

**This Girl Can: giving judgement the finger**

Client: Sport England

Brand: This Girl Can

Agency: FCB Inferno

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## Summary

1.75 million fewer women than men are exercising regularly<sup>1</sup> – a worryingly large and stubborn gender gap in England’s exercise participation levels.

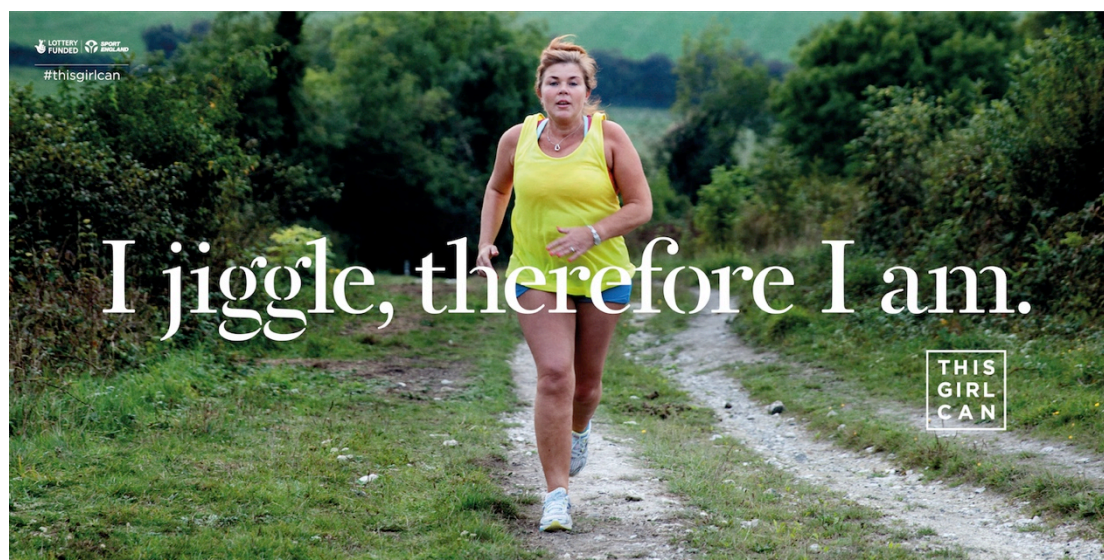
Sport England - the Government agency for grassroots sport – were investing £300m every year in initiatives and facilities to encourage people to participate. Whilst exercise levels were increasing, considerably less women than men were taking part, and so they sent out a pitch brief with an exciting challenge:

*“The aim of the campaign is simple: to get more women from the age of 14-40 regularly active and into sport and to keep them playing.”<sup>2</sup>*

Their aim was simple, but the target audience was broad. The solution needed to elicit mass behaviour change, and needed mass influence.

Through a combination of true empathy – a core pillar of traditional planning – and allowing insight to inform every creative decision – from the casting to typography choice – ‘This Girl Can’ was born.

This paper is about a campaign that has reshaped the way we think about women and exercise, and shows the importance of applying strategic skills both old and new.



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Word count - 190

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<sup>1</sup> Active People Survey results released January 2015

<sup>2</sup> Sport England pitch brief, 2014

## **This Girl Can: giving judgement the finger**

### **Where are all the women?**

1.75 million fewer women play sport than men<sup>3</sup>. Although the number of men and women playing sport has grown over the past decade, the gap has not closed. The biggest sports brands have spent millions targeting women, yet the disparity remains. Health experts have even proved that inactivity is twice as likely as obesity to cause an early death, but to no avail.

Sport England has been concerned about the gender gap in sport for some time and is committed to closing it. Having driven some improvement in the supply side, Sport England knew that to have any chance of tackling the issue, something dramatically different would be required – something that addressed the demand side and talked directly to women.

This led to Sport England's first ever 360° marketing campaign. Launching a high profile behaviour change campaign with communications at its heart meant that the stakes were high and expectations higher.

The campaign needed to...

- Create sustained change in women's attitudes and behaviours towards exercise
- Be relevant and inspiring enough that women would want to become a part of, talk about and share it with friends and family
- Resonate with women 14-40
- Reshape the language around sport and exercise
- Be endlessly adaptable for all channels
- Create impact, quickly
- Allow for multiple partners to leverage it

... all with the ultimate goal of getting more women in England aged 14-40 taking part in activity regularly.

### **Our starting point: enticing women to exercise**

We began by looking for the benefits of exercise and found three potentially powerful claims:

*Exercise releases you from everyday stresses*

*Exercise can be a fun, social way to bond with friends*

*Exercise produces endorphins, which make you feel 'great' post-activity*

Unfortunately, they weren't universal. Even the endorphin effect which, in theory, is true of everyone who exercises, is not felt by everyone.

We'd hit a dead end, and so went back to Sport England's research. Here, something stood out - our target already knew and understood the benefits of exercise and 75% said they wanted to do more. But they weren't.

We were looking for the wrong thing. We didn't need to incentivise exercise; we needed to uncover what was stopping women.

### **A wall of barriers**

As might be expected with an audience spanning 26 years and varying life-stages, the barriers to exercise were incredibly diverse.

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<sup>3</sup> Active People Survey results released January 2015

Firstly, they were endless.

Not being fit enough	Showing their body	Being seen in Lycra	It's too far away
It's too expensive	Not knowing the rules	Having a red face	Being sweaty
Wearing sports clothing	Being the worst one there	Not appearing feminine	
Not being competitive enough	I can't get there	Bringing the wrong equipment	
Family should be more important	Not being good enough	Holding back the group	
Changing in front of others	Wearing tight clothing	Studying should take priority	
Need childcare	Time with friends should be more important	Exercise isn't cool	
Being the only new person	Wearing the wrong clothing/kit	Not looking 'made up'	
Housework takes priority	Developing too many muscles	Being 'too' good	
Body parts wobbling when exercising	Being seen as too competitive	Looking silly	

No single barrier was exclusive to an age group, socio-demographic group or life-stage. At any point, a woman might have one barrier or multiple, all constantly shifting with the world around her. Motherhood might change her barriers, as might an unfavourable look at the gym.

Put bluntly, the barriers were infinite, unpredictable and constantly shifting.

### Removing the logistical barriers

Looking at the barriers, there was a clear set we couldn't solve: logistics. The absence of time, money or childcare are key barriers, but couldn't be addressed by Sport England or advertising. Having removed these from our long list, an interesting pattern emerged.

### A unifying barrier

Every remaining barrier could be traced back to something truly unique, fresh and emotionally powerful...

#### *The fear of judgement*

Fear was stopping women from exercising. If you haven't experienced this fear it can be quite hard to comprehend, but it was a powerful force over our audience, and one they didn't fully recognise themselves.

Women worried about being judged on their appearance, during and after exercise; on their ability, whether they were a beginner or 'too good'; or for spending time exercising instead of prioritising their children or studying. Every barrier we'd encountered fitted neatly into one of these three areas.

FCB Inferno	Judgement – Three Core Areas	Sport England
<u>Appearance</u> Being judged for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being sweaty</li><li>• Having a red face</li><li>• Not looking like I usually do (made up)</li><li>• Changing in front of others</li><li>• Wearing tight clothing</li><li>• Wearing sports clothing</li><li>• Wearing the wrong clothing/kit</li><li>• Showing their body</li><li>• How their body looks during exercise (jiggling)</li><li>• Not appearing feminine</li><li>• Developing too many muscles</li></ul>	<u>Ability</u> Being judged for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not being fit enough</li><li>• Not being good enough</li><li>• Not being competitive/serious enough</li><li>• Not knowing the rules</li><li>• Not knowing what equipment to bring</li><li>• Bringing the wrong equipment</li><li>• Holding back the group</li><li>• Being too good</li><li>• Being seen as too competitive/serious</li></ul>	<u>Time</u> Being judged for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spending time exercising when time with family should be more important</li><li>• Spending time exercising when time with friends should be more important</li><li>• Spending time exercising when time studying/working should be more important</li><li>• Spending time exercising when there are other things I should be doing that are more important</li></ul>



We also found encouraging evidence that an increase in women’s confidence would lead to an increase in exercise.

*“Gaining self confidence was a major influence towards increasing activity.”<sup>4</sup>*

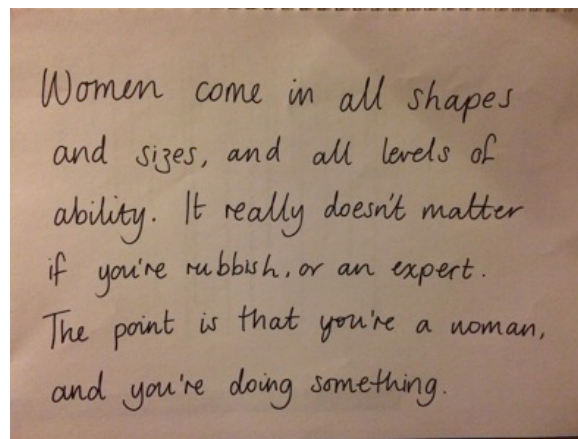
We had found the universal insight we needed.

### **A clear role for communications**

The role for the campaign became clear:

***To liberate women from the judgements that hold them back.***

Rather than write a creative brief, we felt a short manifesto would better express the intention:



Women come in all shapes and sizes, and all levels of ability. It really doesn't matter if you're rubbish, or an expert. The point is that you're a woman, and you're doing something.

### **Challenging the status quo**

Sometimes, we are so used to something, it is hard to see that it might be part of the problem. This was the case with the genre of fitness advertising.

The accepted ‘aspirational’ imagery (perfectly glowing six-packs and slim waists) was intimidating and pushing women away. Uncompromising lines about winning fell on deaf ears – our audience found this demotivating.



<sup>4</sup> Source: Health Education Research, ‘Girls and women’s participation in physical activity’

We needed to completely redefine 'aspiration'. The key was not in appearance or achievement, but in showing women of all shapes, sizes and abilities with an aspirational confidence: a **“don't give a damn”** attitude.

### The power of the creative idea

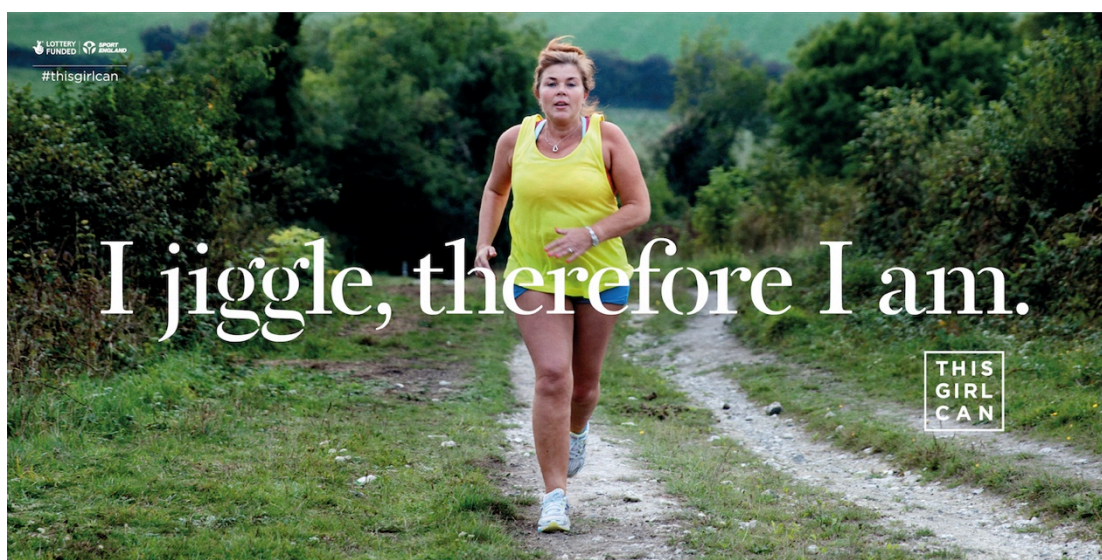
The resulting creative was '[This Girl Can](#)', a celebration of the triumph of attitude over society's judgement. We championed active women across England who were doing their thing no matter how they do it or how they look.



The campaign name itself armed women with positivity and empowerment. It had 'hashtagability' at its heart – women could use it themselves easily.

The premise was simple but phenomenally powerful, and empowered women in two ways.

Firstly, it provided positive role models. We street-cast women from across the country with jiggle bits, sweat patches and importantly, a highly aspirational “don't give a damn” attitude. The kind of people we all want to be like.



Secondly, it provided women with a strategy for dealing with the judgement they fear: the classic riposte. The art of taking an insult, acknowledging it and throwing it straight back with an added piece of wit. Cognitive behavioural therapy suggests that to beat a fear, you have to face it, so we took the fear of judgement head on. Every campaign line or 'mantra' we armed our audience with was based on the woman it featured alongside and therefore came with the power of a human truth.



### Strategy at the heart of everything

As we were tackling a highly emotional and personal barrier, we had to be very particular about how we spoke and behaved.

This girl does...	This girl does not...
Speak to the girls as one of the girls	Tell anyone that what they're doing or thinking is wrong
Debate on relevant subjects	Argue with opposing engagement
Encourage and support	Scaremonger, force or cajole
Add value to the conversations she joins	Post for the sake of posting
Write informally	Sit on a pedestal, or speak like a health information campaign
Use correct language and grammar	Overuse exclamation marks or end posts with kisses lolxx
Feel inclusive and inviting to fellow followers	Feel too chummy or over the top
Exude confidence, energy and a sense of humour	Act arrogantly or dwell on the negatives
Empathise with our audience	Judge anyone, for anything!

Insight informed every aspect of the campaign, from the choice of typography, to the decision to street-cast in parks and Zumba classes, to the development of each campaign mantra, and the choice of director.

### A campaign with social at its core

To ensure the campaign landed in the best way possible, Sport England and its PR agency engaged a wide range of influencers and partners during the creative development process, creating a base of supporters before launch. In parallel we developed a three-phased behaviour change approach:

#### 1. Realisation

Whilst fear of judgement was the universal barrier to exercise, it wasn't necessarily talked about and women didn't realise others felt judged too. We set out to spark conversations online and in social media to help women realise that they were far from alone in feeling that way.

The campaign soft-launched in October 2014, announced by Sport England CEO Jennie Price at the Women In Sport conference. The PR agency worked with select media titles to create a succession of articles discussing the fear of judgement to introduce our creative work: a series of online films, each telling the story of one hero woman (Kelly, Julie, Victoria or Grace) overcoming their individual barrier to exercise.



**The Telegraph**

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HOME » WOMEN » WOMEN'S LIFE

### Sport England: Women don't exercise for fear of being judged

After research reveals why women aren't confident enough to exercise, Sport England has announced a major new campaign aimed at encouraging them to join clubs, gyms and exercise in their homes



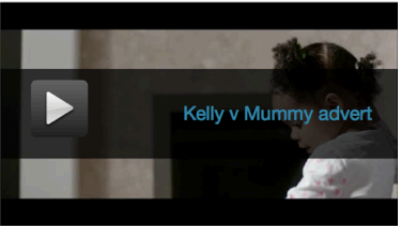
Image 1 of 3  
 Kelly is one of the real women appearing in the Sport England campaign Photo: sport england

By Claire Cohen  
 6:00AM GMT 31 Oct 2014  
 Follow 2,559 followers

Print this article  
 Share 585  
 Facebook 359  
 34 Comments

Sport England say they want to prompt 'that moment of realisation' where women 'recognise that they are not alone in feeling this'.

Kelly is one of the real women taking part in the Sport England ad campaign:



It will also offer practical ideas for how women can take exercise.

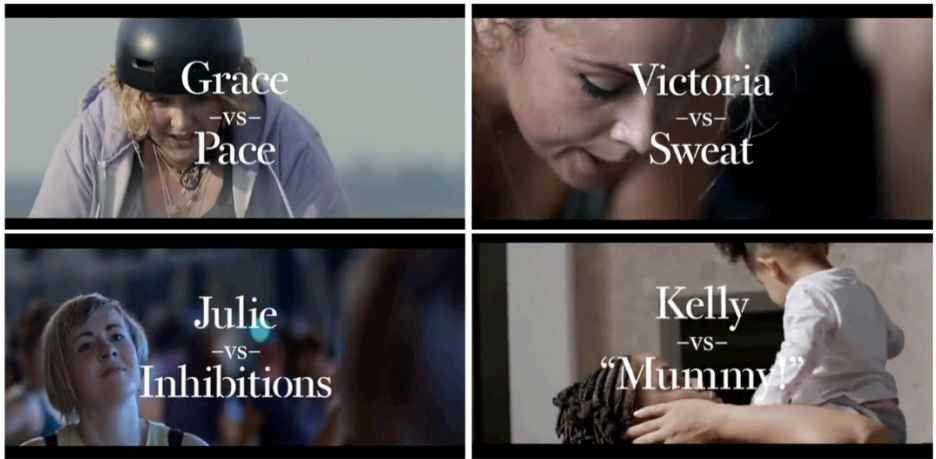
A television advert, which will air in the New Year, features 40 real women taking part in sport in a way that fits around their lives. The activities shown include Zumba, netball, tennis, swimming, jogging and exercising at home – with one mum doing sit-ups alongside her young children.

The campaign announcement comes almost two years after Sport England pledged £493 million in funding across 46 sports, between 2013 and 2017.

Some of that will go towards those activities the sporting body hopes will attract women, such as netball (£25.3 million), running (£22 million), swimming (£20 million) and tennis (£17.4 million). The money will be shared among grassroots campaigns such as **Back to Netball** – a coaching scheme that helps women get back into the game – and **Us Girls Rocks**, a female-only festival that allows visitors to sample different sports.

Jennie Price, Chief Executive of Sport England said:

"Women do less sport and exercise than men, but most say they would like to do more. So we had to get to the bottom of what's holding them back. We found out by talking to women of all ages up and down the country that what's stopping them is fear, fear of judgement: whether that's about how they look, whether they're any good at it, or feeling guilty



Using a unique social algorithm we identified women Tweeting their exercise anxieties and, in a truly social way, started proactive conversations to support and encourage confidence in the women who needed us most.

**Laura Nyland** @lauraloo2704 · Dec 14  
 Just tried to do some exercise...literally managed three tricep dips before giving up 😊

**This Girl Can** @ThisGirlCanUK · Dec 15  
 @lauraloo2704 Hi Laura, three is a wicked start - and 100% more than most people have done today! #thisgirlcan HQ is cheering for you.

**Laura Nyland** @lauraloo2704 · Dec 15  
 @ThisGirlCanUK awww that's a really cute and encouraging tweet - thank you x  
 6:54 am - 15 Dec 2014 · Details

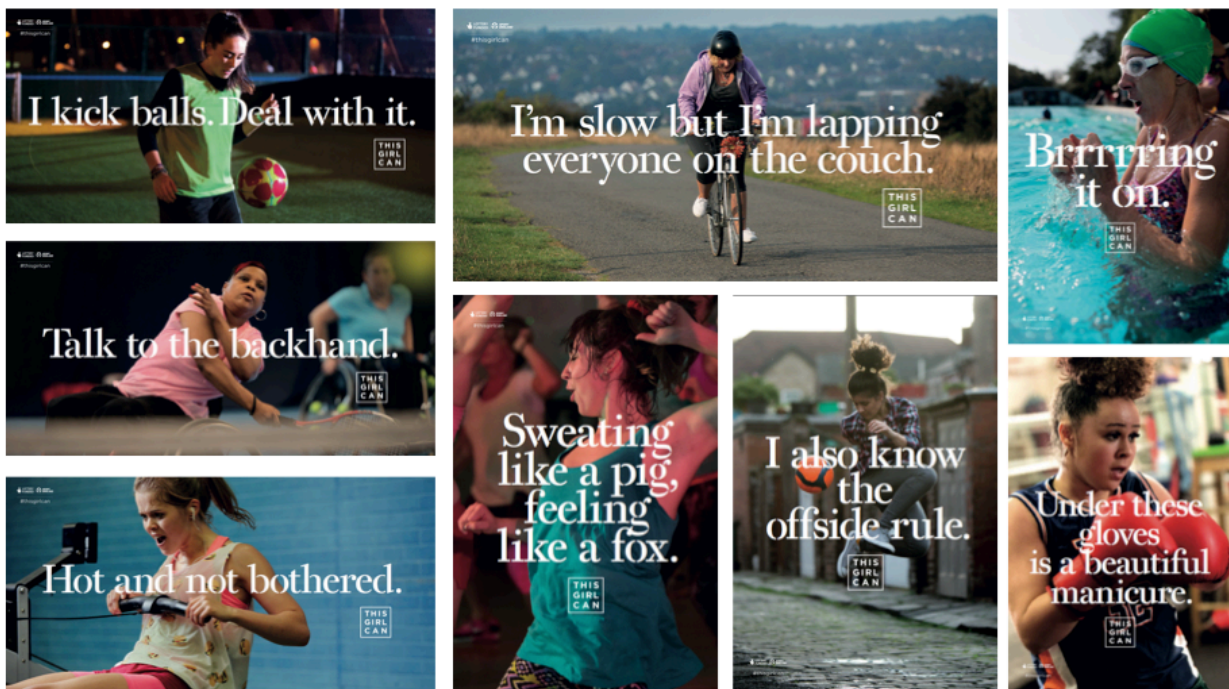
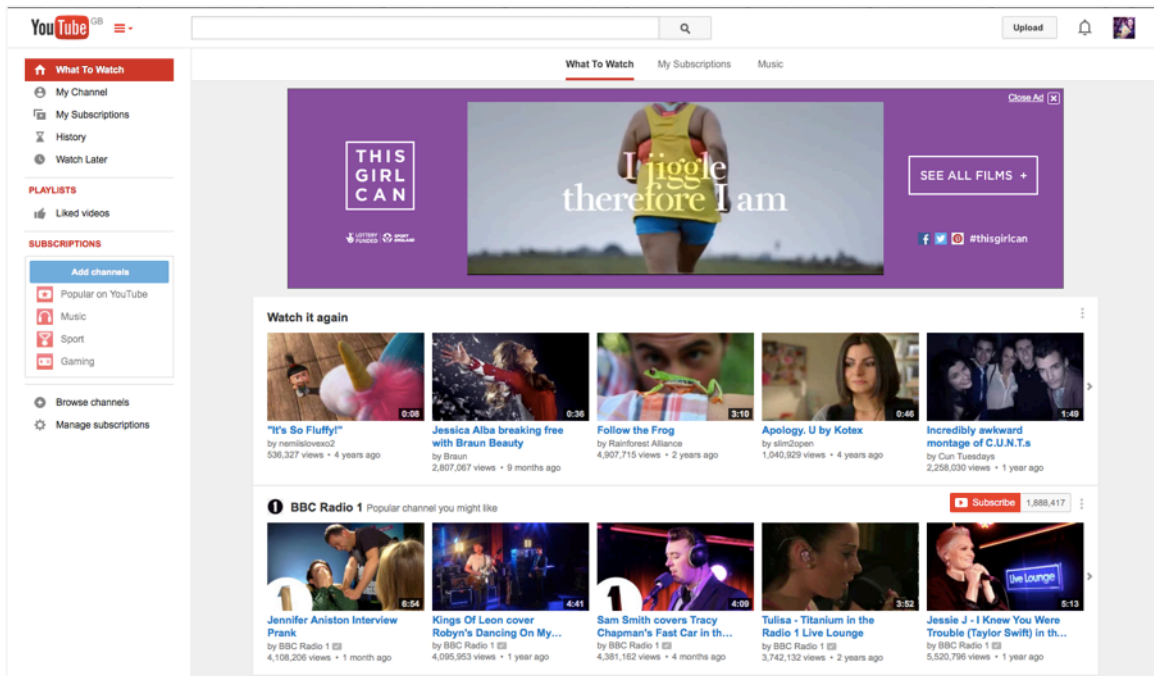
Reply to @lauraloo2704

**This Girl Can** @ThisGirlCanUK · Dec 15  
 @lauraloo2704 Our pleasure! Keep us posted on the triceps, it's always great to hear from active women. Have a lovely week. #thisgirlcan

## 2. Inspiration

Our second stage focused on inspiring women on a mass level.

To encourage as many women as possible and create a new societal norm, we launched with broadcast creative on primetime TV. The 90"/60"/30" TV campaign was supported by a 90" cinema ad, YouTube takeover, digital and social ads and a national poster campaign.



## 3. Self-identification

Behavioural economics suggests that making a public statement improves the likelihood of cementing new attitudes and habits. Phase three focused on encouraging women to self-identify by using the campaign. If we had managed to empower women with the confidence to exercise, we wanted them to shout about it; whether that be talking about their activity, sharing their exercise photos or simply by using #ThisGirlCan.



## The results: Girls Who Can

Since This Girl Can launched we've received an overwhelmingly positive response.

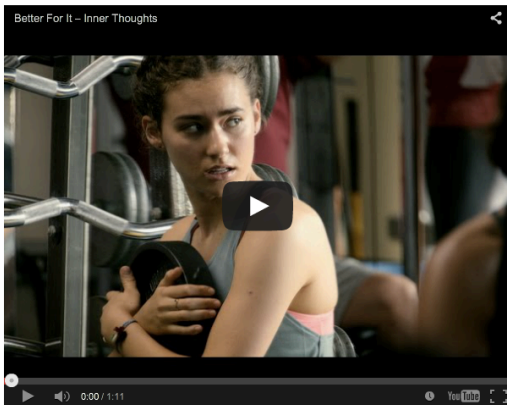
Within days of the broadcast launch the campaign trended twice on Twitter, made it into Google's Hot Trends and Top 12 Trending Searches. We received ten consecutive days of positive news coverage and every TV breakfast show in England wanted an interview. The core film alone has racked up over 16.9 million views and 129,000 shares. We gained 206,000 fans on Facebook, 61,900 on Twitter and the whole campaign has had over 31.4 million views.

Olympians, Paralympians, politicians from across the House, leading feminists and fellow brands have shown support for the campaign. Nike recently launched "Better For It", a step away from their usual competitive style, which has been widely attributed to the influence of This Girl Can.

26 APRIL 2015 - 11:17AM | POSTED BY GILLIAN WEST | 0 COMMENTS

## Ad of the Day: Nike - Better for It - Inner Thoughts

Share 33 Tweet 50 LinkedIn Share 7 +1 1 Share reddit this!



Nike has called on women to get over their 'gym-timidation' with a new campaign showing the sweaty, judgemental and unglamorous side of exercise.

Reminiscent of Sport England's 'This Girl Can' work from the UK earlier in the year, the 'Inner Thoughts' creative uses a humorous tone to encourage women to get over the insecurities that stop them working out.

KNOWLEDGE  
Three reasons to develop creative screen video campaigns



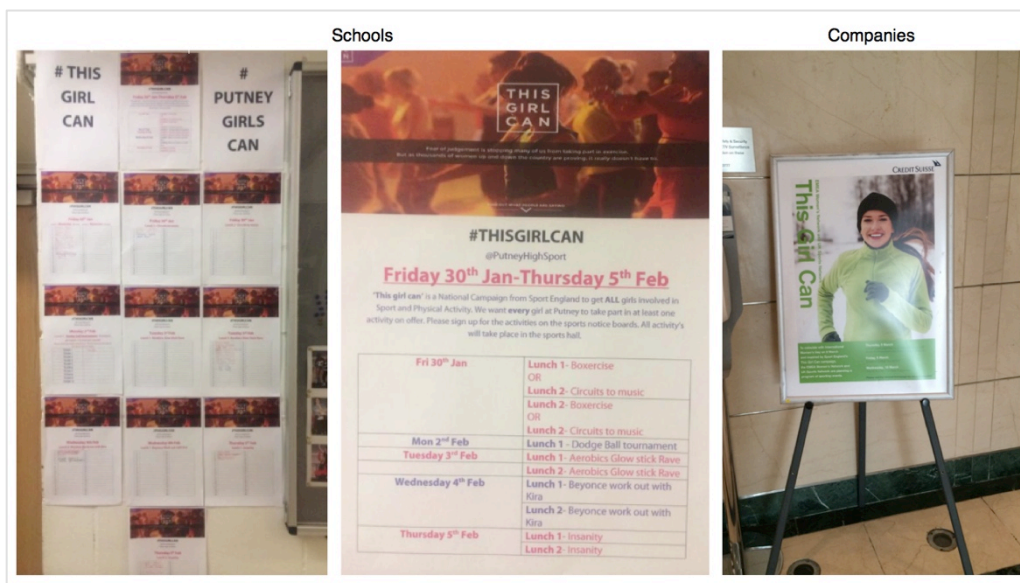
OPINION  
Taking a humorous approach: marketers beware of advertising Apple Watch



AD OF THE DAY  
Ad of the Day: Music Has Enemies -



Parents, schools, libraries, universities and companies as large as Credit Suisse are using This Girl Can to encourage women to become more active.



 **Jamie Barry** Really brilliant. My sporty daughter at primary school has suddenly gone off doing sport at High school. Slowly winning her back and this is the sort of thing I need to help. Thank you.  
Like · Reply · 13 mins

What's more, we are seeing the positive influence it is having in ways that we could not have anticipated.

Wembley, the home of football, asked to host the ad for free. Sports clubs, universities and the BBC created their own versions of the 90" film and a Facebook fan recently revealed the first ever This Girl Can tattoo<sup>5</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> BBC 'This Girl Can Too' video - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/get-inspired/31720658>  
Brighton Table Tennis video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPRX0GKuRi4>  
JWS PE video - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmz8kn\\_HTD0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmz8kn_HTD0)



BBC



This Girl Can fan



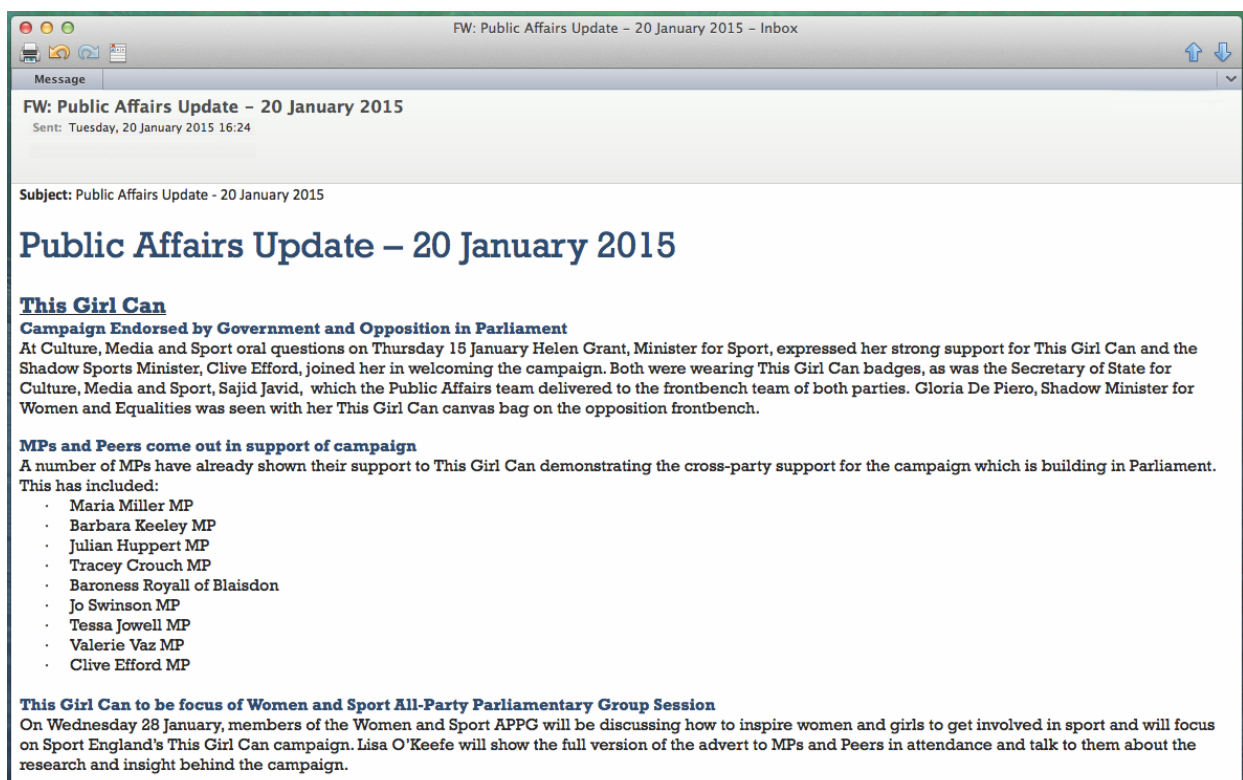
Sporting clubs



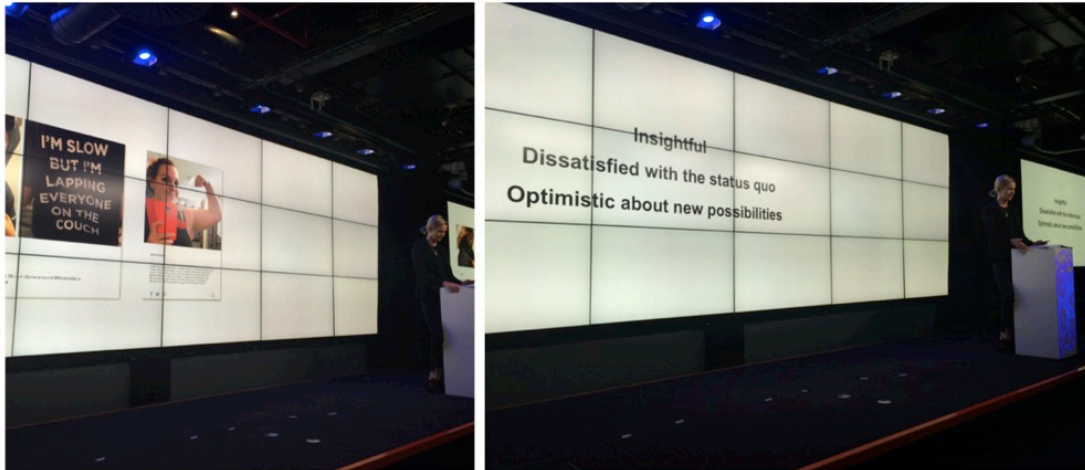
Schools



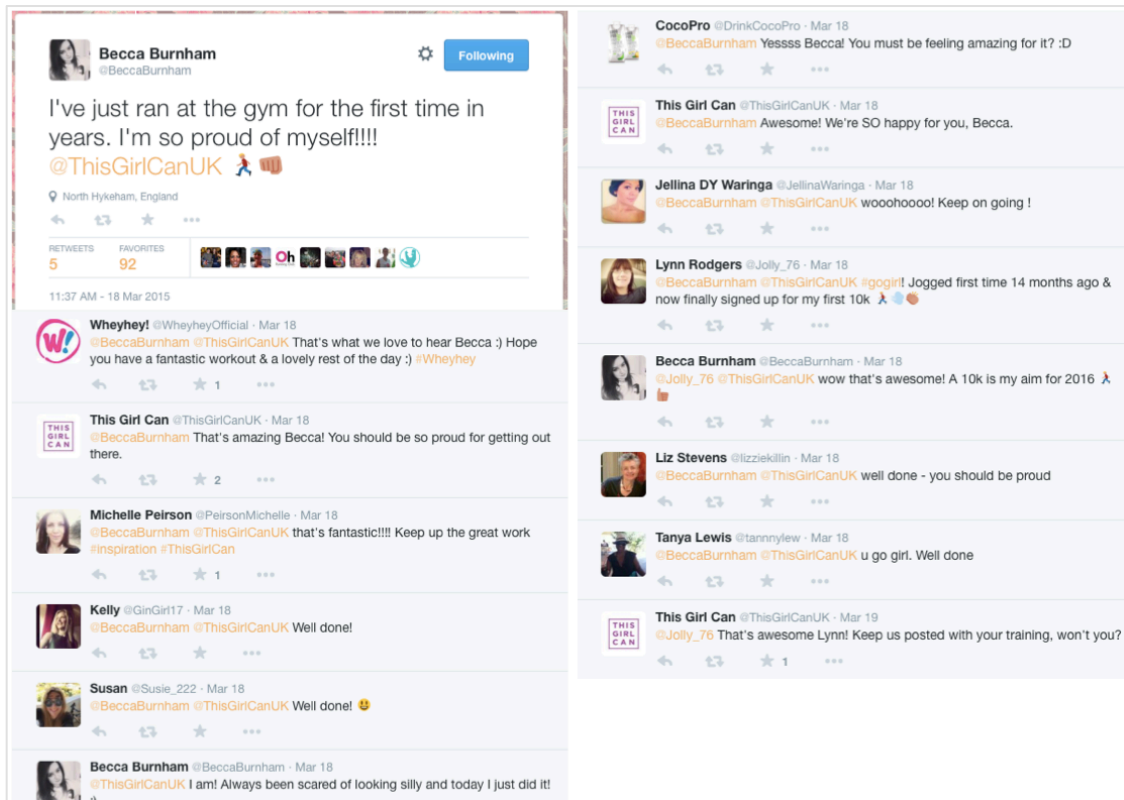
The Government and media industry are changing the way they talk to, and about, women. Students have featured This Girl Can in dissertations about the future of the sport industry and it has been discussed in Parliament and featured in the Public Affairs Update email. Over 4,000 partners have signed up for the This Girl Can toolkit. This includes the BBC, who recently invited us to speak as part of an expert panel about appealing to women. And it was a huge compliment and surprise to see the campaign referenced by Pippa Morris as an example of the future of strategy at the last APG Noisy Thinking event.



Pippa Morris referencing This Girl Can at the APG "The Future's Bright, The Future's..."

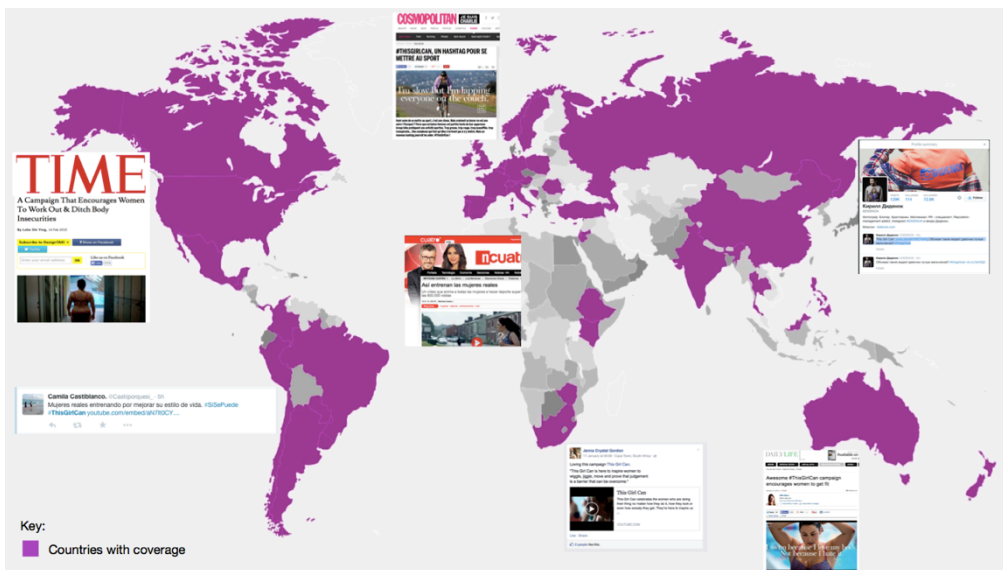


Online, we have an army of supporters, or "Tinkerbells" (our term for the antithesis of online trolls), who add their own words of positivity to support women they've never met before and voluntarily defend the campaign if it receives criticism<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>6</sup> NB – social media monitoring has shown negative sentiment to be less than 3%

Our insight resonated globally. Mentions of the campaign reached 82 countries without any international spend, including TV and press coverage.



We've had countless requests for t-shirts...

**Erica Seiffert** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
29 January at 17:03 · Bloomington, IN, United States · 🌐

Any chance this campaign is going to come out with some t-shirts? I know that when I was having a bad motivational day at the Y the other day - I thought of this campaign to help push me through. When it was done I really wanted a t-shirt with the "this girl can" logo. 😊

Like · Comment · Share · 👍 3

**Back To Netball Nottingham** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
6 February at 19:24 · 🌐

Hi there would love a 'This Girl Can' top can u let us know where we can purchase one x

Like · Comment · Share · 👍 2 🗨 1 ➦ 1

**Tylana Byrd Hill** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
16 hrs · Celebration, FL, United States · 🌐

Where can we buy shirts?

Like · Comment · Share · 👍 1 🗨 1

**Sarah Naylor** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
26 January at 21:03 · 🌐

Slogan tee's needed!! 'I jiggle therefore I am' 😊

Like · Comment · Share · 👍 3

**Zoe Howard** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
15 February at 17:31 · 🌐

Hi are there This Girl Can tshirts available to buy?

Like · Comment · Share · 🗨 1

**Caroline Bowen-Fleming** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
15 February at 21:47 · 🌐

How do I get a tshirt or vest please?? Neeeeeee one 😊 x

Like · Comment · Share · 🗨 2

**Laura Wooles** ▶ **This Girl Can**  
14 February at 21:06 · Credenhill · 🌐

How can I buy a "This Girl Can" t.shirt please?

Like · Comment · Share

**nell read**  
@nellread

@ThisGirlCanUK how and where do I get merchandise please! I ran 10 miles this morning #ThisGirlCan

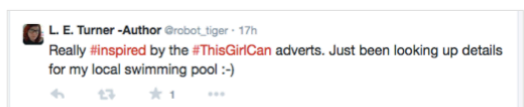
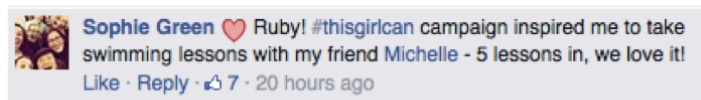
**Michelle Bowen** BEST. ADS. EVER!! These ads should be on a global scale! Inspires me to keep going. Where can we get the T-shirts.  
Like · Reply · 11 hours ago



Women have been Tweeting their love for the posters...



But most importantly, we're seeing a positive impact on women's exercise levels and attitudes towards activity. While quantitative behaviour change results are still to come, women have told us about the exercise they've done and the confidence they've felt as a result of This Girl Can.



## **Conclusion: what we learnt**

### 1. Campaigning, not a campaign

Find the influencers big and small and get them on board early. They will pay you back with valuable support later - as women from Claire Balding, Tanni Grey-Thompson & Kelly Holmes to our Tinkerbells are proving.

### 2. Strategy goes wherever the insight goes

If insight is important to shaping an element of the creative, then strategy should be there – from headlines, to selecting typefaces, to casting & choosing a director. It's important to be involved in every conversation.

### 3. Challenge the status quo

Look hard at all the things that seem to be 'just the way it is'. Listen to what doesn't work for your audience and believe it is possible to find a different answer.

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*Word count - 1,995*