It’s A Goal! Overview

Rationale:
The outlook for men’s mental health is bleak.

According to figures published on their website, the National Mental Health Development Unit state that;
- 75% of people who kill themselves are men.
- 73% of adults who go missing from home are men.
- 90% of rough sleepers are men.
- One man in eight is dependent on alcohol (men are three times more likely to become alcohol dependent than women).
- 78% of drug-related deaths occur in men (men are more than twice as likely to use Class A drugs than women).
- Almost every personality disorder, including antisocial personality disorder, is more likely to be diagnosed in men.
- Men have measurably lower access to the social support of friends, relatives and community.

Reluctance to access services, despite these depressing figures, come against the backdrop of an increasing number of men being diagnosed with and treated for mental health problems as well as the fact that suicide rates for men are substantially higher than those for women. Suicide is the biggest single cause of death of men aged 25-34 and young men are four times more likely to take their own life through suicide than young women. (The Latest Score – An Evaluation of the It’s A Goal! programme)

NHS Blackpool commissioned Unlimited Potential in 2012-13 to run the It’s A Goal! programme. It’s A Goal! is an 11 week programme using football metaphor and analogy, helping the attendees to ‘be the best they can be’. The course was developed to be an early intervention aimed at men with mild to moderate mental ill-health, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and lack of confidence.

Purpose:
The ultimate purpose of It’s A Goal! is for men to have happier and healthier lives.

The aims are:
- Reduce social isolation and increase social inclusion.
- Increase positive mental health and well-being.
- Increase employability.

It’s A Goal! is a non-clinical programme with an emphasis on “being the best you can be”. It uses football metaphor and terminology to mirror life events to help participants (called “players”) to explore their personal issues and develop greater confidence and motivation. A key element is goal setting, with players encouraged to set and achieve short-term and long-term goals.
A person may be referred or self-refer to the programme. There is an informal assessment with each player before the start of the programme ("season").

In each two-hour session ("match") of the "season", the players – both individually and in the "team" – focus on developing and testing techniques and tactics to take more control of the issues in their lives and to deal with them more effectively. The standard eleven-week season involves:
- Goalkeeper (match 1) – introductory session, signing as a player, joining the team and setting initial goals
- Defence (4 matches) – roles, team work and support, with a focus on change and resilience
- Midfield (4 matches) – linking up and creativity, focussing on relaxation, visualisation, communication, motivation, assertiveness and posture
- Attack (2 matches) – taking opportunities, changing perspectives and behaviours, practising techniques and evaluating success

After the end of the season, a weekly "supporters’ club" – a less structured, drop-in facility – is available to help people sustain the benefits of the programme and continuing peer support.

The programme is run by a Coach, with support where possible from one or more graduates in a volunteer role.

**Eligibility:**

The programme is primarily targeted at young men (16-45 years old) with low self-esteem and mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety, who may not wish to access traditional services in traditional settings. It is, however, open to other people who might benefit, such as people in recovery.

Particular consideration will be given to wider accessibility and promotion in terms of age, race, sex and sexual orientation.

**Acceptance and exclusion criteria:**

People aged 18 years or older, resident in or registered with a GP practice in the locality, experiencing low confidence/self-esteem and mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety, who want to make a change but may not wish to access traditional services in a traditional setting.

Exclusion: people with acute mental health, alcohol or drug issues that require specialist support.