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High-intensity hygiene

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Developing a diverse future

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S&PA Professional

ISSUE 40 WINTER 20-2021

 **CIMSPA**

THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDUSTRY MAGAZINE



LIVERPOOL

The city's
gyms, sports
and leisure
centres
are leaving
lockdown
stronger

RISING



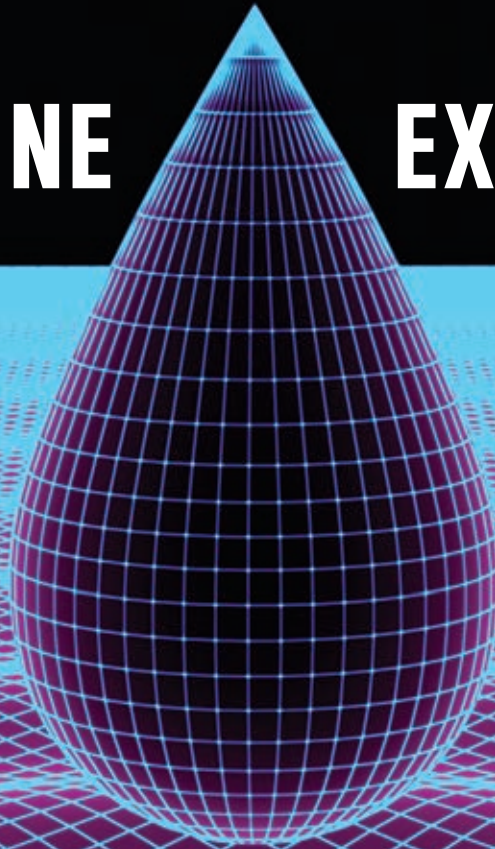
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"For an area where the average healthy life expectancy ... is just 58, it's been vital to keep the population active during this most difficult of years" (p22)



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by Active iQ

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Passenger Transport Service Operations Onboard and Station Team Member	Community Sport and Health Officer	

#Beginwithbetter

www.activeiq.co.uk



► DeeDee Doke

Keep on moving



Going into 2021 with a feeling of optimism, thanks to S&PA professionals everywhere

An American tradition that I wish would cross the Atlantic is the Thanksgiving holiday. All that's required is feeling and expressing gratitude – and if you want to lay on a magnificent feast or even a simple meal of your favourite food, that's fine.

2020 will stand out as a year of tremendous sorrow, for the lives lost and life-changing illness experienced by too many, and a year of anxiety for, again, too many who have lost their jobs.

I will also remember this past year for those sadnesses, including the

life-changing illness of a close colleague.

However, I will also think of 2020 with much thanksgiving and gratitude – for my wonderful husband, our amazing little dogs, my friends and colleagues, my home, and for the fortitude, commitment and brilliance of the staffs of the two gyms I attend. They are enabling me to experience these strange times in the best health and fitness I've ever known and to try new physical activities I probably would never have tried otherwise without their encouragement and motivational approaches.

The NHS has, without a doubt, been

the best friend this country could have in this 'wartime'. But our S&PA professionals are making it possible to emerge healthier, happier, fitter – with joy. As 2020 ends, I clap for S&PA pros to take us into 2021.

Happy new year.



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CIMSPA

S&PA News

A round-up of the latest developments in the industry



SECOND LOCKDOWN SURVEY BRINGS POSITIVE NEWS

By DeeDee Doke

Gym and leisure centre users overwhelmingly (98%) report they plan to return to the facilities immediately or in the new year following the second national lockdown in November, according to the results of a post-Lockdown 2 survey to gauge consumer confidence in gyms and leisure centres.

However, the impact of the second lockdown on activity levels was evident in the survey results, as 69% of respondents said they were less active since its start at the beginning of November. Roughly a quarter (26.5%) said they were about as active as since the start. Nearly 22% said they were more active.

The 'National Post

Lockdown 2 Recovery Survey', sponsored by Active IQ, followed the lines of Leisure-net's initial survey last April. The latest aimed to judge consumer confidence following a second spell of closure for UK health clubs and leisure centres.

The survey questioned 33,544 customers across 771 facilities in the UK, and the results can be cross-

referenced by age, gender, operator type and region.

The initial survey results were "widely used to inform decision making, lobby local and central government, and shape re-opening guidance by organisations such as Sport England, ukactive, Community Leisure UK and CIMSPA", said Dave Monkhouse, Leisure-net director.

"Operators up and down the country also used the results to inform their decisions, maximise the impact of re-opening and reframe post-Covid activity."

The latest survey, Monkhouse said, "provides further evidence to underpin our sector's campaign for recognition as an essential service, as well as supporting operators with their decisions on when and how to reopen their facilities".

"The new consumer confidence scores from this second survey will be used... to inform the modelling of new projections for the sector."

During the second lockdown, walking was the most favoured physical activity by 48% of respondents, online/YouTube classes by 12%, jogging/running by 10%, cycling by 10% and indoor activities by themselves by 9%.

Asked if they had purchased any home exercise equipment in the last eight months, 69% said yes, with 31% having



UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS



MAINTAINING MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

By Roisin Woolnough

A proper, managed induction is key to building up membership numbers and making members feel welcome from day one, says Amanda Bracks, owner of Australian boutique studio Soulful Fitness.

Bracks, a global trainer on fitness sales and lead generation, contends that operators have a two-week window to settle members in sufficiently that they want to stay and don't cancel their membership. At Soulful Fitness they offer new members two guest passes to be used during the first week to make the induction process easier.

Addressing the theme of 'Making People Feel Like They Belong', Bracks was the first speaker at Building Communities, this year's Retention Convention, held virtually on 3 December. Hosted by the retention expert Dr Paul Bedford, a panel of female experts shared their views on community building in the sector. There was a heavy emphasis on the importance of maintaining community spirit through lockdown and beyond.

Soulful Fitness also offers different guest passes throughout the year – such as bring your partner free in January, or bring a friend to class during a month for free. Initiatives like this build community spirit, as well as potentially bringing in new members, Bracks says.

Bracks says operators have to work hard at keeping attendance levels consistently high. This means ensuring members are doing the programmes that are right for them and will produce results. She also thinks it is important to deliver experiences, not just classes. Soulful Fitness runs candlelit evening yoga classes, for example.

Soulful Fitness links to local businesses that are related to the fitness and wellness sector, such as a local naturopath and chiropractic. The studio runs several workshops a month for members to attend and gets in speakers to talk about different topics.

When anyone cancels their membership, they are sent a postcard, thanking them for having been a member and saying they are always welcome back. Bracks says this practice works well, prompting many



MESSAGE FROM CIMSPA CEO



**TARA DILLON ON
HER HOPES OF A
BRIGHTER FUTURE
FOR 2021**

Happy New Year to you.

With the development of the new vaccines, hope is on the horizon that this year will be better than last.

I'm delighted to hear from some of our partners in this issue (see pp10-17) about their experiences of 2020. Reading their comments, it really struck me how people have drawn the positives from the pandemic with common themes of collaboration, innovation, adaptation, learning, rethinking of purpose and the move to new digital offerings.

Above all, I was impressed by their recognition and appreciation of their teams and colleagues. And I'd like to take this opportunity to give my heartfelt thanks to my own colleagues at CIMSPA. Not one member of our team was furloughed last year. Every single one of them worked exceptionally hard and gruelling hours in what were very challenging circumstances. It took its toll and by the end of the year, they all needed the Christmas break. I couldn't be more proud of my team and I hope you, as CIMSPA members, also appreciate the work that they do on your behalf.

I'm sure I speak for you all, when I say I'm glad to see the back of 2020, but it's not over yet. The pandemic hasn't gone away, but having seen the dedication, collaboration and innovation demonstrated by the people working in our sector last year, I have every confidence that we will thrive when life eventually gets back to the new 'normal'.

I wish you every success in 2021.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

SUPPLIER'S VIEWPOINT

2021 – THE YEAR WATER LEISURE COMES TO YOU

Calling health club and leisure centre managers, personal trainers, and all involved in sport and physical activity: SPATEX Virtual is designed for you. The UK's only dedicated international water leisure show, now entering its 25th year, is going online for the safety of its visitors and exhibitors from Tuesday 2nd February to Thursday 4th February.

Free to attend, SPATEX Virtual is a global accessible showcase and shop window – open to everyone from the comfort of office or home. Featuring the virtual booths of the world's top water leisure manufacturers, suppliers and installers, you can source 2021's latest models and innovations. View videos and brochures, engage in chatroom conversations or book a meeting with a company's rep in a face-to-face video conversation. Fill your virtual shopping bag with brochures and product information that you can then email to yourself or others.

SPATEX's seminar programme is widely recognised as the best provider of free education in the industry. Attend free workshops, delivered by industry experts, on a host of different topics including the latest health & safety guidance, pool water treatments and solutions to everyday maintenance problems. Pose questions in live Q&As or dip in and out of the talks, whilst also popping into the expo area for meetings with exhibitors or leaving the event for a while to carry on with your own tasks. All this and more – SPATEX Virtual is available online for 30 days after the live event.

• Visit www.spatex.co.uk for the latest updates on SPATEX Virtual.



6 purchased free weights, 26% an exercise mat, 21% online training sessions, 13% a cardio machine and 9% a bicycle.

The sector earned a Confidence Indicator Score (CIS) of 50%, calculated by the percentage of respondents who said they were extremely confident about returning to their gyms (62%) minus the percentage of 'Not at all confident' respondents (12%).

Respondents were asked further how frequently they would use their centre/club when it reopened, to which 71% said they would use it about the same amount. Even more positively speaking, 19% said they would use theirs more. Only 3% said they would not use it at all,

with 7% reporting they would use it less.

The usage figures above reflect improvements overall from the results of the survey taken earlier this year, when 66% said they would use their club about the same as before, with 8.3% saying they would use their club less and 4% reporting that they would not use it at all.

The attractiveness of providing online classes had dropped from the survey earlier in the year to the latest. Asked if they would be more likely to go back to using their gym or leisure centre if it offered online classes as part of their membership offer, 15% said 'Yes definitely' in the latest survey, compared to 18.9% who gave that response in the earlier questionnaire. Those

saying 'Perhaps/maybe' dropped by 2.3% between June and November, and those saying 'Definitely not' increased by nearly 7% during the same time period.

Jenny Patrickson of Active IQ, the survey sponsor, said: "While the plethora of digital fitness and wellness options have provided a much-needed resource during lockdown, members place the highest value in face-to-face interaction with staff, instructors, trainers and coaches.

"The soft skills of friendliness, empathy and approachability must remain front and centre as leisure facilities reopen and members return."

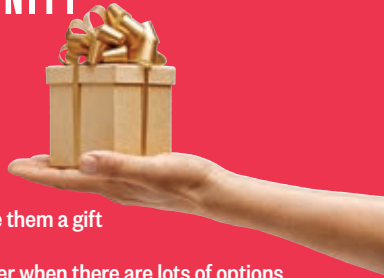
The full report is available for download at Leisure-net's website <https://bit.ly/3a2WoJ5>

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

BRACKS'S TOP TIPS TO BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY

- Attendance is key
- Make people feel like they belong
- Do a great induction
- Set inclusive challenges
- Reward people for high attendance
- Give gifts
- If a member hasn't been in for a while, give them a gift
- Have a referral programme
- Have multiple offerings – people stay longer when there are lots of options
- Make sure people are on the right programmes for them so that they achieve the results they want and need



7 to renew their membership immediately or in the future.

When lockdown happened, Soulful Fitness contacted all customers to give them the choice to stay on their existing membership rates, go on a reduced rate, suspend their membership or cancel altogether. Most chose to stay at the regular rate and support the organisation. Dave Alstead, head of member experience at ukactive, says

most independent gyms took this approach and most received the same response from their customers.

Alstead has noticed two interesting developments, both prompted by Covid-19 and lockdown. One is that the sector has gone from thinking about offering digital to actually offering digital. Nearly every organisation has offered digital services and some have done it very successfully. Zero Gravity

Pilates, for example, with five studios in London and Hertfordshire, started offering a 45-minute Pilates workout via Instagram. It now has thousands of people signed up to its digital offering.

Even when lockdown and restrictions end, Alstead thinks digital won't go away, with most operators offering a hybrid model of digital and physical classes.

The other trend he has noticed is that operators, big and small, have been struck by the importance of the connection between customers and the instructor. Customers prefer to have their regular instructor deliver their online class – someone who they have a rapport with. Alstead said every operator he has spoken to who has outsourced their digital service is now looking to use in-house instructors to maintain the community spirit.

Jenifer Morrison, association director of Group X at the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas in the US, says lockdown also highlighted the popularity of her organisation. "A lot of people didn't believe in it before, but we know it really drives traffic and builds member retention."

PARKOUR UK GIVES STEP UP TO POTENTIAL SPORTS PROFESSIONALS

By DeeDee Doke

CIMSPA partner Parkour UK has launched an initiative that will see seven potential and early career sports professionals obtain valuable work experience – while the organisation itself benefits from short but intensive contributions of their time on significant projects.

Dan Newton, Parkour UK's CEO, said that the initiative will extend his organisation's reach and provide a professional foundation in

sport development for some high-potential candidates.

"The underlying points for me are to increase the capacity that we have in these early stages of our development and the commitment to lift people up, give them an opportunity that will add to their knowledge bank of professional experiences."

Called 'development associates', the volunteer roles offer participants the chance to work on projects

such as a funding directory, and organising schools and universities' future associations with the sport.

Tarryn Horner, currently based in London, and Simon Vardy of Sheffield are in the first cohort of development associates. Horner said: "I am delighted to be given responsibility initiate our own developments within the organisation and network with the wider Parkour delivery community and schools ... My experience and

skills gained through Parkour are putting me at the forefront of this industry."

The greatest significance for Vardy is "broadening my knowledge of sport development and expanding my professional network", he said. "Probably the biggest challenge has been developing my understanding of a sport that is new to me but that's also one of the things that I really like about the project."

• See the feature about the Parkour UK initiative on p34.

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

SECTOR PERSPECTIVES

2020 was a year like no other. We talk to a number of CIMSPA partners to understand their experiences – and their hopes for the future.



EMPLOYER PARTNER
SHELLEY AUSTIN
REGIONAL CONTRACT
MANAGER, INSPIREALL

The first lockdown was high on emotions and extremely intense with so much uncertainty ahead. At times it felt very lonely, with many of my colleagues on furlough whilst I continued to work, but my drive to pull the contract through the challenges and ensure centres opened safely and with as little casualties as possible motivated me to stay strong, positive and resilient. The pandemic has taught me that we should take nothing for granted. Learn, listen and focus on what truly matters.

The amount of information coming from all angles was well received, if not overwhelming at times. However, the lockdown presented a huge opportunity for the sector and the much-needed catalyst for collaboration and innovation. It has also been a perfect source for my Masters degree – I've been able to put numerous academic theories into practice in

respect of the operational and financial challenges we've faced. Another positive this year has been seeing my team grow and learn; their comradeship has been inspirational.

We made full use of the job retention scheme – a much-appreciated lifeline – but unfortunately we also had to make redundancies, and close smaller facilities and theatres. I believe there is light at the end of the tunnel, but it will be a while before we see business recovery and service restoration. We've had to interrogate existing contracts to ensure they work for the good of both contractor and client – it's time to rewrite the rule books.

Thinking outside of the box is something I embrace, as is seeing the bigger picture, which has proved an asset during such uncertain times. Introducing a digital product was an obvious adaptation, but embracing resilience, change behaviour and management, innovation and an agile business focus, as well as prioritising the wellbeing of my team and customers, has certainly taught me much both professionally and personally.

I've used the challenge to continue

my self-development and striving to be the best version of myself in my professional role. This has been supported through collaboration with partners, best practice from other sectors, as well as our own industry bodies. CIMSPA not only provided learning platforms, research, regular updates and connectivity, it also delivered a much-needed voice to ensure the sector was heard. The work it

“Being recognised as an essential service was long overdue and I hope this will be just one of the positive outcomes of 2020”

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

achieved, together with ukactive and other leading bodies, was positive to watch, be part of and see the positive outcomes as a result.

One of the highlights of the year was seeing our sector come together to ensure its survival and sustainability. Being recognised as an essential service was long overdue and I hope this will be just one of the positive outcomes of 2020.

This pandemic has changed the whole landscape, and I believe for the better. It's time to review and refresh old practices and processes and make real differences where it counts. We are more than just a membership sales process. Organisations must be certain of their role within the sector and that it reflects vision and value. They need to define their vision and how they seek to achieve it as clients, stakeholders and partners will need to align to ensure financial longevity.

With so many people learning that they can exercise from home, outdoors, alone or with family, consumer need and demand will differ greatly to pre-lockdown trends and behaviours. The fit will seek greater value and hybrid models, whilst the sick or deconditioned will need different messages to attract them to our facilities as well as journeys and experiences that deliver lifetime behaviour change. Leisure trusts and local authorities can play a vital role in keeping their communities well and protecting against many of the conditions that are positively impacted by physical activity. It really is an exciting time for the sector.

It's been sad to see so many facilities and organisations fall already, but there is a real opportunity for our sector to evolve and grow through quality measurement, management and delivery, but mostly through the exceptional passion and energy that the people in our sector ooze.



**AWARDING ORGANISATION
PARTNER
JENNY PATRICKSON
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ACTIVE IQ**

Last year was challenging in many respects, and rewarding in others. It was exceptionally busy for us, although not in the usual way. Our team had to flex and adapt to maintain our business continuity, and support our approved training providers with their business continuity.

The team has always been extremely

hard-working and productive, but the levels that had to work at last year, despite the challenges of home-working and other commitments, was exceptional and I couldn't be prouder of what they have achieved. We worked very hard to support each other through what has been a difficult time for all of us, and that has been very rewarding.

The entire team moved to home-working a week before lockdown and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We obviously had a

business continuity plan in place so we were confident that we could move all of our awarding organisation functions to full remote-working, however it was both a relief and rewarding to see our transition to home-working happen so smoothly and effectively.

For our qualifications, we had to adapt a number of assessment methods to enable learners to complete and achieve their qualifications despite the closure of gyms in the first lockdown. For our college-based Tech Level qualifications, we had to moderate and check the process of calculated results for every single college learner who completed an Active IQ qualification in the last academic year to ensure they could complete their programme of learning and move into Year 2 of their course or progress to employment within the sector.

We worked closely with all our centres so they understood the requirements and parameters for adapted assessments, and provided guidance and support for their transition to digital delivery for the content of the qualifications that many would typically deliver face-to-face. As a recognised End-point Assessment Organisation conducting end-point assessment (EPA) for new-style Apprenticeship Standards, we also had to apply numerous assessment adaptations across the range of standards that we provide EPA to enable continuity for apprentices.

To achieve the above, we worked with Ofqual, the exams regulator for England, as well as Qualifications Wales and CCEA Northern Ireland. We also worked extensively with CIMSPA to ensure that we, along with other awarding organisations (AO), agreed what adaptations for assessment could take place to ensure standardisation and consistency across all the AOs that serve the sector.

For the apprenticeship side of our business, we also had to work with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to agree parameters around adaptations for apprenticeship end-point assessment. As you can imagine, it took significant time, resource and funds to put measures in place to enable the centres that deliver and assess our qualifications to continue to operate, and to enable apprenticeship assessments to continue. Supporting our customers' own business continuity was our top priority.

Our company values are that we strive to be creative, efficient, agile, professional and supportive. I think we've learned that we truly live all of those values on a daily basis with the way we had to pivot last year. Our creativity and agility certainly came to the fore.

CIMSPA facilitated numerous meetings between the awarding organisations that operate within our sector. This was vital to ensure the assessment adaptations applied were agreed across the AO group to ensure a level playing field across organisations. CIMSPA also worked closely with Ofqual to make sure they were aligned with the regulator and awarding organisations on their thinking around adaptations and what was feasible in the circumstances.

The amount of work we did during the first lockdown meant that we were in a much better place for Lockdown 2.0, due to the adaptations still in place as a result of gyms closing again and reduced capacity within gyms for training provider activity even

with reopening. That stands us in good stead for any possible future lockdowns.

I think the pandemic does spell lasting change. Training providers have proved that digital delivery can be as effective, and in some cases more effective, than face-to-face delivery. I hope that face-to-face delivery will return, as I believe there will always be benefits from live interaction for teaching and assessment. However, the digital world we have all been pushed into has shown us just how creative, engaging and interactive that

learning can be, while adapted assessment has provided an opportunity for learners to demonstrate more creativity and better communication skills than might otherwise have been the case. So, I think that digital learning and digital assessment, where appropriate, is here to stay.

Apart from anything else, the pandemic has also demonstrated that there are other environments beyond the gym, that can and should be used effectively to engage in physical activity. So, moving forwards, we should all consider ways of training and upskilling physical activity professionals to use other environments effectively and creatively, so they are not confined to the four walls of a facility... something else that may future-proof the physical activity sector moving forwards. ►

“Training providers have proved that digital delivery can be as effective, and in some cases more effective, than face-to-face delivery”

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



**TRAINING PROVIDER
PARTNER
MARK MCNICHOL
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR,
IN AT THE DEEP END**

2020 was an emotional rollercoaster. Our numbers in the spring 2020 term were looking so good along with our summer figures, that we were feeling really positive, but then like everybody else in the sector, we came to a sudden halt in March.

As a swim school, we were closed during the first lockdown, but we managed to reopen in September for some lessons. However, there has been an ongoing issue within the area around the original tiers. One of our venues immediately closed once the initial tier structures were announced in September and it took some time for them to reopen. We also had Lockdown 2.0. Currently we are back up and running with the exception of our adult swimming lessons and FloatFit classes, which we were in the process of launching.

We had to learn how to adapt our processes to ensure safety for staff and customers. This meant looking at how we enter and exit facilities, how we clean (that wasn't our remit originally) and how we work with swimmers. Some of our processes, like enrolments, used to be very paper-heavy, so we also had major upgrades to our online systems to ensure these work accurately and effectively and have collected up-to-date email addresses for parents so we can issue enrolment information etc. We also expanded our offering and started to do more B2B work around staff development, CPDs

“We had to learn how to adapt our processes to ensure safety for staff and customers”



and sales – all of which have helped to diversify the business.

The support from the STA [Swimming Teachers Association] has been outstanding. They've been proactive, supportive and a confidante. Guidance, advice and support has been super quick and reactive to information as it has come out from government/DCMS. They've also provided us with practical webinars, and most support has been free. Without them, we genuinely would not still be trading now. Thanks also has to go to the RLSS UK [Royal

Life Saving Society], which produced some amazing practical guidance and support for returning to work and keeping our staff safe.

I think our biggest learning curve has been around communications – both with the public and our employees. I learned very quickly that about 50% of our parents wanted short nuggets of

information, while the rest want to know the rationale around the decisions we've made. What I've also learned is that you have to be prepared to do things differently. One example of this for us was using our online booking

system to ensure information was accurate and talking people through the process over the phone where they were struggling.

CIMSPA has been fighting our corner from the outset, along with the STA, and ultimately one combined voice is better than lots of small ones. Access to Re-Train has been invaluable. Like many others, we've had a big change in our staff team – people have gone to university or decided they not to return because they enjoy being at home or with family more. Our biggest time of the year for training new staff is the summer term, but we lost this completely. We also didn't have the income to do so. But, with the help of CIMSPA and Re-Train we've been able to start the process of upskilling and employing new staff.

I can see a lot of the diversification staying with us, as well as the changes to processes and procedures – the time and money saved on not printing enrolment forms and letters is huge. I do, however, really look forward to the time we can teach 'normally' again.

It has been lovely seeing the sector working together for the common good. I've enjoyed working with some of our competitors to make sure we are all doing the same at shared venues. I really hope some of these relationships continue in the future.



**HIGHER EDUCATION
PARTNER
LISA BINNEY
SENIOR LECTURER
IN SPORT POLICY,**

SOLENT UNIVERSITY

Throughout Solent's Covid-19 response, protecting the wellbeing of students, staff and the wider community has been a top priority. All necessary steps, in line with government guidance have been taken to safeguard the university community.

As for other higher education institutions, university life has become 'virtual' in most aspects. In preparation for the start of the academic year, Solent embarked on an extensive Transformation Academy process in order to ensure high standards of online teaching and learning. This created a collective university approach to providing learning that is aligned with students' educational and career aspirations.

Everyone at the university had to adapt very quickly to the new virtual environment that we found ourselves in. As a senior lecturer I had to adapt my teaching programmes to maximise usability and accessibility for students to navigate the curriculum without face-to-face teaching. I had to learn how to use, and incorporate into my teaching, a wide range of interactive multimedia learning tools that I had never heard of before. In addition to this I also had to teach the students how to use them. Every day was a school day!

It's taught me that it's possible to make yourself visible to students and colleagues even if you are unable to be there in a physical presence. The sense of connection that has been established whilst being online is true testament to the hard work and commitment of both the staff and student community.

CIMSPA was instrumental in

providing sector-wide updates in response to Covid-19 policy decisions. This not only enhanced my own knowledge for my teaching, but also gave me the opportunity to disseminate the information to students, colleagues and the university as a whole. The online webinars and other CPD opportunities have been incredibly useful and the recordings have been key in helping pass information on. The Stronger Together group has also been a supportive and up-to date means of communication within social media.

For higher education institutions, I imagine there will be a return to some sense of normality next academic year. However, I don't think things will ever be quite the same again.

"CIMSPA was instrumental in providing sector-wide updates in response to Covid-19 policy decisions..."

Within my role I have taken the opportunity to rethink how I operate professionally and I further appreciate the value of providing 'scaffolding', which prepares students for the current – and next – level of study. It is not just about delivering

content but also embedding life-long employability skills.

On both a professional and personal basis, I have observed how the sport and physical activity sector has struggled within the midst of the pandemic and I hope that it will recover, and recover strongly. I believe it will, as never before has the sector been so needed. ▶



IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



**CIMSPA MEMBER
TONJA NORMA HUSSEIN
PT AND SELF-EMPLOYED
SENIOR ACTIVITY AND
HEALTH PRACTITIONER**

Coming off the back of an amazing year in which I won four awards, including Team Member of the Year, 2020 was challenging, with both positives and negatives.

I was furloughed in the first lockdown and so I offered free classes on Facebook and free (socially-distanced) classes for children living in our close. I received furlough money. I lost my self-employed income. During the second lockdown I started using Zoom for free classes and PT.

I'm 57 years old and have been a trainer for nearly 25 years. Although I'm very experienced and have many qualifications – I completed several more qualifications while furloughed – I'm not the best at technology so I had to learn quickly. I kept my Zoom classes small, and clients said it was almost like being in a class at the gym – I like to keep that personal touch. I hadn't realised how many people appreciated that I was online or just a call away – they told me it kept them sane.

When the clubs reopened in the second lockdown, I lost some business, which I put down to the fact that members didn't want to return before Christmas and/or were still afraid of another lockdown or had money issues.

Along with the support of my husband, I received information and support from CIMSPA, Fitness Video Production and EMD; either directly or from

their members, as well as from Claire at YBFIT Training. CIMSPA was always there. I valued being able to look at what members were saying and share their experiences. It helps to know that you are not alone. I also appreciate that CIMSPA relates to the fact that some professionals have more experience/qualifications than others and have created Chartered Professional membership, which is great recognition for advanced professionals.

The online market is booming and many gyms have changed the way they work. For new trainers with knowledge of technology, training experience and confidence, the world is their oyster. Some people have given up their gym memberships and gone online or adapted to Zoom classes and/or Zoom PT. Others are training themselves. Some have stopped going to a gym due to their work and stress; some don't want to go back to a gym at all and just want one-to-one training. Many older people use clubs for the social aspect and classes like aqua, Pilates and wellness. I worry about their wellbeing when these classes

can't run because they can't be held outside.

I'm concerned that many good personal trainers are considering leaving the industry. It's a real shame. 2020 was the year when I questioned whether I stay in the industry. I lost motivation and wondered what my purpose is. But I love what I do and I love helping others. I'm determined to continue as long as I can and also help others learn and grow within the industry. 🧡

"I love what I do and I love helping others. I'm determined to continue as long as I can, and also help others learn and grow within the industry"





IN DEPTH

QUEST REVIEW

QUEST PRIME LAUNCHES TO ASSIST INDUSTRY IN ITS COVID-19 RECOVERY

Right Directions has launched a brand new Quest assessment to help the industry get back on its feet

Quest Prime has been developed in recognition of the upheaval Covid-19 has brought to the sector during 2020 and will focus on business recovery, aiming to assist operators in demonstrating they have robust Covid-19 control measures in place for both customers and stakeholders.

Caroline Constantine is managing director of health & safety and quality management specialist, Right Directions, which has managed Quest on behalf of Sport England for 10 years. As Quest's director, she says: "In the present climate, leisure centres don't want an improvement tool; they're busy trying to get their businesses back on track. Alongside Sport England, we have considered the situation and adapted Quest to suit the current needs of the industry.

"Quest Prime has been written especially to support leisure centres

over the next 12 months; adding value to their business by helping them demonstrate their centres have sufficient processes and procedures in place to minimize the risk of transmission of Covid-19 within their buildings. Modules cover general pandemic management, as well as approaches to engaging with customers who are not using the facilities. Centres may have less staff at the moment. In fact, the whole building might not be fully operational, so this more practical assessment should be more valuable during this difficult time.

"Pilot centres that have completed a Quest Prime assessment welcomed the external assessor reviewing their procedures and witnessing their customer-facing control measures, saying, up until that point, they had no benchmark as to whether they were on the right track, and that the importance of a professional visiting

their centres could not be underestimated."

There are two levels: Quest Prime will include a mystery visit and a one-day assessment, conducted against seven Prime core modules, including Community Engagement, Programming, Cleaning, and Hygiene and Operational Management. Quest Prime Plus will include a mystery visit and a two-day assessment; against the seven Prime core modules on day one, and five choice modules on day two, including Engaging with Disabled People and People with Long Term Health Conditions, and Learn to Swim Accreditation.

The new assessment is likely to run alongside Quest Entry, Quest Plus and Quest Stretch until October 2021. However, current Quest accredited sites can postpone their next assessment for up to three months and there will be no unannounced reviews until September 2021. 

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**Richard Clay, Group Spa Revenue Manager,
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CASE STUDY

LIVERPOOL/MERSEYSIDE FITNESS

LIVERPOOL RISES phoenix-like from the PANDEMIC

*How have the gyms, sports and
leisure centres of Liverpool and
Merseyside coped with three
lockdowns?*





From three coins in a fountain to hat-tricks at Liverpool FC, things that comes in threes are supposed to be inherently satisfying and good. That was before lockdowns. When the majority of the country was on its second lockdown in November, it was the third time around for Merseyside. It's been devastating for the whole area in general, but how have its gyms and leisure facilities coped? ▶

CASE STUDY

LIVERPOOL/MERSEYSIDE FITNESS

For an area where the average healthy life expectancy – the age you can expect to reach before you develop a long-term health condition – is just 58, it's been vital to keep the population active during this most difficult of years. All well and good during the balmy summer months. However with winter underway, while the picture is unclear as to how this area, not to mention the rest of the UK, will manage – there is hope.

"I think people always knew that physical activity should be part of their life and routine, but it's really cemented that now," says

Lynn Wilson, health and fitness manager at Volair, a council-owned and controlled organisation established to maintain leisure services across Knowsley, a borough of Merseyside. "The gym is no longer a luxury or something you would easily do without. People now classify it as essential in the

same way they would any utility. I think people always knew it was good for mental health, but I don't think they realised the actual difference it could make to their daily lives."

And while it's hard to think of anything good coming out of this pandemic, Wilson believes the fitness industry has finally been able to connect with a swathe of people that was always beyond its reach. "With people now working out in the open air and online, a whole group of individuals we've never been able to

entice into the gym before has started being active," she says. "Hopefully when we're through this, they will have the confidence to come into a gym. I'd say that's one of the biggest positives. It's changed the mindset of a group of people that would not necessarily ever think of setting foot in a gym."

For Liverpool City Council, the pandemic hasn't suddenly prompted a spring into action regarding its sport and physical activity provision. It's been applying a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approach to increasing physical activity levels for decades.

Sport England has worked with the city since 2005, the launch of the first Liverpool Active City Strategy, having invested resources into activity initiatives in partnership with them.

"Yes, the pandemic and lockdowns have been devastating," says Nicky Yates, strategic physical activity and sport development manager at the

council, "especially after all the work the city stakeholders have done to increase physical activity levels, particularly in the last six years. But there has been a really helpful bit of reflection going on at the moment, not just in Liverpool but across the whole region, in terms of how we as physical activity providers meet the needs of our communities even more. It's raised and accelerated that debate across the region."

Yates admits that the council was sometimes guilty of delivering things in

"For an area where the average healthy life expectancy – the age you can expect to reach before you develop a long-term health condition – is just 58, it's been vital to keep the population active during this most difficult of years"



Green Gyms

Knowsley's four borough parks and 17 local parks have always been popular green spaces in what is a deprived area. As you would expect, people have been turning to these open areas even more keenly during the pandemic. But proving even more popular are the 15 Green Gyms that were installed across the parks back in 2016 to counter the grim statistic that 23% of deaths in the borough were down to cardiovascular disease.

"With the first lockdown and the lovely summer this year, our park rangers have been telling us how popular these Green Gyms had been, despite people sometimes not quite knowing how to use them properly," says Lynn Wilson, health and fitness manager at Volair. "And when training in the parks myself, I could see that people wanted to cling on to being outside."

So the Volair team promptly headed to one of the parks and filmed some really simple instructional videos on using the apparatus (bit.ly/volair-videos). "We even asked the rangers if we could train them to show members of the public how to use them," says Wilson. "And we're also writing up little programmes that we can laminate and put on the Green Gyms as well. It's such a basic thing, but proving so popular."

certain ways because that's the way it had always done them. "I definitely think the pandemic has accelerated some of the conversations around why we were doing things the way we were," she says. "It's helped us reflect even more on how adaptable and agile our services are, and whether they are truly meeting people's needs."

One of many initiatives, Fit for Me, the city's physical activity campaign, was in fact launched back in 2016. Because of the strength of the campaign and the reach it achieved, Yates says it's been helpful in terms of getting messages out across the population about being active during the pandemic. "We used the usual channels of social media and websites," she says, "but we've engaged quite heavily across our health system as well. We've had lots of health practitioners and charities talking to local people and keeping them motivated to stay active during the lockdown."

The council's Sport & Recreation and Public Health teams also worked with Sport England and NHS Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group to launch the We Are Undefeatable campaign this September. "It's a multi-agency approach to encourage people aged 40-75 living with a health condition to be active," says Yates. "It's really helped us address the needs of one of the most vulnerable groups in the city who are of course shielding."

With roughly 47,000 people originally shielding, this is not an inconsiderable group, and the council has produced some home activity resources deliberately targeting these individuals. As well as being accessible from the council website, hard copies are available for those that are digitally excluded. "The activities are really wide-ranging," says Yates, "from chair-based exercises for people with mobility restrictions right up to

Online lesson

Like many gyms across the land, the pandemic has forced gym operator Volair to up its online game. "It's very new for us," admits its health and fitness manager Lynn Wilson. "We only dabbled with online in the first lockdown and, to be honest, it crashed and burned a little bit. I guess we weren't very consistent or polished as we hadn't done it before. We haven't even got our own app yet."

But what the gym operator has noticed is that if it tries to put on a hugely branded online programme of fitness models, it doesn't actually get a lot of engagement. "We're lucky that the relationship with our customers is so good that if we put up one of our fitness team doing any kind of physical exercise, we get a massive social media spike," says Wilson.

"The overwhelming feedback from the members is that they still want to see their normal instructor. Therefore, during the first lockdown it seemed appropriate to



deliver fitness not by buying in an external or putting up a Joe Wicks [video], but by asking our team to video themselves in their own homes."

Volair's exercise timetable is now full every day, and it's invested £300 in some basic filming equipment. "We've moved away from home filming because it was 'hit and miss' sometimes, and we now film in the spin studio," says Wilson. "We have designated days where everyone comes in for half-hour slots."



CASE STUDY

LIVERPOOL/MERSEYSIDE FITNESS

low-impact cardio workouts that you can do in your living room.”

And this push to stay active at home isn't confined to the vulnerable. “We actually gave out table tennis packs to some of the school hubs in the city that were still open to enable children, teachers and families to stay active in a fun way at home as well,” adds Yates. “You can take the pack home and set it up on the dining room table or on any surface really.”

She also mentions the recent launch of the *Active At Home* booklet (bit.ly/active-home) produced in five languages. Further, the council has gone out of its way to share the real-life stories of people in Liverpool on its Fit for Me website (see box). “A central focus of our comms campaign is identifying ambassadors and sharing their stories,” she says.

“It resonates strongly with people, particularly in Liverpool. We like to see what our neighbours and friends are doing to stay active. The response has been overwhelming. We've had thousands of people engaging with the website and on social media. It's testament to the fact that we're all

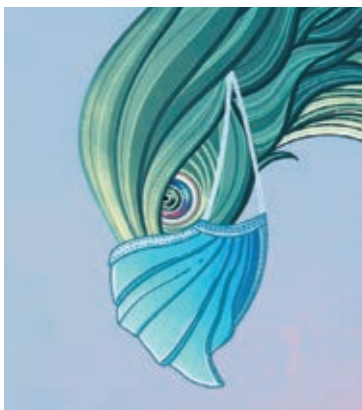
working together to amplify the physical activity message during lockdown.”

Which brings us back to that number three. “This may be our third lockdown,” says Volair's Wilson, “but I have to say we're getting pretty good at it. During the first one we were so nervous that we decided to go above and beyond. We put absolutely everything in place, and it's had some real positives from a business point of view.

“Our processes, procedures and booking systems are smoother than they've ever been, and the percentage of members now using online booking is outstanding. There's a big misconception that senior populations can't use technology, but they're all over it. Yes, we still have the same worries about the financial impact on the business as everyone else, but

I have to admit it has made our operations smoother.”

By most standards, 2020 has been a ghastly year. Hopefully, Liverpool and Merseyside are well-placed to rise phoenix-like from a pandemic that failed to completely blight its sport and physical activity landscape. 



“Our processes, procedures and booking systems are smoother than they've ever been, and the percentage of members now using online booking is outstanding”

Fit for Me ambassadors

In a bid to inspire others to become more active, Liverpool City Council's Fit for Me campaign champions the stories of 'ambassadors' on its website (www.fitforme.info/your-stories). Even just a couple of quotes paint an inspiring picture:

“Before lockdown, I had just started playing 'walking netball'. Obviously, that got cancelled. But even in the new normal, I've found new ways to stay active. I'd never done online classes before, but when I joined a class with chair yoga it really helped. We're the same group of people getting together two or three times a week, virtually. It's nice to see people like you being active together. You get a sense of community. I was feeling a bit down but, after two weeks, people said I sounded and looked much better.”

Naheed, aged 53, following a breakdown and PTSD diagnosis

“Being active is better for you, both physically and mentally. We're not talking about jumping about or going down the gym – I just mean easy activity. Like taking a 10-minute walk each day. Even just a bit of Hoovering counts as activity in my book. I'm not going down the gym with the muscle boys. I do my arm exercises with a couple of tins of beans. At home, you can go up and down the stairs a few times. You can also stand with your hands against the wall and do like a gentle press up, back and forward. It's just little things to keep your strength up.”

Ron, aged 75, diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

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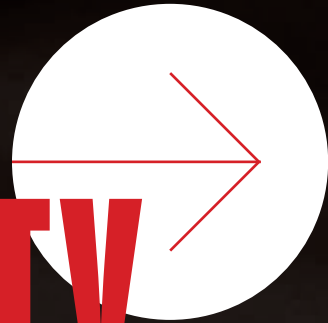
AGENDA

HEALTH & SAFETY

HIGH-INTENSITY

HYGIENE MEASURES

By Caroline Roberts



The promise of a Covid-19 vaccine may give cause for celebration, but for gyms and leisure facilities, threats to public health aren't going away any time soon

The Covid-19 crisis will pass, but pandemics need to stay on the business continuity plan as the threat from biohazards becomes part of our new normal.

In Covid-19, nature has certainly thrown us a curveball. Until this year, biological hazards meant legionella in the water system or athlete's foot in the changing rooms; something of this pandemic's magnitude would have been unimaginable. What's clear is that stricter hygiene procedures and standards are likely to be part of the new normal for the industry – not just in the continued response to the fast-changing Covid situation, but into the future as our changing world means we're likely to face more threats to public health.

Operators need to stay on the front foot and take forward what has been learnt from Covid-19 so they can mount a proactive rather than a reactive response to outbreaks of contagious diseases in the future, says Gill Twell, development

manager with risk management consultancy and CIMSPA partner, Right Directions. "I don't think I've spoken to one client who had 'pandemic' mentioned in their business continuity plan. Going forward, we're putting pandemic information into all of our procedures, and we're advising people not to just refer to it as Covid measures. We need to look at this as a wider issue so that if it happens again in the future, we'll have all of that information and we'll be better prepared."

ONGOING COVID CHALLENGES

In July, sites opened in a high state of readiness, and the sector has done much to dispel the notion that gyms and leisure facilities are hotbeds of infection. Figures from ukactive show that from reopening to September, there were 0.35 cases per 100,000 visits. And these figures represent confirmed cases among gym users rather than infections that can be proved to have been transmitted in the gym environment. ▶

GETTY

AGENDA

HEALTH & SAFETY

The challenge will be to maintain Covid security over the winter and until the anticipated vaccine can be rolled out.

It's easy to assume that everyone had got the message by now but operators need to take steps to avoid laxity creeping in among staff and customers, says Shurene Bishop Simon, director of Bishop Simon, a health and biosafety consultancy. "We learn through repetition, so there needs to be continuous communications going out to keep hygiene measures at the forefront of people's minds. And where possible, all staff should be involved from the top down so cleaning isn't just seen as a menial task." Employers also need to be mindful of the potential health effects of more regular exposure to cleaning materials, she adds. "With constant inhalation of products, I worry about the risk of respiratory and dermatological problems further down the line. It's a good idea to ask staff to wear a mask and gloves when cleaning."

Adequate ventilation is an issue some operators still struggle with, says Twell. "Some people don't have any ventilation at all, and some have old systems, and it's difficult to find sources of funding to install mechanical ventilation. It was easier in summer when you could just keep the doors open."

The science is still sketchy on the risk of airborne transmission, but there's a growing consensus that virus particles can remain suspended in the air for longer than previously thought. A 'superspreader' event traced back to a spin class at a Canadian gym resulted in over 70 Covid-19 infections, despite the

facility following all the recommended hygiene procedures. If there are concerns about ventilation, the government advice is to use a carbon dioxide sensor to keep feelers out for air quality – important in areas where high-intensity exercise takes place.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSTANT CLEANING

Some operators are exploring the use of antimicrobial coatings created using nanotechnology. According to manufacturers, the measure can provide a background level of protection for up to a year, depending on the type of surface and how it's used. CIMSPA Employer Partner Active Nation is now using one of these coatings, Liquid Guard, at some venues. The product uses silica sand to form a permanently bonded nano-scale layer of glass film, which also incorporates an ammonium

chloride-based antimicrobial substance. This kills viruses, bacteria, moulds and fungi that come into contact with it, as well as repelling dirt so making surfaces easier to clean.

"The company come in and spray every nook and cranny, including lockers, and showers," explains Kevin Lane, Active Nation's wellbeing director. "Initially, we decided to use it at our smaller clubs, which don't have the resource capacity for constant cleaning. We've also used it at our trampoline park as there are so many touch surfaces and trampoline beds are very difficult to clean. For our pools re-opening, we coated our wet-side changing rooms to allow post-swim changing, while ensuring disinfection was maintained."

"These were significant investments, but when I started taking into account the cost of cleaning hours and the equipment and chemicals, the added confidence and value for money stack up well. Obviously, areas that get dirty



are still cleaned frequently, but monthly swab tests by the supplier show that the combination of disinfection and cleaning are providing our customers with both a hygienic and safe experience. I admit I was a bit sceptical when I first heard about it, but now I feel as confident as I can be that if someone brings something in, it will kill it. I would absolutely use it again."

There has been a positive response from members about the efforts Active Nation is making, he adds. "We have a statement on the website explaining that we've invested in significant technological cleaning solutions, and I've covered it in a webinar with staff so they can explain it if asked. We haven't formally surveyed our customers, but there's a lot of anecdotal evidence that they have been really impressed with what we've done."

Obviously, the key question is how effective antimicrobial coatings are in preventing Covid-19 infection. On its website, Liquid Guard's manufacturer, Nano-Care UK, concedes that its product hasn't been certified in the UK as effective against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid – the strain is held by government laboratories and has not yet been released for commercial testing. However, coronaviruses are relatively easy to kill and Liquid Guard has been proved to kill another belonging to the same family. Government guidelines advise that any disinfectant that is active against 'enveloped' viruses, or those with the same lipid protective coating, is effective against Covid.

There's less certainty about how long these coatings will remain active. This partly depends on the type of surface

they're used on – they tend to have a shorter life span on plastics. Also, some harsh or abrasive cleaning products can damage the coating.

And, of course, there are companies out there looking to cash in on the pandemic. Some manufacturers of antimicrobial solutions have been taken to task by Trading Standards because of unsubstantiated claims, says Bishop Simon, and it's important that operators are able to challenge manufacturers about the efficacy of their products.

"What is clear is that increased attention to hygiene will be part of our new normal for the foreseeable future," says Twell. "Covid has been a game changer and I think some of the processes put in place are here to stay, and not just in the leisure sector – I can't see supermarkets taking out the sanitisers. I think it's a good idea as there are lots of bugs you can pick up, even in normal times."

FUTURE BIOLOGICAL THREATS – WHY WE CAN'T LET OUR GUARD DOWN

Facing a similar situation in a few years' time hardly bears thinking about, but scientists say we are likely to encounter more threats from emerging viruses in the future. The virus that

causes Covid-19 is the third new coronavirus to emerge this century, following SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2012, which were more lethal to victims but much less contagious. Researchers estimate that there are around 700,000 viruses with the potential to infect humans circulating in the animal world, and it's likely that one of these will jump the species barrier before too long.

A number of factors increase the risk. Human population growth means that we are increasingly encroaching on environments that are diverse in wildlife; farming and food production methods are becoming more intensive; and globalisation provides the perfect opportunity for viruses to spread quickly.

New viruses are not the only potential threat. In 2019, the anti-vax movement, or the increasing mistrust of vaccines, was named by the World Health Organization as one of the biggest threats to global health. It means we could see more outbreaks of preventable diseases such as measles – vaccine cover for the disease has now fallen to below 95% in the UK, the level needed for herd immunity. Growing resistance to antibiotics and anti-viral medicines is also a problem, driven by overuse in humans, farm animals and in the environment. This is causing a number of contagious diseases, such as TB, pneumonia and salmonella, to become harder to treat and control.

Scientists around the world are working hard to address these problems. In the case of emerging viruses, the Global Virome Project, a 10-year international collaboration, will build a genetic database of animal viruses that could potentially infect humans. The hope is that scientists will then be able to predict which of these are most likely to cross the species barrier and spark major pandemics, and enable them to develop preventative measures and effective treatments. 🦠



"...monthly swab tests by the supplier show that the combination of disinfection and cleaning are providing our customers with both a hygienic and safe experience"

IN DEPTH

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

LOCAL APPROACH TO FITNESS

By Dean Gurden

Social prescribing makes sense at every level, bringing about a society that is more active and is fitter, healthier and happier – just one of the main conclusions from ukactive's National Summit this winter

When the world is looking back at changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home (WFH) is one that will stand out. Having been the province of technology workers and creatives primarily before Coronavirus took the UK to lockdown, WFH has emerged to become a working world staple in the post-Covid era.

For the sport and physical activity sector, the practice that is quickly becoming a recognisable part of the UK landscape is social prescribing – which, while widely accepted pre-Covid, has since manifested itself in new and profound ways since the pandemic overtook the country.

Social prescribing was uniformly championed as the

way forward in the fourth and final segment of ukactive's serialised National Summit this November. Taking its theme as 'Integrated approaches to health and social care', this year's final chapter addressed the ways in which

Covid-19 has transformed communities, and the role S&PA professionals can work with health services to support the nation's long-term health, resilience and recovery from the virus.

No less than keynote speaker Professor Chris Whitty (left, top), chief medical officer for England, testified to the sector's critical role:

"There's no doubt that the Covid crisis has made it harder for many people to exercise, and it's certainly made it a lot harder for those involved in the profession and





SHUTTERSTOCK

IN DEPTH

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

ukactive
partners
with NHS

ukactive took the opportunity of its National Summit to announce a ground-breaking partnership between itself, NHS England and Improvement, Sport England and the National Academy for Social Prescribing.

The new scheme will support individuals to better manage their health and wellbeing by connecting the healthcare system and social prescribing with fitness and leisure activities in local communities across England. The scheme has initially pledged up to 500,000 free hours of activity to be made available from 1 April 2021. People will need to be referred by a social prescribing link worker to access the scheme and it is expected that up to 100,000 people could benefit from the free gym and leisure sessions.

As ukactive points out, the partnership couldn't have come at a better time. "Being physically active has never been so important," says CEO Huw Edwards, "and now is the time to recognise it as a major solution to help reduce the pressure on the NHS and lead people to live healthier, happier lives.

"This partnership is a great opportunity for the fitness sector to play a crucial role in helping the country's health, with the facilities and highly trained staff ready to partner with the NHS where needed."

industry to encourage and help support people to exercise and increase their strength.

"But I do think it is remarkable the way that the industry and professionals in this area have tried to find ways around this," he added. "Exercise is probably the single simplest and most important thing people can do to improve their physical and mental health. And what all you do to support people to achieve this is one of the best things for health in the UK. I and everyone else who works in the health professions are very grateful about that, so thank you very much."

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard (p30 inset, bottom), chair of the National Academy for Social Prescribing and a GP, explained that social prescribing has existed for as long as medical professionals have gained insight into the human condition and given advice. "It is what GPs, religious leaders, bartenders, hairdressers, and health coaches and personal trainers have always done to help people to build relationships, unlock individual strengths, increase choice and control, and support community connections," she said.

"During the pandemic when our gyms have been shut and even our green spaces have sometimes been temporarily closed off, I've been blown away by the innovation of social prescribing link workers who moved into the virtual space, picked up the phone and started contacting the vulnerable, the isolated and the lonely.



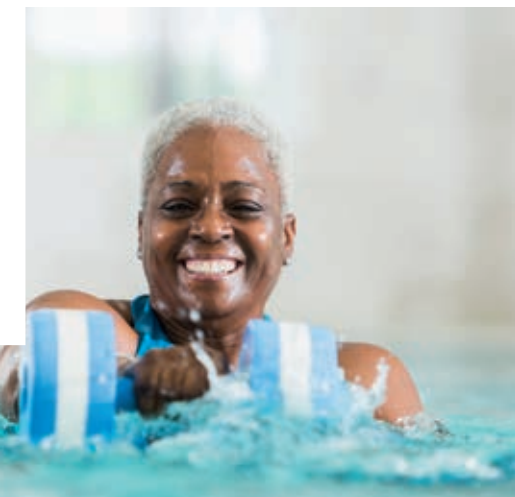
Social prescribing provides a gateway to mainstream fitness for all members of the population



"And you have changed too," she said, addressing the online audience. "We saw how Joe Wicks inspired the nation to be more active. And that sparked off a lot of local initiatives too. Gyms have reached out into their local communities and helped people be active, so that when things change again, we'll remember all these people and connections. People of all ages and walks of life have been connected by a locality, and many innovative schemes have been born."

When asked by ukactive's head of health and wellbeing development, Kenny Butler, how the S&PA industry could make itself even more accessible, Stokes-Lampard counselled the professionals to keep things personal and local.

"Gyms have reached out into their local communities and helped people be active, so that when things change again, we'll remember all these people and connections. People of all ages and walks of life have been connected by a locality, and many innovative schemes have been born"



"Many people that I see in my consulting room are intimidated by the thought of going to a gym," she said. "They don't know what it involves and all they see are adverts of thin, beautiful people on very fast, high-speed exercise bikes on TV, which terrifies them. There's a need to reach out and make it accessible to them. Open your doors – when you're able – and have open days perhaps. Let people come and have a look around with no pressure. Demystify going to the gym, and speak to people in a language they understand."

Speaking of those who have been referred by a social prescribing link officer, she urged gyms and leisure centres to have uppermost in mind that these individuals are making themselves vulnerable when they seek help. "Let's recognise that and embrace that," she said. "Some places do this amazingly well, but if this isn't something you've consciously thought about in your organisation, I'd strongly encourage it."

Stokes-Lampard pointed out that the recommended 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week is highly

commendable, but also terrifying to many people. "If we put blanket things like that out there, we lose the vast majority of people," she said. "Yes, it's great to have the targets, but it's about how the lonely person who has recently moved to your area who doesn't know anybody achieves that target. How do they take the first step through the door of a gym or leisure centre?"

Stokes-Lampard ended her speech with more praise for the sector and a plea. "You are all creative, innovative

people and your organisations include a wonderful range of people with untapped talent," she said. "Please allow their creativity to come out and have the courage to reach out to people. You will be rewarded. Social prescribing isn't mystical or magical, but simply the right thing to do. It makes sense at every level. Your world [S&PA] and my world [medical] make a far better world for everyone – a society that is more active is fitter, healthier and happier." 🌟

Abbeycroft Leisure

Abbeycroft Leisure in Suffolk is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing fitness and activity facilities across 18 sites. It knows all about connecting with the local health system and engaging with social prescribing, having had its Active Living – Exercise Referral scheme up and running for over a decade (see *S&PA Professional*, Spring 2020, page 20). The scheme allows referred individuals to exercise in a supported environment with qualified instructors offering advice, guidance and personalised exercise plans.

Speaking at ukactive's National Summit, Warren Smyth, CEO at Abbeycroft Leisure, said it was important to create an environment where socially prescribed individuals are users just like anyone else. "They have a membership card like anyone else, which they swipe and access the available services," he said.

Having said that, he acknowledged it can be challenging for some coming into a gym or leisure centre for the first time. "We have an arrangement with our local social prescribing team, whereby referred people get an introduction to our environment in a supportive way," he said. "Social prescribers may even accompany their clients to some of the activities available, which can definitely break down

barriers." Smyth also pointed out that with only about 20% of the people referred being in employment and a significant number having long-term health conditions, it trusts the social prescribers to decide if a person has to pay to access Abbeycroft's services.

"We're seeing reasonable take-up from this and a definite growth in social prescribing," he adds. "The pandemic has slightly interrupted activity in terms of how the work is going, but it's certainly going to evolve again on the other side of this. And it's opening up all sorts of opportunities for our teams, whether it's exercise on referral, pulmonary rehab or even Covid rehab. The place we now find ourselves in is really engaging."



IN DEPTH

SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Tendring District Council in North-East Essex has three standalone leisure centres as well as three dual-use sites catering for very different audiences – from areas of deprivation to better-off towns of retired couples.

With a Sport England grant of £120k in 2020, the national governing body and CIMSPA training development partner Parkour UK was able to pay the salaries of its CEO, a development manager and a development co-ordinator. Well spent, one might say.

However, by using the prevalent traits of the sport itself – to be completely functional, effective and liberated as possible with determination and self-reliance – the organisation has created a strategy to bring on seven additional people for limited periods to contribute to its growth and their own future career prospects.

“We’re really grateful for the award... from Sport England,” says Dan Newton, Parkour UK’s CEO. “But for the ambitions and aspirations we have for the first year, we’re light on people and light on resources.”

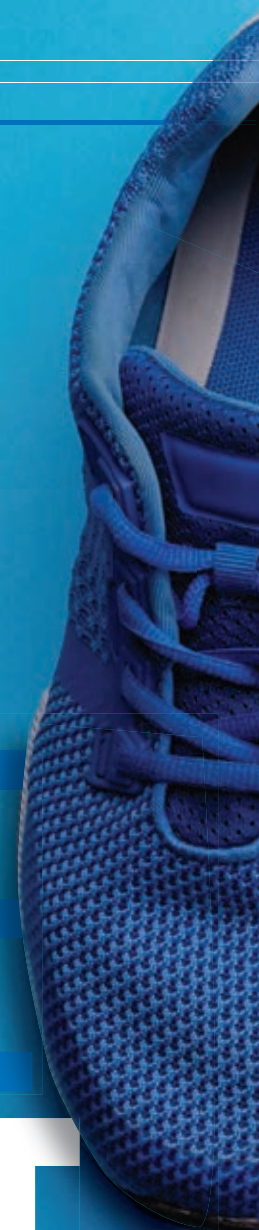
Newton hired development manager Chris Grant and development co-ordinator Omar Jackson, who both came on board in September, from a pool of what Newton says was “a high volume of people who were really credible applicants and had high-quality CV experiences”.

Not wanting these high-potential candidates to vanish from the radar, Newton kept in touch with them. And he found a way to remain in contact as well as to resource projects that might have not been able to move forward otherwise: he has created seven volunteer development associate positions, with each development associate to work for five days on assigned projects for Parkour UK through the end of January.

LEAPING INTO A DIVERSE FUTURE

by Dee Dee Doke

A financial grant may have given Parkour UK an initial boost, but the organisation is excited about its further growth and future ambitions





“The underlying points for me are to increase the capacity that we have in these early stages of our development and the commitment to lift people up, to give them an opportunity that will add to their knowledge bank of professional experiences”

documents for FE/HE, which support the introduction of Parkour in various ways such as societies, classes and curriculum support, among other points.

Youth work/Social inclusion partnerships – to prepare information along the lines of that for schools and FE/HE along with interventions and community growth, among other points.

Building a funding directory for Parkour businesses to include information like how to best set up as a business and to also submit funding applications.

Other aspects of these projects involve working with a Parkour UK affiliate to ‘Test and Learn’ aspects of the project and developing information materials for Parkour companies that want to support the sport’s introduction in different levels of schools.

On each project, Parkour UK development staffers Grant and Jackson will be on hand to support the development associates – albeit from ▶

“It will bring us 40 days capacity we didn’t have,” says Newton.

In addition, working on the projects will give the seven development associates highly-focused work experiences they might not have otherwise been able to access. “The underlying points for me are to increase the capacity that we have in these early stages of our development and the commitment to lift people up, to give them an opportunity that will add to their knowledge bank of professional experiences,” Newton says.

The projects are:

Preparing a toolkit for emerging

Parkour businesses with a series of templates, ‘how to’ information around best practices and an audit of systems. This will also provide guidance on the use of online booking and finance systems with research into current use. **Education partnerships (School)** – to prepare a series of generic documents for the schools environment, which support the introduction of Parkour to a school setting and to support the development of schemes of work in line with key stages/ages for Parkour in schools, among other points.

Education partnerships (University/Higher Education) – to prepare



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SPEAKING TO THE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES...

Mark Cordeaux's career ambition is to achieve the role of CEO at a national governing body or a professional sports club, "and the work I'm doing in the development associate programme will be essential when working towards this goal", he says.

Cordeaux, based in Manchester, is working on the business toolkit project "with the purpose of developing a number of templates and recommendations for Parkour companies to utilise in order to streamline some of their core business practices", he explains.

"The challenges that I'm facing include a lack of initial knowledge into the sport as I am not from a Parkour background and no previous experience of producing the templates required from scratch," he says.

However, he adds, "the challenges I face directly influenced my decision to take part in the project, and I'm looking forward to see the work we are doing benefit Parkour companies across the UK".

Cordeaux says the programme itself was "a great opportunity for me to broaden my skill set within the sporting sector. As I am relatively early on in my career, I am extremely keen to learn as much as possible about all facets of business. Being part of this project will refine some skills I already possess but also gives a great insight into the sport, and the vision Dan (Newton) and the team have for Parkour is really exciting."

Lara Kirwin of Liverpool describes being part of the development associate programme as "extremely valuable to me".

She explains: "Having graduated during a global pandemic and hoping for a career in sport, I am appreciative for this opportunity to work with a national governing body in a schools-based project."

She went on to say that she is enjoying "working collaboratively" with the Parkour UK team, "expanding my network and gaining insight into sport development. I am looking forward to continuing my personal and professional development and delivering a project to positively impact the Parkour community".



a distance, as Newton (*above centre*), Grant (*above right*) and Jackson (*above left*) all work in different parts of the country (Newton in Sheffield, Grant in Glasgow and Jackson in Bedfordshire). The development associates will also be physically separated from each other but joining forces virtually via Microsoft Teams and Parkour-provided email addresses.

And while Parkour UK cannot pay them, financially speaking, for their work, Newton has crafted a set of career-related benefits as an incentive: a reference/recommendation of their work, an introduction to a leader in the sector "who will be well placed to add value to you and your career", the sharing of each individual's CV with a group of senior leaders active in the sector, a Thomas International PPA profile with feedback for each (with a financial value of £75, and a pair of Rainbow Laces (with a financial value of £2.50, which reflect Parkour UK's support for the Stonewall organisation.

At time of writing, the programme is still in its early days. However,

IN DEPTH SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Newton says the programme is "something that we plan to run again. It is likely that for the next 15 months, in particular, we will be light in terms of executive capacity, and it is proving to be a positive way of getting us on the front foot with projects that we wouldn't have otherwise had the capacity to start".

Asked about the challenges encountered to date, Newton says, "is the need to be specific and tight on what they (the associates) are doing next and their project goals. It is a short space of time, and they have a relatively limited amount of time to spend on it. So any vagueness is something that we have needed to push back on."

Even beyond increasing Parkour UK's capacity and the benefits to the development associates themselves, Newton sees other gains from this initiative: "From a diversity perspective, it has significantly increased the lived experience that we have access to, which based on our size always has the potential to be a limitation. I believe that doing a good job with this cohort is important as it will set the foundation for us to build something better in the future which could be on a more significant scale. &



TECH TOOLKIT

PRODUCT ROUND-UP

FITNESS FOR PURPOSE

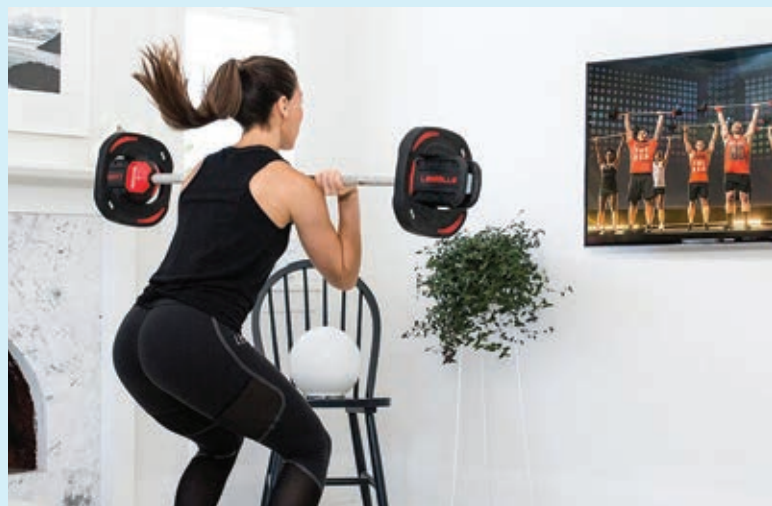
Immersive and integrated solutions are coming to the fore

BLENDING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Les Mills has launched a range of blended online and offline fitness solutions to help operators future-proof themselves as they continue to react to the Covid-19 pandemic. The solutions have been two years in development but Les Mills has accelerated the product launch to help clubs embark on a post-lockdown phase of growth. The newly-launched digital solutions include: enhanced livestream workouts, which enable operators to offer live Les Mills workouts of its classes to their members; app workout content, where workouts can be brought into a club's own member app; an on-demand affiliate programme in which clubs can support their members' entire fitness journey by providing home workouts via Les Mills On Demand and receive a share of the revenue for each sign-up; and online skills training for staff with Les Mills instructor training and group fitness management training. Among the club partners Les Mills is working with are Nuffield Health, Bannatyne's and Everyone Active.

Price: On application

www.lesmills.com/uk/clubs-and-facilities



Hip thrusting glute workouts

Hip thrust machine creator Booty Builder has launched its V8 model to the UK market. Based on experience gained from the previous seven models, the V8 has been totally redesigned and has a smaller footprint than its predecessors at 2006mm (length) × 965mm (width) × 1574mm (height). It claims to make hip-thrusting safer, faster and more effective and the patented raised feet design puts the user in the optimum position to isolate and work the glutes. It follows the release of Booty Builder Station, a full-body workout station designed for small gyms. The station can be used for hundreds of different exercises in conjunction with Booty Builder resistance bands and barbells.

Price: TBA

<https://react-fitness.com>



MORE FIT FOR PURPOSE

Fitbit has upgraded the software to its Sense and Versa 3 smartwatches enabling users to better manage their health and wellbeing. The OS 5.1 upgrade provides more ways to track oxygen saturation or SpO2. Fitbit describes Sense and Versa as its most innovative devices yet and explains that at a time when it is more important than ever to monitor day-to-day health metrics, they can play an important part in surfacing new information available about your physical and mental health and wellbeing. It has also announced the availability of voice-enabled capabilities, which in the UK will be via Google Assistant.

Price: On application
www.fitbit.com

EXERCISE TESTING COMES TO WATTBIKE

Cortex has partnered with Wattbike to integrate its exercise performance testing machinery with the AtomX indoor smart bike. The companies explained that historically, within cardiopulmonary, metabolic, performance and fitness testing, heart rate has been used as a clear indicator of cardiopulmonary health and for exercise prescription. Heart rate, however, is subject to various sudden changes and has a high day-to-day variance. Power output, therefore, is a much more solid parameter when testing. Cardiopulmonary exercise testing (CPET), involves testing the heart, muscles and lungs to their maximum capacity and analysing their functions. This is done by analysing gas exchange, so throughout the test on the Wattbike AtomX, the individual wears a mask with a sensor attached to it that measures the volume of air produced. There is also a cable tube attached that allows the sampling of the gas exchange; exhaled and inhaled air. The

companies hope their collaboration will bring enhanced, controllable and accurate exercise testing accessible to the medical, fitness, sport science and elite sport markets.

Price: On application
<https://wattbike.com>



WHEN THE KIT INTERACTS WITH THE CONTENT

Freemotion is rolling out its new 22 Series of cardio machines globally, powered by the iFit connected fitness platform. The aim is to integrate best-in-class product design with industry-leading, on-demand, digital content so gym operators can offer users an immersive and

personalised virtual training experience. Products in the range include the Reflex Treadmill, Incline Trainer, and CoachBike. The kit interacts with the content via auto-adjusting technology that controls the speed, resistance, incline, or decline in sync with the coach's command. Freemotion explains that by accurately simulating the topography of the iFit Global Workout, the technology makes the user feel as though they are running, walking or cycling alongside their coach. There is a wide range of digital content from around the world including all of the stages of the 2020 Tour de France.

Price: On application
<https://freemotionfitness.com/>



PROVIDING A DIGITAL UPGRADE

Online booking system Bookteq is designed to digitally upgrade independent sports and fitness venues as well as increase revenue. Developed by those behind the online sports marketplace Playfinder, it allows operators to manage bookings and customers, take payments online, automate invoicing and onboard members. It was built with direct input from venue managers. Contactless payments and track-and-trace facilities can be enabled in the application to help operators remain Covid-19 compliant. The company said it knows through the Playfinder marketplace that slots made available online are booked at a faster rate than those that have to be processed manually so it maximises opportunities to generate more revenue. Moreover, operators can increase their exposure and gain access to new customers by listing their facilities on the Playfinder sports booking portal.

Price: On application
www.bookteq.com

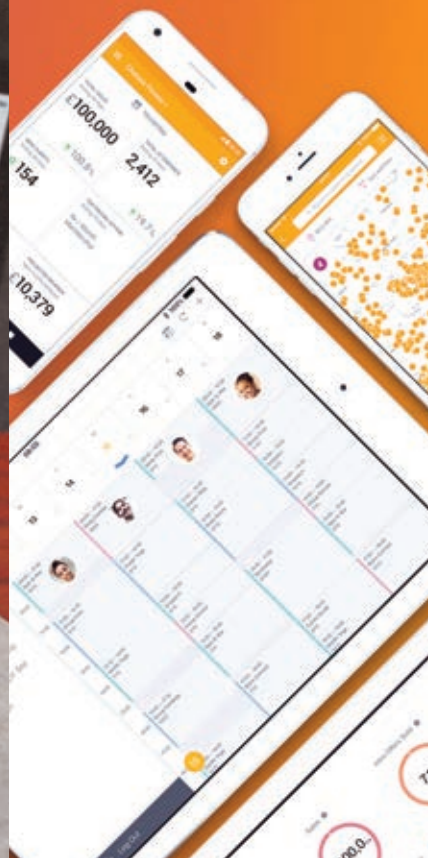
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EXPERT ADVICE

USING PR TO BOOST YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

Louise Findlay-Wilson *explains why the employer brand has never been more important, and how to boost it through PR*

During the 10 years pre-Covid, the sport and physical activity sector's workforce increased by almost 20%.

While the pandemic has stalled this growth, the issues which fuelled it – Type 2 Diabetes, sedentary lives, an ageing population and obesity – have not gone away. So, although attracting talent may not feel like a high priority, once the dust has settled, the sector will grow again. Competition for the best talent will be fierce. That's why companies should start now, thinking about their employer brand – using PR to get it in order.

STATUS QUO

A first step is to gauge how your brand is currently perceived. According to the CareerBuilder survey 2018, 55% of jobseekers abandon applications after reading negative reviews about a potential employer online. Yet only 45% of employers ever monitor those reviews! This is madness. Take a hard look at Glassdoor and see what comments are being posted about your business. Perhaps speak to freelancers who work with you, current and former employees, even your community and recruiters. Get a genuine sense of what your employer brand is currently like. Do you like what you see or hear?

SETTING THE TONE FOR YOUR TALENT

It's important to also know how you want to be perceived, not just as an employer but as a sports/fitness business. Are you family-friendly or catering for the executive market? Is



“Get a genuine sense of what your employer brand is currently like. Do you like what you see or hear?”

there an eco-angle to your offering? Perhaps you are aimed at semi-professional sports obsessives, fitness junkies, active retirees or people with little kids? Getting clear about the market you serve will not only help with your wider marketing but it will help you attract talent that fits your ethos.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Once you know the status quo of your employer brand, and the image you want to project, you can address the gap between the two through carefully crafted PR campaigns.

These may involve harnessing current employees, perhaps using case studies, stunts, charity initiatives, awards schemes, community events or social campaigns. These all need to be carefully thought through to project your business' approach and personality and to address any misconceptions.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

It's no good attracting people into your organisation through great communications only to stop talking to them once they're onboard.

According to CIMSPA's own research, 22% of the sector's professional workforce are freelancers. This is a communications challenge. It's much harder for freelancers to feel a part of a place, and to understand the organisation's values; you must work doubly hard with them.

A large percentage of your workforce is also likely to be young. This affects the communications channels you deploy, the tone and style of your approach. Don't let your communications preferences skew things. Just because you use Facebook or email doesn't mean they do – they most likely don't!

CONCLUSION

There's so much more I could tell you but you get the gist. Staff affect a business's reputation, and the experience the customer receives. They're ambassadors, especially in organisations which are very localised, as fitness businesses often are. The better your people, the better your business. That's why your employer brand matters – look after it. ☺

Louise Findlay-Wilson is managing director of Energy PR

WORKPLACE

FOCUS

ARE YOU HR BREXIT-FIT?

There is no doubt that the post Brexit landscape will add challenges to the sport and fitness sector's post-pandemic road to recovery, says Laura Darnley



Nearly five years after the Brexit referendum, free movement of EU nationals has now come to an end. By all accounts, the fitness industry is unlikely to experience as significant a commercial impact from Brexit as other sectors, such as manufacturing. However, this doesn't mean its effects won't be felt at all.

BREXIT EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

One area where post-Brexit changes will have an impact is the right to work implications on organisations in the sector. It's estimated that 15% of the workforce in the UK's leisure and hospitality industries are EU nationals. It is the legal obligation of employers to make sure that they only employ people whose immigration status gives them a legal right to work in the UK, so it's important for all businesses to ensure that they are operating within the new guidelines set by the Home Office.

Depending on the circumstances, employing someone illegally could give rise to a civil penalty of up to £20k per illegal worker where the employer has

not carried out the necessary due diligence. A sponsor licence is the gateway to using the work permit system and, without it, businesses won't be able to recruit non-UK national staff through the work permit route. If the business is already employing work permit staff under their sponsor licence, the Home Office will cut their visas short, giving them 60 days to find another employer to sponsor them or to leave the UK.

Who has the right to work in the UK is now a lot more complicated as a result of the end of free movement ends.

In the first instance, EU nationals who had established residency in the UK before the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020 will be eligible to apply for settled or pre-settled status. This is likely to be the case for existing staff members. They have been given until 30 June 2021 to make these applications. Either settled and pre-settled status will allow them to continue living and working in the UK.

But, if they don't apply by the 30 June deadline, they will be classed as an undocumented migrant, without the right to live or work in the UK. In this

case, businesses risk finding that their existing staff might not have the right to work, and this could give rise to the civil penalty of up to £20k per illegal worker, or the criminal offence of up to five years in prison or an unlimited fine.

The second category of EU nationals are those who have entered the UK for the first time since the start of the year. They won't have had residency in the UK before the end of the transition period and will therefore not be eligible for settled or pre-settled status. Instead, they will be subject to the full visa regime. Typically, they will need a work permit to take up employment in the UK.

Helpfully, the government has confirmed that there are no changes to the 'right to work' document checks required until July 2021; unhelpfully, this means that an employer in the fitness industry who is employing an EU national in the first half of this year can't require employees to prove they have settled status, as this could give rise to discrimination claims on the grounds of race/nationality.

BEING PREPARED

The changes are undoubtedly an extra challenge that gym groups and other fitness businesses could do without at this time. While providing employees with immigration or visa advice is a criminal offence unless you are specifically regulated to do so, HR directors should be doing what they can now to ensure their employees are at least aware of the changes, while auditing their employee base and analysing their future recruitment plans to avoid any potential legal issues further down the line. Failure to do so risks starting this year less than match fit. 🏏

Laura Darnley is legal director at independent law firm Brabners



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A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a sports bra, is holding dumbbells in a gym setting. The image has a teal tint and is partially obscured by a dark blue diagonal shape on the left side.

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LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR



Dr Tok Hussein is CEO of occupational health company *Healthwork*

GET SPORTS UP AND RUNNING

Our work is about helping people get back to work and ensuring people are safe at work, normally from hazards like asbestos and silicon dust. But, after coronavirus hit, our work changed significantly, and we've been working in sports and events management, a new area for us. We've been creating bio-safe environments and ensuring people are safe to go into those environments.

During the first lockdown, we worked with key workers and got involved in setting up the Nightingale hospitals.

Our name got around, and we were contacted by Premier League doctors. They asked if we could support them with Project Restart, the project to get the Premier League started again. We worked very closely with the doctors, writing risk assessments and setting up the right processes to allow people back into training venues safely.

In phase one, the aim was simply to get sport started up in a training capacity. Other sporting organisations contacted us – Rugby Football Union, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), the national gymnastics squad and national tennis squads – to get them up and running again as well.

We helped the ECB get international cricket up and running. We had teams from Pakistan, Australia and Ireland to play five-day games. The teams stayed

here for several weeks so we had to create a bio-safe environment for everyone, involving frequent swab testing of all the teams and other people.

It's been about managing the overall risk – making stadiums and venues safe for people – and individual risk. We introduced additional control measures for some individuals, if they had pre-existing conditions, for example. We got to meet and assess a lot of the big names in sport, as well as commentators.

What struck us this summer is how a lot of the work around the edges of a major sports event, which doesn't normally get noticed, suddenly became very important. We all realised how important everybody is – groundspeople, security people, cleaners...

We are so proud of what we've done. It's a far cry from the other work we do and is completely different to what we were doing before coronavirus hit. There has been a huge level of pressure, but some of the feedback has been amazing. With the in-house professional sports teams, many have doctors dealing with things like ligament injuries or getting the best performance out of a person. The skills set they don't have is occupational health – assessing risk from biological hazards.

Those sports couldn't have started again without demonstrating what

measures they had in place. Cricket was probably our biggest project. The ECB had 25 members of our team working at all the venues, making them Covid-secure. Many people, including ancillary workers like groundsmen and kitchen staff, as well as the elite sportspeople, felt hugely reassured.

It was different in the second lockdown. I was recently asked to share my views on why elite sports can continue but grass roots sports have to be put on hold. To keep things going with Covid-secure measures, you need a big budget. It's not just about what goes on on the pitch – with grass roots sports you have parents on the sidelines, car sharing, and all this puts people at risk. Going forward, it's very important that the government does everything it can to get all sports up and running as safely as possible.

Healthwork has helped get elite sport going again at a time when many people thought we wouldn't be able to do so in a safe manner. It's been challenging, but also really exciting and interesting.

We will be able to look back and say, 'We were part of that and helped get things going again'. We've really been at the leading edge of occupational health and return to work strategies. 🌱

Dr Hussain was speaking to Roisin Woolnough

LAST WORD

SPORTING LIFE

Magdalena Dawczak became a fitness instructor in Poland but now lives and works in Cambridge and Ely, Cambridgeshire



CHANGING PEOPLE'S LIVES

HOW DID YOU BECOME A FITNESS INSTRUCTOR?

It started with my mum. She worked in a leisure centre in Poland and was always sending me on courses. A friend then told me about Zumba. I went along with my mum and really liked it. I did a training course, then a PE teacher friend wanted me to run a class for teenagers in school, and it was really good.

HOW DID YOU END UP IN THE UK?

My husband, who is also Polish, got an 18-month contract here, and it was a good time to come as I was pregnant and had to stop my classes. I had been to the UK before, working in the summer when I was younger, and really enjoyed it and wanted to come back.

WHAT CLASSES DO YOU TEACH NOW?

Zumba, aqua aerobics, combat (boxing), pump (weights), social dancing and ballet fit. I teach at (CIMSPA employer partner GLL/Better) The Hive Leisure Centre in Ely (Cambridgeshire) and at Nuffield Health Reading Fitness & Wellbeing Gym in Cambridge. In the first lockdown I did my pump instructor training, and I'm now doing spinning (indoor cycling) as well. We had to cancel those classes after the first lockdown because there weren't enough instructors, so I learnt to do it so I could cover – now I do spin every day.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I love teaching, the social side and helping people in their daily lives. You can really boost people's confidence. My favourite class is aqua aerobics. I do a lot of acting to make it fun and keep people interested – I do things like pretend I'm fishing as they swim from side to side! But I can't do aqua at the moment because of lockdown, and I'm really missing it. *[Editor's note: At time of writing, the UK was in its second national lockdown.]*

WOULD YOU EVER CONSIDER A DIFFERENT CAREER?

I like computers and worked as a graphic designer for a few months but gave it up because I can't be seated for a long time. I was always waiting eight hours in order to run my classes in the evening.

IS IT DIFFERENT TEACHING FITNESS IN THE UK TO TEACHING IT IN POLAND?

In the UK, people are more focused. With Zumba in Poland, if it's a new routine and they can't do it, they will dance whatever. In the UK though, people will concentrate and try to learn it. Also, in Poland it tends to be younger people doing exercise and they do it for

fun, rather than for health benefits. Here, people are older. It's good that in the UK they educate people about how important physical activity is.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CLASSES ARE HELPING PEOPLE?

You can see someone getting stronger or losing weight. One of my students is 75. He joined in January to address his mobility problems. When he started aqua, he couldn't walk without a stick. He has lost 15kg, does all my classes now and walks without a stick.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

Two years ago, I started body building. I did an online competition this year and want to do a big competition next year. I would love to do more courses so I can teach other instructors. It was meant to happen in lockdown, but it will have to be next year now. Also, my students nominated me for Living Sport's Community Volunteer of the Year Award. That was a really nice surprise. 🌟

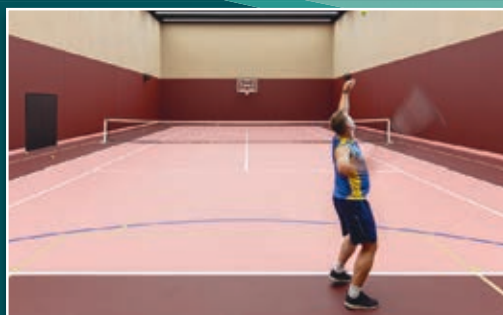
Magdalena Dawczak spoke with Roisin Woolnough.





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