



Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit

Guide 7:

Measuring the
impact of a physical
activity and mental
health service





About this guide

We've put together this guide to help you measure the impact of physical activity on mental health. This will help demonstrate your service's impact and help secure funding.

Who is this guide for?

Anyone delivering a sport or physical activity service that aims to support and improve people's mental health.

The language we use

In this guide we use the term service to represent any project, programme, activity, session or intervention you deliver.

What does this guide include?

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

- 03** Why should I measure the impact of my service?
- 05** Defining your outcomes – what do I want to achieve?
- 08** How do I measure the impact of my service?
- 13** Designing an evaluation process
- 19** Ways to increase participation in your evaluation
- 22** Demonstrating impact to funders and commissioners
- 24** Appendices



Why should I measure the impact of my service?

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Why should I measure the impact of my service?

Recording the number of participants only tells some of your story. By measuring how participants' lives change you can capture your service's real-life impact. This evidence can help inspire potential participants, or persuade funders to invest.

Capturing impact also enables you to improve what you're delivering and create a better experience for the people involved. It empowers participants to shape the service, making sure their voices are heard.

It's important to consider how you'll measure impact in the planning phase – when you're designing your service. This will ensure you collect and measure data as soon as people start taking part.





Defining your outcomes – what do I want to achieve?

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Defining your outcomes – what do I want to achieve?

Before you collect data, you need to decide what you want to achieve. It's good practice to do this with stakeholders, delivery partners and your target audience to ensure it meets their needs and expectations.

And remember, many services have unintended outcomes too (results you didn't expect), so it's important to be open to spotting and reflecting on these as well.

Build on the evidence you already have, and make sure that your evaluation is equal to the size of your service. If research exists on a similar service, look at the outcomes that were measured. Compare this with the number of outcomes you're measuring against. When looking for existing evidence a good place to start is the research section of the [Sport England website](#).

To understand your outcomes and the steps needed to achieve them you may want to develop a [Theory of Change model](#).

This is a planning tool that helps you to map out the:

- current situation and need for your service
- activities you'll deliver in response to this need
- short to medium-term outcomes that will result from these activities
- the long-term aim or goals of your service that will flow from these outcomes.

Learn more about how you can build a Theory of Change model on the [NCVO KnowHow website](#).

¹ At the time of writing, this was the current DCMS strategy.

Key strategies to consult when developing your outcomes include:

- Sport England's [Uniting the Movement strategy](#) (2021-2031).
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) [Sporting Future strategy](#) (2016-2021)¹.
- Your local Health and Wellbeing strategy found on your [local government website](#).
- Your [Active Partnership](#) strategy.
- [National Governing Body](#) (NGB) strategies for individual sports.

Case study

Get Set to Go evaluation

In the first phase of the [Get Set to Go programme \(2015-17\)](#), Mind worked with researchers from Loughborough University and the University of Northampton to explore and evaluate the impact of the programme on participants' physical activity levels and mental health.

The researchers also looked at the impact of [peer support](#) on the people who give and receive it, and the effectiveness of the peer volunteer support model. This is where volunteers use their own experiences of mental health and physical activity to help participants feel more confident to be active.

Understanding the experiences of people involved in both delivering and taking part in the programme allowed the evaluation team to explore the impact of Get Set to Go.

The evaluation also involved recruiting a team of peer researchers – all of whom had lived experience of mental health problems. The peer researchers supported the delivery of focus groups, conducted phone interviews and helped with the wider research.

See the findings from the Get Set to Go programme on [our website](#).





How do I measure the impact of my service?

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

How do I measure the impact of my service?

Validated tools are tried and tested methods for recording impact.

They work well because:

- you can be sure of the quality of the questions you're asking and the data you collect
- they've been extensively tested to demonstrate reliability, consistency and sensitivity
- they enable you to compare your service against other interventions that use the same tools: this helps you to benchmark its effectiveness.

We recommend as a minimum choosing one tool to measure mental health and wellbeing and another to measure changes in physical activity.



Tools for measuring changes in mental health and wellbeing

Some of the tools below are free to use, but some require a licence. You can find more information about different measurement tools on the [Child, Youth and Family Database](#).

The tools ask questions about people’s mental health and may include statements and questions on suicidal feelings and thoughts of self-harm. Answering these questions may be upsetting or triggering. It’s important to put in place support for respondents, and inform them of these support options before they start. A checklist of support ideas is available in [Appendix 5](#).

Name of tool	Summary	Age range
Mind’s recommended outcome measures		
<u>Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)</u>	Monitors mental wellbeing among the general population and is widely used in evaluations. Available in long and short formats.	13-74
<u>Social Provisions Scale (SPS)</u>	Measures the level of social support an individual has available. Available in 24 and 10 item scales.	8 and over
<u>Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES)</u>	Robust tool for measuring self-esteem.	No age range provided
Measures commonly used in the NHS and requested by commissioners		
<u>Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item scale (GAD-7)</u>	The sector standard for measuring self-reported symptoms of anxiety.	13 and over
<u>Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9)</u>	The sector standard for measuring self-reported symptoms of depression.	12 and over

Name of tool	Summary	Age range
Additional measures you could consider		
<u>Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL)</u>	To assess the quality of life for people with different mental health conditions.	16 and over
<u>General Self-efficacy Scale</u>	Robust measure of how an individual reacts and adapts to challenging events.	12 and over
<u>Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS-6)</u>	A measure to gauge social isolation in older adults and the level of perceived social support received from family and friends.	65 and over

For information and resources on the validated tools for children and young people, visit the [Child Outcomes Research Consortium](#).

The Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (SWEMWBS) is appropriate to use when measuring mental health outcomes for young people aged 13+. When working with people under the age of 18 you may need to consider providing additional or tailored support to help them fully engage with your evaluation.

This could include:

- a glossary of terms
- ensuring any examples are relevant to the participants' age group
- consider asking parents or guardians to answer questionnaires on behalf of younger participants' where appropriate.

Tools for measuring changes in physical activity levels

Name of tool	Summary	Age range
<u>Short Active Lives Survey – Adults</u>	Set of questions used to measure adult physical activity levels over the last seven days.	16 and over
<u>Short Active Lives Survey – Children and Young People</u> (see pages 12-13 for questionnaire content)	Captures information about the type and amount of physical activity that children and young people have done in the last seven days.	5-16
<u>Simple Physical Activity Questionnaire (SIMPAQ)</u>	A five-item clinical tool designed to assess physical activity among populations at high risk of sedentary behaviour.	No age range provided



Designing an evaluation process

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Designing an evaluation process

You may find it useful to write an evaluation brief to help you define what you want to find out and how the information will be used. Think about the points below to help you.

Question	Considerations	Notes
What data do I need to collect?	<p>Only collect the information you'll actually use – long questionnaires can put people off.</p> <p>This will also depend on your funder's requirements. But as a minimum, we suggest measuring mental wellbeing using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and the Short Active Lives Survey to measure changes in physical activity.</p>	
What methods will I use to collect data?	<p>Incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data into your evaluation to ensure you present a more holistic picture of the impact of your work (see Qualitative vs quantitative data).</p>	
What resources and capacity do I realistically have available to collect, input and analyse data?	<p>It is important to consider this at the beginning. Ensure all staff and volunteers know their role and responsibilities regarding collecting data. If necessary provide additional guidance or training to those who need it.</p> <p>Where possible, provide time for participants to take part in data collection before and/or after a session to provide a greater degree of flexibility and ensure it doesn't interfere with their enjoyment.</p> <p>Masters or PhD students may be able to help you measure impact as part of their research. Contact your local university to see if this is possible. You can search for universities delivering mental health or physical activity-related courses on the UCAS website.</p>	

Question	Considerations	Notes
<p>How do I ensure the data collection is accessible and inclusive?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use both paper forms and online surveys. ● Print on coloured backgrounds to make your forms dyslexia-friendly. ● Translate forms or use a translator if necessary. ● Make sure your participants are aware that a friend, family member or carer can help them. 	
<p>How will I know that my service is having an impact?</p>	<p>If possible, collect information from people before and after the intervention, or at regular time periods such as the start, three, six and 12 months.</p> <p>Check in with participants regularly about how they are finding the service and how, if at all, they are benefiting from it.</p>	

Question	Considerations	Notes
<p>How do I reassure participants that I am storing and using their data appropriately?</p>	<p>It's essential that you collect and process data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and your organisation's Data Protection Policy.</p> <p>Data should be anonymised and participants must be informed about how their information will be used. An example privacy statement can be found in Appendix 1 and an example registration form in Appendix 2 Sport England's privacy statement also provides tips to follow when collecting data on a sport and physical activity programme.</p> <p>If data demonstrates a significant dip in a participant's wellbeing, staff should check in with the participant to see if they require extra support. If necessary, they should signpost to relevant mental health support.</p> <p>The consent statement participants sign before engaging in the evaluation should also clearly outline under what circumstances confidentiality can be broken if there is genuine concern that the individual is at risk of harming themselves or others. Participants should be directed to the organisation's privacy and safeguarding policy, which should detail the process for breaking confidentiality. If you are working with children and young people then you will need to ensure that you have the appropriate consent statements and procedures in place.</p>	
<p>How can I best communicate my findings to different audiences?</p>	<p>A person looking to join your service will most likely have different priorities to a local commissioner, so it's important to highlight the information that will resonate most strongly with each group.</p> <p>Any materials you produce should be engaging and easy to read. They could involve a mix of reports, eye-catching infographics and presentations. You can find templates to help you develop case studies in Appendix 3 (participant) and Appendix 4 (volunteer).</p>	

Qualitative vs quantitative data

Quantitative data (numbers) and qualitative data (words and stories) are different ways of demonstrating the impact of your service. But when should you use quantitative data, and when should you use qualitative? Here's a quick summary.

	Quantitative	Qualitative
What it tells you	<p>What, how, where, how much</p> <p>For example, by showing how much a person's mental health has potentially changed by participating in physical activity.</p>	<p>Why, how</p> <p>For example, by providing an insight into why the intervention facilitated the change in the individual's mental health.</p>
Methods	Surveys	Interviews, focus groups
Good for	Answering a fixed question	Hearing people's own words
	A clear message which is quick and easy to understand	Capturing the complexity of change, particularly for individuals
	Helping to assign costs and benefits of results	Capturing the impact the intervention/service has had on the participant
	Reducing bias by allowing a large number of people to take part	Understanding in-depth where services can be improved
		Gathering detailed information from a range of stakeholders

Top tools

- [KnowHow NonProfit: How to collect **quantitative** data the easy way](#)
- [KnowHow NonProfit: How to collect **qualitative** data the easy way](#)

Top tools

- Don't assume people joining your service have a mental health problem, or that they are willing to share that they have one. Many of the Get Set to Go participants stated in their survey forms that they didn't have a mental health problem, despite the programme being promoted as supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Think about how you can capture the insight and learning from your service as part of your evaluation. Is it possible to build feedback sessions or focus groups into the service to find out more about how it has impacted on participants, volunteers and key partners?
- Take into account the cultural and social influences on yourself and your participants. This is both an ethical and a practical consideration as it relates to power and exclusion. It's important to be sensitive to both your own and your participants' experiences, values and expectations. For example, people from some cultural backgrounds may be particularly anxious to preserve their anonymity if the research covers topics that are stigmatised in their community.

Conducting evaluations remotely

- Run online Question and Answer (Q&A) webinars to provide a space for participants to ask questions about the evaluation.
- Build in time to regularly measure response rates so you can quickly address any problems.
- Regularly monitor the quality of your data; this will allow you to identify and correct any errors early on.



Ways to increase participation in your evaluation

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Ways to increase participation in your evaluation

- Clearly communicate the reason(s) why you're collecting information to your participants. Any information should:
 - Explain the type of data you're collecting and why it's important you collect it.
 - Demonstrate how participating in the evaluation will be of direct benefit to your work and how it will help to improve the participants' experience. This will help people feel like they're part of the service, and will provide a personal reason for continuing to engage with the research.
 - Outline the ways in which you'll collect the information and at what points during a participant's journey through your service.
 - Provide an indication of how long it will take to answer the questions.
 - Ensure contact details are provided so participants know who to contact if they have any questions.
 - Avoid jargon and explain any words or phrases that people may be unfamiliar with.
- Remind people that all answers are anonymous and completion is voluntary.
- Wherever possible, ensure a member of staff or volunteer who is familiar with the questions you are asking is on-hand to answer any queries participants may have.
- Allow plenty of time for people to read, understand and respond to the questions.
- Offer participants different ways of answering the questions. This could be face-to-face, over the phone or completing an online form.
- Keep people informed on how you'll store and use the data they have provided.
- Make the data collection process as painless as possible. Could people do it as part of a social event or over a cup of tea? Could you offer incentives such as free prize draws?

Top tools

- The [Sport England Evaluation Framework](#) has developed tools and templates to conducting research that will help you think about:
 - The type of research you might want to do and the methodologies you might want to use.
 - How to define your research objectives and write an evaluation brief.
 - How to engage stakeholders at each stage of your programme.

Sport England has also developed a list of [top tips](#) to help you encourage colleagues and participants to engage with your evaluation.

- Sport England is working with the Sport and Recreation Alliance to help the sector become GDPR-compliant by creating a [suite of templates](#) such as privacy policies, data usage statements and consent forms.
- You can find a checklist to help you prepare for collecting data from participants in [Appendix 5](#).
- The [impact pages on the Knowhow Nonprofit website](#) have a range of tools and resources to help you plan and cost your evaluation.
- [INVOLVE](#), part of the National Institute for Health Research, has some [guidance](#) to help you engage children and young people in designing and participating in an evaluation.



Demonstrating impact to funders and commissioners

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Demonstrating impact to funders and commissioners

Measuring and evaluating the impact your physical activity service has on your local community's mental health can influence funders and commissioners to invest for longer.

If your service demonstrates a cost effective, efficient way to meet the needs and support the wellbeing of local communities, you may inspire funders and commissioners to think differently about what they can do in the future.

Questions to consider when making your case:

- Can you demonstrate that your service meets the needs of the community?
- Does your evaluation provide an effective way to support the health of the community?
- Can you provide recommendations to improve the existing system?
- Is your service accessible?
- Do you have key partners who will support your case?

Top tools

- Sheffield Hallam University's [Social return on investment \(SROI\) in sport: a model for measuring the value of participation](#), demonstrates the impact physical activity has on societal benefits in terms of improved health and wellbeing.
- [Guide 10: Funding and sustainability](#) includes information on how to use impact data to support funding bids.



Appendices

Guide 7:

Measuring the impact of a physical activity and mental health service

Appendix 1 – Privacy statement example

It's up to you whether you want to take part in this programme and the research. All answers will be treated in confidence and they will not affect any care or support you receive. If you start the questionnaire and then change your mind about participating, you can stop at any time.

Any personal information that you include on the questionnaire will be stored securely, and only the [insert relevant role titles of staff / name of team] will have access to the data. Your personal information will not be used for any other purpose.

The research findings will be shared with [insert list of any partners or stakeholders with whom you plan to share findings, including the media if applicable].

However, your answers will remain anonymous – no one will know who has said what. You can find out about how we look after your information by reading our Privacy Policy [insert your organisation's privacy statement].

If you have any questions please contact [insert role title / team name] using the contact details below:

[Insert contact details]



Appendix 2 – Get Set to Go registration form and Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) example

This questionnaire will take about [insert amount of time] to complete. It is up to you whether you want to take part in this programme and the research. All answers will be treated in confidence and they will not affect any care or support you receive. If you start the questionnaire and then change your mind about participating, you can stop at any time.

Any personal information that you include on the questionnaire will be stored securely, and only the [insert relevant role titles of staff / name of team] will have access to the data. Your personal information will not be used for any other purpose.

The findings will be shared with others – including [insert list of any partners or stakeholders with whom you plan to share findings, including the media if applicable]. However, your answers will remain anonymous – no one will know who has said what.

If you have any questions please contact [insert role title / team name] using the contact details below:

[Insert contact details]

I am willing to complete this questionnaire. I understand that I can choose to withdraw from the evaluation at any time, without providing a reason. (Please tick).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	------------	--------------------------	-----------

Section 1: Contact details

Name	
Email	
Address	
Telephone	

Who can we contact in an emergency?

Contact name	
Contact phone number	

**The following three questions will be used to create a reference number for you.
This is so we can anonymously match up questionnaire responses for you.**

What day and month were you born? (DD/MM)	
What are the first two letters of the road you live on? i.e. BR	
How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Including step / half brothers and sisters)	

Section 2: About you

How old are you (in years)?	
	Prefer not to say

What is your gender?	
	Female
	Male
	Non-binary
	Another / prefer to self-describe
	Prefer not to say

Have you ever identified as trans?	
	Yes
	No
	Prefer not to say

What is your sexual orientation?	
	Bi
	Gay / lesbian
	Heterosexual / straight
	Another / prefer to self-describe
	Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic background?	
	Asian
	Black
	Mixed
	White
	Another / prefer to self-describe
	Prefer not to say

Which of these categories best represents your experience of mental health problems? (Please tick all that apply)

	I have personal experience of mental health problems
	I use / have used mental health services
	I am a family member of somebody who has experienced mental health problems
	I am a friend to someone who has experienced mental health problems
	I care or look after someone who has mental health problems
	Another (please specify if you wish)
	None of the above
	Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a long-term health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day to day activities? Examples may include epilepsy, depression, Asperger's syndrome or deafness.

	Yes
	No
	Prefer not to say

Section 3: Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire

Regular physical activity is fun and healthy, and increasingly more people are starting to become more active every day. Being more active is very safe for most people. However, some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming much more physically active. If you are planning to become much more physically active than you are now, start by answering the seven questions below. If you are between 18 and 69, the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire will tell you if you should check with your doctor before you start. If you are over 69 years of age, and you are not used to being very active, check with your doctor.

YES	NO	Please read the questions carefully and answer each one honestly: tick YES or NO.
		Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
		Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
		In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
		Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
		Do you have a bone or joint problem (e.g. bone, hip, or knee) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
		Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (e.g. water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?
		Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

If you answered YES to one or more questions

Talk with your doctor by phone or in person BEFORE you start becoming much more physically active or BEFORE you have a fitness appraisal. Tell your doctor about the PAR-Q and to which questions you answered YES.

You may be able to do any activity you want – as long as you start slowly and build up gradually. Or, you may need to restrict your activities to those which are safe for you. Talk to your doctor about the kind of activities you wish to participate in and follow their advice.

Find out which community programmes are safe and helpful for you.

If you answered NO to all questions

If you answered NO honestly to all PAR-Q questions, you can be reasonably sure that you can:

- Start becoming more physically active – begin slowly and build up gradually. This is the safest and easiest way to go.
- Take part in a fitness appraisal – this is an excellent way to determine your basic fitness so that you can plan the best way for you to live actively. It is also highly recommended that you have your blood pressure checked. If your reading is over 144/94, talk with your doctor before you start becoming much more physically active.

Please note: if your health changes so that you then answer YES to any of the above questions, tell your fitness or health professional. Ask whether you should change your physical activity plan.

Delay becoming much more active, if:

- You are not feeling well because of a temporary illness such as a cold or fever – wait until you feel better.
- You are or may be pregnant – talk to your doctor before you start becoming more active.

I have read, understood, and completed this questionnaire. Any questions I had were answered to my satisfaction.

Please sign here:

For staff to complete:

Date of first activity				
First activity	Football	Running		
	Gym and fitness	Boxing		
	Walking / Rambling	Yoga		
	Another (please specify)			
PAR-Q checked?		Yes		No
Referral made to GP?		Yes		No

Appendix 3 – Participant case study template

<p>Introduction (max 100 words)</p>	<p>Please provide a little bit of information about the participant and their experience of physical activity and / or mental health.</p>
<p>Case Study (max 500 words)</p>	<p>To develop the case study, please consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why did the participant decide to join the programme? ● What makes the activities successful? ● Why do participants like engaging in your delivery? What is the specific support they receive from staff / volunteers / coaches that has made the difference? ● What were the participant’s key challenges in joining or participating in the sessions? How did you and your partners work to overcome them? ● How is the participant continuing to be active? What type of support are you or your partners providing to support them?
<p>Quotes or testimonies</p>	
<p>Contact details for further information</p>	

Appendix 4 – Volunteer case study template

Introduction (max 100 words)	Please provide a little bit of information about you and your experience of physical activity and / or mental health.
Case Study (max 500 words)	<p>To develop the case study, please consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were your reasons for wanting to volunteer?• Why do you like volunteering? What is the specific support you receive from staff that you value the most?• Did you have any reservations or challenges to overcome before you started volunteering on the programme? If so, how did you overcome them and what support did you receive?• Have you taken on any other volunteering roles, developed skills or attained any qualifications as a result of volunteering on the programme? How have staff helped you to achieve this?• What do you plan to do next?
Impact and next steps (max 200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What impact has volunteering had on you?• What advice would you give other people thinking about volunteering on programmes like this one?

Appendix 5 – Data collection and participant support checklist

When	Considerations	Completed
<p>Before the participant completes the form</p>	<p>Familiarise yourself with the questions. Put yourself in the shoes of a participant: are there any questions that could prove difficult and/or potentially triggering? If so, plan what support you can put in place and have contact numbers for any support you can offer readily available when you speak to participants, such as your nearest Local Mind or the Samaritans.</p> <p>You may want to run through the questions with a volunteer or member of staff to plan for any questions that participants might ask.</p>	
	<p>Time how long the questions will take to complete so participants are clear on the time the process will take when they agree to participate.</p>	
	<p>Ensure you have plenty of time to complete the questions with the participant. Allow more time than it takes to run through the questions so you aren't rushing, have time to answer any questions and clarify anything that is unclear.</p>	

When	Considerations	Completed
While the participant is completing the form	Clearly explain the key aims of the evaluation. Use plain English, avoid acronyms and jargon.	
	Briefly explain how you will use the information you collect from the evaluation.	
	Emphasise that it is up to the individual whether they want to take part in this research. All answers should be treated in confidence and not affect any care or support they may be receiving. If they change their mind about participating, they can stop at any time.	
	Reassure the participant that there is no obligation to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable.	
	Reassure participants that there are no right or wrong answers. Be clear that it is important for them to be as honest and open as possible.	
	Offer breaks if there are a large number of questions to answer.	
After the participant has finished answering the questions	Ask if the participant has any questions. If you are not able to answer them yourself then who else can you ask?	
	Check in with the participant to find out how they are feeling. Is there anything they want to discuss? Do they need any support after answering the questions and, if so, who among your organisation and partners is best placed to provide that support?	



Have a question or would like more information?

You can find more information at [mind.org.uk](https://www.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.

Produced with support from



Mind, 15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 4BQ

Registered Charity No. 219830