

# Guide 5: How do I demonstrate the impact of my physical activity service?

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



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# Guide 5: How do I demonstrate the impact of my physical activity service?

## This guide covers

- How to define your outcomes.
- Key Sport and Health sector strategies you may want to consider.
- The tools you can use to measure changes in activity levels and mental health and wellbeing.

Evaluating your physical activity programme enables you to continuously improve the service you are providing. By demonstrating the positive benefits of the service you can attract more people to your sessions. Demonstrating the impact of your programme can also make the case for further funding to local, regional and national funding bodies.

If you consider how you will measure the effectiveness of your physical activity sessions during the planning phase, you can ensure that you are measuring the impact of your sessions for participants as soon as they start engaging with them.

## The Get Set to Go evaluation

The Get Set to Go programme is being independently evaluated by the University of Northampton's Institute of Health and Wellbeing.

The evaluation team are using robust questionnaires to measure changes in physical activity and exercise behaviour, motivation, mental wellbeing and social support. The research objectives are to understand:

- The relationship between sport and mental health recovery.
- The effectiveness of the peer navigator model for encouraging sustained sports participation.
- The effectiveness of the national communications campaign.
- The impact of online peer support on mental health.
- The impact of online peer support on sports participation.

The evaluators at Northampton recruited a team of peer researchers who all have personal experience of mental health problems. The peer researchers are supporting focus groups, conducting phone interviews and assisting with the wider research. You can download the summary report from the sport and physical activity pages on the [Mind](#) website.

Final research findings will be published in autumn 2017, but to date the research has shown:

- One-third of participants were inactive when they joined Get Set to Go.
- After taking part in a Get Set to Go programme, all participants had increased the amount of time they spent raising their heart rates.
- Participants felt that they now face fewer barriers to engaging in sport and physical activity sessions.
- Participants reported increased feelings of mental wellbeing.

## Defining your outcomes – what do I want to achieve?

Once you have consulted with key stakeholders it is time to decide what you want to achieve from your programme – what are your intended outcomes? Remember many programmes have unintended outcomes too, and it's important to be open to spotting and reflecting on these as well.

It is also important to build on the existing evidence base, and make sure that your evaluation is proportionate to the size of your project. If research has been undertaken on a similar programme it may be useful to look at the outcomes that were measured, but reduce the number of outcomes you record if your programme is of a smaller scale. When looking for existing evidence a good place to start is the research section of the [Sport England](#) website and the [Sport and Recreation Alliance – Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation evidence hub](#).

To understand your outcomes and the steps needed to achieve them you may want to develop a Theory of Change model, which is a planning tool that helps you to map out:

- The current situation and need for your intervention.
- The activities you will deliver in response to this need.
- The short to medium-term outcomes that will result from these activities
- The ultimate long-term aim or goals of the project that will flow from these outcomes.

A few resources to help you get started can be found on the [NPC](#) and [Nesta](#) websites.

Think about how you can incorporate the priorities of your stakeholders and funders when you are developing your outcomes. This will help to build their interest in the success of your physical activity sessions. Tips on how you can identify stakeholder priorities are available in guide 4: *How do I identify and engage my key stakeholders?*

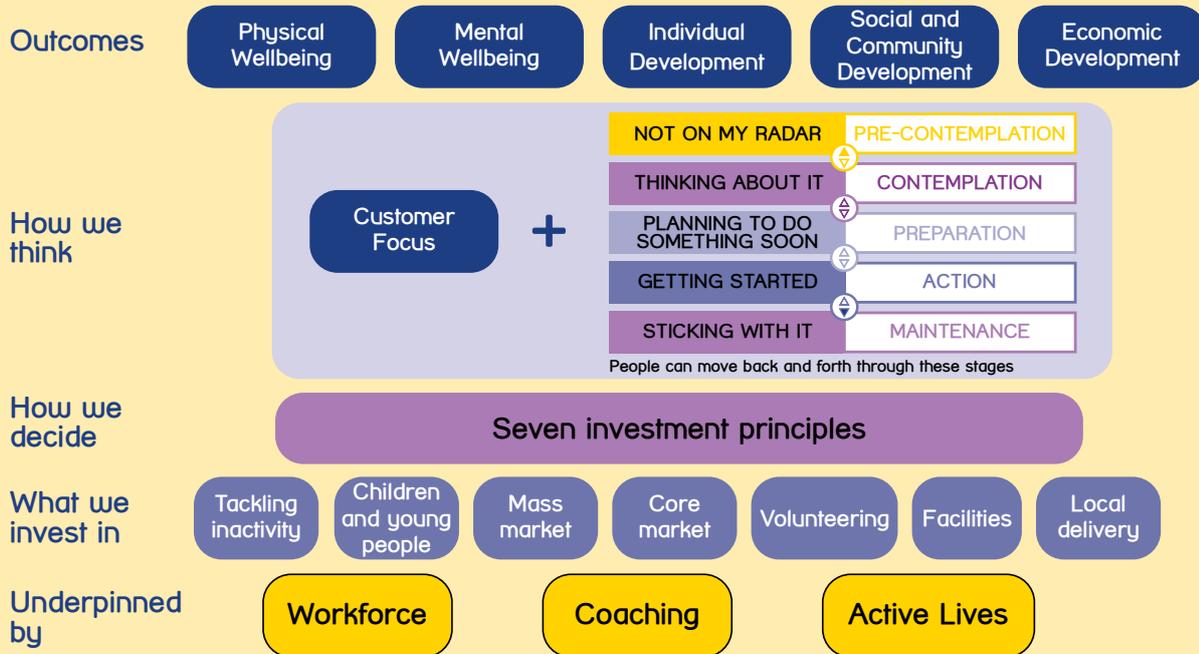
Key strategies to consult when developing your outcomes include:

- Your local Health and Wellbeing strategy. A map of the Health and Wellbeing priorities across England can be found on the Local Government Association website.
- Sport England strategy 2016–21 – [Towards An Active Nation](#)
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 2016–21 strategy – [Sporting Future](#)
- Your regional County Sports Partnership strategy
- Individual National Governing Body (NGB) strategies for those sports providers you aim to work with are available from the [Sport England](#) website.

## National physical activity strategies

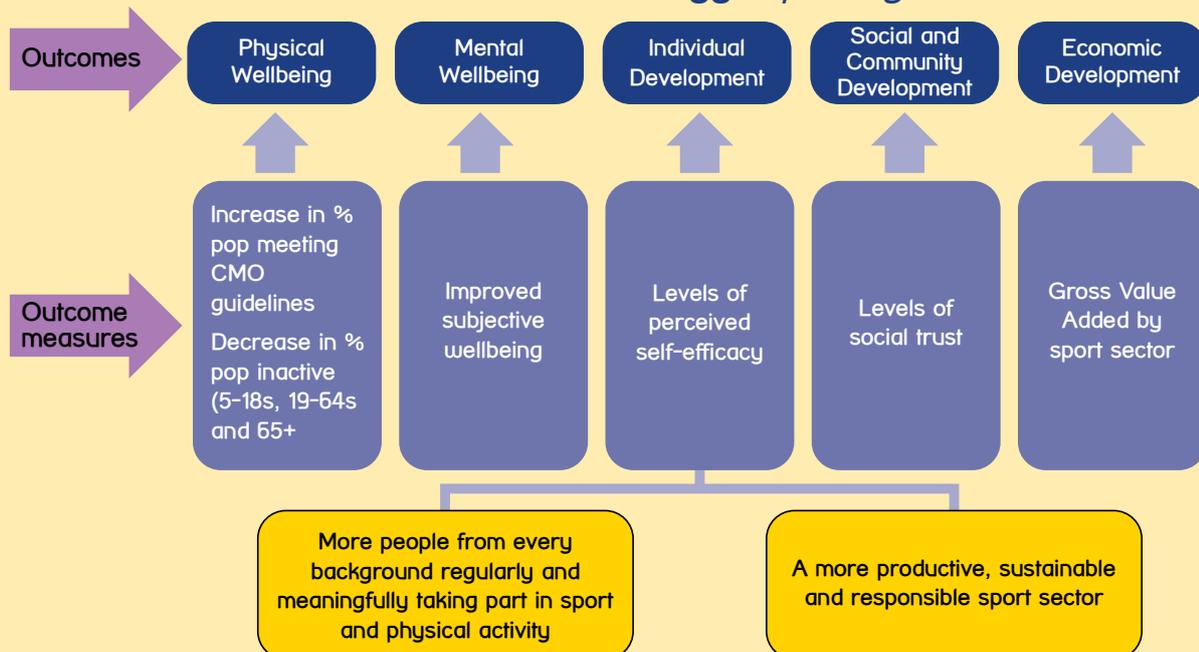
- Both government and Sport England strategies highlight mental wellbeing as one of five outcomes that will be measured to demonstrate impact.
- It is the first time that mental wellbeing as an outcome has independently been cited as a priority in a national sport/physical activity strategy.

### Sport England Strategy: *Toward An Active Nation*



Sport England Towards an Active Nation 2016-21

### Government Strategy: *Sporting Future*



## How do I design the evaluation?

During the planning phase you may find it useful to write an evaluation brief to help you define what you want to find out and how the information will be used.

You should consider the following points:

- What information do you really need? Only collect the information you will use – a large evaluation questionnaire can be a major barrier to participation, especially when people first join.
- Incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data into your evaluation. Include open questions or arrange focus groups or interviews with people.
- Ensure your data collection is accessible and inclusive. Use paper forms and online surveys to ensure you're reaching a wide variety of people. Translate forms or use a translator if necessary.
- How can you measure the impact your sessions are having on participants, and if that impact is sustained in the long-term? Is it possible to collect information from people before and after the intervention, or at regular time periods such as 0, 3, 6 and 12 months?
- What resource and capacity do you have to collect, input and analyse data?
- Make the data collection process as painless as possible. Could people do it as part of a social event or over a cup of tea? Could you offer incentives such as free prize draws?
- Think about how you can capture the insight and learning from your programme as part of your evaluation. Is it possible to build feedback sessions or focus groups into the programme to find out more about how it has impacted upon participants, volunteers and key partners?
- Think about how you will share your findings to different audiences. A person looking to join your sessions will most likely have different priorities to a local commissioner, so it's important to highlight the information that will resonate most strongly with each group. Any materials you produce should be engaging and easy to read. They could involve a mix of reports, eye-catching infographics and presentations.
- It is essential that data collected is treated ethically – can participants be anonymised? Ensure that data is protected in line with the Data Protection Act and your organisation's Data Protection policy.

Keep people informed about how you will be using the data they have provided, and how the findings from your research will benefit them. This will help people feel like they're part of the programme, and will provide a personal reason for continuing to engage with the research.

## Useful resources

Sport England has developed a guide to conducting research that will help you think about:

- The type of research you might want to conduct and the methodologies you might want to employ.
- How to define your research objectives and write an evaluation brief.
- How to engage stakeholders at each stage of your programme.

Find out more on the research pages on the [Sport England](#) website.

The [Knowhow Nonprofit](#) website also has a range of tools and resources to help you plan and cost your evaluation.

The sport development charity Sported have created a range of tools on their [Impact Practice Learner Journey](#) webpages to help you understand the need for your programme, and to develop an approach for measuring your impact.

**TOP TIP:** Ask universities for Masters or PhD students who can help you measure the impact of your sessions. This can reduce your costs and increase your capacity to develop a more robust evaluation, while helping the academic team to engage your client group and gain experience. You can search for universities delivering mental health or physical activity related courses on the [UCAS website](#).

## How do I choose the right tools and methods to measure the impact of my sessions?

At this stage you also need to decide on the types of questions you need to ask to measure your progress towards achieving your outcomes.

It is best practice to use validated tools to measure changes in mental health and wellbeing, a selection of which are listed in the box below. It's not advisable to use all of them, but choose the most appropriate ones to help you measure the changes you are hoping to observe.

The National Obesity Observatory (NOO) has developed a standard evaluation framework for physical activity interventions that outlines which information to collect when evaluating a physical activity intervention. You can download the framework from the [NOO](#) website.

## What is the minimum data I need to collect as part of a physical activity programme?

This will depend on the funder's requirements, but we suggest as a minimum measuring mental wellbeing using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS – see the box below) along with physical activity levels using the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ). This allows comparison against other data sets and programme evaluations, such as the Get Set to Go evaluation.

## Is there anything else I could measure?

### Validated tools for measuring mental health outcomes

The **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)** is the most commonly used tool across mental health, sport and physical programmes. It is available in both a short and long form. WEMWBS monitors mental wellbeing among the general population. It also enables the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies that aim to improve mental wellbeing.

Wellbeing is only one component of measuring change in mental health. There is a wide range of measures to capture this – the choice of measures really depends on the research topics. Some frequently used tools are:

- **Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9)** – the sector standard for measuring depression. This tool includes a statement on suicidal thoughts and thoughts of self-harm, and as such you will need to put a standardised process in place to check responses to this question and escalate participants for further support if necessary.
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item scale (GAD-7)** – the sector standard for measuring anxiety.
- **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale** – robust tool for measuring self-esteem.
- **Schwarzer-Jerusalem Mental Health Self-efficacy Scale** – robust measure of empowerment (key component in MH recovery).
- **Mental Health Recovery Star™** – a self-report tool for allowing people to self-assess changes on key dimensions of MH recovery (not robust for making cross-participant comparisons but very popular as a case worker tool).
- **Mental Health Knowledge Schedule (MAKS)** – popular tool for measuring mental health knowledge.
- **Reported and Intended Behaviour Scale (RIBS)** – popular tool for measuring stigma-related behaviour.
- **Lubben Social Network Scale** – a measure to assess the level of perceived social support received from family and friends.

For information and resources on the validated tools used to measure mental health outcomes for children and young people, please visit the **Child Outcomes Research Consortium** website.

To help you continually improve the experience for participants and understand your successes and challenges you might also record:

- The key successes and challenges of the service in any given period.
- Participant demographic data such as gender, age, ethnicity, type of mental health problem, physical health conditions etc.
- How people are hearing about your service, so you can work out which marketing materials or channels have been most effective.
- Individual development outside of the programme. For instance, have people joined their local leisure centre or gained employment since they started attending your programme?

An example registration form developed by Get Set to Go is included in the resource section at the end of this guide.

## Resources

### Example registration form

Regular physical activity is fun and healthy, and increasingly more people are starting to become more active every day. Being more active is very safe for most people. However, some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming much more physically active.

If you are planning to become much more physically active than you are now, start by answering the seven questions below, which will tell you if you should check with your doctor before you start. If you are over 69 years of age, and you are not used to being very active, check with your doctor.

#### Tell us about you

Your name .....

Email ..... Telephone .....

Postcode ..... I prefer you to contact me via  phone  email

#### (Physical activity readiness questionnaire – PAR-Q)

##### About your physical health

Please read the following questions carefully and answer each one honestly: tick YES or NO.

Yes	No	
		Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
		Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
		In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
		Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
		Do you have a bone or joint problem (such as bone, hip, or knee) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
		Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

### Additional physical health questions

Do you have any other long term illness, health problems or disability that limits your daily activities, including: asthma  heart condition  diabetes  epilepsy  high blood pressure

Other please state \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please tell us more \_\_\_\_\_

Are you new to or returning to exercise after a time of inactivity? Yes  No

Do you have bone or joint problems that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity Yes  No

Have you undergone surgery in the last 6 months? Yes  No

If applicable are you pregnant or have you recently had a baby? Yes  No

Has a doctor or health professional ever advised you against physical activity? Yes  No

### About your mental health

Do you consider yourself to have a mental health problem?  
Yes  No  Prefer not to say

Are you taking any prescribed medication which may affect your physical abilities (for example makes you tired, dehydrated, affects your concentration)? Yes  No

If you answer 'Yes' please provide details here \_\_\_\_\_

### About your interests in sport and physical activity

In a typical week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 minutes or more of sport or physical activity for recreation (enjoyment)? This may include sport, exercise, walking or cycling for recreation but should not include housework, commuting to work or physical activity which is part of your job.

None  One  Two  Three  Four  Five  Six  Seven

The physical activities/sports I currently participate in are (tell us here)

\_\_\_\_\_

The activities that I am most interested in participating in are:

1st \_\_\_\_\_

2nd \_\_\_\_\_

3rd \_\_\_\_\_

## About your interests in sport and physical activity (continued)

Which areas of the region would you be able to travel to?

- Locality A
- Locality B
- Locality C

Are there any other areas where you might need support, such as travelling to sessions

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## Emergency contact details

Contact name.....

Relationship to you.....

Telephone.....

## Declaration

- I understand that if I have answered 'yes' to one or more of the health-related questions that I may be advised to seek further medical advice before starting a new physical activity programme.
- I agree to tell the activity leader if there is a change to my health or medical conditions.
- I understand that I participate in the programme at my own risk.

## Data Protection and Confidentiality Statement

Mind respects your privacy and values the trust that you place in us when giving us personal information. Mind complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and applies strict confidentiality and privacy standards surrounding all our participant's personal information.

Any information that you chose to give Mind will be stored and used by Mind to provide you with the service you have requested: only provide personal information that you consent to us using for this purpose. Please be aware that this programme involves Mind disclosing the information to other providers so that they can support Mind in providing this service.

We will process this information in line with Mind's Privacy Policy that can be found at [mind.org.uk/legal-info/privacy-policy/](http://mind.org.uk/legal-info/privacy-policy/). If you want to find out more about how we look after personal information, or want to contact us about this in any way, please get in touch using this link.

### For staff to complete

Date of first session .....

Activity session .....

PAR-Q checked  Referral made to GP Yes/No

Signed .....

### About you

The next few questions will help us to find out if we are supporting people with mental health problems from all communities and backgrounds. If you would prefer not to share this information with us please tick 'I would prefer not to say'.

Gender: Male  Female  Another  ..... (please specify)  
I would prefer not to say

Age: 16–25 years  26–39 years  40–65 years  65+years   
I would prefer not to say

About your mental health diagnosis: Depression  Anxiety  Stress   
Bipolar  Personality Disorder  Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)   
Schizophrenia  Psychosis  Multiple diagnosis  Other   
I would prefer not to say

### Ethnicity:

White: British  Irish  Eastern European  Any other White background

Mixed: White and Black Caribbean  White and Black African

White and Asian  Any other mixed background

Asian or Asian British: Indian  Pakistani  Bangladeshi

Any other Asian background

Black or Black British: African  Caribbean  Any other Black background

Other ethnic group: Arab  Gypsies and Travellers  Chinese

Another ethnic background  ..... (please specify)

I would prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?\* Yes  No  (a condition that affects your daily life on an ongoing basis and is likely to last more than 12 months)

I would prefer not to say

Please tick if the following apply to you. Are you: a mental health service user

a refugee or asylum seeker  gay  lesbian  bisexual or other

currently residing in a secure hospital

currently or previously identified as transgender  I would prefer not to say

Office use only:

Date joined ..... Date inputted .....