

Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week

Members' Business: S5M-18943

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Introduction

Age Scotland welcome the opportunity to brief Members about the contribution of older women and the benefits of Walking Sports as part of Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week.

Our vision is that whatever sport you've been involved in, you should have the opportunity to remain in that sport throughout your life.

With the ever increasing number of people across Scotland taking part in Walking Sports, there is a growing opportunity for more older women to participate in team sports to maintain and improve their fitness in later life.

Walking Netball

After the success of Walking Football, which has both male and female participant players, Age Scotland was delighted to launch in partnership with Netball Scotland – Walking Netball.

Launched in the summer of 2017 after much demand, Walking Netball originated as a pilot in the Grampian region and is now available across the country. Supported by a Regional Development Management team, there are now over 30 Walking Netball groups across Scotland, and numbers continue to grow.

This is a slower version of the game which has been designed so that anyone can play regardless of age or fitness level. This means that not only older women can benefit from the slower pace but those recovering from injury.

Key statistics

Improving health and fitness

Walking Sports help get more older people active and engaged on a regular basis. The physical and mental health benefits are endless.

Studies have shown that participation in Walking Sports has:

- **Reduced blood pressure and cholesterol levels**
- **Prevents heart disease and strokes**
- **Improves fitness and wellbeing**

Tackles loneliness & isolation

Walking Sports can help connect older people to others with a shared interest whilst having a positive impact on their health. These connections can develop into long term friendships which foster regular social interaction off the field.

Development of Walking Sports will help meet the Scottish Government's objective of reducing social isolation and loneliness as laid out in their "A Connected Scotland" strategy.

Age Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

Tel. 0333 323 2400 Email: policycomms@agescotland.org.uk

Web: www.agescotland.org.uk Facebook: fb.me/agescotland Twitter: [@agescotland](https://twitter.com/agescotland)

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Sessions are about having fun and socialising, all whilst benefiting from being more active. Members of Walking Netball say the beauty is that people never forget playing the game, and the memories and love of the game never leave them.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits

As our population continues to age it is vital that sporting opportunities are available for all women as they get older. Walking sports is an excellent way for older women to build up their confidence and fitness level providing better outcomes for physical and mental health. Walking Sports will see participants benefit from lower heart rate and blood pressure, less fat and more muscle, and better mobility.

As many of the women who take part in Walking Football and Netball will tell you, its much more than a game, it's a community. The negative impact of loneliness and social isolation on health outcomes are well documented and sports can be a power for good in tackling these. Walking Sports provide a fun and social way of keeping fit and active.

Age Scotland believe that with some minor development every team sport has the potential to have a walking version available. We believe that governing sport bodies have an important role to play in encouraging the uptake of walking sports. This will help to ensure that older people throughout Scotland have the opportunity to take part, benefiting their health and wellbeing whilst feeding into the Scottish Government's mission to reduce loneliness and isolation and promoting healthy living.

Want to find out more?

As Scotland's national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people's lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Our work is guided by the views and needs of older people themselves.

Further information

Contact the Age Scotland Policy, Communications and Campaigns team:

policycomms@agescotland.org.uk

0333 323 2400

Twitter [@agescotland](https://twitter.com/agescotland)

Facebook [/agescotland](https://www.facebook.com/agescotland)

Linkedin [Age-Scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/agescotland)

www.agescotland.org.uk