

## College students leading fight against inactivity among young people

### Barriers to getting active

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Physical activity opportunities are not always easily accessible for college students who are not sporty. They face a variety of barriers, including academic commitments, time, money and location.

Some students are also less likely to have participated in sports due to factors such as gender, disability, ethnic background and social deprivation.

### Partnership

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In partnership with Sport Wales and Colegau Cymru, colleges have received funding (2014-17) to create new and innovative projects that break down some of the traditional barriers to participation in sport and physical activity for the 16-24 age groups.

With the support of college staff and organisations including Street Games, Tennis Wales, Disability Sport Wales and First Campus, student ambassadors are leading their peers into healthier lifestyles.

### Peer-led approach

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FE colleges provide education for around two-thirds of 16-19 year olds in Wales and have a ready-made workforce with over 3,000 students studying sport and coaching courses.

The partnership focuses on working with those students who are inactive or have limited opportunities to take part in health enhancing physical activity. It is pioneering peer-led interventions, with students leading their fellow students in getting more active.

Examples of college projects:

- **Enrichment programmes for students on campuses in rural and socially deprived areas**  
(The College Merthyr Tydfil, Coleg Sir Gâr, Coleg Cambria, Coleg Ceredigion, Coleg y Cymoedd)
- **Gym activity encouraging childcare students to get fitter and lead new activities in nurseries and early years education**  
(Coleg Gwent, Grŵp Llandrillo – Menai, St David’s Catholic College)

- **New sports and activity clubs for disabled students** and those with learning support needs (Gower College Swansea, NPTC Group, Pembrokeshire College)
- Introducing the US Girls programme to colleges working with **female students who are completely disengaged from exercise and sport** (Cardiff and Vale College, Bridgend College).

## New style sporting activities

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The range of activities on offer has moved away from the more traditional sports offer to shorter more dynamic options including Zumba, social running, ultimate frisbee, dodgeball and parkour to name a few.

Sporting opportunities still play a central role though, with modified games such as rush hockey, touch rugby, popup sports and 7 aside football for girls proving popular.

## The result

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The FE sports project has demonstrated that colleges provide an ideal environment to re-engage with young people who are currently inactive. Support from Sport Wales, colleges and over 30 partner organisations has developed a collaborative project that encourages students to lead their peers in healthier lifestyles.

In the first two years of the partnership over 4,000 non-sporty students will have tried a new activity, hopefully leading to a healthier lifestyle.

Supporting this is a sustainable workforce of student ambassadors, sports coaches, fitness instructors and ambassadors, hard at work in their colleges and the wider community. In 2016/17, FE students will have volunteered over 50,000 hours contributing more than £500,000 to the sporting economy.

## Next steps

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With over 50,000 young people in colleges and inactivity levels of 50% among some groups, particularly young women, there is still a mountain to climb. The challenge now is to identify more partners and additional resources to provide opportunities for all students to get active. Without this support, future generations will face significant health and social risks.

## Further Information

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