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## Developing an Informal Sports Offer

This factsheet is one of a series produced by sports coach UK and the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation aimed at sports deliverers and sports coaches who work with women in informal sports settings. These factsheets provide insight into the informal female participant and her needs, and provide guidance on the type of environment and coaching style she needs in order to be attracted to, and retained in, informal sport.

In particular, this factsheet is relevant to people who are involved in designing and developing informal sports offers, as well as those who deliver them (coaches, leaders, coordinators etc – referred to as 'coach').

The information contained in this factsheet was obtained by an independent research agency who interviewed over 40 women and 11 coaches from across the country who participate in Run England, No Strings Badminton or Just Play football. The sports were selected to be representative of individual, racquet and team sports.

While we aim to provide advice and guidance, we are cautious about making generalisations, and it is for you, the coach and sports deliverer, to contextualise the following information to your own settings. Also, remember that your participants are individuals. What appears in the information below will not be representative of all female participants but is a generalisation based on research carried out. This information is for guidance only.





## Developing an Informal Sports Offer

### Run England

**Where:** Meet outside local leisure centre

**Session time:** Mondays 6–7pm

**Leader:** Run England Group Leader

**Cost:** £2

**Session structure:**

- Session is one hour – timed around children's gymnastics class
- One leader and two assistants means class can split into three levels
- Warm-up, long run in ability group, back together for intervals/hills/drills, cool-down

Delivered from convenient locations – close proximity to homes, workplaces etc.

Delivered at convenient times to meet a variety of women's needs (eg mums, full-time professionals).

The gender of the coach is not important, but he/she must be skilled and, above all, passionate about the sport; this is what enthuses and motivates participants.

Women are able to participate at their own level and pursue individual goals, rather than be pushed too far too quickly.

Sessions should be pay as you go, rather than requiring a long-term financial commitment.

### No Strings Badminton

**Where:** Local leisure centre

**Session time:** Wednesdays 6–9pm,  
Saturdays 10am–12pm

**Leader:** No Strings Badminton coordinator

**Cost:** £3 a session, pay per session

**Session structure:**

- Session works as a drop-in session – do not need to attend for full three hours
- Coordinator matches players depending on ability levels
- Play games of badminton with regular player rotation – no drills coaching
- Coordinator joins in, tailoring level of play to different participants; this also guarantees a playing partner

Drop-in sessions mean women are offered the flexibility they can't get from traditional clubs.

### Just Play Football

**Where:** Football complex

**Session time:** Tuesdays 6–7pm

**Leader:** Just Play Organiser and qualified Level 2 coach

**Cost:** £1.50 a session, pay per session

**Session structure:**

- Meet coordinator in reception
- Find reserved pitch together where coach meets the group
- 5 minutes' warm up
- 10 minutes' drills
- 40 minutes' gameplay
- 5 minutes' cool down

The emphasis is on game play, not drills and coaching.

Coordinators join in sessions, building rapport and fostering an inclusive environment.

Sessions should be pay as you go, rather than requiring a long-term financial commitment.

**Emphasis should be placed on making the environment welcoming, friendly and sociable, rather than competitive**