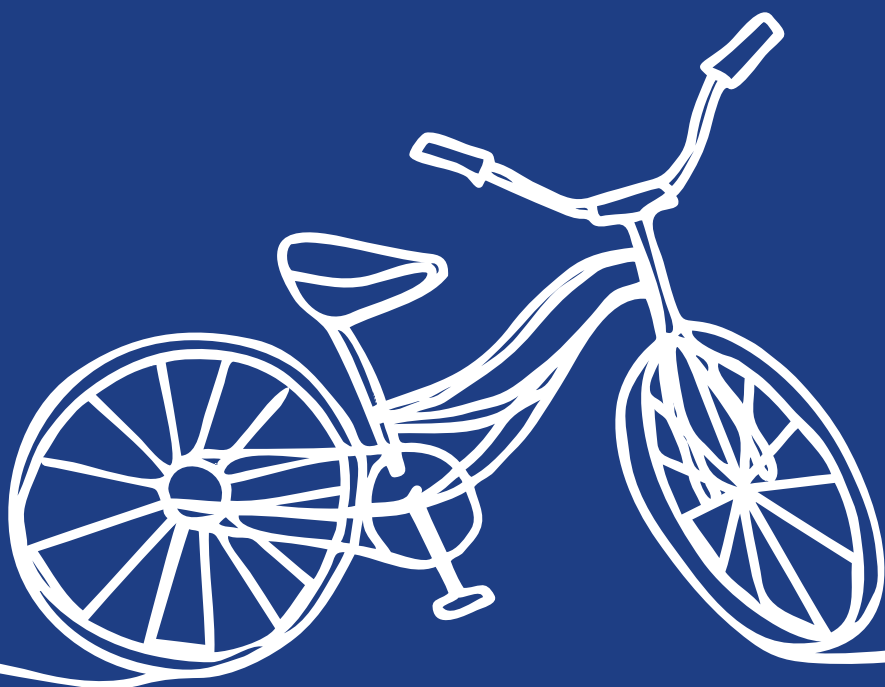




Mental health champions toolkit for the sport and physical activity sector



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Introduction

This toolkit is for organisations, clubs and groups in the sport and physical activity sector that want to support the mental health of their members, participants, staff and volunteers. It introduces the idea of mental health champions, and provides guidance on establishing a mental health champions scheme.

Research shows that being active improves our mental health and reduces our risk of developing depression by up to 30%. It can also support and enable mental health recovery, and should be one of the first treatments recommended by doctors for mild to moderate depression.

With one in four of us experiencing a mental health problem each year, it's a vital issue to address. But we know it can be hard to start the conversation with coaches and instructors. In fact, almost 70% of people with mental health problems told us they wouldn't feel comfortable talking about their mental health in a sports setting¹.

People who work and volunteer within the sector also find it hard to talk openly about mental health, and to get support. The [Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Mental Health \(SPAWMH\) Survey](#) from Edge Hill University in association with DOCIAsport and supported by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (2019) found:

- 57% of respondents had experienced mental health problems at some point in their lives.
- 23% were experiencing mental health problems at the time of completing the survey.
- 35% of respondents knew of others within their organisation who were experiencing a diagnosed mental health problem, with 75% reporting they knew between one and three people.
- 17% of respondents had received support for their mental health from someone in their organisation.

¹ Get Set to Go, 2015

Section one

Setting up a mental health champions scheme

What are mental health champions?

A mental health champion is someone who takes action to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma. Stigma is when we make assumptions about how a mental health problem will affect someone's behaviour. In turn, this makes it more likely that they will be labelled as different, strange, or even dangerous.

In some cases, and where trained appropriately, champions can help those who are experiencing mental health problems by signposting them to appropriate support services.

Mental health champions aren't expected to be experts in mental health, or to diagnose mental health problems. Instead, their role is to promote positive mental health and to signpost to relevant support and help, where appropriate.

Who can be a mental health champion?

Anyone can be a mental health champion

Champions don't need personal experience of mental health problems. Those who do have lived experience of mental health problems may find it helps them to start conversations and challenge stigma. Any action that a champion takes – no matter how big or small – helps to end stigma and raise awareness.

What's involved?

Being a champion is a voluntary role, so it's important to give careful thought to how you can best use your champions to bring about positive change.

As with any volunteer role, people are choosing to invest their time, so it should be a positive experience for both the champion and the organisation, club or group. You can help by:

- having a clear purpose for the role
- providing a positive experience and a feeling of achievement
- encouraging your champions to bring their own skills and experiences to the role
- empowering them to develop new skills and experiences
- setting and maintaining boundaries
- being clear on the help available to support their own, and other people's, mental health.

Important note

Champions aren't expected to be mental health experts – neither are they Mental Health First Aiders unless they have completed the appropriate training. Advice, support and counselling should only be provided by professionals. Instead, champions can help people find the right professional support through appropriate signposting.

With input from sport and physical activity organisations, we have identified two important mental health champion roles for the sport and physical activity sector:

1 Workplace mental health champions

Encouraging positive mental health and challenging stigma within the internal workforce – both paid and voluntary – and workplace. This role is covered in Section two.

2 Community mental health champions

Promoting the benefits of participating in sport and physical activity to maintain and improve mental health within local communities. These champions might work or volunteer within a club or activity group. This role is covered in Section three.

Section two

Workplace mental health champions

Workplace mental health champions are employees who challenge stigma and encourage positive mental health in the organisation and for its workforce - both paid and voluntary.

Mental health champions aren't intended to replace or duplicate the important role of human resources (HR) within your organisation. Instead, they work alongside your HR team to create a positive mental health at work experience for everyone.



How to establish a workforce mental health champions scheme

There are three stages to establishing a scheme in your organisation. We will look at each in turn with practical tools, templates and examples from the sector to help you put these steps into action.

1) Designing and planning your scheme

Gaining consent from decision makers

Before anything else, you'll need to gain consent and support from decision makers in your organisation, such as line managers and senior managers. To do this, you'll need to highlight the benefits of establishing the scheme and what it will involve. We've outlined these below:

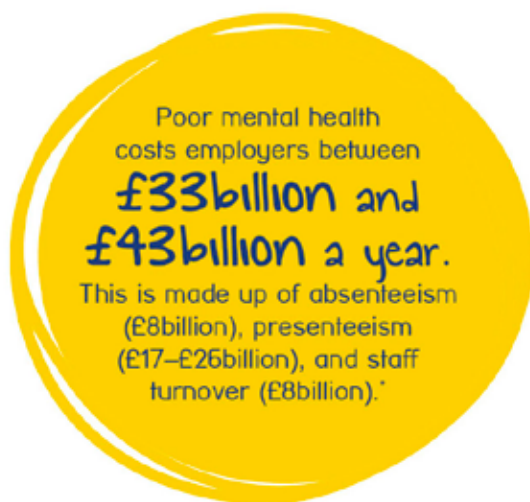
- **A mechanism to support your workforce's mental health**
Mental health problems can impact productivity, increase absence and have financial implications for your organisation. Introducing a mental health champions scheme could reduce the number of staff who are affected by mental health problems.
- **A more welcoming and inclusive workplace**
This could help you recruit and retain staff to ensure your organisation has the best possible workforce and to save time and money on recruitment.
- **Development opportunities for staff**
This also helps to retain and recruit staff, as they feel the organisation is committed to their development.

“After becoming a mental health champion and completing the [Mental Health First Aid] training, I feel comfortable to engage with someone that I think needs a chat, or to provide guidance etc. Not only in the racing industry but in everyday life I have come across people needing to talk/be listened to, and to get advice or help from a professional.”

British Horseracing Authority mental health champion

“ As part of a team that works directly with the full spectrum of our sport’s participants, being a mental health champion and access to Mental Health First Aid training was becoming increasingly important. It was a great opportunity to de-bug such a sensitive subject; I have no doubt we are a stronger team for having taken part. ”

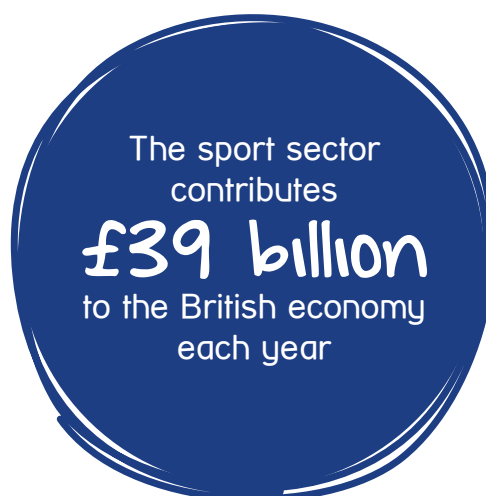
British Horseracing Authority mental health champion



* (2017). Mental Health and Employers: Supporting the Case for Investment. Deloitte.



* (2012). Absence Management Annual Survey Report 2012. CIPD in partnership with Simply Health.



www.sportengland.org/why-were-here/economic-development. Sport England

What it will involve:

- **Staff time.** Establishing and managing a mental health champions scheme involves a significant amount of staff time. If one employee is to be responsible for the scheme, it's important that their workload is reduced to enable them to coordinate it effectively.
- **Finance.** You may need a small budget to pay for champions to complete training and any resource development to support them with their role.

Designing your scheme

We know from experience that the most successful schemes are developed by the people you're trying to reach. This includes employees from across the organisation and those with lived experience of mental health problems. It's important to involve them from the beginning to help you plan and design your scheme (often called a co-design or co-production approach).

Mind's [influence and participation toolkit](#) provides a range of tools to help you involve people effectively in the design, development and delivery of activities.

Running a co-design workshop

We suggest running a short workshop to co-design your champions scheme. This can be delivered virtually or face-to-face. The 5 Ws and H is a simple and effective tool ([see Annex A](#)) you can use in your workshop to map out the scheme. It involves asking questions beginning with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. For example, what should the role entail, what it shouldn't entail, and what it should be called. For example the RYA (Royal Yachting Association) champions decided to call their scheme Wellbeing Colleagues.

Creating a plan

Once you've decided what your champions scheme is going to look like, you need to put it into action. We've created a template action plan to help you do this ([see Annex B](#)). It includes sections on timelines and deadlines, goals and KPIs, roles and responsibilities and updates and reviews. It's important to consider how the scheme impacts on any of your existing policies and procedures, particularly in relation to safeguarding and managing risk. You'll find more information in our guide to [safeguarding and managing risk](#).

Good practice

On the back of signing the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) have established a mental health champions scheme. The scheme has included training a number of staff as Mental Health First Aiders.

To introduce their mental health champions, the BHA created a short film. The film includes some of the Champions talking about their personal experiences and how they manage their mental health. The film struck a real cord with BHA staff as it was honest and homemade during the coronavirus lockdown.

Important note

If someone needs urgent medical attention due to their mental health, direct them to their GP, Accident & Emergency at their nearest hospital, or the Samaritans on 116 123, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Alternatively, the yellow box at the top of every page on the [Mind website](#) will help direct people appropriately.

2) Developing your scheme

Recruiting workplace mental health champions

When an employee wishes to invest their time to volunteer as a champion this should be embraced. However, to ensure employees fully understand the role and have the skills, experience and knowledge to fulfil it successfully, it is good practice to undertake a recruitment process. This will also ensure champions are recruited in a fair and objective manner.

The following checklist provides an example of how to recruit workplace mental health champions within your organisation:

- **Talk to your HR team**
Ask if they have a policy, process and/or relevant forms for recruiting internal volunteers. This could save you a lot of time and effort in the recruitment process.
- **Confirm the recruitment process**
Some organisations have used an expression of interest or application form ([see Annex C for a template](#)) to open the opportunity to employees. If you decide to do this, you'll need to create an assessment panel to review and approve or decline applications.
- **Create a role description**
This should include the aim of the role and the skills and commitments needed to fulfil it. [See Annex D](#) for more information and a template job description.
- **Promote the opportunity**
Use internal communications such as staff updates, newsletters, intranet, posters and emails to promote the benefits of taking on the role of mental health champion to encourage staff to apply.
- **Assess applications**
The assessment panel could assess applications individually then meet to decide which to approve and decline. If decisions can't be made on the basis of the application alone, it may be necessary to host interviews.
- **Inform applicants**
Notify the successful applicants and ask those who were unsuccessful if they'd like to support the work and/or other mental health activities your organisation delivers.

Supporting workplace mental health champions

Before promoting your new champions scheme, take the time to put together a support package to help your champions fulfil their role effectively and to provide support when they need it. We've outlined some ideas below, but best practice is to run a co-design workshop with your champions to understand what support they would like. This is a chance to reaffirm what their role as a champion entails, to set boundaries (see Annex E) and to highlight the aims of the scheme.

- **Existing support**

Details of support available in your organisation such as employee assistance programmes (EAPs) or private health insurance.

- **Mental health training**

It's crucial that champions have the confidence, skills and knowledge to fulfil their role. There are several training courses that can help with this (see Available training in Section four for details):

- 1 Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning.
- 2 Mind's mental health training.
- 3 Time to Change's free champion eLearning training.

- **Champions**

It's good practice to create a [handbook](#) providing information on your champions scheme, guidance around the role, the support available to champions and where to signpost people who may be experiencing mental health problems.

- **Wellness action plans (WAPs)**

[Wellness action plans](#) are an easy, practical way of helping people to support their own mental health. They help us to identify what keeps us well, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should we experience one.

In any organisation, there will be several different employee relationships that impact on the success of a mental health champions scheme. It is important to be clear on the responsibilities of each role and how they can interact:

- **Workplace mental health champion**
Promotes positive mental health through the planning and delivery of a range of wellbeing activities. Provides light touch support to colleagues by signposting to appropriate professional support as required.
- **Mental health lead**
Provides strategic leadership of mental health across the organisation, shaping policy and practice. Supports the whole organisation with crisis management and complex mental health support.
- **Line manager**
Supports positive mental health as part of line management and leadership duties. Signposts to additional resources and training support as required.

See [Annex D](#) for example job descriptions for both workplace mental health champions and mental health leads.

3) Delivering your scheme

- **Announcing your champions scheme**

You could do this through internal communications such as staff updates, newsletters, intranet, posters, and email from your chief executive or senior management. Champions may like to add that they are a workplace mental health champion to their internal email signature

- **Adapting and delivering activities**

Time to Change provides information and ideas on how to engage people in wellbeing activities, which can be adapted to your organisation. Having a broad range of activities helps you to keep people engaged and appeal to a wider audience.

Below are some examples of activities that champions could deliver to raise mental health awareness in your organisation:

Got a few minutes?	Got a few hours?	Got longer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information and good practice about mental health across the organisation, using a variety of formats such as intranet, social media and/or posters and flyers. • Signpost people to sources of professional help and support. • Provide top tips to other members of the workforce on how to engage people with a mental health problem. • Walk and talk during meetings. • Bring and share lunch. • Organise a Time to Talk day tea trolley with cake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a blog or case study about your organisation's work to promote positive mental health. • Have positive conversations with people and signpost them to sources of professional help²; • Give a talk or presentation to colleagues on mental health and stigma. • Sit on an interview panel to help with the recruitment of future colleagues. • Help your HR department to organise and promote mental health awareness training for staff. • Run activities with your workforce to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create local links with mental health organisations to support your workforce. • Develop social media and promotional campaigns. • Work with diverse communities to promote mental health and recruit people into your organisation. • Make the services your organisation offers accessible. • Support your organisation to commit to the Thriving at Work standards, or to deliver on your Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation pledges. • Coordinate and deliver events to improve workforce wellbeing. • Set up a peer network of champions to share experiences and best practice.

² If appropriate within your organisation's champions scheme, and with appropriate training.

- **Provide ongoing support to champions**

Have regular check-ins with your champions to ask about their wellbeing and if they need any additional support. You could do this through a face-to-face meeting, social media such as a closed Facebook group, or using an anonymous survey.

- **Review the scheme annually**

It is important to check that your workplace mental health champions scheme is achieving the goals and objectives you set out when you first established it, and to ask your champions if they want to continue in the role.

Good practice: EIS champion scheme

The English Institute of Sport (EIS) worked with Changing Minds to establish their mental health champions scheme. Abi Lewis (HR Officer) and Sam Cumming (Mental Health Manager) share some of their learning and tips from their scheme:

- Take the time to clarify what a champion is, what they will do and how they will fit into your organisation. There was early confusion about whether the scheme intends to create a new 'role' or a set of 'skills'. We've clarified our intentions to say that 'the champions scheme provides additional skills to help you carry out your normal role'. This may not be the right approach for everyone, but having this clearly stated helps to avoid confusion.
- Our training is set up as three one-day workshops but we have had to come up with a two one-day option to fit in with busy schedules.
- The need to deliver the content virtually following the COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected challenge! Flexibility was required to deliver the training online while maintaining the interactive nature of the sessions.
- Be clear about what ongoing support is available to your champions beyond initial training.

Section three

Community mental health champions



Community mental health champions are local club or group volunteers who promote the benefits of sport and physical activity in maintaining and improving mental health in our local communities.

Research shows that being active boosts wellbeing, but it's not always easy to be active – particularly if you're experiencing poor mental health, when it can be hard to talk openly about how you feel and to get the support you need.

People with existing mental health problems often experience immense barriers when trying to become active. You can [hear from](#) the people with lived experience of mental health problems that are part of Mind's Physical Activity Advisory Group and learn more in our [Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity training](#).

Community mental health champions can play a critical role in promoting being active, understanding people's needs and helping them to access sport and physical activity. They can also help to ensure your club or group and its activities are welcoming and inclusive to anyone experiencing mental health problems.

How to establish a community mental health champions scheme

There are three stages to establishing a scheme in your club or group. We will look at each in turn with practical tools, templates and examples from the sector to help you put these steps into action.

1) Designing and planning your scheme

Gaining consent from decision makers

Before anything else, you'll need to gain consent and support from decision makers in your club or group, such as committee members. To help you do this, you'll need to highlight the benefits of establishing the scheme and what it will involve. We've outlined these below:

- **Increased and more diverse club membership** by recruiting people with mental health problems.
- **Less turnover in membership or participation** as people feel supported to maintain activity levels.
- **Better links with the local community** as relationships are established with local mental health support organisations, and through the delivery of mental health awareness activities.
- **More diverse skills and experience** within the club, and increased loyalty and retention as a result of the improved support network.
- **Improved club reputation and recognition** within the local community, which could potentially help to attract funding.

“ This has had such a positive impact on me, especially as I have had struggles with managing my job alongside my anxiety. Being able to lead a running session, watching people play the games I have planned, hearing people say how much they have enjoyed the session and just people coming in their own time to an event that I have organised means so much to me and has reminded me of my value. ”
An England Athletics' mental health champion

Many of the benefits above apply to a facility or venue operator but the key positive is that the venue is regarded as an accessible and inclusive location. Whilst it is a legislative requirement to meet equality standards for service providers, ultimately if a venue is welcoming of all people and community groups it will generate greater potential income from higher levels of usage.

What it will involve:

- **Time.** Establishing and managing a scheme involves a significant amount of time for both the person coordinating the scheme and the volunteer who is going to take on the champion's role.
- **Finance.** You may need a small budget to pay for champions to complete training and any resource development to support them with their role.

Designing your scheme

We know from experience that the most successful champions schemes are developed by the people you're trying to reach. This includes club/group volunteers, members and importantly people with lived experience of mental health problems. It's important to involve them from the beginning to help you plan and design your scheme (often called a co-design or co-production approach).

Mind's [influence and participation toolkit](#) provides a range of tools to help you involve people effectively in the design, development and delivery of activities. In addition, your [local Mind](#) or other mental health support organisations can help you connect with people or provide appropriate support.

Running a co-design workshop

We suggest running a short workshop to co-design your champions scheme. This can be delivered virtually or face-to-face.

The 5 Ws and H is a simple and effective tool ([see Annex A](#)) you can use in your workshop to map out the scheme. It involves asking questions beginning with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. For example, what should the champions role entail, what it should be called.

To ensure you test your thinking carefully, always ask why? Taking this approach will help you to justify your decisions and provide the rationale for the champions scheme you're developing for your club or group.

Good practice:

As an example, England Athletics have clear aims for their mental health champions programme across their club network:

- 1) Promote mental wellbeing through running.
- 2) Work with clubs to support members to improve mental health through running.
- 3) Support new people experiencing mental health problems to start, continue or get back to running.

Creating a plan

Once you've decided what your champions scheme is going to look like, you need to put it into action. We've created a template action plan to help you do this ([see Annex B](#)). It includes sections on timelines and deadlines, goals and KPIs, roles and responsibilities and updates and reviews. It's important to consider how the scheme will impact on any of your existing policies and procedures, particularly in relation to safeguarding and managing risk. You'll find more information in our guide to [managing risk](#).

Important note

If someone needs urgent medical attention due to their mental health, direct them to their GP, Accident & Emergency at their nearest hospital, or the Samaritans on 116 123, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Alternatively, the yellow box at the top of every page on the Mind website will help direct people appropriately.

2) Developing your scheme

Recruiting community mental health champions

When an individual wishes to invest their time to volunteer as a champion this should be embraced. However, to ensure people fully understand the role and have the skills, experience and knowledge to fulfil it successfully, it is good practice to undertake a recruitment process. This will also ensure champions are recruited in a fair and objective manner.

The following checklist provides an example of how to recruit community mental health champions within your club or group:

- **Speak to your national governing body of sport**
They may be able to advise on a suitable recruitment process in line with their safeguarding policies and club/group development processes. They may also have policy, process and/or relevant forms you can adapt to save time and effort. Your club or group safeguarding officer may also be able to provide guidance and support when you're establishing your champions scheme.
- **Confirm the recruitment process**
Existing schemes have had champions nominated by an affiliated club/group or by other club/group members. If you decide to do this, you'll need to create an assessment panel to review and approve or decline applications.
- **Create a role description**
This should include the aim of the role and the skills and commitments needed to fulfil it. [See Annex D](#) for more information and a template job description.
- **Promote the opportunity**
Use updates, newsletters, intranet, posters and emails to promote the benefits of taking on the role of mental health champion to encourage participants or members to apply. ([See Annex D](#) for the benefits of the role.)
- **Assess applications**
The assessment panel could assess applications individually then meet to decide which to approve and decline. If decisions can't be made on the basis of the application alone, it may be necessary to host interviews.
- **Inform applicants**
Notify the successful applicants and ask those who were unsuccessful if they'd like to support the work and/or other mental health activities your club or group delivers.

If you are a national governing body of sport or a regional sports organisation you may want to consider establishing a support network for community mental health champions. This could be a WhatsApp group, a closed Facebook group (such as the England Athletics mental health champions group) or a regular meeting space for champions to come together either physically or virtually. This will enable everyone to:

- share experiences and best practice examples
- consult and communicate on new policy
- promote the benefits
- provide ongoing support
- coordinate training.

Supporting community mental health champions

Before promoting your new champions scheme, take the time to put together a support package to help your champions fulfil their role effectively and to provide support when they need it. We've outlined some ideas below, but best practice is to run a co-design workshop with your champions to understand what support they would like. This is a chance to reaffirm what their role as a champion entails, to set boundaries (see Annex E) and to highlight the aims of the scheme.

- **Mental health training**

It's crucial that champions have the confidence, skills and knowledge to fulfil their role. There are several training courses that can help with this (see Available training in Section four for details):

- 1 Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning.
- 2 Mind's mental health training.
- 3 Time to Change's free champion eLearning training.

- **Champions**

It's good practice to create a [handbook](#) providing information on your champions scheme, guidance around the role, the support available to champions and where to signpost people who may be experiencing mental health problems.

- **Wellness action plans (WAPs)**

[Wellness action plans](#) are an easy, practical way of helping people to support their own mental health. They help us to identify what keeps us well, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should we experience one.

3) Delivering your scheme

- **Announcing your champions scheme**

You could do this through updates, newsletters, social media, posters, or emails from your chairman or president.

- **Adapting and delivering activities**

Time to Change provides information and ideas on how to engage people in wellbeing activities, which can be adapted for your club or group. Having a broad range of activities helps you to keep people engaged and appeal to a wider audience. Below are some examples of activities that champions could deliver to raise mental health awareness in your club or group:

Got a few minutes?	Got a few hours?	Got longer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome someone new to your club/group. • Share information and good practice about mental health across the club/group using a variety of formats such as social media, posters and flyers. • Signpost people to further professional help and support. • Provide support to other club/group volunteers on how to engage people with a mental health problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a blog or case study about your clubs or group's work to promote positive mental health. • Have positive conversations with people and signpost them to appropriate professional support³. • Provide a training session or presentation to club/group members and volunteers. • Undertake outreach activities with the family of club/group members to talk about the benefits of being part of your local club/group. • Organise and promote mental health awareness training for your club/group workforce. • Run activities with your club/group workforce to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create links with local mental health organisations to recruit new participants. • Develop social media and promotional campaigns to raise awareness of the activities your club/group offers. • Coordinate and deliver community events to promote mental wellbeing.

³ If appropriate within your club/group's champions scheme, and with appropriate training.

Good practice

Run Together West Berkshire is one of hundreds of running clubs that have signed up to England Athletics' #RunAndTalk programme. They have been hosting #RunAndTalk runs for the last few years, and the numbers of runners continues to grow. After their run, group members meet for drinks and cakes and someone from the group shares their own experiences of mental health. This helps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems and encourage others to open up about their experiences.

Provide ongoing support to champions

Have regular check-ins with champions to ask about their wellbeing and if they need any additional support. You could do this through a face-to-face meeting, social media such as a closed Facebook group, or using an anonymous survey.

Review the scheme annually

It's important to check that your community mental health champions scheme is achieving the goals and objectives you set out when you first established it, and to ask your champions if they want to continue in the role.

Section four

Support for you and your mental health champions

Available training

There are a number of training options available to champions to increase their confidence, skills and knowledge in order to fulfil their role. These include:

- **Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning**
This is a good starting point for champions working and volunteering in the sport and physical activity sector. [The course](#) takes 2 to 3 hours to complete and is aimed at anyone who delivers or supports sport and physical activities.
- **Mind's mental health training**
[Mind](#) offers a wide range of training, advice and support for people and organisations looking to promote mental health awareness and challenge stigma.
- **Time to Change's free champions eLearning training**
To support their champions to promote conversations and activities to tackle mental health stigma, [Time to Change](#) have created eight e-learning modules, each of which takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation

The [Mental Health Charter](#) provides a useful starting point for organisations, clubs and groups looking to embed positive action on mental health within their workforce and activities. Signatories are required to commit to three pledges that will help to break down the stigma associated with mental health in sport and physical activity.

Your mental health champion may like to implement an action plan to help your organisation, club or group deliver your charter pledges. It's important that you develop a workforce-wide commitment to positive mental health.

Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health Regional Networks

A great way to establish a champions scheme is to talk to organisations, clubs or groups that have already done it.

Mind has created [regional networks](#) throughout England to unite organisations from across the sport, physical activity and mental health sectors. Their aim is to increase the number of groups that are equipped with the skills to support and engage people with mental health problems in physical activity.

Mind's Physical Activity and Mental Health Newsletter

Mind publishes a monthly newsletter that includes updates on our work, shares good practice from across the sector and opportunities to get involved in.

You can sign up to the newsletter by emailing sport@mind.org.uk.

Thriving at Work

Thriving at Work – a guide to implementing workplace standards in the sport and physical activity sector – is an independent review that outlines what employers can do to better support all employees, including those with mental health problems, to remain in and thrive through work.

Mind has collaborated with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Sport and Recreation Alliance, and Sport England to help employers across the sport and physical activity sector to understand and implement the Thriving at Work standards.

The guide contains examples of what employers are doing, plus practical tools to help you achieve the standards in your own workplace.

Your mental health champions could help you to implement the Thriving at Work standards in your organisation.

Local Mind Network

Local Minds are independent charities that support over 400,000 people locally across England and Wales. Building a relationship with your local Mind could help to connect your club or group with people experiencing mental health problems.

Local Mind charities have the potential to be an invaluable source of local knowledge and expertise to support your champions scheme.

Get Set to Go Programme

Get Set to Go helps people find the physical activity that's right for them so that they can enjoy the physical, social and mental benefits of being active. The programme is delivered by local Minds across England and Wales that are committed to helping people with mental health problems to get active.

We are Undefeatable

Mind is part of the national We are Undefeatable campaign alongside 14 other leading health and social care charities and Sport England. Its aim is to inspire and support people with long-term health conditions to be active.

Your community mental health champion(s) could use the campaign to recruit new participants to your club or group through a partnership with your local Mind.

The [website](#) shares case studies, stories, tips and ideas on getting active for better mental health.

Developing your own expert group

In addition to existing training and support, you may want to consider recruiting a professional expert panel on a paid or voluntary basis.

For example:

- UK Sport and EIS have recruited an expert panel of psychologists and psychiatrists who help to shape their work and support individual or complex cases.
- England Athletics has recruited a group of mental health ambassadors from within their own sport who provide professional expertise to mentor their mental health champions and advise England Athletics on wider developments.
- Mind provides reflective practice sessions to staff via a counsellor.

You could create a formal role or invite professionals to sit on your steering or advisory group. Here are some examples of who you might want to recruit for your panel:

- mental health professionals from the charity or statutory sector
- experts by experience – people with lived experience of mental health problems
- counsellors or therapists
- mental health nurses
- psychologists
- psychiatrists

Appendices

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Planning your champions scheme

Working through the questions below in your co-design workshop or planning meeting can help to shape your ideas:

Why does our organisation want a mental health champions scheme?

Who will benefit from the scheme?

What do we want to achieve?

Who needs to be involved?

Where will activities take place?

What activities are out of scope for the programme?

How will we achieve successful delivery?

What resources and training do we need?

Why would people want to get involved?

What would motivate them to take part in the programme?

When will activities take place?

What activities will take place? Think about activities to suit the time the champion has available (see pages 16 and 25 for inspiration).

Got a few minutes?	Got a few hours?	Got longer?

Mental health champions action plan template

Scheme	Community or workplace mental health champions scheme
Lead person	
Date updated	DD/MM/YYYY

Activity description	Lead person	Who can support	Timescale/ deadline	Performance indicator (KPI)	Progress update
Design and planning For example... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-design workshop					
Developing For example... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• recruitment process• assessment panel• support for champions					
Delivering For example... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• announce champions• activities they will deliver including when and where• ongoing support for champions					
Reviewing For example... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• annual meeting or survey• collating impact of the champions scheme					

Template application form

mental health champion application form

Name:	
Job title:	
Team/department:	
Email:	
Contact number:	

Why are you interested in becoming a mental health champion?
What skills and experiences can you bring to the role of a mental health champion?

What support do you think you'll need as a mental health champion?
Why do you think mental health awareness in the workplace/your club or organisation is important?
Do you undertake any other voluntary commitments alongside your role?

Thank you for expressing interest in being a mental health champion.

Template role descriptions

The template role descriptions that follow are intended as a guide to help you develop your mental health champions scheme. You will need to tailor the description of the role(s) to fit the needs, aims and aspirations of your organisation, club or group.

It's important to review the champion's role description annually to ensure it still meets the requirements of the role. Carrying out this review with your champion(s) will help you to identify any training needs, gaps in the role description and priorities for future work.

<INSERT ROLE NAME> ROLE DESCRIPTION

Background:

The background should outline the aims and purpose of the scheme and help potential champions understand the scope of the role they will be fulfilling on behalf of the organisation. It should set out your vision for mental health in your organisation and how you intend to achieve it.

<INSERT ORGANISATION NAME> signed up to the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation on <INSERT DATE> as part of our commitment to diversifying our workforce and leading the promotion of positive mental wellbeing in the sport and physical activity sector.

During the past 12 months we've worked with our member clubs and staff to raise awareness of mental health issues and the need to address stigma.

The next stage on the journey is to build upon the momentum and enthusiasm shown by our colleagues by creating a mental health champions scheme.

This role will...

Aims:

This section should cover any actions you may require your mental health champion to complete. Select the actions from the table on page 41 that reflect the aims of your initiative.

Skills:

<INSERT>

Benefits:

<INSERT>

Time commitment:

<INSERT>

Be clear and specific on the commitment you expect from the role to help applicants understand the commitment involved.

Mental health lead		Workplace mental health champion	Community mental health champion
	<p>Identified by the senior management team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core part of their organisational role. 	<p>Application process: voluntary role additional to day job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good practice to include within annual appraisal objectives. 	<p>Application process: voluntary role</p>
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the organisation to promote positive mental health by becoming a healthy workplace where talking about mental health is a natural and everyday occurrence. • Lead the organisation's mental health strategy and implementation plans. • With the support of senior management, design and implement a champions scheme to support workplace wellbeing. • Establish a network or working group that agrees and organises communications, activities and events for the organisation's champions scheme. • Take lead responsibility for appropriate signposting of colleagues, volunteers and participants to available professional support. • Coordinate appropriate mental health training and awareness for staff and volunteers. • Facilitate champion peer support sessions using online platforms such as Facebook or through face-to-face meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the organisation to promote positive mental health by becoming a healthy workplace where talking about mental health is a natural and everyday occurrence. • Act as a champion representative, role modelling positive mental health working practices. • Part of a network or working group that agrees and organises communications, activities and events as part of our mental health champions scheme. • Be open to talking to colleagues, volunteers or participants about the importance of mental health and tackling mental health stigma. • Be able to signpost colleagues, volunteers and participants to available professional support. • Build local partnerships that help recruit people into our sport and physical activity delivery to positively impact on mental health. • Coordinate awareness-raising activities for staff and volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome new participants to our club/group activities and sessions. • Share information and good practice about mental health across the club/group, using social media, posters and flyers. • Signpost people to sources of professional support. • Provide support and advice to other club/group volunteers on how to engage people with mental health problems. • Build local partnerships with mental health organisations to help recruit people into our club/group activities. • Coordinate mental health training and awareness for our volunteers.

	Mental health lead	Workplace mental health champion	Community mental health champion
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment and enthusiasm for promoting positive mental health.• Strong knowledge and/or experience of mental health problems.• Completion of the (two-day) Mental Health First Aid training.• A clear, strong communicator with the ability to build rapport easily.• Motivated, flexible and able to lead a team of mental health champions.• Able to influence others, including senior management, to deliver change.• Capable of talking about difficult issues with others and showing empathy.• Able to identify opportunities for adding value to this work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment and enthusiasm for promoting positive mental health.• Knowledge and/or experience of mental health problems (personal experience is desirable, though we welcome those who care for others or who are interested in promoting mental health).• A clear communicator with the ability to build rapport easily.• Motivated, flexible and able to work as a part of a team to deliver change.• Capable of talking about difficult issues with others and showing empathy.• Able to identify opportunities for adding value to this work.• Any other skills that could help with awareness raising (storytelling, poster design, event management etc).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment and enthusiasm for promoting positive mental health.• Knowledge and/or experience of mental health problems (personal experience is desirable, though we welcome those who care for others or who are interested in promoting mental health).• A clear communicator with the ability to build rapport easily.• Motivated, flexible and able to work as a part of a volunteer team.• Capable of talking about difficult issues with others and showing empathy.• Able to identify opportunities for adding value to this work.• Any other skills that could help with awareness raising (storytelling, poster design, event management etc).

Mental health lead			Workplace mental health champion	Community mental health champion
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enough capacity to embed role within work programme (in agreement with line manager).• Ability to take responsibility for actions on work such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design, lead and oversee activities to promote positive mental health• communication across the organisation• facilitate peer support• conduct monitoring and evaluation and provide feedback to senior management team• Time to attend training/workshops (where realistically possible around work and personal commitments).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend monthly working group meetings.• Ability to take responsibility for actions on work such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design, lead and/or take part in activities to promote positive mental health• communication across the organisation• conduct research and feedback.• Time to attend training/workshops (where realistically possible around work and personal commitments). <p>(Note: as a voluntary role, we appreciate permission from line managers is essential, and that the commitment is as much as the champion can offer ensuring personal wellbeing.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend monthly club/group committee meetings to update progress.• Ability to take responsibility for actions on work such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design, lead and/or take part in activities to promote positive mental health and recruit new participants/members.• communication across the club/group• conduct research and feedback• Time to attend training/workshops (where realistically possible around work and personal commitments).	
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leading a movement to create positive change in our organisation.• Opportunity to lead an organisation-wide priority.• Representing our organisation at external events, networks etc, advocating our mental health work.• Networking with like-minded colleagues across our organisation.• Development of skills outside normal job role and learning from peers.• Increased self-confidence and empowerment in taking up challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being part of a movement to create positive change.• Opportunity to use creative talents to develop original activities to support positive mental health.• Networking with like-minded colleagues across our organisation.• Development of skills outside normal job role and learning from peers.• Increased self-confidence and empowerment in taking up challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satisfaction of leading change and improvements across our club/group delivery.• Develop new skills and experiences.• Opportunity to use creative talents to develop original activities to support positive mental health.• Networking with like-minded volunteers within our club/group.• Increased self-confidence and empowerment in taking up challenges.	

Setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries and providing support to your champions

Boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for your workforce, participants and champions.

Boundaries exist to protect people. Setting clear boundaries is necessary for all services, and it's a crucial step when designing your mental health champions initiative. It's vital to establish what expectations you have for the role.

Relationships with colleagues and participants will vary depending on the other roles your champions have within your organisation. Your champion may also be a coach, leader, safeguarding officer, development officer or line manager. These multiple roles will have an impact on the way other people interact and respond to them in a champions role – both positively and negatively.

Your organisation, group or club's policies (HR, equality, lone working, safeguarding, codes of conduct, etc) should support you to establish clear boundaries for your champions so that they can have positive conversations about mental health awareness.



Things you need to consider



Time

Understand how much time champions can offer. Don't pressurise them to overcommit, and support them to maintain a focus on their own wellbeing.



Skills and experience

Be clear about what professional skills, knowledge and experience your champions have. Encourage them to use these skills in the champions role, and provide training and support to address gaps in their knowledge.



Sharing personal contact details

How will champions interact and communicate with people? You might want to consider setting up a separate email address for the champions role, or to provide dedicated contact details.



Social media activities

What is your organisation, club or group's policy about interacting with people online and via social media? It may be appropriate to develop guidelines, or to revise them to help champions fulfil their role successfully. It's common for people to reach out for support through social media, but this is likely to be outside of the boundaries in your existing policies.



Sport and physical activity sessions

Your champions scheme may involve delivering new activity sessions to engage people with mental health problems. Are your champions, coaches and volunteers knowledgeable and confident to work with people with mental health problems?



Confidentiality

Be clear on what champions can and cannot keep confidential, and the circumstances in which things that have been shared with them may need to be shared elsewhere. Look for this information in your data protection and confidentiality policies. You'll find more information in our guide to [safeguarding and managing risk](#).



Supporting your champions' mental health

Champions will need support to manage their own mental health. Think about the support that's already available, that you can put in place before starting a champions scheme.

- Encourage the champion to prioritise their own mental health by developing a wellness action plan (WAP).
- Regular support and supervision from a line manager, supervisor or coordinator of the champions scheme. This could include a regular check-in, or adding a question about personal wellbeing.

- Peer support network – where champions can share their own experiences and challenges, either face to face or online through a closed group on Facebook.
- Signposting to mental health services available nationally and locally (see Annex G).
- Formal or informal buddy systems to give your champion the chance to talk to someone other than their line manager or champion scheme coordinator.

You may also have access to additional support in-house or through partners via an employee assistance programme or other tailored mental health and wellbeing support programme. These benefits may include:

- Free or subsidised private medical insurance.
- Access to counselling at work.
- Access to mentors, coaches or sports chaplains.

Tips for maintaining appropriate boundaries within your champions programme

This toolkit has already outlined roles and actions that may not be appropriate for a champion to fulfil. Below are more examples, that may not be appropriate for champions to fulfil, to help you define and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries for the role:

- Being contacted outside of work or volunteering hours – including through social media – to provide emotional support with mental health and wellbeing.
- Providing people with lifts to GP/therapist appointments, etc.
- Providing mental health therapy or counselling support.
- Diagnosing people, offering medical or clinical advice or interventions.
- Dealing with challenging behaviour such as abuse or threats.

It's important to be clear on what you expect from your mental health champions. Create a role description, offer training and written guidelines to help them fulfil the role, and provide ongoing support, mentoring and training to deal with any questions they may have.

Providing a positive experience for your champions will help to ensure you retain them. Fulfilled champions can help your organisation raise awareness of mental health problems, and engage people in physical activity to encourage and maintain positive mental wellbeing.

Tips for maintaining appropriate boundaries within your champions programme

1) Maintaining clear boundaries starts with understanding and defining the role

- Identify the kind of activities your champions will be responsible for delivering.
- Be clear about what activities they will undertake.
- Encourage them to stay within the remit of the role.
- Encourage champions to use any skills they may have gained from training such as Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity, Mental Health First Aid or ASIST suicide prevention.

BUT always remember that the champion's role is to raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma and discrimination and engage people in sport and physical activity for wellbeing.

NOT as a counsellor or mental health nurse. You may have champions who are trained counsellors or mental health professionals, but a champion's role is to listen and signpost, not to make a professional judgement.

2) Signpost people to further information and support

- Encourage champions to ask: "What would you like to happen?" This helps to empower and encourage the person to take the course of action that's right for them.

3) Be clear about what champions can do, as well as what they can't

- Consider what supervision or support is available to champions. Do you have champion network meetings? Who is the dedicated contact person for champions working in the community with clubs and groups, who they can talk to for advice?
- They may be able to offer support and advice locally via mental health expert organisations or charities.

4) Explain the champion's role and its limits to colleagues and participants so you can manage people's expectations

- Be clear what activities champions will be undertaking as part of their role. For example, they could say, "My role as a mental health champion is to share information that promotes awareness of how to keep yourself mentally well through physical activity".

5) Communicate the reasons for the boundary

- If someone asks for direct advice or help beyond the limits of the role, champions could say: "I don't have the right knowledge, skills or experience to help you with this, but I can suggest other sources of support you might find helpful."

6) Ensure champions don't make promises they can't keep

- For example, don't tell someone that you'll keep everything they tell you confidential if there's a chance you might need to alert someone else in your organisation, club or group.

How to have conversations around mental health

An important part of the champion's role is having positive conversations about mental health with colleagues, participants and people in the local community.

Starting a conversation is a powerful way to challenge mental health stigma and help people to think about their own perceptions and the perceptions of others. Remember, champions don't need to be mental health experts to talk about mental health and challenge stigma.

Positive conversations may lead to talking to someone about their mental health, so it is important that champions can manage this situation effectively, and that they know how to end these conversations when required. The guidance in this section can help.

Managing conversations

- Find a quiet place with an informal atmosphere, such as a café. A conversation about mental health shouldn't feel like a formal interview.
- Actively listen to the person by giving them your undivided attention. Leave any questions or comments until the person has finished, so you don't interrupt them.
- Once someone knows they're being given the space and time to talk, they're more likely to open up. If someone approaches you wanting to talk, it may not be possible for you to give them the time they need there and then. Instead, show them you recognise that they've taken a positive step by speaking to you, explain why you can't talk now and arrange a better time to have the conversation. If they are in urgent need of help, be sure to signpost them to support.
- Reflecting the words they've used can encourage them to open up more.
- Use empathetic statements such as: "I appreciate this must be difficult for you..."
- Avoid clichés. Comments like "pull yourself together" or "you're just having a bad day" are unhelpful.
- Remind them that mental health problems are more common than people think, and that they can affect anyone at any time.
- Avoid asking too many questions, especially closed questions (which require a 'yes' or 'no' answer) and those that begin with the word 'why.' Ask open questions to invite a more detailed response:
 - Can you describe how you're feeling?
 - How do you look after yourself?
 - What support do you have in place?
- Reassure them that it's positive that they want to talk about their experience, and that they've acknowledged they want support (if this is the case).

- Ask if they're aware of sources of support, and signpost them to relevant information and help. It may be helpful to ask "What would you like to happen in this situation?" This will help to empower and encourage them to take the course of action that seems right to them. Be clear about what you can do, as well as what you can't,
- The important thing is to listen rather than give advice – the individual needs to be able to act for themselves. Signpost them to sources of support, rather than telling them what you think is best.

Important note

If someone needs urgent medical attention due to their mental health, direct them to their GP, Accident & Emergency at their nearest hospital, or the Samaritans on 116 123, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Alternatively, the yellow box at the top of every page on the Mind website will help direct people appropriately.

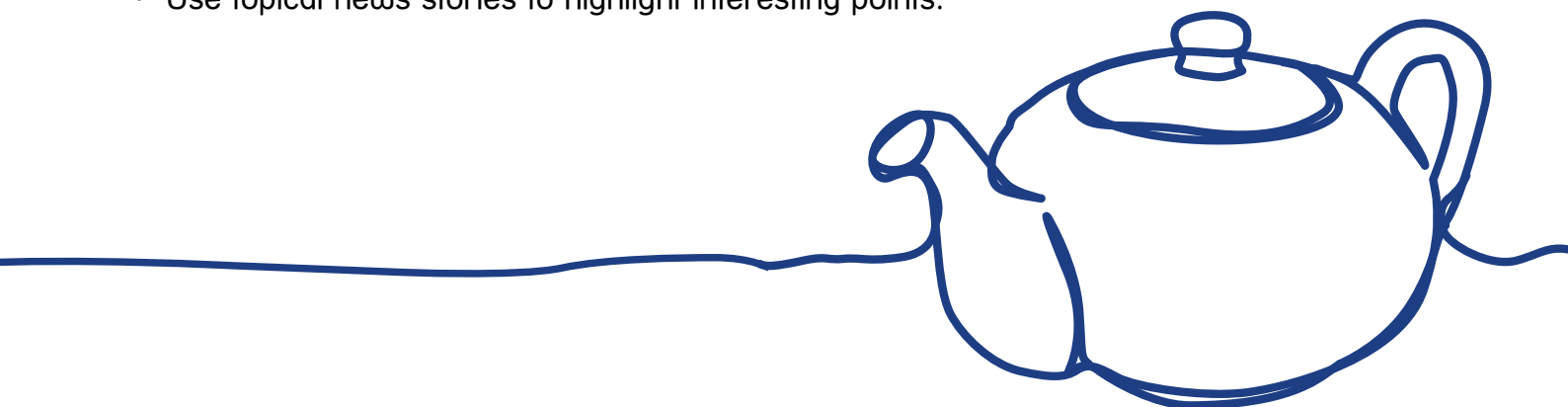
Starting conversations

Sometimes starting a conversation about mental health is the hardest task, and it's important not to be discouraged by negative experiences.

You may want to practice or role play conversations with a close friend or family member until you become more comfortable. It's important to know your own boundaries and be clear on what personal experiences you're happy to reference in conversation.

Here are some tips to help start conversations:

- Ask someone how they are doing or feeling. Encourage them to engage with an open question focused on them and their wellbeing.
- Use your own personal experiences as a conversation starting point. Be clear on what you're happy to share, before you get started.
- Talk about how you maintain personal wellbeing, relax or de-stress (for example, how you use sport or physical activity as part of your daily or weekly routine).
- Use topical news stories to highlight interesting points.

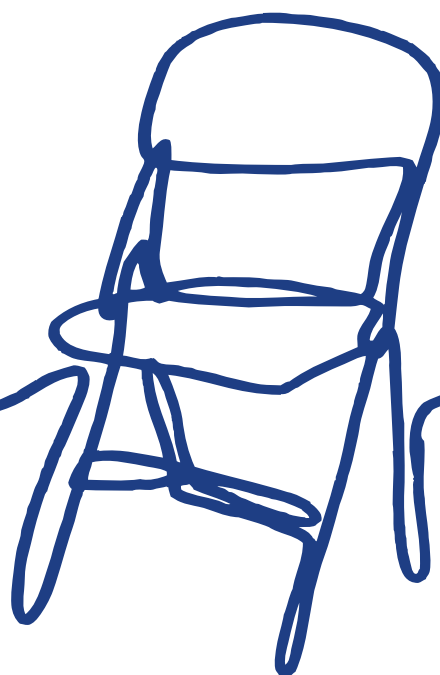


Closing conversations about mental health

Closing conversations effectively helps to reassure the participant that their thoughts and feelings have been listened to, and helps to clarify next steps.

- Sometimes conversations will come to a natural end. If this doesn't happen, provide a gentle indication that the conversation needs to come to an end. You could say something like: "It's been good to talk. We've covered a lot and we will have to wrap up soon because I have another session," or something similar.
- Summarise the conversation and anything you've both agreed to do. For example: "You've told me you're going to speak to your GP about how you're feeling, and I will email you details of your local Mind."
- Ask practical questions such as "Will someone be there when you get home?" or "Is there a friend you can go and see?"
- Offering a listening ear and showing your acceptance, warmth and regard can go a long way to help someone. It may not be possible to get a clear idea of the next steps they'll take as a result of talking to you. Ending the conversation by inviting them to take some time to reflect on what you've discussed, and to consider what they may want to do next could be the best way to bring the conversation to a close, especially if you feel there's nothing more you can say at that time.

If you feel it would be helpful, that it's appropriate within the boundaries of your role, and that you're able to commit to giving more of your time in this way, you may want to arrange another time to meet and talk.



Signposting to support services

General information

Mind

mind.org.uk

InfoLine: 0300 123 3393

The Mind InfoLine can help you find specialist services in your area.

Helplines and listening services

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 (free from any phone).

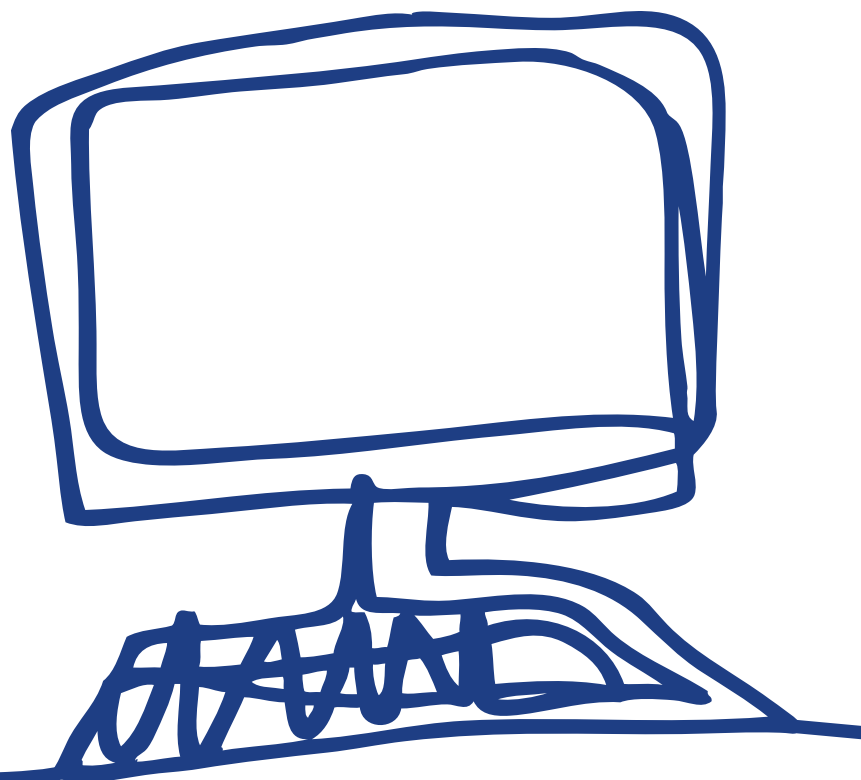
Shout

www.giveusashout.org

For immediate support text SHOUT to 85258 to chat by text to a trained and supervised volunteer. Free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

For more options, visit the Helplines Partnership website for a directory of UK helplines:

www.helplines.org/helplines



Directory of organisations and services

The following table contains a selection of organisations that provide support for people with mental health problems.

Audience	Organisation	Website	Services offered
Anyone	Mind	mind.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information resources • online peer support community • information and legal lines • network of around 120 local Minds across England and Wales, delivering a range of community-based peer support, advocacy and support services
	Mental Health Foundation	mentalhealth.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducts practice-informed research, disseminating resources and learning • champions mindfulness through the BeMindful resource and directory
	Rethink Mental Illness	rethink.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • network of 140 peer support groups • over 200 services, including supported housing, one-to-one help for carers, and group activities for people leaving hospital
	Time to Change	time-to-change.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social movement to change attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems to improve • works in schools, workplaces and the community
	Sane	sane.org.uk/what_we_do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helpline and textcare • online support forum
	NHS England	england.nhs.uk/mental-health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see website for details of services
	NHS IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapy)	NHS IAPT service search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see website for details of services
	Hub of Hope	hubofhope.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a national mental health database, bringing help and support together in one place, with a focus on grassroots organisations
LGBTQ+	Switchboard	switchboard.lgbt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helpline: 0300 330 0630 (10am to 10pm every day) • messaging and email service

Men	CALM	thecalmzone.net/help/get-help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helpline and webchat open daily, 5pm to midnight, for anyone who needs support
	Movember	uk.movember.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see website for a range of services and projects aimed at combatting premature death in men from suicide, prostate and testicular cancer
Under-25s	The Mix	themix.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-to-one chat and messenger services • discussion boards • information
Veterans	Combat Stress	combatstress.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specialist treatment programmes • peer-to-peer support groups • helpline
Condition-specific	Anxiety UK	anxietyuk.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-help group • support to access therapy
	Bipolar UK	bipolaruk.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online peer support groups • regional support groups
	Beat	beateatingdisorders.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online peer support groups • regional support groups
	Gamcare (gambling problems)	gamcare.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helpline: 0808 8020 133, 8am to midnight, seven days a week • live chatroom etc (see website for full details of services)

Self-care

What is self-care?

The World Health Organization defines self-care as “the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider”.

Self-care techniques and simple lifestyle changes may help to lessen the symptoms of some mental health problems – and may even prevent them from developing or getting worse. It’s important to remember that there’s no instant solution, and everyone is different. Self-care techniques are very individual and are most definitely not selfish.

Our pages on [improving and maintaining your mental wellbeing](#) contain more self-care suggestions and tips.

Why is self-care important as a champion?

- Juggling different commitments can leave you feeling pressured. While some pressure is helpful to get tasks done, frequent pressure can lead to stress, which, over time, can be harmful for both your physical and mental health.
- Sharing your experiences can help to change how other people think about mental health, but you need to be comfortable with what you’re sharing – and this may change depending on how you’re feeling on any particular day.
- People may share their problems with you and want you to help fix them, but that’s not your role. Explain this to them and signpost them to relevant support services.

Ways to support your self-care

Sleep well

Sleep is a basic human need and is fundamental to our wellbeing. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep, and poor sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health. We’re all different but, on average, we need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep per night. Try something new, such as a technology ban for 30 minutes before bed or setting a regular bedtime. Aim to optimise your sleep and review the impact it makes.

Food and mood

There is a direct relationship between food and mood, and improving your diet can help you:

- feel more positive
- think more clearly
- have more energy
- feel calmer
- experience fewer mood swings

Think about your food and mood this week. Take notice of your habits and how they link to your behaviour. Look for opportunities to make positive changes to improve your wellbeing. Perhaps you could substitute your 3pm brew for an ice-cold lemon water or herbal tea, or swap the office biscuit tin for a communal fruit bowl.

Relaxation tips

Everyone relaxes in different ways, whether that's taking part in light exercise, such as walking or yoga, or reading a book. When it comes to relaxation techniques, there really is something for everyone. Try a 10-minute relaxation activity at home or in the workplace and see if it affects the way you're feeling. The body scan on page 58 is just one example.

Write your own wellness action plan (WAP)

A wellness action plan is an easy, practical way of helping you to support your own mental health. If you're a line manager or coach, they can also help you support the mental health of your team.

WAPs are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not. They help us to identify what keeps us well, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem should we experience one. They also open up a dialogue with your line manager, supervisor or coach, to help them better understand your needs and experiences, and to better support your mental health. This in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

What is a body scan?

A body scan is a great way of taking time to notice how different parts of your body are feeling. It can take as little or as much time as you like, and you can do it statically (sitting or lying down) or actively (while you're out walking, for example).

If you're out walking, you may want to perform a body scan at both the start and the end of the walk to see if you notice any differences.

A basic scan may involve the following:

1. Turn your attention to your feet, wiggling your toes and getting a real sense of how they feel. Do you notice any particular sensations? How do they feel against the ground? Is the ground soft or hard? What are you standing on? It might be mud, leaves or a pavement. How does it feel beneath your feet?
2. Now bring your attention to your ankles, then up to your knees and thighs, scanning both legs equally.
3. Moving up the body, turn your attention to your hips and lower back, then up your spine to the top of your back and shoulders. How do your neck and shoulders feel? Any sensations?
4. Now move your attention to the top of your arms, down to the elbows, then the wrists, hands and fingers. What can you feel? Is the temperature cold or warm? Can you feel a breeze?

Finally bring your attention to your chest and stomach. This part of the body is very expressive and is hugely linked to our emotions. If it feels heavy or anxious, consider using the breathing activity to help you expel these feelings with each outgoing breath.

Five Ways to Wellbeing for champions

Connect

Speak to a friend, family member or another champion.

Visit Side by Side to connect with people online.

Disconnect – leave your phone at home or have a phone free hour.



Keep learning

Try a different self-care activity.

Read an interesting blog or listen to an inspiring podcast.




Take notice

Write down three things each day you are grateful for.

Try a mindful breathing exercise from Every Mind Matters.

Learn how to reframe unhelpful thoughts.



Get active

Go for a walk during lunch or take a walking meeting.

Build activity into your daily routine.

Try stretch and flex activities and build them into your week.



Give

Share feedback or a tip of something that has worked on the champions group.

Say thank you and really mean it.

Pay someone a heartfelt compliment.



More ideas for looking after yourself during champion activities can be found [here](#).

Mental health calendar

Month	Key moments
February	Time to Talk Day – First Thursday of the month Children's mental health week
March	Eating Disorders Awareness Week Self-Injury Awareness Day – 1 March every year University Mental Health Day World Bipolar Day – 30 March every year
April	Stress Awareness Month
May	Mental Health Awareness Week – Usually the third week of May
June	Volunteers week – First week in June every year
September	World Suicide Prevention Day – 10 September every year
October	World Mental Health Day – 10 October every year
November	National Stress Awareness Day – First Wednesday of November every year