



Case study

Activity Alliance - mental health at work

Project at a glance

- Mind and Activity Alliance formed a strategic partnership to help put inclusion and mental health support at the heart of sport and physical activity.
- Activity Alliance harnessed Mind's expertise to support their own staff's mental health via...



Training
managers in
mental health



Introducing
Mental Health
First Aiders



24/7 support
via Employee
Assistance
Scheme

The challenge

Activity Alliance joins members, partners and disabled people to make active lives possible. Together, they challenge perceptions and change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport. With much of their work concentrating on the activity and health of others, the charity recognised the need to focus on their own employees' wellbeing.

“Mental health is so important,” says Jess Cook, Activity Alliance’s National Partnerships Advisor. “We have to be aware of what demands our staff are under, both inside and outside of work, so we can support or help them to help themselves. Otherwise you’re not going to have a very happy or productive workforce.”

Jess wanted to ensure employees had somewhere to turn to if they weren't feeling well.

“Our staff need to be able to share if they're not OK. Then we can give them the support they need.”

Activity Alliance's response

In 2019, Mind and Activity Alliance formed a strategic partnership to help put inclusion and mental health support at the heart of physical activity organisations. This included Activity Alliance supporting Mind on inclusion and Mind providing practical help on mental health. This work kicked off with a far-reaching mental health action plan.

“We didn’t just want woolly KPIs,” says Jess. “We wanted to have tangible outcomes for our organisation. So we put together an in-depth action plan, based on Mind’s [Thriving at Work resource](#).”

Following this, a Wellbeing Action Group was established to work on the mental health action plan. The group included representatives from across the organisation to ensure everyone felt connected to the work.

“We made sure we covered the whole organisation,” says Jess. “This included senior management to take things to the board, as well as HR advice. This group is also responsible for designing staff away days and actioning staff suggestions.”

One of the key things they did to embed mental health was offering Mind’s online Mental Health Awareness in Sport and Physical Activity training to staff at all levels. The training equips staff with mental health knowledge so they can start to recognise when someone is experiencing mental health problems. Importantly, senior staff were also trained so they could support the members of their teams.

The organisation also joined an Employee Assistance Programme provided by Canada Life. Employees download an app that offers 24/7 counselling and wellbeing support. “Staff like to know it’s there on their phones if they need it,” says Jess.

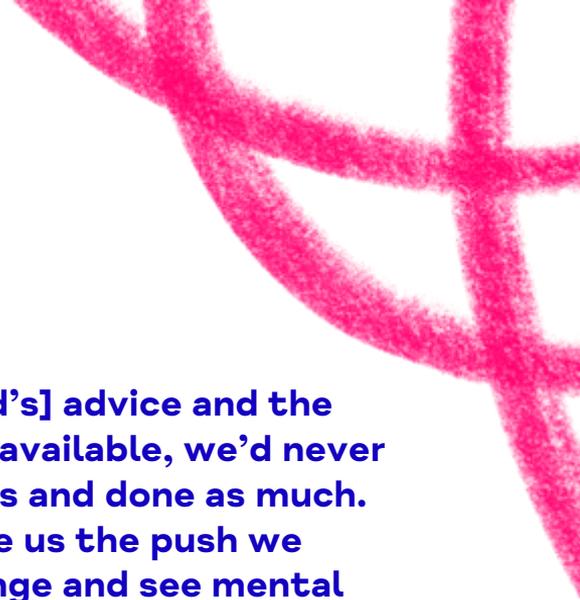
The results

As a result of the awareness-raising activities, one member of staff who'd experienced mental health issues felt comfortable to share their journey in a staff update. "We knew this person had struggled," says Jess. "But we didn't know how much. They felt they could share their story".

Activity Alliance also included health and wellbeing questions in the annual staff survey so they can track their progress around workplace wellbeing.

In their latest staff survey, 55 per cent of staff felt they would be comfortable talking about their mental health at work. Meanwhile, 83 per cent felt they are given an opportunity to discuss their wellbeing with their line manager.

Jess says that Mind's advice was crucial to developing Activity Alliance's range of support.



“Without their [Mind’s] advice and the resources they have available, we’d never have changed policies and done as much. This partnership gave us the push we needed to make change and see mental health as important. They’re always on the end of the phone, so you can ask direct for help.”

Learning

- **Make a tangible plan with measurable outcomes**

Then you can see where you're making progress. "The action plan helped us track what we needed to do as an organisation," says Jess.

- **Get expert advice**

Mind helped support Active Alliance's journey, providing practical advice and technical information to shape policies and boost success. Thriving at Work was also a useful resource to guide thinking.

- **Communicate clearly and get everyone involved**

Busy staff can be hard to engage. Jess says that regularly communicating with staff (and getting senior buy-in) really helped. "People then saw it was about changing a mentality, not just ticking a box," she says.



Relevant support available

Thriving at Work: implementing workplace standards in the sport and physical activity sector

Mental Health Awareness for Sport & Physical Activity+ eLearning

Mind's Workplace Wellbeing services

Mental Health at Work gateway

