



# University Sport & Mental Health

Supporting student mental health through sport & physical activity

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# 1 Why is mental health important?

We know that taking part in sport and physical activity is a major part of many students' time at university, and gives institutions an opportunity to support students' physical and mental wellbeing.

Physical activity is proven to have a positive effect on wellbeing, with higher levels of activity associated with improved quality of life and wellbeing, as well as reduced anxiety, depression and body dissatisfaction.

Using participation in sport and physical activity, students and staff across Higher Education can support students' mental health, enhancing their university experience and improving their psychological wellbeing.

**Empowering sports staff and student leaders** to provide peers support networks within student clubs, university sport can provide peer support networks within university clubs can provide students with a shared identity, increased self-confidence and improved mental health and wellbeing.

This resource has been designed by British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) and Student Minds to help you:

- 1 Increase your knowledge of student mental health.
- 2 Develop your understanding of how to design sport programmes for students experiencing mental health difficulties and how participation in sport can enhance peer-to-peer support.
- 3 Understand **best practice** from universities working to improve mental health through sport.



*“Physical activity stands apart from more traditional treatments and therapies for mental health problems because it has the potential to simultaneously improve health and wellbeing and tackle mental illness.”*

**Journal of Mental Health and Physical Activity**

*“University sport is little different from the school playground, everybody wanting to be picked and popular, an undisputed member of the in-crowd.*

*But when suddenly adrift of the upbringing that made you who you are, failure to accomplish this can leave a young person feeling more vulnerable than they've ever known, without the cognitive tools to make it better.*

*Participation in sport can make a university career, but that doesn't mean it can't break it.”*

**Ed Tarlton, University of Nottingham alumnus**



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## 2 Understanding the challenges in student mental health

**Think about mental health as a continuum encompassing mental health difficulties and mental wellbeing:**

Mental Health First Aid England builds on the ideas of the **Mental Health Continuum** in their training courses.

**A student's journey through university** sees young people adjust to new systems and lifestyles, financial and academic pressures, and for students participating in sport at university, periods such as trials, competitions and injury can contribute to additional stresses. Read the **'How to cope with student life'** guide published by Mind and Student Minds to support your mental wellbeing throughout your time at university.

**Students' mental health is often referred to as an invisible problem**, and we must all **work together to support staff and students** who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

Organisations continue to research how we can effectively support students who struggle with their mental health – read the **Grand Challenges report** from Student Minds for more information.

A person experiencing significant mental health difficulties, can manage these well and have good support in place, allowing optimal mental wellbeing.

Optimal Mental Wellbeing

People who are not experiencing mental health difficulties still benefit from looking after their mental wellbeing



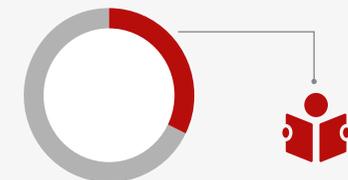
**1 in 4** people experience mental health difficulties each year



**1 in 6** workers experience depression, anxiety or problems relating to stress



Most lifetime mental health difficulties first begin by **24 years old**



**29%** of students experience clinical levels of psychological distress associated with increased risk of anxiety, depression, substance use and personality disorders



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### 3 Types of mental health diagnosis



There are many different mental health difficulties which students might struggle with throughout their time at university; these can take varying forms and might affect individuals in a number of ways.

Understanding the breadth of mental health difficulties students might be going through can help you to recognise the symptoms, so that you are better able to provide effective signposting to support their mental health and wellbeing.



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# Types of mental health diagnosis

Understanding different types of mental health difficulties can be helpful in identifying when someone is struggling and what they might be going through.

**It's important to recognise that most identifiers are linked to changes in:**

- Behaviour
- Physical appearance
- Mood

Students may experience symptoms without having a medical diagnosis; equally they may have a diagnosis but not have obvious symptoms. **Mental health difficulties are common**, but there are variations in students' ability to manage the symptoms.

Types of mental health diagnosis can include:

### **Depression**

Signs can include a persistently sad, anxious or generally low mood and a loss of interest in activities. Watch out for decreased energy levels, irregular sleeping patterns, poor concentration and increased tearfulness; feelings of worthlessness and suicidal thoughts or feelings can also be present.



Elite athletes have struggled with depression at times throughout their careers.

*"I had started my career at 12 and from age 14 it was my aspiration to be an Olympic champion. I loved what I did and I always had my goals but it was a hellish journey, the illnesses, the injuries, the depression a year before the Olympics. It was the hardest time of my life."*

**Kelly Holmes**

### **Anxiety**

Fearing the worst and dwelling on negative experiences can be signs of anxiety, as can light-headedness, nausea, a fast or irregular heartbeat and raised blood pressure.

In November 2013, England Test cricketer Johnathan Trott left England's Ashes team, citing stress and anxiety as the cause; since his departure he has encouraged others to recognise it is okay to ask for help.

### **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

This is an anxiety-related condition where an individual experiences frequent obsessional thoughts, often followed by repetitive compulsions, impulses or urges used to reduce the anxiety.

Signs can include obsessive thoughts such as fear of contamination, and performing compulsions including rituals, correcting thoughts or repeatedly seeking reassurance from others.

*"I have to have everything in a straight line or everything has to be in pairs."*

**David Beckham**

### **Psychosis**

Manifesting itself in experiences of hallucinations or delusions which stop a person from thinking clearly, the difference between reality and an individual's imagination can become blurred.



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# Types of mental health diagnosis

## Behaviours associated with mental health difficulties

### Self-harm

Individuals who struggle with negative feelings such as fear, anger or shame sometimes find self-harm to be a coping strategy or may find that they harm themselves when they are experiencing particularly intense feelings. Commonly associated with cutting, self-harm can also include scratching, burning, over-exercising, abusing alcohol and drugs, and hair-pulling.

Victoria Pendleton, jockey and former track cyclist, has spoken about self-harming throughout her competitive career, seeking to send a message to other people that you could have experiences like these, get past them, and succeed.

### Panic Attacks

A panic attack is a rush of intense anxiety, with physical symptoms including shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness. Panic attacks always pass, but reassuring someone going through a panic attack can help - encourage them to focus on their surroundings.

### Suicide

When particularly struggling with their mental health, people can experience thoughts that their life is not worth living. Often these feelings are fleeting and only rarely result in an action to take one's own life; while many students feel very low at times, few will actually attempt to take their own life.

Asking about suicidal thoughts does not increase the risk of a person taking their own life. In fact, asking about suicidal thoughts can be helpful, giving those who are struggling the opportunity to talk about their feelings and consider taking positive action.



**Contact Papyrus** HOPELineUK on 0800 068 41 41 or take a look at this resource's **Contacts** page for more help.

Make sure you are informed – find out more about the different forms of **mental health difficulties** and **how to be aware of these in sport**. Further support for student mental health difficulties can be found on the **Student Minds website**.



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# 4 Body Image



*“Although the issue of body image is most often associated with teenage girls and young women, the concerns may be shared by men and women of all ages. Much of the abuse and unwelcome attention comes from those outside sport and is outside our control.*”

*What we have done, and we can continue to do, is to help and encourage coaches to understand the problem, recognise the insecurities felt by many participants and act in such a way as to support their athletes in their enjoyment of sport.”*  
**sports coach UK**



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## Body image

What signs or symptoms can you watch out for if you are worried that someone might have an eating disorder?

### Anorexia

Signs to notice can include continuing weight loss, distorted perception of body image and weight, changes in mood or emotions and compulsive excessive exercise. Those with purging forms of anorexia will often experience the signs of bulimia as well.

### Bulimia

Those with bulimia will likely be at or near their normal weight, but you might notice frequent dehydration and complaints of muscle cramps and weakness, bad breath or swollen salivary glands.

*"In my mind the only way I could keep my weight down was by making myself vomit. At first I was just very, very lean. I became skin and bone, but I weighed myself every morning, noon and night - in the evening if I was heavier, I'd get in the pool and swim."*

**David Coulthard**



### Binge eating disorder

Those with binge eating disorder might be overweight or obese, suffer from joint or mobility issues or shortness of breath and will be at increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

### Considerations within sport

Watch for any sudden weight loss, fainting or dizziness, and discuss any concerns with the student themselves and any expert practitioners. Focus on facts rather than assumptions, reflecting upon any health screening which may have been completed prior to joining.

Where weight restrictions apply, look at how you can support a student through access to a **sport dietitian and psychologist**, or work with the student to ensure they have time to achieve their goal weight - a slow steady weight loss through a small deficit in energy and a small increase in physical activity is the best and most sustainable method of weight loss.

### How appropriate is it to encourage sport for those with eating disorders?

While exercise is important for healthy living, it can become obsessive for those with eating disorders. It can be a form of perfectionism; another way for people to punish their bodies and control their feelings. Excessive exercise can be dangerous, with potential risks to the heart, bones, fertility and in the possibility of thoughts of suicide.

The information in this section was provided by **Anorexia & Bulimia Care (ABC)**.

For more information about supporting people with an eating disorder, visit their website or **Student Minds guidance** on understanding eating disorders.





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## 5 Good practice for club committees



Students leading university sport are ultimately responsible for leading the creation of a club and team environment where their peers feel included, valued and able to be honest about any mental health difficulties which they might be struggling with.

The next section shares a number of suggestions which club committees might consider as they seek to support their members throughout their time at university.



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## Good practice for club committees

Sports clubs can offer a sense of belonging and support to their members, and for a lot of students their main social group can be found on the pitch, in the pool or on the court.

Follow these tips to help promote a positive club culture that supports students' wellbeing:

### 1 Encourage supportive conversations about mental health

Mental health difficulties might not be immediately obvious, so be aware and take an interest in club members' wellbeing – establishing a committee member responsible for members' welfare can help with this. Set the standard for each other, listening and responding to the needs of others to ensure they feel valued, whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Take a look at the **Look After Your Mate guide** for guidance around boundaries and signposting.

### 2 Organise socials which are inclusive of all members

Social situations can be difficult at university, and students can often feel pressured to



comply with group behaviour. Whether students are experiencing mental health difficulties or not, social situations may sometimes feel difficult or exhausting, and additional social pressures can be isolating.

Social events can often focus on alcohol, but focusing on putting on alcohol-free social activities, using spaces in university buildings or mixing with other student clubs can give members the opportunity to meet new people and socialise in a safe space.



Be active in tackling anti-social behaviour and discrimination, and **Take a Stand**.

### 3 Include members in the club through injury periods

Missing training, competitions or fixtures through injury, demanding study or personal circumstances can lead to isolation. Keep members involved through social activities or coaching to make sure that they don't lose their support network, and maintain a sense of purpose through difficult times.



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## Good practice for club committees

### 4 Remove financial barriers to participation

The financial pressures of university can be a significant contributor to students' stress. **Reducing these concerns** by being transparent about membership costs, keeping social activities diverse and sharing information about hardship funds can reduce the extent to which students worry about money.

### 5 Plan a thorough and inclusive induction

Share plenty of information about the club online, through social media and at induction events, including committee members' details, the flexibility of students' involvement and what someone should bring to a first session.

Make sure to introduce appropriate individuals and explain how to contact them, providing information on what to expect and encourage existing members to talk to new members. Why not split the session up to give students the opportunity to ask questions in a less focused environment?



### 6 Prioritise the individual during competition periods

The adrenaline-fuelled nature of competitive sport is thrilling for some students, but can be distressing to others, especially those experiencing mental health difficulties. Discuss expectations; encourage; do not blame and keep any criticism constructive.

Following a period of high pressure and energy, or after losing a place on a team, a reduced intensity of training can see students feel lonely and without purpose. Focus on the wellbeing of club members and always offer available opportunities to get involved in other university sport and physical activity.



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## 6 Establishing accessible opportunities



*“People with mental health problems should have access to the same activities as anyone else. However, some people with mental health problems may benefit from the provision of sports projects specifically designed for them.”*

**Time to Change**



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## Establishing accessible programmes



**Regular participation in sport & physical activity has been shown to have benefits for students' mental health, but making sport programmes accessible can be difficult.**

There can be various barriers to participation, but **recognising these** and designing programmes to optimise access, ensures students can get involved and enjoy your university sport offer.

### 1 How do you support students during your session?

Consider how you can help students to set goals and self-monitor their achievements in order to successfully change their behaviour – pairing students with a buddy who has more experience with the sport can motivate them to support each other.

Are you co-ordinating with Student Services? Counselling or wellbeing services can refer students to sport projects and include this in their regular provision, or online signposting can allow students to self-refer. Take a look at some **university case studies** for ideas on how your university could implement this.

### 2 Are the programmes accessible to different groups of students?

Students are a diverse group with different experiences, needs or barriers to engaging with physical activity.

Language barriers may prevent **international students** from finding out details about sessions, and certain sports may have limited appeal due to cultural differences.

**Mature students or parents** may have added time commitments or childcare requirements, and are less likely to live in student accommodation or local to regular activities, whilst **postgraduate students'** study commitments may require sessions to take place in the evening.

**Students with disabilities** might have specific accessibility requirements and require specialist equipment to take part in sports. Take a look at **Time to Get Inclusive** for tips on how to adapt your club's activity for disabled students.

Students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (**LGBTQ+**) or are from **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)** backgrounds could experience discrimination in sport, though BUCS are working with universities across the country to tackle anti-social behaviour and discrimination through the **#TakeAStand campaign**.

Private changing facilities should be accessible for students who cannot, or would prefer not, to change in public for reasons including **body image, religion or gender identity**. Be aware of preferences students may have regarding unisex clothing and the gender pronouns they use. If in doubt ask.

**Gender** can play a part in how people talk about mental health and engage in physical activity. Universities across the country are working to get more female students active through the **#ThisBUCSGirlCan** campaign, with **Time to Change's Wolfpack campaign** a great example of how you can empower men to talk about their mental health.



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## Establishing accessible programmes



### 3 How well publicised is your activity?

Make sure your advertising details all the information students might require, including what kit or equipment might be needed, and level of ability required for the session. Consider the existing networks available to you to market your activity, such as department or university mailing lists, and incentivise students to recommend friends to increase access.

Remember that the word 'sport' can hold negative connotations for some students as well, so adapt your language where possible to ensure your activity is attractive to all potential members.

### 4 What financial support is available?

Charging a nominal fee can increase commitment, but seek to limit the cost required to take part wherever possible. Where the cost is higher, and you are seeking to support students' mental wellbeing, are there opportunities for **cross-departmental funding** with your Student Services department or any local organisation working to support young peoples' mental health?

### 5 How flexible is the schedule?

Look to maintain a regular schedule for sessions throughout the week to ensure repeated attendance, but offer a range of opportunities throughout the week to give students flexibility to fit around other commitments. Emphasise where sessions are open to students of any ability and seek to run taster sessions regularly throughout the academic year.

### 6 Have you thought about how you will evaluate the programme?

It is important to measure the impact of your referral programme on the mental wellbeing of the students that attend. Student Services or the Counselling Service may be able to help you by providing a Wellbeing Scale.

*"In other work, coaches might be assertive in their approach when dealing with poor attendance or poor performance - this is unlikely to be appropriate in mental health projects."*

**The Football Association**

Consider how you can follow Sport England's EAST framework:

- E Make it Easy**  
Tell me everything I need to know. Can it be adapted to make it easier for me to join in?
- A Make it Attractive**  
Is the marketing appealing and relevant to me? Do I trust the partners?
- S Make it Social**  
Encourage me to make a commitment to others. Is it delivered in a familiar space?
- T Make it Timely**  
Help me plan my actions, and prompt me when I'm most likely to be receptive. Please recognise that I might not turn up for a few weeks if I'm struggling.



# 7 Empowering staff and students with training

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*“Lack of awareness and general mental health literacy means that many people don’t feel confident in knowing what to do...*

*By learning to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health, you will increase your confidence in feeling able to approach, assess and assist someone who might be experiencing a mental health issue and encourage them to the support they need.”*

**MHFA England**



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## Empowering staff and students with training

The understanding of student mental health varies across Higher Education, with mental health awareness training enabling staff and students to build confidence in responding appropriately to mental health difficulties, supporting and signposting students as required.

Basic mental health training can help develop understanding of the best routes to support those experiencing mental health difficulties, how to signpost to appropriate support services and how to effectively challenge the stigma around mental health.

### Available training opportunities

In association with BUCS, Student Minds have developed a two-day course - **Mental Health in Sport** – to equip staff involved in HE sport with the knowledge, confidence and skills to make sport at their university inclusive for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

Find out more about **BUCS & Student Minds' Mental Health in Sport course**.



Staff are trained in **Mental Health First Aid**, and learn how to set up physical activity programmes with a focus on mental health as well as being trained to deliver a “Mental Health in Sport” workshop to student sports clubs.

Information about a range of additional mental health training courses is also available via the **Alliance for Student-Led Wellbeing**.

Engaging internal experts such as university counsellors and Student Services departments can raise the profile of student-facing services, but clarify expectations for student care so that staff and students understand the boundaries of their role, the most direct pathways to student support and emergency contacts for when more urgent support is required.

Peer networks within sports clubs can help to create a supportive culture, with **students more likely to speak to a friend about a mental health difficulty than a member of staff**, so involve student leaders in training delivery to enable students to relate to peer experiences and change negative attitudes towards mental health.

*“University can act as a boiling pot for factors affecting mental health. Our focus is to make committee members aware that their club members may be going through issues with their mental health, how they can spot these and how to approach and signpost to professional help.”*

**Lawrence Uttley,**  
Participation Sport Development Officer,  
Nottingham Trent University



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# 8 Taking a proactive approach to tackling stigma in student communities



*“We want to encourage people to discuss mental health and also to seek help and support when it is needed.”*

**Mental Health Charter for Sport & Recreation**



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# Taking a proactive approach to tackling stigma in student communities



**The stigma associated with having a mental health difficulty can be more debilitating than the difficulty itself, so having an understanding of what stigma is, how it is maintained, and how to reduce its effects is vital to changing attitudes towards mental health.**

## How should you talk about mental health?

How students **talk about mental health** within their club can have a big impact – talking openly about stress and the difficulties you are facing shows how welcoming and supportive the environment is to others, so that they are willing to talk through their own difficulties.

**Remember, we all have mental health**, so everyone has a responsibility to encourage changes in the stigma surrounding mental health. People with mental health difficulties should not be painted as victims, and language should reflect this.

People experience mental health difficulties rather than suffering them - with good wellbeing, people can thrive with mental health difficulties. **Make sure to talk about mental health as a continuum** rather than as a problem, disorder, illness or disease.

## Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation



**The Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation** sets out how sport can use its collective power to tackle mental health and the stigma that surrounds it. Sport organisations can sign the Charter to commit to take positive steps to address and

encourage people to be open about mental health difficulties.

Why not take a look at the national campaigns below to see how you can support students and staff in tackling mental health difficulties at your university?





# 9 University case studies

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Universities across the UK are leading the way in making sport more inclusive and accessible to young people experiencing mental health difficulties.

The next series of pages share some examples of best practice which you may be able to learn from. Why not look to implement similar activity at your university?



## Accessible programmes



### University of Birmingham Mental Health Badminton Project

The University Badminton Club have collaborated with Birmingham’s Mental Health Advisory Service since January 2015 to deliver an hour-long session to students once per week. The programme is open and advertised to anyone registered with the Advisory Service, with sessions attended by specialist mental health advisors to offer a safe, supportive atmosphere.

### Glasgow Caledonian University Active Lifestyles

**Glasgow Caledonian’s Active Lifestyles programme** emphasises the importance of being physically active for a healthy body and mind, reiterating the contributions of sport and physical activity for students’ mental wellbeing. With all activities free and requiring zero experience, the flexibility of the diverse programme ensures that students have an opportunity to drop in and out of sessions as they please.

### University of Gloucestershire Sport Buddy Programme

At Gloucestershire, students receiving counselling sessions through the university are referred to the UNiversal Sport programme, or can self-refer if they wish, before being assigned a ‘Sport Buddy’. Students discuss their motivations and goals with their buddy and then keep in touch across the academic year, meeting regularly. The volunteer buddies also provide feedback to the UNiversal Sport team and share best practice to support future students further.

### Nottingham Trent University Sport Access Scheme

Nottingham Trent offers students who have been referred by Student Support Services, the opportunity to apply to the university’s **Sport Access Scheme** which provides a choice of gym sessions of access to club sports. The student meets an instructor following their referral to

discuss any concerns and what they are looking to get out of the session, with the instructor provided with confidential information regarding the student’s support needs prior to this initial meeting.

The university also promotes mental health during exams by means of a series of challenges and exercises including free sports sessions and engaging with charity campaign events.

*“I’ve been to the group twice: it’s not been a lot but it has been when I’ve felt quite low. It’s been comforting to know that there is somewhere I can go and spend”*

**Participant from the University of Birmingham’s project**



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## Staff and student training



### Imperial College London

The sport committee training at Imperial College London includes the delivery of a **Mental Health in Sport workshop** to all incoming committee members. The university is also developing activities to reduce stress around exam times, as well as providing regular drop-in sessions for students who have concerns or questions about mental health.

### Nottingham Trent University

At NTU Sport, each club now has a Social and Wellbeing Officer who are required to attend a Mental Health in Sport workshop, with these sessions also available to all other committee members across the academic year. The focus is to give committee members the skills to identify when their peers are struggling with their mental health and to effectively signpost to professional help within the university's Wellbeing Department.

### Edge Hill University

In 2013, Edge Hill's Sport & Physical Activity Department became the first in the UK to offer its' students mental health training. Students are trained in **Mental Health First Aid** and **safeTALK** suicide awareness, collaborating with professional bodies on sport-based mental health projects including **Everton FC's Tackling the Blues** and Everton in the Community.

The training is funded by the Department, with students attending the course showing continuously improved NSS scores, improved student retention and engagement, and increased 6-month employability and graduate level outcomes.



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## Campaign activity



### University of Nottingham

**Welfare in Sport** launched in June 2015, the Welfare in Sport pledge is a commitment made by University of Nottingham sports clubs, following training about how they will improve welfare support within their clubs. The student-led Welfare in Sport committee supports clubs in delivering their pledges and in raising awareness of the campaign across the university community.

Clubs are encouraged to take ownership of the campaign and create something specific and beneficial to their members, with 55 sports clubs taking part in the initiative, including pledges to make their club more inclusive and introducing student welfare representatives onto their committees.

### University of York Staying on Track

The University of York kick-started their Staying on Track mental health awareness campaign with a PLAY week, focusing on helping students to get active and have fun outdoors. They hosted activities including Rave Aerobics, Yoga and Water Polo, encouraging students to get involved in physical activity in a relaxed atmosphere to improve their wellbeing alongside their fitness.

### BUCS – Take A Stand campaign

BUCS' #TakeAStand

campaign aims to make sport across the HE sector as inclusive and accessible as possible by tackling anti-social behaviour and discrimination within student sport.



Leading this campaign activity, BUCS has also established a **Mental Health network** to inform priorities across Higher Education and to share best practice across universities.

#### Top Tip:

Campaigning for change in the way mental health is viewed on campus can encourage positive attitudes towards mental health difficulties and reduce stigma:

- 1 Work from student opinions, so research attitudes across campus to guide your campaigning.
- 2 Collaborate with relevant services to ensure capacity management.
- 3 Deliver regular campaign activity across the academic year to optimise the level of action.



# 10 Summary of recommendations

student  
minds

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- CHALLENGES
- DIAGNOSES
- BODY IMAGE
- CLUB COMMITTEES
- ENSURING ACCESS
- TRAINING
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- CASE STUDIES
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So what can you do to ensure sport at your university is as inclusive and accessible as possible for students struggling with their mental health and wellbeing?



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### Check off these recommendations as you implement them at your university:

#### Body Image

- Ensure student-facing staff are aware of protocol for sensitively determining if students are experiencing an eating disorder and how to respond appropriately.
- Watch for any sudden weight loss, fainting or dizziness, and discuss any concerns with the student and available expert practitioners.
- Consider introducing a health questionnaire for all club members to screen for potential eating difficulties.
- Ensure staff and students coordinating sports with weight restrictions know how to safely set goal weights.

#### Good practice for club committees

- Set the standard for your peers and encourage supportive conversations about mental health.
- Organise social activities which are inclusive of all members, and include members in the club throughout periods of injury.
- Minimise students' concerns about the cost of taking part by seeking to **diversify your club's funding**.  
  
Welcome new members to your clubs by delivering a thorough and inclusive induction.
- If you don't have capacity to accommodate all students who want to get involved with your activity, make sure you signpost them to other available opportunities so that they still use sport and physical activity to support their mental wellbeing.

#### Establishing accessible programmes

- Support students during your club sessions by developing a buddy scheme in coordination with your Students' Union or the university's Student Services department.
- Emphasise where sessions are open to students of any ability and seek to run taster sessions regularly throughout the academic year.
- Make the schedule regular to ensure repeated attendance, but flexible with a range of opportunities throughout the week.
- Review session's attendance to evaluate the accessibility of your programme, making use of support from your Student Services department as required.

**Remember Sport England's EAST framework** make it easy, attractive, sociable and timely.



## Summary of recommendations



### Empowering staff and students with training

- Encourage staff to attend mental health awareness training and run sessions for student leaders at your university.
- Clarify the expectations for student care so that staff and students alike understand the boundaries of their role.

### Taking a proactive approach to tackling stigma in student communities

- Use positive mental health language - remember that we all have mental health. Speak to your Students' Union or your Sport Department about signing up your institution to the **Mental Health Charter for Sport**.

- Launch an awareness campaign about mental health awareness and support national campaigns such as **University Mental Health Day**.

### Educating yourself

- Consider attending **Student Minds' Mental Health in Sport training workshop** to learn more about how can sport can support students struggling with their mental health.
- Read up on how you can **look after your own mental health throughout your time at university**.

Find out more about the different forms of **mental health difficulties** which can affect people throughout their lives.

**Reach out to the experts.**

*“Every student who wishes to take part in sport at any level and in any capacity should be able to do so without fear of discrimination on any grounds and feel safe in any environment”*

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# Contacts

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## Student Minds

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## Further support

- Anorexia & Bulimia Care
- Anxiety UK
- Bipolar UK
- Mind
- Nightline
- OCD Action
- Papyrus - Prevention of Young Suicide
- Samaritans
- Students Against Depression
- Student Minds at your University
- Talk to Frank
- Access further support via **Student Minds**

**This guidance resource has been developed in partnership by Student Minds & British Universities & Colleges Sport, with support from a number of wider partners and member universities.**

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