



East of England Mind Sport & Physical Activity Network Impact Report 2023-24

Tom Horey, Health Officer
27th March 2024



Introduction

The East of England Mind Sport & Physical Activity Network is a mental health initiative that has run since 2019. Coordinated by Mind, the Network is part of a wider programme of nine regional networks across England, that aim to increase collaboration among local organisations to make sport and physical activity more inclusive for people with mental health problems.

The approach taken locally was decided by the organisation funded as the Network lead, supported by Mind through the provision of training, toolkits, and resources. The Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) have led the Network over the last four years, with 2023 – 2024 being the last year the programme will run.

**East of England
Mental Health in Sport
& Physical Activity Virtual
Conference 2024**

March
27 | 9:30 am -
1:00 pm | Free to
attend

If you have any questions about the conference, please email t.horey2@herts.ac.uk



Project background

In 2019, the mental health charity, Mind, launched nine new Regional Networks to help more people with mental health problems engage in physical activity. By linking up local organisations across the physical activity, mental health and charity sectors, Mind hoped the Regional Networks would support sport and physical activity organisations to be more inclusive of people with mental health problems.

The Regional Network's aim is to increase the number of groups in their region who are equipped with the skills to support and engage people with mental health problems in physical activity. They offer training, toolkits, and resources, as well as providing a platform for networking and sharing best practice to build stronger relationships between organisations.

Every Regional Network is led by a Hub (lead organisation), with one based in each of the nine English government regions. They receive support and funding from Mind. Hubs have autonomy and responsibility for designing, delivering, and implementing their Regional Network.

HSP has coordinated the Regional Network Hub in the East of England since Mind launched the programme in 2019. Known locally as the East of England Mind Sport & Physical Activity Network, the network now comprises of the six Active Partnerships in the East Region. The network works collaboratively to achieve objectives set by Mind:

- Utilise and promote Mind's Universal Offer (e.g. training, toolkits, and resources).
- Build relationships between sport, physical activity, and mental health organisations.
- Share best practice and relevant Mind updates.
- Support the scoping around Mind's strategic priority audiences, in particular people fighting poverty and racialised communities.
- Help Mind with requests for support within their region.

Implementation

When HSP became the Regional Network Hub lead, we knew that to achieve regional reach we would need to engage with various partners. We started by working through the Active Partnerships (APs) in the region. Over the course of the Regional Network's programme, we have developed strong relationships with the other 5 APs.

Although HSP are the host of Network, it is very much a collaborative approach. Developing these strong relationships has ensured each AP is aware of the good practice taking place throughout the region and are better connected with organisations we can learn from.

As a Network we also did as much as we could to highlight this good work, helping ensure the learning goes beyond just us working within the APs. This included creating monthly mental health newsletters that anyone in the region could sign up to and hosting various learning and networking events. Our most notable events have been the Mental Health in Sport and Physical Activity Conferences we have run, the most recent of which we delivered online March 2024, with over a 160 people attending.

Feedback

“The hub has been incredibly useful, taking the time to meet and discuss challenges and opportunities has proved invaluable. It is great to learn from other people’s work and experiences, this can help with motivation in terms of moving challenging work forward and also inspire new ideas! When we all have such limited resource, the hub is great for sharing ideas and resources so that we can collaborate and work more effectively.

Moreover, it has also enabled us to showcase some of our innovative ideas and initiatives that we hope have inspired others to adopt or adapt. We [Active Essex] are grateful for the excellent coordination and leadership of Tom, Will and the wider HSP team, who have made this possible.” – Danielle Warnes, Active Essex.

“The East of England Mind Regional Hub has been a valuable platform for learning, collaboration, and support in the field of mental health and wellbeing.

The hub has facilitated the sharing of challenges and opportunities across the region, stimulating dialogue and action on how we can improve our relationships locally, with the wider system.”

– Jade Welding, Be Active

Partnerships

400

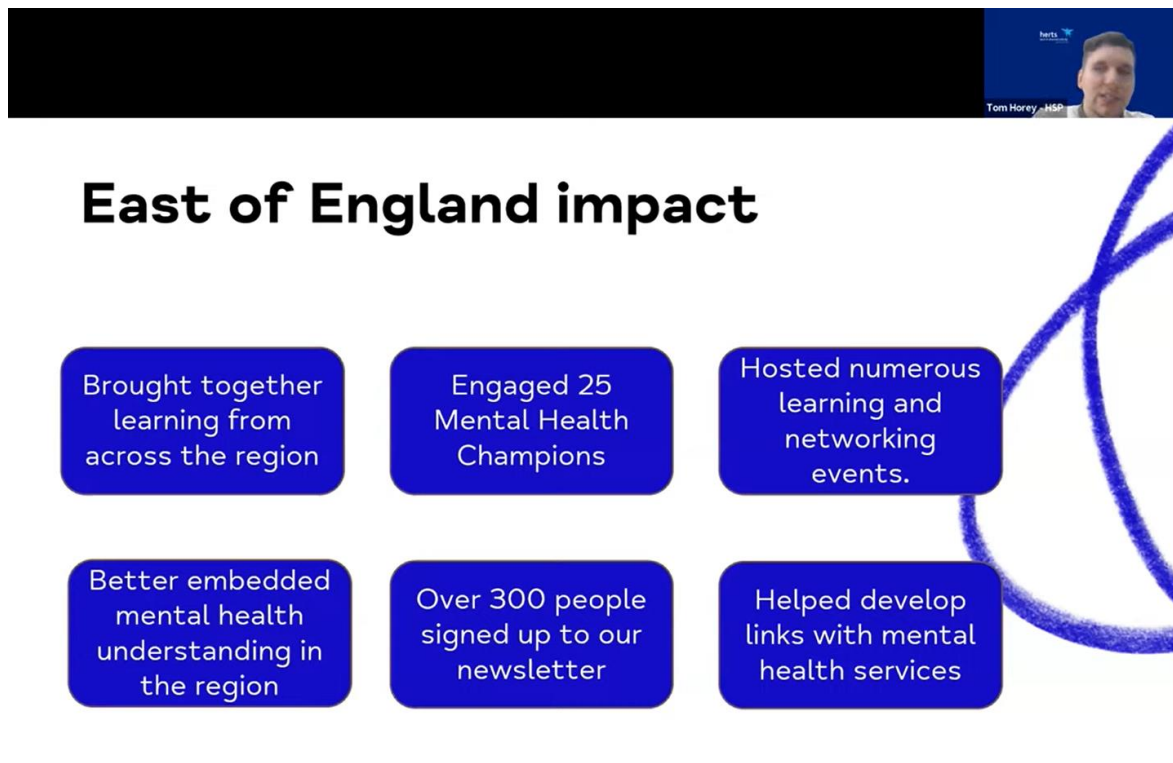
Sign ups to mental health mailing list

KEY PARTNERS
Active Norfolk
Active Essex
Active Suffolk
Be Active
Living Sport
Mind
Rethink Mental Illness



Outcomes and Benefits

The Mental Health in Sport and Physical Activity Conference we ran in March was a major highlight of the Network over the last year. The conference engaged over 160 attendees, successfully raising awareness of Mind's physical activity toolkit. Seeing this brought to life with case studies from across region helped demonstrate how the toolkit can be embedded within physical activity opportunities.



The screenshot shows a virtual conference slide with a black header bar on the left and a video feed of Tom Horey on the right. The main content is a white slide titled "East of England impact" with six blue rounded rectangular boxes arranged in two rows of three. A blue scribbled line is on the right side of the slide.

East of England impact		
Brought together learning from across the region	Engaged 25 Mental Health Champions	Hosted numerous learning and networking events.
Better embedded mental health understanding in the region	Over 300 people signed up to our newsletter	Helped develop links with mental health services

Screenshot from the Virtual Conference

Post conference feedback indicated the learning taken away from the conference should have a lasting impact, leading to greater opportunities for those with mental health conditions to be physically active.

The success of the conference also demonstrated the culmination of better connecting with the other APs, a key objective we wanted to achieve when planning the Network. By showcasing different case studies from around the region, it provided fresh ideas to attendees and demonstrated our regional coverage.

Another success over the last year was the launch and delivery of our Mental Health Champions programme. The programme aimed to create a legacy beyond the Regional Network, developing a community of volunteers that would continue to advocate for the importance of being physically active to support positive mental health.

Through the programme, we provided training and support to the 29 Champions engaged, helping them start taking action to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma within their physical activity settings. Some of the ways the Champions have used the training and started to undertake their role have included:

- Actively promoting positive mental wellbeing in the sport and physical activity settings they are involved.
- Worked with their clubs and groups to support members to improve their mental health through sport and physical activity.
- Supporting people who are experiencing mental health problems to start a new activity, get back into activity, or continue activity.
- Being a point of contact for anyone experiencing mental health problems to join a club or group.
- Encouraging and promoting conversations about mental health.
- Making connections to mental health organisations in the community.
- Keeping up to date with research, resources and support available.
- Providing crisis contacts to individuals that require them in their club or group.

Although the Champions engaged have varying roles, creating an environment for like-minded individuals to be part of a wider network has proved useful. Given the initial success, we are committed to continuing to run and hopefully growing the programme in Herts.

Key Learnings

Collaboration, sharing of best practice, and learning from when things don't go well can be really impactful. Having the opportunity to share challenges and learn from like-minded organisations through the Network has been invaluable.

Through this collaborative approach HSP, and I am sure our partners from across the region are now much more aware of approaches to successfully support people with mental health conditions into physical activity opportunities.

Next Steps

1

MH Champions

Promote and grow the Champions programme, co-ordinating this for the Region.

2

Support the Legacy

Work with Mind on the Regional Network Hub Legacy plans; sharing details about the legacy plans locally.

3

Stay Connected

Continue to meet quarterly with the Active Partnerships in the East Region, continue to circulate monthly newsletters and maintain/develop relationships built.



27th March 2024

9:30 am – 10:30 am	Mind's Toolkit Lead by Karla Burton and James Durcan from Mind
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Case Studies from around the region With studies from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active Essex Foundation: Co-Designed CYP training Offer• Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust: Empower Project• Healthwatch Essex

Conclusion

Pooling resources for mutually beneficial outcomes has been key to the success of the Network. Embedding a collaborative approach has helped achieve greater reach; enabling us to engage with more partners and raise awareness of Mind's sector support offer. Ultimately the work we have done as the Regional Hub, a group of APs and a wider network has left the sector in a better position to support people with mental health problems in the East of England to be physically active.



East of England Mind Sport & Physical Activity Network

