

COMING TOGETHER

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POST-PANDEMIC

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S&PA Professional

ISSUE 38 SUMMER 2020

 **CIMSPA**

THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

I N T O



T H E

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gyms, leisure
centres and
pools look
like after
lockdown?

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**Richard Clay, Group Spa Revenue Manager,
Macdonald Hotels and Resorts**



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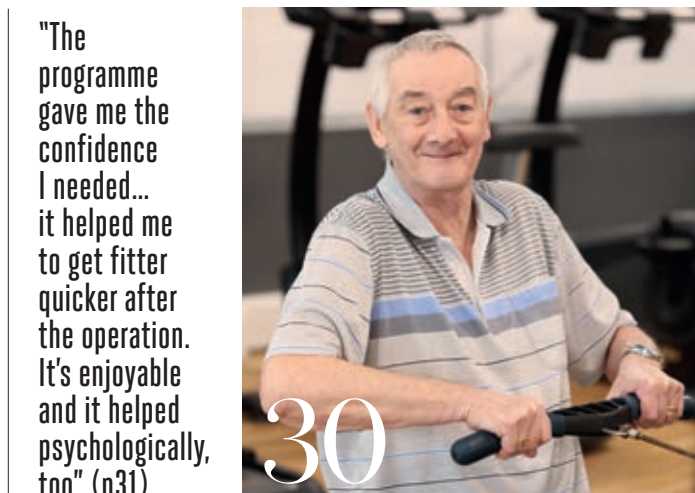
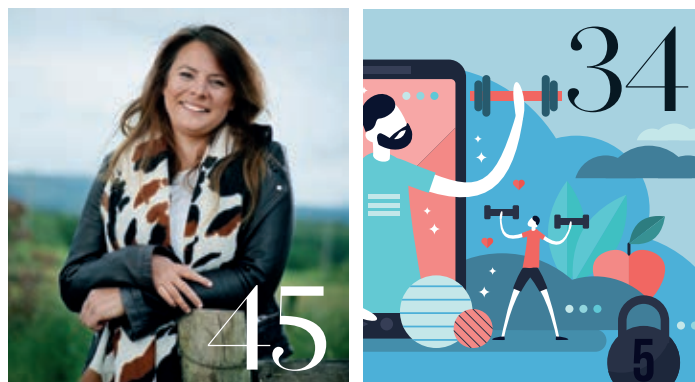
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"The programme gave me the confidence I needed... it helped me to get fitter quicker after the operation. It's enjoyable and it helped psychologically, too" (p31)



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UPFRONT

EDITORIAL

► DeeDee Doke

S&PA and Covid-19



There is life on the far side of lockdown, and I can't wait to take part again

When the UK workforce was advised to work from home in mid-March, there was a week before lockdown when the gyms, pools and leisure facilities were still open. It was wonderful for me – working from home, I went to gym or pool classes at lunch and then again in the evenings. Then all the gyms, pools and classes shut down. And there was nothing except online offerings (better than nothing and well done to the instructors, but there's no substitute for a pool). My desire to jump in a swimming pool is balanced with a concern that we need some caution is necessary to

get rid of the virulent virus. But how I miss the pools.

As you can imagine, a lot of the stories we tell in this issue are related to Covid-19, from advice about helping your employees return to the workplace to raising your awareness about business disruption insurance to thinking ahead to the new gym/leisure/fitness workplaces of the not-so distant future.

And sadly, we say farewell to industry grandee Steve Franks of Water Babies in one of those stories, our Sporting Life feature. But also catch up with Olympic medallist-turned-entrepreneur Liz Johnson,

our Sport Ambassador. We also look at the opportunities to help transgender S&PA participate more and at an initiative that helps surgery patients get fitter before they undergo their operations.

Have a joy-filled, healthy, active summer – see you on the other side of lockdown!



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CIMSPA

S&PA News

A round-up of the latest developments in the industry



STEMMING THE STAFF EXODUS

By DeeDee Doke

The loss of significant numbers of workers in the sport & physical activity industry is a potential outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic upset, CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon warned the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sport.

Speaking at a virtual gathering on 12 June, Dillon cited results from two workforce surveys carried

out by CIMSPA during the lockdown that reflected respondents' concerns. Five per cent of them plan to leave, or have left, the sector, a "significant number", she said, with a further 35% working elsewhere to support their income.

"We've no indication whether or not that 5% will return," Dillon said. "That's somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 people."

Dillon said: "Stadiums are stadiums and tennis courts

are courts – but they're nothing without people."

She was one of three speakers at the event, co-ordinated by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA). Also speaking were Mark Gannon, CEO of UK Coaching, and Mel Marshall, Olympian and coach to star swimmer Adam Peaty.

Ben Bradley MP and private secretary at the Business Department chaired: James Sunderland MP; Dr Luke Evans MP of the

Health and Social Care Select Committee; Lord Addington, Liberal Democrat spokesperson for sport in the House of Lords; and Baroness Massey attended. Delegates from around 80 S&PA organisations were also there.

Dillon warned that many were expecting that facilities will reopen from 4 July at the earliest, "but the reality is... operators are going to be stymied about how they can service the numbers. For the foreseeable future, operators are going to see around 40% of their turnover with 100% costs."

She also suggested that the sector should look to apprenticeships to fill the workforce ranks, especially during the 12-to-15 month recovery period.

Dillon did sound a positive note: the continued and growing interest in learning from within the sector, as well as from people who "are actually looking to join".

And Gannon noted that UK Coaching has been working with MIND to offer mental health and wellbeing as a course for coaches "so that when we come out of this carnage, coaches are well-equipped to understand signs of distress or mental health issues".

It is understood that plans have now been made for talks between CIMSPA and Lord Addington.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

HOW A CONFIDENT TEAM HAS MADE THE MOST OF REMOTE POSSIBILITIES

By Roisin Woolnough

Sport for Confidence places health professionals and specialist coaches into leisure centres to support people who face barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. On 20 March, Covid-19 abruptly ended the organisation's on-site work when the government announced that all leisure centres had to close. Undeterred, on 1 April, Sport for Confidence launched Stay Connected, its remote service for vulnerable adults in Essex.

Through Stay Connected, Sport for Confidence has redeployed all of its occupational therapists and sports coaches to deliver an 'at home' service. As well as supporting existing clients, Sport for Confidence is taking referrals from 14 Active Networks, from learning disability and autism social work teams and Supported Living providers.

Jake Turner, operations manager at Sport for Confidence, says the remote service has been very successful.

"We are really grateful that we've been able to continue an adapted version of the model," he says. "We've clients who normally come to our sessions once, twice or three times a week, and being able to stay in touch with them virtually has done a lot for their emotional and mental wellbeing."

Stay Connected is supporting about

320 Essex residents a week, and has taken on 100 new referrals.

During April and May it had contacted 751 individuals under the new scheme, delivered 2,631 interventions and shared 965 home physical activity workouts. "Everyone knows we're always a phone call away," says Turner.

Megan Potts, a Sport for Confidence occupational therapist in the Chelmsford and Southend area, says she calls new referrals for a chat and to talk about issues such as establishing a daily routine, the importance of self-care, healthy eating, rest and physical activity. They also discuss goal-setting and ways to engage with family, friends and neighbours. "We see how they are getting on, what their structure is like, and we can provide personalised interventions and videos."

Potts says there are structured physical activity Zoom sessions each day that clients can access, covering activities such as football skills, dance and fun fitness, and she is looking at setting up a sing-and-stretch class.



In touch: residents at Fenham Lodge in Hatfield Peverel in Essex. Sport for Confidence has been able to stay in touch with its participants there

MESSAGE FROM CIMSPA CEO



TARA DILLON ON HOW SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WILL EMERGE STRONGER

How our world has changed since the last edition of *S&PA Professional*. We completed the spring issue just as the government ordered the closure of all gyms and leisure centres across the UK to halt the spread of the coronavirus, plunging the sector and its workforce into the unknown.

Over the intervening three months we have worked tirelessly to support the sector through the crisis, with practical information and guidance, as well as free products and services via our new Stronger Together digital hub. This hub is providing critical support for all those working in the sector and has been made possible thanks to the generosity of a host of organisations, whose benevolence has been truly inspiring. You can learn more about it on page 12.

While the end is not yet in sight, and the future still remains uncertain for many in the industry, we are gradually moving towards the recovery stage. There's no doubt that we will emerge into a different world, one in which I'm convinced sport and physical activity will play a more critical role than at any other time in our history. Government and its medical advisors have been extolling the virtues of exercise throughout the pandemic, so now is the time to stake our claim and prove our worth.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

VIEWPOINT

LEONIE WILEMAN, CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER AT PREMIER SOFTWARE:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the leisure industry has been put under considerable strain. With the public instructed to stay at home, health clubs froze memberships and furloughed staff, with little assurance on when business would return to a 'new normal'.

However, one thing has been evident – the power of technology to bring people together and support businesses. Video conferencing apps such as Zoom have experienced exponential growth, and business management software has also stepped up to the bar.

System reports have provided help in forecasting the months ahead. Marketing tools have enabled clubs to stay in touch with their clients, extend memberships or offer refunds. Now, as the lockdown lifts, software will support businesses in their journey to reopening.

There will be an increased use of online booking and fast-track access to enable contactless check in. Online controls will help limit class sizes and outline opening hours. Booking slots will be extended to avoid crossover and allow time for cleaning. All the while, marketing will communicate that gyms are a safe environment.

Ultimately, technology will determine how quickly the leisure industry bounces back, and what life will look like post-pandemic.

HOW TO ATTRACT MORE TRANS PEOPLE TO GET ACTIVE

By Dean Gurden

The majority of transgender people avoid being open about their gender identity in sports clubs and fitness and leisure centres for fear of negative reactions from others, research suggests.

But sport & physical activity providers can help by educating staff about their use of language, putting a basic inclusivity

policy in place and incorporating non-binary terms on membership forms, S&PA professionals attending a webinar heard on 2 June.

As part of Pride Month, the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA) ran a series of free webinars offering insight, strategies and good practice for engaging LGBTQ+ people in sport and physical activity.

The first workshop, 'Including trans people in sport', was attended by a broad spectrum of representatives from National Governing Bodies, LGBTQ+ sports' organisations and Active Partnerships, as well as individual stakeholders, according to the SRA.

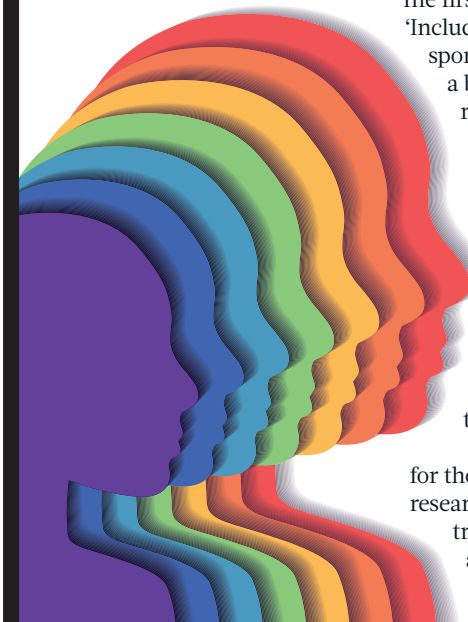
Setting the scene for the discussion was research conducted into trans people's athletic activity and participation at gym and leisure

facilities. A National LGB&T Partnership survey from 2016 revealed that 60% of trans people, rising to 64% of non-binary people, are not active enough for good health – compared with 33% of men and 45% of women in the general population.

A 2018 National LGB&T survey from the Government Equalities Office found that 62% of trans people avoid being open about their gender identity in sports clubs, fitness and leisure centres for fear of a negative reaction from others.

"A lot of activities, particularly team sports, are divided into men's and women's teams, and access to those binary options plainly needs to improve," says Simon Croft, who led the workshop and is director of professional and educational services at charity Gendered Intelligence. He adds: "It's not that non-binary people don't play in gendered teams. It's that it's often not a comfortable place to be – and the same goes for sports facilities in general."

Allied to this, and a key takeaway from the workshop, is the importance of treating elite and grassroots sports differently. "Historically, we've seen most sports looking to the International Olympic Committee for their standards of inclusion, which has actually been quite exclusive with fairly strict standards of eligibility," says Croft. "At grassroots level, we advocate starting from a basis of



UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

general inclusion and only excluding if strictly necessary. It should be about participation, having a good time, fitness and sociability.”

The issue of visibility was also discussed. “One of the key points was that it doesn’t matter how inclusive your sport, gym or leisure centre is, trans people aren’t even going to get to the front door if you’re not shouting about it,” says Croft.

“Especially if they go on your website, type in ‘trans’ and get nothing.”

Croft was keen to make people aware of the degree to which trans people stop participating in sport at or

around their period of transition. “They simply don’t go back,” he says. “It’s the whole issue of trying to move between teams or maybe moving out of a team and another team not existing for you to join, or you don’t feel welcome.”

The bottom line: trans people are as keen to be involved in sport and physical activity as any other sector of the population, but are having poor experiences and are underrepresented.

“We know things aren’t going to change overnight,” says Croft, “but we want to encourage people to think about what their sport could

look like in 20 years’ time.”

“There is so much S&PA providers can do to improve access,” he adds, “and a lot of it is straightforward.

Educating around language, putting non-binary options on membership forms, and getting some basic inclusive policy in place are all great steps in the right direction. It’s time to make sure trans people can thrive in sport.”

Gendered Intelligence is a trans-led charity offering professional training and consultancy to the SPA and all other sectors. Visit www.genderedintelligence.co.uk for details

CALL FOR MORE ACCESSIBILITY

The sport & physical activity sector has responded well to the Covid-19 pandemic with online provision. However, according to a paper by the Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP), this has led “to an increasing gap between those with digital skills and access, and those without. Public provision and the promotion of physical activity must ensure that it continues to be accessible to all.”

The LGPAP consists of six organisations: Community Leisure UK, Active Partnerships, APSE, Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association, Local Government Association and Sport England.

Published in June, the paper ‘Why an active community needs to be at the heart of renewal’ outlines a series of physical activity challenges and contributions. They include rebooting the economy through active travel, building stronger communities and service integrations, such as social care and community hubs.

“We recognise that activity levels are the result of a complex local system and no single intervention, or organisation, can achieve real and lasting change alone,” the paper says. “We believe a collaborative, whole-system approach is going to be even more important.”

HOW OLDHAM STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE

By Roisin Woolnough

The sporting facilities may be closed, but Oldham Leisure Centre (OLC) is still providing a community service. At the start of April, soon after lockdown began and leisure centres closed, OLC became a holding space for the Oldham Foodbank. Then, on 13 April, Oldham Foodbank moved into OLC. On 20 April, for safety reasons, the service became delivery-only.

“The food bank is usually in a small pub, but they couldn’t socially distance there,” says Kelly Tattersall, community development and partnership manager at OLC. “When it became clear



that demand for food parcels was growing, it made sense to use the leisure centre.” Many OLC staff have been furloughed, but some are working as volunteers, either sorting out food and delivering the parcels or in a wider capacity, such as the exercise referral staff helping the NHS by checking in on vulnerable people.

The operations are a partnership between OLC, Oldham Foodbank, Oldham Council and community

organisation Action Together, and from 30 March to 9 June, the food bank issued 2,224 vouchers, helping 3,344 adults and 2,038 children.

The search is under way for a new location for the food bank, as OLC hopes to open its doors to customers again soon. But Tattersall says the past few months have shown the importance of collaborative working. “We’ve been able to do so much,” she says. “I can truly see and feel partnership work, now. And it will make organisations stronger together. And it shows that leisure centres are at the heart of the community, in the way that schools are.”

UPFRONT

MOVERS & SHAKERS

NUFFIELD HEALTH

Dr Natalie-Jane Macdonald is the new chairman of the Board of healthcare charity Nuffield Health. She succeeds Russell Hardy, who is stepping down after eight years as chairman and a decade on the Nuffield Health Board.

PARKOUR UK

Dan Newton has been appointed chief executive of CIMSPA partner Parkour UK and the officially recognised national governing body for parkour and freerunning in the UK. Newton has held the role of interim CEO while on part-time secondment since September 2019 from his role of development director with Rounders England, a post he has held for nine years.

PARKOUR UK

Also at Parkour UK, the body has bolstered its board with the appointment of two new independent directors to help drive forward the 2020 strategy 'Moving with purpose'. The

appointees are **Natasha Preville** and **Hannah Holland**. Preville has previously launched a consultancy business focused on helping young people to identify and access opportunities to thrive within the culture, media and sports industries. Holland is a marketer who was previously a member of the senior management team at Rounders England.

PREMIER GLOBAL NASM

Dan Rees has been appointed managing director at fitness education provider Premier Global NASM to oversee the growth of the operation in the UK. Having joined the company in 2019 as commercial director, he will be responsible for the organisation's strategic leadership. In a company statement, Rees said he would be working through "close collaboration with CIMSPA" to match the needs of employers with the needs and aspirations of the workforce.

NEWS IN BRIEF

BAME DIVERSITY DRIVE

The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK) and the Black Swimming Association (BSA) have announced a new strategic partnership. The partnership aims to overcome barriers to water-based activity and promote inclusion in both aquatic activities and the wider leisure sector for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

A statement from the two organisations said that the BSA is the first organisation of its kind in the UK "set up as a voice, an advocate and a strategic agent for change, to drive forward participation, inclusion and diversity".

The statement quoted statistics that claim that 95% of black adults and 80% of black children in England do not swim.

AT THE HEART OF DUDLEY

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has committed £17.4m to a new leisure centre in the heart of the town centre. The council is working in partnership with Alliance Leisure, through the UK Leisure Framework, to create a venue that will occupy part of a council-owned car park.

It will include a 25-metre, eight-lane swimming pool, a teaching pool with spectator provision; sauna; a four-court sports hall; a 100-station fitness suite; two group exercise studios; an immersive cycle studio; a soft play area with catering facilities and a party room; a café; and a power-assisted exercise studio.

Work is due to be completed in October 2021, and Dudley's current leisure centre – located about a mile from the new venue – will remain open until then. The Alliance Leisure development team

includes construction specialist ISG and Robert Limbrick Architects. All works will be delivered via the UK Leisure Framework, owned by Denbighshire Council and managed by Denbighshire Leisure.

GO-AHEAD FOR MORPETH

In plans described as "ambitious, forward-looking and eagerly awaited", Northumberland County Council's strategic planning committee has given the go-ahead for a £21m new leisure centre in Morpeth.

According to the *Northumberland Gazette*, contractors will now be appointed so that work can begin on the new facility in the autumn, with an anticipated completion date of spring 2022. The original projected completion date was October 2021.

"Let's get on with it; let's get the economy going, which will be needed after everything that's going on," the paper quoted Councillor Barry Flux as saying.

The leisure provision will include a six-lane swimming pool with spectator gallery, a learner pool, spa facilities, a four-court sports hall, a new 100-station fitness suite, a dedicated spinning studio, large fitness studios, a café and soft play area.

The paper reported that the proposals incorporate a new community services hub that would relocate the town's library to a previous site, a customer service centre and a new adult learning facility. A pedestrian boulevard would provide better connectivity with a nearby street.

Council leader Peter Jackson described the plans as "ambitious, forward-looking and eagerly awaited".

Compiled by DeeDee Doke

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

Following the agreement between CIMSPA and UK Coaching earlier this year to create a single directory for all exercise and fitness professionals, we have been working closely with UK Coaching to support this transition. By aligning our membership communications, we've been able to keep people up to the date about the process, helping to ensure the transition is as smooth and user-friendly as possible.

There are approximately 15,000 exercise and fitness professionals registered with the Register of Exercise Professionals, which stopped taking on new members and renewing the membership of existing ones on 31 May. The process of transferring REPs members to the new combined directory, hosted and managed by CIMSPA, began the next day, on 1 June, after almost 80% of REPs members responded positively to UK Coaching's request to transfer their membership data to the sector's chartered institute.

Naturally, professionals will be keen to know if their REPs-endorsed qualifications are eligible for CIMSPA membership. The CIMSPA team have examined all the data and we are pleased to say that we have procedures in place to ensure the process is as smooth as possible.

The same applies for continuing professional development. The great news is that any of the training providers that are endorsed by REPs, and the CPD they provide, are also endorsed by CIMSPA.

We have been pleasantly surprised about how engaged exercise and fitness professionals have been in the process. All members are keen to take advantage of all the benefits offered by CIMSPA membership, including access to UK Coaching's comprehensive learning and development platform, which holds a wealth of resources.

A new information hub – Onboard – has been created on the CIMSPA



TIME TO GET ONBOARD

The process of transferring professionals from the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) to CIMSPA's Exercise and Fitness Directory is well under way, as CIMSPA project manager Sara Wright explains

website to provide those making the transition from REPs to CIMSPA with information about the process.

Our partnership with the European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS) means that professionals with a CIMSPA membership will have portability in many countries worldwide.

This is a gradual transition, which will continue until 31 May 2021, by which time all REPs members who wish to will have moved across to CIMSPA membership. This means that all UK exercise and fitness professionals

will be able to maintain their professional status and recognition through the membership of a single industry directory, giving them access to the best learning and development opportunities and career development.

If you currently have REPs membership and are due to renew later on in the year, please be assured that your membership remains valid until the time of renewal. 📞

For more information, visit <https://www.cimspa.co.uk/our-work/cimspa-exercise-and-fitness-directory>

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

*The crisis has brought out the best in the sector, which has pulled together to support one and all, as **Phill Wright**, CIMSPA's business transformation manager, explains*

My PT Hub

My PT Hub, a fitness software provider for personal trainers, fitness professionals, gyms, clubs and boutique fitness centres, is giving free access to its app to new customers during the pandemic. The online web and mobile app enables organisations and individual practitioners to efficiently manage their businesses and relationships

with their clients, from admin and financials to tracking an individual's fitness progress and achievements.

My PT Hub has also created a 13-part video series, called Masterclass, to help professionals start, build and grow a successful online personal training business.

Phil Carr, the chief executive of My PT Hub, says: "If I don't support the

workforce right now and only use this as an opportunity to simply onboard thousands of paying customers, then the PT marketplace goes extinct, so I won't have a business.

"If I put people before profit and support them through this crisis, then at least I'll have a customer base who will support what we do in the future."

When the sector shut down on 21 March, there was a real sense of nervousness across the sports and physical activity sector. We were essentially paralysed. No one had experienced anything like it before, and at that stage, no one had any idea what the future would hold.

Our response was to create the Stronger Together digital hub. Launched just two weeks after lockdown, the aim was to coordinate expertise, advice and guidance from across the sector, including from partners such as Sport England, UK Coaching, ukactive and Community Leisure UK, and to offer support. This wasn't about companies pushing their products; this was about providers coming together to deliver practical assistance and resources to help the sector survive.

We did not want to make assumptions, so a key part of the project has been sticking to our mantra of leading by listening, so that we understood what was needed at each stage of the pandemic.

Stronger Together has therefore been underpinned by a strategy of research – sector-wide surveys conducted in three phases to ascertain the specific requirements of individuals, organisations and training providers.

The first survey, conducted from late March to April, was designed to understand the immediate impact of the crisis. The aim of the second survey, carried out from late April to May, was to ascertain how the sector was adapting to the changes in circumstances, how individual practitioners and businesses were switching to online delivery, etc. The third stage, which launched in June,

focuses on recovery as government restrictions eased.

The information and learnings gathered from these surveys have been – and are still being – used to shape Stronger Together. Almost 50 organisations have come forward to support the sector, some submitting multiple offers of help.

The nature of these products and services varies considerably. They include free education to allow sports and physical activity professionals to use their time in lockdown to upskill, and business support to provide operators with guidance on how to market, communicate and engage with their members outside of their facilities.

Many tech companies have given free access to their apps to allow PTs, coaches and organisations to connect with their clients and members remotely.

The phase one and two surveys identified high levels of anxiety among the sector's workforce, with some talking of depression. In response, we worked

with the mental health charity Mind, together with some of our education partners, to provide advice and support to help improve mental health and wellbeing.

We have also worked with our key partners to gain other insights to help the workforce. For example, throughout lockdown Sport England has carried out weekly surveys to understand the public's attitude to exercise, to note changes in their exercise behaviour, as well as their fears and concerns. The findings have been hugely useful and have allowed sports and physical activity professionals to adapt and shape what they do more effectively.

Another important strand of

Make the Comeback Campaign

TA6, powered by Alliance Leisure, created Make the Comeback to help leisure providers attract users back into their local fitness activities.

The flexible campaign is designed to be used across multiple activities and for all types of provider, from independent personal trainers to large, multi-site operators.

Working with CIMSPA to roll the campaign out nationally, TA6 is offering two campaign options, giving operators the flexibility to tailor it to their own brand, or to use the templates provided in the free Kickstarter pack.

All operators that sign up to the campaign will also be listed on www.makethecomeback.com, which will allow customers to find their local facilities and providers.

Free to all operators who want to use the Make the Comeback campaign during the re-launch phase of lockdown, the Kickstarter Pack provides:

- Logos
- Brand guidelines
- Campaign guide
- Video
- Templates
- Social media memes
- Press release
- Fitness article/blog
- Website listing on makethecomeback.com, and
- The option to purchase bespoke items online

"We want the industry to bounce back in the most effective way possible and this campaign is designed to do just that," says John Leaver, head of marketing at TA6.

"A key part of the project has been sticking to our mantra of leading by listening"

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



Stronger Together is the Facebook group. This has proved a great way of bringing our vast and varied sector together. It's a place where exercise and fitness professionals, sports coaches, health and wellbeing practitioners, and those working in leisure operations can ask questions, voice concerns, network and learn from experts in our weekly live sessions.

Recent contributors have included Dave Monkhouse, director of Leisure-net Solutions, who shared the findings of the Post Lockdown Recovery Survey, which attracted responses from more than 65,000 customers. It gave valuable insight into how they plan to use centres after lockdown and what is most important to them when accessing facilities.

This has been an unbelievably difficult time, but in some ways, it has also been a positive one. It's been heartwarming to see the level of support and generosity. People have gone above and beyond, and have never been so supportive. We've proved that we are stronger together, and I hope we can continue to collaborate and support each other as we move ahead. 🌊

For more information, visit <https://www.cimspa.co.uk/library-and-guidance/coronavirus---cimspa-briefings>

Taking action

We understood from the outset how devastating the pandemic was for the sector and immediately set about drafting a 12-week plan to steer us through. Our action plan centred around four pillars – vigilance, agility, visibility and leading through listening. We knew we had to do all of these things if we were to support the sector through this crisis.

CIMSPA is an organisation for the entire sector. Irrespective of whether we have a relationship with you, it's our priority to provide support and bring everyone together, which is how we arrived at Stronger Together.

We are working with partners who have an altruistic approach to getting the sector back on its feet. A large proportion of these are organisations we had never worked with before. They were very quick to approach us, allowing us to coordinate the support offered to provide solutions and directly target the problems that had been identified.

We are constantly listening. Members of the CIMSPA team sit on countless webinars and Facebook live sessions with people from across the board to get a clear understanding of where we can make the biggest impact. We are also engaging with employers and our partners to gather intelligence and respond as quickly as possible to their needs.

The quality of the relationships that we have built over the past few years has enabled us to have a wide reach and deliver help where it is needed most.

Things are moving at such a pace that we cannot stand still. For example, at the start of the lockdown, we wrote to the chancellor to ensure that self-employed sports and

physical activity professionals were included in the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Since then, we have:

- engaged with government and the DCMS throughout, which has helped result in easier access to business interruption loans and clarification around the guidance relating to outdoor exercise and personal training in England.
- worked with our partners, including Sport England, EMD UK, UK Coaching, ukactive and Active Partnerships, to develop new guidance for the safe delivery of online sport and physical activity in response to the dramatic rise in the number of people taking part exercise online. This clear advice ensures that both the workforce and participants can work online safely.
- engaged with multiple partners to develop a raft of reopening guidance to support the ukactive framework. Pragmatic and printable, the guidance is designed as a practical resource that operators and general managers can tap into to ensure they adhere to the reopening framework.

I know I've said this before, but what has been most obvious to me during this crisis, is the value of our people. We are nothing without them. As the popularity of PE with Joe so clearly demonstrates, people who engage with physical activity engage with people more than anything else. It's our workforce that keeps this sector alive and we will continue to support them through this crisis – however long it lasts.

TARA DILLON, CEO CIMSPA

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

COMING OUT OF THE CRISIS

Leading professionals from the sports and physical activity sector share their thoughts about the future in a post-Covid 19 world

THE SECTOR STILL HAS AN ISSUE WITH ITS IDENTITY. IS IT LEISURE OR IS IT HEALTH?

DUNCAN WOOD-ALLUM, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SLC

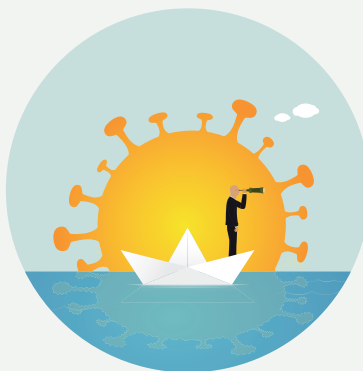
With public sector funding likely to dry up in the expected recession/depression post-Covid, councils will only be able to invest in services that reach their target communities. The leisure sector still plays too strongly to the traditional 20% of the population, and not to those who are likely to benefit the most from a more active lifestyle.

I have maintained this position for more than two decades: how will the health and public health professions (and budget holders) take our sector seriously when we are focused on the most healthy in society?

This crisis is the tipping point and we need to decide which side of the fence we are on.

The Covid crisis is exposing the fragility of many management models. Margins are very low. Overheads for smaller operators are proportionately too high. Net result? More leisure facilities will close in the next 12 months than the past 20 years.

Whatever the management model, it needs to benefit from economies of scale. Regional buying consortia, mergers and acquisitions will have to emerge. Small standalone organisations or smaller groups with their own overheads and management structures will, I fear, struggle to survive the crisis.



“The key questions are: what should the future recovery programme look like? Who are the priority user groups?”

We cannot assume government will come to the rescue with more revenue funding until we have won over the doubters as to our effectiveness in delivering real outcomes.

SLC is in discussions with leisure operators and councils on how to navigate through the Covid crisis. The key questions are: what should the future recovery programme look like? Who are the priority user groups?

In many cases, we as a sector have paid lip-service to those non-traditional

groups which we (including myself) have patronisingly called ‘hard to reach’ in the past. Lack of insight, empathy and understanding of broader cultural and socio-economic issues have further exacerbated inequalities of access.

Sport England has led the charge on supporting those in our society who would benefit the most from an active lifestyle. As public sector providers, I believe we should make this our mission, and use our commercial skills to make this a sustainable aim in the long term.

Easy it won’t be – but we like a challenge.

WE NEED TO CAPITALISE ON OUR LEARNINGS AND SUCCESSSES

STEVEN SCALES, CLIENT SERVICES DIRECTOR, UKACTIVE

The sector needs to demonstrate a level of pragmatism in the short term to ensure its sustainability. Operations have to be our immediate priority to guarantee the safety and confidence of our customers, while ensuring our employees also feel safe and valued.

Our research has shown that 42% of customers intend to return to our facilities in the first week of opening. We need them to come back after that first visit and also tell their friends, so customer service will be paramount.

In the medium term, we need to show that we are part of the solution and that we can work hand in hand

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with the health sector to improve public health. It is something we have talked about for some years, but now is the time to prove it.

The sector can be critical of itself at times, but there are plenty of examples of best practice across the industry.

The pandemic has allowed us to reflect, both on what we are good at and where we could improve. We need to capitalise on our learnings and successes, align with social prescribing and roll out best practice to ensure a consistent approach across the UK.

Consistent benchmarking, applied to business performance as well as the social impact, will be key to proving the value of the sector and our contribution to the wider community.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that a collective voice, nuanced with individual identities, can accelerate our position in the eyes of decision makers and, importantly, society as a whole.

It's important to have a long-term vision, but we need to have solid foundations in place to ensure stability as we set our course for the future.

LEISURE, SURVIVE OR THRIVE – IS A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR LEISURE NECESSARY?

**MARK TWEEDIE, CEO, COMMUNITY
LEISURE UK**

'Whole-systems approach', 'place and asset-based development' – these terms are about developmental thinking and collaborative ways of working that are typical of progressive leisure providers.

There are powerful examples of leisure services that reach out into communities and deliver better

outcomes for the most vulnerable affected by health inequalities, including the remarkable contribution by many providers as part of the co-ordinated Covid-19 public service response, and also examples of collaboration, such as GM Active.

But, does the wider public sector recognise leisure as a major public asset with a significant contribution to build and maintain stronger healthier communities? Or is leisure generally perceived as a facility, asset-management function, that exists to maximise net operational costs?

However leisure is recognised, it is a valuable and cherished public service and we need to be careful not to undermine the efforts of the hard-working, passionate people who work in it – they are capable, adaptable, multi-skilled and its greatest asset.

Hardly having recovered from austerity, Covid-19 has struck a knockout blow, the legacy of which may last a decade. It will mean unpalatable public sector expenditure decisions jeopardising leisure assets and threatening to deepen the health inequalities exacerbated by Covid-19.

The real value and untapped potential of leisure is its cost-saving contribution to wider health and social services and consequently the wider economy. Progressive leisure providers have already embarked upon the noble

journey to optimise their value by focusing more resources to support the most vulnerable and by moving from fitness per se to wellness, with person-centred approaches to maximise physical and mental health.

Examples of this best practice have become less exceptional, but there is still much work to do develop and scale it. However, the financial consequences of Covid-19 risk leisure providers defaulting to survival mode, stifling the appetite and means for such progressive developments.

By better identifying its value and potential to build and maintain stronger healthier communities, the sector can justify a greater share of scarce public

**“The real value
and untapped
potential of
leisure is its
cost-saving
contribution to
wider health”**



resources. But to deliver consistently and at scale, the sector must first unite and overcome the barriers to collaboration created by the different delivery models and the perverse consequences of competitive tendering processes and output-focused contracts.

Covid-19 provides a call to action for the sector to unite behind a new bold and brave vision to release the untapped potential of the sector, key for the sector to thrive in the future. A groundbreaking national strategy for leisure can present the united vision and articulate what success looks like, how it will be measured and how leisure will be supported by the wider public sector to successfully achieve its

potential. This could be the birth of a national wellness service sitting alongside our beloved NHS.

REPAIR OR RENEWAL – WE DO HAVE A CHOICE **MARTYN ALLISON, SOCIAL CHANGE AGENT AND INFLUENCER**

A few years ago, I challenged the sector in terms of its failure over 40 years to address the challenge of inequality. While there has been marginal improvement, activity levels, particularly among the most deprived communities, were no different to those in the 1980s when the 'Sport for All' campaign was launched. I asked at the time if we simply have an empathy gap.

Just as the epidemic was breaking, Sir Michael Marmot reported on his 10-year review of health inequalities in the UK. He highlighted that in those 10 years the gap between the richest and poorest had remained firmly entrenched and for some people become worse, and that austerity had hit the poorest the hardest.

So it is no surprise to see that the coronavirus itself is also hitting the poorest communities the hardest, and I suspect the economic fall-out will equally hurt them the most.

At the start of the crisis I wrote suggesting that the scale of what the sector faced in lockdown, in recovery and over the next few years, would be immense. We could focus on trying to repair it, which I felt was unrealistic, or we could acknowledge it is already broken and grasp the opportunity to fundamentally reshape what we do and how we do it. We could try to renew it.

I suggested in a subsequent article

that renewal must involve adopting the approach proposed by Sir Michael, namely 'proportionate universalism'. Now the term may put you off, but the concept should not.

His premise is that we address health inequalities by providing something for everyone, but provide the most to those who need it the most. In a subsequent article I have shown – with evidence – that the sector fundamentally fails to work to this model. In fact, our usage patterns in terms of serving deprived communities and lower socio-economic groups absolutely follows Sir Michael's life expectancy graph. We tend to provide more for the better off and the least for the less well off.

As we try to deal with recovery in a climate of major reductions in both government and council funding, I fear there is a real danger that even our limited attempts to address inequalities will now fall off a cliff as income generation again takes centre stage. Hoping that national messaging about the importance of exercise will make this challenge easier is, at best, naïve.

The only way we can avoid this is by stopping to think – now – about what sort of future we as a sector actually want to create, who needs physical activity and health improvement the most and working across the system collaboratively to create this future.

It will mean some hard decisions driven by collaborative leadership. What emerges could bear little relationship to what we had before, but it could potentially place the sector at the centre of making a real difference to people's lives. 🌱



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QUEST REVIEW

GET FIT FOR BUSINESS AND PLAN TO REOPEN POST-COVID

Right Directions offers strategy plans and clinics for operators emerging from months of lockdown

With UK lockdown restrictions beginning to ease, Right Directions (RD) has developed a strategic reopening plan and a series of free online Fit for Business Covid-19 clinics to support leisure operators as they emerge from many months of closure. The Covid-19 Health & Safety Re-mobilisation Plan and Checklist forms part of CIMSPA's official coronavirus guidance on its website.

Caroline Constantine, MD of RD, says: "Businesses in public-facing sectors are now planning for reopening and strategising to recoup some of the losses they have suffered as a result of the government's response to the pandemic.

"Our Covid-19 Health & Safety Re-mobilisation Plan and Checklist provides a helpful framework for this, based on our decades of experience in health and safety compliance. As the government and Public Health England delivers more clarity on when health clubs and leisure centres can open and what restrictions will remain, we will continually update our plan to keep clients informed."

RD has also been running fully-booked Fit for Business clinics three times a week, with 250 people keen to

prepare their businesses for reopening. Topics cover everything from admission control, cleaning regimes and virus prevention to signage and 'the legal bit'.

"The raft of measures operators have taken to survive the pandemic include staff redundancies and furloughing," says Constantine. "As they prepare for reopening their doors to customers, further HR decisions will need to be made; and the 'Four S's': Spacing, Sanitising, Signage and Smiling will need to be observed. Our guidance document, alongside the regular clinics, will support businesses to reopen with confidence."

RD's action plan encourages companies to establish a response team to set out a timeline. It recommends clear communication internally and externally, announcing the planned date for reopening and setting milestones to enable effective operations from the start.

The plan sets out advice on re-engaging staff or recruiting new team members, delivering training where necessary, to enable safe supervision of facilities. In terms of reviving revenue, it identifies work that will need to be done by marketing and sales teams, liaising with existing and new clients and reinstating any frozen payments.

Tara Dillon, CEO of CIMSPA, says: "This comprehensive overview of a facility reopening management process covers issues including risk assessment principles, staff information and cleaning, and is all presented in a clear and concise timeline that will help operators play every step of the way. As a CIMSPA partner, we are pleased to be able to offer Right Directions' advice to the industry via our ReOpen guidance hub, alongside a raft of other industry guidance to help our nation's sport and physical activity facilities plan for their reopening in a safe and effective way."

As lockdown restrictions ease, RD will also be offering on-site risk assessments, in addition to its virtual support system, and pre- and post-opening inspection audits and procedure reviews, to ensure every aspect of the facility is in line with health and safety legislation and code of practice guidance, with statutory inspections up to date.

RD's re-mobilisation plan and checklist can be found on the ReOpen page of CIMSPA's library and guidance website section, where you can also sign up for the Fit for Business Covid-19 clinics. Alternatively you can email info@rightdirections.co.uk. 

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AGENDA

S&PA SECTOR

By Dean Gurden

POST-PANDEMIC activity

When the time comes, what will the sector look like and how will it operate in the wake of Covid-19?

Like so many other areas of business, the sport and physical activity sector has been decimated by Covid-19, with gyms, swimming pools and leisure centres lying empty as they wait for the all-clear to reopen.

If there can ever be said to be a silver lining to the ravages of coronavirus, it's the heightened awareness of the importance of exercising and staying fit. Research by Savanta ComRes, commissioned by Sport England, shows that two-thirds of adults (63%) believe it is more important to be active now than before the crisis. But just as governments and epidemiologists have struggled to anticipate the route of the disease, one of the hardest things to predict is human behaviour. Will people really rush back to gyms and leisure centres or will fitness habits have changed forever?

"People may decide they want to do more activity at home and that they don't want to go back to paying so much for their fitness activities," says Lisa Wainwright, CEO at the Sport and Recreation Alliance, "but who really knows? Having spent so long confined to their homes, maybe it'll be the opposite. Personally, I think people will return to the likes of dance studios and gyms because of the social element."

But in returning to these facilities, which ones will still be there, what will they look like and how will they function? Ian Mullane, CEO and founder of Keepme, a tool that helps health and fitness businesses retain members, believes large numbers of operators will go out of business. "Sadly, many will never reopen their doors," he says. "And some of those that do manage to reopen will unfortunately close again in a very short period of time."

Mullane paints a dismal picture of many operators limping on while ▶

Digital fitness

"Digital consumption of fitness is the biggest trend we will see in the next 12-18 months," says Martin Franklin, CEO – Europe at CIMSPA partners Les Mills International. But he warns that consumers are now more aware than ever before of what quality content looks like. "Content creation has exploded, but the overall experience of this content varies massively as fitness operators navigate a potentially brand-new space," he says.

Ian Mullane, CEO and founder of Keepme, also offers a warning in skewering what he sees as a pervading belief that operators need to be working on their digital offerings to successfully come out of lockdown. "With very few exceptions, that is the wrong thing to do," he says. "It's an incredibly challenging business, not only to produce high-quality content, but then to monetise that service."

Mullane points to Peloton, the major leader in this field, which lists itself as a media production company and not a fitness company, because that is its core business.

"Organisations will feel under pressure to deliver digital content very quickly, but unless you are a brand with a strong following – Gymbox, for example – it will be incredibly difficult to get people interested in your particular offering," says Mullane. "And even if during the lockdown period you managed to produce some quality content, you then need to do that day-in, day-out."

Mullane is not alone in urging operators looking to develop a digital offering to do it through partnerships with those that know what they're doing, and not to take their eye off their bricks and mortar operations.

"Some operators will be very happy to try

innovative approaches online and others won't," says Lisa Wainwright, CEO of the Sport and Recreation Alliance. "But it's important that you remember what your expertise is. If it's not online training, then don't go there. Leave it to somebody that has that digital experience and skills. To be honest, I think it'll all be about delivering a blended offering."

"Online has been on the horizon for a long time," adds Tara Dillon, CEO of CIMSPA, "but if I was going to be critical of our sector, it's

that we've simply been waiting for it to happen to us. Coronavirus has obviously brought it to the fore. But the reality is that customers remain loyal to instructors as opposed to the flashiness of a facility. So operators need to make sure the online offering is wrapped around their brand and people."

"It's important that you remember what your expertise is. If it's not online training, don't go there"



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“As in any recession, those that are cashed up and well-resourced will be able to do quite well”

laudable government incentives give them the bare bones to be able to survive. But the moment this help diminishes or is taken away they could fold if they don't have the necessary traction to keep going.

And it's the boutique sector that most concerns Mullane. “It's produced some great products, brands and communities,” he says, “but their business models rarely rely on membership and are based on class packs or ‘pay as you go’, and their cost structures lack the flexibility to allow them to weather long-term storms. The vast majority of costs are tied up in property. There's often very little scalability or ability to adapt to what will be an incredibly difficult 18-24 months.”

Thankfully Mullane is more upbeat about the budget sector's ability to bounce back faster than the midmarket and high-end operators. “They're taking up a smaller proportion of people's discretionary spend and are therefore likely to see less attrition,” he says.

Global fitness authority Emma Barry is also quick to point out that if you look at the last two recessions, the health and fitness sector came back relatively

Jobs

Just as sports facilities and operations must adapt to a coronavirus world, so too must the people working in the industry. Jobs are obviously going to change, from embracing new cleaning regimes to delivering services in different ways.

As global fitness authority Emma Barry says: “If clubs and centres are running half-occupancy with less people able to be in classes or use facilities at any one time – and all of this in the context of a digitally enhanced environment that could presumably take jobs – then there's going to be a shift in the skillsets required. Operators will be resourcing an on-and-offline expression of their brand, so staff roles will need to be recut to reflect this.”

Phil Carr, My PT Hub's CEO, agrees, especially when it comes to personal trainers (PTs). “The lockdown period has transitioned PTs away from thinking of online training as a ‘nice to have’ to being an absolute necessity – and not just for the next six to eight weeks, but as an insurance policy for their jobs in the future.” He foresees a bit of a cull coming where those that haven't taken this opportunity to invest in themselves will get left behind.

It's a matter of flexibility, believes Martin Franklin, CEO – Europe at Les Mills International. “PTs may have a network linked to a club, but they will also need to function as a virtual coach,” he says.

“They may spend 50% of their time training people in person and the other half coaching people online.

The current environment opens up the marketplace for whole new skillsets, and as an industry we

need to make sure our people are trained for this change.”

Ultimately, Lisa Wainwright, CEO of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, is heartened by what she has witnessed so far. “Our members have been incredibly adaptable in what they're offering and so has the workforce,” she says. “Many have been furloughed, which is an experience they won't have been through before. Even then, many have been volunteering in various activities to contribute back to society. I genuinely think the workforce will become more resilient because they will be challenged.”



quickly. "It had a lot more resilience than other retail sectors, so it's important not to lose sight of that," she says.

However, she accepts that all organic growth will cease for the foreseeable future. "And there's definitely going to be a lot of M&A [merger & acquisition] activity. Stronger brands will be in a position to pick up the operators and chains that are suffering badly," Barry says. "There'll be a massive restructuring of the entire industry. And, as in any recession, those that are cashed up and well-resourced will be able to do quite well. There's always some that are well-positioned to capitalise on a crisis like this."

And what about the bricks and

mortar facilities themselves? How will they adapt to this new world order? Probably the only thing we know for certain is that operations will be severely restricted. "It's going to be a case of social distancing in all fitness classes, only using every second machine, renting out only half the equipment and cleaning multiple times a day," says Barry. "All of this has to be the reality of a phase-one reopening."

It's certainly going to be demanding, agrees Tara Dillon, CEO of CIMSPA. "The obvious challenge will be that not all areas of a leisure centre or gym can open at full capacity," she says. "I really don't think exercising in dance studios or doing group exercise sessions can be achieved in the same way as previously. If you can put 20 people in a great big sports hall, then good for you, but most operators have dance studios that are a lot smaller. Boutique gyms will struggle to do this."

And with social distancing measures likely to stay in place for some time, the whole sector will need to adapt to this reduced occupancy, agrees Martin Franklin, CEO – Europe at Les Mills International. "An ordinary timetable may have 10 classes with approximately 30 people in them, but in the future this could be 30 classes with 10 people, with some form of digital implementation to help operators achieve this via virtual online streamed classes."

The gym operator and CIMSPA partner Everyone Active had already been trialling new ways of servicing its customers even before the full lockdown came. "A week before we

"When we reopen, we feel it will be very similar to the position we were in a week before we closed"

closed, we were operating with 50% occupancy in our dance studios," says regional director Duncan Jefford. "Cleaning was massively enhanced, and we enforced the social distancing of 2m."

Classes were also stopped early to make sure thorough cleaning could take place, and every other piece of kit within the gym environment was removed. Everyone Active also experimented with throughput movement that mirrored the one-way systems currently operating in supermarkets. "When we reopen, we feel it will actually be very similar to the position we were in a week before we closed," says Jefford.

So when do the operators think these longed-for reopenings will happen? Les Mills' Franklin sees three phases occurring. "The first is happening now, which is all about online digital offerings and live streaming solutions for clubs and instructors," he says (see box, Digital fitness). "The second horizon will be... when



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gyms reopen, but with specific restrictions and not fully operational. The third phase will be the 'new normal', and I anticipate that to be at least 12 to 18 months away."

As for the financing of these reopenings and sustaining the businesses over this period, David Turner, senior investment manager with Foresight, which invested £4m growth capital into CIMSPA partner Ten Health & Fitness last year, believes it's simply too early to say what the full fiscal impact of coronavirus will be. "Everyone's in survival mode at the moment and trying to use as many of the financial support schemes available to them as they can," he says.

"The schemes have been very helpful," he adds, referring to the variety of financial support schemes



put in place by the government, "but it does feel like there's a bit of a cliff edge coming. The real pain for the leisure industry is that it has lost so much revenue, which is not something you can really claim back. Our assumption is that the types of

investments you'll see in the next 12 months will be all about helping businesses repay their loans, supporting their working capital, assisting them with reopening and re-growing their businesses.

"Longer term, we believe the sector will again be attractive to investors, regardless if it's physical or digital," he says. "Fitness is quite rightly capturing a greater share of the consumer's interest and their wallet. This has historically always been so and should stand the leisure sector in good stead. As always, investors will still be looking for great formats, good expansion opportunities, great founders and good people with which to work."

One thing is certain: it won't be 'business as usual' for the sport and physical activity sector any time soon. But in its eagerness to reopen its doors and at the very least embrace a 'new normal', CIMSPA's Dillon sounds a note of caution. "My concern is that we end up telling the government that we want to open but with reduced capacity and revenue," she says. "It [the government] needs to understand that we could lose 50% of our revenue and will need some kind of finance package to support us through what will be socially-distanced reopenings. If we rush to open and the government assumes we're fine when plainly we're not, then it's an issue." 



Insurance

The immediate post-pandemic landscape will naturally carry risks in the way that gyms will have to operate, with concerns about hygiene, cleanliness and social distancing. "Insurers will be looking at these measures closely," says Neil Adebawale, director of leisure insurance at Partners&.

"Although I don't see the core offering of a gym changing radically, operators will probably make doubly sure they have the right cover," he says. "And I've already seen requests for cover for future pandemics."

But as Adebawale points out, most insurers don't currently offer a policy for business interruption, and most have certainly not provided cover for Covid-19. "The very few that have provided insurance did not cover the impact of the government shutdown," he says. "There really isn't a solution at this time, as this is a new risk for insurers to get their heads around. And the potential for interruption to business is so great that insurers won't be able to cover this in a conventional way."

To find a solution, UK insurance industry leaders have combined to form a steering group. It is working with government and Pool Reinsurance Company (Pool Re), the organisation set up in 1993 in the wake of the IRA bombing of the Baltic Exchange. The group is exploring a similar solution to future pandemics as terrorism insurance. "The problem is that it involves collaboration between a lot of stakeholders and could take some time to put it in place," says Adebawale.



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IN DEPTH

BUSINESS

NEW LOOK FOR THE NEW NORMAL

By Colin Cottell

Post-lockdown restrictions, what will leisure centres, swimming pools and gyms look like when they reopen their doors to clients?

After shutting their doors in March after Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a tightening of the UK's lockdown, plans are afoot to reopen the country's leisure centres, gyms and fitness studios.

In May, ukactive published its framework for how operators in the sector could safely reopen once it gets the green light from the government, to which CIMSPA contributed.

Created with support from the industry, it makes a series of recommendations, ranging from more rigorous cleaning, to how to deal with concerns over lifeguards giving first aid, and how to maintain social distancing.

ukactive's framework has been welcomed as a blueprint for the sector's return to some sort of normality. CIMSPA

has taken this framework and created practical support and resources for operators to lift and use with its ReOpen online hub. These include measures that, in an effort to maintain that all-important social distancing, would see significant changes to the physical layout and design of facilities. One operator that already has a clear picture of what their leisure centres will look like when customers are allowed to return is CIMSPA partner GLL, which runs more than 270 leisure centres throughout the UK. According to CEO Mark Sesnan, the company is working on a six-week plan to make its facilities 'Covid-secure', with the aim of being to reopen as many as possible by the start of July.

Sesnan says one of the measures he and his colleagues are planning is moving classes previously held in small spaces into their much more spacious sports halls. "So what was previously a dance studio, typically around 150sq m with 30 or 40 people in it, we will be replacing by moving the class into the sports hall, which is four times the size, allowing us to continue to have the big classes," he says.

Because GLL's leisure centres have some very big spaces, Sesnan says the company is well placed to make these sort of changes. In a similar vein, he says squash courts will become stretch zones, and exercise bikes will be moved into unused corridors. "Generally, the focus will be on getting a good offer up and running for health and fitness and group exercise customers first," he says. Sesnan is optimistic that the changes will be well-received by customers. "Our objective is to actually make it feel much, much better for the customer than ever before because by making these changes to our leisure centres and making them more spacious, we can make it more interesting and exciting."

David McHendry, MD of Knight, Kavanagh & Page, a consultancy

Risk assessments for the 'new normal'

The starting point to making changes to the physical layout and design of leisure, sport and fitness facilities is the risk assessment, says Enable Leisure & Culture's Claire Fletcher: "We will be doing risk assessment for each facility and then we will be risk-assessing every activity in every room."

Nottingham City Council's John Wileman agrees: "In the old days we used

to do a risk assessment on a sports hall, for instance, but that risk assessment was probably for badminton. Now it needs to be risk-assessed for say 40 people in a group fitness class." Referring to a spin studio, he says, "this could mean four or five bikes compared to 16 previously". Some operators are also considering moving some activities outdoors, at least for the summer.

specialising in the sport and physical activity sector, says moving fitness suites to sports halls also makes financial sense for operators. "Rather than taking out every second piece of equipment in a fitness suite, which would cut income, this enables them both to employ social distancing and to use this space in a much more effective way to protect their income," he says. The downside, says McHendry, is that activities that previously took place in the sports hall, such as basketball, netball and badminton, will be curtailed.

Another change McHendry expects to see is clearer physical separation between people when they are moving through a site. "There will be a lot more structure, with rules about walking on the left or on the right in corridors," he says. ►



IN DEPTH

BUSINESS

John Wileman, head of sport, leisure and business management at Nottingham City Council, who has responsibility for eight council-run leisure centres in the city, says the council has yet to decide on how it will modify its facilities. "There is a debate at the moment whether or not it looks sexy to take out every other machine, which gives you the social distancing, but not the customer experience, or whether you take the big decision and say 'Right, we're going to remove some of the machinery from the gyms to create the social distance, and maybe move our cardiovascular kit into our aerobic studio and move our group fitness instruction into the sports hall'."

While big operators, such as GLL, with lots of space have the flexibility to switch activities and equipment around, for many smaller operators this simply isn't practical. Daniel Herman, owner of BTX, a gym and fitness studio

of around 1,000sq m in North London, says his ability to change the layout is "very limited". To make more space, he plans to move equipment from the middle of the floor to the periphery. He is also contemplating taking out one piece of cardio equipment and reducing the number of free weights. He also intends to put warning tape on the floor to keep customers 2.5m apart – more than the officially recommended 2m, but necessary he says to take into account people who are perspiring and breathing heavily.

Herman says he also intends to install a hygiene station at the front of the building, where customers can clean their hands, and pick up gloves and disposable masks.

Because of these changes, Herman estimates that the maximum number of people – customers and staff – in the building at any one time will be just five compared to 10 under normal circumstances. The inability to make significant changes to the building aside, Herman says he is lucky in one respect: "We have actually got a back door and a front door so people can come in one and out the other, so there won't be any necessity to cross each other's paths," he says.

Although precise changes such as these are dependent on the size and layout of each individual site, there is broad agreement that because of the difficulty of maintaining social distancing, showers – in particular – are unlikely to reopen. According to McHendry, some operators may decide to keep changing rooms open. However, Sesnan says, initially at least changing rooms are unlikely to be open, although toilets will be available. Claire Fletcher, head of leisure at CIMSPA partner Enable Leisure & Culture, goes further, saying that for sports such as tennis and archery she is looking at not having changing rooms or toilets at all.

While moving equipment, marking the floor with tape, and installing screens to protect staff at reception are relatively simple and readily understood, ventilation systems are a more complex element altogether, with fears being raised that some systems can recycle the virus within buildings.

Sesnan says it will be up to Public Health England to make a call on this, but generally gyms use split air conditioning systems, which chill the air rather than recycle old air. And although air is recycled in swimming pools, he says the risk is countered by the large volume of air. "I don't think there is an issue of recycled air in most leisure centres, and certainly not in the leisure centres we operate," he says.

With doors at the front and rear of his building creating a good through flow of fresh air, along with high ceilings, Herman says, fortunately poor ventilation is not something he needs to worry about.

Although there is some evidence that chlorine kills the virus, swimming pools are another area where operators are still waiting for more detailed guidance. As the ukactive framework points out: "There is no evidence that Covid-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools, hot tubs or spas." It then goes on to make a number of detailed recommendations, including a suggested ratio of one bather per 3sq m.

According to Wileman, the main issue is not the pool itself, but the capacity of changing rooms to cope with the number of swimmers while ensuring social distancing. With modern facilities having changing cubicles rather than traditional changing rooms, "operating every other cubicle is probably the best option", he says.

Simon Kirkland, MD of consultancy Sport Structures, suggests that to maintain social distancing in pools, one possibility is that swimmers are only allowed to use alternate lanes.

While anyone entering a UK leisure centre, gym or fitness studio when they finally reopen is sure to notice significant changes to their physical layout, what will happen if and when Covid-19 is finally defeated? "I think, inevitably, things will return to normal," says McHendry.

However, Herman says, he will be led by the customer, and whether they will be prepared to pay £80 an hour for the privileged of having more space and not having to navigate around other customers. If not, he may have to put everything back the way it was before. One change Wileman expects to see is less focus on reception desks: "It will be, 'I have made my booking online, I am able to tap and go straight through with the minimum of human interface'. I think that will be part of everybody's future going forward." 📌

Action points

- Move or remove equipment or use fewer pieces
- Mark up floor with warning tape to maintain social distancing
- Erect protective screens
- Erect signage
- Control and maintain safe flow of customers
- Improve ventilation
- Closing areas such as showers and changing rooms, where social distancing it difficult to maintain
- Make more use of cubicles
- Relocate some activities and equipment outdoors
- Reorganise reception areas to minimise crowding
- For swimming pools, operators should follow sector guidance
- Adhere to government guidelines on cafes and restaurants
- Don't forget about parents and spectators

"There is no evidence that Covid-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools or spas"

IN DEPTH

CASE STUDY

Eddie Varley was put on a prehabilitation programme to help with his recovery - post-surgery

GET FO



TING FIT R SURGERY

Pre-treatment partnerships between health professionals and physical activity providers are putting patients on the road to recovery much sooner, as Caroline Roberts discovers

When Eddie Varley was diagnosed with lung cancer, he was worried he wouldn't survive the rigours of treatment. The 71-year-old had previously suffered heart problems, lacked energy and needed to sit down a lot when out walking. But a pre-treatment exercise programme involving cardiovascular and strength training helped put him on the road to recovery. He had never been to a gym before, but he says: "I wanted to do the most I could to get ready for the surgery

and the programme gave me the confidence I needed. I really do feel it helped me to get fitter quicker after the operation. It's enjoyable and I think it helped psychologically too."

Prehab4Cancer, the Greater Manchester-based project Varley attended, is one of a number of 'prehabilitation' projects around the country being delivered by partnerships between health professionals and local physical activity providers.

There's growing evidence that increasing fitness levels during the time

that patients are waiting for surgery, and other treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy, means shorter hospital stays, fewer post-operative complications and improved recovery times.

Surgery creates a stress response that leads to greater oxygen demand and can take a huge toll on the body, says June Davis, prehabilitation lead at Macmillan Cancer, which supports the projects. "It's like a marathon, and you wouldn't run a marathon without doing some training. Cardiovascular fitness helps prevent the deconditioning that comes with treatment, enables people to heal better and, as far as possible, to get back to normal. Improving physical and mental health also makes them less vulnerable to the side effects of treatment."

A cancer diagnosis is also a huge wake-up call for many people, Davis adds, and they're at a time when they are highly amenable to adopting a healthier lifestyle. It's common for prehabilitation programmes to have a participation and compliance rate of around 95%, while the figure for standard GP referral programmes tends to be around 60%. What's more, follow-up shows that many participants maintain their exercise habit following recovery.

Prehab4Cancer is a partnership between local cancer services and GM Active, a collective of 12 community leisure organisations across Manchester. The project is hosted by Salford Community Leisure, a GM Active member and CIMSPA partner. It was launched in April 2019 with funding for 2,000 patients diagnosed with either lung or digestive system cancers, the cancer types being determined by the funding stream used to set up the project. So far, just over 1,000 patients have been through the programme. The majority are in the 65-plus age group, ▶

IN DEPTH

CASE STUDY

although the youngest is 27 and the oldest is over 90.

Patients referred to the scheme undergo a fitness assessment and have a personalised exercise programme designed for them by one of a team of specialist trainers, all of whom hold a Level 4 qualification in cancer rehabilitation. Those with particular needs or a very low level of fitness are placed on a targeted pathway involving extra one-to-one training and support. Patients can opt to follow their programme at any of the 86 facilities that come under the GM Active umbrella and can attend group Prehab4Cancer group sessions with Level 3 staff employed at those centres on hand to offer guidance. The project covers the membership fees of participants and provides funding for the specialist trainers, with extra funding made available to cover the time of L3 staff supporting the sessions.

Exercise programmes involve interval training and periods of active recovery to improve aerobic fitness, along with resistance training, explains programme manager Kirsty Rowlinson. "We asked physiotherapists to advise on muscle recruitment to help movement after surgery as we know that the best thing for a patient is to get out of bed as soon as possible. Our resistance exercises are designed to develop upper body, core and leg strength to help with this. The patients really relate to the functional nature of it, so they're willing to push themselves.

"Where patients are having chemo," Rowlinson continues, "we talk a lot about fatigue management and organise exercise around their treatment." Chemotherapy can also leave patients prone to infection so they need to avoid the gym environment. To address this, the project has developed home exercise programmes with remote supervision, which has come in very useful during

"Patients love the prehab. The big thing that comes across is the sense of control they get from participating"

KIRSTY ROWLINSON, programme manager, Prehab4Cancer

the coronavirus lockdown, when all patients have had to exercise at home.

Participants can have up to three months of prehab followed by three months of rehab, with a six-week break in the middle when surgery takes place. On completion, they are encouraged to take up discounted gym membership or join community exercise groups. "The take-up rate is over 80%, and 90% of participants complete the whole thing, including the post-treatment part," says Rowlinson. "Patients love the prehab.



The big thing that comes across is the sense of control they get from participating. They're going through a time when they feel like everything is being taken out of their hands, and this gives them a focus and some control over their own bodies. They often want to come back early after surgery."

For Jack Murphy, a Salford Community Leisure employee and specialist trainer, seeing the positive impact of the programme is hugely rewarding. "If the work I do helps improve someone's

quality of life for as long as possible, that fills me with great satisfaction," he says.

And the relationships that develop between participants in the group sessions are an important part of the process, he adds. "Peer support is fundamental to the project's success. The goal is to promote long-term exercise adherence, and we see the majority of people coming through the scheme sticking with the exercise. Many come back to the sessions when they've finished and offer support to the new people."

Varley is one of those participants. Following surgery to remove a section of his lung, he completed the rehab programme, has now taken up over-70s membership with Salford Community Leisure and continues to attend the Prehab4Cancer supervised sessions three times a week. He has noticed that his breathing has become easier, and he's significantly stronger – he's now able to complete 15 chest press reps at 17.5kg, while he was only able to manage 5kg at his initial assessment. "Getting into a routine and meeting other patients in a similar situation helped," he says, "and the support and guidance on offer from the trainers has been very important."



How to get involved with prehab programmes

"There's a significant workforce out there in the leisure industry that could support these projects and we need to tap into that. It's not all down to the NHS," says Davis. "In areas where it's come together, it's working very well and is creating a sustainable model."

She advises interested physical fitness providers to take the initiative and approach key people in their area. In England, the first port of call should be the local Cancer Alliance. It coordinates cancer delivery pathways and acts as a broker between the NHS trusts and those commissioning services.

To find your local alliance, visit england.nhs.uk/cancer/cancer-alliances.

Contacts for other UK countries are as follows:

- All Wales Cancer Network (walescanet.wales.nhs.uk)
- Northern Ireland Cancer Network (nican.hscni.net)

There are three regional cancer networks in Scotland:

- South East (scan.scot.nhs.uk)
- West (woscan.scot.nhs.uk)
- North (nrhec.scot/nca)



IN DEPTH

TECHNOLOGY

Simon Longstaff, who runs Pontefract-based gym Body Design FIT, describes himself as a great candidate for testing any kind of automated system, “because my knowledge of computers is very, very limited”, he says.

An ex-rugby professional and junior GB javelin star, his business was awarded Northern Gym of the Year in the 2019 National Fitness Awards. After running the business with a pen-and-paper diary, he decided that he needed to identify a single tool to manage scheduling and payments and help him run the business more efficiently.

He had looked at four systems and among his criteria was enabling his customers to be able to pay online and get into a class straightaway. “Our core business is small group classes and personal training, and we wanted something that was adaptable and could be easily integrated in the business,” he says. “We have lots of people coming through the door each week who do multiple classes.”

His research took him to Fisikal, set up in 2011 by Rob Lander, himself a former personal trainer (PT) who developed the product after recognising technology was the key to increasing his own efficiency by automating his diary.

In the past 12 months, the Fisikal system has enabled Body Design to become entirely GDPR-compliant and virtually paperless. It has also enabled the openly computer-unsavvy Longstaff to take a more data-driven approach to the business. “Everything is entirely quantifiable. I can analyse what an individual has been doing and not doing... I can really serve my customers what they need,” he says.

Fisikal is one of the new wave of software products that enable gym operators and PTs to use digital technology and the online environment to run their businesses more efficiently.

Non-tech-savvy gym owners are finding IT solutions that are simple to use and are boosting their business too

By Sue Weekes



DIGITAL TRANSFOR

Others include Fibodo, Virtuagym, Glofox and MindBody Online. The developers and their users are playing an important part in progressing the digital transformation of the fitness sector, which is gaining momentum, especially as developments such as the cloud have made the tech accessible to small businesses and individual trainers as well as larger outfits.

Lander says the sector has been a slow adopter of digital innovation compared to some other industries but is now starting to catch on. “Digitalisation creates possibilities to deliver a much more personal experience to the

customer and, as a service sector, we need to fully embrace this, rather than shy away from it,” he says.

Former PGA golf professional Anthony Franklin similarly believes technology is key to addressing some of the challenges that gyms and trainers face. When he ran his coaching business, he came to accept that no-show or late customers were part-and-parcel of life. “People would book but didn’t think it was a commitment to pay or even turn up,” he says. After working abroad, he returned to the UK in 2012 and wanted to get into fitness as a consumer. “I then realised how difficult it was to actually book and



MATIONS

get a commitment from the coach to turn up," he says. "I couldn't believe that the same issues and experiences I'd had as a coach still existed but in reverse."

This provided the impetus to launch Fibodo – which literally translated means 'find it, book it, do it' – to help personal trainers and coaches better manage their sessions and business. It allows customers to easily book and pay upfront, which in turn means they are more committed to turning up.

Potentially, the platform can bring a double benefit of more revenue through not just increased turn-up rates but also increased bookings from the trainer's

own network after someone leaves a review.

Franklin describes himself as both time and location-poor, and cites the likes of Airbnb and Uber as providing access to products and services that are near people at a time that suits them. He wants to offer a service akin to this in the fitness industry. "So people can manage their booking just like they do an airline ticket," he says.

He reports that more than 50% of bookings on the platform take place outside of work hours and half of those between 10pm and 7.30am. And clearly much of this is done on a mobile phone.

Fibodo's features include real-time alerts to a trainer, which is essential if you want to offer a truly live service, says Franklin: "If someone books at 10 at night for 10 in the morning, the coach needs to know that when they wake up. We want to make the coach/trainer's days as commercially viable as possible."

One way the latter is manifesting itself is by allowing trainers to run more group sessions. Fibodo has observed the trend for these to take place mid-morning after parents have dropped children off at school and at weekends. "Rather

than doing a half-hour, one-to-one sessions on a Saturday morning for £20, our users are doing groups of, say, 20 people at £8 per person. And then those people might come for a private lesson later in the week," explains Franklin, adding that the data from the system also helps the trainers tailor their service to meet them.

Personal trainer Steph Wood, who runs the SW Fitness private gym in Hexham, Northumberland, says the biggest difference that Fibodo has made

to her business is the ease which she can now organise group sessions.

"People can book themselves in quickly and easily, eliminating the three hours I used to spend every Sunday timetabling," she says.

Lander concurs with Franklin that mobile phones are at the heart of meeting customer expectations and engaging with them in the future for trainers and gym operators.

"In today's digitally driven world, consumers are managing more and more of their daily tasks through their mobile devices. This is driving an expectation that personal training and group exercises classes should be managed in this way," he says.

"Mobile phones – once banned from the gym floor – are now widely accepted as a must-have training aid for PTs and members alike."

"Consumers are managing more and more of their daily tasks through their mobile devices"

For many operators and trainers, the digital transformation journey is just beginning. Longstaff explains that he launched phase one of the system with personal training, online payments and scheduling to put down strong foundations and instil a more systematic approach for his team and customers. In phase two, he plans to use the Fisikal

platform for all its email marketing as well as establish an online shop.

Lander believes the industry is entering an era of exciting possibilities and says it has only just started to scratch the surface of opportunity with regards to how technologies such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality could support customer plans.

"Change is happening quickly. As a digital solutions provider, our challenge lies in keeping one step ahead of market trends... Best to be prepared." ❧

TECH TOOLKIT

PRODUCT ROUND-UP

CUTTING EDGE

Check out the latest equipment to help exercise regimes – in or out of lockdown

WORKING THOSE GLUTES

Technogym is extending its PURE range of plate-loaded equipment with five new products focused on the glutes. The Glute Builder training range includes: Hip Thrust, a multi-angle foot platform with three different footholds for a diversified muscle activation; Standing Abductor, which allows optimal activation of the glutes through a range of movements; Hack Squat, which allows users to safely perform squats, squat jumps, lunges and jumping lunges, either double or single legged; Pullover, which focuses on the upper body; Seated Calf, which isolates work specifically on the soleus muscle and works together with the Pure Calf to fully develop one of the hardest muscles to train. All PURE movement trajectories are the result of detailed biomechanics research aimed at defining the best balance between natural movement, safety and maximum muscle activation.

Price: On application

<https://www.technogym.com/gb>



The mark of an athlete

MARQ Athlete, built from titanium, is one of a new range of connected tool watches from Garmin and celebrates the company's 30th anniversary (others in the range include Aviator, Driver and Expedition). Each features an always-on sunlight-readable display, performance GPS, and advanced sensors such as wrist-based heart rate and pulse ox. As well as provide key data in areas such as V02 max and recovery time, MARQ Athlete includes advanced running dynamics to further track workouts, measure progress and fine-tune form. With sensors for various biometrics, athletes can gain additional insights on how their body is performing.

Price: From £1,399.99 to £2,249.99

www.garmin.com

RIDING BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Gogoro Eeyo 1 claims to be designed for e-bike riders who demand agility over utility. Arriving in Europe this summer, the Eeyo 1 is described as an ultralight “adrenaline time machine” by its maker’s founder, because its Smartwheel technology “brings back the joy of riding”. It claims to take a rider-centric approach to e-bike innovation by tightly integrating the motor, battery, sensors and smart connectivity into a compact, self-contained hub. An advanced torque sensor detects a rider’s pedal-power and instantly delivers pedal assist to provide increased control, power, and speed that Gogoro says feels more “balanced, and natural”. The e-bike has been designed to be carried on a rider’s shoulder wherever a bike cannot be ridden.

Price: \$4,599 (£3,659) Eeyo 1S;

\$3,899 (£3,100) Eeyo 1

www.gogoro.com



VIRTUAL VIDEO PLATFORM TAKES CONTENT TO THE CUSTOMER

Fitness and wellness software company Mindbody has launched a virtual wellness platform for its boutique fitness and wellness business operators. The video product, which is available for free and will roll out to Mindbody customers during the current beta phase, allows operators to upload and share pre-recorded videos to their customers via direct, secure links. The new platform removes the need for third-party video solutions as it integrates directly into the Mindbody software, allowing consumers to access their favourite operator’s video content. Operators can use the Mindbody booking platform to list and promote classes and videos, engage their customer base with marketing automations, and set promotions and deals. In the near future, Mindbody will add livestream capabilities to the product that will allow for wellness services to be provided and taken in real-time.

mindbodyonline.com

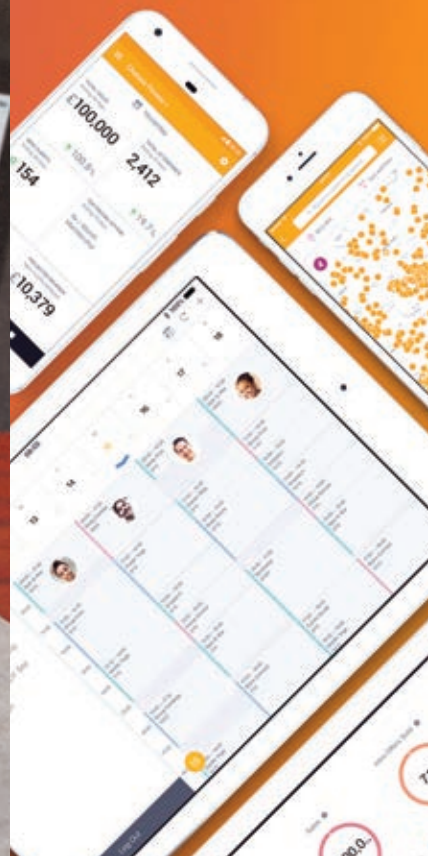
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demo at uk.mindbodyonline.com
0203 514 1894



EXPERT ADVICE

COVERING THE CLOSURES

With S&PA businesses unable to stay open, insurance solicitor Catrin Povey looks at some of the issues around making a claim

Business interruption insurance is intended to cover the financial losses of businesses during periods when they cannot trade as a result of unexpected events. However, many in the S&PA sector, who had understood that they would be able to rely on this insurance when they were forced to shut down by the government, are facing a rude awakening, with many insurers refusing to pay out.

Sold as an add-on to commercial property policies, which cover the cost of putting premises back to how they were before, say a flood or fire, business interruption insurance is a common investment in the sector.

However, many insurers are saying: "We didn't intend for pandemics to be covered, so we won't be paying out on them."

This is because the general principle of this type of insurance is just to cover property damage, which is very difficult to prove in the case of Covid-19: while the virus can be present on a physical surface, it doesn't cause damage in the way that, for example, a fire would.

To claim, you normally have to have an extension or an add-on to the business interruption insurance for a notifiable disease or denial of access.

Another factor is that insurers are saying the industry is facing bankruptcy because they hold insufficient reserves.

But many of these policies are not clear cut. So, while I have seen a couple where there are specific exclusions for pandemics, with others the wording is



Action points

- Review your insurance policy
- Seek expert advice
- Put your claim in to your insurance company as soon as possible
- Make use of the Financial Ombudsman Service

very ambiguous, which means potentially there is scope for a claim.

For a couple of household-name insurers, the policy wordings were that, where the government forced you to close your premises due to an emergency, you would be able to claim. Obviously, this would apply to Covid-19 and to businesses in the fitness sector. We are finding, though, that the

majority of insurers are denying claims, but a successful claim really does depend on the policy, and I don't think I've seen two exactly the same.

If insurers fail to pay out, this could lead to catastrophic losses in the fitness industry, which is likely to be one of the last allowed to reopen, because of the difficulties around social distances, and also because of doubts about whether people will want to return.

Businesses should definitely be looking at their policies and potentially getting professional help.

The other point is to lodge a claim as soon as possible, as often there is a condition in the policy that states: "You need to notify your insurer as soon as possible about any potential claim." Obviously, we are three months into this situation, so it's crucial you put your insurer on notice.

While there is a great deal of uncertainty about which policies will pay out, it is hoped that a test case being taken by the Financial Conduct Authority – the UK's financial services regulator – will provide more clarity.

However, this decision, which is expected by the end of July, will not be binding, so even if you have a policy that looks as if it will not pay out, there are still other avenues you can pursue.

You could go to the Financial Ombudsman, who will look at what is fair and reasonable, and he can order the insurer to pay out.

Obviously, if you're a small business and you're suffering financially, you can't fund a court case: it's the bigger companies that are likely to go down the court route. But certainly, don't wait for the outcome of the FCA case. 📌

Catrin Povey is an insurance solicitor in the Financial Services department at Capital Law

WORKPLACE

FOCUS

BACK TO LIFE, BACK TO ANXIETY?

Employees need emotional resilience when the future of the workplace is uncertain, says Brendan Street



The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic threw the world of work into a period of uncertainty and stress, with an estimated nine million British employees furloughed and the rest facing disruption as they adapted to remote working.

Now, more than three months on, for those working in the social, customer-facing environments of sports and leisure facilities, the prospect of returning to the workplace is daunting.

So, if possible, allow employees to visit their place of work before it reopens to customers, so they can acclimatise to it and reassure themselves as regards new processes, the use of space, equipment and perhaps even new technology.

Remaining in a heightened state of stress for too long can affect physical and mental wellbeing, and everyone has their own 'stress signature'. However, typically, stressed employees often experience fatigue, headaches and sleep disturbance. Long-term stress can lead to exhaustion and burnout, plus increased susceptibility

to health issues such as heart attacks and strokes.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

It is important that staff members are not left in the dark. Be transparent about the organisation's policy on returning, and when it comes to setting a date, give ample warning.

Furloughed employees may have concerns about their value to their organisations and be worried that their job may be at risk. Communication is a priority while staff members are away from the workplace to show they are valued. Employees may doubt their ability to return to their previous levels of performance and face a crisis of confidence. Consider sending a daily email, supplemented with weekly personal check-ins over a messaging platform or, ideally, a personal call.

Encourage communication among the staff members themselves. For example, set up team chats on an informal messaging platform.

On their return, communication is crucial in helping staff feel as confident as possible. Talk through how their role

has changed – perhaps they have new responsibilities – and clearly outline any adjustments to the facilities.

Let them know you understand it is a strange time and reassure them, and that your door is always open if they need any help.

TACKLING STRESS

This is where the right support is vital. Staff may benefit from online mental health self-help support; modules can be worked through each day to help establish a routine if they are not working, and access modules to help with specific problems and difficulties.

Consider offering remote psychological support. For example, cognitive behaviour therapy therapists (via online therapy or videoconference/telephone) can help with coping mechanisms or breathing techniques to counter feelings of uncertainty.

Also, providing training for managers in noticing signs of distress in their teams, and then supporting their team members, is key for dealing with future disruption or uncertainty.

Emotional literacy training – ensuring the workforce has a shared understanding and language to be able to have conversations about mental health – can boost resilience. It reinforces the belief that a discussion about mental health is both welcomed and expected in the workplace.

It gives people the knowledge, self-awareness and empathy to be better listeners and to support themselves and others. In the post-Covid-19 world we need, more than ever, work cultures where it's okay not to be okay – and one where employees feel able to seek support early. 🧘

Brendan Street is Professional Head, Emotional Wellbeing, Nuffield Health



YMCA
awards

EMBRACING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

YMCA Awards has become the **first awarding organisation to receive endorsement** from the Chartered Institute of the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) having embraced the organisation's new professional standards in three new **gym instructor** and **personal training** qualifications. These new qualifications are also mapped to the UK National Occupational Standards and are recognised by REPS.

For more information about these new qualifications please visit ymcaawards.co.uk/cimspa-standards



LAST WORD

SPORTING LIFE

WATER BABIES HEAD LOSES BATTLE

Steve Franks, CEO and managing director of Water Babies, and CIMSPA Chartered Fellow, passes away after contracting Covid-19

Steve Franks, CEO and managing director of Water Babies, died on 30 April from complications after contracting Covid-19. He also was a CIMSPA Chartered Fellow. As a fit and healthy 58-year-old with a zest for life, his death has shocked and devastated friends and colleagues alike.

The level of tributes that poured in at the news of Steve's death is a measure of the esteem in which he was held. RLSS UK's director of commercial operations Jo Talbot sums up the feelings of many. "I was saddened to hear of the passing of Steve," she says. "It was a pleasure to work collaboratively with him. His passion and enthusiasm for both Water Babies and the sector were inspiring..."

His work, developing highly developed swimming programmes for babies and pre-school children leaves a legacy, one which RLSS UK will continue to champion."

Steve began his career as a lifeguard at 21, before putting himself through higher education, starting at Newcastle College. He completed a postgraduate diploma in management

studies and went on to study for an MBA at Staffordshire University. In keeping with his belief that you can never stop learning, Steve graduated from the London Stock Exchange's Elite Senior Executive Development Programme at Imperial College Business School as recently as 2018.

His first management role came in 1997 as leisure services manager with Lichfield District Council. He then spent over 20 years in senior management roles across both the private and public sectors, including international experience gained in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, China and the Caribbean. Having spent six years as operations director of the Swimming Teachers Association, he joined Water Babies in 2009.

Steve was an inspirational leader, as founder of the innovative swim experience organisation Paul Thompson can attest to: "He was compassionate and always there to support our people, partners and customers. His vision and dream was to see a government minister for children

"His passion and enthusiasm for both Water Babies and the sector were inspiring"



appointed, and to make parliament sit up and realise that the future of our world lies within our children. He championed the first 1001 Critical Days Manifesto, was an active member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood, and wanted every child to have the best possible start in life."

Of Steve's tireless campaigning, Thompson adds: "He would regularly beat down doors in Westminster to anyone who would listen to our Children First movement. He created The Children First Alliance to fundraise and support the social good of the early years, believing in a world where the physical and emotional development of every child should be fully supported and nurtured from birth."

An essential player in advancing the baby and toddler swimming industry,



Whether at Parliament, highlighting the importance of childhood, or promoting Water Babies, Steve Franks was passionate about kids and physical activity

always contributing – helping us to shape the culture, guest speaking at our events, and always mentoring and nurturing.”

Perhaps the final word should go to Water Babies’ Paul Thompson, at the organisation that Steve loved and worked tirelessly to promote throughout the

UK and around the world: “The outpouring of love, support and respect for all he has done in his professional and personal career has been overwhelmingly heart-warming. So many people knew Steve as a friend, colleague, leader, mentor, educator, activist, board member, son, husband and father. In whatever role people knew him, from whatever vantage point, he stood apart as someone special.”

Steve is survived by Alison, his wife of 35 years, and their two children, Abby and Tom. 🌟

he won numerous awards for Water Babies and was the technical author and a driving force behind the UK British Standards Institute’s PAS 520: Code of Practice, which sets out best practices and guidelines for teaching babies to swim. In tandem with Swim England, he was also instrumental in creating the first diploma-level qualification for pre-school swimming teachers.

Steve joined CIMSPA in 2011 and became a Chartered Fellow in 2015. As CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon explains, he was a big champion of the association: “Steve has been a great supporter of CIMSPA over the years and before that, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management. As a chartered fellow, he was highly regarded as one of the trailblazers in professionalising our wonderful sector. Having personally known Steve for many years and

counted him among one of the greatest leaders in our sector and a true friend, he will be dearly missed.”

Dillon echoes the thoughts of many throughout the industry. “The board and team at ukactive are devastated by the news that Steve has passed away, and our hearts go out to his family and the team at Water Babies,” say ukactive chair Tanni Grey-Thompson and ukactive Kids Council chair Adrian Packer. “His contribution to improving the health of children will always be recognised, as CEO of the hugely successful swim school organisation or through his leadership as part of the ukactive Kids Council.

“Steve’s passion and energy for changing children’s lives inspired us all. He is a huge loss to our movement and we will be more determined than ever to deliver his ambition to improve our children’s health.”

Energize STW Active Partnership CEO Chris Child highlights Steve’s willingness to get stuck in and support a cause or campaign, whatever its size or profile. “For Steve to be prepared to share some of his time and expertise with a local Active Partnership tells you a lot about the kind of guy he was,” he says. “And he didn’t just turn up, he was





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LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR

Liz Johnson has won medals for swimming in the Paralympic Games, the IPC World and the European Championships – and now applies her winning approach to business as co-founder and MD of The Ability People and website Podium

UNTAPPING THE HIDDEN TALENT

People always say to me ‘You have got a disability, are you a Paralympian?’ but when somebody meets my able-bodied friends, they don’t get asked if they are an Olympian.

I don’t like injustice. There are so many characteristics and attributes that we all possess that we can’t be blamed for – where we were born, who we were born to, where we live, any of those things. And so it really grinds on me when people are discriminated against because of it, whether that’s race, whether that’s gender and sexual orientation or any other characteristic.

We launched [social enterprise recruitment consultancy] The Ability People (TAP) because of the employment gap for people with disabilities, which was enormous – over 30% for a decade. The last time I looked it was 28.6%, and although it is reducing, it is still a ridiculously high number.

London 2012 was phenomenal. It did so much for the population of people with disabilities, but as a nation, as a global community of human beings, we need help in joining the dots and a bit of handholding to link things together.

TAP works on the basis that we can change people’s perceptions and opportunities. We recently launched Podium, an online marketplace that gives a level of accessibility regardless of



people’s disabilities, impairments or medical conditions. It is also specifically geared towards freelancers with disabilities of medical needs, and showcases the untapped skill sets of the disabled workforce.

There is a level of comfort in knowing other people are like you, but also that employers who engage on the platform and post opportunities are doing so in the knowledge that the person who might take up that work may have an additional need of some sort.

As an athlete competing and training, you can become so focused on one dimension – something I was very conscious that I didn’t want to happen.

With four years from one [Olympic/ Paralympic] Games to the next, there is always a danger that you look back and all that is different is you are four years older or four years stronger... you might have another Games tracksuit, and two more medals and all of that that sort of thing, but actually as a human being you haven’t evolved.

I didn’t let that happen because I just knew that there was more to me. Also, it helped my swimming to have things to focus on. I always had that affinity to the business world. When I finally retired, I was really lucky that I transitioned straight into podcasting, athlete mentoring and corporate speaking. I also felt the need to do something about the fact that not everybody gets that opportunity to do something that they love, or even that they are capable of.

I often get asked how did I cope with retirement and how did I find the transition? And I really think that what I do now ignites the same emotions, and it relies on the same skill sets and the same personality traits as my life as an athlete did. It is just putting my efforts in a different direction but I find it very challenging, as I did swimming, and very rewarding when it works – and just very motivating to continue to improve. 🌱

Liz Johnson was interviewed by S&PA Professional’s Colin Cottell

LAST WORD

SPORT BY NUMBERS

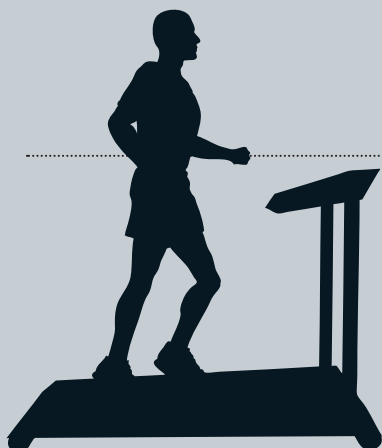


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This issue... The impact of Covid-19

The recent ukactive/4global publication, 'COVID-19 Impact Report: The Fitness and Leisure Sector's Path to Recovery', says: "The total impact on the sector... is projected to be extreme." These statistics from the report illustrate coming danger signs.

1.8 million in Week 11 2021, **one year after lockdown**, the projected number of **lost visits** in that week against a forecast without Covid-19



£3.9bn

Expected annual **social value of the sector** if Covid-19 had not happened

£2.1bn

Projected loss of social value, as a result of Covid-19, if restrictions last **six months**,

£2.89m

of which will result from **restrictions** placed on participants aged **over 70**



However, sales data from the **Decathlon sports store chain** (and included in the report) reveals that the UK **still wanted to be physically active** at the height of the Spring 2020 lockdown.

March and April 2020 vs March and April 2019

+641%	+271%
Home bikes	Step
+575%	+194%
Elliptical trainers	Treadmills
+483%	+192%
Trampoline	Equipment accessories
+460%	+149%
Biking	Rower
+272%	+124%
Stepper	Jump rope



700 million

Across a **full year** following lockdown in 2020 to Week 11 2021 - **projected loss** of over **700 million visits** to **leisure centres, gyms and fitness facilities**

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