

New research highlights effective education for sports coaches as key to healthier UK youngsters

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Childhood obesity is a serious public health problem predicted to affect two thirds of UK children by 2050. Physical inactivity is a leading contributor to the obesity epidemic, which researchers from the University of Birmingham are seeking to combat through effective coach education.

A European research project called Promoting Adolescent Physical Activity (PAPA) seeks to encourage physical activity by helping make youth sport more engaging, enabling and empowering. It is led by the University of Birmingham's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, in partnership with academics from the Universities of Bergen, Valencia, Thessaly, York St John, Université Joseph Fourier and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Project Director of the PAPA project, Professor Joan Duda, from the University of Birmingham's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, explained:

"The EU-wide PAPA project responds to the challenge of how to reduce childhood inactivity and related increasing obesity rates by trying to promote positive physical activity experiences for young people.

"Via the delivery of a theory and evidence based coach education programme, our goal is to create a sport environment that enhances children's emotional health, growth and development to sustain children's involvement in physical activities and to encourage them to adopt an active lifestyle."

PAPA's approach to deliver and evaluate the Empowering CoachingTM programme in the UK and across Europe will be one of the topics explored during a day of discussion and debate at the University of Birmingham. Academics, applied practitioners and health professionals will exchange ideas on how best to tackle the region's as well as country's growing childhood obesity epidemic during a one-day public conference.

Organised by five doctoral research students within the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the conference, 'Promoting healthy physical activity experiences for healthier kids' is taking place on Wednesday 29 June at the University of Birmingham. Professor Tim Barrett, Dr Peymane Adab, Dr Eleanor Quested and Dr Paul Appleton from the University will be presenting alongside experts from the University of Lincoln, Liverpool John Moores and Leeds Metropolitan Universities.

Themes which will be explored in presentations include: the health risks associated with childhood obesity, the impact of weight loss camps for obese children and the development of programmes to promote physical activity and healthy eating for school children. The day will conclude with a panel discussion involving key stakeholders from local authorities, the NHS, and the Youth Sport Trust that will be led by Professor Duda.

Event organiser, Samantha Bracey, Doctoral Researcher at the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences commented:

"The growing obesity epidemic in the UK has stimulated interest in getting – and keeping – kids moving. It is hoped that this event will stimulate new collaborations within the University and beyond, driving research forward, and informing policy and practice which will impact positively on children's future health and well-being."

Funded by the Roberts Fund in association with the University of Birmingham's Graduate School, the one-day conference, 'Promoting healthy physical activity experiences for healthier kids' is taking place at the University on Wednesday 29 June from 9.30am-6.00pm and is open to members of the public. Registration will cost £7 and refreshments and lunch will be provided. For more information, please contact Nathan Smith on nxs704@bham.ac.uk or 0121 415 8785. To register for the event, please visit the website: <http://www.sportex.bham.ac.uk/research/conferences/physical-activity/> (<http://www.sportex.bham.ac.uk/research/conferences/physical-activity/>).

Notes to Editors

For further media information, please contact Amy Cory, University of Birmingham Press Office, via tel: 0121 414 6029 or e-mail: a.cory@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:a.cory@bham.ac.uk>).

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