



Case study

England Athletics – #RunAndTalk programme

Project at a glance

- #RunAndTalk running clubs and groups recruit Mental Health Champions to help raise awareness of mental health.
- #RunAndRevise aims to reach young people and spread the wellbeing benefits of physical activity.



33,000+
people
engaged
(2016-2020)



1,200+
Mental Health
Champions
recruited



420+
running clubs
and groups
involved

The challenge

The people involved in running clubs and groups understand first-hand the mental health benefits of physical activity. So how could England Athletics amplify these positive effects and get more people talking about mental health?

England Athletics' response

Working in partnership with Mind, they launched the #RunAndTalk initiative in 2017. The aim was to inspire more clubs to prioritise mental health and promote the benefits of running for wellbeing.

Initially, the idea was to set up physical activity groups through local Minds. Yet Liz Purbrick, Inclusion Manager at England Athletics, says that running clubs were already embracing members' mental health.

“What we found was that in many cases there were people at running clubs passionate about supporting mental health and others who wanted to talk about their experiences. So we changed tack and worked to identify Mental Health Champions at the clubs and groups.”

Clubs signing up to the #RunAndTalk programme appoint Mental Health Champions. Their role is to support people to access the wellbeing benefits of running, reduce stigma and get people talking about mental health. They also have the chance to become a Mental Health Ambassador, supporting other Champions and advising England Athletics on their mental health work.

“At the start, some people were worried what inviting people experiencing mental health problems to clubs would look like and what support they’d need,” says Liz. “But I think now more people realise that it could be someone that they know – your friend or parent. That makes it more relatable.”

Training helps Champions understand their role and support others effectively. This includes online learning plus a comprehensive handbook that Mind helped to create.

However, despite its success, Liz realised the campaign wasn’t reaching under-35s. So in 2019, England Athletics launched #RunAndRevise– a digital campaign aimed at getting more young people moving.

“#RunAndRevise encourages young people to take a break from revision and exams and get some exercise – hopefully with other people.” Liz Purbrick



The results

Today, there's more than 420 clubs and groups involved and 1,200+ Champions.

Participants say the #RunAndTalk programme has helped them sleep better, find others to talk to and regained lost confidence.

“I joined because I need to do something for me that is not expensive but allows me to talk to other adults.” Participant

“Mind’s expertise really helped us,” says Liz. “Mind reviewed all the induction information and helped provide volunteers with the correct guidance. We also regularly access Mind’s resources around safeguarding and other toolkits.”



Learning

- **Connect with volunteers**

“We were able to do a lot with very little,” says Liz. “And that’s down to the passion and commitment of our volunteers.”

- **Encourage sharing through social media**

England Athletics set up a closed Facebook group where Champions could share ideas and experiences. This helped spread practical learning and inspiration as well as celebrate the great work of the Champions.

- **Get the right resourcing**

Liz says that while it’s amazing the programme has had such an impact, more resources could amplify its effect further. She recommends organisations who would like to replicate the programme, should factor in time and financial resource at the planning stage.

- **Work with the right partners**

Because of their unique experience it made sense to partner with running clubs and groups. Consider who is best placed to partner on a programme rather than ‘reinventing the wheel’.



Relevant support available

Mental health champions: a toolkit for the sport and physical activity sector

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: Engaging volunteers in a physical activity and mental health service

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: Mental health and safeguarding

Mental Health Awareness for Sport & Physical Activity+ eLearning

