



## Media Release

## Sports psychiatrist's scores new role at Sunderland

ONE of the region's leading psychiatrists will be offering his expertise to the next generation of Sport and Exercise scientists at the University of Sunderland.

Dr Alan Currie is a consultant psychiatrist at Northumberland, Tyne and Wear (NTW) NHS Foundation Trust, one of the country's largest mental health and disability trusts, and also Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists group on Sports and Exercise Psychiatry.

As a result of his published work looking at how exercise and physical activity can be used to help with mental health problems, and collaborative working opportunities through NTW, Dr Currie has now become a visiting honorary professor at the University of Sunderland.

He will be using his experience and connections built up over many years to support the work already taking place in the University's Sports and Exercise Sciences department, as well as introducing new ideas and projects.

Dr Currie said: "I know I'll be working with staff whose expertise complements mine and who can deliver. It would be great to see the collaboration between the NHS and the University grow and flourish and we would all benefit from that."

He added: "We've already made a start and I've been working with some terrific people in the department. We've been looking at what makes it hard for those affected by more serious mental illnesses to get active.

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**The University of Sunderland** is innovative and accessible, with global influence and remarkable local impact. There are 20,000 students studying its programmes worldwide, it has three campuses; two in Sunderland on the North East coast and a third in London. Its life-changing impact is the result of global partnerships with learning institutions in 15 countries, world leading research, knowledge transfer partnerships with business and collaborations with private and public regional leaders.



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The whole area of ‘behavioural change’ is fascinating and there are some very experienced researchers here at the University. We’ve also just begun a huge survey of athlete mental health and again being able to work alongside excellent people makes me confident we’ll make great progress.”

Dr Paul Innerd, Clinical Exercise Physiologist and Lecturer in Exercise Physiology at the University of Sunderland, said: “Dr Currie’s appointment represents an exciting development for the Sport and Exercise Science’s team and fits perfectly with the direction in which the Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing is growing. Working closely with such a prominent clinician means we are now pushing the quality of our research in which are aiming to tackle major public health problems and to help support the NHS and its workforce”

Dr Currie has worked as an NHS consultant in several different roles over 20 years and his research interests began due to of his involvement in sport – recognising that many athletes often had problems and might not be getting the help they need.

“I wanted to understand this better and developed my own study during my psychiatric training,” explained Dr Currie. “This got me noticed as not many psychiatrists were working in the field and I was invited to advise sports organisations on mental health issues. I was also able to make links with international colleagues working on similar topics. In recent years my interests have expanded to look at how we can use exercise and physical activity to help people with mental health problems.”

In order to introduce Dr Currie and his body of work to the University community, he will be giving a lecture: **‘Sport, Exercise and Psychiatry – why exercising is good for your mental health but being an**

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***athlete isn't*** on 16<sup>th</sup> February, at 12.30 in Murray Library Lecture Theatre.

He explained: "I'd like to see exercise more fully included in mainstream clinical practice because it really does improve mental wellbeing. I'd also like the problems that athletes experience to be understood more fully and for the right sort of help to be available to them – just as it is when they tear a hamstring or rupture a ligament."

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### Notes to Editors

Dr Currie is highly active in the field of sports psychiatry. As well as being chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Sport and Exercise Psychiatry Group, he is a board member of the International Society for Sports Psychiatry. He has published and presented on topics such as mental illness and psychiatric treatment in athletes, eating disorders in sport and the rehabilitation of doping offenders. He has advised a number of national sports organisations including UK Athletics, UK Sport and the national institutes of sport in Scotland, England and Wales. He edited the 2016 handbook of Sports Psychiatry (OUP), edited and co-authored the UK Sport guidelines on eating disorders and has developed a range of mental health training materials for use in sport.

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