

Case study

**Springfield Mind and Think
Active – joint staff role**

Project at a glance

- Springfield Mind and Think Active created a joint staff post responsible for running their Get Set to Go project.
- This ‘hybrid’ approach helped each organisation learn from the other and built new relationships that weren’t possible before.



Improved
collaboration.



Unlocked new
opportunities.

The challenge

Research shows that mental health and physical health are closely linked. Yet, staff and volunteers working in each sector don’t necessarily have the skills to support people with both.

As part of funding from Mind’s Get Set to Go programme, Springfield Mind and Think Active (an Active Partnership) set up a joint staff post. And that’s how Hayley Noel got on-board with both organisations to manage and coordinate a physical activity programme for people experiencing mental health problems.

Springfield Mind and Think Active's response

“I was working part-time for Springfield Mind, and part-time for Think Active,” says Hayley.

“By working for both organisations there was a direct way to share learning and opportunities. So Springfield Mind had a wealth of experience of mental health and Think Active had a wealth of experience on physical activity.”

For example, Springfield Mind supported Hayley to take a Mental Health First Aid course and learn more about mental health. Hayley then took that learning back to Think Active to inform their programmes. Plus, with her experience in sports development, Hayley helped Springfield Mind staff see the value of physical activity first-hand.

“I arranged for a friendly competition between Springfield Mind and Think Active to log daily activity. This involved some staff taking part in get Set to Go sessions and discovering for themselves the benefits of physical activity on mental health.”

Being based in both offices also benefited this joint approach. Hayley says she could naturally absorb conversations around sport and mental health and see how the two organisations could work together on new opportunities.

But it could be a challenge too. “Wearing both hats” meant that recognising the boundaries of both organisations was sometimes hard. So was staying on top of two inboxes, one for each organisation.

However, because the flow of ideas between each felt organic, clear communication and good time management meant she could make it work for everyone.

The results

By bringing the two organisations closer together Hayley was able to act quickly when funding opportunities appeared.

For example, a charity organisation secured funding to deliver a five-year men's mental health programme. Think Active were able to bring together this organisation and Springfield Mind to work together. This made it easier for referrers to signpost service users to the correct programme.

“The partnership has been brilliant and helped us both to improve the support we offer. We have been able to share our knowledge with Springfield Mind allowing them to incorporate physical activity into the support they offer individuals. Springfield Mind has given us knowledge to help offer a mental health support strand for clubs in our area. All resulting in better support services for those individuals locally who are living with a mental health condition.”

Abi Dixon, Senior Partnership Manager at Think Active





Hayley working at Springfield Mind and Think Active has been a brilliant link between the mental health and physical activity sectors, perfectly mirroring how mental and physical health go hand in hand. Ultimately this partnership has helped both organisations in reaching their goals of better support for those living with mental health problems in the community.



Mel Campbell, Services Manager at Springfield Mind

Learning

- **Have regular catch-ups**

“If you’re trying a hybrid approach then hold regular sessions so that everyone’s clear on priorities and what’s coming up,” says Hayley. “That way both organisations can have access to learning and opportunities.”

- **Make space**

Hayley found having a desk in both offices helped her to speak to different colleagues on a regular basis and spot opportunities. It also helped her understand the needs and strengths of both organisations.

This might not always be possible (especially during the pandemic). Yet if in-person catch-ups aren’t possible, regular meetings can help both organisations keep priorities clear.



Relevant support available

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: The relationship between physical activity and mental health

Get Set to Go: programme evaluation and findings

Find your local Mind

Find your local Active Partnership

