



Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit

Guide 6:

Engaging volunteers in
a physical activity and
mental health service





About this guide

We've produced this guide to upskill sport, physical activity and mental health providers on how to recruit and support volunteers in physical activities for people experiencing mental health problems.

Who is this guide for?

Anyone with little to no previous experience in recruiting and supporting volunteers to help people experiencing mental health problems to be active.

What does this guide cover?

Click on the headings below to go straight to the information you're looking for.

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The importance of peer support and recruiting people with lived experience of mental health problems as volunteers

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The importance of peer support and recruiting people with lived experience of mental health problems as volunteers

Recruiting volunteers to help deliver your sessions is a great way of offering people opportunities to develop their social and leadership skills. It also provides you with greater capacity to deliver your service.

Sport England's [Active Lives data](#) shows that volunteering can boost mental health and wellbeing¹. People benefit the most when volunteering is combined with physical activity.

Volunteers with experience of mental health problems often have a greater understanding of the challenges participants face, so they can provide advice and help you tackle particular issues. It's important that your volunteers reflect the communities your participants are from, and that they understand the associated barriers and opportunities to physical activity.

See tips on how to engage a wider pool of volunteers on the [Sport England website](#).

“I think working with somebody who understands it [mental health problems] helps more because I don't believe people that talk about these situations that haven't been there...they can't relate to it. If you talk to somebody who's been in the same position, you know they understand how you've been feeling or how you are feeling at that moment of time.”

Get Set to Go Participant

¹ Sport England (2019). [Active Lives Adult Survey: May 18/19 Report](#).

The power of peer support

Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. It can be a really useful way of engaging participants in your physical activity service.

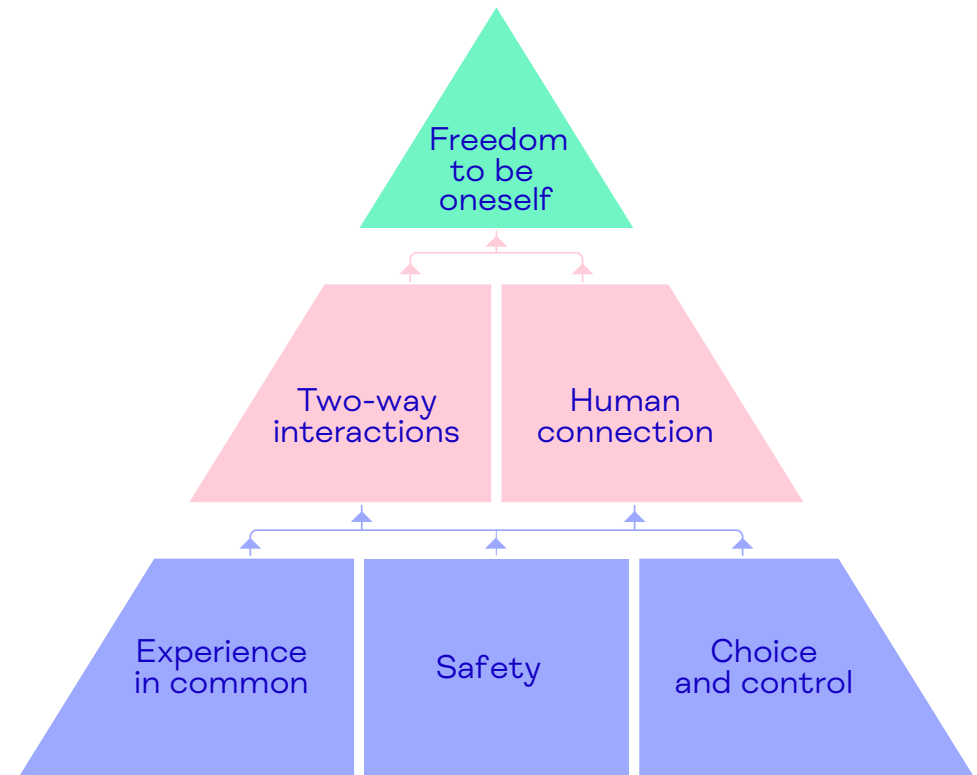
Peer support is non-directive; it's not guided by a leader or facilitator. It aims to create an equal power dynamic between people and is underpinned by these six interconnected core values².

The first three core values, **Experience in common, Safety, and Choice and control**, form a foundation on which the next three values, **Two-way interactions, Human connection, and Freedom to be oneself**, rest.

If people don't feel they're with others who have similar experiences, are not safe to express themselves, and don't have choice and control over whether/when/how they express themselves, they're unlikely to engage in two-way interactions and develop connections with their peers.

So without the five core values, it's unlikely that people will come to feel like they have **Freedom to be oneself** in peer support.

By creating an environment where people feel safe and empowered to offer and receive peer support you are helping them nurture the confidence to take on a more active volunteering role. For more information on creating a route into volunteering, see [Creating a pathway to volunteering for your participants](#).



² Billsborough J et al (2017). [Evaluating the Side by Side peer support programme](#).

Practical ideas on using peer support principles

Use these ideas to put the principles into practice.

Values	Considerations
<p>Building a common experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do you value people’s different experiences and explore common connections? ● What experiences do we share? Do we have more than one in common? ● What are the challenges, if any, of focusing on our shared experiences in peer support? ● How can we support people to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their experiences? ● Are there any practical or cultural barriers to people joining? Are we unintentionally excluding people by not considering accessibility or failing to show a diverse range of people in our publicity materials, for example? ● Are there any circumstances when sharing our experiences would not be helpful or appropriate?
<p>Providing a safe and familiar environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can you ensure everyone has a working knowledge of your safeguarding policies and procedures (see Guide 9: Safeguarding and mental health)? ● Do you have a code of conduct? Do you share your complaints/conflict resolution procedure with participants? ● What ongoing supervision and support do you offer? ● Do you have a group agreement? Developing a group agreement helps to build respect and trust between everyone involved so that they can be confident the session will be safe and non-judgmental. Everyone involved in delivering and supporting the sessions needs to sign up to this agreement. Be clear about when you will review the ground rules and agree on the actions the group will take if members don’t follow them.

Values	Considerations
<p>Providing a safe and familiar environment (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key areas the agreement should cover include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Confidentiality – what information do members feel comfortable sharing? How and with whom do they want this information to be shared outside the group, if at all? – Communication – what communication styles work for members? As a group how can you ensure that all communication is clear, inclusive, respectful and non-judgemental? Agreeing to avoid jargon and using plain English is a good start. – Comfort – what can you do as a group to make everyone feel welcome and relaxed? – Respect – what are the group’s boundaries? How can you resolve any disagreements in a respectful way? Is it important that everyone arrives on time for sessions, for example? – Conduct – how does the group want to challenge and resolve behaviour or conduct that’s not in keeping with the group agreement? ● Do your staff and volunteers understand mental health stigma and discrimination? Provide mental health training to existing staff and volunteers to upskill them if necessary. ● Do you know if your participants have had any negative experiences of physical activity? If so, how can you use this knowledge to better design your sessions? For example, if someone has experienced weight-shaming in the past, they might not be comfortable attending their first session in a sports environment. You could ask if they prefer the session took place somewhere unconnected to sport like a community or faith centre. ● Does your venue feel welcoming and friendly? Is there space for people to take time out if they’re finding things tough? ● Who else uses the venue? Will people feel comfortable with others using it? ● If meeting online, how can you and your group work together to make the space feel safe and secure?

Values	Considerations
<p>Offering choice and control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you provide a multi-sport session so people can choose the activity they'd like to do? ● Is it possible to split a longer session into two halves with a break in-between so there's a natural pause where people can join in or finish? ● Would participants and volunteers like the opportunity to lead on different aspects of the session, like warm-ups and cool-downs? ● Would they also want to collaborate on developing monitoring or evaluation tools? ● What goals do people want to achieve as a result of attending your sessions? ● How comfortable do people feel dipping in and out of sessions? ● How much control do participants and volunteers have about how sessions are run? ● Are there ways to provide feedback anonymously or in a way that doesn't require talking with the whole group?
<p>Developing human connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can you recruit staff and volunteers who can relate to your participants? What criteria can you include in role descriptions? See Appendix 1 for an example volunteer role description from the Get Set to Go programme. ● Would participants and volunteers want to welcome new people to sessions? ● Are you able to build in time so people have the opportunity to talk and get to know each other? Simple actions like gathering for a cup of tea after the session can be invaluable and provide a great space for peer support. It's important that everyone knows this is optional: no-one will be judged for not taking part in social activities. ● How can you keep the conversation going between sessions? Can you set up a closed social media group so people can stay in touch or encourage people to join an online peer support community like Side by Side? ● What support is available to help people share difficult experiences if they want to? ● Do people feel comfortable saying no? ● How will you establish appropriate boundaries, for example, around contact outside of sessions?

Values	Considerations
<p>Building two-way connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would participants like the chance to ‘buddy up’ with another person during a session? • How can you help people to share their experiences and coping strategies? • What opportunities might there be to share responsibility for aspects of the session across different members of the group? For example, welcoming new people or leading on warm-ups or cool-downs. • How can people contribute if they don’t feel comfortable talking in a group? • How can we ensure that new members feel comfortable to contribute? • How can we best work with each other to identify and develop skills, strengths and interests? • How can we encourage people to listen and not interrupt each other? • Do we need some training or a discussion to help develop listening skills? • Do we need some training or a discussion to help people share views and experiences with others in a way that is safe for us and helpful for others?
<p>By doing these things, you will help to create an environment where people are free to be themselves.</p>	

Top tools

- [Mind’s Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit](#) contains advice and tips to help you think about how you can integrate peer support into your activities.
- The [AVA project digital safeguarding resource pack](#) includes information to help you choose the right social media platform when establishing an online group. There’s also practical and detailed guidance to help you plan for and manage potential risks.

Case study

Side by Side

[Side by Side](#) is Mind's online community for anyone aged 18+ who has an experience of mental health problems, or is closely connected to someone that has. It's a safe place to build connections, share how you're feeling and support one another in taking positive steps to look after your wellbeing.

On Side by Side you can:

- Create posts to share what's on your mind or ask other community members for tips, advice or support.
- Add a 'theme' to your posts, such as 'Being Active'.
- Find others with similar experiences or interests like 'Sports' by adding this to your profile.

It's moderated seven days a week during the day and evenings, so there's someone on hand if you need any help.

Elefriends, the platform that came before Side by Side, highlighted that online activity can translate into positive offline action. In a 2016 survey, over one-third of members said they had tried a new physical activity.





How to recruit volunteers

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Use the checklist below to record ideas that will help you to shape your volunteer recruitment strategy.

Before recruiting

Questions	Considerations	Your response
Do you have links with volunteers and local volunteer networks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may have volunteers supporting other aspects of your work. Are they interested in your new volunteer opportunity? 	
Should the role be paid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the activity reliant on the volunteer or was it previously a paid position? If so, it might not be suitable as a voluntary role. 	
Do you have a dedicated volunteer support role?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your capacity to recruit, train and manage volunteers? What support can partner organisations provide to volunteers? Do you have capacity for regular supervision sessions to ensure your volunteers feel supported and get the most from their experience? Can you offer online, phone and/or face-to-face catch ups? 	
Do you have a budget for volunteer expenses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is good practice to pay volunteer expenses like travel, equipment and training. Some people may be concerned about how volunteering, and any expenses they claim, might affect their benefits. Read the Government's advice on volunteering and claiming benefits so you can answer any questions. 	

When recruiting

Questions	Considerations	Your response
Who are you looking for and what are your expectations for the role?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's best practice to write a volunteer role description to help potential volunteers decide if they are right for the position (see Appendix 1 for a Get Set to Go example). • You may need to tailor your language so your audience understands the role. Ask peers and partners to co-design the role description to ensure it's inclusive for different people. 	
What support will volunteers receive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, will you provide a volunteer induction, training (see Topics to cover in volunteer training), development opportunities, regular supervision with a line manager and expenses? • Could you use Wellness Action Plans as an easy and practical way to support your volunteers' mental health? 	
What are the benefits of getting involved in your volunteer opportunity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your recruitment promotion, list benefits such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mental health and wellbeing benefits (like feeling good by being active). – the chance to learn and develop new skills. – meeting new people and social activities. 	
How have existing volunteers benefited from being involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share stories from your existing volunteers in recruitment material. • Include quotes or full case studies (with permission) so people can see the positive impact of volunteering. 	

Questions	Considerations	Your response
<p>Do you have existing volunteer programmes that could support this new opportunity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your existing volunteers might be interested in trying something new and developing a different set of skills. • Where possible, it is also useful to integrate your volunteer training with other volunteer programmes. 	
<p>How will you promote your volunteer opportunity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote your opportunity through your existing stakeholders and partners. • You could also promote it through local Minds, Rethink Mental Illness peer support groups, Time to Change Champions, GoodGym, local sport and community clubs (speak to your Active Partnership), colleges and universities. 	

Topics to cover in volunteer training

Your training will depend on the nature of the role and your organisational policies and procedures.

However, it may include these topics.

Overview of your programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type and duration of your activities.• Partner organisations.• Key outcomes you hope to achieve and why they're important, along with how volunteers can support you to showcase your outcomes.• Incentives for taking part, including expenses.• Support available to volunteers such as one to ones, group get-togethers, online support through platforms and Wellness Action Plans.
Benefits of physical activity for mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why being active is important for mental health? See Guide 2: The relationship between physical activity and mental health.• What are the common barriers to getting active and how can these be overcome? See Guide 5: Engaging people in physical activity to support their mental health.
Skills to encourage peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the principles and values of peer support.• How to safely and meaningfully disclose lived experience.• Practising self-care.• Establishing boundaries and group agreements.• Facilitation and active listening.• Asking open questions.• Building and developing an environment where everyone is able to benefit from giving and receiving support based on their own experiences.• Tips to draw out compassion and common themes in people's experiences.• Best practice on providing peer support online or remotely.

<p>Skills to maximise the participants' experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Find out what the participants want from the programme. ● Use SMART (specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, time-based) goals. ● Provide effective and constructive feedback. ● Use behaviour change theory to support people to be more active. See Guide 5: Engaging people in physical activity to support their mental health.
<p>Ensuring volunteer and participant safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defining abuse and vulnerability. Types of abuse – categories and indicators. ● How to record and report abuse. ● Keeping yourself safe – lone working, awareness of risks. ● First points of contact. ● Overview of relevant sections of organisation's policies and procedures, including what to do in a crisis or emergency. ● Hygiene and physical distancing protocols (if applicable). <p>For more information on these points, see Guide 9: Safeguarding and mental health.</p>
<p>Embedding equality, inclusivity and diversity within sessions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defining what we mean by equality, diversity and inclusion. ● Reviewing equality legislation such as the Equality Act 2010. ● Exploring and challenging appropriate/inappropriate language, behaviour and actions. ● Understanding and respecting the needs of individuals. ● Offering practical tips to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in sessions.
<p>Confidentiality and data protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview of relevant sections of your organisation's policies and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) including the impact of breaking confidentiality or data breaches. ● Circumstances when we would break confidentiality without consent and why. See Guide 9: Safeguarding and mental health.

Top tools

- Our [Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity+ eLearning course](#) aims to give you the knowledge, skills and confidence to better understand and support people experiencing mental health problems, and create a positive environment that ensures they enjoy the benefits of being active and keep coming back for more.
- UK Coaching offer a range of [training and resources](#) covering topics from safeguarding children and vulnerable adults to using behaviour change theory to support people to be more active.
- Club Matters have a [volunteer toolkit](#) that includes information on finding, keeping and developing volunteers.
- The National Survivor User Network have developed a [Remote and Online Peer Support resource](#) with best practice, tips and information on providing peer support remotely.
- The Scottish Recovery Network have developed the [Peer2Peer course](#) to help people develop understanding and skills in peer support.



How to retain volunteers

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How to retain volunteers

Keeping volunteers engaged for the long term means they benefit from getting involved with your project and expands the capacity and skills in your team.

Here are seven steps to help you retain volunteers.

1 Safeguard everyone

Make sure you safeguard both the volunteers you recruit, and the participants they'll be working with. See [Appendix 2](#) for a Get Set to Go example of a safe volunteer recruitment checklist. See [Guide 9: Safeguarding and mental health](#) and NCVO KnowHow [Safeguarding and Volunteers](#) webpages for more information.

2 Manage expectations

A volunteer-participant agreement can help you manage expectations around the scope and limits of the support available. See [Appendix 3](#) for an example from Get Set to Go.

3 Use Wellness Action Plans

Offer volunteers the chance to complete a Wellness Action Plan where they can share information about the factors that might impact their mental health and the support they may need to stay well. You can find [Wellness Action Plan templates and guidance](#) on our website.

4 Provide wellbeing support

Like participants and staff, volunteers may need wellbeing support in their roles. This could include offering volunteers check-ins with staff and peer support with other volunteers. Ensure you have sufficient cover if a volunteer needs to take time away from the role.

5 Offer participants one-to-one support

Do you have the capacity to offer volunteer support for participants on a one-to-one basis? Learning from [Mind's Get Set to Go programme](#) shows that it can take time to match a volunteer and participant based on their interests and the types of activities they want to try. Volunteers may require extra training and support when working with participants with complex needs or severe mental health problems.

6 Check in regularly

Offer regular one-to-one or group check-ins to give volunteers the opportunity to discuss concerns, successes and feedback. These could take place in person, online or over the phone. During these sessions you may want to talk about:

- achievements and challenges since the last meeting
- reviewing goals and what the volunteer would like to get out of their experience
- areas of concern, including discussing any boundary or safeguarding issues
- issues around engaging a participant within the peer support relationship, such as a potential lack of motivation to engage, which could be a result of poor mental health
- skills development or training needs
- any questions on key policies (for example, lone working and safeguarding).

7 Get together

It's a good idea to offer opportunities for volunteers to get together as a group to discuss ideas, raise concerns, share best practice and celebrate. This can be especially important if volunteers are mainly working on their own.

Top tools

- The [NVCO KnowHow volunteering webpages](#) have lots of resources and guidance to help you support volunteers.
- [Sport England's volunteering Q&A](#) includes explanations on everything from how to develop a volunteering strategy, to providing the best experience for your volunteers.
- The [Sport and Recreation Alliance volunteering pages](#) provide insight into the benefits of volunteering in sport and physical activity, what drives people to volunteer, and what keeps them from doing so. [Doit.Life](#) has information to help you get started in recruiting volunteers, including a section to post your volunteering opportunity.
- The [National Lottery Heritage Fund volunteering guidance](#) provides tips on planning and developing volunteer opportunities, as well as suggestions for costing volunteer activity.
- The Volunteering Matters website has [great tips to help you thank your volunteers](#).
- [Appendix 4](#) has a Get Set to Go volunteer advert example.



How to give your volunteers a great experience

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Volunteers that have a great experience tend to return in the future. Here's how to ensure they have the best experience possible.

- 1** Look out for opportunities to get motivated volunteers involved in more of your work. For example, give them the opportunity to get involved in marketing and promotion. Offer opportunities that fit with their motivation, interests and goals for volunteering.
- 2** Design a clear pathway that outlines the different volunteer opportunities available, both within your organisation and with your partner organisations.
- 3** Shout about their successes – include volunteer case studies and quotes in your internal and external communications. Ask volunteers if they would be happy sharing their experience as a short video or case study to use in your recruitment and training collateral.
- 4** Keep volunteers in the loop through newsletters and other communications – this can help to maintain links if there are few volunteering opportunities available at the current time.
- 5** Give positive encouragement and say thank you – you can never do this enough! For maximum effect, try to couple positive comments with the reason why you're giving them. You can also plan celebrations during events such as [Volunteers Week](#) and [International Volunteer Day](#).
- 6** Recognise people's contributions publicly – you could organise your own award ceremony, or nominate volunteers for an external award. Examples include the [Marsh Awards](#), which celebrate peer support in mental health, or volunteer awards hosted by individual National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport or [Active Partnerships](#). You can also highlight people's work in your organisation's newsletter and marketing channels.
- 7** What incentives can you offer? For example, training, invitations to events or free gym memberships.
- 8** Where budget and space allows, could you offer volunteers a free space in your activities for their friends or family members?
- 9** Hold exit interviews with volunteers that leave to find out what changes you could make to improve the volunteering experience. [Appendix 5](#) has a Get Set to Go volunteer feedback form example.
- 10** Provide training and development opportunities (see [Examples of training opportunities](#)).

Examples of training opportunities

The courses in the table haven't been developed by Mind but you may wish to offer them to your volunteers (and participants if they are keen to become volunteers or coaches) to develop their skills.

Course	What it covers
<u>Inclusive Activity Programme (IAP) – Activity Alliance</u>	Skills to engage disabled people, and people with long-term health conditions, to take part in physical activities together.
<u>Coaching the Person in Front of You – UK Coaching</u>	How to put participants' feelings, thoughts, ambitions and motivations at the heart of everything you do.
<u>Behaviour Change Tactics – UK Coaching</u>	Useful strategies to help people get and stay active.
<u>How to Deliver Engaging Sessions for Adults – UK Coaching</u>	How to support positive experiences for adults and ensure sustained participation. There's also a version of this course aimed at <u>engaging young people</u> .
<u>How to Coach: Plan, Do, Review – UK Coaching</u>	How to plan, deliver and evaluate coaching sessions effectively.
Sport/activity specific introductory courses	<p>The National Governing Body for each sport provides introductory training to upskill people on how to deliver their activity. Examples of introductory courses that have worked well in our Get Set to Go programme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Leadership in Running Fitness (LiRF) – England Athletics</u> • <u>Level 1 Swimming Assistant (Teaching) – Swim England</u> • <u>Level 1 in Coaching Football – FA</u> • <u>No Strings Badminton Coordinator eLearning – Badminton England</u> • <u>Walk Leader training – Ramblers</u>

Top tools

Semble have created a [six-point guide to keeping volunteers engaged and happy](#). It includes practical tips and suggestions from community projects to help you create a positive volunteer experience.

“I do get quite a sense of wellbeing from being able to help out effectively. It gives me confidence, it gives me purpose and new skills, and helps me practise socialising too. It makes me interact with the world in a better way, a more successful way.”

Get Set to Go Volunteer





Creating a pathway to volunteering for your participants

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Creating a pathway to volunteering for your participants

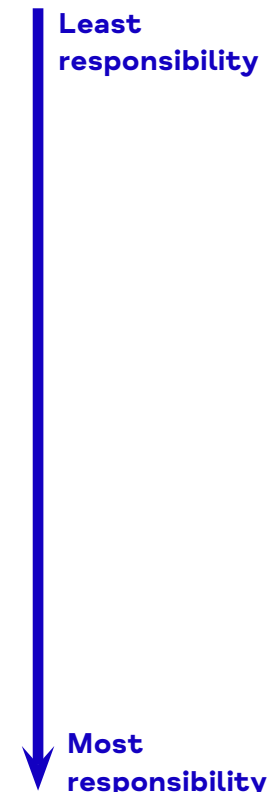
Participants may be interested in volunteering, but lack the confidence to try. So it's important to look at the different ways people can actively support your sessions, starting with a role with less responsibility. That way people can build their confidence before trying more demanding roles. It's also important to offer a range of roles that meet people's aspirations and interests.

When developing a volunteer pathway it can be useful to find out what skills, experience and expertise your volunteers and participants currently have and which they may want to develop. Can you provide relevant opportunities?



Here's an example of a volunteering pathway.

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting and greeting new participants. • Participants offer peer support to each other.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping the coach or leader with admin or setting up equipment. • Accompanying participants to sessions within the programme where appropriate. • Supporting warm-ups and cool-downs. • Supporting community events and activities. For example, celebration events or marshalling at fundraisers.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accompanying participants to sessions in the wider community where appropriate. • Delivering the warm-up and cool down during a session. • Acting as an ambassador for activity sessions or speaking at events. • Club or community group mental health champion – a volunteer who promotes the benefits of sport and physical activity. For example, England Athletics' Mental Health Champions scheme.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering elements of the session. • Undertaking formal training for a recognised qualification.



Top tools

Mind's Community Mental Health Champions guidance provides practical tips and templates to help community clubs and groups create an environment that supports mental health and wellbeing. Find out more on our [Mental Health Champions toolkit page](#).



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Appendix 1 – Get Set to Go peer volunteer role description example

The role description below was created to help local Minds recruit volunteers for the Get Set to Go programme. Local Minds could adapt the content to fit with their programme and style.

What is Get Set to Go?

We're often told that it's good to be more active, but we understand that having a mental health problem can reduce our desire to get up and go, especially when we're not well.

Mind's Get Set to Go programme aims to remove barriers that prevent those of us with a mental health problem feeling more confident about getting active and developing the confidence to be active in your local community.

[Insert organisation's name] is one of the local Minds across England that will start providing Get Set to Go sessions this spring. The programme is being supported by Sport England and the National Lottery.

What will I be doing?

As a Peer Volunteer, you'll work with a range of people with mental health problems to participate in weekly sessions that focus on a particular sport or physical activity.

You will use your own experiences of mental health and physical activity to help participants feel more confident to be active, and use leisure and sports facilities in your community. For the most part you'll be working with people as part of a group, but there may be some people who need a little more one to one support. The relationship between the Peer Volunteer and participants is an equal one based on the principles of shared identity and mutual benefit.

You will also have opportunities to use your knowledge and experience as a Peer Volunteer to help us shape key aspects of the programme, which may include assisting with the production of training materials and the broader marketing and promotion of Get Set to Go.

What will I get in return?

In return for your time, [insert organisation's name] will provide full volunteer training and regular catch up sessions with staff and other volunteers to help you get the most out of your volunteering experience.

There will be opportunities to try out a range of different sports, develop leadership and communication skills by taking more of a lead in delivering sessions and, where available, the chance to gain sport-related qualifications.

As a Peer Volunteer you will be expected to:

- Create a mutually helpful and supportive relationship between the Peer Volunteer and participant that will be of benefit to both.
- Build the confidence of people by encouraging and motivating them to overcome any barriers to getting active and taking part in sport.
- Work with participants to attend sport related activity sessions together in the community.
- Work with Get Set to Go participants to help them achieve realistic goals and identify how they can stay active in the future.

- Encourage participants to consider their health and wellbeing more broadly, for example improving their diet, stopping smoking, sleep hygiene and developing social networks that can benefit their mental wellbeing.
- Share information about local services that can offer support to participants with needs not related to sport.
- Contribute to programme evaluation activities and support participants to do the same.
- Work within agreed boundaries.
- Be a positive role model.

As a volunteer of [insert organisation's name] you will also be asked to:

- Complete [insert organisation's name]'s volunteer induction programme and attend any other training necessary for the role.
- Attend regular supervision sessions and encourage your fellow volunteers.
- Provide feedback and attend relevant meetings (where able).
- Work in a professional, confidential and non-discriminatory manner at all times and promote equal opportunities for all.
- Work in accordance with [insert organisation's name]'s policies and procedures and maintain accurate records when required.

Disclosure: This role is subject to satisfactory references, Mind's policies on the Protection of Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults and an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and subsequent re-checks.

How much time do I need to commit?

Hours are flexible although we do ask that you attend a weekly group sport session.

What have existing volunteers said about the role?

“I have always been a caring person and Mind made me remember that I still had those gifts and wanted to use them. I naturally see the potential in others and hope to instil confidence and self-belief in them so that they can achieve too. Becoming a volunteer has shown that people have trust, faith and belief in me and this has made a massive difference to me, a huge difference, an incredible boost.”

Get Set to Go volunteer, Middlesbrough & Stockton Mind

“As a peer volunteer I really relish the opportunity to encourage others to take part in sporting activities. It's great to take an active part in the sport, but also 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, Bath Mind

What knowledge and experience will I need?

To help you make your decision we have listed the experience, knowledge and qualities that will help you to make the most of the role in the table below. Some are felt to be essential and are marked with an **E** (essential), others are great to have, but you can develop as a Peer Volunteer and are marked with a **D** (desirable).

Don't worry if you don't already possess everything on the list: some will be included in the volunteer training and you will develop others as you gain experience in the role.

Criteria	Standard	E/D	Measured by
Qualifications	None required.		
Experience	Experience of using physical activity to improve physical and/or mental wellbeing.	E	Application form/Interview
	Experience of a mental health problem, either personally or from a close relative or friend.	E	Interview
	Experience of working with people with mental health problems.	D	Application form/Interview
	Experience of providing one-to-one peer support.	D	Application form/Interview
	Experience of providing online or remote peer support.	D	Application form/Interview

Criteria	Standard	E/D	Measured by
Knowledge	Knowledge of the health benefits of physical activity.	E	Application form/Interview
	Knowledge of mental health problems.	D	Application form/ Interview/Training
	Knowledge of behaviour change theory in supporting people to be more active.	D	Application form/ Interview/Training
Skills	Ability to communicate with people of different gender identities, ages and backgrounds in a friendly and supportive manner.	E	Interview/Training
	Ability to provide effective positive feedback.	E	Interview/Training
	Good time management skills and reliability.	E	References/Training
	Ability to maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality.	E	References/Training
Attitude	Open and non-judgmental attitude.	E	Interview/Training
	Positive, patient and tolerant approach towards supporting people with mental health problems.	E	Interview/Training
	Positive approach to supporting fellow volunteers.	E	Interview/Training
	Commitment to [insert organisation's name] 's aims and objectives.	D	Interview/Training

Who do I need to contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions or would like further information then please contact [\[insert contact details\]](#).

Appendix 2 – Safe recruitment of volunteers: Get Set to Go checklist example

Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers is not just about DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checking. A DBS may form one part of your safer recruitment practices.

The following checklist created to help local Minds safely recruit volunteers for their Get Set to Go programme.

Task	Completed
Write a clear role description (what tasks the volunteer will do) and a role profile (what skills the person will be expected to have). This will help you to determine whether the post is regulated and is subject to a DBS check.	
Use an application form to assess the volunteer’s suitability for the role. This makes it easier to compare the experience of potential volunteers and helps you to collate the important information you need to ask.	
Make it clear that your local organisation has a commitment to safeguarding and protecting vulnerable people. This should be included in the volunteer pack.	
Conduct a face-to-face interview with pre-planned and clear questions.	
Include a question on the application form and during interview about whether the applicant has any criminal convictions, cautions, other legal restrictions or pending cases that might affect their suitability to work with vulnerable adults.	
Check the volunteer’s identity by asking them to bring photographic ID such as a photo driving license or passport.	
Check that the volunteer holds any relevant qualifications they say they have by asking them to bring the certificates with them to interview – for example: sports coaching qualifications, first aid certificates etc.	
Take up a minimum of two references. These should be from a previous employer, volunteer manager or from a school/college/ university tutor. Ask specifically about a person’s suitability to work with vulnerable adults.	

Task	Completed
Provide a copy of your organisation's safeguarding procedures and employee/ volunteer code of conduct (what is and is not acceptable behaviour in relation to working with vulnerable adults), and ask them to sign when they have read it.	
Agree who will line manage the volunteer and agree the boundaries for their role.	
It may be your organisation's standard policy to apply for a DBS check, or you may deem the work of the volunteer to be 'regulated activity' – in which case you will need to apply for a DBS check. Read the DBS eligibility guidance for further information. Alternatively ask the volunteer to complete a self-disclosure form.	
Safeguarding vulnerable adults training should be provided to the volunteer before they start volunteering with you. If you have any concerns about a volunteer's suitability to volunteer with vulnerable people you have a duty to follow this up with additional training or checks as required.	

Additional guidance

- [UK government DBS eligibility guidance](#). Includes an eligibility tool to find out which roles or activities could be eligible for a basic, standard or enhanced DBS check.
- [NCVO KnowHow Safer Recruitment of Volunteers guidance](#). Includes a link to the NSPCC Safer Recruitment guidance for organisations working with children.

Appendix 3 – Get Set to Go volunteer-participant agreement example

The agreement below was created to help local Minds to agree the boundaries and expectations between volunteers and participants for the Get Set to Go programme.

This agreement will be completed by both of you at your first meeting. It will formalise the boundaries and ground rules of your relationship.

We understand and have agreed that:

- We both aim to keep session appointments, to be on time and let each other know in good time if session appointments cannot be kept.
- We will bring the specific equipment required for the session (bottle of water, Training Plan and comfortable, clean sport kit).
- If another arrangement is made (like swapping mobile phone numbers) contact will only be by text message and during 9-5 office hours. The text will only contain details of the meeting to be arranged or rearranged.
- The relationship is solely for support into being more active. [Insert project name] is not offering general mental health support, it is not a crisis service and does not provide support with benefits, housing or family issues. Home telephone numbers or addresses should not be exchanged and volunteers and participants should not transport each other in vehicles.
- No financial assistance is to be requested or given by either the peer volunteer or participant.
- We will inform the office if we cannot make an appointment unless we can come to another agreed arrangement.
- We fully understand the role of the peer volunteer and agree not to compromise them by asking them to do something that is not part of their role.
- We understand that the peer volunteer is not an expert and that if something arises outside of their expertise or knowledge they may need to ask if they can signpost the participant to someone who will have that knowledge.
- The peer volunteer and participant will treat all sensitive information shared between each other as confidential. Confidentiality will only be broken if either the participant or peer volunteer discloses information that poses a danger to themselves or others. In this instance a member of staff will be informed as soon as possible.
- We understand that the peer volunteer will keep a record of our sessions and receive supervision from [insert organisation's name]'s staff.

- If pictures are taken of the participant or volunteer that will be used to market [insert project name] then it is the responsibility of the [insert job title of member of staff] to obtain written consent from everyone featured before the image can be used in promotional materials.
- We understand that the partnership will come to an end after an agreed time.

Additional boundaries we would like to include in the agreement can be added in the space below.

Participant Name: _____

Signed: _____

Volunteer Name: _____

Signed: _____

Appendix 4 – Get Set to Go Volunteer recruitment advert example

The advert below was created to help local Minds recruit volunteers for the Get Set to Go programme. Local Minds could adapt the content and branding to fit with their programme.

Do you want to help people get active?

- We're seeking volunteers who can use their experiences to support people who want to be more physically active as part of our exciting [insert programme name].
- You don't need to be a health or fitness expert, but you will need to appreciate the health benefits of being active and enjoy and feel confident about using local sport and leisure services.
- You may have a mental health problem yourself – or understand the difficulties of starting something new if you have a mental health problem.
- We will provide full training and support. By volunteering you'll be learning valuable peer support skills while getting all the health benefits of being active too.

[Insert programme name] is all about removing the barriers to sport and physical activity that those of us with mental health problems can face. As a volunteer you might find yourself working with a small group of participants or providing one-to-one support to people who want to be active, but maybe lack confidence, or just don't know where to start.

We're looking for people based in [insert location] or the surrounding area. We'll train you to be one of our Peer Volunteers so you can work alongside our staff to support people joining the programme.

What you'll be doing:

- Building supportive relationships with people joining [insert programme name].
- Improving people's confidence by encouraging and motivating them to overcome any barriers to being active.
- Directly supporting people over a set period to attend their chosen activity so they feel confident using sport and leisure services when their [insert programme name] support ends.
- Helping participants find an activity that feels right for them but also helps them to meet their goals.
- Encouraging participants to consider their health and wellbeing more broadly and signposting them to information and services that can help people live healthier lives.
- Helping you to gather information that will help you demonstrate the impact of [insert programme name].

If you're interested in applying, or have any questions, we'd love to hear from you.

Please contact [insert contact details].

Appendix 5 – Volunteer feedback form

The form below was created to help local Minds gain feedback from volunteers for the Get Set to Go programme. Local Minds could adapt the content and branding to fit with the programme.

Thank you for volunteering.

We are really interested to hear how you think we can improve the experience for volunteers and appreciate any feedback you might have. To help, we'd be really grateful if you could answer the following quick questions.

Why did you decide to volunteer for [insert programme name]?

How did your volunteering experience compare with your expectations before starting the role?

Was there anything you felt could be improved?

Were there any further training/development opportunities we could have offered to support you in the role?

Has volunteering for [insert programme name] been useful in any other part of your life? If so, please provide details here.

Are there any changes/improvements you would like to see made to the volunteering programme? Please be specific.

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How likely are you to recommend the volunteer role to others? 1 being 'not at all likely' and 10 being 'very likely'

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

**How would you rate the support you have received from [insert organisation's name]?
1 being 'very poor' and 10 being 'very good'**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

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Have a question or would like more information?

You can find more information at mind.org.uk.
Or why not take a look at the other guides in our [Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit](#).

If you have any further questions, please contact
our Physical Activity team at sport@mind.org.uk.

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