



**PRESS RELEASE**

**11th March 2009**

## **“KELLY EFFECT” BOOSTING THE PERFORMANCE OF BRITAIN’S BEST FEMALE TALENT**

**First season ‘On Camp with Kelly’ sees a 64 per cent improvement**

64 per cent of the female athletes selected for the ‘On Camp with Kelly’ mentoring initiative, supported by Aviva, improved their average time in their first season, new research has revealed. A further 60 per cent attained a new personal best, highlighting the benefits of having Dame Kelly as a mentor.

The ‘On Camp with Kelly’ experience provides 800m and 1500m female runners with the unique opportunity to learn and benefit from the double Olympic champion’s knowledge and experience in athletics. Research undertaken by Aviva, supporters of ‘On Camp with Kelly’ since it began in 2004, demonstrates the advantages of the “Kelly effect” on the scheme, with 79 per cent of athletes attaining a personal best time in at least one event since joining.

In general, performance in women’s 800m and 1500m is also improving, particularly when compared to men – the mean top time for female athletes improved by 7.22 seconds in the 1500m, and 2.76 seconds in the 800m, from the year 2000 to 2008. In contrast, men’s times during the same period deteriorated by 0.53 seconds in the 1500m and only improved by 0.24 seconds in the 800m.

Dame Kelly Holmes said: “I’m delighted ‘On Camp with Kelly’ is having a positive impact on Britain’s top young female athletes. One of my main aims when setting up the initiative was to help athletes make the transition from junior to senior ranks and this has definitely been the case as we are starting to see them achieve at senior level. The improvement in the athletes’ performances since joining the scheme is very pleasing and a great reward for all the hard work that they and their coaches have put in. I aim to pass on as much of my experience as I can and am really pleased that the athletes are recording such impressive times and well as developing as people.”

Retention of female athletes for 'On Camp with Kelly' stands at an impressive 96 per cent, further emphasising the important role of the initiative in the future success of women's middle distance running. Traditionally, teenage girls drop out of sport at a faster rate than boys. A report conducted by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) in 2008 suggested three key reasons why some girls who played sport regularly decided to stop: peer group and societal values, lack of enjoyment and low confidence.

'On Camp with Kelly' has paid special attention to address these issues, providing support for all the athletes on the initiative. Six psychological benefits of being involved with 'On Camp with Kelly' have been highlighted from feedback provided by all 45 female athletes on the scheme. These are:

- Increased confidence
- Race preparation
- Peer group support
- Motivation and inspiration
- Improved self belief
- Support through injury and rehab

Hannah England, who has just returned from competing for the Aviva GB & NI team at the European Indoor Championships in Turin, said: "'On Camp with Kelly' gives me confidence in everything I'm involved in, from media days to races. It's helped me mature as a person, as well as an athlete. Just listening to Kelly talk about her attitude to training is really inspiring".

Tanya Veingard, Head of Sponsorship, Aviva said: "We are proud to support these young athletes and delighted with the results of this new research. The benefits of being on the initiative and having Dame Kelly Holmes as a mentor are really starting to show. We are thrilled with the role 'On Camp with Kelly' is playing for the next generation of British medal winners".

'On Camp with Kelly' supported by Aviva provides athletes and their coaches personal mentoring from Dame Kelly Holmes as well as grants and medical support throughout the year to prepare future champions in 800m and 1500m.

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **Research**

Aviva commissioned research by performance psychologist Dr Anna Waters, Chrianna Consultants Limited, to investigate the impact of the 'On Camp with Kelly' initiative, and the role that mentoring can play in talent retention and development.

### **'On Camp with Kelly'**

'On Camp with Kelly' (OCWK) started in January 2004 and with support and sponsorship from Aviva has grown from strength to strength. Over 60 athletes have been involved in the initiative to date.

Double Olympic champion Dame Kelly Holmes set up OCWK because she wanted to help talented young female middle distance athletes to achieve their dreams. Her vision of OCWK was that it should be an educational development programme so that the athletes who are part of it gain life experiences as well as learn what it takes to become a world class athlete.

Eight girls were given the opportunity to participate in the first OCWK camp in South Africa in October 2004, funded by Aviva, and since then there have been regular Get-Togethers, a training camp in Spain and a camp in Melbourne during the 2006 Commonwealth Games, as well as the opportunity to race in international meetings across the UK and Europe. The athletes also benefit from mentoring from Dame Kelly as well as medical and financial support funded Aviva.

For more information about 'On Camp with Kelly' visit [www.uncampwithkelly.co.uk](http://www.uncampwithkelly.co.uk)

### **About Aviva**

Aviva has been the team behind UK Athletics since 1999 and is committed to developing the sport at every level from the playground to the podium. In addition to supporting UK Athletics, Aviva has also supported 'On Camp with Kelly' since 2004.

In the summer of 2009 Norwich Union will change its name to Aviva. From January 2009, all of Norwich Union's sponsorship properties were rebranded to Aviva. Aviva is the world's fifth largest insurance group and operates in 27 countries. Aviva is to become the customer brand worldwide, thus enabling the company to compete even more effectively on a global scale for the benefit of customers, staff, business partners and shareholders.

This year, Aviva will be helping over one million children get active, putting on six world class athletics events on home soil and supporting the Aviva GB & NI Team as they prepare for major championships. It is anticipated that by 2012 15 million children will have been actively engaged in Aviva-funded UK Athletics grassroots schemes.

For more information visit [www.aviva.com/athletics](http://www.aviva.com/athletics)