

# Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation

## Spreading the word: Champions, ambassadors and case studies

October 2017

### Introduction

As part of your commitment to the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation, you may be planning to recruit champions or ambassadors or ask people to share their stories through a case study to help support your work. This briefing has tips on:

- [The difference between a champion or ambassador and a case study](#)
- [How to broach people to share their story](#)
- [How to support people to share their story](#)
- [Further information](#)

### What is the difference between a champion or ambassador and a case study?

In this context, a **champion or ambassador** is someone from your organisation (an athlete, participant, coach, volunteer or employee) with either has personal experience of mental health problems or has experience through supporting a close friend or family member. They are committed to supporting and promoting your organisation's Mental Health Charter work on an ongoing basis.

Ambassadors may be involved in a range of activities from media interviews, speaking at meetings, events and conferences, through to social media and supporting individuals. This will depend on you as an organisation and on the individual.

Wherever possible, try to recruit more than one champion or ambassador so you are not calling on one individual all the time. Try to find people from a range of backgrounds that reflect the diversity in your audience.

Relationship – usually ongoing.

**A case study** is the story of an individual (an athlete, participant, coach or employee), a programme or service over a fixed period of time.

Relationship – usually 'one off'.



## How to broach people to be champions or ambassadors or to share their story as a case study?

There are several ways you can approach this including:

- Putting a call to action in your internal newsletters, through social media, staff intranet asking that anyone who is interested in supporting and sharing either their own personal experience or close friend or family member experience of mental health problems to get in touch with a named contact
- Directly approaching people who have spoken openly about their mental health problems. This may be someone that has spoken in the media or openly in the workplace.

## How should I support people to share their story?

### Telling the story

There are lots of resources available to help people to start their conversation about their experiences such as the [Time to Change](#) resources. To help people tell their story you might ask ambassadors to make a [mental health selfie](#) or to write a blog. These top tips may help:

- Is the person genuinely prepared to share their story or talk publicly about their mental health problems?
- Think about where to meet them to have the conversation or initial meeting. Meeting in a busy, sports centre for example may not make the person feel very comfortable
- Don't identify the person by name or using photos or moving footage, unless they have given permission
- Seek agreement beforehand on the use of photos and video and whether the person will be identified
- Give them an idea of what they will be asked or even better a list of questions before the interview
- It's likely to help the person to speak about their personal experience if they have had a chance to consider what they will say
- Use the person's own words to represent their experiences wherever possible
- If the person has a different view of their illness to family or doctors, try to include the person's understanding of their experience
- If material is likely to be shared with other partners or online through social media or on YouTube, let the person know so they are not taken by surprise when their story appears in other contexts
- Let the person know about likely editing processes the case study goes through before it is shared. Tell the person if you intend to emphasise a particular angle
- Give the person copy approval if possible
- Encourage people to seek help by adding information about available support, including helpline numbers, local services and websites (see Annex 1)

### At an event

- Check-in with the champion or ambassador ahead of the event to see how they are feeling about the event and that they are attending
- Some people may be affected by medication meaning that they struggle getting up in the morning or may be sleepy on the afternoon. Check what time of day works best for the ambassador and try to work around their needs



- Be careful not to bombard champions or ambassadors with back to back interviews or multiple demands on the day
- Nominate someone ideally a [mental health first aider](#) to be responsible for everyone’s welfare on the day
- Check-in with the champion or ambassador to make sure that everything is okay
- Make sure that there is a quiet space or chill out area should some time away from the situation be needed. Let the champion or ambassador know where this is in advance.
- Like physical health conditions, mental health conditions can fluctuate daily meaning that the champion or ambassador might be unwell or become unwell at the event. Make sure you ask the champion or ambassador how they are and monitor their wellbeing. If you are concerned that they are becoming unwell encourage them to use the quiet area and support them through:
  - letting them know you are there to help
  - talking to them about what they feel would help, if they have experienced symptoms before they will know what does and does not help
  - offering practical help such as making a telephone call to a key worker or other person such as a friend or family member
  - keeping yourself and the person focused on positive things and day to day realities
- Agree the champion or ambassador’s role in advance and check about any topics they do not want to discuss and reassure them that this is okay. Ensure the chair or whoever is facilitating the session is aware
- Make everyone feel comfortable on arrival by providing introductions, a briefing for the event and a tour of the facilities including the quiet room
- Check-in with the ambassador after the event to make sure they’re happy with the experience. It’s also an opportunity to find out if there’s any further support you might be able to offer in the future.

### General support

- It is helpful to create a role description for champions and ambassadors outlining expectations and time commitment involved. Involve prospective champions and ambassadors in creating the role
- Create a briefing for each of the activities you are asking the champion or ambassador to support, providing clear instructions and expectations for example key messages and what is and is not expected of them
- Consider the training needs of the champions or ambassadors and involve them in shaping what training and support is provided. Time to Change provides support to mental health champions through e-learning modules and access to resources see Annex 2 for further information
- Have a main point of contact for champion or ambassador activities, speaking opportunities and case studies. Consistency is helpful
- Ensure all ambassadors have details for [Mind’s infoline](#) and if you have one available your organisation’s counselling or employee assistance programme (EAP) phoneline



## Signposting to support for everyone

If you need support for your own mental health or are concerned about a friend or family member.

### **Mind**

Mind, the mental health charity, provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We offer a range of support including a confidential info-line, free information resources and support through our network of local Minds.

Website: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393

Our lines are open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays)

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

### **Samaritans**

Samaritans offers a 24-hours a day, 365 days a year confidential, free helpline. You don't have to be suicidal to call it.

Website: <http://www.samaritans.org/>

Helpline: 116 123

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Your GP, [NHS 111](#) or 999

## E-learning courses available from Time to Change

Courses are available for Time to Change and other mental health champions [here](#).

Modules include: 'Being a Champion Every Day', 'Speaking Out on Social Media' and 'Stigma and Discrimination: the facts and more'

<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/champions/e-learning>

## Further information

If you need further information or some advice about recruiting champions, ambassadors or case studies please get in touch with Mind - [visit its website](#) or contact [sport@mind.org.uk](mailto:sport@mind.org.uk)

Sources: Time to Change, Case Studies and Mind.

