

Conference Report 2017

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Why the sector needs to invest in our workforce

Andrew Honeyman, DCMS

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA

In this keynote address, Tara Dillon, chief executive officer of CIMSPA, talked to Andrew Honeyman, head of health, workforce and diversity (sport team) at the DCMS.

Honeyman began by explaining how the launch of the government's Sporting Future strategy in 2015 marked a watershed moment, representing a shift in focus away from sport for the 'sporty' to engaging with the inactive.

Since then, the DCMS has published its first annual report highlighting the progress made to date, including the launch of a new code for sports governance and the huge changes being made at Sport England to achieve the five key outcomes set by government.

Hailing Sporting Future as a huge vote of confidence for CIMSPA, Honeyman said the innovation in the sport and physical activity sector, such as exercise referral schemes, joint project working with CCGs, build and design projects as part of town planning and developing a chartered institute, set against a backdrop of recession and austerity, demonstrated that the sector was one that government should be doing business with.

Importantly, government now recognises the impact sport and physical activity has to play, not only in terms of the health benefits, but also social and economic impacts too.

Government has made a lot of noise about 'professionalising the workforce', so does it believe that the sector isn't professional? Not at all, said Honeyman.

"We know that there are a lot of hard working, qualified people working in this sector, but it's important that your sector is validated as a profession in the same way as medicine, law or accountancy, so that when tell the medical profession to refer people, they recognise the qualifications and have confidence in the skills in the sector."

Sport and physical activity does not form part of the 15 new technical pathways, identified by government, but Honeyman explained how he and Tara had met the team at the Department of Education to make the case for the sector's inclusion and that the sports minister, Tracey Crouch, was due to meet her opposing number at the DfE to press the case.

Dillon reiterated her commitment to the cause saying: "Hairdressing and beauty feature on a pathway, but we don't. That feels very remiss. We are working with ukactive on this and we won't let this go. We'll put a question to the house if necessary."

Honeyman sympathised with the lack of progress being made with trailblazer apprenticeships, saying: "It's taken a lot of time to get the new standards agreed and they say its teething troubles, I say it needs to get moving quicker. It's one of the topics my minister will be raising with the minister for skills shortly."

Honeyman explained that the power of sport and physical activity to deliver different agendas – from mental health to the rehabilitation of offenders – was increasingly being recognised



throughout government and he spoke of plans to establish an inter-ministerial group to drive this.

If there was a key message from government that Honeyman wanted to leave with the audience, it was this: “From where I am sitting, CIMSPA is punching well above its weight for an organisation of its size. What they’ve achieved is outstanding. Join us to help fight inactivity and get behind your chartered institute.”



Living with levy

Spencer Moore, CIMSPA

Mac Cleves, Mac Consultancy Services

Nigel Wallace, Lifetime Training

Spencer Moore introduced the panel discussion with an update on the apprenticeships situation in our sector.

CIMSPA has been submitting and resubmitting apprenticeship standards since August 2016, with one apprenticeship standard that now on its 10th submission, but with no apprenticeships approved to date.

Standards have been submitted for leisure duty manager and personal trainer. For recreation assistants, the standard also includes embedded content for gym instructor, lifeguard, swimming teacher and group exercise instructor specialisms. Once approved these apprenticeships can be used by the sector. 368 apprenticeships have been approved by the DfE to date, which can be used by employers if applicable.

On behalf of the sector, CIMSPA will be the custodian of the quality assurance process for training providers and end-point assessments – ensuring that standards are high, cowboys have no place in the market and the training and assessment is fit for purpose to meet the needs of the sector.

Recent statistics suggest that 36% of those who will have to pay the levy don't know what to do. Only 1.3% of employers are expected to pay the levy charges, these are employers whose PAYE bill is over £3,000,000 and will be charged 0.5% of their annual payroll bill. Employers who have less than £3m PAYE bill will receive £15,000 allowance and will have to subsidise 10% of total fees, with government subsidising the remaining 90% – this is referred to as co-investment. Employers can either spend their allowance with training providers and end point assessments or keep the training provision in house, if the training infrastructure is robust and in place.

Monies will be taken from employers on May 1st 2017, employers will have two years to spend the money (monies taken on 01/05/17 will expire on 30/04/19), it is very much the case of 'use it or lose it'. All levy paying employers need to register their digital account through the government gateway before 31/03/17.

The allowance has to be tracked and spent appropriately and can only be spent on the cost of the apprentice training and end-point assessment. The allocation is not just for front-line staff and can be used for senior staff through higher apprenticeships or to create an infrastructure to support future training of apprenticeships.

Apprentices are going to follow framework developed by employers through the professional standards process and will learn knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their apprenticeship and the organisation they are working for. Training providers' role is to provide support to apprentices throughout their learning process rather than providing a gateway assessment. Apprentices will have a 'ticked competency' approach whereby each element will be signed off as 'achieved' as they achieve them, with a final end-point assessment.



Apprentices under 25 are exempt from national insurance payments and employers can claim back £1,000 cash back per apprentice aged between 16-18 years.

Different organisations have taken different approaches to the direct grant that will come through the levy. Organisations can opt to become a main provider or an employer provider and deliver apprenticeships in house through internal trainers and education programmes. Funds can then be spent on tutors, room hire, certifications and registration, learning resources etc.

Employers can also opt to use training providers and outsource/procure all learning, training and assessment or source a training provider who will aid the employer to deliver in the short term and build an infrastructure and programme to deliver in house in the future. Those opting for in-house options will be required to pass OFSTED inspections.

Delegate questions:

Q. What happens if an apprentice fails an end point assessment?

A. From Nigel's perspective there will be two routes that create this scenario, one whereby both the training provider and employer agree that the apprentice is ready for the end point assessment and the second option where the employer feels the apprentice is ready but the training provider does not. With option 1, the training provider should support the employer with re-sit fees, option 2 would see employers paying the re-sit fees. All routes lead to the apprentice needing to re-sit the end point assessment and the details of fees should be negotiated with training providers.

Q. Are employers expected to procure end point assessors and training providers?

A. Yes, the employers should procure both end point assessors and training providers, but may wish to discuss end point assessor allocation with the training provider that they appoint.

Q. How will the integrity of assessors be assured?

A. CIMSPA will be the quality assurance agency and will work to maintain the credibility and integrity of the learning and assessment.

Q. Is there a minimum number of apprentices that a training provider will take from each employer?

A. No, employers can enter as many or as little apprentices with a training provider as they would like.

Q. Can the money allocation be used for existing employees?

A. Yes the money allocation can be used for both new and existing employees.

Q. Has CIMSPA got an end point quality assurance process in place that is available to the sector?

A. CIMSPA is currently developing an end point quality assurance process based on other sectors best practice of which there is limited information. Once agreed, the quality assurance process will be divulged to the sector.



Q. Are employees who have previously achieved a degree eligible for the funding?

A. Yes, the learning would need to be in a different field and achieve them a different skill set but they can use the funding to retrain.

Q. Does the new apprenticeship programme change existing apprentices?

A. Anyone signed onto an apprenticeship pre May 1 2017 will not be affected and will see no change to their learning or assessment plan.

Q. Do apprentices have to be employed in a 'job role' or can they just be an apprentice?

A. There is no obligation for employers to find a job role for apprentices after they have completed their apprenticeship, however, the sector should look to provide the best possible opportunities for apprentices and find ways to retain the best talent within the sector.

Q. Are apprentices entitled to minimum wage/living wage?

A. Apprentices will need to be paid the minimum apprenticeship wage.



Higher Education and Employability – Closing the talent

David Aldous, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Doug Cole, The Higher Education Academy

The session was framed around four aims:

- Setting the context: Identifying the 'gaps' between HE/FE and the sport and physical activity sector.
- Discussion point 1: What it means to be successful within the sport and physical activity sector?
- Discussion point 2: The role of sport and physical activity in supporting the development of future graduates.
- Future directions and considerations: Addressing the 'gaps' in HE/FE working together with the sport and physical activity sector.

Setting the context

Unpacked what is meant by the talent gap. David Aldous, Senior Lecturer in Pedagogy, Cardiff Metropolitan University, and Doug Cole, Head of Academic Practice, The Higher Education Academy, outlined research showing the lack of skills and behaviours exhibited by graduates of HE/FE is making it difficult to find employment in our sector.

Discussion point 1

In this section the audience identified the skills they require from graduates that they don't currently exhibit. These included:

- Proactivity
- Communication
- Life preparation
- Drive
- Enthusiasm
- Entrepreneurial mindset

It was agreed there is a lack of standardisation on degree programmes, they also are not driven by employers or focused on an occupation. It was felt the changes in HE has made institutions more business driven and it easier for them to sell the 'sexy' topics such as elite sport, whereas realistically there are many more jobs in the practical roles such as management of programmes or facilities.

Graduates have great knowledge but struggle to apply this in a real world setting.

Futur directions

The establishment of closer links between employers, FE and HE, as brokered by CIMSPA was advocated.



The positive payoff of investing in staff skills and training

Jenny Patrickson (panel chair), Active IQ

Mark Tweedie, Active Tameside

Hilary Farmiloe, Aspire Instructability

Steven Scales, ukactive

Jenny Patrickson, managing director of Active IQ, set the scene by describing the current training and development landscape as complex and uncertain with the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April and changes to technical education with 15 new pathways for 16 to 19 year olds.

“Despite this, the one thing that we can hold on to is that we are a people business and people contribute to all aspects of our business,” she said.

Hilary Farmiloe, project manager of Aspire Instructability agreed. “Investment in your staff as the potentially greatest asset to your business is where the focus should be. However, it’s very much about what we are doing and how we are doing it to get that return on investment.”

All Aspire staff take part in an engagement survey, and since the organisation has adopted this exercise, Aspire has been ranked in The Times’ Top 100 best not for profit companies since 2013.

Farmiloe said investment in staff and workforce at Aspire came in various forms from training those with disabilities as gym instructors via its Instructability programme, to recognising staff achievements through Aspire’s annual awards.

“When sufficiently supported, trained, developed and challenged, staff are committed, motivated, confident and focused on achieving success and delivering great customer service.”

By contrast, if you don’t develop staff and they aren’t able to meet the demands the job requires, they’ll underperform, suffer from a lack of confidence, anxiety, and ultimately will leave. The other side of coin is also true, she said.

“If you’re not providing enough opportunities for development and challenge for experienced and well qualified staff, you are wasting that asset and you won’t get a return on that investment.”

Mark Tweedie, chief executive of Active Tameside, explained how he invested in staff to meet the brief of improving health and life expectancy in the community.

Operating at a significant financial deficit with no money to invest, Tweedie could have cut the staff development budget, but he recognised that that would have only ever been a short term strategy.



Instead he invested in people. This included appointing an organisational development manager to drive a values-based culture and introduce coaching to grow leaders not managers, linking performance plans to the trust's goal based on community outcomes and supporting staff to deliver community interventions such as exercise referral with a set of high quality standards.

In terms of recognition and rewards, the trust invests in spot purchasing reward budgets. All facility managers have a discretionary budget of £100 to reward staff a benefit such as a meal out.

"That's really hard to justify when you're up against it financially, but it's paid off for us in terms of staff engagement," he said.

In addition, the trust has addressed gender inequalities introducing women to the board and the senior leadership team.

Such measures have helped to increase revenue per employee by 20 per cent over the last five years. The trust has experienced revenue growth of £3m and now has a £10m turnover and its management fee to turnover ratio has reduced from 26 per cent to 11 per cent.

"I put a lot of this down to the way we have invested in people, because that is something we have done fundamentally different in the last five years," said Tweedie.



Explaining CIMSPA's professional standards matrix

Spencer Moore, CIMSPA

Jeff Lynch, GLL

The session had two main aims:

- Exploring what is meant by a professional standards matrix
- An employer's perspective of the professional standards matrix

Defining a professional standards matrix

Spencer Moore, CIMSPA, outlined:

- The mandate CIMSPA have been given from government and DCMS to identify the key occupations in our sector, develop professional standards for those occupations and accredit/endorse qualifications and training providers that align to the standards.
- The current approach from government (department for education) on technical education, discussing the potential impact of the report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury.
- The current education system in the sector – as invested either by government or by individuals. Outlining over £1.1.billion per year that is spent on training the workforce in our sector, but even with this we have a number of skills gaps and a huge churn rate of employees.
- CIMSPA's approach to the development of professional standards – its purpose and priorities.

An employer's perspective of the professional standards matrix

Jeff Lynch, GLL, explained:

- The challenges they face echoing the sector's concerns – a large churn of people, large number of vacancies (particularly in entry level roles) and the potential impact of Brexit.
- GLL's vision for their workforce, the occupational maps they have developed and the graduate and management programmes they use.
- The impact of the apprenticeship levy for GLL, how they are utilising this to upskill their existing workforce and fill vacancies.
- GLL's commitment to supporting CIMSPA to develop the professional standards matrix, with a view to having a single qualifications framework that the whole sector can benefit from.



CIMSPA labour market intelligence and introducing member eLearning

Tara Dillon, Chief Executive Officer, CIMSPA

Ian Doherty, Client Services Manager, CIMSPA

CIMSPA LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Tara introduced the session with an overview of the CIMSPA labour market intelligence (LMI) process and explained that its aim is to provide an annual report on the state of the sport and physical activity sector's workforce. Tara outlined that there are two elements to the project – one survey aimed at employers and one aimed at employees.

The first set of surveys has now been completed and the report is currently being compiled. Tara reiterated the importance of as many employers and employees completing the surveys as possible to ensure the best possible data and made a call to action to employers present at the session to participate in future surveys.

Tara outlined that this session would focus on some of the heading figures and that the full report will follow within the next 4-6 weeks. CIMSPA employer partners will get a free copy of the report, whereas there will be a fee for non-partners.

Headline figures

Q. What is the male to female split within our sector?

A. 54% male – 46% female

Q. Is there a gender pay gap?

A. Yes average male salary £31.5k, average female salary £24.6k (gap of £6,950)

Q. Diversity – percentage of white people in our sector?

A. 96%

Q. How long do employees stay in their current job role?

A. 5 years

Q. What are the top five customer complaints?

A. Activity / class / session quality, centre cleanliness, staff helpfulness, staff attentiveness, broken equipment.

Q. Percentage of turnover spent on training?

A. 0.5%



Detailed breakdown

A more detailed drill down into the statistics revealed that 60% of respondents were from a management role, with 40% being from technical roles with the top 5 of each being:

Tara then outlined that the data showed that females tended to be paid more in technical roles and males more in management roles. The rationale behind this could be due to females taking time out of employment to have children. When they seek employment again after a number of years they are placed at the bottom of the pay scale as opposed to their male counterparts who have amassed additional years of experience and have worked their way up the pay scale.

Additionally technical roles tend to be more flexible and offer those with children wider choice over the hours they work.

Tara then moved on to discuss the differential between full and part time work between males and females. The data showed that the majority of people in full time management roles are male, whereas females take the lead in higher technical roles.

Tara summarised that this shows our sector is not overly adept at being flexible with initiatives such as job shares for more senior management positions such as general managers / CEOs and is something we should look into to allow females who have chosen to have children the opportunity to take on these more senior roles.

Diversity

More positively, our sector seems to perform well in relation to diversity for those with a disability, condition or illness. 12% of respondents identified they had a disability, condition or illness with the highest percentage being autism and dyslexia.

- 35% of these were employed in a technical role
- 65% of these were employed in a management role

Tara summarised that these figures are in fact higher than the average uptake in the same roles. So, we offer equal opportunities but our profile of BAME and disabled employees is starting from a low base.

Are we looking after our staff?

On average we are keeping our staff for longer (5 years) – this has risen from 3 years when a survey of this last type was carried out.

More men are looking to leave their current job than women (41% male, 29% female). The main reasons for wanting to leave were: salary, lack of benefits and poor management.

75% of men in emerging manager roles (duty manager etc.) are currently looking for a new job. These are predominantly 25–32 year olds. Scarcely 40% of these are looking for a new job outside of our sector.

With the exception of group exercise and contract manager, women stay in their roles longer than men, but more contract managers are looking for a new job even though they have the second highest average salary.



Training needs

A clear majority of those asked were looking for more training in management, and employers too highlighted first line management as their training priority. This would go some way to explaining why first line management is where we currently see the biggest drop off of staff leaving employment. If we were to address training in this area we may see higher rates of retention.

Employers believe they get the most value out of leadership, communication skills and customer management training areas, yet have identified leadership, managing others and business planning as most required for management training.

Employees say that the most common training they receive is the statutory health and safety courses with customer management and team management at the bottom of the list.

Training split within the sector:

Tara asked the question, Why do we stop training our best so young and at a pivotal point in their careers? Is it down to spend?

- 0.5% of turnover spent on training.
- How much more is spent on recruiting and retraining?
- So how much is our sector's staff attrition really costing?

Tara summarised if we invested more in quality training and CPD for our employees it would save an awful lot of money in the long term. Employers said that staff poor performance costs up to 60 hrs per year and around £5.5K, this does not include the cost of losing custom – real or potential? Do we really need to revisit that investing in meaningful training, particularly in management as this will make a difference to retention and bottom line!

What is CIMSPA doing to help?

Tara outlined the importance of quality assured training and that CIMSPA has a growing network of approved skills development partners that employers can tap into. Furthermore CIMSPA is going one step further to help address training around management by launching the CIMSPA Academy.

CIMSPA ACADEMY

Ian introduced the concept of the CIMSPA Academy – an online eLearning platform with over 2000+ pieces of training covering the following topics:

- Communication skills
- Managing people
- Business management
- Compliance and regulatory
- Coaching skills
- Personal development
- Written English
- IT Skills



- Customer service
- Sales
- Finance

Phase 1 of the CIMSPA Academy is to give CIMSPA members access to the platform, included in their membership subscription fee. When the academy is launched members will have access to 34 pieces of learning, with more being added on a quarterly basis, giving ongoing access to varied CPD opportunities.

The value of the whole training package is in the region of £10k – so within the context of a membership costing £30 – £230, this provides excellent value for money.

Ian outlined that the CIMSPA Academy is currently being piloted by our partners at Active Nation. Following a successful pilot, CIMSPA plans to launch the academy to all of its existing members in April.

Phase 2 – Employer Partners

Ian then went on to outline phase 2 of the CIMSPA Academy, aimed at providing employers with a bespoke training management system for their organisation. They will be able to:

- Have their own branded version of the CIMSPA Academy and select which of the 2000+ courses they would like their employees to have access to – depending on their training needs analysis.
- Monitor compliance – using a traffic light system, individual employees will be monitored to ensure they are completing the training you have set as their employer.
- Performance management – can be tied into personal development reviews. Line managers can send courses to individuals to complete following their development reviews to ensure ongoing CPD and continual improvement.
- Coaching and mentoring – the system allows you to setup an internal network to put junior colleagues in touch with senior colleagues with similar interests / skill sets to aid with mentoring, coaching and personal development.
- Staff surveys – a functional 360 feedback system allows employers to gain valuable feedback from their employees to help with morale and retention.
- Programme authoring – perhaps the most powerful element of the system – allow employers to create their own eLearning courses. Move your inductions online, upload policies and procedures and report on when employees have downloaded / read them.

Ian went on to outline this platform will be a major benefit to employers. A pilot will be taking place over the summer with partners at Everybody Sport and Recreation. Following a successful pilot CIMSPA hopes to have this product available later in 2017.

Ian mentioned that this product would be exclusively for CIMSPA employer partners and those who are not currently in partnership could sign up online.

Tara outlined that whilst this product will not be free for employers and an exact costing model has not yet been agreed, it will be significantly cheaper than existing off the shelf products which cost upwards of £70k and bespoke products costing upwards of £250k.

All CIMSPA employer partners will be contacted once further information is available.



The business case for diversity

Hilary Farmiloe, Aspire Instructability (chair)

Shaheen Bi, Sporting Equals

Ruth Holdaway, Women in Sport

Barry Horne, English Federation of Disability Sport

Some interesting points were raised in this discussion on diversity. Ruth Holdaway, chief executive of Women in Sport, explained that while every publicly funded governing body of sport must have a minimum of 30 per cent of one gender on their board, gender diversity at leadership level is actually good for business.

“Organisations that have 30 per cent or more of women on their board do better than those that don’t. Women aren’t a minority group; they make up 51 per cent of the population, so why would you want to exclude half of your talent pool?” she asked.

On average, the national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport are achieving 30 per cent board gender diversity, but to this diversity needs to be sustainable with a pipeline of female leadership talent within sport.

As such, Holdaway outlined the following guidelines to help organisations become more gender diverse:

- Develop an effective recruitment and retention strategy which focuses on attracting diverse talent and nurtures it
- Promote a wide range of flexible working practices
- Involve men and women in achieving the shared goal of gender equality
- Challenge gender stereotypes; they limit women to certain roles and excludes them from others
- Modernise organisational structures and practices to enable more women to rise up through the organisation.

Disabled people make up 20 per cent of the population and are disproportionately keen to be active. Yet, said Barry Horne, chief executive of the English Federation of Disability Sport, there is a fear around employing disabled people, exacerbated by the lack of understanding about different impairments and health conditions.

If organisations want a more diverse customer base, they need to think differently about employing disabled people, said Horne.

“Disabled people are effective employees; they take less sickness absence than non-disabled people, said Horne. They also bring their lived experiences as disabled people to an organisation’s thoughts and process, which is an important perspective and adds value.”

Shaheen Bi, head of research & projects at Sporting Equals, presented some sobering statistics: only one CEO of 68 audited NGBs and 26 of 601 board members are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background.



She said organisations need to bring in more skills to better reflect the audiences they serve, understand cultural sensitivities and the barriers some groups face in accessing programmes.

Hilary Farmiloe, project manager of Aspire Instructability and chair of this session, described the sector as being in a chicken and egg situation.

“We’ve got to get more populations into the sector to recruit more diversely. And we can’t lay this just at the door of employers; it applies to training providers and awarding organisations too. We need a foundation strategy to enable diversity in the sector and provide opportunities to ensure people come up through the ranks.”

Suggestions from the panel on how to recruit more diversely included changing the language used in advertising roles, creating a more diverse interview panel and considering new avenues for advertising jobs such as ethnic media. A look at the profile of applicants will quickly show if you are appealing to a diverse audience.



The Skills Agenda

Rob Johnson, Future Fit Training (chair)

Jenny Patrickson, Active IQ

Rob May, YMCA Awards

Rob May, director of YMCA Awards, launched the discussion by saying that both quality and qualifications were under attack. He described how awarding bodies are held to account through a regulatory framework which aims to ensure public confidence in qualifications. But asked what the repercussions would be for our system of education and employment if public confidence should diminish?

“Imagine a system where assessments are devised and planned by non-technical experts; a fully-functioning qualifications system is rapidly dismantled, with new assessment bodies popping-up and left to largely self-regulate; experienced regulators are largely ignored and qualifications are de-emphasised or left out of certain career pathways, even where the requirement for public trust is paramount. You don’t have to imagine it – these all features of emerging public policy,” he said.

May queried how we can preserve quality in an education and training landscape that is under attack from technologists and policy makers.

He outlined how the Sainsbury report, post-16 skills plan and apprenticeship reform programme perhaps represented policy developments based on some misconceptions about how our vocational qualifications system works; unrealistic timescales for developing new qualifications and implementing an effective change programme; and arguably a miscalculation of the public’s attitudes towards recognised qualifications.

It was noted that, in the post-16 skills plan, 15 new technical education routes were proposed, funded by a £500m investment.

However, whilst tailor, furniture maker, hairdresser and estate agent are included in the funded “T-Level” routes, fitness and physical activity professionals have been excluded – “it’s a shame that the government is funding education to treat the nation’s hairline rather than its waistline.”, May commented.

In this context, May asked how we can preserve quality in an education and training landscape that is under attack from technologists and policy makers.

“Firstly, it’s important to have a sector-led professional body which endorses only where quality can be demonstrated, but maintains the flexibility to endorse wherever it can be demonstrated.

Secondly, as a sector we must continue to converge and agree on acceptable standards of high quality – not just a minimum viable product for our learners. Finally, it’s crucial for us all to share a strong and united voice to not just challenge the government’s ‘anti-expert’ polemic which is undermining our sector, but to find and present a clear way forward, because the solution is not going to come from the government,” said May.



Rob Johnson, managing director of Future Fit Training, highlighted some of the findings of the “Raising the Bar” research report, which found that 84 per cent of employers have to provide additional training to fitness staff to ensure they are “work-ready”.

According to the research, 77 per cent of employers said they needed to provide social skills, 73 per cent staff needed behavioural change training and 60 per cent said staff required additional training in business acumen.

The research, conducted in partnership with CIMSPA and ukactive, also found that 100 per cent of employers said practical assessments should be completed on real clients, not simulated on peers and not accessed remotely.

Eighty eight per cent of employers believe there should be a minimum number of hours experience working in a gym included as part of their assessment strategy, while 84 per cent said that PT qualifications should take no less than six months to complete.

“At the moment, it can take as little as four weeks to qualify as a Level 3 PT. A NVQ Level 3 plastering course takes 10 weeks and a VRQ Level 2 hairdressing course takes up to 36 weeks. How can we be taken seriously as a sector if we don’t make our training and assessment more robust?” asked Johnson.

Thankfully things are changing, he said, with a review of standards and qualifications in the sector and CIMSPA tasked by the sector to establish a quality assurance process to validate the quality of training and assessment delivered against these standards.

Implementing a rigorous quality assurance process for both training providers and awarding organisations will result in highly trained fitness professionals that the industry can be proud of and that the health sector is happy to refer to.

“We all have to up our game and get behind CIMPSA if we are going to make difference,” he said.

In her talk on the cost of quality, Jenny Patrickson gave a useful insight into the world of an awarding organisation with an overview of the complex regulatory environment in which it operates. She explained how Active IQ had to remain compliant with over 150 conditions of recognition on a daily basis, had to adhere to the rules and regulations of various types of qualifications with the Institute of Apprenticeships soon providing another level of regulation. In addition, there is the cost of refreshing qualifications to meet the new qualifications framework.

Regulation is just one side of the equation, she said, the detailed process of refreshing and producing new qualifications is the other. Reducing the variability in the quality of training provision is another area which requires extensive resources.

Finally, Patrickson highlighted the cost of correction to ensure providers take corrective action where they have failed to demonstrate compliance, which can mean apply sanctions or even withdrawing approval altogether.



Measuring the impact of investing in quality

Nick Bradley, CEO, Premier Global

In his closing address, Nick Bradley, CEO of Premier Global, said he believed the sector could learn from some of the learning and development strategies that he has helped organisations such as Google, Nike and Apple deliver.

Bradley said the sector doesn't have a problem with the quantity of people wanting to join the industry, but there is a dire absence of quality.

“Building high-calibre fitness professionals is not about fast-tracking them through a course or qualification, it's about developing sustainable careers that, over time, increase capability, confidence, and ultimately, personal and economic value.”

Bradley highlighted the following principles of effective learning employed by global companies:

- Clearly defined learning pathways
- Greater focus on the learning experience
- Rigorous assessment – ensuring graduates are 'job ready'
- Pedagogy underpinned by science, data and analytics – enabled by technology
- A focus on performance outcomes; capability and competence mapped to clear business priorities.
- A continuous, collaborative and engaging journey

To move into the realm of excellence, Bradley believes there needs to be a move away from traditional knowledge transfer by didactic learning to blending learning where technology is the key enabler.

Bradley referred to his work with Google on its flagship education programme Google Squared, a successful and immersive programme created to combat industry challenges around hiring, developing and retaining great digital talent.

Bradley ended his presentation with a six point process to measure impact, based on clear learning outcomes, that enables business growth:

- Start with your business strategy, specifically the objectives/priorities – what will it take to win?
- Identify current baseline, focusing on skills & behaviours – gap analysis vs. business needs
- Align learning outcomes with priorities at a business, team and individual level – prioritise, address gap
- Set measurable KPIs that ladder back to clear performance metrics – best way to determine ROI!
- Ensure that your learning design is 'blended' from the outset – invest in off-the-shelf technology; make the experience engaging
- Test and trial first, then analyse and review – establish control groups, measure impact, roll out





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