



THE GRASSROOTS SPORTS NUTRITION REPORT 2026

UNDERSTANDING NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE,
ACCESS AND SUPPORT ACROSS
GRASSROOTS SPORT IN THE UK



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1. A GROWING OPPORTUNITY FOR GRASSROOTS SPORT



The research reveals a clear disconnect between growing recognition of sports nutrition and access to qualified expertise.

Every week, an estimated 150,000 grassroots sports clubs across the UK help people of all ages train, compete and stay active. As the foundation of sporting participation across the country, grassroots sports clubs create opportunities for millions of people to enjoy sport within their local communities. However, while awareness of the role nutrition can play in supporting athlete health, recovery and performance continues to grow, access to expert sports nutrition support has not kept pace.

Recognising the importance of grassroots sport, the UK Government has committed more than £900 million to support major sporting events and community sport, alongside longer-term investment in local facilities.¹

As participation continues to grow, so too does the opportunity to support athletes beyond training and competition. Nutrition plays an important role in supporting exercise performance, recovery, and overall health and wellbeing, with evidence-based nutrition strategies widely recognised as an integral part of athlete support.^{2,3}

While expert nutrition support has become increasingly embedded within elite sport, far less is known about how nutrition support is accessed, experienced and prioritised within grassroots sport.

To improve understanding of sports nutrition provision within grassroots sport, GetPRO Professional commissioned two nationally representative surveys, conducted by Opinion Matters, involving a combined total of 2,000 adults across the UK.

One survey explored the views of coaches, early career sports nutritionists and others working within or closely involved in grassroots sports clubs, while the second captured the experiences of people participating in grassroots sport, including amateur athletes, players and parents. Together, the findings provide valuable insight into both the provision of sports nutrition support and the experiences of those it is intended to support.⁴

Recognising the importance of grassroots sport, the UK Government has committed more than £900 million to support major sporting events and community sport, alongside longer-term investment in local facilities.¹

This report brings together the findings from both surveys alongside wider context to examine the current state of sports nutrition within grassroots sport across the UK. By exploring the challenges, opportunities and priorities identified by those closest to grassroots sport, it aims to support informed discussion around how evidence-based nutrition can become more accessible to athletes, clubs, parents and sports nutritionists alike.

The research reveals a clear disconnect between growing recognition of sports nutrition and access to qualified expertise. Nearly four in five respondents (77%) do not turn to a qualified sports nutritionist for sports nutrition advice, while more than half of grassroots clubs (51%) report having no access to a sports nutritionist. Reflecting that disconnect, 85% of respondents believe there remains a significant gap between elite and grassroots sport when it comes to nutrition knowledge and support. Combined, the findings indicate that while sports nutrition advice is widely available, access to trusted, evidence-based support from qualified sports nutritionists remains limited.

The barriers identified are both practical and persistent. Nearly half of respondents (47%) identified limited budgets as a key barrier to accessing sports nutrition support, while others pointed to a lack of club investment (30%), gaps in education and awareness (30%), limited access to qualified sports nutritionists (29%) and the perception that nutrition is not always seen as a priority (28%).⁴ Together, these findings suggest improving access is about more than funding alone.

Encouragingly, the findings point towards a clear way forward. Respondents consistently identified a need for practical, evidence-based nutrition guidance, particularly around fuelling for performance, hydration, recovery nutrition and healthy eating. Together with growing recognition of the value that qualified sports nutritionists can bring, these findings reinforce the case for strengthening access to trusted nutrition support within grassroots sport.

Rob Browne

Robert Browne
Danone North Europe's Senior
Science Communications Manager

2. ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

- >

Commissioned by GetPRO Professional
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Two nationally representative UK surveys
- >

2,000 respondents

>

1,000 working within grassroots sport

> 1,000 participating in grassroots sport
- >

Fieldwork: 23–30 June 2026
- >

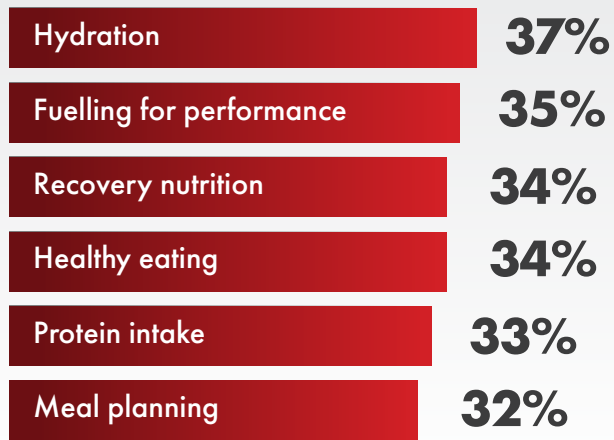
Conducted by Opinion Matters

KEY FINDINGS



Nearly four in five respondents (77%) do not turn to a qualified sports nutritionist for sports nutrition advice.⁴

TOP PRIORITIES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT



The evidence has never been stronger. Awareness has never been greater. So why does access to trusted, evidence-based support remain out of reach for so many clubs?

The findings present a striking contradiction. Sports nutrition is now an established part of athlete support, underpinned by a growing body of evidence demonstrating its role in health, training adaptation, recovery and performance.^{2,3} Yet while nutrition advice has never been more accessible, access to dedicated support from qualified sports nutritionists has not kept pace.

More than half of grassroots clubs (51%) report having no access to a sports nutritionist. This is far from an isolated finding. Almost nine in ten respondents working within grassroots sport (86%) believe dedicated nutrition support is limited, while a similarly high proportion (85%) say there remains a significant gap between elite and grassroots sport when it comes to nutrition knowledge and support. More than one in three (37%) describe that gap as very significant.⁴



The wider findings help explain why this matters. More than half of respondents (51%) were unsure of the recommended daily protein intake, suggesting there may be important gaps in understanding of some of the fundamental principles of sports nutrition.⁴ In an environment where many people turn to social media and online sources for advice, the ability to access trusted, evidence-based guidance from qualified sports nutritionists becomes increasingly important. Their role extends beyond sharing information, helping to interpret the science and translate it into practical, achievable advice that reflects the realities of grassroots sport.



Viewed together, these figures highlight an important reality. Grassroots sport is no longer questioning the value of sports nutrition. Instead, there is a growing expectation that nutrition should form part of athlete support, without the corresponding access to specialist expertise needed to deliver it. Awareness has progressed more quickly than access, creating a gap between what clubs increasingly want to provide and what many are currently able to offer.

The research reinforces that picture elsewhere. Nearly half of respondents (47%) identified cost and budget constraints as a key barrier to accessing sports nutrition support. More than a third (34%) identified gaps in education as a barrier to implementing effective nutrition practices within grassroots sport, while almost three in ten (29%) highlighted limited access to qualified sports nutritionists. Others pointed to a lack of club investment (30%) and the perception that nutrition is not always seen as a priority (28%).⁴

Respondents were equally consistent about where greater support is needed, highlighting hydration, fuelling for performance, recovery nutrition and healthy eating as the highest priorities.⁴ The challenge is no longer convincing grassroots sport that nutrition matters. It is ensuring clubs, coaches and participants can access trusted, evidence-based support from qualified sports nutritionists, enabling them to turn knowledge into practical action.

Understanding why access remains limited is the next step. By exploring the barriers identified by respondents, the findings begin to explain where the greatest challenges lie and where meaningful opportunities for improvement may exist.



3. CLOSING THE GAP

If the headline findings tell us that a gap exists, the next question is why. The answer is not a single issue. Rather, respondents described a combination of financial, practical and educational factors that continue to limit access to sports nutrition support across grassroots sport.⁴

Cost and budget constraints emerged as the most frequently cited barrier, identified by almost half (47%) of respondents working within grassroots sport.⁴ That finding is unsurprising, since grassroots clubs operate in an environment where every investment must be carefully balanced against competing priorities, including facilities, equipment, coaching, travel and participation. Within that context, nutrition support is often recognised as valuable, yet difficult to prioritise when resources are limited.

Limited access to qualified sports nutritionists was identified by 29% of respondents, while 30% cited gaps in education and awareness as a barrier to accessing sports nutrition support.⁴ The findings suggest the issue extends beyond funding alone, with grassroots clubs looking for greater access to trusted expertise and practical guidance that reflects the realities of community sport.

Alongside the challenges, the research also identifies a clear opportunity. While clubs describe limited access to sports nutrition professionals, strengthening connections between grassroots clubs and qualified sports nutritionists has the potential to increase access to evidence-based support while creating valuable practical experience for sports nutritionists within community settings. There is clear scope to bring together two groups whose needs naturally complement one another.

Importantly, the research highlighted that many grassroots athletes are seeking support on the foundations of sports nutrition. Hydration, fuelling for performance, recovery nutrition and healthy eating were identified as the areas where greater support would be most valuable.⁴ That distinction matters because it suggests many grassroots athletes do not currently have access to practical, achievable guidance on the foundations of sports nutrition from a trusted sports nutrition expert.

The barriers facing grassroots sport are real, but they are not insurmountable.

Clubs recognise the value of sports nutrition and are clear about the support they need. The next question is where athletes, coaches and clubs currently turn for nutrition advice, and whether those sources provide practical, evidence-based guidance they can apply with confidence.

4. BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH BETTER SUPPORT

Where dedicated nutrition support is limited, access to trusted, evidence-based advice becomes increasingly important. The findings point to a demand for practical guidance that can be applied confidently within the realities of grassroots sport, with survey respondents consistently identifying hydration, fuelling for performance, recovery nutrition, healthy eating, protein intake and meal planning as the areas where additional support would be welcomed.⁴

The research also highlights why this support matters. More than half of respondents (51%) were unsure of the recommended daily protein intake, suggesting there may be important gaps in understanding of some of the fundamental principles of sports nutrition.⁴ In addition, more than a third (34%) identified gaps in education as a barrier to implementing effective nutrition practices within grassroots sport.⁴ Together, these findings reinforce the need for practical, evidence-based guidance from qualified sports nutrition professionals to help athletes, parents, coaches and clubs make informed nutrition decisions with confidence.

That emphasis on practical support is significant. For many grassroots athletes, nutrition decisions are made alongside work, education and family commitments, while coaches and volunteers often support athletes without specialist nutrition training. Although sports nutrition advice has never been more accessible through online resources and social media, the volume of information can make it difficult to distinguish credible, evidence-based guidance from conflicting messages. This reinforces the need for qualified sports nutrition professionals to translate sports nutrition and exercise science into practical, accessible advice that reflects the realities of community sport.

Qualified sports nutritionists have an important role to play in bridging that gap, helping athletes, parents and clubs interpret nutrition information with confidence and translate evidence into practical, everyday decisions. Their influence also extends beyond individual consultations. By supporting coaches, volunteers and others working within grassroots clubs with trusted education and resources, they have the potential to strengthen nutrition knowledge across entire clubs and encourage a wider culture of evidence-based practice.

THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR

Grassroots sport is not asking for more information. Grassroots athletes, coaches and clubs are looking for information that is credible, practical and relevant to everyday training and competition. Strengthening access to trusted, evidence-based support has the potential to build confidence, encourage better decision-making and make sports nutrition part of everyday sporting practice.



5. WHERE SUPPORT MATTERS MOST

The priorities identified tell their own story. Grassroots sport is not asking for highly specialised interventions or strategies developed exclusively for elite athletes. Instead, respondents consistently highlighted the fundamentals of sports nutrition, suggesting a need for greater support around the areas likely to make the greatest difference in everyday training and competition.⁴

That distinction is important, with survey respondents looking for guidance that can be applied within everyday grassroots sport and does not feel out of reach outside elite performance environments. Practical, evidence-based nutrition support has the potential to build confidence, encourage consistent behaviours and help athletes develop sustainable healthy habits over time.

Understanding the barriers to sports nutrition support is only one side of the story.

The research also highlights the nutrition topics respondents believe deserve the greatest attention. While individual clubs inevitably face different challenges, there was remarkable consistency in the priorities identified, suggesting grassroots sport has a clear understanding of where practical guidance is needed most.⁴

Hydration emerged as the highest priority, identified by 37% of respondents, closely followed by fuelling for performance (35%), recovery nutrition (34%), healthy eating (34%), protein intake (33%) and meal planning (32%).⁴



Practical, evidence-based nutrition support has the potential to build confidence, encourage consistent behaviours and help athletes develop sustainable healthy habits over time.

Healthy eating

34%

Protein intake

33%

Meal planning

32%



For sports nutritionists, the findings present an equally significant opportunity.

Grassroots clubs are actively identifying areas where specialist expertise could add value, creating opportunities for sports nutritionists to support athletes while developing experience within community sport. Strengthening those connections has the potential to benefit both grassroots clubs and the wider profession.

Hydration

37%

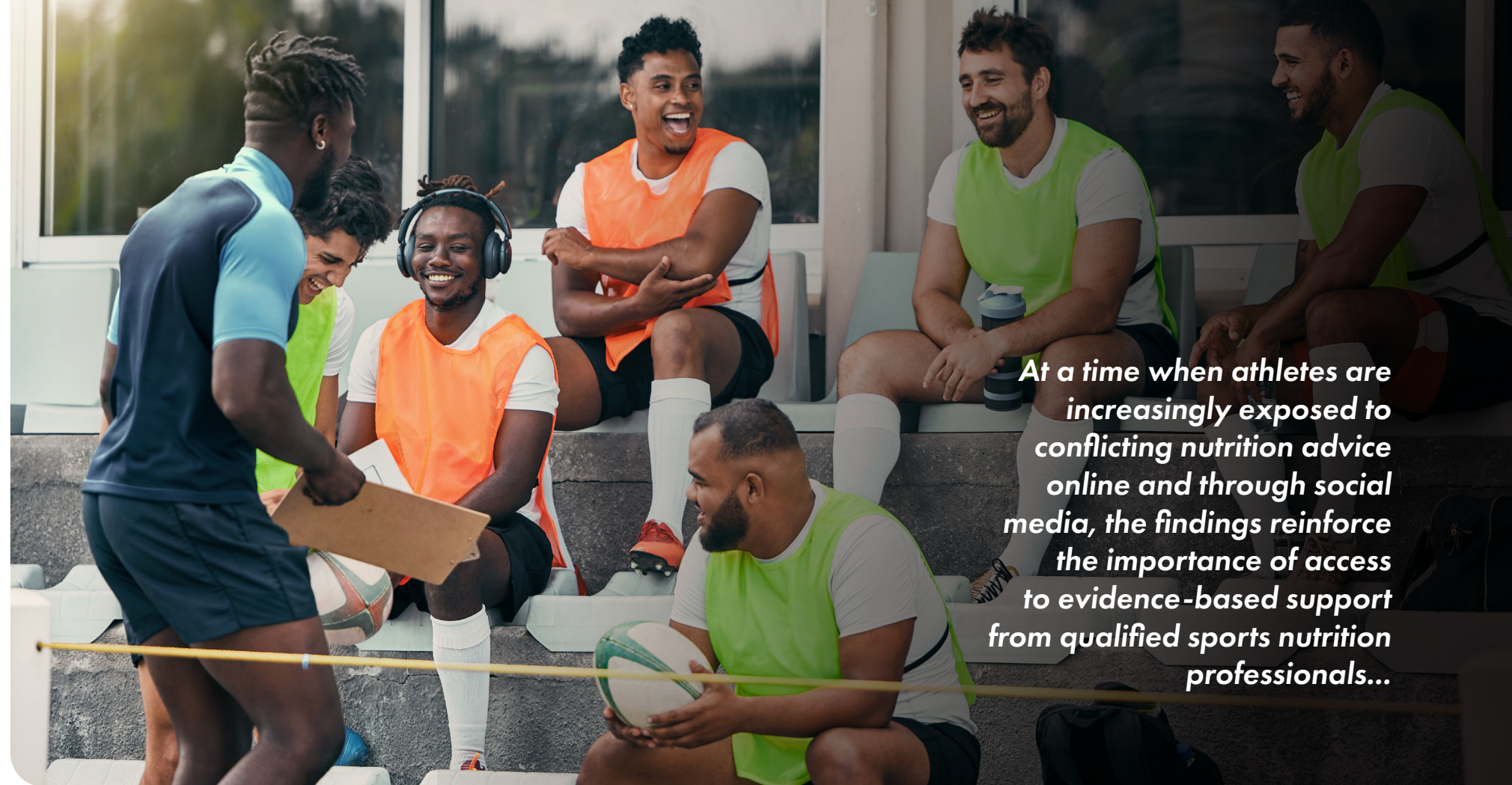
Fuelling for performance

35%

Recovery nutrition

34%

6. FIVE THINGS THE RESEARCH TELLS US



At a time when athletes are increasingly exposed to conflicting nutrition advice online and through social media, the findings reinforce the importance of access to evidence-based support from qualified sports nutrition professionals...

Looking across the findings as a whole, five clear themes emerge. Together, they provide a picture of where grassroots sport is today and where the greatest opportunities lie.



1 ACCESS TO QUALIFIED EXPERTISE REMAINS LIMITED

More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) do not turn to a qualified sports nutritionist for sports nutrition advice.⁴ The findings suggest that while nutrition advice is readily available, access to trusted, evidence-based guidance from qualified professionals remains limited. As more clubs recognise the role of nutrition in sport, ensuring they can access practical, evidence-based support will be key to strengthening nutrition practices across grassroots sport.

2 THE PRIORITIES ARE CLEAR

The priorities identified by respondents were strikingly consistent. Rather than asking for highly specialised interventions, respondents consistently prioritised the fundamentals of sports nutrition. The findings suggest the priority is to help athletes and clubs master the basics of sports nutrition, often the areas that can make the biggest difference.⁴

3 WHAT THE BARRIERS REVEAL

Cost and budget constraints, limited access to qualified sports nutritionists and gaps in education emerged as the most commonly identified barriers.⁴ These challenges are real, but they are also tangible. They point towards opportunities to strengthen connections, improve access to expertise and make evidence-based guidance more readily available within community sport.

4 PRACTICAL SUPPORT MATTERS MOST

Respondents consistently prioritised practical guidance around hydration, fuelling for performance, recovery nutrition and healthy eating, rather than highly specialised interventions designed for elite athletes.⁴ At a time when athletes are increasingly exposed to conflicting nutrition advice online and through social media, the findings reinforce the importance of access to evidence-based support from qualified sports nutrition professionals who can translate the science into practical, achievable advice for everyday training and competition.

5 THE BENEFITS EXTEND BEYOND ATHLETES

Improving access to sports nutrition support has the potential to benefit far more than individual competitors. It can help strengthen knowledge across entire clubs, support coaches and volunteers who are often the first source of advice and create valuable opportunities for sports nutritionists to develop their practical experience within community sport.

7. TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

**Every piece of research
raises an important question:
what happens next?**

*The GetPRO Professional Grassroots Grant
has been developed to help bridge that gap.*

By supporting qualified and early career sports nutritionists to work directly with grassroots clubs, the programme aims to increase access to trusted, evidence-based sports nutrition guidance while creating meaningful opportunities for nutritionists to gain practical experience within grassroots and community sport.

The grant has been designed with the realities of grassroots sport in mind. Rather than attempting to replicate elite performance environments, it recognises that meaningful change often begins at a local level, where relatively small interventions can have a lasting impact. Whether supporting educational workshops, working alongside coaches, delivering athlete consultations or developing club-based nutrition initiatives, successful projects will be those that respond to the needs of individual clubs and the communities they serve.

The research findings reinforce why this approach matters. Respondents consistently highlighted the need for greater access to qualified sports nutritionists, practical nutrition guidance and education that reflects the realities of grassroots sport.⁴ The grant represents an opportunity to respond directly to those priorities, strengthening connections between qualified sports nutrition professionals and grassroots clubs while helping translate evidence into practical, accessible guidance that supports everyday training and competition.

The value of the GetPRO Professional Grassroots Grant extends beyond the individual projects it supports. By creating opportunities for qualified sports nutritionists and clubs to work together, it has the potential to strengthen nutrition knowledge, build confidence and embed trusted, evidence-based sports nutrition more widely across grassroots sport.



**FIND OUT
MORE**

Click here or scan the
QR code to find out
more about the grant
and how to apply.

In this case, the findings point towards a clear opportunity. Grassroots clubs increasingly recognise the value of sports nutrition, while the research highlights clear demand for practical guidance and greater access to expert nutrition support. The challenge now is ensuring trusted, evidence-based support from qualified sports nutritionists reaches the clubs and communities that stand to benefit most.

8. THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

The challenge is ensuring greater access to qualified sports nutritionists who can provide trusted, evidence-based guidance and translate nutrition science into practical advice for grassroots sport.

The opportunity now is not simply to increase access to sports nutrition advice, but to strengthen access to qualified sports nutritionists who can translate evidence into practical, evidence-based guidance for grassroots clubs, athletes, coaches and parents.

Initiatives such as the GetPRO Professional Grassroots Grant provide one practical way of responding to those findings. By connecting qualified and early career sports nutritionists with grassroots clubs, the programme aims to increase access to trusted, evidence-based nutrition support while creating valuable opportunities for sports nutritionists to develop their experience within community sport.

Importantly, the impact extends beyond individual projects. Every successful collaboration has the potential to strengthen nutrition knowledge within clubs, build confidence among athletes, coaches and parents, and demonstrate the value of trusted, evidence-based sports nutrition in community settings. Over time, those individual partnerships can contribute to something much bigger: a stronger culture of nutrition support across grassroots sport.

The findings presented throughout this report paint an encouraging picture. Grassroots sport increasingly recognises the value of nutrition and actively seeks advice to support health and performance.

Perhaps the clearest message to emerge from this research is that the foundations are already in place. Grassroots clubs recognise the value of sports nutrition, the priorities for support are clear, and the opportunity to improve access to trusted, evidence-based support is well understood.

The next step is turning that understanding into action. Sports nutrition advice is widely available, but access to trusted, evidence-based support from qualified sports nutritionists remains limited. By strengthening the connections between grassroots clubs and qualified sports nutritionists, there is a real opportunity to help more athletes, coaches and parents access practical, evidence-based guidance while enabling sports nutritionists to develop valuable experience within community sport.

**Every successful
collaboration has the
potential to strengthen nutrition
knowledge within clubs...**



FIND OUT MORE

The GetPRO Professional Grassroots Grant, hosted in partnership with the Nutrition Society, supports qualified and early career sports nutritionists to deliver evidence-based nutrition initiatives within grassroots sport across the UK.

Whether you're leading your first community project or building on existing experience, the programme offers an opportunity to work directly with grassroots clubs while developing your professional, applied practice.



APPLICATION FORM

Click here or scan the QR code to download the application form.

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