



## Welsh Athletics Mental Health Champions

### Role Description

#### About the Role

Welsh Athletics is committed to creating a sustainable approach to supporting the mental health of those in the running network across Wales. Whilst many are comfortable talking about their physical health, we know talking about and seeking support for our mental health can be a challenge. We all have mental health, just as we have physical health. As our bodies become unwell so too can our minds, with 1 in 4 adults experiencing mental health problems each year. Sadly, the cost of not talking about mental health can be devastating with 356 deaths by suspected suicide by Welsh residents between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. (Source: [Public Health Wales](#).)

As part of a two-year partnership, we have worked with Mind to co-design a mental health champion role to improve mental health within running communities and using the sport to promote the wider benefits of physical activity. This is the first partnership of its kind in Wales, and we are committed to train mental health champions in each of our 100 affiliated running clubs and 60 Run Wales social running groups so that those involved can talk openly and be supported.

#### Aim of the Mental Health Champion Role:

- To create a sustainable approach to supporting the running network in Wales with mental health. (*Long-term aspiration to have a mental health champion in each Welsh Athletics club & Run Wales social running group across Wales*)
- To encourage participants, volunteers and officials involved in the Wales running network to talk about mental health and to tackle mental health stigma.
- To signpost people to sources of professional mental health support.
- To develop a champion network that supports each other and works together to develop the champion scheme.



## Definition of a champion

“A mental health champion is someone who takes action to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma.

In some cases, where trained appropriately, champions can help those who are experiencing mental health problems by signposting them to appropriate support services”

## How can Champions Support People?

### Reactive Aspects of the Role:

- Be a point of contact for those within your athletics club or social running group, via mutually agreed communication channels.
- Actively listen non-judgmentally.
- Empower and encourage people to seek help and support.
- Identify resources and activities that can support positive mental health; for example, the five ways to wellbeing and other wellbeing activities.
- Signpost to professional mental health support; for example, GP, A&E, mental health charities.

### Proactive Aspects of the role:

- Champion mental health including talking about mental health with... within the running community, practice self-care and identify when you may need to take a break.
- Share lived experience stories ‘which could be your own, from the media or from people who’ve given permission to share their stories to help break mental health stigma.
- Proactively promote mental health key moments such as World Mental Health Day, Mental Health Awareness Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, Time to Talk Day on social media.

### Required Skills, Experience and Attributes

- A good understanding of how running and physical activity can support mental health with personal experience to support.
- An understanding of and passion for promoting positive mental health.
- Good communication skills with the ability to build rapport easily and use active listening skills.
- Approachable and encouraging.
- Non-judgemental and empathetic.
- Understanding and respectful of confidentiality and boundaries.
- An understanding of safeguarding and welfare processes.
- Confidence to deliver the role.
- Knowledge and/or direct or indirect personal experience of mental health is desirable.



**Additional training will be provided:**

- **Part A: Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity + eLearning**

*This training takes 2-3 hours to complete at your own pace. It is CPD accredited with CIMSPA and provides 'core' mental health information.*

During the course you will:

Take part in a variety of learning activities, quizzes, case studies and videos that will help you:

- better understand mental health, including the misconceptions and how to recognise the red flags.
- appreciate the impact that sport and physical activity can have on mental health.
- recognise the barriers to participating in physical activity, and learn about practical strategies to use to adapt your sessions to overcome them.
- understand and connect with people and provide an inclusive, welcoming experience for all.
- communicate effectively and offer appropriate guidance.
- be confident about opening and holding a conversation about mental health with someone you coach.
- make your club or group more inclusive, and better prepared to be able to support people experiencing mental health problems.

- **Part B: Welsh Athletics Champion training** introduction to the champion role & training delivered by Mind (supported by WA) bespoke for Welsh Athletics. Including:
  - Introduction to the champion role with a focus on building peer support.
  - Promoting mental health in your club – supporting you to develop a proactive plan for your club or social group.
  - Active listening activities.
  - Support and signposting for you and your participants.



### **Commitments**

- This is a voluntary role which will require approximately 2-4 hours commitment<sup>1</sup> each week. This will include time within club or group sessions and sometime outside of this i.e. following up with people, undertaking CPD or planning for mental health key moments.
- We will host champions' learning and reflections sessions quarterly (online).
- Attendance at online and face-to-face mandatory role related training.

### **Benefits**

- Welsh Athletics branded kit
- Being part of a movement to create positive change.
- Training, including mental health awareness and champion role training.
- Networking with like-minded people.
- Development of skills and learning from peers

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<sup>1</sup> Time commitment to shaped by the champion, it may include adhoc conversations, through to planning #RunAndTalk events.