



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

Issued: Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016

---

### **Olympian backs hi-tech bid to promote healthy lifestyle in teens**

Olympic medallist Gemma Gibbons is backing an initiative that uses smartphone technology to encourage healthier lifestyles among teenagers.

Gemma, who won silver in judo at the 2012 London Games, met high school pupils who are trialling a personalised system designed to improve knowledge and promote healthy behaviour. It is hoped the technology can play a key role in helping to prevent obesity.

Gemma - currently completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the University of Edinburgh - was at Armadale Academy in West Lothian to mark the mid-term of a six-month trial.

Fifty young people in Scotland, aged 13 to 16, have volunteered to test the PEGASO system - Personalised Guidance Services for Optimising lifestyle. It includes six apps that enable users to monitor their diet, physical activity and sleep .

The system, which is also being tested in Italy, Spain and England, includes interactive games, guidance, and personalised feedback on health behaviour. A key element of the platform is its co-design, where software engineers used input from teenagers to develop PEGASO.

Once complete, pupils will feed back their experience of PEGASO, and log any changes in their health behaviour. Their results will be compared with those of another group of teens who have not used the system. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute, Edinburgh Napier University and NHS Lothian will analyse users' data.

Gemma, who hopes to become a physical education teacher on completion of her course, said: "I am really pleased to be able to support this exciting initiative, which is all about promoting health and fitness in a way that is easy to use and relevant."

The project's research fellow Dr Anne Martin, from the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute, said: "Gemma is such an inspirational role model and it's great to have her support. The pupils really enjoyed her visit."

The research team hopes to feed the results of this pilot project into a much larger study that will assess whether PEGASO can lead to better health outcomes for teenagers.

A video featuring interviews with Anne Martin and Gemma Gibbons can be accessed here (Password: Gemma):

<https://datasync.ed.ac.uk/index.php/s/KriEhEXXnUI3MnF>

---

*Ranked among the top universities in the world*



---

*Ranked among the top universities in the world*