



**University of Brighton**

**sportbrighton**

# **Active Wellbeing Project Impact Report**

**January 2024 - May 2025**

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Sport participation officer

# Background

Sport Brighton provides sport and physical activity services for students and staff at the University of Brighton. The sport programme includes student clubs, development teams, intramural leagues, and turn-up-and-play recreational sessions.

While these programmes have been successful, pop-up events across our campuses revealed that many students are unaware of these opportunities or face barriers that prevent their participation.

## Barriers identified



### Multiple campuses

The University of Brighton operates across multiple campuses: Falmer, Moulsecoomb, and Brighton city centre. Most sport facilities are located at the Falmer site, with a gym also available at Moulsecoomb. This distribution has led to consistent feedback from students that travel (time and cost) is a significant barrier to engaging in sport and physical activity.



### Anxiety to participate

Another barrier identified is the anxiety students feel about attending sessions. Many students, especially those new to a sport, are hesitant to join recreational sessions due to uncertainty about what the sessions will involve and who the other participants will be.



### Accessibility

In the 2022-23 academic year, 29% of students declared a disability, with 35% of these students reporting a mental health condition. As we don't collect disability data of our sports club members, we don't have much insight on specific barriers experienced by these students. To gain better understanding, we met with members of the disabled students' society to discuss barriers experienced by disabled students, and potential interventions to enable increased participation.

# Implementation

## Aims

There were 2 primary aims of this project:

- To increase the number of unique students engaging in sport and physical activity outside of the sports clubs
- To get better engagement with the wider student population to understand their needs to increase physical activity participation

## Methodology

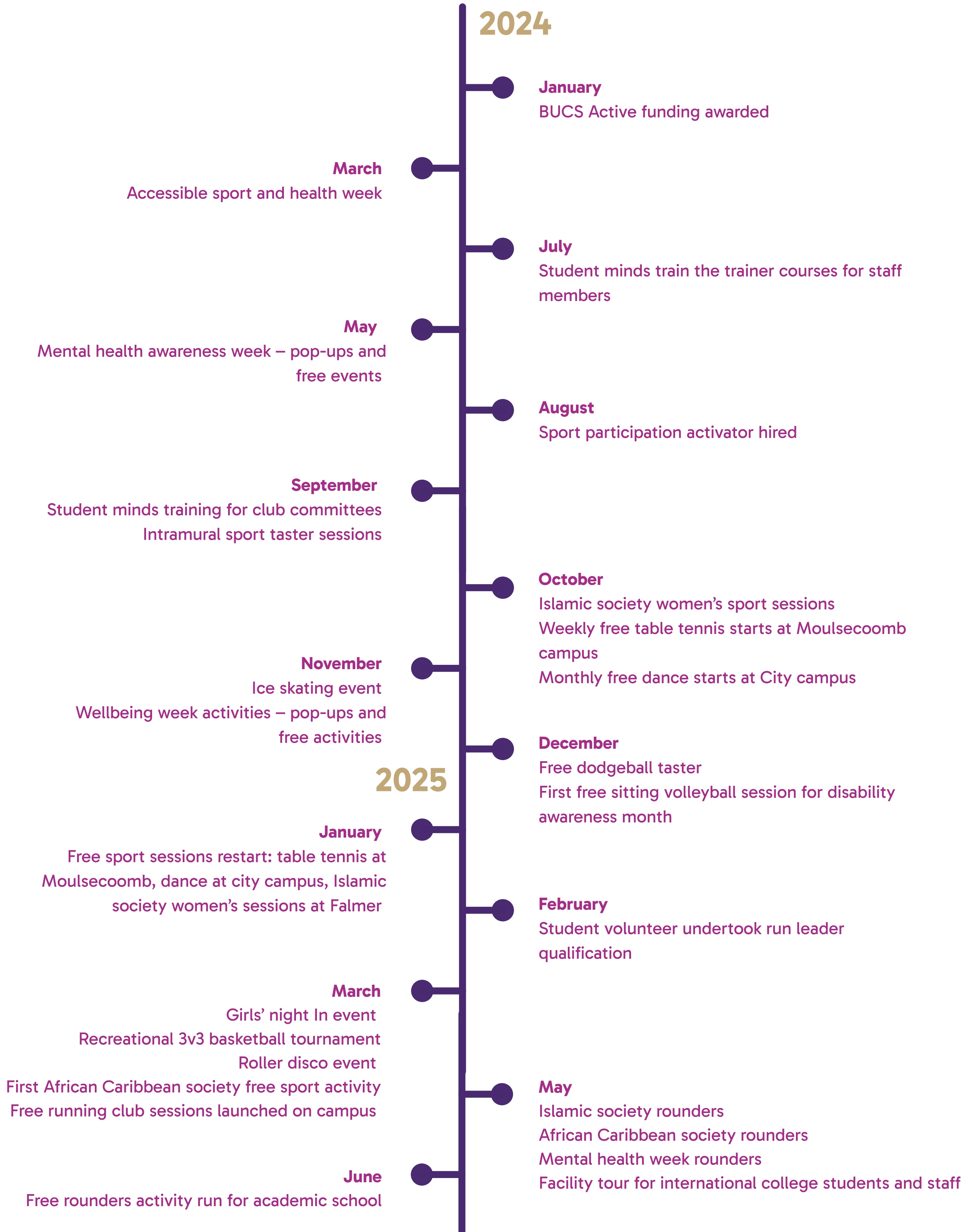
Our active wellbeing initiatives were created around the identification of the engagement barriers and our target populations.

Based on the feedback that travel between campuses was a significant barrier, we identified 2 new spaces where we could run free activities at the city and Moulsecoomb campuses.

We identified that many students wanted to get involved in recreational sport, but felt discouraged if they didn't know any other participants. To overcome this, we planned sport sessions for non-sport societies to engage new students in physical activity at university. These societies would include the Islamic society, the African Caribbean society (ACS), and the disabled students' society. Other societies were approached but chose not to engage this year.

To make our sport programmes more accessible to students, we planned to upskill our club committees and student volunteers to be more confident in creating inclusive environments and adapting sessions, through delivering and promoting workshops and webinars. These included in-person mental health training, in-person coaching workshops (including a coaching disabled footballers), and online webinars. We also increased the number of mass participation events organised for all University of Brighton students and reached more of the wider student population through new marketing strategies.

# Project Timeline



# Impact

**673** students were engaged in the new, active wellbeing initiatives. This does not include the participation statistics for our existing recreational and intramural sport programmes.

**6** mass participation events were held

**4** new free, regular activities were created

**3** new non-sport societies were engaged

**3** new student & graduate roles were created to support the project

“It was really great fun, nice for it to be so girly pop and fun. The open swim session being so empty was really nice to just mess about in the pool and not feel judged etc when we left we all just kept saying how much we had enjoyed it”

**Girls' Night In attendee**



**Girls' Night In attendee**

“Loved the girls night, would be nice if it is a semi regular thing. I think it's a great idea to try and engage more women in sport. Netball club was fun and friendly. The self-defence instructor was great. Pole instructor and society member running the pole session were awesome. The staff in the open gym were great.”

**Roller Disco attendee**

“I loved how it was an opportunity to exercise and have fun!”



# Highlight Impacts



## Girls' night in

The Girls' Night In event was organised to encourage more female-identifying students to visit the Sport Complex and take part in different activities offered.

The event included a range of activities, from sport and physical activities to more creative activities, to appeal to as many different students as possible. Activities were run by paid instructors and volunteers, with the event being overseen by full time and casual Sport Brighton staff. The volunteers included students from sports clubs and student residential advisors from the Wellbeing team.

### Activities:

- Pilates
- Pole fit
- Self-defence
- Swimming
- Netball
- Tennis
- Open gym with PT support
- Fitness challenges with prizes
- Bracelet making
- Collage making
- Movie watching with candyfloss and popcorn



The event took place on International Women's Day and was an after-hours event to ensure that the only people in the building were those attending the event. Parking was made free to help overcome some travel associated costs. Pre-sign up was required and tickets were sold at £3 to keep the cost low to attendees but to ensure financial viability.

**66** students attended the event

**9%** had no gym membership or sports club membership.

**55%** of students had a gym membership, but were not part of a sports club.

Following the success of the event, the aim will be to organise it at least once a year as it received very positive feedback and helped bring a new student audience into our facilities. There will also be further discussions on smaller-scale events such as female-only classes and gym hours.

## Islamic society women's sport sessions

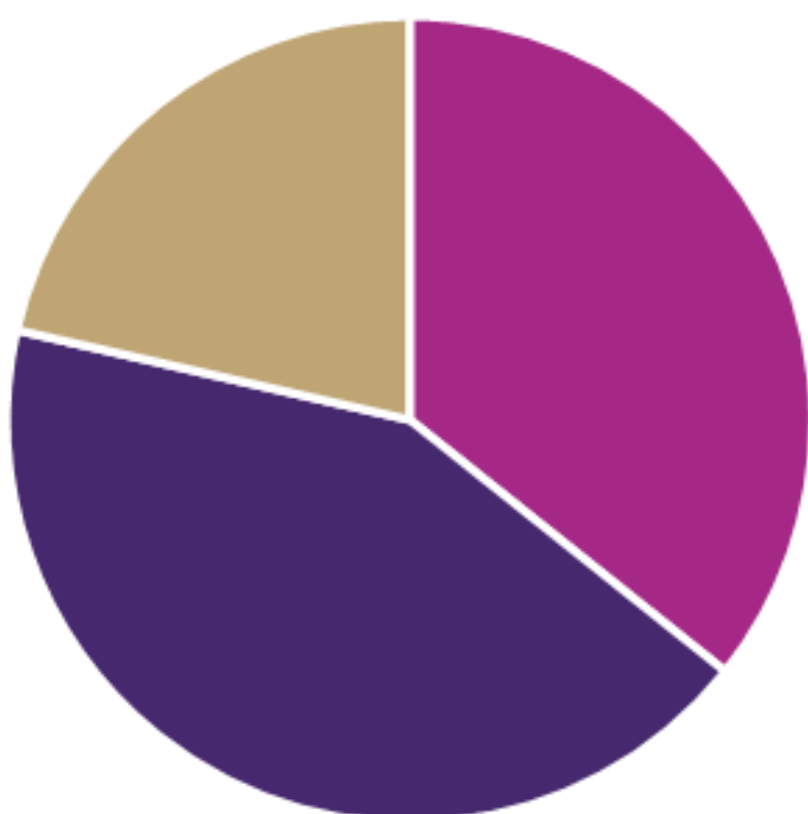
These sessions were delivered by a long-term Sport Brighton volunteer as she took on a new role as a sport officer for the University Islamic society. The volunteer was a qualified basketball coach who had been volunteering for 2 years previously within the recreational sport programme. In previous discussions, we had asked for her input on barriers experienced by female Muslim students wanting to take part in sport; the biggest being the need for female only sessions within enclosed spaces.

In October 2025, the volunteer approached Sport Brighton about a one-off sport event for female members of the Islamic society as part of a society event week and ran dodgeball and benchball, where 14 students attended. After the success of that event, suitable dates were decided to run a different event each month for the female members of the society. By the end of the year, we ran 7 different events with 17 unique participants involved. Most students involved had never attended a Sport Brighton club or session previously.

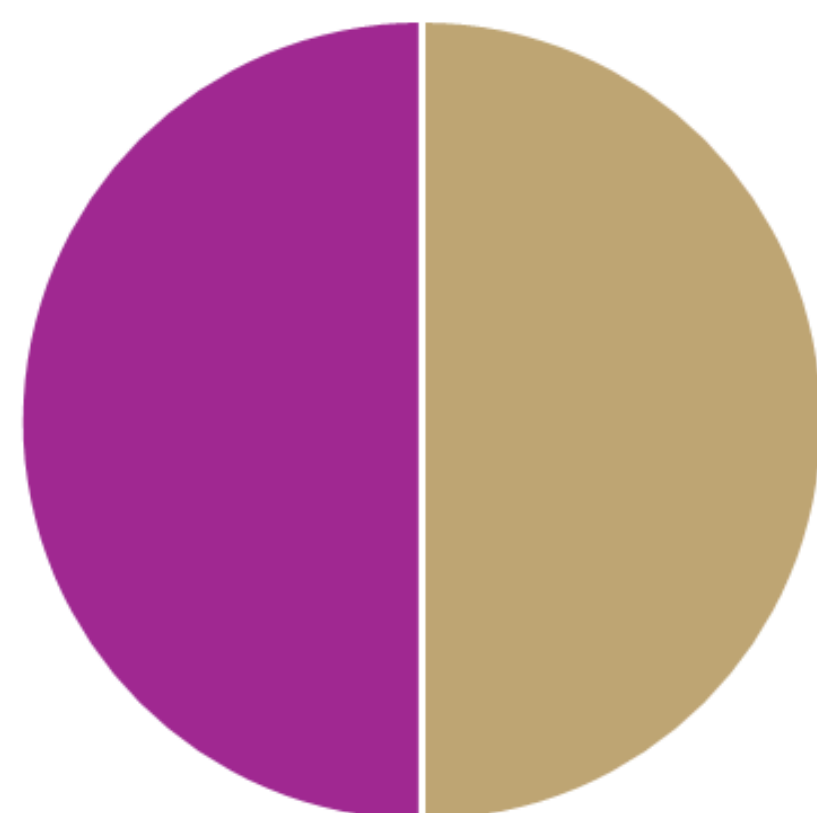
“These (sessions) were free to women in the Islamic society to help increase their participation in sports and make it a suitable and comfortable environment for Muslim women, especially those who wear the hijab. I think the impact was highly positive. It increased sisterhood and bonds, motivated people to get involved and stay fit, and gave them time away from studying to be active and get fit.”

**Volunteer session lead**

“ I would like to do more sport/fitness ”



- Inactive - doing fewer than 30 minutes a week
- Fairly active - doing 30-149 minutes a week
- Active - doing at least 150 minutes a week



- Agree
- Strongly agree

## Sport Participation Activator

For the 24-25 academic year, we hired a current student for a casual sport participation role to support the implementation of the active wellbeing project, as well as general recreational sport support. The SPA worked on average 4-10 hours a week engaging with numerous events and campaigns in both supporting and leading roles.

By creating this role, we were able to gain the perspective of a current student when organising events, and to better engage students with our promotion.

## Wellbeing culture within sports clubs

Through qualifying two staff members with student minds' mental health in sport, we were able to upskill over 40 sports club committee members with the training to implement within their clubs. All sports clubs were required to elect a welfare officer for 24-25 to undergo this training and to be the contact for club members to go to for support and advice with finding relevant university services. The welfare officers were contacted throughout the year with information and opportunities to support them in their roles. By engaging more with student clubs and raising awareness of mental health, we noticed an increase in the engagement of clubs getting involved with university and external campaigns.

## Challenges

One of the major challenges faced was reaching target demographics with marketing for events and initiatives, most significantly, with reaching disabled students to promote the accessible sport week and to get feedback on activity preferences.

In term 3 of the 23-24 year, we attempted to collaborate with the University's Disability and Dyslexia team to reach these students. This proved unsuccessful due to GDPR restrictions and the department's own contact with these students.

In September 2024, a new disabled students' society was formed giving us a communication route directly to these students via the society's president. This led to an in-person meeting and online communications where we discussed barriers to participation, measures to overcome them, and activity ideas.

In May, a disabled students society swimming session was planned, however this fell through due to drop outs, most likely due to the assessment period. This will be picked up again in October 2025 with their new committee to continue the link created this year.

To improve our marketing capabilities, a new, full-time engagement officer role has been created. We have already seen an improvement in our promotional reach throughout the wider university and the connections made within the university and student union marketing departments.

# Sustainability

To ensure continuity of our society sport events, we aim to meet with the sport officers and other committee members of societies at the start of each academic year. So far, we have connected with societies including the disabled students, Arican Caribbean, Islamic and Tamil. We hope to increase this to include more societies engaging with us each year.

Using some of the BUCS funding, we were able to qualify two members of staff to deliver mental health training to the sports club welfare officers. However, this will not be sustainable due to upcoming staff changes. Instead, we have formed connections within the wellbeing department, meaning we will now have someone consistently able to deliver mental health training to sports clubs as part of their committee training.

Each event organised as part of the active wellbeing project has clear planning guides and budgets produced to allow for efficient and easy repeatability. These events will be scheduled during the summer months for the upcoming academic years to give plenty of time for organising and promotion.

## Project Expenditure

Specialist coaching for accessible sport and health week	£325	March 2024
Mental health in sport trainer training x2	£580	July 2024
Ice skating hire	£2400	November 2024
Run Leader Qualification	£200	February 2025
Roller disco providers	£350	March 2025
Girls' Night In catering, Instructors and staffing	£716.15	March 2025
Sport participation activator	£2,797.60	September 2024 – May 2025