

ACTIVE WELLBEING PROJECTS

2025-26

Anglia Ruskin University

Project Lead: Sally Pearson (sally.pearson@aru.ac.uk)

Project Focus: ChampionHER

“ChampionHER at ARU” aims to proactively increase the number of females taking part in physical activity, exercise and sport at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU). We want to inspire, engage and create a sense of belonging and community for these females to be confident to take part in physical activity.

The ChampionHer project will aim to: Launch the ChampionHer Campaign which will change how females currently think and feel about exercise, to raise awareness and spotlight the benefits of females taking part in physical activity. This will encourage females to be active in ways that work for them.

We will recruit and grow a female workforce. We will use passionate student Champions as role models to launch the University Wide ChampionHer Campaign whilst also promoting & supporting the delivery of the Women in Sport Festivals, offering physical activity sessions, events and guest speakers which will break down the barriers and increase the confidence for females to take part in physical activity. At the festivals we will promote the vibrant and accessible ‘Let’s Get Out There’ programme for ARU females to take part and enjoy activities outside which will be student led by our Champions. We want women to enjoy the many physical and mental health benefits that can be gained from being outdoor in nature.

Brunel University Students’ Union

Project Lead: Chris Hepworth (Christopher.hepworth@brunel.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Campus Sport Programme

This project aims to develop a sustainable, on-campus competitive sports programme at Brunel University, addressing the declining participation in lower-level BUCS teams due to logistical challenges and time commitments for away games. By offering accessible, local competition options such as inter-hall, inter-departmental, and individual events, the initiative seeks to boost student engagement, improve mental wellbeing, and reduce social isolation. The project also aims to create a flexible, student-centered sports model that reduces barriers to participation and strengthens campus community. The success will be measured through surveys, participation data, and engagement analysis, with the goal of increasing wellbeing and fostering long-term student involvement in campus sports.

City St George’s Students’ Union

Project Lead: SU Sport (sports@city.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Sisters Sport

Sisters Sport is an exciting new initiative designed to increase female Muslim student participation in physical activity at City St George’s University. While women make up 58% of the student body, only 28% currently engage in the GetActive recreational sports programme. This project aims to address this gap by offering women-only, culturally appropriate sessions in accessible and familiar spaces across campus. These sessions will create welcoming, safe environments where female students can confidently engage in a range of sports and activities.

A key feature of Sisters Sport is its student-centred approach. The programme will be co-created and delivered with the support of a Muslim Women’s Sport Ambassador, who will work closely with the Students’ Union to ensure the sessions reflect the preferences and motivations of female Muslim students. Through this initiative, Sisters Sport aims to engage around 300 female students, fostering confidence, improving physical and mental wellbeing, and encouraging long-term participation in sport. By expanding the GetActive programme, this

project also supports the Students' Union's strategic goal of creating a sense of belonging and building community through inclusive and accessible physical activity.

Manchester Metropolitan University

Project Lead: Charlotte Sykes (c.sykes@mmu.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Active Halls

Active Halls is a project targeting students living within Manchester Metropolitan University owned halls of residences. The project is designed to provide sporting opportunities to help tackle issues of isolation, by increasing a sense of community and belonging. The most recent BASS survey showed that 34% of students felt left out and 41% felt isolated, highlighting the issues that students face when moving away from home. Our aim is to help reduce feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety within halls, in turn helping to alleviate the pressure on our counselling, mental health and wellbeing service.

The project will be supported by student ambassadors, known as hall reps. They will generate feedback via focus groups & surveys to understand the wants and needs of students within halls. Hall reps will be the face of our active campus programme, promoting and engaging halls students in taking part in our free sport and fitness offer. Alongside this, they will deliver one-off competitions throughout the academic year, and filter teams into our campus league programme.

We hope that the work done by our halls reps will gain a greater understanding of how we can further support students living on campus and increase their engagement with MMU Sport.

University of Bristol

Project Lead: Joe Leaver (joe.leaver@bristol.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Black Student Sport Project

The University of Bristol's Black Student Sport project aims to raise the profile of Black students in its sporting offer. In 2023/24 there were 3929 students who identified as being of Black or Mixed Black ethnicity at the University, making up roughly 3% of the student population. This is compared with just 0.7% of Black and Mixed Black students who make up the universities sport club members.

The big picture aim of the project is to improve representation in sport and activity from the Universities black students and to gain deeper insight on the participation gap and overall perception of sport. The issue of under representation in sport from the black community is something that extends to British society in a wider context. Inclusion is a pillar of the university strategy, with systemic racism widely acknowledged and a desire to make wholesale change to address this. The Black Student Sport Project will look to tackle the problem in a progressive and pragmatic way by carrying out extensive research and co-creating an action plan with Black students to lay out a series of tangible events for students to participate in.

University of Central Lancashire

Project Lead: Bobby Tunbridge (ritunbridge@uclan.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Female Participation

The University of Central Lancashire in partnership with UCLan Students Union are collaborating to increase female student participation in sport and physical activity. Developing new and enhancing on current sports opportunities across the University, we are looking to create an inclusive offer for females to participate in physical activity and sport that will include traditional and non-traditional sports people. The initiative will also cater for diverse students. The aim is to focus on tackling common barriers that occur when taking part in sport and exercise. Our plan is to help build confidence whilst inspiring members within the targeted groups by introducing a range of accessible activities for everyone to take part in.

We aim to deliver a wide range of female only timetabled opportunities to our university students. From outdoor sessions involving walking groups, tennis, netball, to female only instructor led indoor classes such as Yoga and Pilates, football, netball, rounders, tennis, and Women's only gym sessions. Factored into our timetable will also be Neurodiverse & Disability Inclusion sessions such as Goalball, Wheelchair basketball, Badminton and table tennis sessions. We also aim to enhance/ build on our quiet time slots in our fitness suite to encourage more Neurodiverse students to engage in our fitness suite and physical activity classes at

Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre. Furthermore, we will deliver a virtual offer to our students to accommodate those students who are not confident to attend the gym and may prefer to work out in quieter spaces within the sports centre. Our virtual offer will include online meditation, HIIT classes, kick boxing and dance classes and much more.

University of East London

Project Lead: Hilary Lissenden (h.lissenden@uel.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Active Campus & ActiveXchange

It is relatively easy to collect information about active health initiatives that are delivered within traditional sports settings – but much harder when participation takes place in the great outdoors! Surveys and registers are labour-intensive and other means of generating data can involve high infrastructure costs and GDPR concerns.

As part of its developing Active Campus programme, UEL is partnering with ActiveXchange, whose data intelligence platform will help us really get to the heart of active wellbeing need and demand across our learning and local communities.

Our grant-funded project will test how targeted geofencing, combined with the analysis of publicly available movement data, can generate insights into programme design and delivery – so we can serve more people, in more places, for more positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

We will share our findings from approximately six events held throughout the year with the wider BUCS membership.

University of Essex

Project Lead: Jennifer Stanhope (jennifer.stanhope@essex.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Student Mental Health Referral - Inclusive and Accessible Program

Thrive 2.0 aims to create an inclusive, accessible, and sustainable student well-being program that breaks down barriers to participation and provides targeted physical activity interventions that support positive mental health outcomes.

Our Student Wellbeing & Inclusivity Service (SWIS) data shows a concerning trend, with 25% of our student population (4,323 students) accessing support services in 2023-24. This represents a significant portion of our community requiring additional support for their wellbeing, with mental health concerns being a primary factor. To address these challenges, Thrive 2.0 offers a clear referral pathway, allowing students to be referred by our Wellbeing Team or opt for self-referral. Once enrolled, students will have access to carefully designed shorter sessions, adaptive sports options, and designated quiet facility times. These initiatives will create supportive and inclusive spaces, ensuring students who have previously felt excluded from traditional sport and exercise opportunities can engage in a way that aligns with their needs and promotes their overall wellbeing.

University of Hertfordshire

Project Lead: Lynne Pestle-Bass

Project Focus: Providing Semester C Sport and Physical Activity Opportunities with a Focus on Staff and International Students

HertSquad organise and deliver all sport and physical activity opportunities to University of Hertfordshire students and staff, who are the main target audience for this project. All our HertSquad programmes run throughout semester A and B and what we hope to achieve with this project is the opportunity for both our students, specifically international students who are often isolated on campus, and staff, who have more time to participate over the summer period when they have fewer academic demands, to participate in a semester C programme of sport and physical activity.

Our student Activators would be the face of the programme by welcoming students / staff to sessions and

helping them integrate and collecting session attendance data. We also have a team of 16 trained Wellbeing Activators who provide our students with one-to-one support, giving them the confidence to become involved in life at Herts as well as taking some of the pressure off our University Wellbeing Team, who are heavily oversubscribed. These Wellbeing Activators would help integrate students into our semester C programme. We aim to achieve 400 unique users in this semester C project with 60% being international.

University of Kent

Project Lead: Oli Prior (o.prior@kent.ac.uk)

Project Focus: Increasing Opportunities for REM Students

The University of Kent are delighted to have received BUCS Active Wellbeing Funding to help us to proactively challenge underrepresentation in sport and physical activities within the Racial, Ethnic and Minority (REM) student community, creating much needed communities and friendship groups whilst studying.

We will utilise the funding to create a programme of activities that targets the REM student cohort and recruit student ambassadors to champion physical activity, deliver the timetabled activities and promote the many benefits being active provides. In collaboration with Kent Students' Union, we will ensure the student voice is reflected in the programme of activities created. The long-term vision and aim of this project is to provide a pathway supporting REM students into transitioning into student clubs and societies.

University of Wolverhampton

Project Lead: Natalie Gould (n.gould@wlv.ac.uk)

Project Focus: West Midlands Regional Competition

The West Midlands Regional Competition (WMRC) project aims to increase student participation in sport and physical activity at institutions in the West Midlands by removing identified existing barriers to enable them to participate in sport whilst studying at their university. The focus of the project will be on participation, and this will be supported by offering mixed gender competition, sport festivals instead of weekly competition, and opportunities for students to compete in a wide range of sports by universities merging to create teams.

Our vision is to offer an inclusive and engaging regional development competition structure that is financially viable and sustainable for institutions and students.