

Employers' toolkit

**Helping your employees improve their
mental wellbeing with physical activity**



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1.0 Introduction

This toolkit is designed to help you encourage your employees to look after their own mental wellbeing by being more physically active in their daily lives.

Why is it important to support your staff's mental wellbeing?

Mental illness not only blights lives, it's also the leading cause of absence from work due to sickness in the UK¹. Last year, more than 17.9 million working days were lost as a result of stress, anxiety or depression – more than for any other kind of illness².

How does physical activity help?

Research shows that getting physically active is not only good for our bodies, it's good for our minds too. By encouraging your employees to be more active, and signposting them to the tools that are available to help, you can help them boost their energy and lift their mood.

People who are employed typically experience better mental health than those who are unemployed³. But everyone faces challenges at work or difficulties at home that impact their work, so employers are often uniquely placed to help their employees have good mental health.



¹ www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/economic-and-social-costs-2009 (The economic and social costs of mental health problems in 2009/10 | Centre for Mental Health)

² <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/workingminds/>

³ Lelliott, P et al Mental health and work (2013)

2.0 Tips for getting your employees started

Use these facts and tips in communications with your employees, such as newsletters or intranet articles, to tell them about how being more active can benefit their mental wellbeing and provide suggestions for getting started.

- Being active isn't just good for your body – it's good for your mind too.
- People who exercise regularly have 1.5 fewer 'bad days' a month on average than those who don't exercise¹.
- Being active releases chemicals in your brain that boost your self-esteem and help you concentrate, sleep well and feel better.
- Finding an activity you like and are able to do regularly is more important than pushing yourself to do something you don't enjoy.
- Being active doesn't have to be a hassle. Doing little things every day to be more active can really lift your mood and put a smile on your face. And every step you take is a step towards feeling great.

Tips for getting going:

- **Lunchtime** is a good opportunity to fit in some activity. A brisk walk will help you unwind and feel ready to take on the rest of the day.
- An **active hobby**, like gardening or DIY, can be great for your mind as well as your body.
- Get your **friends and family** involved with activity challenges like seeing who can do the most steps in a day.
- Whether it's running, yoga or simply dancing around your home, it's more likely to make you smile if you **enjoy it** – and you're more likely to stick at it too.

¹ The Lancet Psychiatry Journal



3.0 Tools and resources to tell your employees about

These useful tools and resources can help your staff improve their mental wellbeing by moving more.

Better Health – Get Active

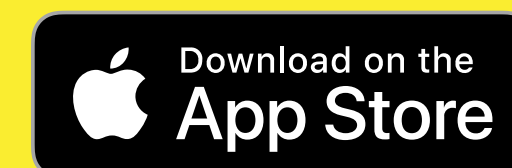
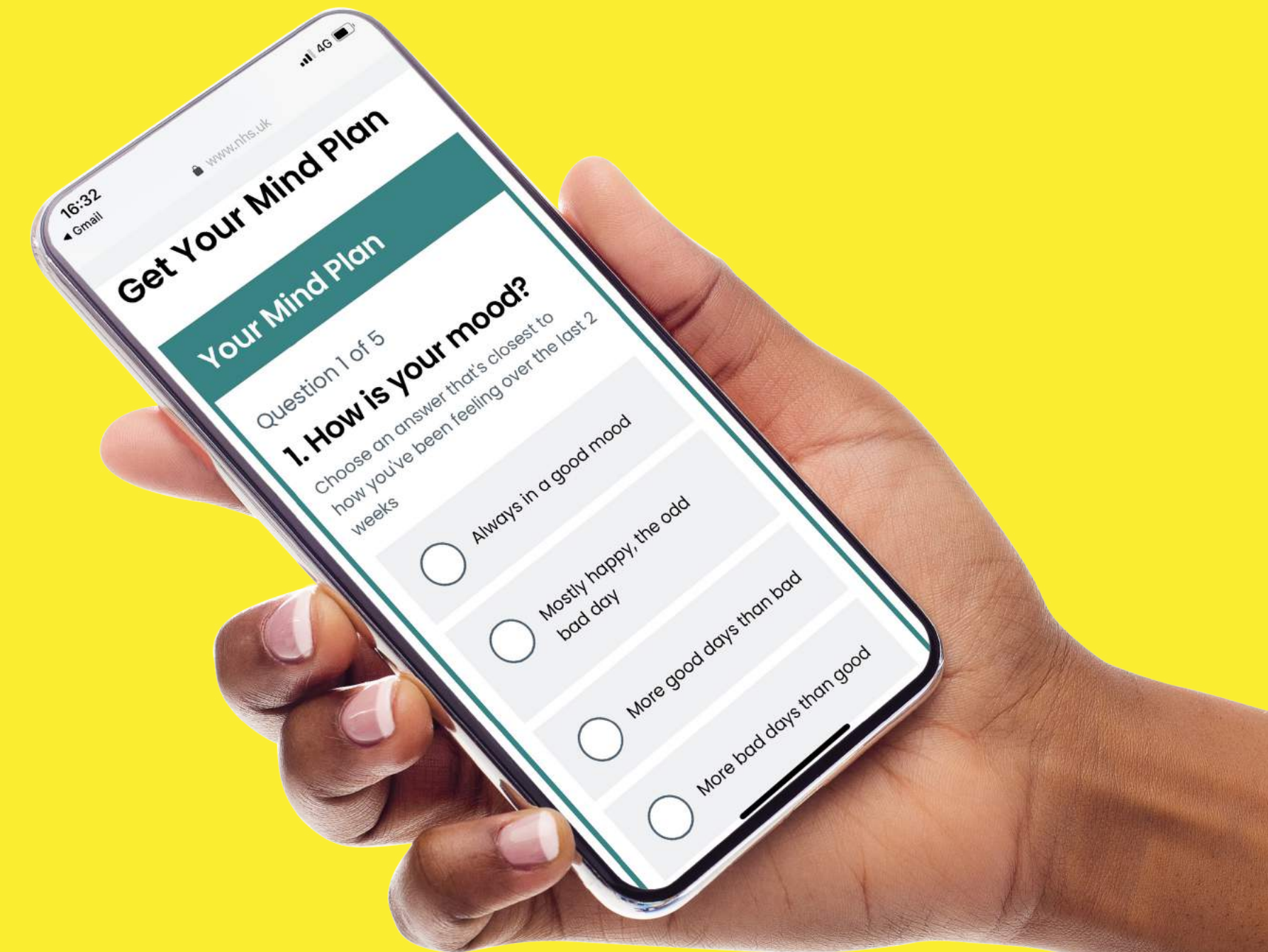
Visit the NHS Better Health website's 'Get Active' page which shows the easy things we can do to get more physical activity into our daily lives and the difference it can make to our mental wellbeing. It also offers suggestions of support to help people get started, such as:

- **Active 10 app** – this app is a great way to track the walking you do and set goals to do more. It shows you your achievements and gives you tips to boost your activity.
- **NHS Couch to 5K app** – if you'd like to take up running but don't know where to start, this running plan will help you get off the couch and gradually work towards running 5K in just 9 weeks.

Better Health – Every Mind Matters

The Better Health – Every Mind Matters website is designed to empower people to look after their mental health and wellbeing and support that of others.

It offers a free NHS-approved **Mind Plan**. By answering five quick questions you'll get a personalised action plan with practical tips to help you deal with stress and anxiety, boost your mood, sleep better and feel more in control. To date over 4.2 million Mind Plans have been created. You can also choose to have more tips emailed to you to help improve your wellbeing.



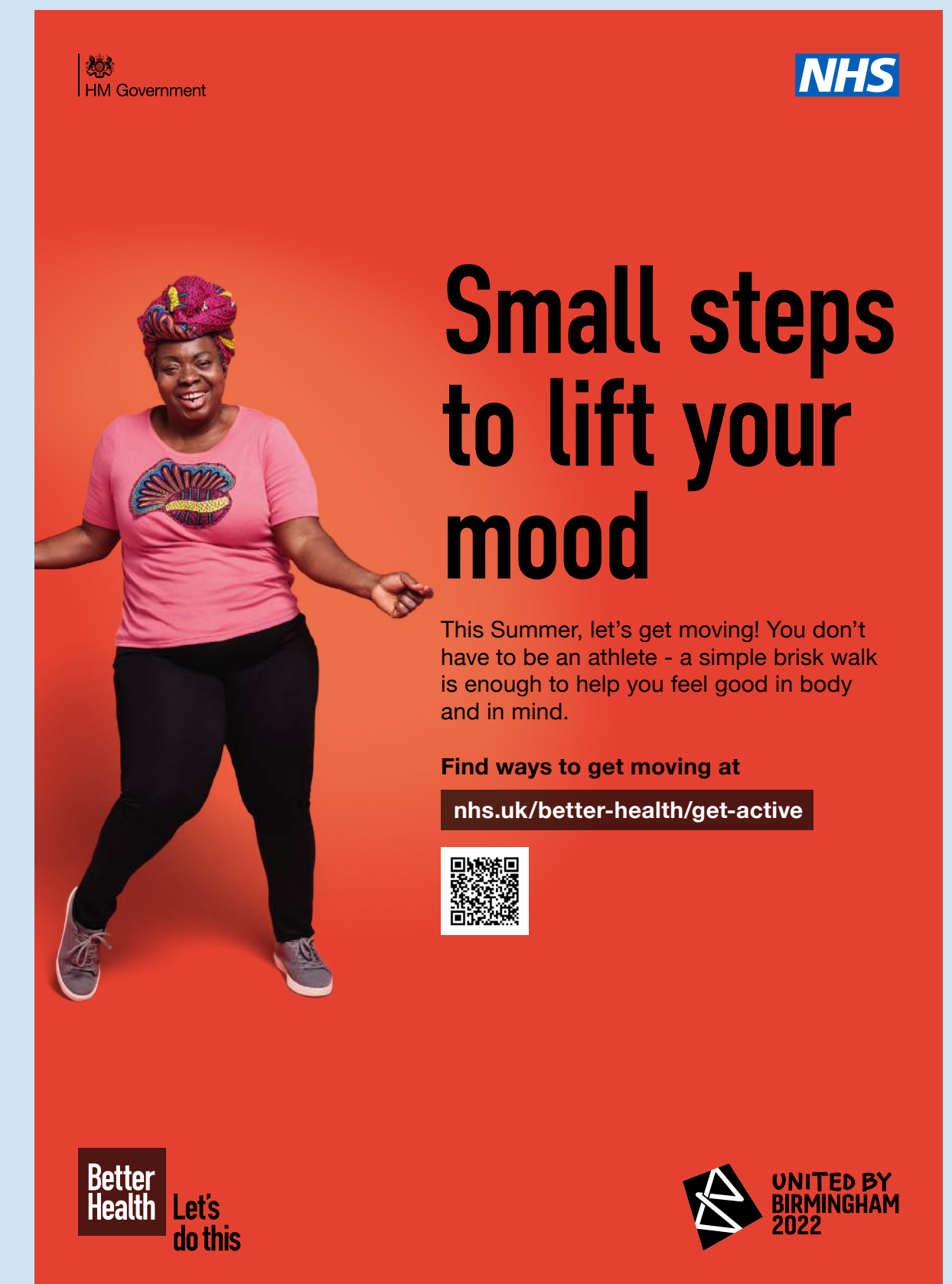
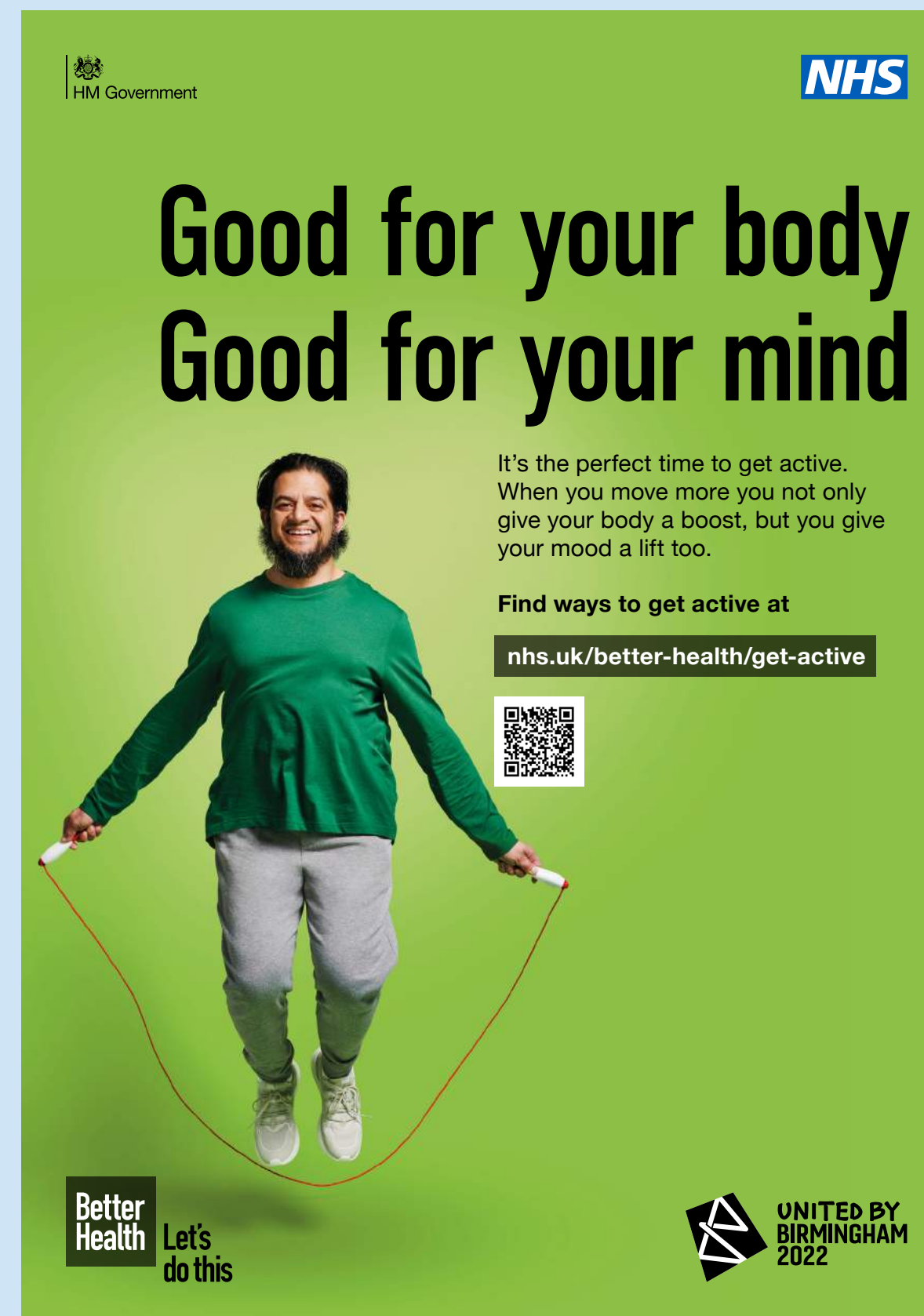
4.0 Ready-made resources to get your staff moving

These resources are available to download from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#)

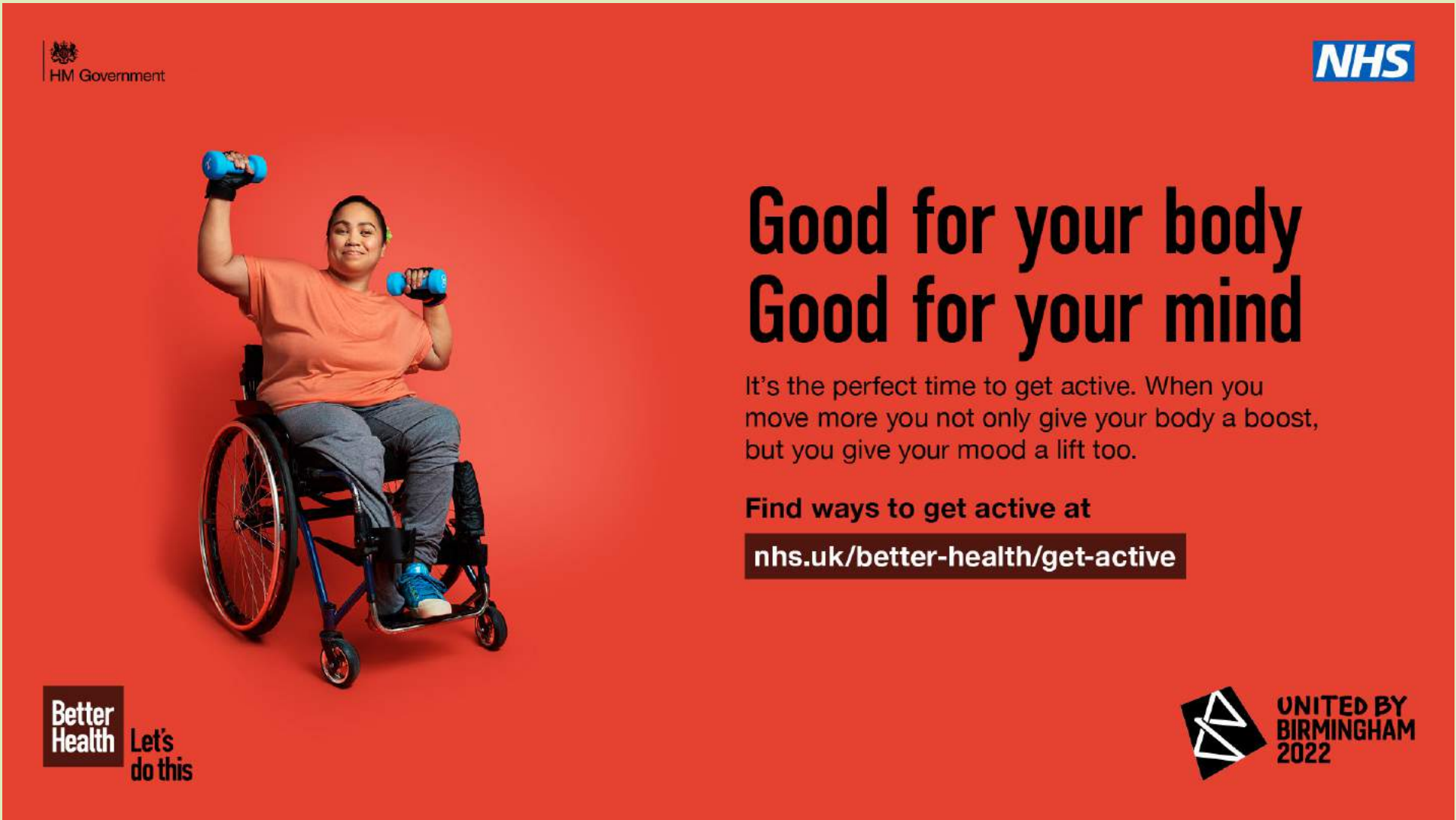
4.1 Posters

A set of eye-catching A4 posters have been created to help you encourage your employees to be more physically active to improve their mental wellbeing. Print or order them and display them in and around your workplace where they'll get your employees' attention, such as in rest and eating areas, on noticeboards and in washrooms.

Download now 

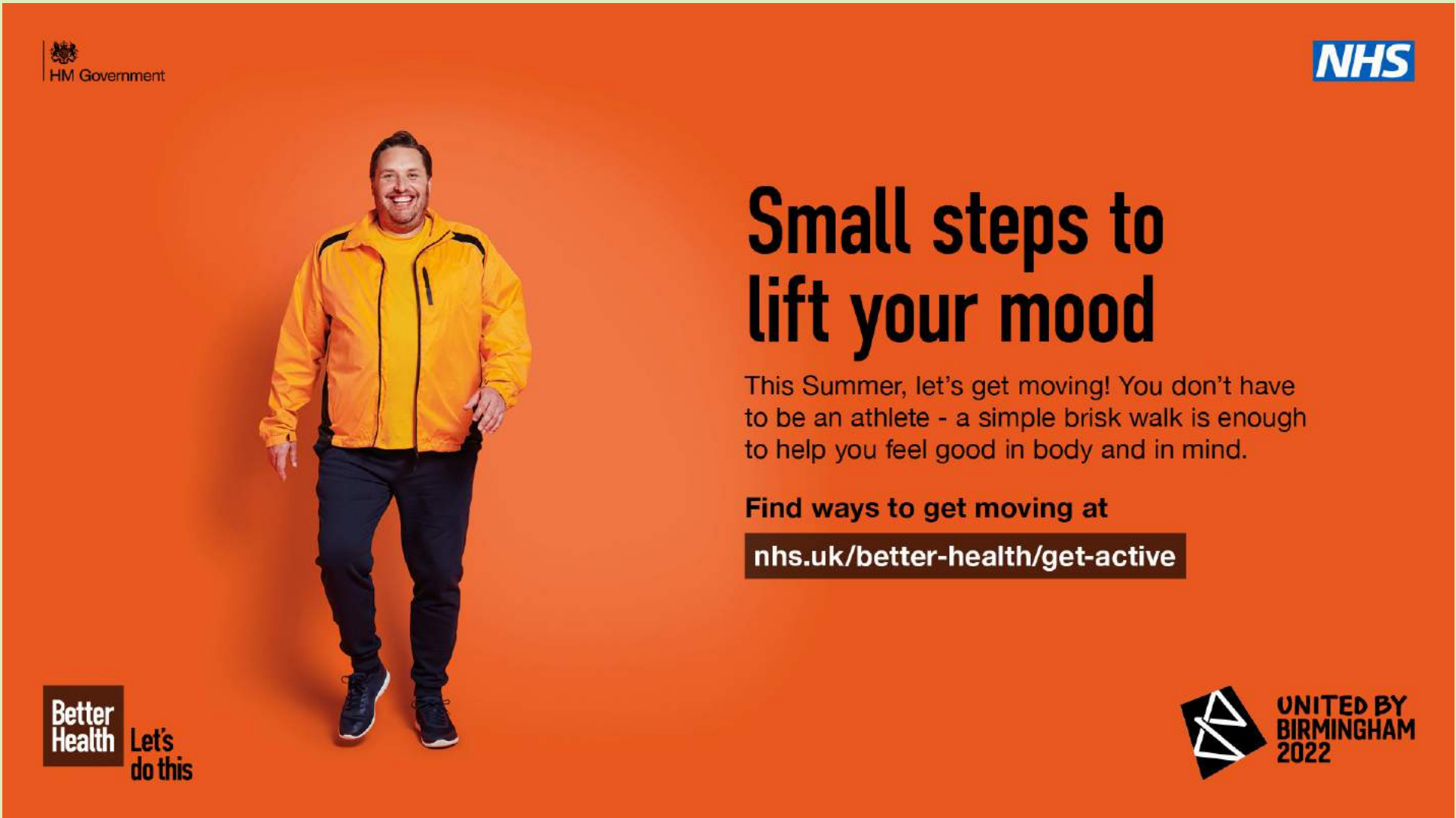


4.2 Digital assets



Like the posters, these digital assets will help encourage your staff to get moving more. Use them on your digital screens, website/intranet and emails.

Download now 



4.3 Social media





Your social media channels are a great place to get your employees' attention and motivate them to start getting active and improve their mental wellbeing. You could start by using our suggested accompanying post copy.

Accompanying post copy

Being active is good for your body and your mind. Being more active every day can boost your energy, lift your mood and make everyday activities easier. Search NHS Better Health Get Active for ideas to get started.

Download now 

4.4 Conversation starter




Good for your body Good for your mind

Move more and feel better

Getting active doesn't have to be a hassle. Doing little things every day to be more active can really lift your mood and put a smile on your face. And every step you take is a step towards feeling great.


Walk away your worries

A daily brisk walk can boost your energy, lift your mood, clear your mind and stop your worries going into overdrive.




Get active, sleep better

Physical activity releases feel-good hormones called endorphins, which help us sleep better. The better we sleep, the better our energy levels, mood and ability to concentrate.



Make active connections

Doing something active with a friend gives you a good opportunity to chat, and connecting with others can help you feel less stressed.



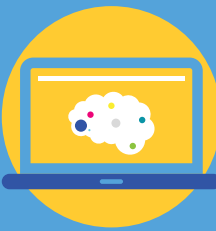
Build active habits

Building activity into your daily routine can be easy and fun: try some stretches while the kettle's on or a boogie while brushing your teeth.




Take your first step

If you need some help getting started, you can find lots of support online and on your phone.



Apps to help you feel 'appier

Active 10 – this app is a great way to find out how active you are already and set goals to move more. **Search NHS Active 10**




NHS Couch to 5K – this app is ideal if you'd like to take up running but feel a bit out of shape. **Search NHS Couch to 5K**



Create your own Mind Plan

Visit the Every Mind Matters website to create a mental wellbeing action plan just for you.

Answer 5 quick questions to get your free plan with tips to help you deal with stress and anxiety, improve your sleep, boost your mood and feel more in control




Search Every Mind Matters

Find ways to get active that work for you

Visit nhs.uk/better-health/get-active



Let's do this



This handy conversation starter is a great tool to give people ideas and help for getting more active to benefit their mental wellbeing. Order them from the **Campaign Resource Centre** and display them across your premises in areas where people are able to stop and chat.

Download now 

4.5 Employer's script

This script has been written as a starting point to help you talk to your employees about being more active and the benefits it can have for their mental wellbeing, in a staff briefing, for example. It could also be used as the basis for a written piece such as a blog post.

Being active isn't just good for your body, it can be good for your mind too.

Mental health issues are very common. In any given week, one in six people in England¹ will report experiencing a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. But it's been shown that getting physically active is not only good for our bodies, it's good for our minds too.

Getting active doesn't have to be a hassle. Doing little things every day to be more active can really lift your mood, as well as giving you more energy and making everyday activities feel easier. And every step you take is a step towards feeling great.

Suggestion: speaker could give an example of what they like to do to keep active and the benefits they get from it, e.g. "I like to take a brisk walk at lunchtime because I find it clears my head and gives me energy for the afternoon".

Building activity into your daily routine is a good idea and can make it easier to get active. For example, lunchtime is a good opportunity to fit in some activity. A brisk walk will help you unwind and feel ready to take on the rest of the day. Or if you're working from home, you could do a quick 10-minute workout.

An active hobby, like gardening or DIY, can be great for your mind as well as your body. And doing some stretches while you're watching TV helps too.

We often get more out of exercising when we do it with others. So how about getting your friends and family involved with activity challenges like seeing who can do the most steps in a day.

There's no 'right' way to exercise – it's about what's right for you. Whether it's running, yoga or simply dancing around your home, it's more likely to make you smile if you enjoy it – and you're more likely to stick at it too!

If it's been a while since you exercised or you need a bit of help to get going, a good place to start is the NHS's Better Health Get Active web page. This has advice, tips and suggestions that can help you get moving.

If you want to do more to look after your mental wellbeing, visit the Better Health – Every Mind Matters website. By answering 5 quick questions, you can get a free personalised action plan with practical tips to help you deal with stress and anxiety, boost your mood, sleep better and feel more in control.

¹ McManus S, Bebbington P, Jenkins R, Brugha T. (eds.) (2016). Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult psychiatric morbidity survey 2014

Thank you

