

Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

Greater Manchester: 2025–2028

CREATED BY

Sport and Physical Activity Sector
Local Skills Accountability Board –
Greater Manchester



Contents

Photo credits:

CIMSPA would like to thank GM Moving, Dream Big Sports Ltd, StreetGames UK, GM Active CIC and Swim England for their support in sourcing photographs for this skills plan.

Introduction

The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Greater Manchester

About the board

Chair: Jon Keating, Head of Business Operations and Company Secretary, GM Active CIC

Vice Chair: Dr Eoin Murray, Head of Sport, University Academy 92 (UA92)

Board member organisations

- Bury College
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Dream Big Sports
- England Netball
- GM Active
- GM Moving
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Health Fitness Academy Ltd
- School of Play
- Sportivity Consultants
- StreetGames UK
- Swim England
- The Gym Group
- University Academy 92 (UA92)
- Wigan & Leigh College
- Wigan Warriors in partnership with Competence Development Academy
- Your Trust

Funding and support

Our local skills work to engage with employability-focused organisations and build a representative sport and physical activity sector workforce is funded and supported by Sport England and the National Lottery.



Get involved

To learn more about this local skills plan or the work of your local skills accountability board please contact CIMSPA who will link you with their workforce development manager for Greater Manchester.

partners@cimspa.co.uk

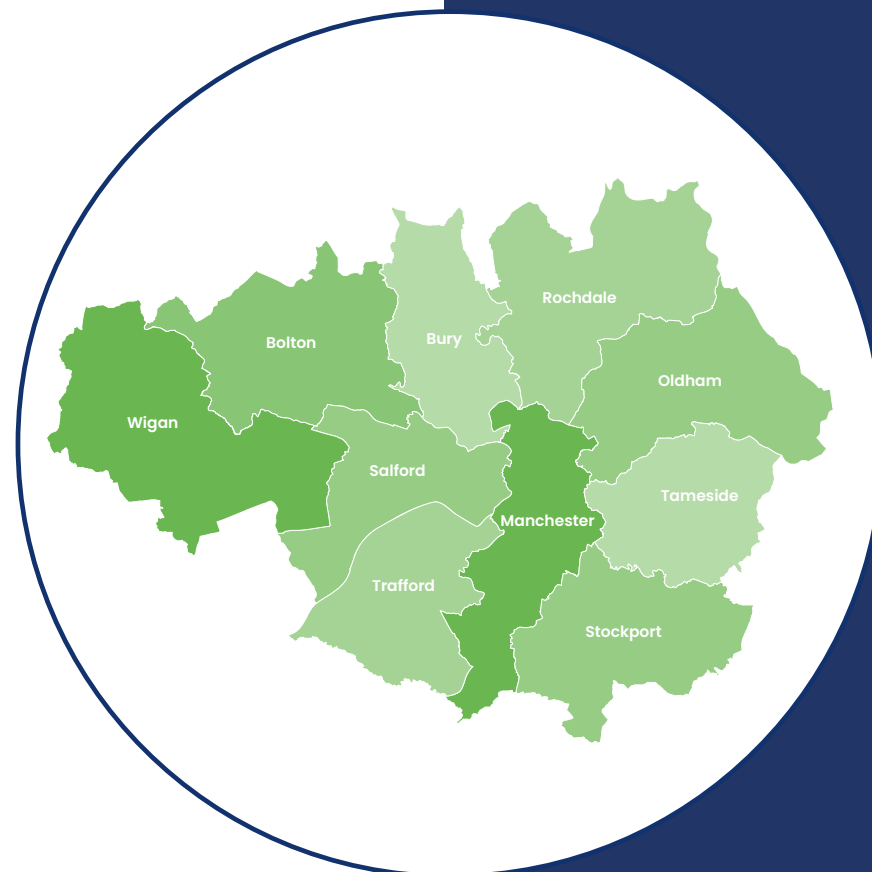
[LSAB PAGE](#)

Greater Manchester – geographical area

The Greater Manchester Local Skills

Accountability Board covers:

- Bolton Council
- Bury Council
- Manchester City Council
- Oldham Council
- Rochdale Borough Council
- Salford City Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Trafford Council
- Wigan Council



Foreword

This is Greater Manchester's movement, sport and physical activity local skills plan, which has been shaped by the Greater Manchester Local Skills Accountability Board (LSAB).

The LSAB has brought together key individuals from a wide range of organisations and educational providers across the sport and physical activity sector within Greater Manchester.

Sport and physical activity, and its associated sociological, physiological and psychological benefits, are proven to contribute to a more equal and prosperous society. In an ever-changing landscape, including an ageing population, rising inequalities and increased physical and mental health challenges, the importance of physical activity has never been stronger.

Greater Manchester remains the lowest ranked of the fifteen regions in the UK's Prosperity Index. This is certainly no badge of honour – quite the opposite – and we need to mobilise the movement, sport and physical activity sector to help change this unenviable status.

By placing movement, sport and physical activity at the forefront of our solutions to local and societal challenges, we can help prevent and reduce avoidable long-term health conditions while bringing recommended movement patterns back into our daily lives.

In order for the sector to be able to demonstrate its worth and impact, we need a skilled and passionate workforce acting as consistent champions of sport and physical activity. Therefore, our local skills plan will aim to address gaps in our current workforce by focusing on recruitment, development and retention of skilled staff.

The opportunities across our sector are diverse, spanning frontline physical activity practitioners and the managers and leaders that enable their work as well as support-chain and technical occupations such as pool plant operators, tutors and assessors.

Our collective ambition for the local skills plan is to champion the work of our entire sport and physical activity workforce and celebrate how each professional benefits and serves local communities across Greater Manchester.

Sport and physical activity provision must reflect the real needs of our fast-evolving communities, including their participants, employers, deployers and the workforce. We need to provide opportunities that allow everyone a chance to engage in sport and physical activity, whether it be for physical or cognitive benefits or to excel in sports performance.

For this reason, it is vital that our workforce connects with these communities to codesign attractive movement, physical activity and sport sessions and support the preventative long-term health agenda. Greater Manchester has a rich sporting heritage and success, which continues to demand a highly skilled workforce, so we start with a strong foundation on which we can build.

Jon Keating, and Dr Eoin Murray,

Chair and Vice Chair (respectively)
Greater Manchester Local Skills Accountability Board

CIMSPA and local skills



The right training, delivered in the right place, at the right time.

Our collaborative local skills project is bringing together employers, education providers and employability-focused organisations to effectively and efficiently match supply and demand.

CIMSPA – the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity – is the chartered professional body for the sport and physical activity sector workforce.

In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity”. This strategy explicitly backs CIMSPA’s rollout of local-based skills and training: “We will support CIMSPA in the development of local skills improvement plans with full national coverage.”

In line with its “Uniting the Movement” strategy, Sport England has commissioned CIMSPA to help accelerate local-focused skills improvements within the sport and physical activity workforce.

CIMSPA has already deployed a complete delivery team of multiple workforce development managers working at a local level across England, Wales and Scotland.

The CIMSPA workforce development manager within Greater Manchester works with the area’s local skills accountability board and with other organisations, carrying out skills diagnostics and helping to deliver the recommendations within this local skills plan.

Vision and context

Vision

A connected and data-informed sport and physical activity sector with stakeholders who proactively engage with and serve Greater Manchester communities, supporting local residents to live well through education and access to physical activity and sport.





VISION AND CONTEXT

Vision detail

A Vision for Greater Manchester

by Jon Keating

A committed group of willing volunteers
Passionately driven to help future careers

Sport, health, coaching and physical activity
All needs a workforce with passion and creativity

We want to nurture the future and inspire our sector
A workforce for GM, a coalition of protectors

Collectively we've developed our key recommendations
To evolve the GM sector workforce for many generations

A dedicated workforce to support GM's preventative health
Physical and mental wellbeing, vital to GM community wealth

Collaboration across organisations is at the heart of our proposal
Motivating, upskilling and much more besides at our disposal

A highly skilled workforce to reduce health inequalities
Consistent high-quality individuals, in all localities

GM as the leader in our sector's training and education
Supporting all within GM's population and influencing the nation

The local skills board are committed to bringing this to fruition
Seeing impact this can create is wholly our mission

Economic, social and much more community and individual gain
A career in our sector where we recruit and retain

Sport and physical activity benefits cannot be denied
and with it a GM sector workforce that delivers with pride

Pioneering excellence:

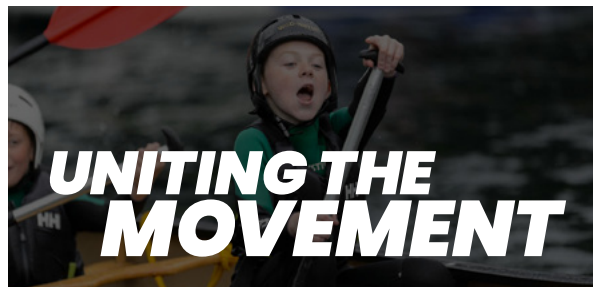
Our GM local skills improvement strategy
We'll be leading the way as we make this reality

National context



DCMS strategy context

In August 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity”. This strategy explicitly backs CIMSPA’s rollout of local-based skills and training: “We will support CIMSPA in the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans with full national coverage.”



Sport England strategy context

In 2021, Sport England launched Uniting the Movement, a 10-year strategy outlining the importance of the workforce in driving change to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

Uniting the Movement strategic priorities include:

- Unleashing the power of diversity
- Ensuring people have access to help from those who relate to their experiences
- Training and qualifications fit for the future
- Better career choices
- Organisations contributing more to the social fabric of their communities

With this, the sector’s workforce must be representative of the community it serves, creating sustainable careers, placing local employer and individual need at the heart of training and development. There is a collective responsibility to ensure the sport and physical activity sector is a valued and accessible career choice with progression for individuals.



The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 context

The passing into law of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 places employers at the heart of the skills system, making it easier for people to access the skills required to secure well paid jobs in industries with skills gaps.

Employers and training providers must work together to identify the skills needed locally and address the skills gaps. For further education colleges and training providers who access funding to deliver their training, it is now a legal requirement to work with employers to develop skills plans. Adult skills funding is being developed, and funding must align to the employer-identified priorities.

Local context

Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan

The Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), developed by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, sets out the strategic priorities for the region in terms of key growth locations, sectors, occupations and training.

It highlights recruitment and training issues raised by local employers, such as lack of applicants with required skills, which must be tackled to grow Greater Manchester's economy and offer for its residents.

Creative, culture and sport is named as a key sector, with a focus on the ongoing expansion of facilities creating an increasing demand for skilled professionals.

Health and social care is another sector at the heart of the plan, and work towards improving provision in the region will be closely linked to the sport and physical activity sector's offering and alignment.

Overall, the region's local skills improvement plan is centred around aligning training with employer needs to ensure that Greater Manchester has a skilled, future-ready workforce. The strong connection with this local skills plan's vision will allow the LSAB to work in tandem with the LSIP to achieve this goal within the movement, sport and physical activity sector.

Links

[WELCOME | GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE](#)



Themes, recommendations and stakeholders

Themes

This plan has four themes.



Recommendations

This plan has three headline recommendations:

Promote career opportunities

1

Establish and highlight career pathways and opportunities that enable individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to join the sport and physical activity sector workforce.

Upskill the workforce

2

Identify and address local sector learning and development needs by connecting employers and education providers as well as highlighting and sourcing funding.

Enhance overall impact

3

Enhance the impact of Greater Manchester's movement, sport and physical activity workforce through ethical practice, a data-led approach and alignment with professional status.

Partners and wider skills alignment

Partners and stakeholders

CIMSPA and the local skills accountability board will work collaboratively with a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver on the actions that underpin this plan's recommendations.

These include:

Education and training providers

Those delivering accredited training – both sector/occupation-specific training and training around basic skills, knowledge and behaviours – for example, further education colleges and higher education institutes.

Skills and sector partners

Those with knowledge and understanding of the sport and physical activity sector, with expertise to support both employers and training providers, Active Partnerships, national governing bodies of sport and other system partners.

Employers and deployers

For example, leisure providers, coaching companies and gym owners.

Recommendations, actions and milestones

RECOMMENDATION 1

Promote career opportunities: Establish and highlight career pathways and opportunities that enable individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to join the movement, sport and physical activity sector workforce.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
RECRUIT	1a	Raise awareness of sport and physical activity roles and careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sector stakeholders attend local career events ▶ Case studies are used to highlight roles available and in demand locally ▶ The CIMSPA Careers Hub is used to generate understanding of sector careers ▶ Education leavers and other potential sector entrants are aware of and understand opportunities to work in sport and physical activity ▶ Increased applications for local vacancies ▶ Increased interest in sector qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Careers event attendance and engagement data ▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data ▶ Employer data on job applications ▶ Education provider data on course applications ▶ Qualitative data
RECRUIT SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	1b	Create and promote opportunities for individuals to embark on and/or sustain successful careers within the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data is used to understand skills gaps and workforce growth opportunities ▶ Collaboration with the Greater Manchester Employer Integration Board and its initiatives is maximised ▶ Increase in job opportunities from local employers ▶ The CIMSPA Careers Hub and Greater Manchester Careers and Enterprise Hub are used to share and find sector vacancies ▶ Quality-assured education, work experience placements and apprenticeships are promoted to career explorers and those looking to progress ▶ Improved workforce retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ Greater Manchester Combined Authority data ▶ Training Academy for Sport and Physical Activity data ▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data ▶ Office for National Statistics data
RECRUIT TRAIN	1c	Work to break down structural inequalities by increasing opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to enter the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A wide range of pathways into the sector, including work placements, apprenticeships, return to work schemes, routes for NEET people and career switching are promoted and supported ▶ New recruitment strategies are used to engage individuals not currently working or training within the sector ▶ Case studies are used to showcase diverse experiences and opportunities within the sector ▶ Part-time, multi-skilled roles are available ▶ Students studying sport and physical activity courses are more diverse ▶ A more diverse sector workforce that is representative of local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Greater Manchester Combined Authority data ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ Education provider diversity data ▶ Qualitative data

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

RECOMMENDATION 2

Upskill the workforce: Identify and address local sector learning and development needs by connecting employers and education providers as well as highlighting and sourcing funding

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT	2a	Work with sector stakeholders to identify local training needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA local workforce skills diagnostic surveys and data are consistently used to identify and understand local skills gaps ▶ Other methods of collecting data on local training needs are explored ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic insight is shared with participating employers to inform their workforce planning ▶ Skills gaps are monitored to ensure that improvements are made ▶ The CIMSPA skills diagnostic survey is available to complete on demand via the LSAB web page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ More employers completing the skills diagnostic survey ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	2b	Connect education providers and employers to promote high-quality career progression opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ More opportunities for education providers and employers to collaborate on curriculum design and training opportunities ▶ Training opportunities are promoted through outreach to the Greater Manchester sector workforce ▶ Success stories are used to promote career and training opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Greater Manchester Combined Authority data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN	2c	Standardise training and continued professional development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Endorsed, quality-assured training and continued professional development in Greater Manchester is identified and signposted to ▶ More CIMSPA-endorsed training is available across Greater Manchester ▶ Training opportunities are developed on the basis of data, insight and local priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Annual review of providers ▶ Number of CIMSPA Education Partners in Greater Manchester with 'Enhancing' quality assurance status
RECRUIT SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	2d	Support workforce development through funded course delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased funding available to support continued professional development ▶ More funded training options are available to employees within the sport and physical activity sector within Greater Manchester ▶ More cost-effective training is available to all sector professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amount of funding secured ▶ Number of funded training courses ▶ Funded course attendance data

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

RECOMMENDATION 3

Enhance overall impact: Enhance the impact of Greater Manchester's movement, sport and physical activity workforce through ethical practice, a data-led approach and alignment with professional status

Recommendation area: Embed ethical practice

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN	3a	Support the ongoing monitoring and regulation of ethical and inclusive practices to safely serve our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Policies and procedures are in place to support employers to practice ethically and inclusively ▶ High and regular engagement in continued professional development workshops and refresher qualifications relating to ethical and inclusive practice ▶ Increased connection with underserved and diverse communities in Greater Manchester ▶ Positive feedback from these communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ GM Moving survey data ▶ Sport England Active Lives data ▶ Course attendance data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN	3b	Foster operational excellence and an effective and embedded welfare and safeguarding culture across the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A culture of respectful professional support, challenge and curiosity within the workforce ▶ The workforce is skilled and confident in creating safe, inclusive and positive environments for local communities ▶ Increased signposting to external welfare support ▶ Increased delivery of operational and safeguarding courses in Greater Manchester ▶ Suspected safeguarding and welfare issues are identified, reported and managed appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reports on safeguarding course attendance, completion rate and course delivery ▶ GM Moving safeguarding data ▶ Local documentation and reporting

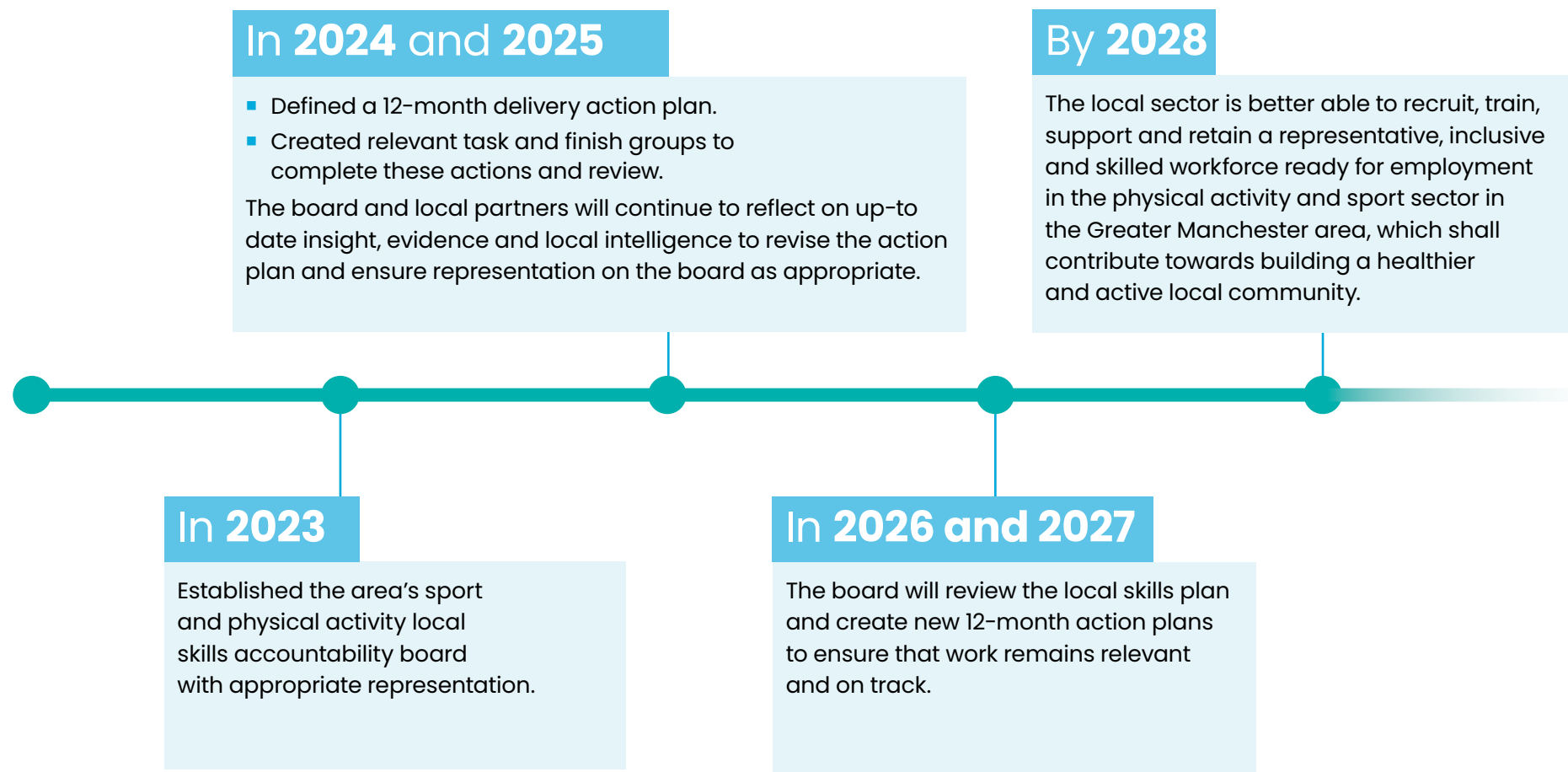
*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
RECRUIT SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	3c	Understand the health challenges and priorities of Greater Manchester by analysing local data and identify how our sector can support with preventative care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased collaboration with healthcare organisations in Greater Manchester ▶ Qualifications and training are embedded with knowledge and skills that support local healthcare priorities ▶ Sector professionals understand healthcare-aligned job roles and careers ▶ Sector professionals are aware of healthcare-aligned training opportunities ▶ Existing collaborations between healthcare and sport and physical activity organisations such as Prehab4Cancer are used as case studies to highlight career opportunities ▶ The outcomes of the local skills plan align with local objectives and contribute towards addressing and reducing health inequalities ▶ Better integration sport and physical activity into health, social policy and care-related training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sport England Moving Communities and Active Lives Survey data ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ State of Life quantitative data and qualitative insight ▶ Greater Manchester Combined Authority data ▶ Health Innovation Manchester Innovation with Impact strategy progress reports ▶ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN	3d	Understand current relationships with CIMSPA across education providers and employers, then further promote alignment with professional status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Current sport and physical activity education and apprenticeship providers within Greater Manchester are identified ▶ Increased awareness of and engagement with CIMSPA across local sector education providers ▶ Education providers are supported towards gaining CIMSPA 3-star Enhancing status through action plans ▶ An increase in quality-assured education providers in Greater Manchester ▶ Sport and physical activity employees, apprentices and learners are encouraged to work towards professional status ▶ CIMSPA professional status is embedded in job roles and descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Number of CIMSPA partners ▶ CIMSPA membership and professional status data ▶ CIMSPA business diagnostic data

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

Milestones



Wider alignment with local skills work

StreetGames Doorstep Sport + Empowerment: developing life skills

Sport for development charity StreetGames harnesses the power of sport to create positive change in the lives of young people living in underserved communities right across the UK.

Its Doorstep Sport + Empowerment framework is a methodology of youth engagement, focusing on the valuable life skills sport can help to develop when young people are empowered to do more.

Youth empowerment is a means of encouraging young people to work on life skills – to both do great things for themselves and to make a positive impact within their community. Sport is a powerful tool to empower young people with life skills, demanding perseverance, teamwork, discipline and leadership, which in turn nurture confidence and motivation for self-development.



CASE STUDY

StreetGames Doorstep Sport + Empowerment case study

Abraham Moss Warriors at the Heart of the Community CIC

Abraham Moss Warriors is a multi-cultural club focusing on sport and other activities for families in Cheetham and Crumpsall in North Manchester.

They have a strong focus on supporting young people to progress from participants to volunteers, young leaders, coaches and beyond. Their involvement with Doorstep Sport is a great example of the early stages of the participant to coach journey.

Abraham Moss Warriors started their Doorstep Sport + Empowerment journey in 2020 with a group of 11-year-olds participating in a workshop on organising and managing events. This took place alongside youth action, gardening and fundraising. The programme led on to the group running their own football tournament as well as ongoing support at weekly sessions, holiday provision and other tailored initiatives, with the assistance and encouragement of trusted adults helping to bring their ideas to life.

Fast forward five years and many of the participants are now young volunteers or young leaders leading their own activity sessions and ready for an ongoing journey into coaching, leadership and youth and leisure work.

Abraham Moss Warriors' Doorstep Sport experience provided young people living in an underserved community with the chance to step into paid work through the club's strong partnerships with the local leisure centre, schools and local community provision.

Find out more:

[STREETGAMES DOORSTEP SPORT + EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK](#) 

Greater Manchester local skills plan alignment

- This work is a powerful example of a “strong opening” to the talent pipeline this plan is supporting – using sport to empower young people and connecting them into education and then employment in sport and physical activity.
- The LSAB will look to leverage initiatives such as this – getting sector-related careers content in front of young people.
- Doorstep Sport's focus on underserved communities will help with achieving wider objectives of ensuring that the local sport and activity workforce reflects the communities it serves.

GM Active Prehab 4 Cancer



Prehab4Cancer is the UK's first integrated care service delivering prehabilitation and recovery programmes for cancer patients

It is run via a partnership between the GM Cancer Alliance and GM Active. Through the programme, patients engage in exercise, nutrition and wellbeing assessments and interventions throughout their treatment.

The service empowers eligible patients in the Greater Manchester area to take an active role in their cancer care. It prepares them for treatments and surgeries and helps provide positive outcomes for patients during recovery and beyond.

Evidence shows that patients who actively improve their physical and mental health recover more quickly from surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, reducing the chance of further problems both during and after treatment.

GM Active is instrumental to the successful delivery of this large-scale NHS prehabilitation and rehabilitation programme and provides:

- Multiple sites and state-of-the-art equipment that patients can access close to their own homes within local communities
- A passionate, dedicated and highly skilled workforce to deliver the programme, including local exercise professionals trained in providing healthy lifestyle interventions for people with complex co-morbidities and health needs

This innovative partnership is giving participants the best opportunity for good quality outcomes and long-term survival. Prehab4Cancer has been consistently identified as a priority in addressing the requirements of the [NHS Long Term Plan](#).

Greater Manchester local skills plan alignment

The Greater Manchester Local Skills Accountability Board is committed to ensuring that the local workforce can contribute to sustaining and expanding programmes like Prehab4Cancer through a supply of sport and physical activity professionals with the right qualifications, skills and experience able to work with participants and patients in a healthcare-aligned way.



GM Active Transformational Leadership programme

With support from GreaterSport and investment from the National Lottery Fund, GM Active is delivering a Transformational Leadership programme to cohorts of its managerial team.

This learning and development, delivered by Future Fit Training, targets key leaders across GM Active member organisations with the aim of supporting the transition towards integrating sport and physical activity with healthcare and wellbeing services.

The programme is divided into five core topics:

- Principles of leadership
- Creating culture
- Understanding today's leisure
- The wellness sector
- Services and organisations

The modules have been selected to equip organisation leaders with the skills and knowledge to:

- play a greater role in developing new services in response to current and emerging health needs
- develop stronger partnerships with clinical healthcare providers.

Andy King, Chair of GM Active, said: "It is vital that staff across the community leisure sector understand much more about the wider community we serve and how we can better play our part in improving health and wellbeing services for everyone across Greater Manchester.

"We need transformational leaders to help us achieve a shift in our workforce's mindset. Leaders already exist across GM Active – we don't need to build this group – but we want to enable them to grow, do more and be better connect to the ecosystem that they are part of.

"Our leadership programme will bolster the knowledge and understanding of our staff to meet the demands of their roles and the changing needs of our communities."

Greater Manchester local skills plan alignment

This unique and proactive approach to upskilling managers and leaders is strongly aligned with this local skills plan's recommendations, with a focus on both retaining and developing existing staff and aligning training with the healthcare sector. The LSAB considers this programme to be a strong example of how further action can be modelled to effectively equip the sector workforce with relevant competencies, particularly in the sometimes-overlooked area of management and leadership.

Greater Manchester Moving priority plan – people, leadership, workforce

Greater Manchester Moving is a charity and one of 42 Active Partnerships changing lives through movement, physical activity and sport.

The ambition of this priority plan is to develop the Greater Manchester people and leadership workforce – realising the power and potential of a system-wide movement of people that is reflective of the population to inspire, engage and support people to live more active lives.

Their contribution to delivering the plan is to lead, support and connect people and ideas across organisations, sectors and communities so all can work collaboratively around a shared purpose of changing lives through activity, sport and movement.

Core plan activities

- Ensuring existing and future managers and leaders are equipped and supported to meet the changing needs of local communities – from volunteers in community groups through to chief executives in corporate, public sector and voluntary sector organisations.
- Supporting non-clinical staff to have better conversations about activity and movement with people with long terms health conditions to help make engagement in activity and movement more accessible and inclusive.
- Developing an understanding of how to make volunteering in sport, physical activity and movement more supported, inclusive and representative of local communities using data, research, insight and learning.

The plan's five enablers of change

- Involving local people and growing assets
- Learning and adapting
- Effective work across and between sectors
- Strategic leadership enabling collective leadership
- Transforming governance and processes

Greater Manchester local skills plan alignment

The Greater Manchester Moving priority plan highlights the importance of ensuring that the Greater Manchester Local Skills Plan includes the whole sport and activity workforce. The practitioners that form the frontline of the workforce will always be a key focus of any sector-specific skills plan, but initiatives such as this priority plan ensure the inclusion of the managers and leaders whose work supports and enables the effectiveness of the practitioner workforce.

The Greater Manchester Baccalaureate

The Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) is a proposed technical education pathway designed to provide young people with an alternative to the traditional academic route for ages 14 and above.

It is a result of the trailblazer devolution deal, which gave Greater Manchester increased oversight of post-16 technical skills in the region. Co-designed by education providers and employers, the MBacc will offer a range of different routes that focus on careers in growing sectors in Greater Manchester such as engineering, digital technology and healthcare as well as a “creative, culture and sport” route.

The new qualification pathway will complement the existing English Baccalaureate (EBacc), offering essential qualifications in English, maths, science and digital skills while guiding students towards technical qualifications that align with the region’s economic needs. In addition to increasing the availability of targeted T-levels, higher level apprenticeships and work-oriented courses, the scheme will also

offer a centralised work placement system, ensuring that from year 9, students are able to gain significant real-world workplace experience.

The MBacc aims to address skills gaps in Greater Manchester by linking education directly to local job opportunities, offering a clear pathway into high-demand industries. Alongside this local skills plan, the MBacc forms part of a broad-reaching effort across Greater Manchester to create a more inclusive, skills-driven education system for young people.

THE GREATER MANCHESTER BACCALAUREATE –
GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY [↗](#)

Greater Manchester local skills plan alignment

The Greater Manchester Baccalaureate is a strong example of how education can be shaped around local skills needs. With this plan’s recommendations partly focusing on supporting young people into sport and physical activity careers, the MBacc can be used as a model to inform the development of sector education provision and employability pathways.

#BeeWell

#BeeWell is a wellbeing measurement and improvement initiative aimed at secondary schools in Greater Manchester. Led by experts from The University of Manchester and the Anna Freud Centre, alongside leaders from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the project surveys students on their wellbeing and readiness for life beyond school.

This pioneering project, the first of its kind in the UK, provided valuable insights into the factors influencing young people's wellbeing, such as arts, culture and physical activities. Schools received aggregated data via an intuitive online dashboard, enabling them to track trends and make informed decisions. The initiative also aims to create a place-based approach, encouraging local collaboration across arts, sports, businesses and charities to address the unique needs of each community.

The programme seeks to shift the educational focus from purely academic achievement to also prioritising wellbeing, ensuring that young people feel hopeful, supported, and ready to transition into adulthood, further education, or employment. The ultimate goal is to provide comprehensive, data-driven support for young people, particularly as they recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, stresses the importance of this initiative in supporting young people's future prospects and wellbeing as part of the Young Person's Guarantee.

[#BEEWELL](#)

Live Well

Live Well is Greater Manchester's movement for community-led health and wellbeing, led by the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. The initiative believes that being able to "live well" means different things to different people, including:

- Enjoying life
- Having purpose
- A good job
- Being in a warm and safe house
- People to spend time with and care about
- Being represented
- Having a voice and a say in decisions about their life

Live Well is aligned with the wider Greater Manchester Model for Health and Wellbeing and is part of its work to strengthen communities so that everyone in Greater Manchester can lead a healthier and happier life.

[LIVE WELL](#)

Data and insight that have informed this work



Social value of sport and physical activity

It is estimated that physical activity and sport provides £5.1 billion in social value to Greater Manchester annually in primary value and secondary value based on child, young person and adult participation as well as adult volunteering.

Primary value is the direct benefit and value to individuals of improved wellbeing, the enjoyment of being active, benefits to physical and mental health and more.

Secondary value is the wider value to society, including the state, and includes reducing the risk and impact of many health conditions such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia and depression, which reduces strain on healthcare services.

SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Source: The social value of sport and physical activity in England, Sport England, October 2024

Recruitment challenges in Greater Manchester

The CIMSPA local workforce skills diagnostic data for Greater Manchester highlighted a variety of recruitment challenges.

Survey responses stated that recruiting the right people is challenging due to a lack of relevant skills and experience in areas such as club and community development, budgeting and coaching individuals with specific needs. Additionally, attracting candidates with the right values and motivation is difficult, particularly in low-population areas or for roles viewed as temporary.

In-demand sector roles often require a blend of skills that are hard to train for. This, combined with limited career progression, part-time hours and low entry-level pay, makes positions less appealing than many in other sectors.

The competitive recruitment market, high costs and limited awareness of roles available also complicate hiring. Structural barriers like limited recruitment platforms and high advertising costs hinder the process for sector employers, too.

Source: CIMSPA local workforce skills diagnostic data, 2024

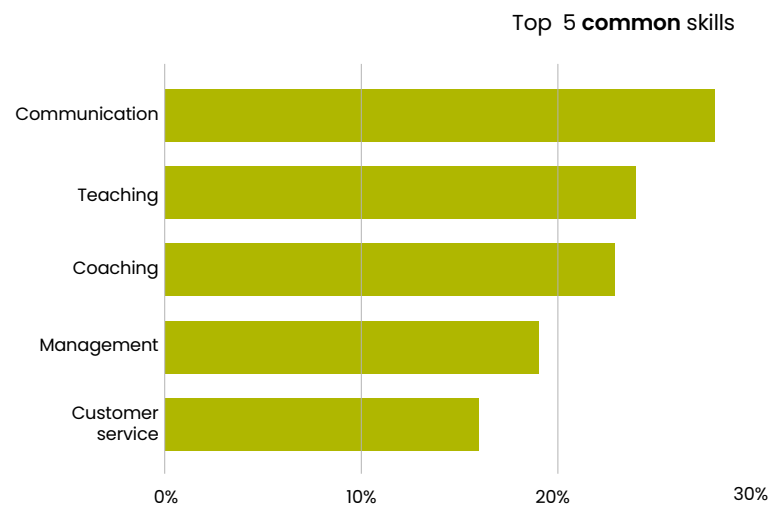
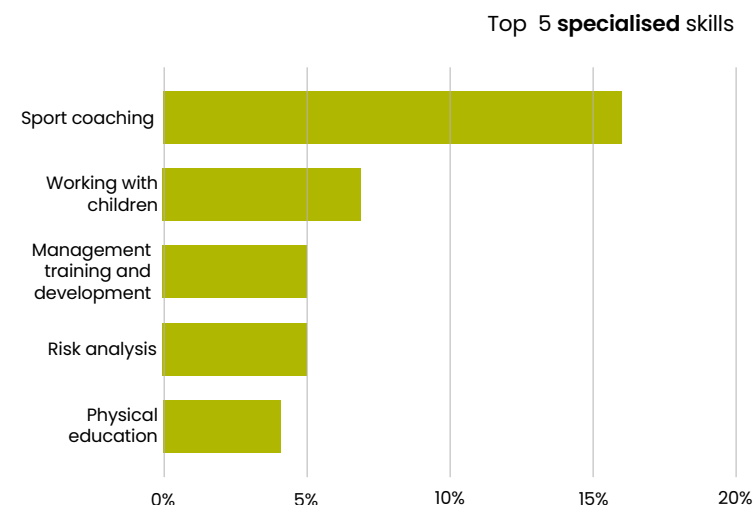
Skills in demand in Greater Manchester

Source: CIMSPA Greater Manchester Regional Data Pack 2024

This data shows the top five specialised skills (typically unique to sport and physical activity sector roles) and common skills (highly transferable skills essential to many job roles across multiple sectors) in demand by sector employers in Greater Manchester.

The CIMSPA regional data shows that over the past 12 months, sports coaching has been the specialised skill most desired by sport and physical activity employers, appearing in 16% of sector job postings across the region. The top common skill over this period has been communication, appearing in 28% of job postings in the same period.

Management has appeared in the top five for both specialised and common skills, highlighting this as a skill in high demand within the sport and physical activity sector.



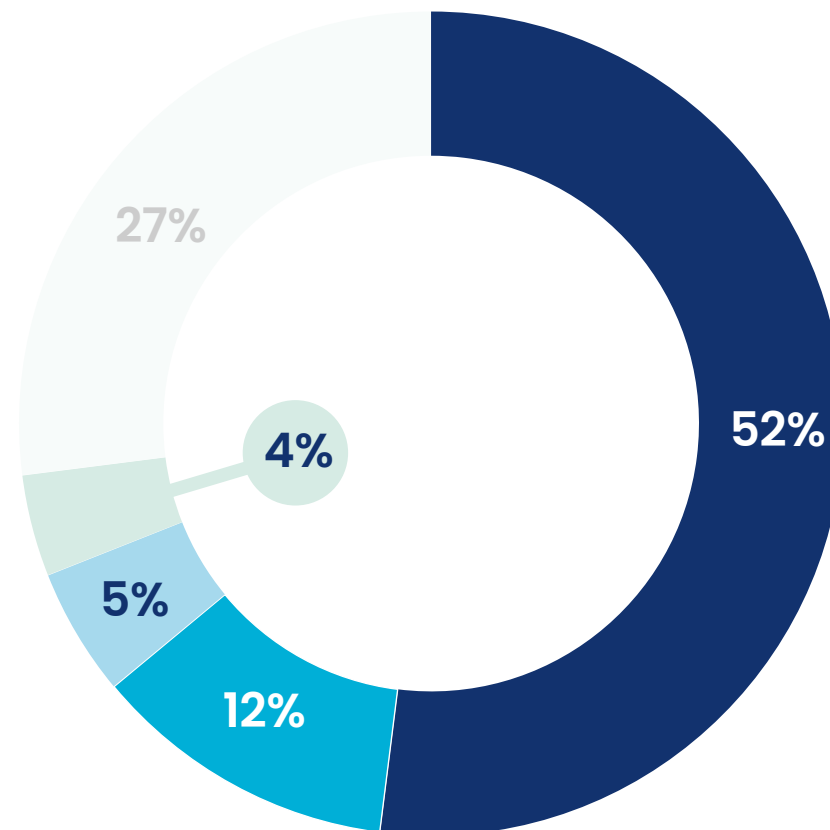
Businesses in the region: Size

Source: CIMSPA Greater Manchester Regional Data Pack 2024

A majority of local employers within Greater Manchester are microenterprises and experience high turnover, low pay and burnout affecting workforce stability.

- 52% Micro enterprises
- 12% Small enterprises
- 5% Medium enterprises
- 4% Large enterprises
- 27% Businesses unaccounted for

The remaining 27% of sport and physical activity businesses within Greater Manchester not accounted for here are due to either no company financials being available or 0/an unknown number of employees within the business, meaning they cannot be categorised by business size.



DATA AND INSIGHT THAT HAVE INFORMED THIS WORK

Greater Manchester region

Greater Manchester Moving in Action 2021–2031,
Greater Manchester Moving, 2021

[LINK](#)

Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan,
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 2023

[LINK](#)

Health Inequalities Dashboard,
Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2025

[LINK](#)

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Greater Manchester Labour Market Insights Pack,
Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2024

[LINK](#)

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Health Innovation Manchester,

[HINM STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT](#)

National

Workforce Insights Report 2023,
CIMSPA, 2023.

[LINK](#)

PE and School Sport: The Annual Report 2024, Youth Sport Trust, 2024

[LINK](#)

Impact of investing in physical activity, Sport England, 2025

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Great Britain Working White Paper, Department for Work and Pensions,
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Sport England, 2024

[LINK](#)

United Kingdom Prosperity Index 2021, Legatum Institute, 2021

[LINK](#)

DATA AND INSIGHT THAT HAVE INFORMED THIS WORK

Unlocking the potential: How sport, recreation and physical activity can help improve the health and wellbeing of the nation report, National Sector Partners Group, 2022

[LINK](#) 

Contribution of sport to society and economy with particular reference to impact on young people's health and wellbeing and to community sport, Local Government Association, 2024

[LINK](#) 

Office for National Statistics

[LINK](#) 

The scope of the sport and physical activity sector

Sector and industries definitions

The sport and physical activity sector:

“Everyone working in the sport and physical activity workforce in the industries and occupations detailed below and overleaf.”

Sector industries

Industry definitions from CIMSPA for the purpose of this strategy are shown in the table (right).

Paid/voluntary workforce

This sport and physical activity sector local skills plan aims to be broad enough in its outcomes to not need to be separated by employment/deployment status.

Industry	Definition
Exercise and fitness	Services, activities and venues that predominantly improve participant physical fitness.
Community sport	Sport/skill-based services, activities and venues that increase participation and develop skill, sometimes targeting under-represented groups and inequalities.
Leisure operations	Services, activities and venues that predominantly improve participation in physical activity.
Health and wellbeing	Holistic services and activities that promote improvements across all aspects of health, sometimes involving health care and other non-sector professionals.
Adventure sport	Activities, services and venues both indoor and outdoor improving participation in sport perceived as having a high level of risk.
Performance sport	Competitive sport and activities including those in which athletes receive payment for their performance; professional, semi-professional and grass roots sport.

Occupations

Introduction

“Occupations” are a standardised set of job roles that cover the whole of the sport and physical activity sector. For example, what some operators might call a “leisure attendant” is considered to be part of the “recreation assistant” occupation.

Definitions

- Frontline – occupations in sport and physical activity directly servicing the needs of the participant.
- Support chain – occupations in sport and physical activity servicing the needs of the front line and/or the facilities.
- Extended workforce – enablers and influencers of sport and physical activity who are not part of the sector workforce.

Frontline occupations

Sector workforce Occupations aligned with CIMSPA professional standards	Gym Instructor, core group exercise instructor, coach, coaching assistant, personal trainer, strength and conditioning trainer, pilates based matwork instructor, yoga instructor, aspiring manager, entry manager, health navigator, swimming teacher, lifeguard, recreation assistant, assistant swimming teacher, sports therapist*, nutritionist*, sport nutritionist*, physiotherapist*.
Broader workforce	Receptionist, bar staff, kitchen and catering assistant, waiting staff, cleaning assistant, domestic assistant, sales and retail assistant, chef.

*Occupations supported directly by other professional bodies

Support chain occupations

Sector workforce Occupations aligned with CIMSPA professional standards	Entry manager, general manager, senior manager, tutor, assessor, coach developer, health navigator, pool plant operative.
Broader workforce	Sport development officer, researcher, teacher, administrative occupations, finance occupations, health and safety, quality manager, environmental manager, auditor, sports media and reporters, general assistant, maintenance operative (examples).

Extended workforce

Enablers Enablers of sport and physical activity who don't necessarily hold a CIMSPA-recognised professional qualification	Primary school teachers, teaching assistants, PE teachers, childcare workers, carers, sport event staff/volunteers, activity group leaders (e.g. scouts, guides etc), officiating.
Influencers Influencers of sport and physical activity who don't necessarily hold a sector-specific professional qualification	Parents, sport role models, sport and fitness models, sport and fitness social media influencers.

Glossary

Business skills diagnostic

CIMSPA has developed and launched a business diagnostic process through its workforce development team.

Sole traders and micro-enterprises of fewer than 10 employees make up 89% percent of the businesses in our sector, including over 73,000 freelancers and sole traders.

The diagnostic focuses in particular on this business type – building an understanding of their business needs and exploring how we can position our product offer and partner support to meet these.

CIMSPA Data Lens

The CIMSPA Data Lens is a real-time intelligence dashboard for the UK's movement, sport and physical activity sector.

The Data Lens system uses web-scraping APIs to open access data and machine learning, all segmented through real-world definitions specific to the movement, sport and physical activity sector.

It can be interrogated specifically in niche areas such as exercise and fitness

or community sport, or even specific geographies at a county or town level.

DATA LENS 

Local documentation and reporting

Throughout the lifespan of this local skills plan, CIMSPA and the local skills accountability board will look to incorporate any new sector-specific data created by local stakeholders that helps us understand the impact of our actions.

For example – employability and skills reports, survey results and impact reports.

Local skills accountability board (LSAB)

A group of local education and training, skills/employability, health and employer stakeholders across a region and within the movement, sport and physical activity sector.

LSABs are co-ordinated and managed by CIMSPA, enabled by Sport England and National Lottery funding. An LSAB is collectively responsible for the creation, implementation and renewal of a movement, sport and physical activity sector local skills plan.

Local skills improvement plan

Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change.

LSIPs:

- place employers at the heart of local skills systems
- facilitate direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers, providers and local stakeholders
- help learners gain the skills they need to get good jobs and increase their prospects.

Each LSIP has a designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), appointed by the Department for Education.

This document is NOT an LSIP.

Glossary

Local workforce skills diagnostic data

CIMSPA has a team of local skills hub managers working across England, Scotland and Wales.

These skills hub managers are engaged in collecting workforce skills intelligence directly from employers in their local area, through a detailed and standardised workforce skills diagnostic survey.

This data can then be segmented at the level of the local skills accountability board for use in better understanding local workforce needs and in monitoring the success of workforce improvement initiatives.

Movement, sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

This document is a movement, sport and physical activity sector local skills plan. It is a local skills plan specific to the movement, sport and physical activity sector in a specific region.

The plan has been created by the local skills accountability board (see above), coordinated and managed by CIMSPA.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data is non-numeric, descriptive information that gathers experiences and perceptions. It includes case studies, feedback via surveys and forms, and interviews.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Regional datapack

[LINK](#)

Appendix 2: CIMSPA Business Diagnostic UK Wide Report

[LINK](#)

Appendix 3: GM Active – together we move as one

GM Active is made up of 12 separate leisure and community organisations. Members operate in all 10 local authority areas across Greater Manchester, reaching communities across the whole region.

The GM Active collective accounts for 99 leisure and sports facilities across the city region, with a combined reach of 20 million visits a year, playing a major role in the health of its communities.

This section highlights the excellent work being done by members of the GM Active collective and explains how their services and facilities can benefit the health and wellbeing of local people.

Life Leisure's Brinnington Park Complex

The evolution of Life Leisure's Brinnington

complex in Stockport has had a dramatic impact on its place in the community.

The centre, which is in one of the most deprived areas of the town, has evolved from being an underused traditional activity centre to become a community hub bringing people together and encouraging them to be more active.

The change of emphasis has resulted in a substantial increase in usage typified by figures for quarter 1 and quarter 3 in 2022, which saw usage more than double from 4,441 visits to 9,537 visits.

[LINK](#)

Fuel4Fun at Active Tameside

Active Tameside's Fuel4Fun programme offers free holiday club places to the 10,000 young people on benefit-related free school meals in Tameside, where they can enjoy fun activities, take part in creative and physical challenges, alongside a free nutritious meal each day.

Those children benefitting also have a hamper delivered to the family home; each containing enough food to feed a family of four for five nights. Over the past 12 months,

Fuel4Fun has supported 4,935 individual families with a total of 24,675 meals delivered.

[LINK](#)

Stockport Community Leisure – postural stability classes

This is a 24-week exercise rehabilitation course for older people at risk of falls, delivered by fully qualified postural stability instructors.

The aims of this class are to improve stability during standing, walking and other functional movements. The programme develops balance, strengthens the muscles around the hips, knees and ankles and increases functional flexibility. The programme has been shown to reduce hospital admittance and improve daily living.

The classes are paying dividends for those taking part, as this anecdote explains: "After years of seeing such incredible improvement in clients' stability, instructors now ask to take video footage of people in their first few weeks and again at the end of the course to capture their achievements and to show to new clients."

[LINK](#)

Appendices

Active Ageing at Be Well in Wigan

Be Well's Active Ageing team delivers more than 20 strength and balance sessions a week that help reduce the risk of falls among the over-65s – and lessen the financial burden on the NHS.

Breaking down the financial impact of someone being treated after hurting themselves in a fall, it costs an average of £36 per person for a GP visit, while a visit to A&E without admission costs more than £90, rising to £100 with admission. An in-patient hospital stay for a hip fracture costs almost £9,000 per person on average, while the cost of a lengthy geriatric stay is £14,600.

[LINK](#)

Manchester's water-based musculoskeletal programme

Arcadia Library and Leisure Centre and Hough End LC first launched a pilot for a water-based musculoskeletal (MSK) programme in spring 2022 which has since become part of a wider MSK UK research and innovation project.

Named Good Boost, the classes support those living with muscle and joint pain. The programme also has a land-based equivalent called Escape Pain – all delivered as under GLL's Better banner.

[LINK](#)

Live Well at Bury Leisure

The Live Well service provides health trainers and exercise referral officers to the neighbourhoods of Bury. They offer one-to-one support for behaviour change on issues such as stopping smoking, movement and weight management.

Live Well is also working with a federation of three Primary Care Networks (PCNs) who will be using funding from the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) to recruit eight full-time-equivalent health and wellness coaches to focus on cardiovascular risk factors, bowel screening, frailty and falls.

This will be delivered via a drop-in service in order to improve the accessibility for users. It will be followed up via small groups sessions which are more efficient than one-to-ones.

[LINK](#)

The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Greater Manchester



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