



AudienceNet



# INFLUENCER CONSULTATIONS



# Background:

## BACKGROUND TO INFLUENCER CONSULTATIONS

Throughout the course of this research, a number of local ‘influencers’ were identified as having the potential to encourage, inspire and enable more women from the areas of Barking and Dagenham, Ilford and Newham to do more physical activity. These local influencers are individuals and organisations partly identified directly by women from these boroughs, in an Online Community held in December 2020, and partly selected by London Sport as potential partners of interest.

The most important types of influencer identified by women in this research were:

- Friends and family
- Religious institutions
- Local councils
- Social media influencers
- Leisure centres and gyms
- Sports clubs

These types of individuals or organisations were chosen by participants due to their influence and prominent roles in their daily lives (e.g. friends and family, religious institutions and social media influencers) or due to the resources they possessed which they believed enabled them to create greater opportunities for women to engage in physical activity (e.g. local councils, sports clubs, leisure centres and gyms).

After consultation with London Sport, it was decided which of these individuals and organisations would be subject to further research and which would not; either because enough was already known about them or because they were not ideally suited to partnership opportunities.

Furthermore, other potential influencers were added to the list for further research given their networks or their usefulness to a wider strategy across the target area. For example, parenting groups had been mentioned by a few participants in the Online Community but not as commonly as other organisations. Yet, aware of the potential impact they could have on the large population of mothers in the area, they were included for consultation. Media organisations were also identified as key for further research as they were seen as likely to play an important role in raising awareness of campaigns or programmes created as a result of this project.

# Background:

## THE FULL LIST OF ORGANISATIONS IDENTIFIED FOR THE INFLUENCER CONSULTATION STAGE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

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LOCAL COUNCILS

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PARENTING GROUPS

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SPORTS CLUBS

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MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

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SPORTS FOUNDATIONS

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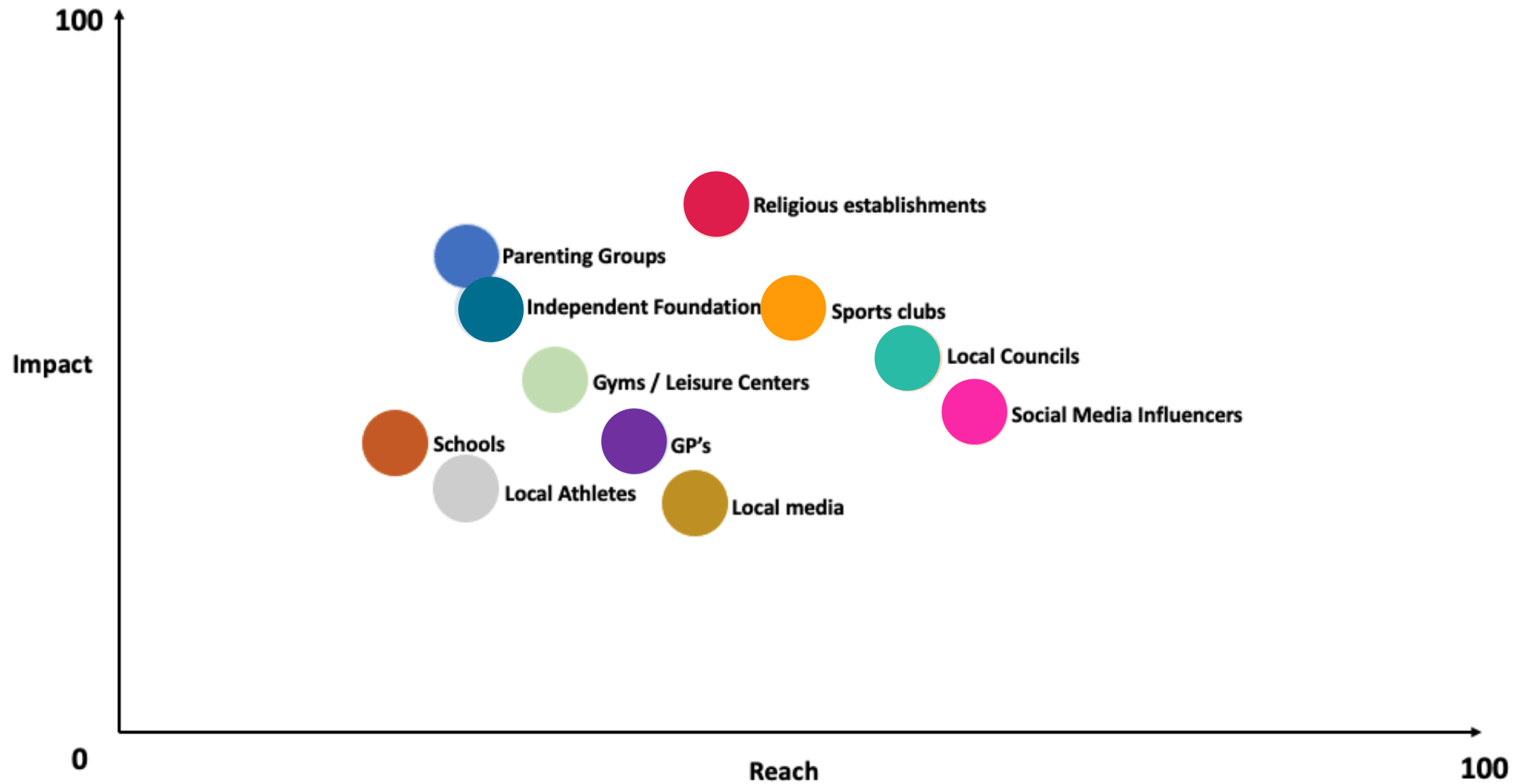
Within these categories, 12 individual organisations were identified to be interviewed. The topics for discussion were the potential ways each organisation could engage and enable more women to become more active as well as any support they may need in order to fulfil this role.

The insight from these consultations has been put together in a collection of case studies which follow in this document.

This insight, combined with initial feedback from participants in the Online Community, has also helped create the basis for an Influencer Index in which individuals and organisations are mapped out and scored according to their reach and potential impact on women in the community.

Crucially, while some influencers may have lower scores than others, all are important in a combined approach to engaging more local women in physical activity. Different individuals and organisations have distinct roles in either enabling or inspiring women. From now, emphasis will be on creating partnerships between these various influencers to combine assets, resources, expertise, reach and networks.

# Influencer Index



# Influencer Index



## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS = 0.7

**Reach = High.** Social media use is widespread with most aware of high profile figures across various platforms meaning potential reach is high.

**Impact = Medium.** Many have the capacity to inspire but fewer have the capacity to convert inspiration to action.



## RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS = 0.7

**Reach = Medium.** Around 70% of people in the target area identify as religious, with many attending places of worship on a regular basis.

**Impact = High.** These establishments are trusted and could also offer safe, familiar spaces in which to engage in physical activity.



## SPORTS CLUBS = 0.6

**Reach = Medium/Low.** Direct reach into the community is low but sports clubs can reach wider networks through partnerships with community organisations.

**Impact = Medium.** There is potential for sports clubs to broaden their direct impact amongst women and girls but also facilitate physical activity at other institutions.



## PARENTING GROUPS = 0.5

**Reach = Medium/Low.** Would be more relevant to those with young children, rather than all mothers in the area.

**Impact = High.** Being able to engage in activity somewhere they could bring their children would remove a big barrier to participation for mothers.



## INDEPENDENT FOUNDATIONS = 0.5

**Reach = Medium/Low.** Foundations are often niche and less well known but can gain significant traction amongst specific populations they may target.

**Impact = Medium/ High.** Foundations serve both to inspire and enable women who are often under-represented in sports, building confidence levels and participation.



## LOCAL COUNCILS = 0.6

**Reach = High.** Potential to reach the majority of households in the Target Area, through public campaigns or comms dropped through letterboxes.

**Impact = Medium.** Though not very inspiring, councils could be a big enabler of physical activity if able to fund and support grassroots organisations such as parenting groups and foundations.

# Influencer Index



## GYMS/LEISURE CENTRES = 0.4

**Reach = Medium/Low.** Efforts to enable physical activity amongst women at gyms may reach those who are active already but not those who have little to do with gyms in the first place.

**Impact = Medium.** Gyms could combat common barriers around price, women only classes and childcare options by incorporating programs or discounts aimed at women around the area.



## GPs = 0.4

**Reach = Medium.** Though potential reach is high, in reality many may never interact with a GP specifically about the topic of physical activity.

**Impact = Medium.** A GP's advice on physical activity holds sway but may only be dispensed on a case by case basis, i.e. to individuals, not broad groups of society.



## LOCAL ATHLETES = 0.3

**Reach = Low.** Local athletes do not seem to have high profiles in their areas currently.

**Impact = Medium/Low.** Many find athletes inspiring but their advanced level can be alienating.



## SCHOOLS = 0.3

**Reach = Low.** Schools only serve a small proportion of the population.

**Impact = Medium/Low.** Seen to have the potential to set girls on a positive path in regards to future engagement with physical activity.



## LOCAL MEDIA = 0.3

**Reach = Medium.** Local radio and newspapers have decent penetration into the community, more so older generations.

**Impact = Low.** Overall impact is limited to raising awareness as part of an integrated approach to behaviour change amongst the local population.

# Influencer Case Studies

These case studies have been created following interviews with the below organisations and are designed to act as guidance for London Sport and its partners when looking to work with each organisation.

Each case study details how organisations or 'influencers' should be approached or engaged with when it comes to the topic of women and physical activity, as well as challenges which may exist to collaboration and any support these organisations might need.



# Religious Institutions

## Religious Institutions consulted:

**BARKING MOSQUE**

**ILFORD ISLAMIC CENTER**

**POWER HOUSE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES**

**A PROMINENT HINDU TEMPLE IN NEWHAM**

## Overall impact of religious institutions:

- High ability to inspire as well as enable.
- Religious institutions are in the advantageous position of being central to many communities, holding a significant amount of influence and owning space which can be used to facilitate physical activity sessions.

## Reach:

- According to Census data, around 70% of the population in the target area identify as being religious.
- It is likely therefore that religious institutions could reach around 60% of the female population in the area; especially if able to extend beyond their regular congregation.
- Many larger religious institutions already partner with other places of worship, indicating an ability and willingness to extend their reach out to more women.

## Potential Challenges:

- Some institutions may be less open to the idea of incorporating physical activity within their space or being ambassadors for physical activity, believing it is not a priority or the responsibility of a place of worship.

## How partners can engage religious institutions:

- The religious institutions we spoke to already had a positive stance on physical activity and were keen to help engage more of their female congregation, indicating others would be willing to engage as long as the subject was introduced with sensitivity.
- Approaching the idea of physical activity in places of worship from a spiritual and health point of view e.g. explaining the benefits for wellbeing etc., will likely resonate best when approaching other religious institutions.

## Greatest Needs:

- Support in facilitating sessions - from coaches of different backgrounds, to equipment and, where necessary, spaces such as sports fields or courts and large indoor halls.
- Some women of Muslim faith may require space which is inside for all physical activity but not all mosques may have these kinds of large facilities.





# Religious Institutions

## Ideal sessions for religious institutions:

- Activities such as yoga and pilates are suitable activities across all institutions of any faith, particularly within Hindu temples where yoga is often encouraged as part of the faith.
- Team sports and martial arts are welcomed but require spaces such as community halls or separate rooms within mosques and temples so as to keep sports out of main areas of worship.
- Netball and other sports traditionally played in shorter outfits might be less appropriate within Islamic centers but could be introduced with sensitivity around kit and an emphasis on women wearing whatever they feel comfortable in.
- Dance, zumba and aerobics classes work well for churches and temples in particular but, again, may need to be facilitated outside of the main area of worship.
- Sessions which coincide with times women may be at their place of worship anyway work best (often at the weekend but dependent on religion).

## Examples of successful initiatives:

### BARKING MOSQUE

- Have around 200 women taking part in 10 different sports put on at spaces attached to the mosque per week.
- Secured internal support by explaining the legitimacy of the programmes from a theological stance and the increase in female attendees at the mosque.
- Spread awareness for sessions via sermons and through key, respected female figures in the community to encourage take up amongst women.

### POWERHOUSE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

- Offer free aerobics and zumba sessions to anyone in the area.
- Handed out over 2,000 flyers to all households in their local neighbourhood, and have had women from all backgrounds and faiths attend their free sessions.



# Parenting Groups

## Parenting groups consulted:

EARLY YEARS COCOON, BARKING

THE HUG, BARKING

## Overall impact of parenting groups:

- High ability to inspire as well as enable.
- Parenting groups are spaces where mothers feel part of a community and are also able to bring their children.

## Reach:

- Medium reach into mothers. Birth rates in the target area are the highest in London. Parenting groups, which are geared towards mothers with young children in particular, will therefore likely have a potential reach of around a third of mothers in the area.
- The two parenting groups consulted had between 100-200 mothers in their direct networks.

## Potential Challenges:

- Parenting groups are very low on available funds and therefore struggle to organise any form of long term sessions or programmes.
- There is emphasis on sessions having to be free of charge in order to be accessible to all mothers.

## How partners can engage parenting groups:

- These organisations are very keen to provide physical activity sessions and report great enthusiasm for such sessions amongst mothers.
- Parenting groups are used to looking for partnerships and funding and are very open to being approached with offers of collaboration and support.
- Providing the resources organisations lack for activities would hugely benefit parenting groups.

## Greatest Needs

- Spaces for sessions where mothers can bring their children – many parenting groups have to borrow and do not own their own spaces.
- Resources for physical activity sessions - coaches, equipment and programs.
- Both organisations interviewed stressed the need for physical activity sessions for mothers to be free or low cost, meaning help is needed with funding or supplying resources at affordable costs.



# Parenting Groups

## Ideal sessions for parenting groups:

- Sessions which focus on physical activity for mother and child are practical and provide the added benefit of ensuring children get regular exercise too.
- Casual family sessions of sports such as cricket, football, rounders etc. which are well known and easy enough to pick up, work well for mothers with children aged 4+.
- Games based on sports, such as tag and throwing/catching balls, work well for mothers with children under the age of 4.
- Providing some sessions just for mothers e.g. yoga, pilates, zumba etc. with childcare on site would also allow mothers some well needed time to themselves amongst other adults.

## Examples of successful initiatives:

### EARLY YEARS COCOON IN BARKING

- Have already partnered with Essex Cricket to deliver 30 sessions of cricket to families in their networks in December 2020 and have received great feedback.
- Have created a pamphlet on easy exercises to do for the whole family at home to ensure mothers and children are supported to continue some form of physical activity.



# Sports clubs and associated club funds/foundations

## Sports clubs consulted:

PULSE LONDON NETBALL

ESSEX CRICKET IN THE COMMUNITY

WEST HAM UNITED FOUNDATION

## Overall impact of sports clubs:

- High ability to inspire as well as enable.
- Particularly effective in partnership with other influencers they can support e.g. parenting groups and places of worship.

## Reach:

- Immediate reach is lower than other influencers, as sports clubs are not naturally part of community life in many places.
- However, sports clubs could help reach vast networks by partnering with other organisations and expand their own reach through a greater range of sessions e.g. beginner and community sessions.

## Potential Challenges:

- Sports clubs face the challenge of being places where people established in sports tend to go; for those who are largely inactive, this can seem intimidating.
- Can seem like spaces for younger generations which may put some older generations off.
- Depending on the sport, those who have to wear specific clothing depending on their beliefs can feel daunted about joining.
- Sports clubs may also struggle to reach women who face different levels of deprivation, e.g. to buy kit, to travel to training.

## Greatest Needs:

- Greater representation of women from all major local communities, including in coaches and facilitators; some sports are more dominated by women from certain backgrounds than others.
- Want to increase outreach to more women in the area but often lack the networks to build attendance.



# Sports clubs and associated club funds/foundations

## Ideal sessions for sports clubs:

- Providing dedicated beginners' and introductory sessions would encourage more women who had not previously played certain sports to try them out.
- Community sessions where anyone can turn up and play, no matter their level or ability, could help encourage older women or previous players to attend with more women of their generation and ability level.
- Continuing online sessions from home beyond Covid-19 and opening these up to anyone who wants to join, would act as gateway sessions for those who would prefer to ease into new activities from home.

## Examples of successful initiatives:

### PULSE LONDON

- Have created a campaign called 'Netball speaks your language', which presents members of the club speaking a range of languages to show netball is inclusive.
- Have worked with a female-led kit provider to create modest club kit.

### WEST HAM UNITED FOUNDATION

- Run online fitness sessions which anyone can join in with from home.
- Send ambassadors such as female athletes into schools to engage girls and encourage uptake of physical activity.

### ESSEX CRICKET IN THE COMMUNITY

- Put on community sessions for anyone from the area to join in with, without need for prior experience of the sport or any formal membership.



# Independent Foundations

## Independent Foundations consulted:

**MUSLIMAH SPORTS ASSOCIATION (MSA)**

**SWAGGARLICIOUS**

## Overall impact of independent foundations:

- High ability to inspire as well as enable.
- Independent foundations may be geared towards general populations or specific subgroups, often increasing numbers amongst groups who are under-represented in mainstream sports and other physical activity.

## Reach:

- Reach differs depending on foundation.
- The Muslimah Sports Association had a reach of roughly 1,000 women.
- Swaggarlicious stretched into the 10,000s across various programs at different schools and clubs.

## Greatest Needs:

- Foundations constantly have to secure funding and may be run largely on a volunteer basis, meaning a need for support/funding for staff and other managerial or administrative aspects.
- Some foundations require support with venues in which to facilitate sessions, often having to rent public spaces such as school halls at expensive rates which are not sustainable.



# Independent Foundations

## How partners can engage independent foundations:

- Independent foundations often have their own networks of participants, coaches and equipment but may lack the infrastructure of sports clubs, e.g. consistent venues, staff.
- Partners can, therefore, help support the work of foundations by providing access to their venues or providing managerial support on joint programmes.

## Examples of successful initiatives:

### MUSLIMASH SPORTS ASSOCIATION

- Local to Barking and Dagenham, attracting women from across the capital to a range of sports sessions.
- Local women are trained up as coaches across a variety of sports, offering them a career path as well as bolstering representation of Muslim and other minority ethnic women at coach level.
- Provide safe spaces only accessible to women, addressing a key need for Muslim women as well as many others from all backgrounds.

### SWAGGARLICIOUS

- Focus on football but run campaigns to encourage women to take up whatever form of physical activity they like whilst advocating both for physical and mental health.
- Have a strong social media presence, helping represent and engage younger women and women from diverse backgrounds, particularly from South Asian communities.





# Local Councils

## Local councils consulted:

**BARKING AND DAGENHAM COUNCIL – HEALTHY LIFESTYLES TEAM**

## Overall impact of local councils:

- High ability to enable programs and grassroots organisations through funding and support.
- Local councils may not be the most influential/inspiring organisations (outside of public campaigns), but can help support other organisations who have a greater reach and influence amongst the community.

## Reach:

- Potential reach is high for campaigns and communication.
- Given the council's ability to target specific households in its area or to create public campaigns, councils can be key partners in disseminating campaigns and information – where and when funding allows.

## Potential Challenges:

- Councils have limited funds to give out to organisations or to create big campaigns on a regular basis.

## How partners can engage local councils:

- Councils work best in a supportive or consultative role, able to provide help to organisations on funding applications or to facilitate contacts between potential partners as well as to provide access to public spaces.



# Media Organisations

## Media organisations consulted:

**A WELL KNOWN LOCAL NEWSPAPER (PRINT)**

**A NATIONAL RADIO BROADCASTER (RADIO)**

## Overall impact of media organisations:

- Media organisations can play an important role in raising awareness of campaigns or programmes, spreading information to a broad range of women across all communities.

## Reach:

- Local radio stations have weekly audiences ranging from listeners in the 1,000s and 10,000s, with high proportions being female.
- The local newspaper we spoke to reached close to 150,000 people online and in print a month. Roughly 50% were female as well as 40-45% being under the age of 35.

## Potential Challenges:

- Placing ads or campaigns in local or national media will require funding as local media in particular survives on advertising and space for campaigns with larger stations is limited.
- Many radio stations and newspapers skew towards specific audiences and communities so finding one with a diverse and representative audience is key.
- When it comes to local radio in particular, audiences tend to be older with less reach into younger populations in the area (highlighting the need for campaigns on both traditional media and social media to engage a broad range of ages).

## How partners can engage media organisations :

**A WELL KNOWN LOCAL NEWSPAPER**

- This newspaper has high engagement, focussing on local news which engages all groups from the area equally. They have dedicated sections on sport and culture where campaigns could be placed to engage more women.

