

# Guide 4: How do I identify and engage my key stakeholders

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Delivering a sport and physical activity service  
A toolkit for mental health providers



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# Guide 4: How do I identify and engage my key stakeholders?

## This guide covers

- Who you should involve when planning your service.
- Key stakeholders in the sport and physical activity sector, and the support they could offer your service.
- Tips on engaging key stakeholders, and learning about their needs and priorities.

## Who should I involve when planning my service?

When designing your service you will need to think about the different people who can influence your service, or be impacted by it. These are your stakeholders. The stakeholder engagement process should start with your participants – they are your key stakeholders and should be given opportunities to shape the service you deliver. Ideas for engaging your participants can be found in the box below. By engaging your participants early in the design of your service, you'll be far more likely to create something that works.

In these early planning stages you should consider convening a programme steering group made up of people who belong to your target audience. This group can help you foresee challenges before they arise, and help you address them when they do. It's also a great way of ensuring that people with experience of mental health problems are a key part of the service development.

## Involving people with mental health problems in the development of your sessions

At Mind we actively seek opportunities for people with experience of mental health problems to get involved in and guide our work. The following steps inform our engagement activities.

**Plan** how you will engage people over the course of your service – what methods will you use to ensure people with experience of mental health problems are involved at every stage of development?

**Recruit** from the communities you are trying to engage through your sessions. If you don't already work within these communities, you may need to partner with an organisation that does.

**Expectations** – be clear about what being involved in the engagement process can offer participants.

This means clearly communicating:

- The purpose and scope of the engagement process.
- The type of support and resources you can provide to help people engage.
- The time commitment expected.

**Support** to ensure the experience is meaningful and any barriers to taking part are addressed.

**Plan again** – each engagement method (whether they are focus groups or working groups) will require different resources and need to be planned individually.

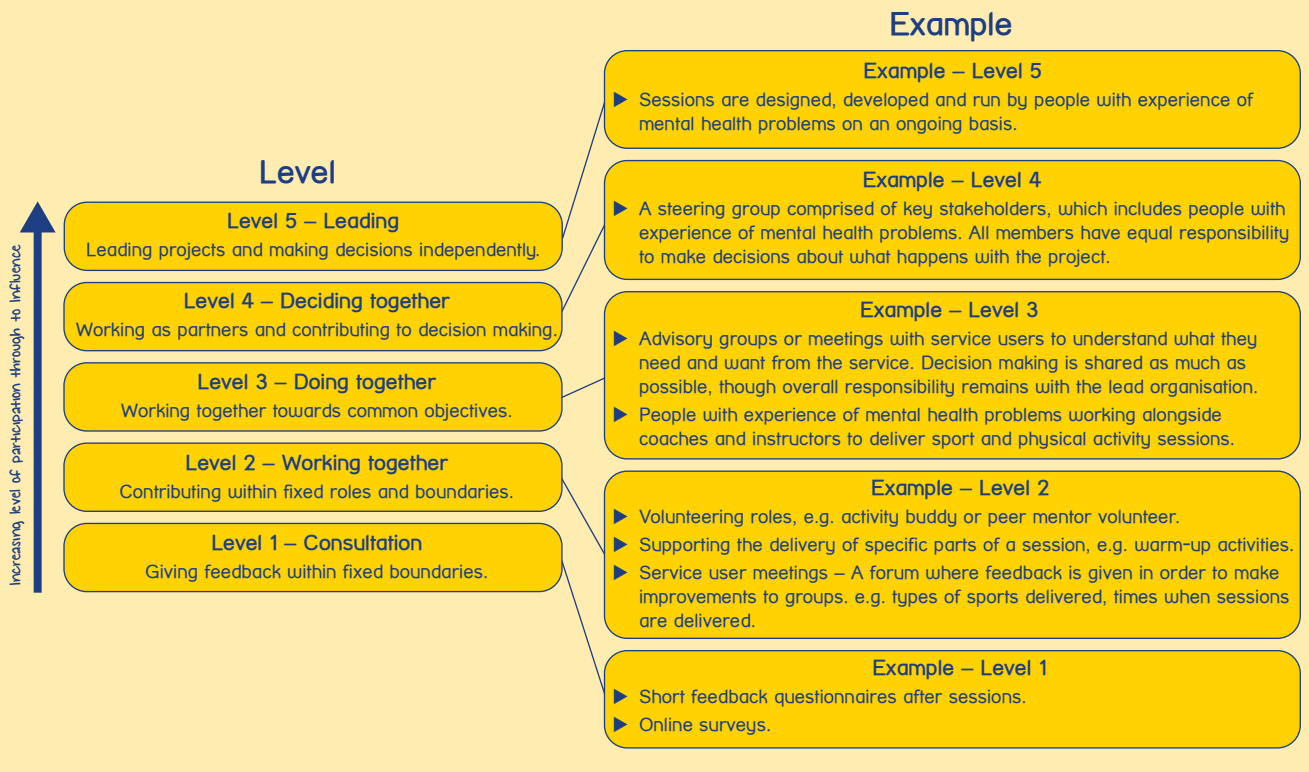
**Evaluate** the engagement process to improve the ways you engage people and share learning.

**Change** – be receptive to new ideas.

**Time for feedback** – tell people how their engagement has impacted the final work to demonstrate that you value their input.

## Levels of engagement

It is important to consider what level of influence the people you are engaging with may have on the project in question. You should also consider the time and skill required from the staff managing the engagement process, and what experience the people taking part in the process should have. This can be broken down into different levels.



Once you have a clearer understanding of what your participants want, it's time to engage with colleagues and other organisations that could support you to meet your outcomes. Start within your existing networks. Work with colleagues to ensure your sessions complement and, where possible, integrate with other services. Next, work outwards to external partners. Guidance on carrying out a stakeholder analysis can be found on the [Knowhow Nonprofit](#) website.

Advice on developing the outcomes you want to achieve can be found in guide 5: *How do I demonstrate the impact of my physical activity offer?*

## Building relationships with your local sport and physical activity sector

Building relationships with your local sport and physical activity sector is a great way of widening your reach and ensuring that you deliver quality activities which complement existing community sport sessions.

The Get Set to Go programme has revealed a number of benefits to working in partnership with the sport and physical activity sector, which include:

- Developing cross-referral routes between organisations.
- Helping to raise the profile of both organisations among new audiences.
- Demonstrating your commitment to coordinate your activities with partner organisations. Funders are increasingly looking for funding bids from consortia that can demonstrate a wider range of experiences and skills.
- Providing support through sharing resources such as staff expertise, venues or equipment.

## Who are the key stakeholders within the sport and physical activity sector?

Organisation	Description	Potential support they can offer	Key staff role*
County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) (England only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks of local agencies committed to working together to increase participation in sport and physical activity.</li> <li>• Partners include National Governing Bodies of Sport and their clubs, school sport partnerships, local authorities, sport and leisure facilities, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and many other sport and non-sporting organisations.</li> <li>• Led by a strategic board supported by a central team of professional staff who provide leadership, co-ordination and structures which allow people and organisations to work more effectively together at a sub-regional level.</li> <li>• Find your local County Sports Partnership by visiting the <a href="#">CSP network website</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing training courses including sports coaching, safeguarding and CPD courses.</li> <li>• Helping you to find coaches, officials and volunteers.</li> <li>• Supporting you to access sports clubs and existing programmes.</li> <li>• Promoting your activities and events.</li> <li>• Helping you find and access facilities and venues.</li> <li>• Linking you to sports and physical activity and health networks.</li> <li>• Providing you with advice on funding and helping you with applications.</li> <li>• Sharing good practice, information and advice.</li> </ul>	Inclusion, Equity and Health Leads.

\*Job titles may differ depending on organisation and region.

Organisation	Description	Potential support they can offer	Key staff role*
Local Authority Sports Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving access to sport and physical activity, developing communities through the use of sport and physical activity, and addressing wider social inclusion agendas.</li> </ul>	As above.	Sport Development Officer.
Regional National Governing Body (NGB) staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The independent, self-appointed body that governs particular sports through common consent.</li> <li>Typically regional staff will support a number of clubs and county networks to increase the quantity and quality of sports provision.</li> </ul>	As above.	Regional Manager/ Health/Equity Lead.
Local leisure centres and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing the space and equipment for a wide range of sport and physical activities.</li> <li>Offering a wide range of taught or coached programmes for groups of all ages.</li> <li>Many leisure centres are now managed by leisure trusts. If you are working across a wide area you may need to engage with a number of leisure trusts or providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping you access facilities and equipment.</li> <li>Providing details of their facility's sessions and existing programmes and how participants can get involved (including open days and events).</li> <li>Providing coaches for taster sessions.</li> <li>Providing details of the clubs hosted at the facility.</li> </ul>	Sports Development Manager/ General Manager.

\*Job titles may differ depending on organisation and region.

Organisation	Description	Potential support they can offer	Key staff role*
Local sports clubs, groups and associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of sports clubs and groups are amateur and are affiliated to the relevant NGB of their sport.</li> <li>• They are usually led by volunteers and have committees responsible for their governance.</li> <li>• Many amateur clubs offer both grassroots sport (entry level) through to competitive opportunities in leagues and competitions. The small number of professional clubs often have a community section which is registered as a charity separate to the professional club, such as Arsenal in the Community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of their club sessions and existing programmes and how participants can get involved.</li> <li>• Providing coaches for taster sessions.</li> <li>• Access to facilities if they have one – for example, a cricket club.</li> </ul>	Development officer/club secretary.
Sport England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-departmental public body under the Department for Culture, Media and Sport tasked with helping people and communities across the country create sporting habits for life.</li> <li>• Investing in organisations and projects that will get more people playing sport and creating opportunities for people to excel at their chosen sport.</li> <li>• 2016–21 strategy, '<i>Towards an Active Nation</i>', highlights mental wellbeing as a key outcome.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing funding through a range of investment streams.</li> <li>• Tools, guidance and insight packs on topics ranging from developing and marketing your programme, engaging with commissioners, engaging with women and girls, and the socioeconomic benefits of sport and physical activity.</li> </ul>	Local Government Relationship Manager.

\*Job titles may differ depending on organisation and region.



Organisation	Description	Potential support they can offer	Key staff role*
The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working to enable organisations to support disabled individuals and people with long term health conditions to be and stay active.</li> <li>Supporting a wide range of people, including leisure facilities, local and national organisations to include disabled people more effectively and provide.</li> <li>Providing insight, training, inclusion programmes and resources, and use their knowledge and expertise to help others deliver more inclusive and accessible programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plethora of guidance documents to help you engage your participants and market your programme.</li> <li>Helping you broker relationships with key local stakeholders via their advisor network.</li> </ul>	Regional Engagement Advisors.
Spotted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National membership organisation aiming to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people aged 11 to 25.</li> <li>Supporting community and voluntary sports groups delivering sport for development and help them to grow and sustain their activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from volunteer mentors.</li> <li>Funding resources and support.</li> <li>Impact measurement tools.</li> <li>The opportunity to attend regional networking events.</li> </ul>	Regional Managers.

\*Job titles may differ depending on organisation and region.

There are also a number of other stakeholders in the health, voluntary and public sectors that can support the delivery of your sessions.

<b>Voluntary and community sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Minds</li> <li>• Samaritans</li> <li>• Rethink Mental Illness</li> <li>• Homeless charities</li> <li>• Mindfulness practitioners</li> <li>• Holistic therapies</li> <li>• Physical activity providers</li> <li>• Faith groups</li> <li>• Community groups</li> </ul>
<b>Primary care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPs</li> <li>• Nurses</li> <li>• Pharmacies</li> <li>• Health visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Talking therapies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)</li> <li>• Counselling services</li> <li>• Psychotherapists</li> <li>• Cognitive Behavioural Therapists (CBT)</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health community teams</li> <li>• Mental health inpatient (wards and hospitals)</li> <li>• Private mental health providers</li> <li>• Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)</li> </ul>
<b>Social care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing associations</li> <li>• Social services</li> </ul>
<b>Statutory sector and policy makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public health teams</li> <li>• Local authorities</li> <li>• Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs)</li> <li>• Mental health commissioning teams</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurseries</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Colleges</li> <li>• Adult education</li> <li>• Universities</li> </ul>

## How do I plan my approach when engaging external stakeholders?

Once you have identified the external stakeholders that you want to engage with, it's important to ascertain their priorities and how your proposed service could help them. Consider:

- The aims of your organisation and what you plan to achieve through delivering physical activity.
- The stakeholder's priorities and how your service can support them.
- A clear idea of the type of support you would like in return.
- An easy way for them to contact you to discuss next steps.

## What to consider when approaching external stakeholders

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the key priorities of the organisation you are approaching?</li><li>• How can your service meet those priorities?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look at their website and see what information they've got publicly available about their strategy and organisational priorities. Map your priorities against theirs.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is their existing commitment to mental health?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are they already involved in delivering a mental health focused programme?</li><li>• Have they signed the <b>Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation</b>?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What practical support can you offer them?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aligning brands to support one another's causes.</li><li>• Promoting their involvement in your programme via your communication channels.</li><li>• Developing case studies and personal stories to show how their involvement has supported your programme.</li><li>• Supporting them to engage your participants and gain an insight into their barriers and motivations to be more active.</li><li>• Training to help their staff and volunteers gain a deeper understanding of mental health problems.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What support would you like from them?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing coaches to run activities.</li><li>• Providing space to run activities.</li><li>• Promoting your service on their website.</li><li>• Brokering new partnerships.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you make it easier for stakeholders to engage with your service?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A quick and easy referral processes.</li><li>• A named point of contact.</li></ul>

After talking to commissioners when putting together our proposal, we decided to build extra support for people who receive exercise on prescription referrals from their GP. This ensured they were supported when they attended their first few sessions and helped tackle the high dropout rate.

Operations Director, Camden Mind

## Stakeholder engagement – top tips from Get Set to Go

- Opt for face-to-face or phone meetings rather than emails to help you build rapport.
- Hold meetings in your office. This can help to challenge misconceptions around your services and client group.
- Don't be reluctant to visit stakeholders to help save them time.
- Invite participants or volunteers who are comfortable sharing their personal journeys to join your meetings and bring their real-life experience to your discussions.
- Don't be afraid to name drop. If you are asking a stakeholder to provide a venue for your activities and you have already received an offer of a free or subsidised venue from another organisation then mention this. Alternatively, if you know that the stakeholder you are speaking to has already offered this type of support in the past then it's worth mentioning it again.

## Case study: Lancashire Sport Partnership and Lancashire Mind

Lancashire Sport Partnership (LSP) and Lancashire Mind had existing links through the voluntary sector before the Get Set to Go funding from Sport England was announced. LSP supported Lancashire Mind to make its application to run a Get Set to Go programme. Since the success of that application they have worked in partnership, with LSP providing the following support to help the development and delivery of the project:

- Advice and guidance on sport within the community.
- Signposting and making introductions to appropriate partner organisations.
- Co-delivering the Mental Health for Sport and Physical Activity (MHASPA) training locally.
- Promoting and marketing the project, its activities and training.
- Identifying opportunities for Lancashire Mind to link into wider projects and activities in the county.
- Supporting Lancashire Mind to attract additional funding to develop and deliver additional sport and physical activity projects.

The relationship between LSP and Lancashire Mind has helped both parties to widen their network and to engage different audiences, partners and stakeholders.

The two organisations now plan to continue to co-deliver the MHASPA training and to use their networks to attract organisations to that package, and to develop physical activity and sport projects which have links to older people and employment opportunities.