

## What type of activities might work for our group?



Plan

### This question is important because...

You need to choose activities which suit both the people you want to work with and your resources. People who enjoy the social aspect of the activity are less likely to come to individual coaching. Those who are very self-conscious may respond better to one-to-one support – at least at first. If there is no safe, easy way to get to your activity, people are less likely to come. This is all part of offering a person-centred service which is culturally and socially sensitive.



You can't expect people to reach and maintain recommended levels of activity instantly. Behaviour change is more likely to succeed if taken in small steps. Getting inactive people to do *some* activity is progress. As is getting those who already do some activity to do more, for longer and of greater intensity. Each small step towards becoming more active is significant if followed by another step.

### Research

The University of Strathclyde research identified four small steps that inactive people can take towards becoming active: limited, some, moderate and active.

Our evidence tells us that people are likely to be attracted to different types of activity depending on which step they have reached. Also that particular types of activity are likely to be effective in enabling them to make progress to the next step:

- ✓ Socialising exercise, with a focus on meeting people and introducing low levels of activity, may help to achieve some increase in activity, for example in care homes. It is unlikely to raise activity to the recommended levels, but may attract those who are inactive.
- ✓ Gentle exercise may attract more people who are already doing limited physical activity than socialising exercise does. It is also the most effective at helping them to maintain their current levels of activity.



## What types of activities might work for our group? (continued)



- ✓ Walking exercise is most effective in encouraging people already doing some activity to do more, and can help those already active to sustain this level.
- ✓ More vigorous activity is likely to attract a mix of participants ranging from those already achieving recommended levels of activity to those who are inactive. It will help many participants increase their overall activity levels.

### Key messages

- ✓ Look at what is already working well with similar groups in other areas.
- ✓ Probably don't call it "sport"! Most groups found this word to be a disincentive.
- ✓ Work with people at their own level, responding to what they say about the activities that interest and motivate them.
- ✓ Social and fun activities are often the most attractive.
- ✓ Walking is often an accessible first step – it feels less daunting for people than having to develop new skills in order to participate.
- ✓ Be realistic about physical progression and how long it might take – people may advance in small steps. They might not come to your walking group if they think they will be expected to be running after a few weeks.
- ✓ Make sure that there are appropriate follow-on activities for people to progress to when they are ready to take their next (small) step.
- ✓ Think about how you can adapt activities to make them appropriate for the people involved: eg walking football.
- ✓ Consciously decide whether or not to make activities competitive, or to what degree – some people may enjoy that element; for others, the reason they stopped being active may have been a dislike of competition.
- ✓ Think about the location – the setting has a practical and emotional impact. Indoors or outdoors? At a leisure centre or in the community?
- ✓ Ask people! You might want to offer a range of viable options so you get some meaningful answers. But be careful not to raise unrealistic expectations which could lead to disappointment.

*find related resources at*  
[www.thrivetoolkit.org.uk](http://www.thrivetoolkit.org.uk)