

Assessing and working to overcome perceived barriers to Women's participation in Basketball in Lincolnshire

Basketball is sport where the prevalence of patriarchal power relations gives men more opportunities to participate and to monopolise positions of power (Hargreaves, 1992: *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*. London: Routledge.). In the UK, women's participation in basketball in 2008 was only one third of the rate seen among men (Sport England: *Active People Survey*, 2008). This suggests a gender divide in accessibility to basketball. Moreover, there is a lack of sociological understanding of the needs and perceived barriers among women who wish to participate. Inclusive policies are needed to reduce ethnic, cultural, religious, political and economic barriers among women. This will help to meet the legacy aims of London 2012 (The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Ltd, 2008: *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. LOCOG: London.).

The principal aim of the present study is to assess women's perceptions of the sociological barriers to participation in basketball, with a view to developing further competitive and recreational opportunities in a city in the East of England. In the study location there are few opportunities for community-dwelling women to participate in basketball. The only club offering competitive basketball is 33 miles away, creating large restrictions to those with small income and travel restrictions.

The project will seek to i. assess perceived barriers to participation current female basketball participants in the area, and then ii. to set up the first all female Basketball team in the study location by offering a free taster session, followed by a series of training sessions. Quantitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, will be conducted to assess their pre-conceptions about accessibility, opportunities and negative experiences within basketball. These data will inform subsequent actions and deliver basketball sessions. Critical success factors include attendance rates and participant satisfaction. Researchers will work alongside the coaches delivering the sessions, the participants, the Lincolnshire Basketball Association and the Basketball Development Officer to create better access and local opportunities.