



Spotlight on: Get Set to Go - volunteering

An overview of how Mind and local Minds have recruited, supported and empowered volunteers in the Get Set to Go programme.



Overview

Get Set to Go helps people find the physical activity that's right for them so that they are able to enjoy the physical, social and mental benefits of being active.

The programme is funded by Sport England, the National Lottery and our 'On Your Side' partnership with the English Football League (EFL).

Peer Volunteers

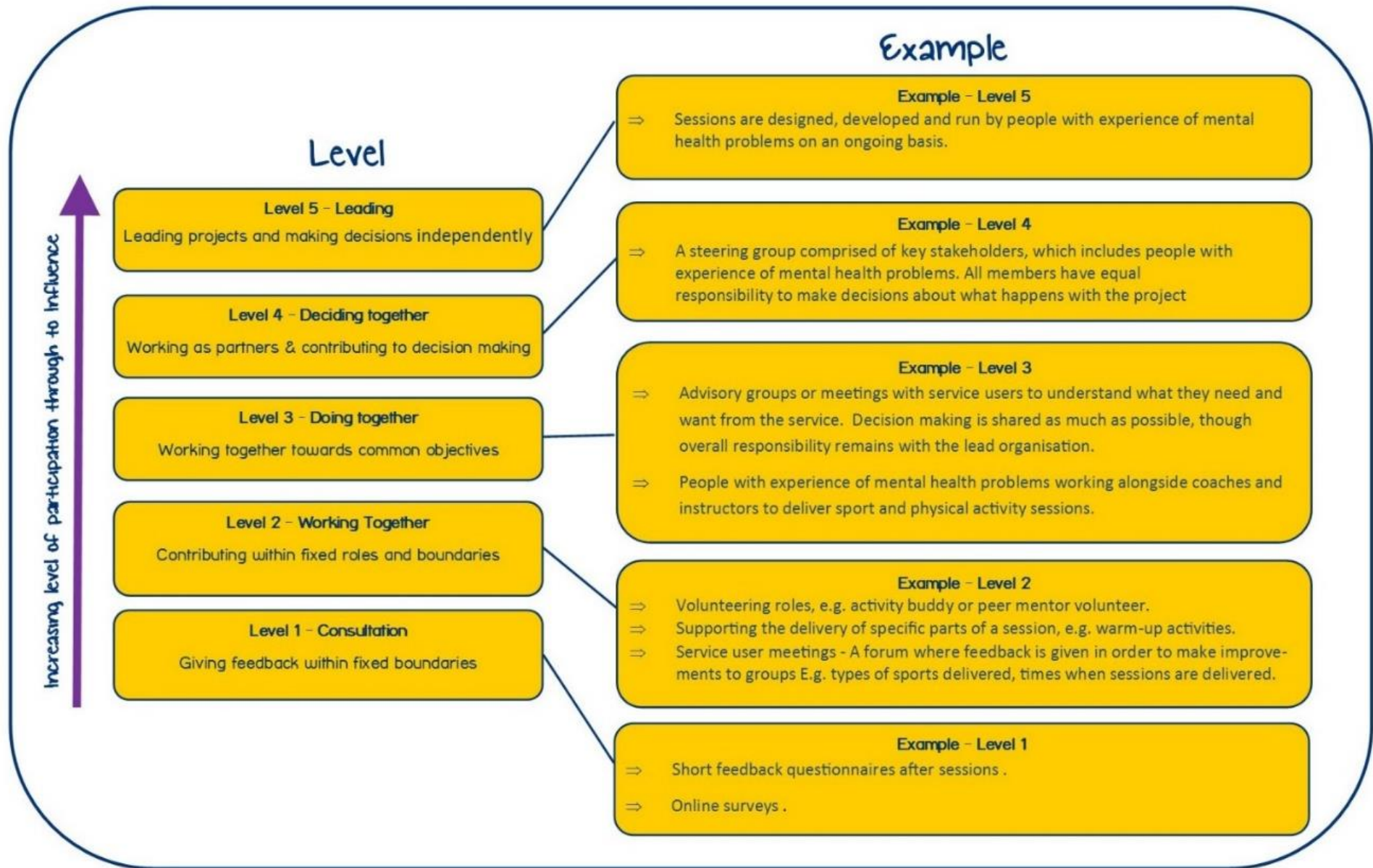
Peer Volunteers are recruited to support Get Set to Go activities. They use their own lived experiences of mental health problems to support other people with mental health problems to be more active and build their confidence to access community sports.

To date, over **300 Peer Volunteers** from across **27 local Minds** have been recruited. They have supported nearly **7,000 participants** to become more active.

The Peer Volunteers role was co-designed with people experiencing mental health problems, local Minds and the sport and activity sector. The role involves:

- Using personal experiences to support local Mind participants to be more active
- Helping participants to overcome barriers preventing them from being active from meeting them at the door to providing 1:1 support.
- Build participants confidence to access community activities; introducing them to a coach or buddy at mainstream sessions
- Support participants to build a regular physical activity habit.

Local Minds delivering Get Set to Go involve Peer Volunteers and people with lived experienced of mental health problems across all aspects of the programme. The graphic on the next page illustrates the different levels of engagement and examples from Get Set to Go.



Recruiting volunteers

Local Minds delivering Get Set to Go should have the necessary policies and procedures in place to support volunteers and ensure they have a good experience.

However, there are some key considerations that we have learnt over the course of Get Set to Go on how to support volunteers. These are outlined in the below.

Staff capacity

Supporting volunteers can be demanding of staff time, especially if staff need to take the time to match volunteers to participants who have asked for one-to-one support.

Outline the support available to volunteers

Our findings recommend that regular supervision and training sessions should take place between local Mind staff and volunteers. Additionally, structures such as meetings (face to face or virtual) or closed social media should be put in place for volunteers to meet regularly to discuss ideas, raise concerns, share best practice and celebrate.

Opportunities for development

Local Minds should promote opportunities available to volunteers to develop their skills and experience from training, speaking engagements through to mentoring. This includes within Get Set to Go and externally through physical activity partners or services offered by that local Mind.

Safeguarding

It is imperative everyone involved in the programme feels safe. We have created a checklist to help local Minds with safely recruiting volunteers (page 14 in our [How do I engage volunteers? guide](#)).

Volunteers receive training around safeguarding, the processes they should follow to report a concern and how to foster clear boundaries with participants (e.g. volunteer remit, outside of their remit and when to break confidentiality).

Volunteers are recruited in line with a clear role description so they understand their role, expectations and support available. An example of a Peer Volunteer role description can be found in the Appendix.

To recruit volunteers, local Minds use a variety of methods including:

- Word of mouth and direct engagement. This includes encouraging participants to volunteer and existing volunteers to inspire others to volunteer
- Promoting our Get Set to Go film and volunteer experiences and case studies
- Through existing volunteers and groups
- Promoting via local volunteer centres, community venues and events, sports and health networks, the job centre, universities

I get a sense of wellbeing from being able to help. It gives me confidence, purpose and new skills. It makes me interact with the world in a better and more successful way.

Get Set to Go volunteer

Maximising volunteer experience

Training and supervision

Volunteers play a fundamental part in ensuring participants have the best possible experience within Get Set to Go activities. As a result, each volunteer receives training and an induction when they start their role. The induction includes:

- Benefits of physical activity on mental health, barriers and how to overcome them
- Effective communication with participants and SMART goal setting
- Clear boundaries to create a safe environment and protect participants from any form of vulnerability or abuse
- The local Mind support offer to volunteers.

Local Minds also offer volunteers regular supervision sessions, which, include reviewing goals, what the volunteer would like to gain from their experience, discuss areas of concern, any difficulties engaging participants and skills development or training needs.

Other opportunities to support and celebrate

Local Minds organise celebrations, social opportunities and meetings to bring Peer Volunteers together. These provide the opportunity to recognise and reward the contributions of volunteers, share experiences and offer peer support. Local Minds have also established online peer support for volunteers including Facebook groups.

Developing volunteer skills and experience

Included in local Minds' funding for delivering Get Set to Go is a budget for volunteer training. This is to support volunteers to be upskilled to deliver sessions and activities themselves. Volunteers have used this funding to complete coaching qualifications (e.g. football, running) and leadership awards. This helps with the sustainability of the programme and provides people experiencing mental health problems with the opportunity to develop skills, qualifications and experience, which may lead to further volunteering and employment opportunities.

Case Study: Steven (Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind)

Steven has a personality disorder, anxiety, low mood and OCD. After several years in mental health services, Steven became socially isolated and, in his own words, "felt like giving up."

He sought help from Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind, who matched him up with a volunteer mentor. Steven became involved in the Get Set to Go project where he progressed from participant to volunteer. The positive feedback he received from staff and service users gave him confidence, and enabled him to make the step from informal helper to official volunteer.

Steven has now taken responsibility for facilitating a weekly group bowls session. Allan McDermott, Sports Academy Manager at Tees Active, said: "Steven's involvement has really helped us to develop this session. Because of his background, he has an understanding and empathy with service users that makes them feel at ease."

Steven's mental health has now improved significantly. He is able to see a clear future for himself, and is excited about what each day brings.

Measuring impact

All Get Set to Go volunteers are asked to complete a registration form when they join the programme and invited to take part in follow-ups at three, six and 12 months. The forms capture their reasons for volunteering in Get Set to Go, activity levels and mental health and quality of life via [Recovering Quality of Life \(ReQoL\)](#).

Findings to date

Volunteers with personal experience of mental health problems...



Reasons for volunteering in Get Set to Go...



Additional support

For more information on recruiting, supporting and empowering volunteers in your physical activity programme, please see our [How do I engage volunteers? guide](#).

To find your nearest local Mind visit www.mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds.

To find other organisations in your area who are working together to promote the power of sport and physical activity to support mental health visit www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/regional-network-hubs.

Case Study: Carolyn (Bath Mind)

“As an individual with a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa and generalised anxiety disorder, I have in the past used exercise as a very unhealthy means to control (block out) my emotions.

During the lows of anorexia nervosa, I used over exercising (competitive running) in a way that was severely detrimental to my physical health. In fact, the more underweight I became, the faster I was at running and the more successful I became competitively. It was a cycle of destruction that eventually led to eating disorder inpatient treatment.

Through the Get Set to Go football sessions, I've:

- Learnt to have fun in a genuinely non-competitive way (a massive achievement). Playing football with Bath Mind, it's not about winning but purely playing and having fun as a team.
- Learnt new skills in football, and felt supported and encouraged by the Bath City FC coach/team.
- Learnt that encouraging others and seeing other people shine and develop in their skills and confidence is what really makes the game fun.
- Met a range of new people, with complex and diverse needs, all mutually supportive - creating an encouraging and relaxed atmosphere.
- I've challenged my own social anxieties and feel more confident and positive about trying other new sporting activities, as well as feeling more positive about further challenging my anxieties with new volunteering opportunities in the future.
- Regardless of what mental state I arrive in at each football session, I always leave much more uplifted, accomplished, energised and relaxed.

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.”

Appendix

Peer Volunteer role description

Role and responsibilities	Person specification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a mutually helpful and supportive relationship between the PV and participant that will be of benefit to both. • Build the confidence of individuals by encouraging and motivating them to overcome any barriers to getting active and taking part in sport and physical activity. • Support people to attend sport and physical activity sessions together in the community, specifically within the designated geographical areas (insert bulleted list of areas). • Work with Get Set to Go participants to help them achieve realistic goals and identify how they can stay active in the future. • Support participants as they transition from the 12-week programme into mainstream community based sessions. • Encourage participants to consider their health and wellbeing more broadly, for example improving their diet, smoking cessation, sleep, hygiene and developing social networks that can benefit their mental wellbeing. • Give information about local services that can offer support to participants with needs not related to sport and physical activity. • Support the team as requested. • Work within agreed boundaries. • Be a positive role model. 	<p>Essential criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of using physical activity to improve physical and/or mental wellbeing. • Experience of a mental health problems, either personally or from a close relative or friend. • Ability to communicate with people of different genders, ages and backgrounds in a friendly and supportive manner. • Ability to provide positive feedback. • Good time management skills and reliability. • Ability to maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality. • Open and non-judgemental attitude. Positive, patient and tolerant approach towards supporting people with mental health problems. <p>Desirable criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working with people with mental health problems. • Experience of providing one-to-one or group based peer support. • Knowledge of the health benefits of physical activity. • Knowledge of mental health problems.