

MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CONFERENCE

Karen Mellanby (Chair of MIND)

Covid has had an impact on mental health – exercising helps. Sport/physical activity/movement has the power to make change!

Partnerships are central to growth.

Organisations are invited to make a pledge regarding how they will support mental health

Mike Diaper Sport England

Movement of whatever kind can make individuals stronger however it has to be right for the participant. Sport England's priorities are to:

- advocate for equal opportunities for movement, sport and physical activity
- join forces with other organisations to promote mental health through movement, sport and physical activity
- create the right catalysts to promote mental health through movement, sport and physical activity

Dr Florence Kinnafick (Senior Lecturer in Psychology Loughborough University)

Dr Kinnafick was responsible for evaluating MIND's work with Sport England. Her team reviewed training, regional networks, partnerships, strategic development in terms of reach, effectiveness, adaptation, sustainability and knowledge development.

The following were found to be important:

- Meaningful **communication** (flexibility is important)
- Credibility
- Buy in by senior management

(Challenges include time and contact)

- **Action** – well-being committees, well-being on the agenda, well-being signposted and online support for well-being
- Increased openness about mental health
- Willingness to change

(Challenges include the high performance culture associated with professional sport and misalignment between senior management (always on duty) and workforce)

Covid has accelerated mental health awareness

- **Sharing best practice**
- Improvement
- Conversations
- Regional networks
- Establishing mutual priorities

(Covid/lockdown has resulted in an increased use of online support)

- **Partnerships** – knowledge exchange
- Tailored support
- Collaboration
- Increased visibility (newsletters, social media, virtual contact)
- Regional networks promoting learning

Connection is central – people with lived experience of mental health need to be embedded throughout all attempts to support, individual contact and collaboration. Greater promotion of success is required. There is a need to work

strategically with partners and to understand the barriers Ideally a multi-sector approach is required

**What can you do to embed mental health within your organisation?
What support do you need?**

Panel

Well-being of sports persons is important (a happier player is a better player). Talking helps. Asics (a sound mind in a sound body) have undertaken research into the link between mind and body. They measured brain activity after physical exercise. They have developed a free mind uplifting tool (mobile app). The app scans the face and asks a series of questions before exercise, repeats this after exercise and displays the results. Areas of the brain that have been engaged eg cognitive, emotional areas light up (a 24% uplift is seen after running; Retford residents presented a 27% uplift following a day of activity)

Asics plan to:

- develop awareness, create champions and run bespoke workshops
- communicate via newsletters and mental health journals
- develop psycho/social collaboration
- support athletes and mental health practitioners
- check use/value through measuring well-being in relation to gender and para athletes
- consider use for those with injuries or in transitional phases

Asics are reviewing the app's relevance in the context of Covid (returning to training/navigating issues)

Asics have learned that they need to:

- develop a central point of contact
- share good practise
- recruit an expert panel
- ensure universal application
- communicate
- ensure smooth transitions
- educate more widely
- capture experience to improve understanding
- engage in further research

**How does your organisation talk about mental health – positively/negatively?
What has your organisation changed? Why? What has remained the same?**

Policies need to be in place

Mental Health conversations need to be normalised.

Experiences need to be positive

Organisations need to learn from individuals lived experiences of mental health

Education is needed to develop a shared language

All need to be less judgemental and accept that all can fail but - without ridicule!

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MK