

Case study

# **England Boxing – Box in Mind**



## Project at a glance

- England Boxing developed a bespoke mental health workshop in partnership with Mind called Box in Mind.
- The course aims to upskill the boxing workforce to identify and support those within the sport experiencing mental health problems.
- When the pandemic hit, Mind and England Boxing worked together to design a 'bite-size' version that would work online.

**140+**

people  
attended  
face-to-face  
workshops



**300+**

people  
attended  
online bite-  
size version



## The challenge

“In boxing there’s an idea that you don’t show hurt, you just carry on,” says Matthew Williams, who helped develop [England Boxing’s Box in Mind programme](#) in partnership with Mind.

“That kind of attitude can be reflected outside the ring too. We know that mental health problems affect one in four people. Many people are struggling, but just go to the gym as normal, and don’t share how they feel.”

## England Boxing's response

Launched in 2018, Box in Mind was developed to change this. Each three-hour workshop is aimed at reducing stigma associated with mental health in the sport. It helps to upskill people on spotting the signs someone is encountering problems, plus what they can do to get them the right help.

The workshop was a pilot programme as part of Mind's Sector Support and Influencing programme. It is an adapted version of Mind's Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity training and is delivered under license.

**“There were lots of people within boxing that were experiencing mental health problems. So it was a way for people inside the sport, like clubs and professionals, to learn about mental health.”** Matthew Williams

Boxing offers a full body workout that releases stress and boosts endorphin levels. It's also one of the most-requested sports through Mind's Get Set to Go programme. So it makes sense to provide the community ways to look out for their members.

“People naturally don't want to carry a burden around with them,” says Matthew.

“They also don't want to be judged and ostracised because they share their problems. So if someone else starts that dialogue, and they feel they won't be judged, they're more likely to open up.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, England Boxing decided to take the workshops online.

“We brought together some of the coaches involved and talked through their ideas,” says Lynette Mayo, membership services manager at England Boxing.

“It's very difficult to hold people's attention for three hours online. So we reduced it to three-quarters of an hour with support from Mind, who helped develop some COVID-relevant slides.”

## The results

The workshops have been a success both online and in-person. As of March 2021:

- 141 delegates have attended 16 workshops face-to-face, and
- Over 300 people have attended 60 online sessions.

Feedback has included:

**“Some real food for thought and some great tips and input from course candidates.”**

**“It has given me a mechanism in which I can assess the boxers within the gym and how I can help them.”**

**“It was an insightful and very beneficial presentation – on a subject which simply doesn’t get talked about enough.”**



## Learning

- **Work with a mental health organisation**

“Don’t do it on your own,” says Lynette. “Reach out to mental health organisations to see if they can help. Mind were great in providing advice and support to ensure what we were doing was effective”.

- **Don’t be afraid to make changes**

Lynette says that sometimes delegates bring up excellent ideas in a session, which she calls ‘golden nuggets’. She advises discussing them and using them in later sessions to keep the workshop evolving and responding to people’s needs.

- **Do trial runs**

If you have volunteers, or other interested parties, test and pilot sessions with them and ask for their honest feedback. They could well come up with ideas and opinions you haven’t considered.



## Relevant support available

Mental Health and Physical Activity  
Toolkit: Introduction to mental health

Mental Health and Physical Activity  
Toolkit: Making physical activities  
inclusive to people experiencing mental  
health problems

Mental Health Awareness for Sport &  
Physical Activity+ eLearning

