



Embedding Physical Activity into Student Life

Abby Sanderson, Wellbeing Manager

a.sanderson@imperial.ac.uk

Physical Activity & Sport Strategy



THE GOAL:

ENABLE & EMPOWER EVERY
MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY
TO DO

**150 MINUTES
OF EXERCISE PER WEEK**

In line with the recommendations of the
Chief Medical Officer (CMO)



Strategy Continued...



SO, WHAT NEXT?

HOW WE'LL DO IT

Empowering every member of our community to undertake 150 minutes of physical activity per week will require a holistic effort across multiple areas of work. Our work will be underpinned by our values of:

COLLABORATION | INNOVATION | INTEGRITY | EXCELLENCE | RESPECT

Here are the key objectives for how we'll do it:

- PHYSICAL WELLBEING** Positively impacting wellbeing by developing a comprehensive package of physical activity programmes.
- ACTIVE** Making an active lifestyle accessible, sustainable and rewarding for every member of our community.
- ACTIVE CURRICULUM** We aim that in all learning sessions students do not remain sedentary for more than 60 minutes.
- IMPERIAL ATHLETES** To deliver the best experience and foster lifelong memories for our student athletes and clubs.
- INFRASTRUCTURE** Developing spaces, services and equipment in line with the expectations of our community.

National Landscape



- Active Lives Survey (Nov 2023 – Nov 2024), adults aged 16+
- **63.7%** adults were **physically active** (0.3% increase on previous year)
- Of those who were active, 70% of 16 – 34-year-olds were active
- Men and women physical activity levels have both increased but **women are generally less active** than men
- Those with a **disability or long-term health condition** are **considerably less active** 48.5% compared to 68.9%
- There's a **positive association between physical activity & mental wellbeing** – some activity is good, more is better
- Individual development (employment opportunities) – increase with physical activity levels

Imperial Landscape



Physical activity

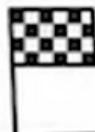
- 73% of students achieve 150 mins or more physical activity per week, increase of 8% from last year
- Barriers to getting active:
 - Time
 - Finances
 - Suitable facilities
 - Balancing being active alongside studies



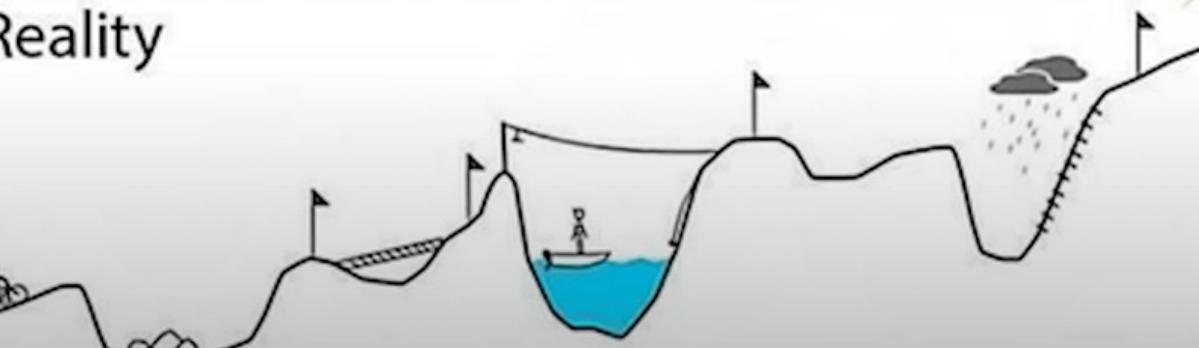
The Journey



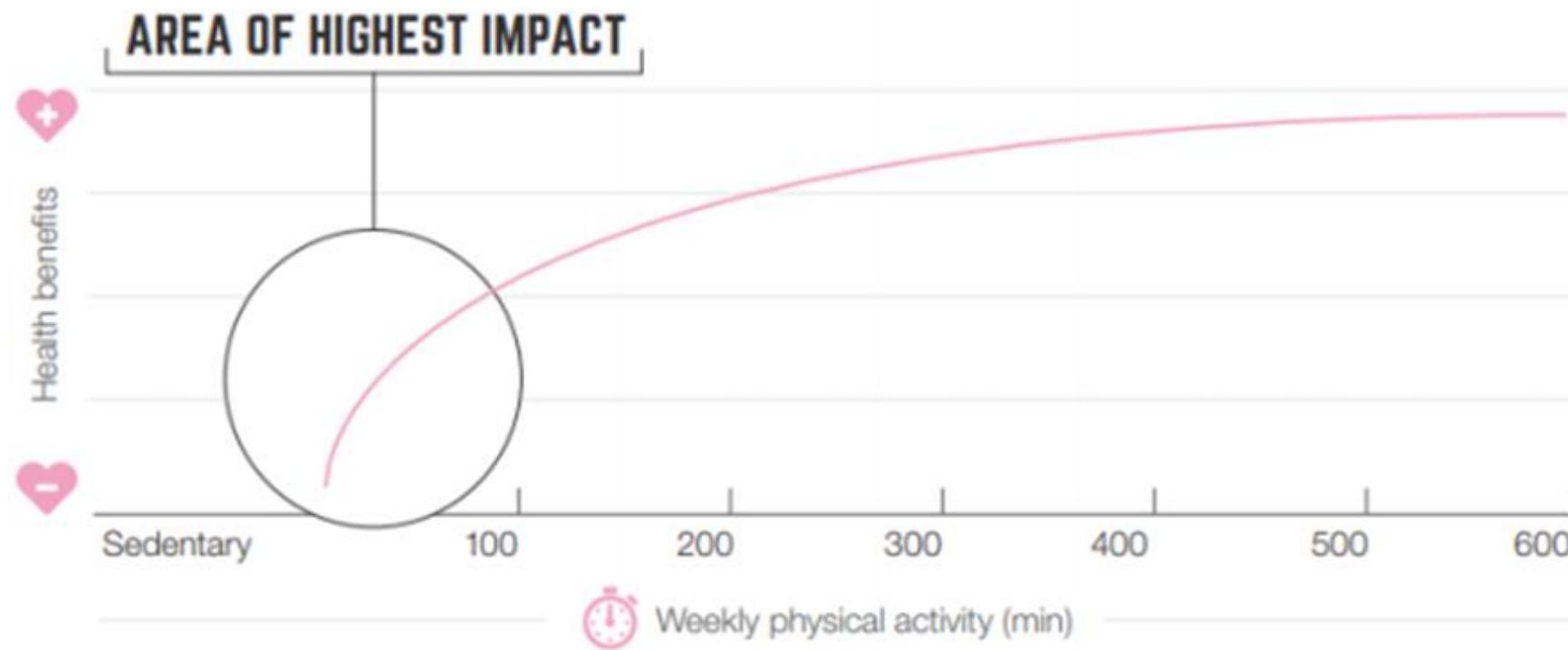
Your plan



Reality



Why does it matter?

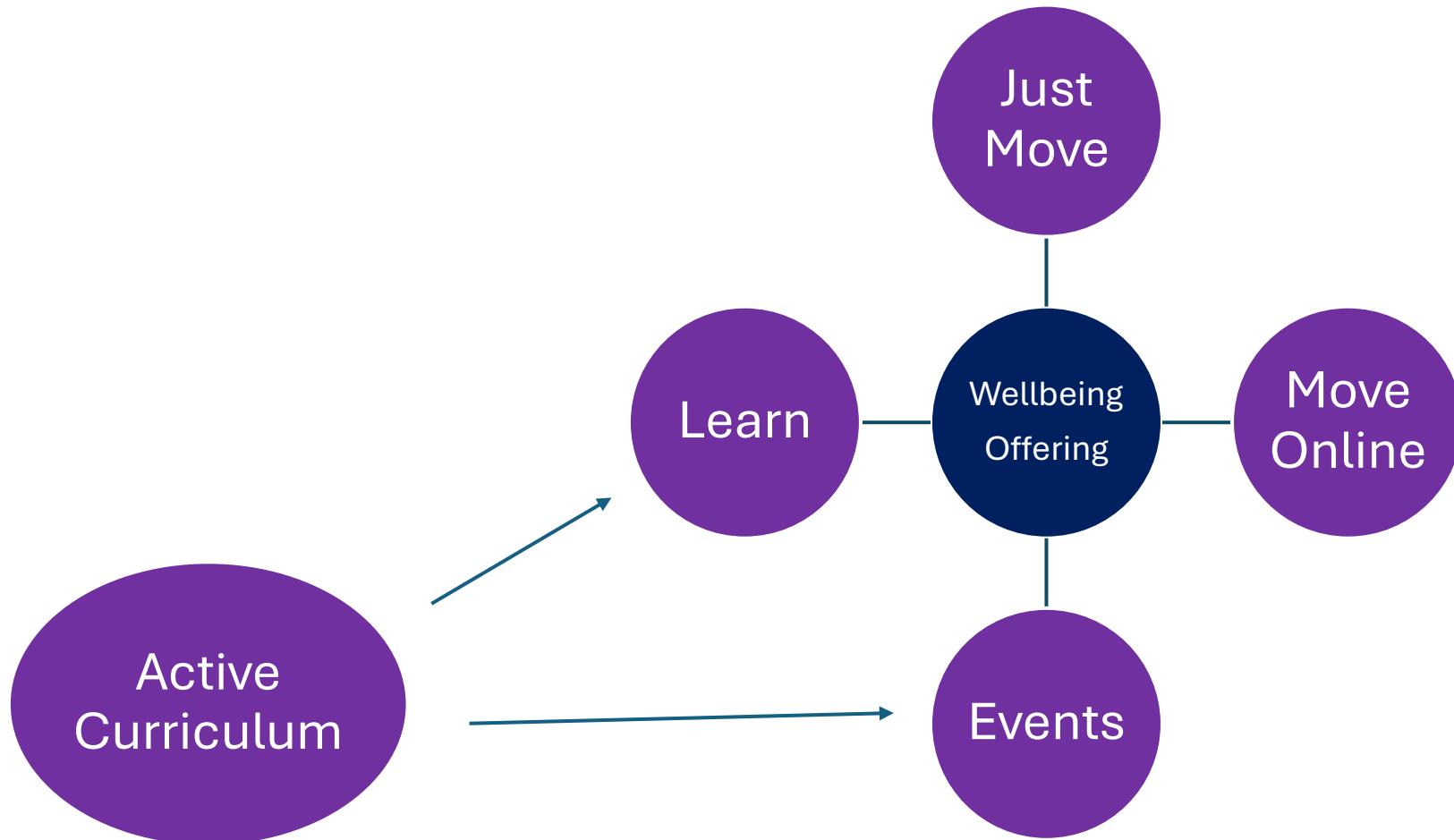


Why does it matter?

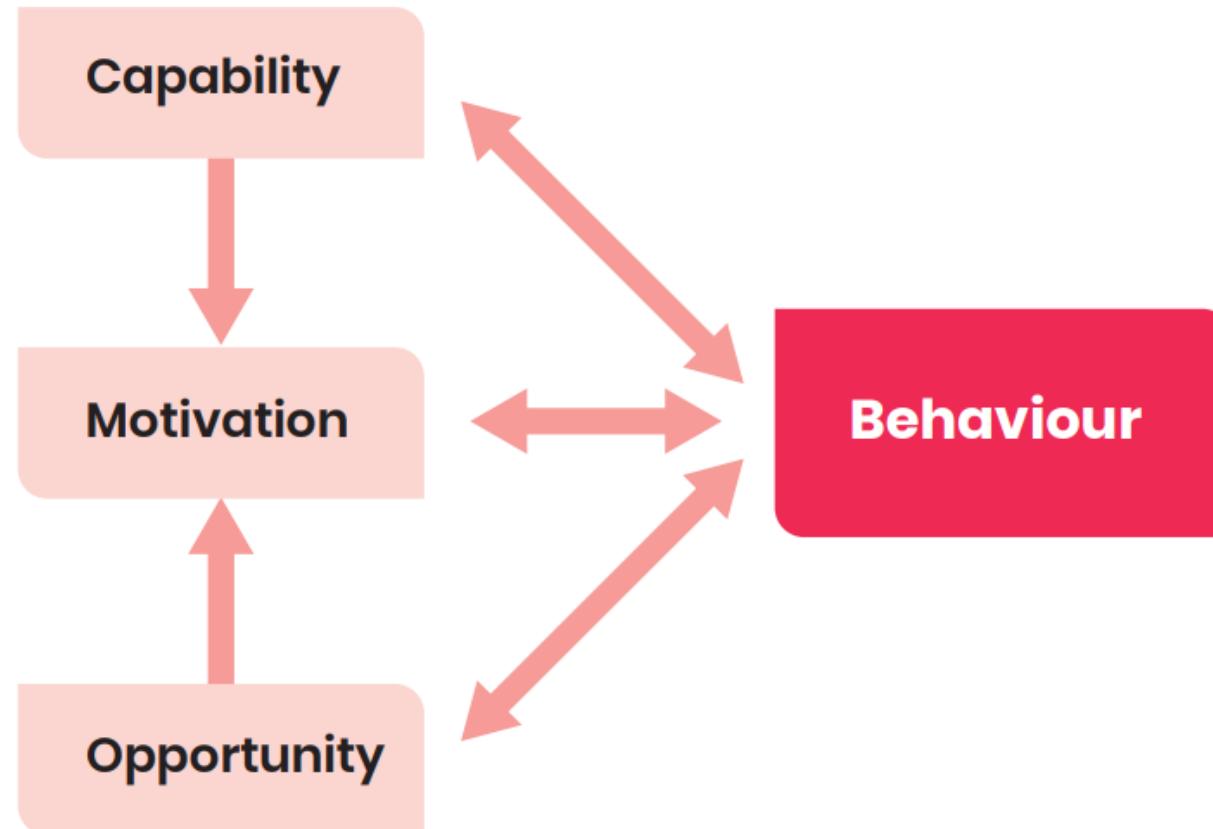


- Improves mental health – reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression (Schuch, Vancampfort, Firth et al., 2018)
- Improves mood and emotional wellbeing (Reed & Buck, 2009)
- Contributes to stress management (Salmon, 2001)
- Supports cognitive function, memory & attention (Erickson, Hillman & Kramer, 2015)
- Improved sleep quality (Kredlow, Capozzoli, Hearon et al., 2015).

Framework of Delivery



The COM-B Model



Strategies



Time	Finances	Balancing studies & activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drop-in sessions / shorter sessions• Spaces near students• No commitment• On-demand• Schedule around learning<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunchtime• Evening• Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free activities• On-campus sessions• Provide equipment• No strict clothing protocol• Freebies to get people moving & active• Work with departments to subsidise costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pop-up activities• On-demand services• Virtual challenges• Delivery spaces• Benefits of physical activity / reframing the message• Partnerships with dept / services• No commitment• Movement snacks – trial with student shapers

Targeted programmes / interventions



- Insight-led approach
- Move Her Way – female participation in sport & physical activity
- Widening Participation Residential
- Disability Advisory Service
- Pilot – Active Residencies
- Exam Season Campaign – Stress Less



Other Strategies



- Non-traditional spaces & activities
- Align with National Campaigns
- Social element
- Welcome week
- Student Activators – peer to peer engagement
- Partner with other wellbeing services across Imperial
- Link to educational benefits





Questions?

Contact us:

a.sanderson@imperial.ac.uk

References



Schuch, F. B., Vancampfort, D., Firth, J., et al. (2018). *Physical activity and incident depression: A meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies*. **American Journal of Psychiatry**, **175**(7), 631–648.

Reed, J., & Buck, S. (2009). *The effect of regular aerobic exercise on positive-activated affect: A meta-analysis*. **Psychology of Sport and Exercise**, **10**(6), 581–594.

Salmon, P. (2001). *Effects of physical exercise on anxiety, depression, and sensitivity to stress: A unifying theory*. **Clinical Psychology Review**, **21**(1), 33–61.

Erickson, K. I., Hillman, C. H., & Kramer, A. F. (2015). *Physical activity, brain, and cognition*. **Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences**, **4**, 27–32.

Kredlow, M. A., Capozzoli, M. C., Hearon, B. A., Calkins, A. W., & Otto, M. W. (2015). *The effects of physical activity on sleep: A meta-analytic review*. **Journal of Behavioral Medicine**, **38**(3), 427–449.

Sport England Active Lives Survey Results (2024) [Active Lives | Sport England](#)