



Moving towards better mental health:

Mind's Physical Activity
Impact Report 2018-2021



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“Being physically active has made me more motivated to do things. I’ve got to meet new people. It just makes me feel happier.”

Get Set to Go participant

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Forewords

Getting active, changing lives

Physical activity changes lives. Research proves that getting active can boost people's wellbeing and improve mental health – whether that's from a short walk or taking part in team sport.

Since 2015, our physical activity programme, **Get Set to Go**, has harnessed the power of getting active to help people find the right activities for them. So far, we've helped almost 10,000 participants enjoy the physical, social and mental health benefits of being active.

Achieving this means working with the sport and physical activity sector to foster an inclusive environment for people living with mental health problems and continuing to support the mental health sector to embrace physical activity as a tool to support mental health outcomes.

Through our Sector Support programme, we've worked with 260,000 employees and volunteers to provide a safe space where everyone can thrive.

We've achieved a lot, but our work is far from finished. The pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities within our society. Racialised communities¹ have been disproportionately affected by the health and social consequences of the pandemic. Plus [our coronavirus research](#) found that young people and those receiving benefits were more likely to report negative impacts on their mental health.

We have to work harder to make our offer as inclusive as possible, with a focus on people from racialised communities, people living in poverty and young people.

We know building a healthy relationship with physical activity can support better mental health. Now we need to make these benefits more accessible.

Paul Farmer, Mind CEO

¹ There's no 'one size fits all' language for talking about race and identity. Group labels bundle many identities and experiences together. This obscures the fact that people in these groups don't all have the same experience of race. And we don't all face the same challenges. Some terms (like 'BAME') can feel particularly crude, or unhelpful. Our approach in this report is to be specific wherever possible and avoid acronyms, use descriptions purposefully in appropriate contexts and use terms that our research suggests are widely understood and acceptable to people affected by racism.

Making activity more inclusive

It's clear physical activity can improve people's wellbeing and help those of us with mental health problems.

And that's not just from the exercise itself. It can be the glow of achievement that comes from trying something for the first time. Or the sense of belonging and community generated by people getting active and having fun together.

Yet people can have a complex relationship with physical activity. Some of us may have been put off activity

by our PE classes at school, or by the risk of being body shamed. And some of us may even become addicted to exercise. And if activities aren't delivered in a way that take into account cultural needs and preferences, they may exclude some people from racialised communities.

Helping people overcome these barriers is vital. That's why everyone working in our sector has to come together and ensure everybody is supported and welcomed, whatever their sports story.

Because we know physical activity can be an effective tool for better mental health. It can be an important part of managing mental health that includes talking therapy, medication, peer support and wider lifestyle changes.

Dr Amit D Mistry, Consultant Sports Psychiatrist and chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Sport & Exercise Psychiatry Group (RCPsych SEPSIG)





Transforming lives and communities

Uniting the Movement is Sport England's 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. The connection of sport and activity with our health and wellbeing is one of the 'big issues' on which we will be focusing.

This report shows how lives can change when the physical activity and mental health sectors work together. The '[Get Set to Go](#)' programme started this, but we still have a lot to learn from each other.

Physical activity professionals bring their passion for the benefits of getting active,

along with practical ways to motivate and inspire people who might be new to sport, and the mental health sector has a wealth of expertise on overcoming the barriers people with mental health problems face, and how sessions can be designed to be more welcoming and inclusive.

As we adapt and rebuild from the coronavirus pandemic, we need to collectively reimagine how we keep movement, sport and activity central to people's lives.

“ This is also an opportunity to change how we talk about physical activity. Sport professionals know that getting active can make us feel good. Now it's our job to share that feeling with as many people as possible, and build a new, more inclusive and mental health-aware future for everybody. ”

Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England CEO



Executive summary

This impact report shows what we've achieved through our [Get Set to Go](#) and Sector Support programmes from 2018 to 2021.

We launched our [Get Set to Go](#) programme with the support of Sport England and the National Lottery in 2015 to help people with mental health problems benefit from being physically active.

In 2018, we created our **Sector Support programme**. This aimed to increase the number of sport and physical activity providers equipped with the skills to support and engage people with mental health problems in physical activity.

Over the following pages you'll read about the amazing people and participants who came together to make these projects a success. Coronavirus meant we had to rapidly change and adapt our plans to a new situation. But not even a global pandemic stopped our participants and volunteers sharing the potential of physical activity.

The impact of Get Set to Go (2018-2021)

Supported

5,842

people with mental health problems to benefit from physical activity

19 local Minds delivered the programme with

348

volunteers supporting people to get active through group and one-to-one sessions

65% 

of participants increased their activity levels during the programme, and their quality of life score also improved

The impact of our Sector Support programme (2018-2021)

We directly supported

259,343

people working or volunteering in the sport and physical activity sector - we estimate they work with or support at least 5.6 million people

38,011

people enrolled on our Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning – 88 per cent said learning from the course led to some or substantial difference to their coaching

18 million

people reached through our On Your Side partnership with the English Football League which also raised funding to extend Get Set to Go to a further nine local Minds

What's next?

Every step of the way we've captured what we've learned from the [Get Set to Go](#) and Sector Support programmes to help others. Plus, we appointed Loughborough University to independently evaluate our Sector Support programme. On the back of the evaluation and learning, ten recommendations have been created to help any organisation to support people living with mental health problems to be physically active.



Recommendations summary

The following recommendations are for Mind, the sports sector and anyone providing physical activity to people with mental health problems.

- 1** Increase engagement from target groups such as young people, people from racialised communities and people living in poverty
- 2** Embrace different people's needs by being flexible and adaptable
- 3** Prioritise opportunities for socialising and peer support
- 4** Provide clear responsibilities and informal roles for volunteers
- 5** Involve people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design, development, and delivery of projects
- 6** Mental health should be embedded across all work and activities
- 7** Focus on employees' mental health alongside delivering mental health initiatives externally
- 8** Introduce mental health champions and/or mental health leads
- 9** Increase collaboration and knowledge exchange between sport and mental health organisations
- 10** Increase promotion of success stories and good practice examples

We want this learning to inspire others, both inside and outside the sector, to make the connection between physical activity and mental health. And by offering evidence of our impact, we hope to fuel a safer, more welcoming sector for everyone.



Get Set to Go programme (phase 2)

What we did

[Get Set to Go](#) helps people find activities that are right for them, so they can enjoy the physical, social and mental health benefits of getting active.

We co-developed [Get Set to Go](#) with people with mental health problems to ensure it was relevant, meaningful, empowering and based on their needs. We used a peer support model so people with mental health problems could inspire and encourage each other.

In phase 2 (2018-2021), local Minds worked closely with physical activity providers to provide sessions supported by volunteers who understood how mental health problems can be a barrier to physical activity.

19

local Minds delivered the programme in phase 2 (27 local Minds across both phases)

That's why our [Get Set to Go](#) and Sector Support programmes are so interlinked. We need to ensure the physical activity workforce have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a supportive and welcoming environment for people with mental health problems.

A robust evaluation was conducted to understand who Get Set to Go was reaching and its impact on participants. This learning is helpful for shaping future physical activity programmes for people with mental health problems.

348

**volunteers harnessed
their insight and lived
experience of mental
health problems to
provide group and
one-to-one sessions**

Top trends

Walking, football, badminton and gym/fitness have been popular throughout both phases of [Get Set to Go](#). In phase 2, lower impact activities such as yoga

became more popular possibly as they were easier to deliver virtually during coronavirus lockdown restrictions.



Responding to coronavirus

Everyone has been affected by coronavirus – including our volunteers and participants. Our participants valued the social connections they built in our

sessions. But social distancing had a negative effect on the mental health of many of those involved.

Local Minds worked with physical activity partners to combat social isolation and keep participants engaged by:

- 1** Taking activities online and providing social sessions by videocall or phone. The opportunity to remotely socialise with others was a lifeline for many participants.
- 2** Setting weekly challenges for people to do on their own. These were complemented with a weekly call where participants discussed how the challenge went.
- 3** Establishing closed social media messaging groups. These enabled participants to keep in contact and provide peer support to each other. Staff could easily and quickly update participants on restriction changes and how this impacted activities.
- 4** Organising small, face-to-face support group sessions that involved physically distanced outdoor activities, like walking (while strictly following government guidelines). They proved vital support for some of our most vulnerable and isolated participants.
- 5** Posting activity packs to people who may not have digital access at home.

Supporting everyone to get active

Our Physical Activity team developed printable Get Active at Home leaflets to help people who are digitally excluded (don't have access to technology to access online activities) to get active.

Close to 27,000 Get Active at Home leaflets were distributed by local Minds, English Football League Extra Time Hubs as well as Heron Foods.

Visit mind.org.uk/getactive for examples of our printable activity sheets.



Who benefited?

In phase 2, Get Set to Go supported

5,842

people with mental health problems to benefit from the power of physical activity

In the physical activity sector,

1,253

staff have benefitted from face-to-face Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity workshops provided by local Minds

Meet the participants

In phase 2, 792 participants engaged with the programme evaluation (14 per cent of 5,842 total participants).

Ethnicity:

The majority of participants were White (89 per cent). One in ten (10 per cent) participants were from racialised communities² – either Asian (4 per cent), African (1 per cent), Caribbean (2 per cent) or Mixed heritage (3 per cent). This was a reduction from phase 1 where 21 per cent of participants were from racialised communities. We believe this drop might have been a result of the move online during coronavirus – when it was harder to engage community groups in person. Sample size: 675

“I’ve been struggling with my mental health and thought the [online Pilates] sessions would help. The trainer and course content was excellent. I came away feeling really good after it.”



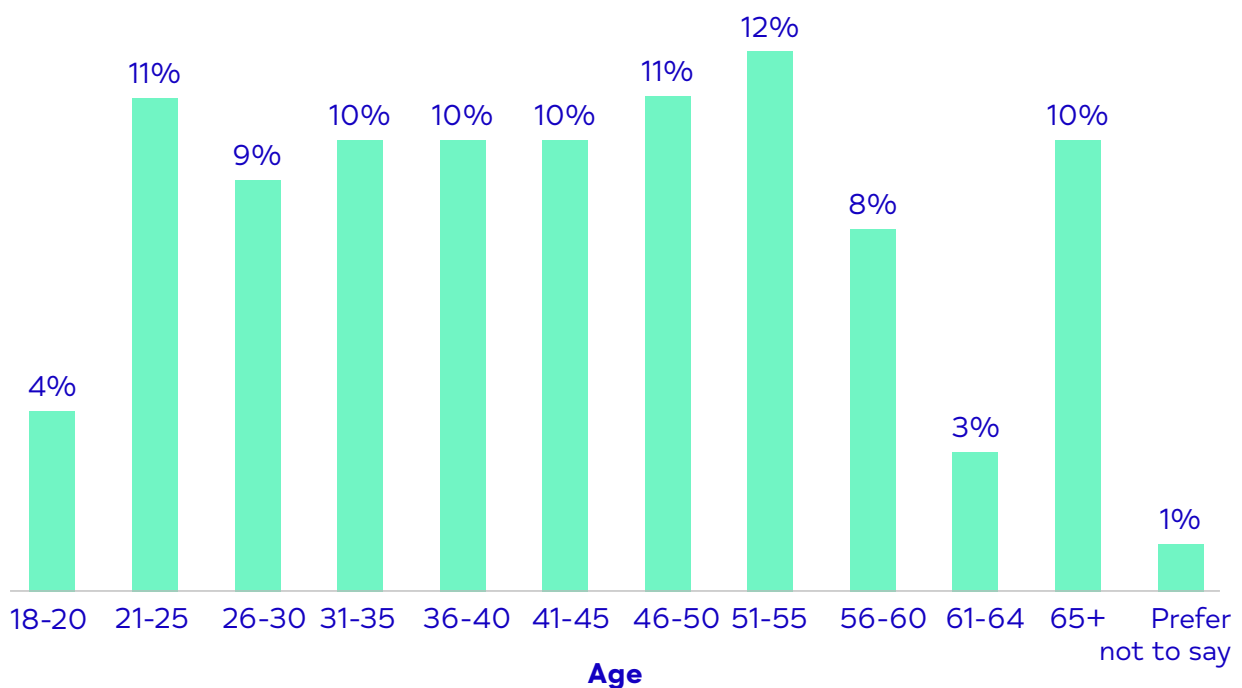
Get Set to Go participant

² We started using the term ‘racialised communities’ in our [We are Mind strategy](#) (published in April 2021). However, during the evaluation (2018-2021) we used the term ‘BAME’.



Age

There was a fairly even representation of participant age groups across the programme. This was similar in phase 1 and highlights [Get Set to Go](#) is a universal service reaching people of all ages. Sample size: 724



Gender

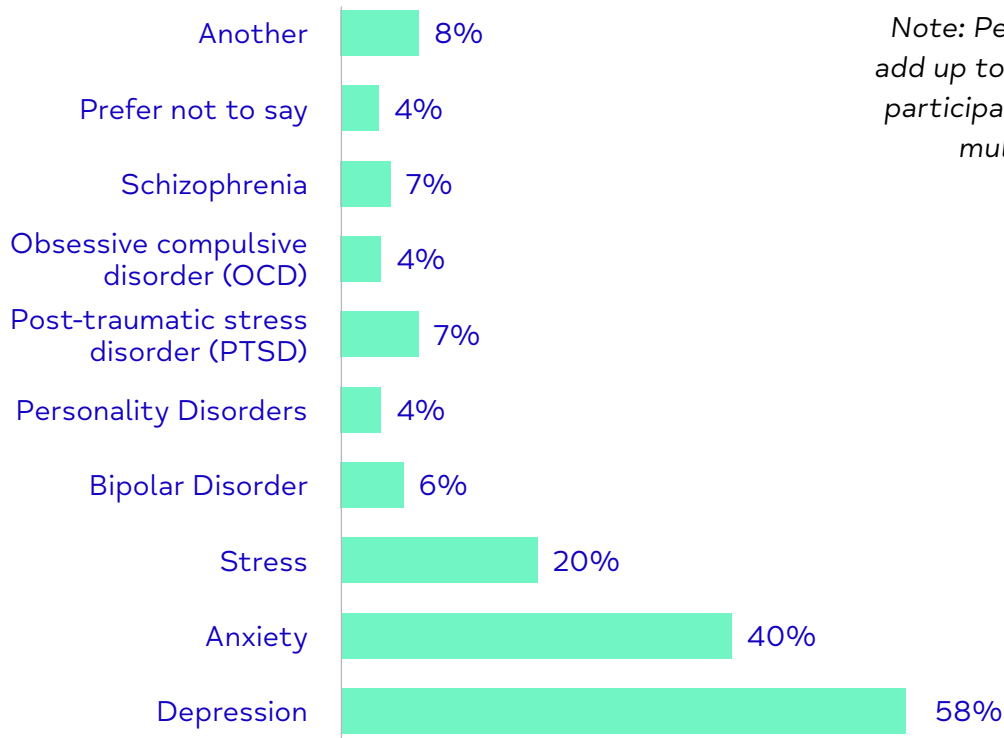
59 per cent of participants identified as female, 40 per cent as male and one per cent as transgender or another gender identity. Sample size: 741

Experience of mental health problems:

More than three in five participants (63 per cent) had personal experience of mental health problems. Many people experienced more than one mental health problem.

Sample size: 480

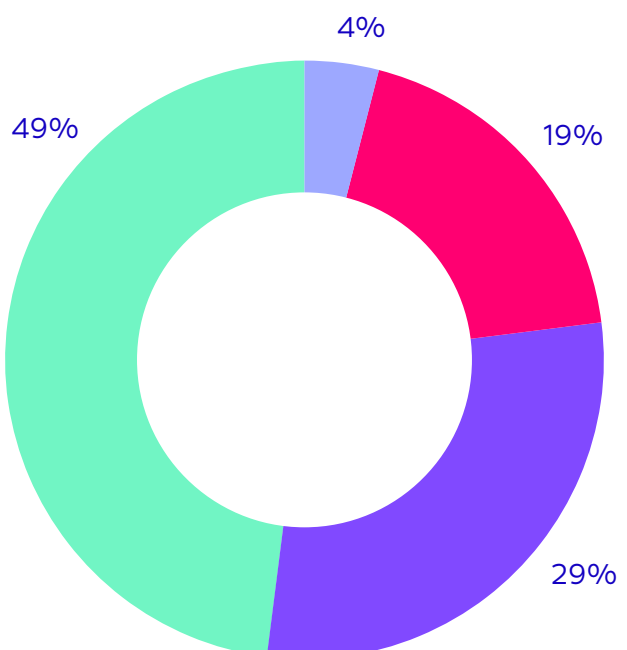
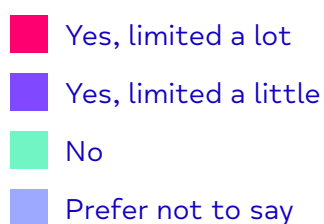
Type of mental health problems



Note: Percentages don't add up to 100 per cent as participants could select multiple responses.

Health problems or disabilities:

Nearly half of participants (48 per cent) reported their day-to-day activities were limited either a little or a lot due to health problems or disabilities. Sample size: 711





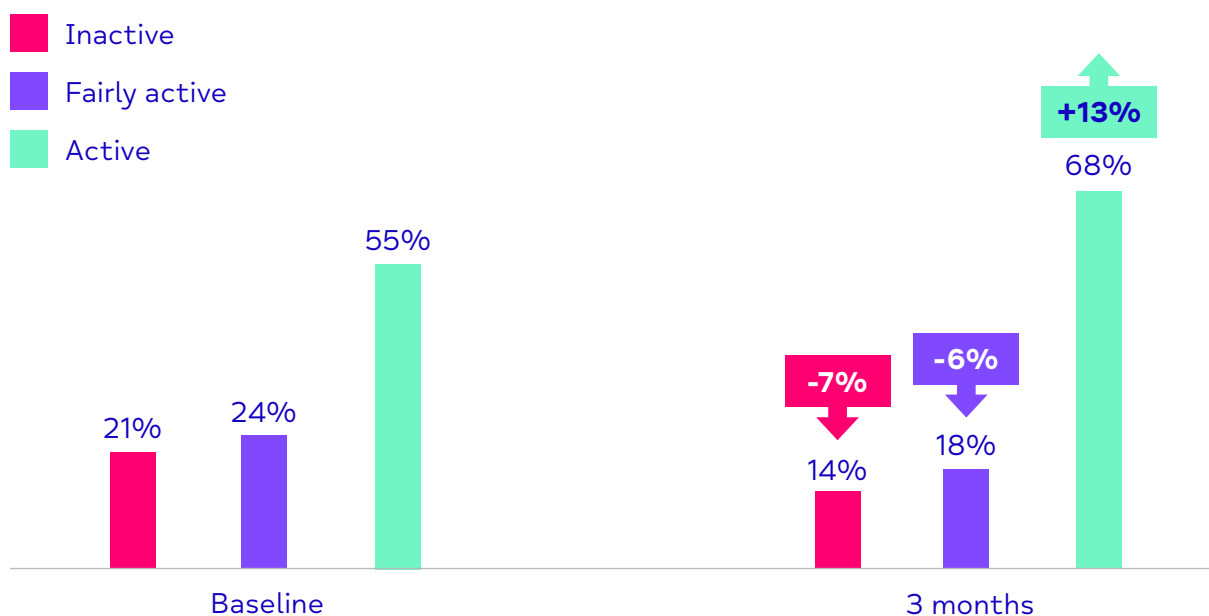
Participant outcomes

1. Get Set to Go got participants moving

Around a fifth (21 per cent) of participants said they were 'inactive' when joining the programme (meaning they'd done less than 30 minutes of activity in the last seven days). At our three-month follow up³ this reduced to 14 per cent. Overall, the percentage of participants saying they were active (doing 150+ minutes of activity in the last seven days) increased

from 55 per cent to 68 per cent at our three-month follow up.

Sixty-five per cent of participants increased their baseline activity level (their usual activity level) at the three-month follow up⁴. Sample size for baseline activity level: 671. Sample size for 3 month activity level: 157



³ We carried out surveys with participants when they started the programme (baseline) and then asked them to complete follow up surveys at 3, 6 and 12 months.

⁴ A paired sample t-tests was performed on participant's baseline and 3 month follow up activity levels and results showed that increase in activity level was approaching significance ($p = 0.07$).



2. Get Set to Go improved quality of life

Participants started the programme with a quality of life score (measured using [ReQol](#)) of 24 – slightly lower than the general population average of 25. This highlighted they may be experiencing a mental health problem that needs treatment.

At the three-month follow up, 61 per cent of participants' quality of life scores increased – the average quality of life score was 26. This is slightly above average for the general population and is typical of people without a mental health problem that requires treatment⁵. Sample size for baseline ReQol score: 585. Sample size for 3 month ReQol score: 137

3. Get Set to Go improved motivation

At the three-month follow up, two in five participants (41 per cent) reported an improvement in their autonomous motivation to exercise⁶ (meaning you want to be active because you enjoy it rather than because you feel pressured into it).

“The sport really changed my life in so many ways mentally and physically. I have lost weight and also reduced my blood sugar to a safer level.”



Get Set to Go participant

⁵ A paired sample t-test was performed on participants' baseline and 3 month quality of life scores and results confirmed that the increase shown in quality of life was significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

⁶ Autonomous motivation to exercise was measured through Sport England's Engagement in Sport questions. It is associated with feelings of wellbeing, social support, empowerment and coping skills.

Participants' favourite part of Get Set to Go

- 1** Socialising: Connection and peer support
- 2** Sense of community and belonging to a group
- 3** Supportive and fun environment to engage in sport
- 4** Improvements in mental and physical health
- 5** Learning new skills, trying new activities and developing abilities

Being social is key

The social element was a crucial part of [Get Set to Go](#)'s success. Many local Minds said it's as important as the physical activity, if not more so. Even if new participants first come to watch or be social, they soon want to join in the activities. This relaxed and non-pressurised approach is important for people to just 'give it a go'.

Participants valued the supportive and fun environment [Get Set to Go](#) provided. This enabled them to get active in a non-competitive, empathetic setting. Participants valued the opportunity to try new activities and develop their confidence and abilities.

“It's a relaxed environment with no pressure, it's something for me to look forward to.”

Get Set to Go participant

“[I felt] part of a group and therefore a sense of community and belonging to society.”

Get Set to Go participant

Meet the volunteers

In phase 2, 66 volunteers engaged with the programme evaluation (53 per cent of 124 total volunteers). As the number of volunteers we have evaluation data for is low, we must be careful when drawing conclusions from the volunteer data.

Ethnicity:

The majority of volunteers (95 per cent) were White – either White British (92 per cent) or another White background (3 per cent). Five per cent of volunteers were from racialised communities – either African (1.6 per cent), Caribbean (1.6 per cent) or Mixed heritage (1.6 per cent). Sample size: 64

Age:

There was a fairly even representation of groups with 21-25 year olds and 51-55 year olds most represented. This was similar in phase 1. Sample size: 64

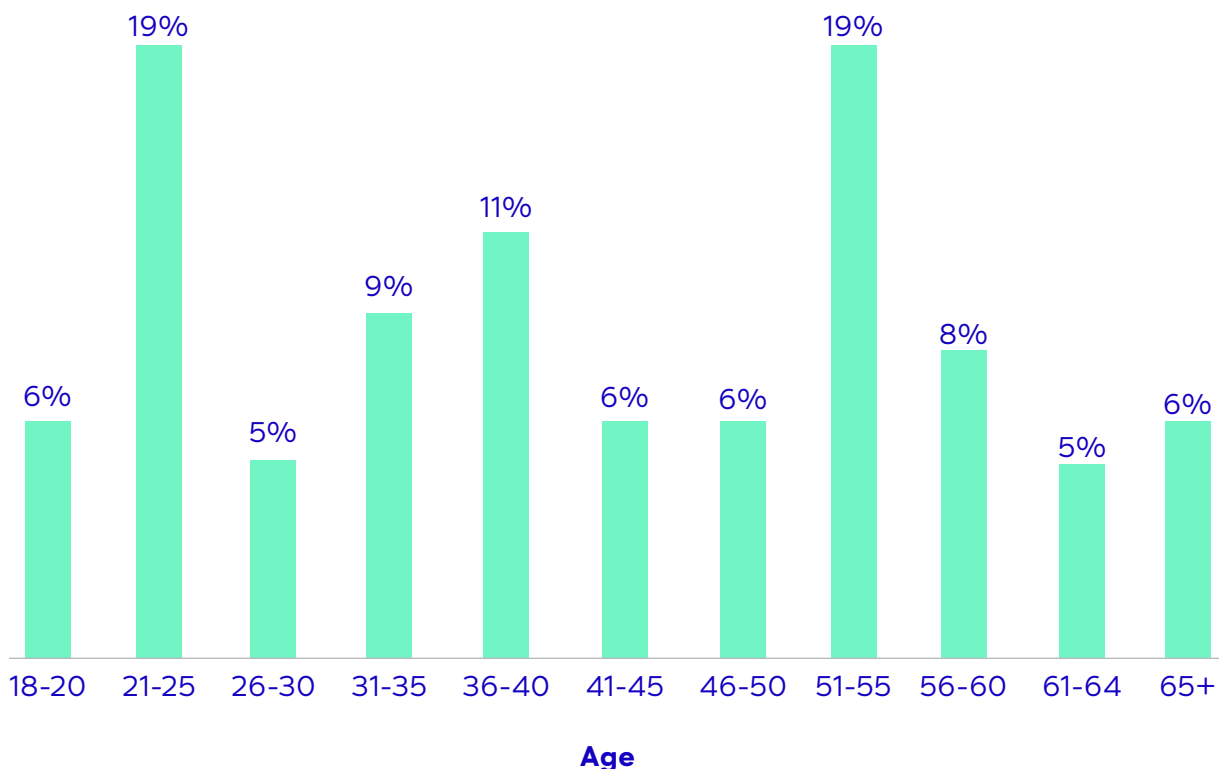
Gender:

Sixty-two per cent of volunteers identified as female and 39 per cent⁷ as male. Sample size: 65

I advise anyone to volunteer for programmes like Get Set to Go. You don't need to be perfect, you just need to be willing to help and smile. You don't need to be sporty either, you just need to be motivated and want to give it a go.



Get Set to Go volunteer

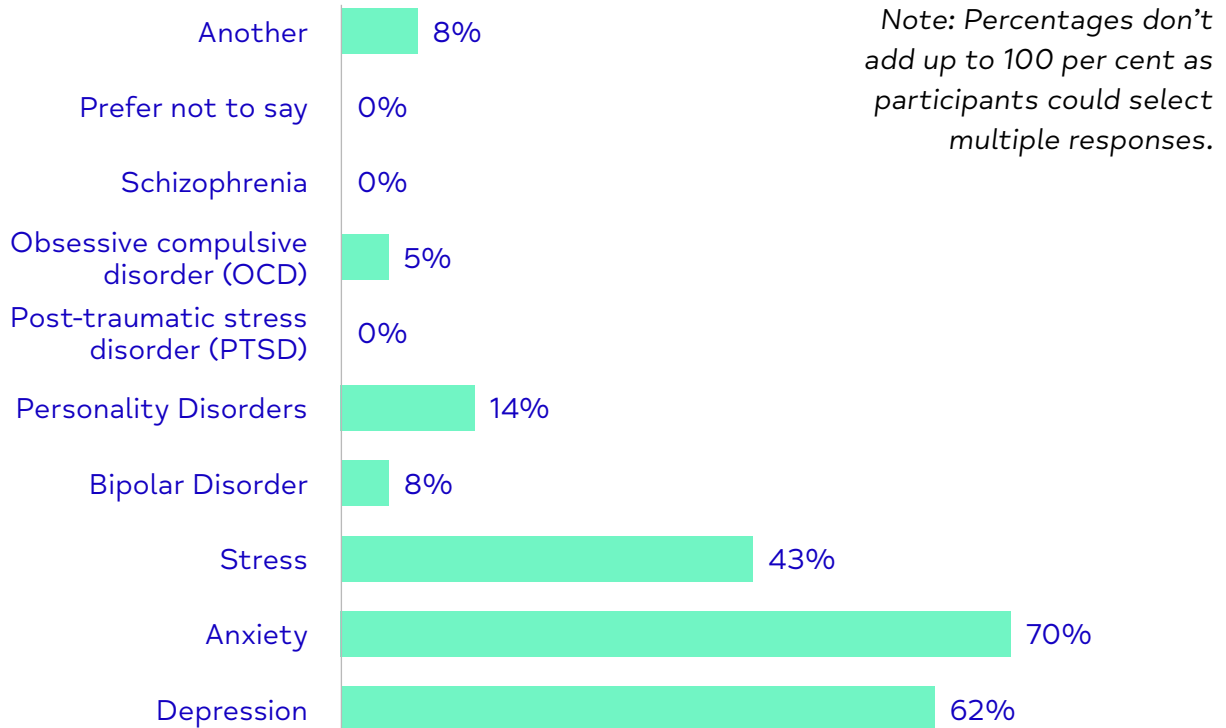


⁷ Volunteer gender percentage is 101 per cent due to rounding to nearest whole number.

Experience of mental health problems:

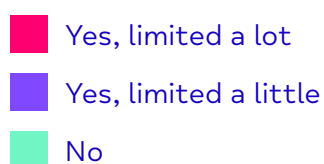
Over half of the volunteers (56 per cent) had personal experience of mental health problems. Sample size: 61

Type of mental health problems



Health problems or disability:

Over a quarter of volunteers (27 per cent) reported their day-to-day activities are limited either a little or a lot due to health problems or disabilities. Sample size: 63



Volunteers' motivations for taking part in Get Set to Go

- 1 To help people
- 2 The cause is important to them
- 3 To learn new skills and/or to make a difference in their local area
- 4 To make a difference in their local area

When asked what their favourite part of Get Set to Go was, volunteers told us they enjoyed the opportunity to support participants to develop. In particular was building the skills and confidence of participants to engage and enjoy participating in physical activity.

They also enjoyed the opportunity to meet and take part in sport and physical activity with a diverse group of people. The peer support element of the programme, and the chance to give and receive support, was another highlight. Volunteers talked about the improvements they saw in their own mental health, and the mental health of participants, and how the programme provided an opportunity to discuss the mental health benefits of exercise.

“I’ve learnt that encouraging others and seeing other people shine and develop their skills and confidence is what really what makes the game fun. It’s very rewarding to provide encouragement and support to individuals, and through the weeks see their personalities and skills develop and shine too.”

Get Set to Go volunteer



What we learned

At the end of Get Set to Go phase 2, we reflected with local Minds and partners on key learning and what we would change.

1 Going online reached more people

The mix of online and face-to-face activities expanded the reach of our programme to people who may find it difficult to leave their homes or don't feel ready to be active among others. People liked how online activities enabled them to stay somewhere familiar and convenient, turn their screen off so they couldn't be seen and play their own music in the background.

2 People needed support to access online sessions

Local Mind staff created and shared guidance on using Zoom and other platforms. They also promoted the first session as a 'practice' session where people could get used to the technology and ask questions.

3 Offline resources were essential

Not everyone is able to access online resources or materials. We produced printed resources to ensure our programme was inclusive and accessible so people could get active at home.

4 Lack of face-to-face support had consequences

We couldn't support as many people as we wanted to take on volunteering opportunities or gain leadership qualifications. It takes time and face-to-face support to build people's confidence to take on more responsibility. It also requires opportunities to volunteer, many of which have been paused during coronavirus restrictions.

5 We need to make volunteering more accessible

In the future, we could include volunteering and training opportunities for participants as part of a development pathway that builds skills and confidence combined with increasing levels of responsibility. For this to work, the definition of 'volunteering' needs to be expanded to include less formal roles such as meeting and greeting new participants. This creates a more accessible and less daunting first step to volunteering that can turn intentions into action.



Case study

Springfield Mind and Think Active's joint role

As part of **Get Set to Go**, [Springfield Mind](#) and [Think Active](#) created a joint staff post. “I was working part-time for Springfield Mind and part-time for Think Active,” says Hayley Noel. “By working for both organisations there was a direct way to share learning and opportunities.”

By bringing the two organisations closer together Hayley was able to act quickly when opportunities appeared. For example, a charity secured funding to deliver a five-year men’s mental health programme. Think Active were able to connect the charity with Springfield Mind so that men involved in the

programme could be signposted to **Get Set to Go** activities.

“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” said Mel Campbell Services Manager at Springfield Mind. “Ultimately this partnership has helped both organisations in reaching their goals of better support for those living with mental health problems in the community.”



Sector Support programme

What we did

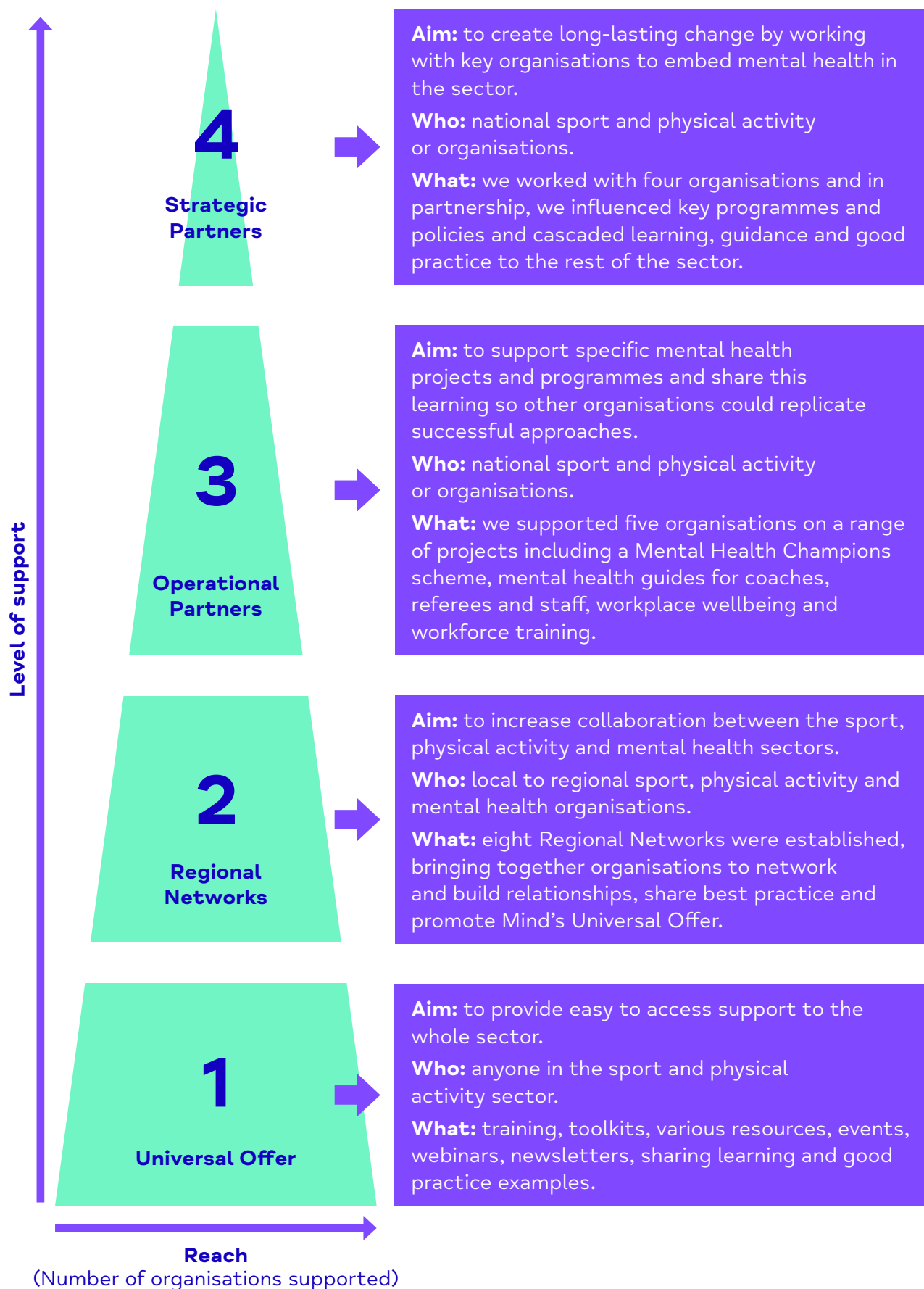
In phase 1 of **Get Set to Go**, we provided informal support to the sport and physical activity sector to better understand mental health. Loughborough University's evaluation of **Get Set to Go** highlighted the need for us to formalise the support we offer the sector.

In 2018, we created our Sector Support programme⁸. This aimed to increase the number of sport and physical activity

providers equipped with the skills to support and engage people with mental health problems in physical activity. We appointed Loughborough University to independently evaluate the impact of this programme.

⁸ This was originally called our Sector Engagement and Influencing programme.

We formalised the programme into four offers, outlined in the diagram below. We did this to ensure we provided efficient and effective support to as much of the sector as possible.



Responding to coronavirus

Coronavirus affected everyone in the UK – including the sport sector. Facilities closed, activities moved online and staff were furloughed and made redundant. Working from home meant some staff felt isolated while working long hours in an ‘always on’ culture between juggling responsibilities.

The pandemic meant we had to adapt how we supported the sector. Our projects and plans with partners stalled and we had to postpone our Mental Health in Sport and Physical Activity Conference.

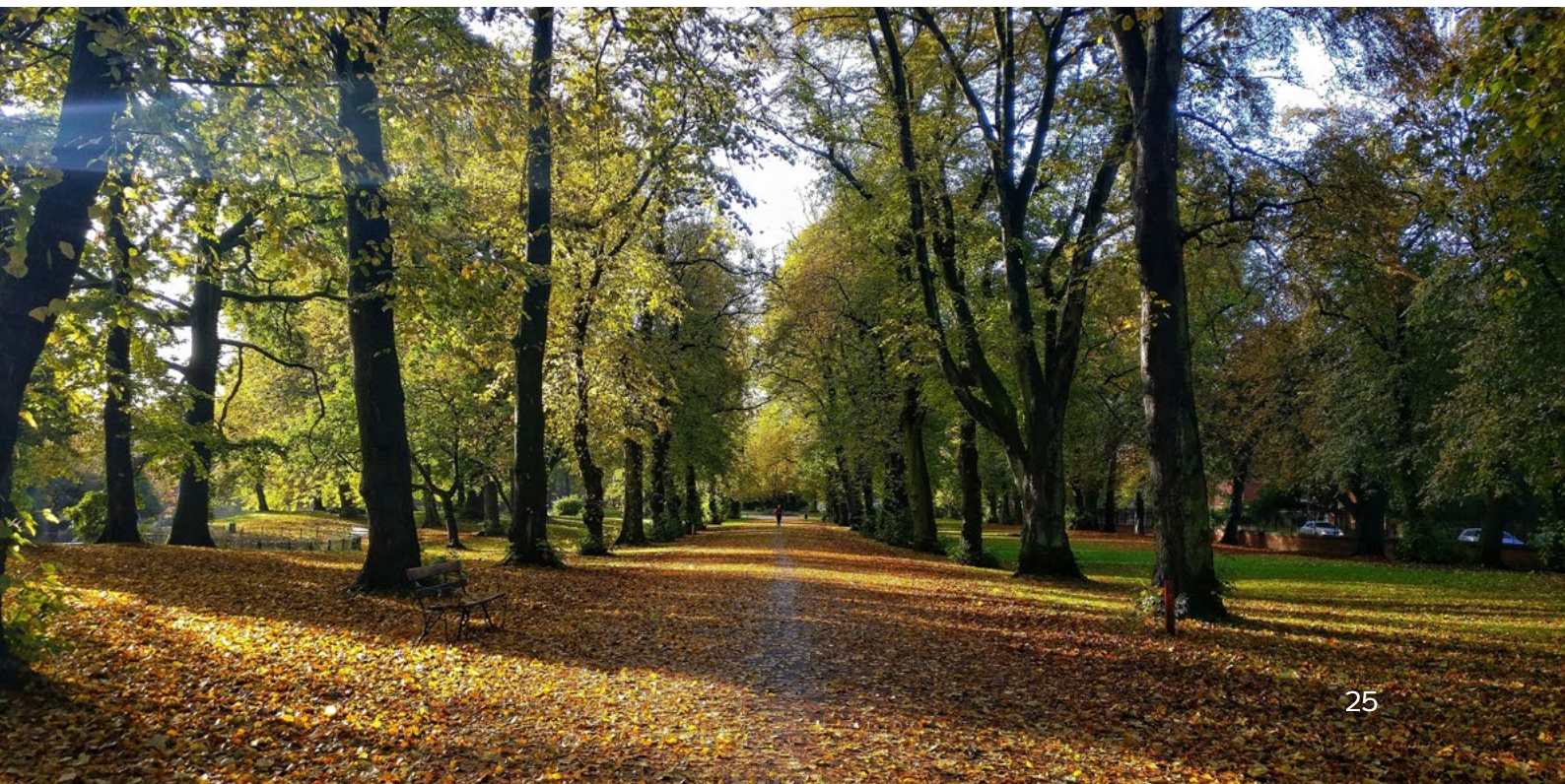
66 Mind have initiated incredible efforts to meet the needs of the sport and physical activity sector and support mental health more widely during a challenging year.

Loughborough University

However, we saw increased demand for our support.

For example:

- We were inundated with requests for guidance and invitations to speak at virtual events.
- Traffic to our physical activity webpage increased by 61 per cent.
- We briefed the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Minister for Sport and Tourism on the benefits of physical activity outdoors for mental health. We also supported partner requests to back their calls to the government around exercise, like [ukactive's letter to the Prime Minister](#).





Reach and impact of our Sector Support programme

We directly supported

259,343⁹

people working or volunteering
in the sport and physical
activity sector

We estimate they will work
with or support at least

5.6 million¹⁰

people

“The Sector Support programme was effective in initiating conversations around promoting parity of esteem between physical and mental health in the sport and physical activity sector.”



Loughborough University

⁹ The number of people working or volunteering does not represent unique users.

¹⁰ Participants' engagement is estimated based on each coach/volunteer/professional working with 20 people. Where exact engagement figures were available (for example, content aimed at individuals) we used these figures instead.

1. Our Universal Offer

These were just some of the projects involved in our Universal Offer:

Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning

Our online course, developed in partnership with 1st4Sport, Sport England and UK Coaching, aims to provide the knowledge, skills and confidence for the sector's workforce to better understand and support people with mental health problems.

38,000+

people enrolled in our eLearning with 22,623 completing it during the programme

88%

of coaches said learning from the course led to some or substantial difference to their coaching (sample size: 188)¹¹

Coaches

said they felt more confident and knowledgeable about how to talk to their participants about mental health¹¹

69%

said their confidence had increased in adapting sports and physical activity sessions for people with mental health problems (sample size: 27,668)



I've been coaching for a number of years and can pick up on changes in behaviour and see a difference in people but haven't always had the confidence to check to see if they are OK. I feel I could now do this.




Coach who completed the eLearning course

¹¹ Liverpool John Moores University's Impact Evaluation of UK Coaching/1st4Sport/Mind's 'Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity' eLearning Course (2021)

Webinars

We provided webinars on topics including mental health training, safeguarding and workplace wellbeing. The webinars were available to anyone in the sport, physical activity and mental health sectors.

97 per cent of webinar survey responders rated them as very good or good and 92 per cent as useful.

 **It helped me personally by providing good ideas and examples of how to manage my wellbeing. It also helped me in my role as a Mental Health First Aider, as I could share tips and tools with others.**



Webinar attendee

Guides and resources

We developed a series of guides including:

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit

The ten guides contain guidance, tools, templates and case studies to help anyone delivering physical activities to people with mental health problems.

A Guide to Implementing the Thriving at Work Standards in the Sport and Physical Activity Sector


Provides guidance on how to support staff mental health in the sector.

Mental Health Champions: a Toolkit for the Sport and Physical Activity Sector

Helps organisations, clubs and groups establish a mental health champions scheme.

Return to Play: Mental Health Guidance to Support the Return of Sport and Physical Activity

Provides tools and guidance to help the sector to better support the mental health of staff, coaches, volunteers and participants as activities reopened after lockdowns.

 **The guide has been my ‘go to’ resource while creating our employee wellbeing and mental health strategy. It clearly sets out standards in a practical and accessible way with lots of useful examples of how to apply them.**



The FA

2. Our Regional Networks

Regional Networks are a vital part of what we do. They helped us spread our message throughout the country by building connections between sport, physical activity and mental health sectors. For example, each Regional Hub (the lead organisation for each Network) built relationships with key partners like NHS Trusts and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services.

Increasing professional knowledge

Our East Midlands Hub worked with the Activity Alliance to create a bespoke Inclusive Activity Programme for local mental health organisations. This helped increase mental health professionals' knowledge and confidence to deliver physical activities to patients.

Campaigning for mental health

Our Yorkshire and Humber Hub worked in partnership with Public Health England (PHE) on a campaign to help raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity on mental health.

Our North East Hub worked with their [Integrated Care System \(ICS\)](#) programme director to help embed physical activity into the ICS' mental health programmes.

Creating new Mental Health First Aiders and Champions

Our East of England Hub collaborated with the YMCA to provide Mental Health First Aid training to their Project Resilience Programme team, which supports people experiencing homelessness. The training helped them better understand mental health and support participants.

Two Hubs also designed, developed and launched Mental Health Champion schemes. Champions were recruited to help reduce the stigma of talking about mental health in local sport and physical activity clubs.

Working with new partners

Our North West Hub provided webinars on involving people with lived experience of mental health problems in physical activity programmes. This led to the Hub working with the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVR) to train their workforce on Adverse Childhood Experiences so they can better support young people who have experienced past trauma, through physical activity.

Our South West Hub supported a local IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) provider to connect with physical activity services in the area. This means people waiting for IAPT services are referred to community sport and physical activities.

Sharing what works

Our South East Hub hosted a good practice event which inspired [a series of case studies](#) that highlight physical activity interventions to support people with mental health problems.

Our West Midlands Hub launched their Active Adversity Awards to capture case studies and celebrate good practice in the region.

3. Our Operational Partnerships

We worked with five organisations during the programme: AoC Sport, England Athletics, Swim England, The FA and ukactive. Through these partnerships we supported specific projects and programmes and shared what we learned, empowering others to replicate successful approaches.

Mind have supported us with mental health expertise in designing, implementing and continually improving our #RunAndTalk programme as well as supporting us with workplace wellbeing. They are leading the sports sector for better mental health.



England Athletics

Case study AoC Sport

Training Mental Health Ambassadors

We worked with AoC Sport (the lead organisation for college and sport activities) to launch a Mental Health Ambassadors scheme as part of their [Leadership Academy](#).

Ambassadors received free access to our Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning, AoC Sport's Leadership Academy training, a handbook and ongoing support from their college, AoC Sport and Mind.



The results

- 142 students signed up to be Ambassadors and to promote the mental health benefits of physical activity and support students to become more active.
- Ambassadors promoted activities through social media videos, set up weekly wellbeing student groups (online and face-to-face) and hosted Walk and Talk sessions where students can talk to their peers about their mental health.



Case study England Athletics

Creating the #RunAndTalk programme

We supported England Athletics to recruit a volunteer network of Mental Health Champions. Their role was and continues to be to promote mental wellbeing through running, support new members and get people talking about mental health.

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



#RunAndTalk participant

The results

- Over 1,200 Mental Health Champions were recruited.
- #RunAndTalk reached more than 33,000 people in over 420 running clubs/groups.
- Participants said #RunAndTalk helped them sleep better, find others to talk to and regain lost confidence.

[See a case study on how we supported #RunAndTalk.](#)

Case study

Swim England

Increasing the mental health knowledge of the swimming workforce

We helped the swimming workforce boost their mental health knowledge, giving them confidence to provide swimming sessions for people with mental health problems.

We achieved this by delivering webinars and providing free access to our Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning. We also published [mental health guidance and factsheets](#) and presented at Swim England's Teaching and Education Conference.

The results

- We reached 1,353 people working in swimming.
- Our mental health factsheets were viewed over 24,000 times.



Case study

The FA

Mental health guidance for coaches, referees and staff

As part of the [Heads Up campaign](#), we helped the FA harness the power of football to encourage people to talk about their mental health and ask for support when they need it.

Following a survey with nearly 1,500 people involved in the game, we developed a series of mental health guides for different audiences in football.

[See a case study on how we supported The FA.](#)

The results

- 120,000 registered football coaches have access to the [Guide for grassroots coaches and managers](#)
- 28,000 FA-qualified match officials have access to the [Guide for referees and those that support them](#)
- 900 staff have access to a specific guide for The FA's employees.





Case study ukactive

Promoting the benefits of being active through Mindful Monday

One of our initiatives with ukactive was Mindful Monday – promoting the benefits of physical activity for mental wellbeing.

We did this by funding local Minds to provide physical activity sessions with a mindfulness element to people in their area. We also collaborated with partners across the sport, physical activity and other sectors to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity for mental health.

The results

- Over 10,000 people took part in Mindful Monday activities during the partnership.
- In 2020, half of local Minds involved hadn't provided physical activities before, Mindful Monday inspired them to get involved.
- Our messages around the benefits of physical activity on mental health reached more than one million Twitter users through the hashtag [#MindfulMonday](#).

“I just wanted to say thank you for inviting me to come along for today's mindfulness walk. It was such a nice experience, especially after so long cooped up. I feel the most alive I've felt in ages.”

Mindful Monday participant

4. Our Strategic Partnerships

To ensure our Sector Support programme was sustainable and created long-lasting change, we partnered with five large organisations: Activity Alliance, CIMSPA (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity), the EFL (English Football League), Sport and Recreation Alliance and UK Coaching.

Case study

Activity Alliance

Creating a joint approach to inclusion and accessibility

We partnered with Activity Alliance to improve the sport and physical activity sector's approach to inclusion and accessibility for disabled people and people with mental health problems. This is vital since people with a long-term physical condition are two to three times more likely to experience mental health problems¹². We did this by working together on key policies in the sector

including UK Coaching's Duty to Care, CIMSPA's Professional Standards and the [Quest Gplus 37 module for Engaging with Disabled People and People with Long-Term Health Conditions](#). We also connected their regional engagement team with our Regional Hubs and supported each other's campaigns, promotion and training.

¹² The King's Fund and Centre for Mental Health (2012). [Long-term conditions and mental health – The cost of co-morbidities](#).



Case study CIMSPA

Stronger Together campaign

We provided a mental health support package for CIMSPA's Stronger Together campaign. The campaign provided resources and support to the sector's workforce during the coronavirus pandemic

The package included free access to our Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning, mental health guidance for CIMSPA's webpages, bespoke content for their resources and a series of webinars for their members. The package was accessible to CIMSPA's 17,000 members and partners.



Case study English Football League (EFL)

On Your Side partnership

We became the EFL's charity partner at the start of the [2018/19 football season](#), initially for two seasons. This was extended for a further two seasons until the end of the 2021/22 season.

The results

- We reached over 18 million people and funds raised through the partnership enabled us to extend the **Get Set to Go** programme to a further nine local Minds.
- Team Talk sessions were held at every EFL Club providing staff and supporters much-needed peer support during the pandemic.
- Over 2,549 club and community staff received mental health awareness training from Mind and local Minds.
- Through the partnership we launched [Get It Off Your Chest: A Report on Men's Mental Health](#) – with the finding that men's preferred alternatives to being prescribed medication are face-to-face therapy and physical activity.
- The CEO of Barnsley F.C. wrote a supportive letter to a fan who had expressed his experience of depression on social media.
- The sponsorship space for Leyton Orient's popular 3rd kit for the 20/21 season was donated to Mind and funded by Harry Kane.

Case study UK Coaching

Duty to Care

We supported UK Coaching on the creation of their [Duty to Care Toolkit](#). This equips coaches with the knowledge and skills to provide great coaching experiences to others, as well as how they can look after themselves.

We provided advice on all five of the Duty to Care pillars as well as content and

resources for the mental health pillar. Our Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning is a key part of this pillar. We also sit on the Duty to Care Steering Group ensuring the toolkit and mental health elements are embedded throughout the sector.



Case study Sport and Recreation Alliance

Policy and influencing work

With the Sport and Recreation Alliance (and Professional Players' Federation) we continue to develop the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation. The Charter helps us to embed mental health in sport to change culture and challenge the stigma around mental health. Nearly 500 organisations have signed the Charter since it was introduced in 2015.

We've also worked with the Alliance on a joint policy letter to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the role of sport in supporting mental health during the pandemic. This influenced the Government's decision on allowing exercise during lockdown restrictions.

Our workplace wellbeing support

It's essential everyone in the sport and physical activity sector gets support to manage their own mental health. And when the pandemic struck, looking after staff and volunteers at work became even more important.

Training

We provided [Managing Mental Health at Work virtual training courses](#) for our partners, Regional Networks and EFL clubs and trusts.

- 108 staff attended
- 100 per cent said their knowledge and confidence of mental health at work increased as a result of the training.

“It was great to interact with others but it was also great to sit back and listen to people’s experiences, procedures and structures around supporting staff.”



Managing Mental Health at
Work virtual training attendee

Supporting organisations and sharing good practice

We ran an event to upskill 11 organisations on the Thriving at Work standards. We provided tools, templates and good practice as well as Managing Mental Health at Work training.

After the event we hosted bi-annual webinars for a group of five organisations. All of them made significant progress on supporting workplace wellbeing including:

- establishing staff Wellbeing Action Groups/Steering Groups
- commissioning Employee Assistant Programmes
- introducing Mental Health Champions schemes
- introducing [Wellness Action Plans](#) for staff, coaches and elite athletes.

We shared learning from these organisations with the rest of the sector. See case studies on how we supported [Activity Alliance](#) and [ukactive](#) with their workplace wellbeing.

“Without their 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. Mind are always on the end of the phone, so you can ask direct for help.”



Activity Alliance

Workplace Wellbeing Index

Our [Workplace Wellbeing Index](#) is a benchmark of best policy and practice. It helps organisations find out where they're doing well and where they could improve their approach to mental health in the workplace.

Before our Sector Support programme, no sport or physical activity organisations had taken part in the Index. As a result of our partnerships, three National Governing Bodies (NGBs) completed the Index including England Athletics who achieved silver.

“An illustration of the project effectiveness was how employees considered the mental health ‘narrative’ in the sector to be more open, more transparent, and discussed more regularly, with clear recognition of its importance than ever before.”

Loughborough University



What we learned

Here's what we've learned from our sector support programme. It's based on feedback, our reflections and Loughborough University's evaluation (their [full report is available online](#)).

1

Co-design is key

Projects and programmes co-designed with people with lived experience of mental health problems and mental health organisations (including local Minds) are more successful than those that don't.

2

People matter

The right people are the most important tool for creating change. It's important to have at least two people responsible for mental health within an organisation, club or group to reduce the risk of progress stalling if one of them leaves.

3

Create a mental health plan

A mental health action plan can be a great tool for anyone at the start of their mental health journey. Action plans can break projects into simple, manageable tasks and agree roles and responsibilities.

4

Be flexible

Organisations have different priorities and challenges, so it was important to adapt our approach to suit their needs. For example, several organisations required additional support to integrate our Thriving at Work guide into their workplace wellbeing offer.

5

Move to 'what's next?'

Mental health support needs are becoming more specific and specialised. We need to move from raising awareness to embedding mental health policies and practices. The sector needs more practical tools, templates and case studies to make it easier to embed mental health across all of their work.



Recommendations

The following recommendations have been created to help any organisation to support people living with mental health problems to be physically active.

It is hoped these recommendations will create a safer and more inclusive and welcoming environment for people with mental health problems to take part in sport or physical activity.

They are a result of our internal evaluation of [Get Set to Go](#), Loughborough University's evaluation of our Sector Support programme and reflections and recommendations from our lived experience advisory group for physical activity.

Recommendation	Who it is for		
	Mind	Physical activity providers	Sport sector
Recommendations from Get Set to Go (community delivery)			
1. Increase engagement from target groups Focus should be on engaging with young people, people from racialised communities and people living in poverty. To achieve this, the activities, marketing materials and promotion needs to be co-produced alongside these communities. <u>Guide 5 of our Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit</u> has guidance on engaging people from different communities.	X	X	X
2. Embrace different people's needs To effectively engage a more diverse range of people, projects should adapt and be flexible. For example, by adjusting the time and length of sessions or offering face-to-face and online sessions. <u>Guide 4 of our Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit</u> has guidance on making activities inclusive.	X	X	X
3. Prioritise opportunities for socialising and peer support Socialising and building connections is a valuable part of physical activity projects. Projects should focus on opportunities that enable people to connect with others and receive peer support.	X	X	X
4. Provide clear responsibilities and informal roles for volunteers Less formal volunteer roles like meeting and greeting new participants makes it easier for people, including those already participating in sessions, to start volunteering. Volunteer responsibilities should be set out at the beginning of role and organisations need to provide time and face-to-face support to build people's confidence to take on more responsibility. <u>Guide 6 of our Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit</u> has guidance on engaging volunteers.	X	X	X

Recommendation	Who it is for		
	Mind	Physical activity providers	Sport sector
Recommendations from our Sector Support programme			
<p>5. Involve people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design, development, and delivery of projects</p> <p>This will ensure projects better understand people's needs and are able to meet them effectively. For example, by creating a lived experience advisory board or recruiting people with lived experience to sit on existing boards.</p> <p>Guide 2 of our Mental Health our Physical Activity Toolkit has guidance on involving people with lived experience.</p>	X	X	X
<p>6. Mental health should be embedded across all work and activities</p> <p>This can be achieved by: writing a mental health strategy or action plan, providing mental health training for staff so they can better support people with mental health problems (e.g. Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity eLearning), using audits such as the Quest Gplus37 and Club Mark to highlight how they can provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for people with mental health problems, and identifying several staff to be responsible for mental health and include it in their job descriptions.</p>		X	X
<p>7. Focus on employees' mental health alongside delivering mental health initiatives externally</p> <p>More priority needs to be given to internal workplace wellbeing. For example, senior management should role model work/life balance and normalise mental health conversations.</p> <p>The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated positive change regarding mental health in workplaces and this momentum should be harnessed.</p> <p>A Guide to Implementing the Thriving at Work Standards in the Sport and Physical Activity Sector provides guidance on how to support staff mental health in the sector.</p>		X	X

Recommendation	Who it is for		
	Mind	Physical activity providers	Sport sector
<p>8. Introduce mental health champions and/or mental health leads</p> <p>Mental health champions and leads can take action to raise awareness of mental health, challenge stigma and signpost to appropriate support services.</p> <p>Mental Health Champions: a Toolkit for the Sport and Physical Activity Sector provides guidance on establishing a mental health champions scheme.</p>		X	X
<p>9. Increase collaboration and knowledge exchange between sport and mental health organisations</p> <p>This will help to ensure parity of esteem between mental and physical health.</p> <p>This could be achieved by inviting both physical activity and mental health representatives to events. And when establishing cross sector relationships, it is important to agree priorities, timelines and roles and responsibilities at the start.</p> <p>Our Regional Networks may help with this as they bring together sport, physical activity and mental health organisations.</p>	X	X	X
<p>10. Increase promotion of success stories and good practice examples</p> <p>More people know that physical activity can boost mental health, but further visibility is needed.</p> <p>The Case Studies page on our website provides a selection of good practice examples.</p>	X	X	X



Loughborough University's recommendations for Mind

Loughborough University also provided several recommendations specifically for Mind. It is hoped these recommendations will help focus the support we need to provide the sport and physical activity sector to continue their progress around better mental health.

- 1** Continue to work with organisations to ensure they provide mental health support for employees and partners. This includes providing direction (where possible) for organisations to get financial support to allocate time and resources to mental health initiatives, working with partners to update Mind's resources (such as eLearning provision and mental health resources), and promoting upcoming webinars, CPD and networking events.
- 2** Continue to work with strategic partners to create quality assurances or competence measures of mental health knowledge in the sector. For example, work with UK Coaching to encourage the integration of mental health into coaching policy through Duty to Care.
- 3** Understand how useful knowledge is spread across the sector and what stops this happening. Share this information with partners and sector organisations to create and sustain effective working relationships.
- 4** Encourage multi-sector collaborations by facilitating engagement with local Minds, introducing contacts to Regional Hubs and sports organisations where possible, and deliver events, training and workshops where representatives from different sectors can network.



Next steps

Mind is committed to building on the successes of our physical activity work, which aligns with Sport England's 'Uniting the Movement' strategy. We want to ensure physical activity supports people's wellbeing, builds resilience and enables recovery from mental health problems. We're also determined to tackle mental health stigma.

We know that the pandemic has entrenched existing inequalities. So we'll be prioritising partnerships where our support can make the greatest impact.

Our long-term ambitions are to embed:

- mental health across the sport and physical activity sector.
- physical activity across the mental health sector.

We hear from organisations both in the UK and around the world who want to replicate our work so far. This evaluation will help them do so.

Want to join us in our fight for mental health?

Start your journey at mind.org.uk/sport.

Thank you

Thank you to the many people who've come together to make our programme so successful. We value your support, passion and expertise.

Sport England and The National Lottery, EFL and the EFL Trust, our Physical Activity Advisory Group (experts by experience) and Sport and Physical Activity Advisory Group, Loughborough University and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (East Midlands).

Local Minds

Bath Mind
Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind
Buckinghamshire Mind
Carlisle Eden Mind
Derbyshire Mind
Dorset Mind
Hull and East Yorkshire Mind
Mind in Bexley
Mind in Brighton & Hove
Mind in Cornwall
Mind in Kingston
Mind in Mid-Herts
Newport Mind
Norfolk & Waveney Mind
Nottinghamshire Mind
Northamptonshire Mind
(Originally Rushden Mind)
Sheffield Mind
Springfield Mind
Washington Mind

Partners

Activity Alliance
Association of Colleges Sport
(AoC Sport)
CIMSPA
(Chartered Institute for the Management
of Sport and Physical Activity)
England Athletics
EFL
Sport and Recreation Alliance
Swim England
The FA
Ukactive

Regional Network Hubs

Active Dorset
Active Oxfordshire
Activity Alliance
Herts Sport Partnership
Merseyside Sport Foundation
RISE
Sport Birmingham
Yorkshire Sport Foundation



Join the fight for better mental health!

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Donate to Mind

mind.org.uk/Donate

Volunteer with us

mind.org.uk/Volunteer

 [mindforbettermentalhealth](https://www.facebook.com/mindforbettermentalhealth)

 [MindCharity](https://twitter.com/MindCharity)