

# Top tips for setting and maintaining boundaries

## 1. Clearly define the role and boundaries of staff and volunteers

Be clear about the role and keep it clearly defined. Identify the activities staff and volunteers are and aren't expected to do in their role (see the England Athletics' case study and examples of boundaries on page 14 of [Guide 9: Safeguarding and Mental Health](#) for more information).

This will depend on how much time staff and volunteers have and their skills, knowledge and experience. Also, the type of service you're providing and the support and expertise within your organisation.

### **You also need to consider:**

- a. Is it appropriate for staff and volunteers to share personal contact details with other people? To overcome this, your organisation could set up a separate email address and/or provide a 'work' mobile phone for staff and volunteers.
- b. Does your organisation have a policy on interactions with people online and through social media? It's common for people to reach out for support through social media so guidelines may need to be developed or updated to support staff and volunteers if this situation arises. Use [AVA's Digital Safeguarding Resource Pack](#) to help you with this.
- c. Is it appropriate for staff and volunteers to provide one-to-one sessions for people? If yes, your organisation will need to provide appropriate training, have policies and procedures on lone working along with risk management procedures and provide out of hours support to the staff and volunteers involved.

## 2. Inform every one of these boundaries to manage expectations

Be clear about the activities staff and volunteers will be doing as part of their role. For example, they could say "my role is to share information that promotes awareness of how to keep yourself mentally well through physical activity."

## 3. If required, communicate the reason for these boundaries

If a person asks for direct advice or help beyond the limits of the role, staff and volunteers could say: "sorry, I'm not the best person to advise you on that as I do not have the right knowledge, skills or experience to help you with this. I am not a mental health professional and stepping outside of my abilities might be unhelpful to you. But I can suggest other sources of help and support you may wish to access."

## 4. Signpost to further information and support

If the person is looking for advice or help, it is best to signpost to professional mental health support (see [Guide 1: An introduction to mental health](#) for available support). It may also be good to ask: "what would you like to happen in this situation?". This will help to empower people and encourage them to take the course of action that seems right to them.

## 5. Don't make promises you may not be able to keep

Be clear on what staff and volunteers can and cannot keep confidential, and the circumstances in which things that have been revealed to them may need to be shared elsewhere. Find more information on this in [Confidentiality – when and how to break it](#).

## **6. Provide ongoing support to staff and volunteers**

What support is available to staff and volunteers to support them in their role? To help with this, your organisation could use [Wellness Action Plans](#), an Employee Assistance Programme or provide regular catch up or supervision meetings for staff and volunteers.