

# Guide 2: How can providing a physical activity service add value to my organisation?

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



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## This guide covers

- The value a physical activity service can add to your organisation.
- The value it can add the experience of your participants.
- How it enhances your offer to volunteers.

We believe sport and physical activity has an important role to play in building resilience, in enabling and supporting mental health recovery and in tackling stigma. A sport and physical activity service is a non-clinical intervention which demonstrates clinical outcomes, which are reinforced by a growing evidence base.

## Delivering a physical activity service can add value to your organisation by:

- Helping you meet your strategic objectives and engage new audiences. Whether your objectives relate to helping people play an equal part in society, helping people stay well, diversifying audiences, providing choice or improving services and support, physical activity programmes can help you reach your targets. A physical activity service can also help you reach people who may not traditionally engage with mental health service providers.
- Helping you build relationships outside of traditional mental health networks, and helping you to diversify income streams. Putting on a physical activity service will give you the opportunity to engage with commissioners from the public health sector, and to contribute to wider agendas. Sport has a huge reach and the potential to generate fundraising through corporate sponsorship and community fundraising activities is huge. You can also deliver training to the sport and physical activity sector (for instance Mental Health Awareness or Workplace Wellbeing training).
- Looking at the outcomes from our Get Set to Go programme, we know that physical activity improves both physical and mental health for participants. Being physically active can change people's lives, and can contribute to wider outcomes for society through community development.
- Physical activity services provide a new platform to showcase your organisation and the impact you make, for instance through engaging the media from a sports angle.

A physical activity service can be developed to support your organisation's strategy, structure and finances. It can be embedded within existing services and adapted to be delivered in existing venues.

Further information about the social value of sport can be found in the research section of the [Sport England](#) website.

## A physical activity service can enhance your offer to participants

- It can appeal to new audiences who may not have thought about their mental health before. People who may be attracted to a football group or a yoga group rather than your traditional offering, but who could still really benefit from becoming involved with a mental health organisation.
- It can provide a stepping stone for participants to become active within mainstream community settings, and therefore reduce their social isolation.
- It can help alleviate the symptoms of common long-term physical health conditions such as arthritis and high blood pressure, and could therefore lessen the burden on the NHS.
- Your activity's primary focus doesn't have to be mental health, so it might be more appealing to participants who are looking for some 'lighter touch' support.

## A physical activity service can enhance your offer to volunteers

- It can give volunteers an opportunity to develop a different set of skills.
- It can empower your volunteers to take up opportunities and paid work in sport and physical activity.
- It can give volunteers the chance to try a number of different activities themselves for free, or at a subsidised rate.
- It could present opportunities to gain recognised qualifications.

## Case study: Why we wanted to deliver Get Set to Go, Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind

Using sport as a means to help people improve their mental health was something we had been thinking about for some time. We knew that sport had a wide appeal and could produce meaningful and powerful outcomes for people, so setting up a Get Set to Go physical activity programme tied in well with our aim to offer a wide range of services to support people in different ways.

Delivering Get Set to Go has helped us in four key ways:

- Working with people with mental health problems who had not used our services before.
- Forming relationships and networks within the sports community (which has helped us in other areas of our work too).
- Helping the organisation think about the benefits of this type of project.
- Being able to provide different options for people at key stages of their recovery journey such as progression from therapies to Get Set to Go.

You can find out more about how being active can support good mental health by visiting the sport and physical activity pages on the [Mind website](#) and the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation pages on the [Sport and Recreation Alliance website](#).

You can find out some useful facts about mental health on the [NHS confederation website](#).