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University of Hertfordshire looking for tomorrow's sporting champions

Teenagers with the potential to represent England or Great Britain in their sport have the chance to receive free specialist support from the University of Hertfordshire to help them reach the top.

Young people selected for the Hertfordshire Talented Athlete Programme (HTAP) will have a personal strength and conditioning programme designed and delivered by elite coaches from the English Institute of Sport.

They will also have access to physiotherapy if they require it and receive professional advice on nutrition and lifestyle to help them become top-performing athletes.

A year-long free membership to the £15 million Hertfordshire Sports Village, which hosts the HTAP and is based at the university's de Havilland campus in Hatfield, is also included in the package.

Equestrian athlete Claire Gallimore (16) from St Albans who recently won a silver medal in the under 16 age group at the Addington International and has been a HTAP athlete for three years says: "The scheme has benefited my performance in so many aspects. I have learnt how to balance my demanding sports commitments with my school work which has benefited me enormously."

Young pole vaulter Daniel Gardner (15) from Stevenage believes the scheme helped him win the Under 17 National Indoor Championship title this year. He says: "As a pole vaulter it is vital for me to be both mentally and physically strong."

“The HTAP has helped in both areas – providing specialised conditioning sessions as well as sports psychology, which helped me greatly in the run up to winning the national title.”

Applications to be selected for the 2010 to 2011 HTAP programme - which launches during the school summer holidays - opens on May 4 until June 4.

Teenagers interested in applying must live in Hertfordshire, be aged between 13 to 18 and either already have represented England or Great Britain in their sport or be part of a national development squad. Youngsters who have attended a national potential talent training camp in the last twelve months are also eligible to apply.

The HTAP has helped 43 athletes since it began four years ago, 11 of whom have gone on to gain higher levels of support through their sport's governing bodies or through government-funded Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme.

The initiative is sponsored by the University of Hertfordshire, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Hertfordshire County Council.

For more information on how to apply go to www.hertssportsvillage.co.uk/hertstalentedathletes