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Bury chosen for women's sport town take-over

The town of Bury was today unveiled as the location for an intensive year-long sporting experiment to get more women and girls active and tackle the gender gap in sport.

Bury beat off competition from towns across England to secure up to £1.8 million of National Lottery funding from Sport England to rigorously test what works in changing the sporting habits of women and girls.

Despite a big increase in the number of women playing sport regularly over the past year, women are still much less likely to be active than men. As the pilot progresses, Sport England will work with partners across community sport to make sure lessons coming out of Bury are put into practice across the country.

Bury soap star and Strictly Come Dancing contestant Lisa Riley said: "It's brilliant that Bury is taking centre stage in this campaign to get women more active. There'll be something on offer to tempt everyone so I really do encourage all women to give it a go. My experiences on Strictly showed me how much fun you can have getting moving so I'll definitely be looking to join in some of the activities over the next 12 months."

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Maria Miller today joined England Netball vice-captain Sara Bayman, former player Tracey Neville and Sport England Chief Executive Jennie Price at a celebratory event in one of Bury's Green Flag parks. And in a taste of what's to come, more than 100 local women showcased and tried out activities including outdoor gym sessions, basketball and zumba.

Maria Miller said: “Last year’s Olympic and Paralympic Games were a triumph for women’s sport, showcasing positive role models such as Jess Ennis and Ellie Simmonds. It is vital that we build on that success, and get more girls and women playing sport. We are making good progress: more than half a million more women are playing sport in the last year; and our broadcasters are responding to pressure to increase coverage of women’s sport. But we want to do more. This pilot project in Bury, backed by £1.8 million of public money, will help us test rigorously what works in changing the sporting habits of women and girls, and help us close the sports gender gap.”

Jennie Price said: “We are determined to make it easier and more appealing for women and girls in Bury to take up sport. This campaign is about making Bury a place where playing sport comes naturally - because your friends do it, the women you work with do it and, most of all, because you enjoy it.”

The campaign in Bury will be led by Bury Council, working closely with partners across the private, public and voluntary sectors. Council leader, Mike Connolly, said: “We are absolutely delighted to be chosen for this pilot project and we are raring to go. Over the next 12 months we will be doing everything we can to change the sporting habits of our women and girls in every corner of the borough.

“We will be offering an exciting range of activities to thousands of women and girls, there will be lots to try out and get involved in. There will be every opportunity for women and girls to get moving, so, come on, let’s play sport, get fit and have fun!”

The activities will be highly visible, using every available space in the town - from local parks to leisure centres – and will be backed by a major marketing campaign to encourage girls and women from the town to get moving.

The sports on offer in Bury will evolve, based on feedback from local women and girls, but will fall into four broad areas:

- Well-known sports offered in different forms or settings such as cardio tennis or school-gate rounders, which offers mums on the school run a chance to get active
- Outdoor fitness such as bootcamps in parks or group runs

- Dance and fitness sessions such as zumba or aerobics
- Programmes to encourage older women to get involved, such as pilates..

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Local women and girls who want to get involved should visit www.bury.gov.uk/gogirls or call 0161 253 5893.

The Active People Survey shows that on average, 6.87 million women in England are playing sport at least once a week compared to 6.3 million in the previous year. 8.64 million men are playing sport regularly compared to 8.46 million in the previous year.

Sport England is focused on helping people and communities across the country create a sporting habit for life. We will invest over £1 billion of National Lottery and Exchequer funding between 2012 and 2017 in organisations and projects that will:

- Help more people have a sporting habit for life
- Create more opportunities for young people to play sport
- Nurture and develop talent
- Provide the right facilities in the right places
- Support local authorities and unlock local funding
- Ensure real opportunities for communities.

The National Lottery has been changing lives for 18 years. Every week National Lottery players raise over £30 million to help change people's lives across the UK.

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