



Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit

Guide 4:

Making physical
activities inclusive
to people
experiencing mental
health problems





About this guide

We've produced this guide to upskill sport, physical activity and mental health providers on how to make their physical activity sessions and projects more inclusive, accessible and welcoming to people experiencing mental health problems.

Who is this guide for?

Anyone working or volunteering in sport, physical activity and/or mental health.

What does this guide cover?

Click on the headings below to go straight to the information you're looking for.

- 03** Taking a person-centred approach
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Taking a person-centred approach

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Taking a person-centred approach

What is a person-centred approach?

A person-centred approach puts people at the centre of a service so it's designed and tailored around them. This ensures their feelings, ambitions and motivations are at the heart of what's delivered.

It's a move away from more traditional service- or system-centred approaches – which fits people into existing services. The table to the right¹ highlights the difference between person-centred and service-centred approaches.

Five benefits to a person-centred approach

1. Better understanding of the person and their needs, motivations and barriers.
2. This helps to develop a better relationship between the person and provider.
3. As a result, the person is likely to use or take part in the service.
4. They're also more likely to take part for a longer period of time.
5. The person is likely to recommend the service to friends and family.

Person-centred	Service-centred
Talking with the person	Talking about the person
Planning with the person	Planning for the person
Focused on the person's strengths, abilities, skills, needs and aspirations	Focused on the person's labels and diagnosis
Finding solutions that work for the person and are preferably community-based	Creating support based on what works for people with 'that diagnosis'
Things are done that way because they work for the person	Things are done that way because they work for the service or those running the service
Family and community members are seen as true partners	Family and community members are seen as secondary

¹ We've adapted this table from the [National Disability Practitioners' 'What is a person centred approach?' Factsheet](#).

Case study

Bath Mind's women's swimming

Bath Mind saw that local women from racialised communities faced barriers to getting active. For example, many women from the local Mosque felt vulnerable when attempting activities because of potential discrimination and attacks.

The opportunity was there to create a successful service. But finding the right sessions for everyone was difficult, since different cultural sensitivities, and finding the right venue, ruled out many activities.

Some of the ladies Bath Mind approached said they'd like to try swimming. So Bath Mind's Special Projects Manager Ailsa Eaglestone and team set about making it happen.

“We needed to create an environment where the ladies could feel safe and comfortable. That meant the sessions had to be truly women-only, we couldn't have men in unisex changing rooms or looking down from the balconies.”

“I remember some of the women were wearing black, water-proof leggings in the pool,” says Ailsa. “Some new joiners started to do the same thing. They said that the leggings made them feel more body confident in the water, so they'd swim more often.”

After a year and a half, the sessions regularly hosted up to 32 ladies from regions as diverse as Jordan, Turkey, Albania, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt and Syria. Twelve could not swim before the sessions, and were now becoming confident in the water. Nine ladies had never been in a pool in this country.

What they learned

Having champions within the community they wanted to reach helped win buy-in and shape the project around the needs of the women involved. As well as recruiting participants, champions were also on-hand to translate marketing and communications.

The team found it could be difficult to capture feedback through evaluation forms because of the language barrier. “If you're in a similar position get creative by asking for oral feedback through a translator or champions if possible” says Ailsa.





Involving people with lived experience of mental health problems

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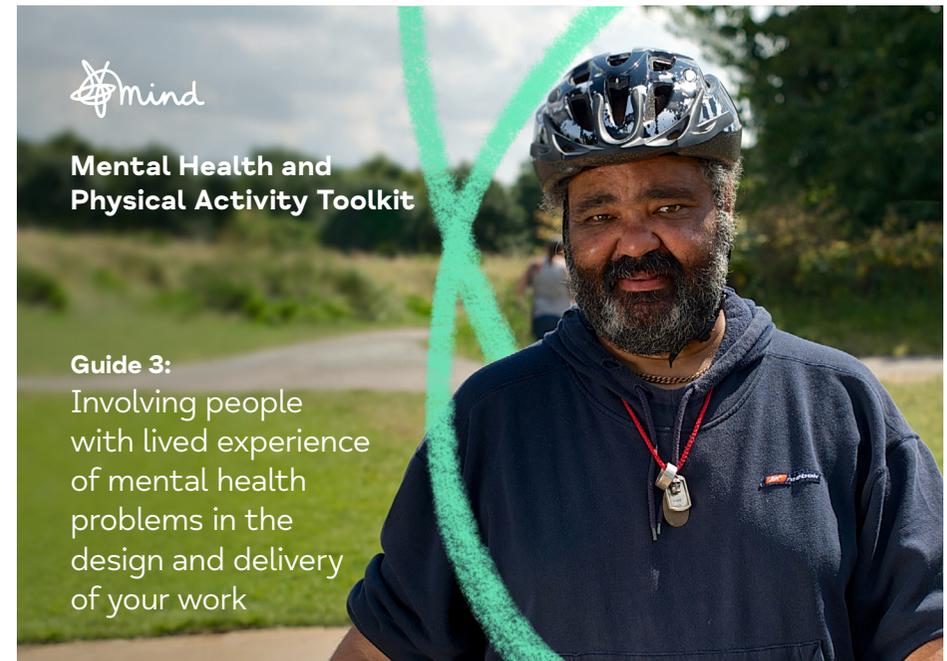
The next three sections will showcase how you can adopt a person-centred approach in your work.

Involving people with lived experience of mental health problems

To design, develop and deliver a truly inclusive and person-centred physical activity service, it's vital to involve your target audience from the beginning.

At Mind, we work hard to understand the needs and experiences of people experiencing mental health problems. This drives everything we do. So we actively seek opportunities for people with lived experience of mental health problems to get involved with and influence our work wherever we can.

[Guide 3: Involving people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design and delivery of your work](#) highlights what this looks like, why it's important and the benefits it can add to your service. The guide also provides an insight into our [Influence and Participation toolkit](#) which offers further support around involving people with lived experience of mental health problems.





Using the STEP model to make physical activities inclusive

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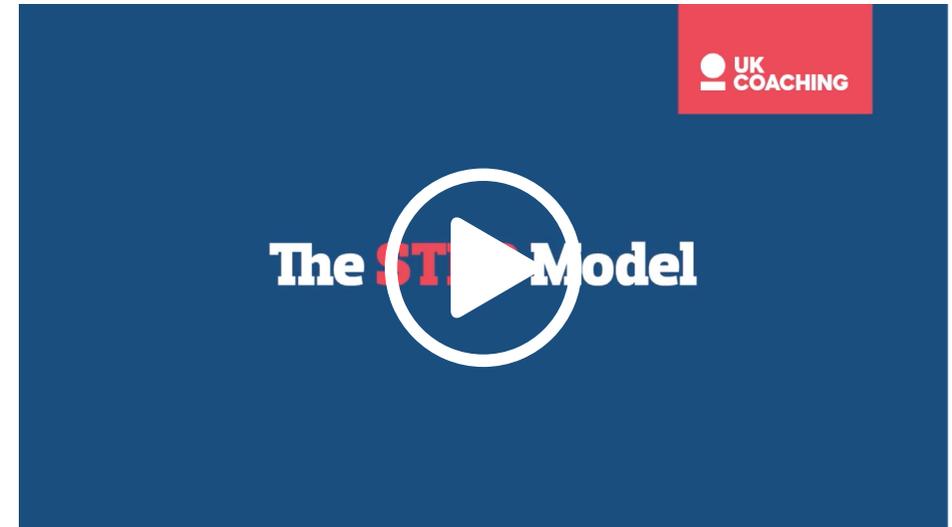
Using the STEP model to make physical activities inclusive

The STEP model helps you make sessions inclusive for everyone. This includes people experiencing mental health problems.

STEP stands for Space, Task, Equipment and People. By making small changes to each of these elements you can adjust sessions for people's needs.

For example, making a playing area smaller (Task) can make it more accessible for people who find mobility difficult. Or offering people tennis racquets rather than a rounders bat (Equipment) can make an activity easier for beginners.

The STEP model can also be used to adapt activities for existing participants. This could include getting participants involved in delivering the activity or providing support to new participants (People).



STEP model examples

STEP	Think about	Ideas for adaption
Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need a specific sport venue or could the activity take place anywhere? • Is the activity taking place indoors/ outdoors/online? • Is the participant taking part in their own home? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a space where participants already feel comfortable (like a local church/mosque/temple, café or community centre). • Can the activity be done outdoors? Exercising in green spaces or near water can have extra mental health benefits². • Can the activity be made available online to allow people who may not be able to attend to take part in their home?
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the outcome of the session? • Is the task suitable for all abilities? • Is the activity fun? • Can you provide activity sheets for participants so they can be active at home? • Do you need to modify the rules to make your activity more inclusive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add social elements to allow the group to interact and work together. • Offer more than one option for an activity (for example: doing a standing squat or standing up from a chair). • Adapt tasks to make them easier or harder depending on ability. • Provide a recording or take-home sheet to support those who are socially isolated or do not feel comfortable at the time, to take part at home. • Modify scoring to boost inclusion. For example: football – score a traditional goal = 3 points, cross bar or posts = 2 points, side-netting = 1 point.

² NHS (2010). [Green exercise and mental health](#).

STEP	Think about	Ideas for adaption
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your equipment accessible and inclusive for everyone? • Can you access affordable equipment? • Can you suggest cheap alternatives if participants don't have or cannot afford equipment? • Can you increase the size, height or arrangement of equipment or targets to build people's motivation and confidence? • If delivering online, how can you support people to become comfortable with technology? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide activities that do not require equipment (like bodyweight-only sessions or using items that can be found around the home such as tins and books). • Work with a local club or coach to offer equipment. • Adapt the size of goals and targets based on ability. • Host a practice online session so people can get familiar with using the technology you're using for the activity. Ask for feedback and check it works for them. • Record sessions so participants can try activities in their own time.
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you provide extra support to new participants? • How can you encourage people to join in? • What can you do to help participants feel part of a group? • Do your participants need language or communication support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use peer support – people using their own experiences to help each other (see Guide 6: Engaging volunteers in a physical activity and mental health service for more information). • Offer the opportunity for people to watch the first few sessions. This may help them to feel more comfortable about joining in. • Focus your session on building confidence and self-esteem (like group work, team building, and working on tasks together). • Develop ground rules with the group so people know what to expect from the coach and each other. • Can a member of the local community translate and support people who find language a barrier? See Bath Mind's case study for an example of how to do this.

It's best practice to involve participants in your decision-making around the STEP model.

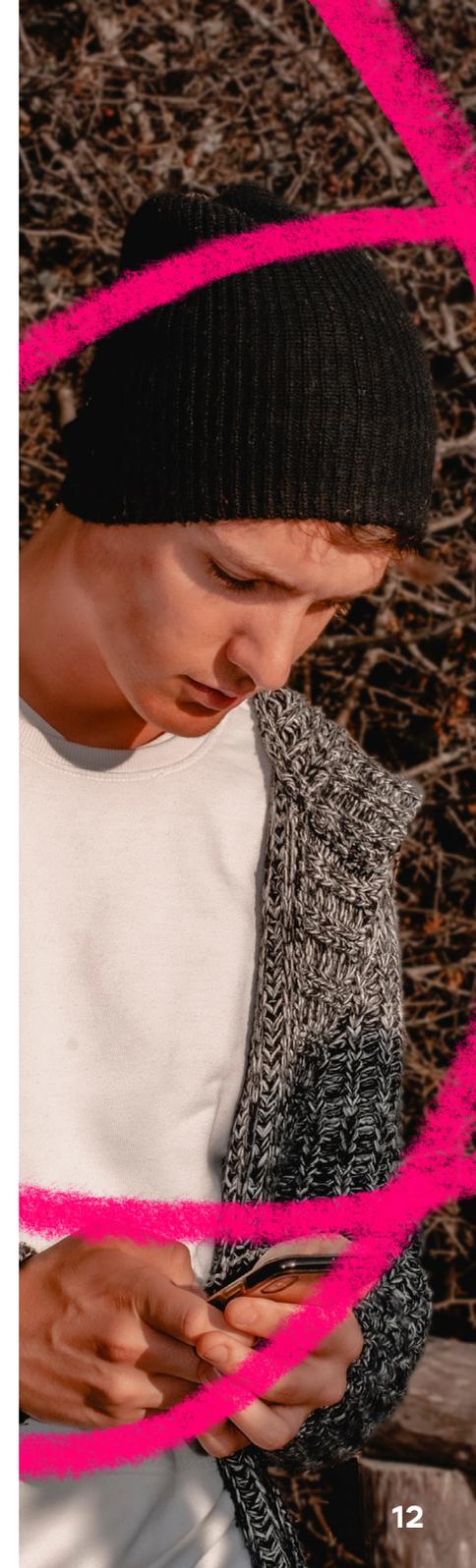
This will help:

- enable participants to design the activity so it suits their needs
- provide flexibility which will encourage the participants to take part
- enable the coach/instructor to test different tasks.

Resources

Looking for some ideas on making sessions inclusive? These resources may help.

<u>Get Set to Go Programme recommendations</u>	Page 37 provides recommendations for making sessions more inclusive to people experiencing mental health problems.
<u>Activity Alliance Adapting Activities</u>	Guidance and tools providing STEP tips for organisations, physical activity providers, family and friends.
<u>Scottish Disability Sport Inclusion Cards</u>	A variety of inclusive warm-up and adapted activity ideas.





Using CARE[©] to make physical activities inclusive

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Using CARE[®] to make physical activities inclusive

CARE stands for: Coaching and customer skills, Awareness, Respect and Empathy.

Thinking about each part can help you promote good mental health through the way you deliver your activities.

UK COACHING

Promoting Good Mental Health Through Coaching

What a coach can do?

Coaching and customer skills



Be welcoming



Talk about mental health



Offer alternatives



Get feedback

Awareness



Ask people how they are feeling



Pay attention



Use your observation and listening skills



Ask how they would like to be supported

Respect



Avoid intrusive questions



Treat everyone fairly



Make yourself available to listen



Treat information in confidence

Empathy



Learn from reliable sources



Listen and seek understanding



Don't feel pressured to find answers



See the individual, not their diagnosis




mind.org.uk
nhs.uk/oneyou

Check out our animation
ukcoaching.org/mentalhealth

This table shows you how to use CARE in your sessions. Use it alongside the [Promoting good mental health through coaching animation](#).

These suggestions benefit everyone in the session, not just people experiencing mental health problems.

CARE	Considerations	How to do it
<p>Coaching and customer skills</p>	<p>Think about the customer's (or participant's) experience before, during and after your session.</p> <p>It's important to keep to the boundaries and limitations of your role. But use your coaching and customer skills to provide a positive experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make yourself or another member of the team available at the start and end of sessions to talk to participants. • Ask for feedback from each session to understand what people did and didn't like. • Use your coaching skills to be person-centred to understand the participant's needs and motivations. • Follow up with participants that haven't attended sessions for several weeks to see if they're OK. This helps to re-engage them and reduce relapse.
<p>Awareness</p>	<p>Understanding the person and what is usual for them is really important. This will help you to notice changes and be able to ask the right questions to show you are mindful of their mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to what makes people engage in your sessions. • Use your observation and listening skills to notice changes in people's behaviour. • Ask the person how they would like to be supported if they are having an off day or are unwell. It is important you ask them for the support they may need instead of making assumptions.

CARE	Considerations	How to do it
Respect	We should be respectful of everyone in our sessions, respecting their individuality, confidentiality and right to privacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid asking intrusive or personal questions. ● Treat everyone fairly and don't single people out. ● Make yourself available to listen before, during and after sessions but within the boundaries of your role. ● Personal information is confidential and should not be disclosed. If you have concerns about a person's welfare make sure you seek safeguarding support (see Guide 9: Safeguarding and mental health for information on setting boundaries and how and when to break confidentiality).
Empathy	Put yourself in the participant's shoes and consider how you'd want people to treat you if you were unwell or in distress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn about mental health from reliable sources or upskill yourself through training (see Upskilling the workforce). ● Be familiar with the culture and religion of the people you're working with. ● Listen, seek understanding and be empathetic without being patronising. ● Don't try to solve people's problems or feel pressured to find answers. ● See the person not their diagnosis – “labels are for jam jars” is an appropriate approach.



Upskilling your workforce

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Upskilling your workforce

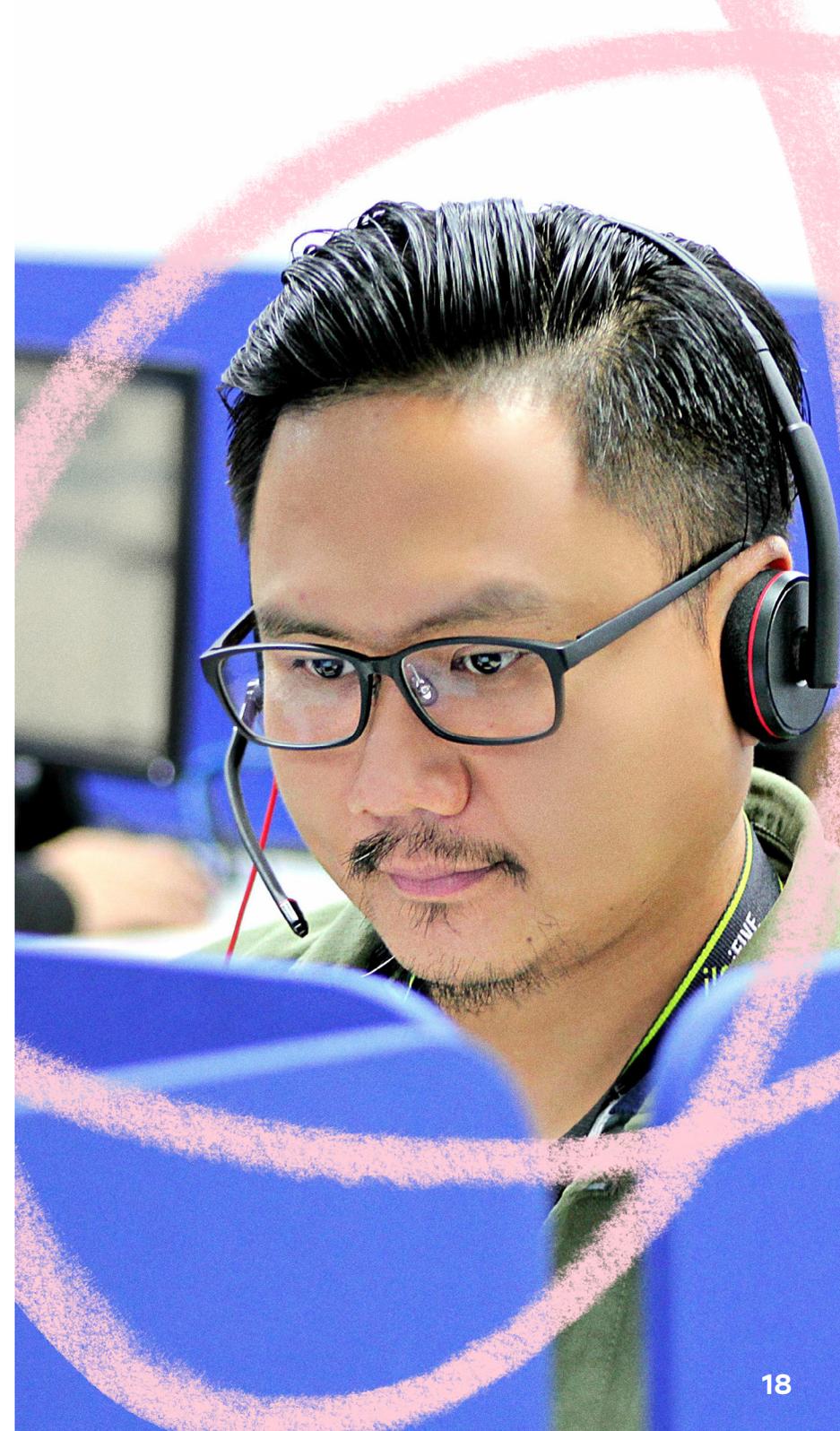
Learning more about mental health means you and your team can deliver activities that better support people experiencing mental health problems to be physically active.

This doesn't need to be through formal training courses (listed in [Table 1](#)).

These informal methods can help increase knowledge and confidence:

- Reading resources, case studies and research.
- Speaking to people with lived experience of mental health problems, physical activity providers or those who deliver physical activities to people experiencing mental health problems.
- Taking part in online workshops.
- Observing others delivering activities to people experiencing mental health problems.

You may also want to consider developing your team's knowledge of diversity to support engagement with wider communities.



Case study

England Boxing's Box in Mind programme

“In boxing there’s an idea that you don’t show hurt, you just carry on,” says Matthew Williams, who helped develop [England Boxing’s Box in Mind programme](#) in partnership with Mind.

“That kind of attitude can be reflected outside the ring too. Many people are struggling, but just go to the gym as normal, and don’t share how they feel.”

Launched in 2018, Box in Mind was developed to change this. The three-hour workshop is aimed at reducing stigma associated with mental health in the sport. It helps to upskill people on spotting the signs someone is encountering problems, plus what they can do to get them the right help.

The workshop was a pilot programme as part of Mind’s Sector Support programme. It is an adapted version of Mind’s Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity training and is delivered under license.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, England Boxing decided to take the workshops online. “We brought together some of the coaches involved and talked through their ideas,” says Lynette Mayo, membership services manager at England Boxing. “It’s very difficult to hold people’s attention for three hours online. So we reduced it to three-quarters of an hour with support from Mind, who helped develop some COVID-relevant slides.”

The workshops have been a huge success both online and in-person. So far 141 delegates have attended 16

face-to-face workshops, while over 300 people have attended 60 online sessions.

Stephen Ware, co-designer for Box in Mind, says: “As a boxing coach myself and former competitive amateur boxer, I am certain this workshop encourages boxing coaches and clubs to implement the small, practical changes that could help to support people experiencing mental health problems. It has been developed with input from people within the sport with lived experiences of mental health problems, and the content is built around real boxing experiences.”

What they learned

“Don’t do it on your own,” says Lynette.

“Reach out to mental health organisations to see if they can help. Mind were great in providing advice and support to ensure what we were doing was effective.”

Don’t be afraid to make changes. Lynette says that sometimes delegates bring up excellent ideas in a session, which she calls ‘golden nuggets’. She advises discussing them and using them in later sessions to keep the workshop evolving and responding to people’s needs.



Training courses

Course	Overview
<u>Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity+ eLearning</u>	<p>This online course is aimed at everyone who works in clubs, community sport and physical activity – such as coaches, activators, front of house staff, administrators and volunteers.</p> <p>This course aims to give you the knowledge, skills and confidence to better understand and support people experiencing mental health problems, and create a positive environment that ensures they enjoy the benefits of being active and keep coming back for more.</p>
<u>Mind's Workplace wellbeing training</u>	<p>Poor mental health is now the number one reason for staff absence. Our mental health training offers a cost-effective way to promote mental wellbeing in your organisation and at home.</p>

The following courses haven't been developed by Mind but we feel they may help to increase your knowledge and confidence around mental health.

Course	Overview
<u>Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)</u>	<p>Mental Health First Aid aims to help you learn how to identify, understand and support someone who may be experiencing problems with their mental health. They have courses focused on <u>adults</u>, <u>youth</u>, <u>higher education</u> and <u>armed forces</u>. There are half-day, one-day or two-day options for each course. The courses are delivered by a range of organisations including many <u>local Minds</u>.</p>
<u>Zero Suicide Alliance training</u>	<p>Free online awareness course, which aims to provide a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who may be having suicidal thoughts.</p>
<u>ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training</u>	<p>A two-day interactive workshop that focuses on how to provide suicide first aid interventions. It aims to upskill participants to recognise when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety.</p>
<u>Loughborough University's Disordered Eating in Athletes</u>	<p>This online CPD course is designed to improve coaches' knowledge and confidence in identifying eating problems and to provide them with tools on how to support athletes who may be struggling.</p>

Case study

Upskilling EFL's workforce to better understand mental health

Through our On Your Side partnership with the English Football League (EFL), many people working in football have learned new skills by taking part in training.

On Your Side Training

The football-focused training was developed in partnership with Washington Mind following co-design events with staff from clubs, Club Community Organisations and local Minds.

Impact of the training (as of March 2021):

- 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge improved as a result of the training.
- 66% of participants felt confident to signpost people to mental health help and support.
- 54% of participants felt confident to talk to colleagues about mental health.

Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning

- All EFL clubs and community trusts were provided free access to Mind, Sport England, UK Coaching and 1st4Sport's [eLearning](#).

Impact of the training (as of March 2021):

- 1,523 staff have completed the training.
- 59% of participants said their understanding of mental health and its impact on physical activity increased as a result of the training.

“This course has really helped me to understand mental health and give me insight into what my players are going through. I am coaching them tonight and I am going to make sure I approach conversations differently using the CARE model”.

Staff Member



Resources and case studies

<u>UK Coaching</u>	Podcast discussing live examples of using a person-centred approach in coaching.
<u>Oxfordshire Mind</u>	Provides an insight into popular physical activities attended by people experiencing mental health problems.
<u>Bath Mind</u>	Carolyn, a peer mentor, discusses how encouraging and talking to people during physical activity has a positive effect on mental health.
<u>The Behavioural Insights Team</u>	A resource on adapting your activities so they are more engaging, welcoming and enjoyable.
<u>Richmond Group of Charities</u>	Research looking into people with long-term conditions and their attitudes towards physical activity.
<u>Roshni Ghar</u>	Insight and learning on making physical activity inclusive for women from the South Asian Community.



Get Set to Go recommendations

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Get Set to Go recommendations

Based on the findings from phase one of our Get Set to Go programme, 18 recommendations were developed by Loughborough University and Mind to help organisations wanting to support people experiencing mental health problems to be active (see pages 38-39 of the [Get Set to Go Programme Evaluation summary](#)).

The table below showcases a selection of the top recommendations.

Recommendation	Information
<p>Involve people with lived experience of mental health problems</p>	<p>It's vital to include people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design, development and delivery of any physical activity service focusing on mental health (see Guide 3: Involving people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design and delivery of your work for more information on how to do this).</p> <p>It's important to involve people who represent the local community and from a diverse range of backgrounds (for example age, gender, race, faith/culture, disabled/non-disabled) to ensure your activity is inclusive and appropriate for different groups of people.</p>
<p>Include family and friends</p>	<p>Family and friends should be included in the activity through 'bring a friend' and/or introductory sessions.</p>
<p>Focus on autonomous motivation</p>	<p>Activities should focus on increasing the motivation of participants by helping create feelings of autonomy (wanting to be active because they enjoy it, rather than they feel pressured into it), competence and connectedness.</p>
<p>Help to overcome barriers to participation</p>	<p>Organisations should identify and understand the barriers preventing people experiencing mental health problems from attending their activities. People may also face barriers due to disability, faith/culture and/or other reasons.</p> <p>With this knowledge, organisations can then adapt their activities to reduce or remove these barriers and inform participants of the adaptations.</p> <p>Give extra support to participants attending their first session, including practical information and support to access the session and facilities.</p>

Recommendation	Information
Same place, same time, same deliverer	Minimise changes where possible. Try and ensure activities take place at the same venue, at the same time and with the same person delivering each session. Let participants know about changes in advance.
Involve peer volunteers and provide training and support	<p>Volunteers play a fundamental role in all sport and physical activity services. Try to include peer volunteers – volunteers with lived experience of mental health problems – in your activities. You could encourage participants to become peer volunteers if they are confident and comfortable doing this role.</p> <p>All volunteers will need training at the start of their role as well as ongoing support (supervision, guidance, a dedicated person to contact if they have any issues).</p> <p>For more information please see Guide 6: Engaging volunteers in a physical activity and mental health service.</p>
Send supportive messages	Personalised supportive messages should be used to prompt participants, including people who have stopped taking part in the programme. Messages may encourage participants to return to sessions and reduce relapse (i.e. returning to previous levels of physical activity).
Develop links between physical activity and mental health providers	It is important to build good, strong relationships between physical activity and mental health organisations. This will help to maintain stability for participants, provide a welcoming atmosphere and sustainable activities.
Upskill those involved	Physical activity staff should be upskilled on mental health and mental health staff on physical activity. This will help to improve the participant's experience.
Promote walking as an achievable activity	<p>Walking should be promoted as an achievable, beneficial and sustainable method of being active.</p> <p>In Get Set to Go, walking was shown to be an effective starting point for inactive people as well as for those returning to activity. Importantly, walking was something Get Set to Go participants could maintain when their mental health declined.</p>
Develop activities that can take place in person and at home	Providing people with the choice to take part in sessions in person or at home/remotely will ensure you reach more people. This is especially important for people who feel uncomfortable coming to activities at the start or are digitally excluded (who don't have internet or a computer/phone, for example).

Good practice examples

- 1** Newport Mind, as part of their Get Set to Go programme, provided video tips on how to get active at home during the coronavirus pandemic. The videos were posted on social media and signposted people to various activities and tools.
- 2** In response to the first lockdown, Mind, with the support of people with experience of mental health problems, produced [printable activity sheets](#). These were designed to help people who were digitally excluded (weren't able to access online sessions and materials) to get active in their homes. Over 26,500 activity sheets were distributed by local Minds, in Heron Food stores and via English Football League's [Extra Time Hubs](#) care packages.
- 3** As part of [Great British Week of Sport's](#) Mindful Monday initiative, local Minds delivered both in-person and online activities. This ensured people who were digitally excluded and people who didn't want to attend group sessions were given the opportunity to take part.



10 talk to me principles

(adapted from Activity Alliance)

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10 talk to me principles

(adapted from Activity Alliance)

In 2014, Activity Alliance released their [Talk to me report](#). The report identified [10 principles](#) to support providers to deliver opportunities that are more appealing for disabled people. Through our partnership with Activity Alliance, we have adapted their principles so they are relevant for people experiencing mental health problems.

1 My channels

Use communication channels that I already trust. For example, word of mouth, social media and local media.

2 My locality

Travelling to activities can be a significant barrier so I would much prefer opportunities closer to me as well as the option to take part at home.

3 Me, not my diagnosis

Focus on me and what I can do rather than my diagnosis. Many people experiencing mental health problems do not identify as being disabled and may be put off by promotion that focuses on mental health.

4 My values

Understanding what my values are and linking an activity to these can make taking part more appealing for me.

5 My life story

Keep me interested over time through new ideas. My values and interests may change so adapt to keep me engaged.

6 Reassure me

I fear standing out and need to be reassured that any activity I attend will be welcoming and suitable for my needs.

7 Include me

I need to know I'm good enough to take part.

Providers should make sure that people with varying ability levels feel included in sessions.

8 Listen to me

I would like the opportunity to discuss my needs in a safe and private environment before starting an activity.

9 Welcome me

An unpleasant first experience can prevent me from taking part again. Ensure my first experience is enjoyable so I'm likely to return.

10 Show me

Show me how similar people to me have benefited from being involved in the activity.



Have a question or would like more information?

You can find more information at [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk).
Or why not take a look at the other guides in our
[Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit](#).

If you have any further questions, please contact
our Physical Activity team at sport@mind.org.uk.

Produced with support from



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Registered Charity No. 219830