



**Plymouth Guild**

Providing Support, Advice and Volunteers

## Active for Life Taster Sessions:

## An overview for services and professionals

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### **1. What is Active for Life?**

Active for Life is a service at Plymouth Guild, which aims to increase physical activity levels in people who are vulnerable to poor health to improve it and reduce rates of obesity related illnesses. The two main client groups the service is currently working with are adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems. Other vulnerable client groups will be supported in addition to these in the future.

### **2. What is physical activity?**

Physical activity is anything which gets people moving a bit more, making your heart beat faster, you breathe a bit heavier and feel a little warmer. Active for Life supports physical activity in its broadest sense, from trying out a sport or joining a gym to improve fitness, to making small lifestyle changes such as walking a bit more or doing some more gardening or housework. It is essential for everyone to take part in physical activity in order to improve and maintain physical and mental health. The current government recommendations are that everyone should engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 times a week. Active for Life aims to support people in finding types of activity they enjoy, and suit their needs and lifestyle.

### **3. What are Active for Life taster sessions?**

Active for Life taster sessions is a programme which gives a group of service users an opportunity to try out different physical activities to find something they enjoy and could continue in the long term. When the programme has finished there are various exit routes (outlined on page 6) for individuals to support them in continuing to be active. The programme can be delivered to established groups of participants from within services and organisations by Active for Life staff and volunteers. Sessions are also run outside of specific settings and participants can be referred or can self refer to take part in these sessions.

The programme aims to give service users information on what physical activity is, what types of physical activity people can do, and give them an opportunity to make an informed choice about what they would like to try – and then try it!

The structure of the programme is:

- **An introductory session** to provide information about physical activity and support participants to make choices about activities they would like to try out as a group in subsequent sessions. This session also contains a taster of some activities which can be done for free at home or at day/residential settings.
- **Five client selected activity taster sessions.** These 5 sessions will be run over 5 weeks. Once service users have made their choice on activities to try, Active for Life will arrange tasters and provide participants with accessible information on what activity will be done each week, what they might need to bring, cost etc. Participants may need to contribute towards the cost of taster sessions if the activity they have selected has a charge such as hall hire, however Active for Life will aim to keep taster sessions free or of minimal cost. Some motivational exercises will also be included in these sessions to improve participant's knowledge on the importance of leading a healthy active lifestyle.
- **A concluding session** for clients to reflect on what they have enjoyed, what not so, if there is anything else they would like to try, how they could go about trying it, and if there are any activities they would like to make more regular. Active for Life can offer continued support for individuals wishing to continue an activity. Participants will receive certificates of completion.
- **A follow up session** where the group will meet with a member of Active for Life staff or a volunteer and each participant given their own individual 'Active plan'. This will contain photos of them trying out activities, some of the feedback they gave about each activity, and what activities they have said they would like to continue with. Active for Life will also spend time with participants setting goals and looking at ways to continue being active.

#### **4. Who delivers taster sessions?**

Taster sessions are delivered by Active for Life staff and volunteers. Active for Life is a small service which relies on volunteers to deliver a quantity of the service. All volunteers recruited will have been CRB checked, recruited subject to satisfactory references, and given mandatory training on diversity and equality, data protection, disability awareness and protection of vulnerable adults. Volunteers will also receive on the job coaching and support during their work with Active for Life.

The role of Active for Life staff and volunteers is to facilitate the taster sessions and support the group in being active. Any personal care or manual handling needs of participants is not Active for Life's responsibility, the participants or the setting worked

with will need to ensure that anyone with these needs has a PA available during sessions to support them with this.

## **5. Health and safety**

To ensure safety of participants and all involved in taster sessions it is mandatory that at PAR-Q (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) form is completed by everyone engaging in activity, including setting staff and volunteers. This form collects health information about participants so Active for Life staff are aware of any issues. It is recommended that anyone who answers 'yes' to any questions checks with their doctor that they are able to take part in some light exercise. PAR-Qs will be kept securely and confidentially by Active for Life for no more than 3 years.

Active for Life carries out risk assessments of each individual session, including assessing environmental risk factors, activity risk factors and ensuring that for each activity there is a first aider present. It is also ensured that any external instructors facilitating sessions have the appropriate qualifications and insurance.

While participants are selecting activities they would like to try out, potential risks and benefits are discussed for each activity to support informed choice.

## **6. Support for parent/carers or services working with the participants**

Parents/carers, personal assistants and staff working with participants engaging in a taster sessions programme will be very welcome to attend the tasters alongside the participant if they wish. Active for Life encourages involvement of people supporting participants so that their regular support network can continue to encourage them to be physically active after the taster sessions have finished. Additional support is available for parents/carers/staff, including information about the importance of physical activity in vulnerable client groups, tips for how to support participants in continuing with physical activity, ideas for how to tackle low motivation, and information on where to go and what to do, including activities which are free. For further information and support, drop in facilities will be open to parents and carers as well as service users.

Staff at settings can also receive continued support from Active for Life, including information on types of activity, resources, cost, risk assessing and planning activity sessions.

## **7. Process for getting participants onto a taster session programme**

There are 2 ways in which people can engage with taster sessions:

1. Attending a programme of taster sessions which has been set up within a setting for an already established group of clients
2. Attending a programme of taster sessions to which participants have been referred. Active for Life will arrange venues, times and dates for these sessions.

#### 7.1. Referral to a programme

Referrals can be made by any professional with the participant's permission, or participants can self refer. The individual will then be contacted by Active for Life and informed of when the next programme is running and asked if they would like to confirm attendance. Participants will also have an opportunity to meet with a member of Active for Life staff or volunteer to discuss the programme more and find more out about it if they wish.

#### 7.2. Setting a programme up within a setting

If a service expresses their interest in having the programme delivered within that setting, a meeting will be arranged to:

- 🌐 Discuss the programme and how it can work within the setting
- 🌐 Agree a fixed weekly day and time (approx 2 hours) for sessions to run and agree a start date
- 🌐 Identify any risks for delivering taster sessions within the setting so the Active for Life manager can complete a risk assessment and forward this to the setting manager.
- 🌐 Look over an itinerary of activities which will be offered to participants

Following this meeting, the service will receive:

- 🌐 A completed risk assessment for the taster sessions programme
- 🌐 Flyers to give service users telling them about the programme happening there, the date it will start and posters to advertise it
- 🌐 Referral forms including PAR-Q questions which will need to be completed for each service user wishing to participate in the programme and returned to Active for Life prior to the first session taking place. These must be completed and signed by either the client or a parent/guardian on behalf of the client.

The setting can also arrange for a member of Active for Life to come and talk to service users about what the taster sessions are and answer any questions prior to the first session.

## **8. Possible exits and further support for service users and services**

Once a participant has completed the Active for Life taster sessions programme, there are several ways they can continue to be active:

- ⚽ Participants can continue an activity they have enjoyed independently
- ⚽ Participants can continue with an activity they have enjoyed along with other participant(s) from the course
- ⚽ Participants to continue an activity they have enjoyed with the support of a volunteer. This can be a volunteer either recruited by Active for Life, or from the Access Sport volunteer buddying programme for people with learning disabilities
- ⚽ Participants starting/continuing an activity through direct payments
- ⚽ Participants will be informed of where and when weekly Active for Life drop in sessions are being held. These sessions are open for anyone to attend for information, support and advice on being physically active and leading a healthy lifestyle.
- ⚽ There may be opportunities for participants to volunteer with Active for Life to support the service in facilitating taster sessions in the future.
- ⚽ Participants can attend quarterly Active for Life events to meet other programme completers, get further information about how they can carry on being active and take part in activities set up at the event
- ⚽ Accessible signposting to other activities and facilities through use of the Active for Life database. This will in the future hold contact details of staff members at leisure and sports facilities who have received training from Active for Life on how to support individuals more vulnerable to ill health.
- ⚽ Continuation of taster sessions at the setting but facilitated by staff. Information and support will be available for staff and settings to continue activity sessions.
- ⚽ Provision of an additional session for parents/carers/support staff to attend (as outlined on page 5). This would be set up at a time which was convenient for parents/carers to attend with the support of the setting worked with.
- ⚽ Parents/carers attending an Active for Life drop in to obtain information on supporting the person they care for in being more active.

