

Guide 10: How do I market my sessions?

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



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This guide covers

- The marketing mix.
- Developing marketing materials.
- Promoting your sessions online.

People's first contact with your physical activity service is likely to be through your marketing materials, so it's vital that these express the value of your session in an engaging and approachable way. This guide will help you think about how you can effectively engage your audiences before their first kick of a ball or swing of a racquet.

The marketing mix: the four Ps

It's good to think about your physical activity service in relation to the marketing mix (below) to help guide how you should talk about your service.

Product (or service)

- What does the customer want from the product or service?
- What needs does it satisfy?
- What features does it have that meets those needs?
- What will it be called?
- How will it be different to other similar products or services?

Place

- Where do buyers (or participants) look for this kind of product or service? Would they look online? On local community noticeboards? Or somewhere else entirely?

Price

- What is the value of the product or service to the customer?
- Are there established price points for these services in your area? How will your price compare?
- Will a small decrease in price gain you extra customers?
- What discounts could you offer to customers to encourage word of mouth?

Promotion

- Where and when can you get across your marketing messages to your target market?
- Will you reach your audience by advertising online (for instance on your website or via your social media channels)?
- Could you use local press, TV or radio?
- How about a direct marketing mailshot?
- When is the best time to promote? Will your service be more popular at certain times of the year?
- How are similar services promoted? And how does that influence your choice of promotional activity?

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What do I need to consider when developing marketing materials?

In guide 6: *How do I engage participants in my service?* we look at how you can use the EAST principles to help raise the appeal of your sessions by making them:

- Easy to attend.
- Attractive to people like me.
- Social within my context.
- Timely.

Learning from the Get Set to Go programme has also revealed a number of insights that help to promote sport and physical activity to people with mental health problems.

- Word of mouth works. Insight from Get Set to Go shows that out of the participants who hadn't been referred through another local Mind service, almost 40% heard about the programme through word of mouth. To help promote your service this way, encourage participants to bring a friend or family member to a session and reward both when this happens (for instance with a free session, a voucher to bring another friend, or some money off).
- Make it fun – focusing on enjoyment is key. You could do this by using images of participants enjoying the sessions on your materials, or featuring quotes that focus on their positive experience.
- Use images of real participants if you can, to help make the materials relatable. If this is difficult, [Sport England](#) and [Make Sport Fun](#) have developed libraries of copyright-free images.
- Don't be too formal in your writing – write as you would talk.
- Use words like 'fun', 'informal' 'casual' and 'drop-in' to create a welcoming impression.
- You might want to think about where you use the term 'mental health.' Sport and physical activity sessions are a great way of engaging with audiences who might not have previously identified as having mental health problems.
- Make sure you have a range of materials that target people at different stages of their fitness journey. In some marketing you'll want to focus on introducing the positive benefits of physical activity to people who haven't really considered it before, whereas elsewhere you'll want to reach out to people who want to get active but face barriers. [The Get Set to Go](#) website is specifically designed to engage this audience. To find out more about the barriers that people with mental health problems face when trying to be more active go to guide 6: *How do I engage participants in my service?*

- Make sure materials promoting your sessions clearly communicate key information such as:
 - Days and times.
 - Type(s) of activity being run and the ability level.
 - Cost.
 - What to wear.
 - Benefits to the reader.
 - Contact details of organiser.

As with the design of your sessions, it's best practice to work with participants and volunteers to develop marketing resources. For engagement ideas refer to the guide 4: *How do I identify and engage my key stakeholders?*

Sport England and the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) have also created guidance that shares best practice in how to communicate an inclusive physical activity offer. You can view these resources on the [Sport England](#) website.

How do I talk about physical activity in a mental health context (language and terminology)?

Insight from focus groups run throughout the Get Set to Go programme has shown that the words 'activity' and 'wellbeing' are viewed positively by people with mental health problems, whereas 'health', 'sport', 'fitness' and 'exercise' are seen as alienating.

'Activity' is broad and inclusive. It appealed because people felt they could be active in their own way. Being 'active' might be a gateway for people to build confidence and take up a sport.

'Wellbeing' captured the idea of being well both in mind and body. Everyone recognised the importance of the relationship between these two aspects of 'wellness', and understood that physical activity could benefit mental wellbeing.

'Health' had clinical overtones, whereas 'sport', 'fitness' and (to a lesser extent) 'exercise' were associated with feelings of shame, intimidation and un-attainability (though understood to be beneficial).

How do I use social media to promote my sessions?

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are great ways of reaching supporters and stakeholders quickly, and at very little cost. Using these channels effectively will be key to the success of your project.

Top tips:

- Always think about what action you want someone to take when they see your Facebook post or tweet. Do you want to encourage people to visit your website? If so, include a link. Do you want them to sign up to a session? If so, include a link to the sign up page.
- Post regularly. If someone visits your Facebook or Twitter page and it hasn't been updated recently, they may assume you're no longer active.
- Statistically, posts which include images always get more engagement (such as likes and shares)
- Including hashtags (#) in your posts will also help them reach people who will find them most useful:
 - Include hashtags that help people in your area find you: #dudley #brent
 - Mention the sports that you will be doing: #cycling #football #zumba
 - Think about your audience – which hashtags do they use to find information: #publichealth #mentalhealth #mh #sport #physicalactivity #manchester
- You should also use social media to engage with other organisations and stakeholders. Follow them, interact with their content and include their handles in relevant posts such as @MindCharity @Sport_England
- Use online tools such as [Hootsuite](#) and [Buffer](#) to help you manage and schedule your social media, track your links and see what your stakeholders and partners are up to. Both are web-based, easy to use and free for the basic version. You can also get useful data from www.analytics.twitter.com and from your Facebook insights page.
- Creating good social media content is not an exact science – try things out and see what works for you.

Further information on getting the most out of your social media can be found on the Local Government Association website at: local.gov.uk/digital-councils

When might I need resources?

Think about the participant journey. At what points could you engage the participant? Who might the person be speaking to at each stage and what marketing might be appropriate?¹

Stage of behaviour change		Contact points	Engagement methods
NOT ON MY RADAR	PRE-CONTEMPLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Friends GP, nurse, pharmacist IAPT services Support worker Secondary mental health services – CPN, CMHT, psychiatrist Library, community centres Job Centre Plus Local parks, shops, transport hubs Local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster, leaflets Presentations/talks Elefriends
THINKING ABOUT IT	CONTEMPLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure provider Drop-in/taster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Stakeholder websites Blogs/case studies Images Videos Social media Mind info pages Get Set to Go website
PLANNING TO DO SOMETHING SOON	PREPARATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme lead Programme volunteers Coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting tool (Get Set to Go plan) Welcome meeting with staff/vols
GETTING STARTED	ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other sports providers Leisure centre staff Staff/volunteers from local clubs Volunteer coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned social events Review of goal setting tool Facebook group Updated menu of activities Celebration event Info from local clubs/sports providers Info on skills development and training
STICKING WITH IT	MAINTENANCE		

People can move back and forth through these stages

¹ Sport England and the Cabinet office (2014) *Stages of Change model*

Resources

Case study template: Physical activity

Thank you so much for agreeing to tell your story. By sharing this account we hope to inspire others to join [project name] and experience how being active can support their mental health.

If you have any questions while writing your story, please ask a member of staff.

About you:

Your name		Age	
Gender			
Email			

Tell us about your mental health diagnosis, and how your mental health can impact your involvement in sport or activities (50 words or less)

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Which physical activities/sports do you enjoy? Where and how often do you do them? (20 to 30 words)

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What impact, if any, has being active made to your life? (50 words or fewer)

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How have you managed to break down barriers to getting involved? How has [project name] helped you to overcome these challenges? (100 words or less)

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Tick this box if you are happy for your experiences to be shared with others