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Northumbria students set to benefit from new wellbeing initiative led by Matt Dawson

A new mental health and wellbeing programme funded by Student Living by Sodexo has just been launched at Northumbria University by Rugby World Cup winner and TV presenter Matt Dawson.

Sodexo health and wellbeing ambassador Matt Dawson will launch the NU Thinking initiative from Northumbria Sport on Wednesday 3 March.

There is a strong link between regular moderate physical activity and better mental health. The England Rugby legend will learn about the University's approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students and provide hints and tips.

The NU Thinking initiative received £6,000 from Sodexo as part of a 'whole wellbeing' approach combining fitness and mental health. Developed as a three-month programme, it will provide students at Northumbria with a bespoke support package.

Students who are registered with the Counselling and Mental Health Support team can be referred to the programme, giving them access to a Northumbria Sport fitness membership, personal training and nutritional advice sessions, as well as fortnightly meetings with the Sports Development Officer. This will allow students to discuss their progress in relation to agreed goals which have been tailored to their individual needs.

The donation will also contribute towards members of staff undergoing a mental health training course which will enhance the level of support they can provide students during the programme and the months following.

Rory Kavanagh, Vice President of Sport at Northumbria Students' Union commented: "Due to the pandemic, the mental health needs of our students have been heightened, and we know that exercise can have a really positive impact on mental health. The NU Thinking project has created a fantastic opportunity to have a positive impact on mental health by giving our students an opportunity to understand and experience the benefits of physical activity.

"The NU Thinking project complements what the Students' Union and the University already have available in terms of support. Therefore, I would like to thank Sodexo for their generous donation, and I am really looking forward to seeing Northumbria students getting involved and benefitting from the project!"

Sodexo provides food, catering, facilities management, property and technical services to many private and public sector organisations. They manage a number of Northumbria's halls of residence and have supported thousands of self-isolating students with food and essential provisions in recent months. Sodexo is focused on improving the student experience and

have awarded £11,000 to Northumbria this year to support initiatives such as NU Thinking and an initiative called NU Ideas aimed at helping student entrepreneurs develop business concepts.

Simon Knight, managing director, Sodexo schools and universities said:
“Supporting the health and well-being of staff and students is our priority. Supporting this initiative offers a great opportunity to positively impact the wellbeing of students and staff onsite.

“Matt Dawson is an ambassador for Sodexo, having him with us to launch this initiative will help us engage with the staff and students about the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle to their overall wellbeing.”

The NU Thinking project further enhances Northumbria’s commitment to supporting students and complements existing initiatives and multiple routes to support.

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