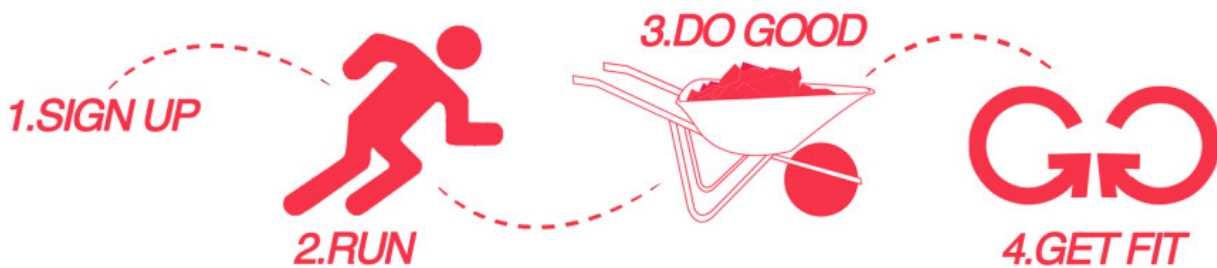


**Running is a great way to stay fit. But what if you could do it and also give something back to the community? That's the idea behind GoodGym. Sarah Long, our health programme advisor, explains more.**



GoodGym: a great way to get moving and do good things

By [Sarah Long](#)

I've seen a lot of changes in Bournemouth in recent years. Once famous for its population of retirees, it's now morphing into a young person's town. This is thanks to a thriving student scene and an increase in digital start-up companies.

But we can't forget our elders. We expect the number of older people living in Bournemouth to grow. This means we will face the many issues that an ageing population creates.

It's likely that more older people will live with a disease, such as dementia or heart disease. Living with a long-term condition can reduce mobility and confidence. As a result, this can increase social isolation among older people.

## **Running to do good**

So, the question is: how can we use the enthusiasm and energy of younger people and to support older people? One answer is GoodGym.

[GoodGym](#) is a registered charity aiming to improve communities' physical, mental and social wellbeing.

It's essentially a community of runners who get fit by doing good. Goodgym encourages runners to take part in weekly group runs.

Each run starts at one location and finishes at a place where runners can do organised volunteer work. This can be clearing community land or decorating a community hall. Weekly group runs are social and open to runners of all abilities.

## **Reducing loneliness**

One of the main reasons we support this scheme is because it pairs runners up with older people. The runners will be able to help older people, who may suffer from isolation and loneliness.

GoodGym works with local organisations to find runners who want to become a volunteer. They will then match runners to local older people.

An older person become a 'coach' to their runner to keep them motivated to be active. In return, the runner will regularly visit their coach, providing them with good company.

GoodGym Bournemouth has recently appointed Lydia Turnbull who is a local running coach. It supports the communities of Boscombe and West Howe.

Lydia organises the weekly group runs. They take place every Wednesday evening at 6.15pm from Urban Reef, Boscombe.

We hope this work can link generations and provide great health benefits for everyone.

If you want to dust off your running shoes and give it a go, contact [Lydia](#) for more information.

**Sarah Long is a health programme advisor at Public Health Dorset.**