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S&PA Professional

ISSUE 41 SPRING 2021

THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDUSTRY MAGAZINE



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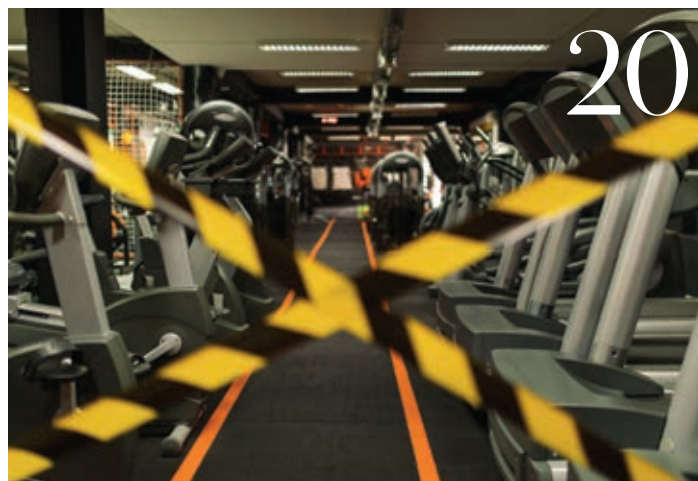
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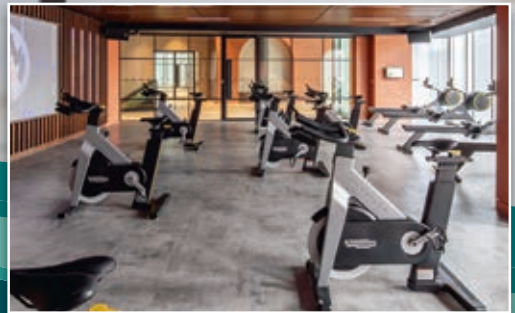
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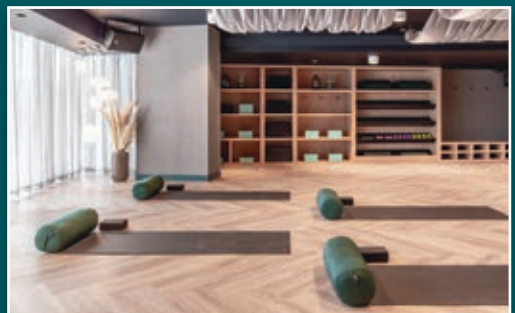
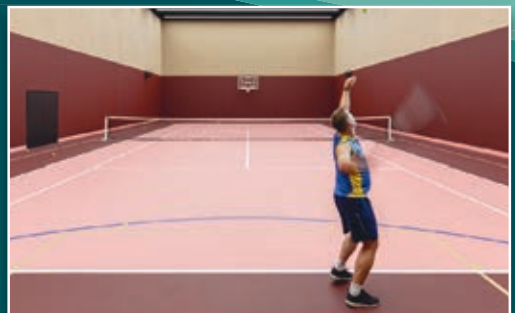
"This spiral upwards in terms of vehicle numbers then comes back to affect the poorest people in society... If we want to create a fairer society it's one that doesn't see the car as king" (p27)



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▶ DeeDee Doke

Exiting lockdown



A national strategy is called for as sports and physical activity reopen

Could we be nearing ‘the final frontier’ in reopening every type of fitness facility in all four nations? The last few months have served up quite the drought in terms of endorphin-inducing physical activity.

At a recent Parliament debate, a spark of hope was ignited about the development of a national strategy of promoting health and fitness, supported by the different political parties. “Gyms and fitness clubs should be recognised as wellbeing hubs and given the support they need to survive and to help revive our nation’s flagging physical and mental health,” said MP Sam Tarry from Ilford

South. “I echo the calls of many of my constituents... to develop a national strategy to encourage people to exercise more and to promote physical and mental health.”

MP Alison McGovern from Wirral South also told her parliamentary colleagues: “To improve the health of the nation, we need a national plan as we come out of the lockdown.”

If their fine words can be translated into meaningful action through genuine recognition of the value the sector delivers, perhaps a small measure of the damage done over the last year will have been worth it. But the sector and its supporters, such as the founders and the signatories of

petitions calling for the reopening of gyms and fitness centres, must continue to make their voices heard. Unless there is continuous pressure from the public as well as sector leaders, the calls for a national strategy will fade into the background of noise.

What will you do to help drive the change?



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CIMSPA

S&PA News

A round-up of the latest developments in the industry



POLITICIANS AGREE EXERCISE IS 'HEART OF NATION'S RECOVERY'

By DeeDee Doke

MPs have concurred during a March debate that a national strategy to promote exercise is necessary as the UK emerges from the economic downturn and global pandemic.

The debate at Parliament involved petitions focused on aspects of the government's Spring 2021 roadmap out of

the lockdown, including some related to reopening golf courses, gyms and fitness centres and providing greater financial support for the fitness centre.

One petition, signed by 180,000 people, called for gyms to remain open during Tier 4 lockdown. The other, signed by nearly 250,000 people, proposed that gyms and fitness centres reopen

early on as lockdown ends and the funding of a 'work out to help out' scheme.

The petitions were submitted before the road map was made public, and Conservative MP Nick Fletcher – Don Valley, who led the debate, apologised to the petition leaders for "speaking somewhat retrospectively... It is important to highlight why

the petitions were signed and what we should all take into consideration as we move forward and recover from this dreadful pandemic".

"It is clear that people are desperate for an outlet to channel their frustration at, being confined to their home or workplace, and to improve their physical and mental wellbeing in the process," said MP Sam Tarry – Ilford South, who is vice chair of the Commons and Lords Rugby Union Football Club.

Tarry said that one of the gyms in his constituency had lost half its membership in the last 12 months. "The sector is losing £90m every single week," he said, "putting more than 100,000 jobs at risk."

He continued: "I echo the calls of many of my constituents in Ilford South to develop a national strategy to encourage people to exercise more and to promote physical and mental health, as called for in the petitions. Exercise will be at the heart of our nation's recovery from Covid, and key to restoring our nation back to fighting fitness."

MP Greg Smith – Buckingham praised gyms and fitness centres for carrying out enhanced cleaning regimes and taking other measures to protect against the virus when they were open over the past year. He voiced concern that fitness studios would not be able to reopen at the same time as larger gyms. He



referenced a fitness studio in his constituency, the Energy Effect, and noted that its owner “has given everything to keep her clients going in these dark times... Her business has undoubtedly been a lifesaver for so many... It surely cannot be fair that this fitness studio has to stay closed while a gym less than a mile away can reopen.

“There must be an equality of opportunity, and every small business must be given the opportunity to rebuild.”

Smith supported providing financial incentives to encourage fitness centre and gym members to renew their lapsed memberships or grants along with the proposed ‘work out to help out’ scheme. “If we can get this right, it will undoubtedly save lives and livelihoods,” he said.

Also paying tribute to all gym owners and leisure facility operators was MP Alison McGovern – Wirral South, who said they had been “right on top of the need to keep their facilities safe, when they have been able to

open. To help them open quickly, they have left no issue unturned when it comes to making sure that gyms and other leisure services are – as much as they can be – even in spite of complications... like the way in which gyms are ventilated. I know that they have all worked really hard”.

McGovern also echoed Tarry’s call for “a national plan as we come out of the lockdown to address many of the concerns that have been expressed”.

Sport minister Nigel Huddleston defended the government’s roadmap and its timing, saying that the role of sport and physical activity as “a powerful defence” against the pandemic had been “reflected in the government’s approach in each of the lockdowns”.

He went on to say: “Our national life is going to come back stronger and healthier as a result of this focus.”

Whilst the minister demurred on the proposed ‘work out to help out’ scheme, he pointed out the financial

provisions made to date to local authority leisure centres and to community sport clubs. He also noted that proposals such as extending the current VAT cut for hospitality and tourism to the leisure sector had been brought to his attention. “This is a challenging area, but I hear the appeals made today.. as I am sure do the Treasury,” Huddleston said.

Also, Huddleston revealed he had had a conversation with a minister in the Department for Education “about the importance of sport and physical activity at school. We will also be refreshing the school sport and activity action plan. There will be lots of work and focus from government, across departments, as we continue to focus on the importance of physical and mental health and the benefits of sport and physical activity”.

“I am delighted,” Huddleston said, “that sport and recreation are at the forefront of honourable members’ minds as we begin to open up our society and economy... The pandemic has also been an opportunity to reflect on the sort of country that we want to build in the future – the sort of Britain that we wish to rebuild.”

MESSAGE FROM CIMSPA CEO



TARA DILLON ON A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR THE SECTOR

After what feels like an awfully long time, we are finally open for business – well, almost. Outdoor activities and indoor venues including gyms, leisure centres and sports venues are able to welcome back the public, but unfortunately organised group exercise will have to wait until 17 May.

There is no doubt that the successive lockdowns have put huge strain on our sector, but I do believe that we now have some fantastic opportunities available to us. Exercise has been in the media spotlight throughout the pandemic, and we’ve seen how people have found new ways of keeping active. Our sector has done an amazing job of adapting, whether that’s providing online fitness classes or wellness advice and guidance.

As a sector, we must continue to broaden our offer to ensure we stay relevant to people, even if they choose not to use our facilities. We must take a holistic approach to the problem of inactivity by working with key stakeholders such as local government, prescribers, social services and employers to create active communities that impact on social and economic outcomes. We must continue to upskill our workforce to give them the skills to work more closely with local authorities, health and social services and gain a better understanding of local health and social priorities.

All of this is in our power. It’s ours for the taking if we are prepared to adapt and change the way we deliver. I’m truly excited about what the future holds for our sector.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

SECTOR STILL IN PRECARIOUS POSITION



By DeeDee Doke

In spring 2021, England's local authorities and the sport & physical activity (S&PA) sector face "a much more precarious position" than a year ago during the first national lockdown.

This was the warning given by Sport England's director of capital investments to an audience at the recent active-net virtual conference.

The financial reserves of local authorities, trusts and operators have been stretched significantly during the Covid pandemic and even with £200m-plus funding injections, plus grants and business relief from Sport England and the government, "it's

below what is required for sustained recovery", Sport England's Kevin Mills said. "At this point, complete catastrophic disasters have been avoided, but... the sector now finds itself in a much more precarious position than it was."

Mills spoke as part of the keynote panel at the active-net conference, joining CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon, Community Leisure UK CEO Kirsty Cummings, Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) vice chair Debbie Kaye and ukactive CEO Huw Edwards to speak about the sector's future.

All speakers expressed optimism about the future of the leisure industry. CIMSPA's Dillon said: "We've learned that we can adapt and adopt change.

Our ability to grow and deliver differently seems to be overwhelmingly in the mindset of the entire sector.

"I am really quite enthused by the sector's approach to the future and its recovery, and utterly relieved," Dillon said.

At the same time, all panellists also shared concerns about its major financial concerns and changing dynamics in the local authority environment that will levy heavy impact on its leisure partnerships.

Mills said: "We now have a position where local authorities are in a substantially worse position financially and are facing immense difficulties in relation to 2021-22 budget and beyond, and trusts are severely weakened, having depleted reserves."

If central government provides no further financial aid, "the cliff edge which we've managed to avoid, to a great extent, will be encountered, and the efforts to avoid the damaging impact on the sector and communities and clubs and individuals will unfortunately be realised", Mills continued.

"Public sector is in crisis, public sector leisure is in crisis... and it's difficult to look to the sector at this stage," Mills said. "It's difficult because at this stage, we can't be clear what the full extent of the impact will be and what we are recovering from. And it's probably not that important at this stage that we are clear about what all solutions are.

"But what is clear is that there will need to be changes and services will need to be reviewed," he said.

"What we are seeing now is an increasing appetite – instead of

authorities reviewing their leisure services when a contract is coming to an end, or a new capital build is on the horizon, we are seeing the majority of councils having to look at and review their service provision,” Mills said. “We are seeing authorities questioning whether the service is meeting community need and concerned about the prospect of reducing services, questioning whether the client-operator trust relationship is effective.

“What we have seen through the crisis is that those areas which have strong partnerships and relationships between operator and client have fared better, and it’s going to be essential going forward that both parties work hard in this partnership arrangement,” Mills said.

Also speaking of the perilous financial straits facing local authorities was Debbie Kaye, who in addition to her CLOA role is head of community services at Cambridge City Council. “Local authority finances are in a really bad way,” Kaye said. “We’ve had a decade of austerity and the National Audit Office says that 94% of local authorities are going to be cutting funding next year to balance their budgets; these balance sheets have really been scarred by Covid.”

Kaye predicted it would take at least five years for local authority finances to “get back to where they were”, despite government support coming in “from a number of different sources”.

To build a better future, Mills emphasised, the sector must have available “robust data and insight” to demonstrate more easily and consistently “the huge benefit” created through health and social value. “Making that case was essential in convincing government of the need for financial support,” Mills said, and will be crucial to “influence and shape both local and national policy and investment”.

COMMUNITY IS THE FUTURE FOR GYMS

By DeeDee Doke

The future for the boutique gym fitness sector is “community”, according to Emma Barry, global sector brand development expert and headhunter.

The people who attend the gyms when they’re open, joined in online classes and relied on their trainers and class leaders for mental and physical motivation during the various lockdowns are linked through a “tactile, immersive, interactive, unbelievable experience” that they come back to – and boutique operators must continue “to get them even more involved” post-pandemic, Barry told a virtual audience at ukactive’s Sweat 2021 event.

“The future is community,” Barry said. “Now I want to really emphasise this now... It has to be both arms around people... This is our bread and butter. So, you’ve got to double down on ‘community’. The one thing we did better than anyone else was that we reached out to our community, we communicated

with them, we took them with us.

“I know the efforts that went into keeping your community engaged, uplifted, inspired, exercising, moving, educated – just enormous. Great job, and well done on it!”

Barry also acknowledged that the sector and constituents must accelerate its evolution because of the past year’s events. “There are new rules,” she said. “You need a new playbook. And no one has all the answers, so make it up as you go. Listen to your members, lean into what you love, partner with someone who does something you don’t love or what you’re not good at.”

She warned: “You’re not going to get away with just shoddy ‘near enough’, you’re going to have to get better. Looking sideways, you’re going to have to have some pretty interesting conversations with your competitors... Think locally about who you should be partnering with to complete that lifestyle circle.”

“Stay agile and innovate; this is a wake-up call for all of us.”



IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

Launched in February 2020, the Sports Governance Academy (SGA) is a partnership between Sport England and The Chartered Governance Institute. The SGA champions good governance in the sport & physical activity (S&PA) sector and seeks to develop those working in governance roles, upskilling the sector as a whole.

CIMSPA plays an important role in the governance of the SGA project. The Chartered Governance Institute first started talking to CIMSPA in 2019. We had a lot in common as chartered bodies with a large professional membership. And, of course, a shared interest in governance. When we began to develop the proposal for the SGA, the Institute and Sport England immediately recognised the value of CIMSPA as a strategic partner in the project, opening up the wider fitness and physical activity landscape. And we were delighted that they were so keen to support us.

CIMSPA CEO Tara Dillon sits on the Programme Board, which oversees all of our activity, and Danielle Peel, head of Organisation Design and Development, sits on the Advisory Group which helps us develop our content, training syllabuses and general direction to ensure we are meeting the needs of a very broad sector. We are working with CIMSPA colleagues to offer joint accreditation of CPD gained through our training so that the sector recognises the skills, knowledge and development of the SGA community. This recognition is important to the portability of the learning we offer and will give confidence to the sector.

Together, we share the ambition to raise governance standards across the sport & physical activity sector and to bring people together and support one another. CIMSPA is already doing some great work in that area – in Danni's team and elsewhere – and we want to help wherever we can.

CHAMPIONING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance needn't be a lonely place, says Craig Beeston, Sports Governance Academy programme manager at The Chartered Governance Institute



ENABLING PERFORMANCE

Our mission is to improve the standard of governance in S&PA organisations by supporting, training and connecting those who work in governance roles, or who simply have an interest in it. These could be governance professionals, governance leads, board members, CEOs, management teams, volunteers – a whole range of roles.

Governance is essentially the framework within which an organisation's strategy is set, decisions are made and implemented, and performance is monitored. It provides for accountability and communication, both within an organisation and outside. While there is clearly an important component which is compliance-driven (such as legal duties or paperwork), 'softer' aspects such as an organisation's culture, its values and the behaviour of those connected to it are increasingly seen as crucial to good governance. After all, organisations are made up of people.



What we want to promote with the SGA is to not approach governance with a tick-box mentality or to see it as a burden, but rather to embrace good governance practice as an enabler of performance. Yes, on the one hand governance serves to comply with the law, to manage risk and to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes. But it also provides for the best information to be made available to those making decisions; it seeks input from a range of stakeholders and listens to them; it involves a diversity of thought and experience among decision makers which helps ensure that an organisation makes the best choices for those it serves. So, it really helps bodies of all sizes to improve performance, achieve their objectives and maximise their impact in a sustainable but confident manner.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GOVERNANCE

We also want to demystify governance, help people get to grips with it and

understand the benefits it brings to their organisations.

To do this, we provide training courses at an introductory level (Essential Sports Governance), intermediate level (Leading Sports Governance) and a course covering Effective Chairing Skills. We are adding further courses in 2021. We have a large and growing knowledge base which provides reference material on all aspects of sports governance as well as a range of tools and specimen documents which organisations can adapt for their own use. Alongside this, we provide regular webinars and blogs covering a range of governance topics. Though this is often driven by those active within the sector, we also bring in expertise from other walks of life. As we are a fully funded project, all of our services and content are available free of charge.

We also want to connect people, showing them that working in sports governance needn't be a lonely place

and help them to share best practice and learn from each other.

Networking therefore plays an important role in our vision for the SGA, but this has of course been hampered by the pandemic. To compensate for that, we have launched an online community, The Huddle, where people can connect with others in the sector, seek advice or just share stories and experiences. Everything can be accessed through our website.

And on 28 April we are hosting the first SGA conference. Titled 'Diversity. Resilience. Growth', this online event will tackle some of the biggest issues facing the sector right now, and looks ahead to bouncing back stronger.

NEGLECT GOVERNANCE AT YOUR PERIL

Sadly, there is no shortage of examples of what can go wrong if governance is neglected. You can pick up a newspaper and read these stories most days. This happens across all sectors and sport and physical activity is no different. The impact varies. The repercussions can be financial, with an organisation losing income, making poor investments, maybe ultimately even going under. It can be reputational, where your good name is damaged. And, of course, when poor behaviour is involved, the impact can be very real for those who suffer at the hands of that. I think everyone can point to examples where this has been the case, either in media stories or elsewhere, and that cost can be incalculable. These risks will never be eliminated entirely, but they can be mitigated through good governance.

If governance is not done properly you may be missing out on engaging with customers and participants, making decisions which aren't the best, or failing to open up whole potential markets because you haven't reached them or haven't appealed to them. sportsgovernanceacademy.org.uk/

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



Tim Hollingsworth, CEO of Sport England, talks about the 10-year vision to transform lives through physical activity, while some of the sector's figures give their views on the strategy

UNITING THE MOVEMENT



WHY IS THIS STRATEGY IMPORTANT?

While it is setting a vision for the next decade, I hope 'Uniting the Movement' feels very relevant as a strategy for now – and for all. It was created with the spirit of collaboration at its heart. It is the result of over 18 months of consultation with thousands of people and hundreds of organisations offering ideas and making valuable contributions.

These discussions started before the pandemic. As a result, I think we have managed to highlight and focus on areas that will both build on the great work that has been done over the past few years and at the same time clearly recognise the enormous additional challenges the pandemic has brought. Again, that in part is why we have set it as a 10-year strategy. It gives us all the chance not just to cement the importance of sport and physical activity as essential for our physical and mental health and for bringing communities together, but to start to consider how best to reinvent it to fit the world to come.

As we begin to emerge from the crisis, and as restrictions begin to ease, it is crucial we begin to address areas of weakness that have been exacerbated during the past year. Uniting the Movement explicitly recognises that some people in our society are less well served by what we offer and are much more inactive as a result. So there will be a sharp focus on tackling those inequalities – providing opportunities for those who are being left behind.

This strategy will help us create a nation where people are able to live healthier, happier and more fulfilled lives. It is important that issues like background, gender, bank balance and postcode do not prevent anyone from reaping the rewards of being active. Our role is to champion this life-changing impact and ensure everyone across the nation can benefit from it. That is why this strategy matters.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS STRATEGY?

Uniting the Movement is designed both to create and then sustain real change – it is a bold vision for the future that builds on the work we have done in recent years. To achieve that Sport England will need to become more than just a funder – important as that is.

Increasingly our role will be in creating the opportunity for others to deliver, and to thrive, through our advocacy and campaigning, our championing the role of sport and physical activity in society, and the impact it can have in so many areas of our life. We will seek to play more of a convening role than previously – recognising that achieving real collaboration, across our entire sporting 'ecosystem' and around a common purpose, is the only way that we can make the impact we need on people's lives.

We will also need to focus on ways in which we are all working and delivering differently. That's why the 'catalysts for change' identified in the strategy are so important. We must invest more in the skills and capabilities of our partners – and in the leadership and governance structures that underpin so much of the delivery of sport and physical activity at all levels. We need collectively to focus on creating safer, more inclusive, more enjoyable environments for everyone to be active and find something that is right for them.

The other key focus of the strategy is all our work will have tackling inequalities at its heart more than ever before. We want everyone to feel the benefits of being involved in sport and

physical activity – at the moment there are many barriers to entry that need to be overcome. That will mean our learning in particular from the lessons of the 12 Local Delivery Pilots we have run in the past few years – how understanding the environment at a local level and the challenges faced by those we are seeking to support is the

only way meaningfully to create sustainable levels of activity. For too long the sport sector has been determined to deliver 'top down', expecting those previously unattracted by or unable to access the opportunity suddenly to change their behaviour. That needs to change.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF THIS STRATEGY?

We want to be able to look back in a decade and chart a journey of real change when it comes both to increasing how

we all think about the nation's – and our own – health and wellbeing, and that everyone can have the opportunity to be active in a safe, accessible, enjoyable environment that makes sense and can fit in to their own lives.

That is the heart of Uniting the Movement – ensuring sport and physical activity is truly available for all. We have been very clear in identifying that tackling inequalities is crucial to this becoming a reality and this means providing in particular women, people from minority ethnic communities, disabled people and people with a long-term health conditions with improved choice and opportunities to be active.

And – as a second ambition – that we have done this together. That we

“I do think that we have managed to highlight and focus on areas that will build on the great work that has been done over the past few years”

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have created a genuinely collaborative approach to the delivery of sport and physical activity where we are maximising resources, minimising duplication and bonded by a common purpose. We cannot deliver systemic change on our own. Together we are stronger.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE?

Of all the issues Covid-19 has highlighted, the one it has really cemented in my mind is just how important sport and physical activity is to the nation. This has been reflected in words from the Prime Minister, reports in the national and regional media almost daily, and through the messages I and many others continue to receive reaffirming the role sport plays in people's lives.

Grassroots sport – whether we're talking about people playing, volunteering, coaching or administering – brings communities together and offers a path to improved health and wellbeing. Against the odds, clubs and organisations have done everything they can over these difficult months to keep their members and players engaged. Continuing to support this critical role in our communities, not just to survive but to thrive, really excites me.

But this comes with a strong caveat. We know that the current 'offer' across grassroots sport and activity is not equal and the pandemic has made that inequality worse. By removing these barriers to sport and activity, we believe we can be part of a bigger picture of work that helps address many of society's biggest challenges.

By championing the role that sport and physical activity plays in our communities, and ensuring funding and resources reach those people and organisations who are struggling to access them the most, we can fulfil the true potential of movement.



ANDY KING, CEO, LINK4LIFE

There were very few surprises in the new strategy due to the excellent way it has been consulted upon over an extended period of time, combined with the way we are working in Greater Manchester with the Local Delivery Pilot and Systems Leadership etc.

I agree with the extended timeframe of 10 years as we need to take a longer-term strategic view yet be agile enough now to capitalise on the appetite for change. The purpose of helping people live healthier, happier lives through moving more feels right as a common purpose should do. It's the call to action we needed. The challenge now is the 'how' – how can the leisure trust that I lead, Link4Life, and GM Active as well as the public leisure sector really get behind the strategy and make it a reality? The two areas I feel we need more detail on is leadership and the role of the public sector in delivering the vision.

As part of the approach across Greater Manchester where we work as a

collective of leisure trusts as GM Active, and also work hand in glove with the Active Partnership, Greater Sport, we are already working towards a 'whole system approach' and considering how we build from the Local Pilot learnings. The Sport England strategy helps refine those thoughts but also spurs us on to accelerate the pace of change. In Link4Life and GM Active we are revisiting our own strategies and considering how this should impact our plans with a view to launching draft plans for consultation in March before going live alongside the new GM Moving strategy in July.

In GM Active we are convinced there is a significant training need for the sector if we are to contribute fully to a wellness agenda. As a result, we have launched the GM Active Learning and Skills Academy and are currently rolling out courses such as Covid Recovery, Mental Health First Aid, Making Every Contact Count and various CPD courses designed to upskill our workforce to be 'commission ready' on as many long-term conditions as possible.

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

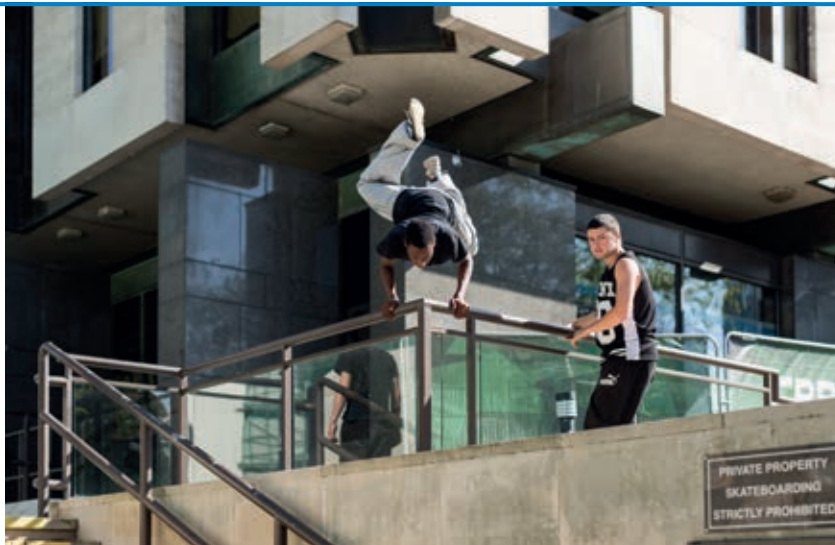
Our biggest priority now is to address the 'systems leadership' challenge – not just at a senior manager level, but fundamentally seeking to answer the following questions:

- What does systems leadership mean to our general managers, our receptionists and all our staff?
- What behaviours are we looking to see, how do we want our staff to feel about our purpose and their own purpose?
- How can we encourage leaders at all levels?

There are some excellent courses on systems leadership and collaborative leadership, but nothing that help us tackle these questions at all levels in our sector and can be delivered effectively across the workforce. We intend to work with partners to address this because we believe that unless we do, we will struggle to deliver what we know we can.

I hope the public leisure and cultural sector can put aside the internal squabbles about what 'flavour' we are and collaborate effectively to position ourselves as the national wellness sector. The way we are perceived by health and social care commissioners and the public fundamentally needs to change, and examples of best practice where leisure and cultural assets and resources are effectively deployed to serve the community and close health inequalities must be championed, replicated and built upon.

I also want us to work together to be better as a sector in the areas of technology and create new experts from our ranks who can really help people use technology to improve their health in an affordable and scalable way. In short, I want to see our people developed to the extent that they are valued as essential, professional and inspirational.



**DAN NEWTON, CEO,
PARKOUR UK**

The key messages of Sport England's new strategy are consistent

with the conversations we've been having for a number of years. I think if you asked 100 people working in the sports sector what the five main issues are, most would list those articulated in the Sport England strategy, which is a good thing. However, I think people in the sector are most concerned with the 'how' element of the strategy. This will follow next and we will then be able to see if the trajectory is on track or not.

Lots of strategies are three to five years long. Having a 10-year strategy is great; it's ultimately a generation, and allows you to see things through. There have been calls for a 10-year strategy for some time, even before the pandemic struck, so Sport England will have to be very clever about how it gets people through the current challenges caused by Covid-19 before it can embark on the longer term strategy.

We want the sport of Parkour to thrive across the UK, but 85% of the Parkour community we work with is in England, so the new strategy is important to us. As a young governing body, we have benefitted from seed funding from Sport England and we want to ensure we make a valuable contribution to what Sport England has outlined in its strategy.

We are interested in supporting a whole systems approach to growth by working with other lifestyle sports like skateboarding, surfing and snow sports. We are all young organisations and want to make sure we grow in a way that complements each other and takes advantage of collaboration and potentially a shared services model.

One of the areas of the strategy that is most interesting for Parkour is active environments and we see huge potential working with local authorities to use Parkour and other activities to help rejuvenate high streets, city centres and parks. We see a bigger opportunity to activate spaces like disused underpasses and car parks through the sport. These are the places Parkour naturally likes to use, and we are working with active partnerships as well as councils to get this on the agenda. It would be great to deliver schemes like the project at Carlsberg Brewery in Copenhagen, where an urban space was created in the abandoned lot of the former brewery. Along with Streetmovement, a group of Parkour practitioners, the site was temporarily transformed in 2010 into an urban space (demolished in 2017), where families and friends could come for picnics, children could play and the Parkour community could practise.

We are ambitious and optimistic about the future, especially about the overlapping of the Sport England and Parkour strategies.



HAYLEY LEVER, EXEC LEAD GM MOVING AND CEO OF GREATERSPORT

I really appreciate the spirit in which Sport England consulted on this strategy. It engaged far and wide, as well as in a targeted way, to reach audiences who haven't previously engaged in this kind of conversation. As a result, the strategy feels more open and collaborative, and signals an intent for the way we can all work together over the next 10 years, alongside people and communities.

The long-term vision of a 10-year strategy gives us the opportunity to lift our heads up and work towards a healthier, happier future, whilst at the same time, deal with the ever present challenges of the pandemic. We have learnt so much as we have adapted, reimagined and redesigned approaches to support active lives in this very challenging year.

We all have a part to play, whether we're from health, education, transport, planning, community, sport, physical activity or beyond. We can unite in this movement, which will be rooted in communities as we grow informal movement and activity alongside more structured and organised community physical activity and sport.

Here in Greater Manchester, we have started the refresh of the GM Moving Plan, in the context of Uniting the Movement, and the key reform and transformation strategies that guide us locally. As a local system, we will determine and describe our collective contribution with a 10-year vision for GM Moving in Action, as moving supports our individual and collective recovery from the pandemic.

As CEO of GreaterSport, the Active Partnership for Greater Manchester, I will continue to work with our Board, team and Sport England colleagues, to define our specific role in the future of

GM Moving and our contribution to the national strategy.

Every organisation, team and individual in Greater Manchester and beyond has the opportunity to respond to the invitation and challenge that this strategy presents, so that we can all make our full contribution to the shared purpose of Uniting the Movement.

“We need to change culture, systems, policy, practice and behaviour if we are going to design moving back into life”

We are at the start of a long journey. We've made good progress, since launching the first GM Moving Blueprint for Change, in 2015. But there is a long way to go, and some serious repair and recovery work for us to do together in the short term.

We need to change culture, systems, policy, practice and behaviour if we are going to design moving back into life. This includes a collective need to address the structural inequalities that we know define people's levels of activity.

We are ready, committed to and re-energised by Uniting the Movement, and the opportunity to work alongside Sport England to create positive change for the long-term future with our people and communities.



IN DEPTH

QUEST

MOVING COMMUNITIES TRACKS RETURN TO LEISURE FACILITIES

Platform launched to assess impact of National Leisure Recovery Fund on public leisure facilities and their contribution to active communities

A new platform called Moving Communities has been launched, which will track participation at public leisure facilities and provide new evidence of the sector's performance, sustainability and social value.

This data will help local authorities, leisure providers and policymakers support the recovery of public gyms and leisure centres from the Covid-19 pandemic, taking informed decisions to keep our nation active.

It will also measure the impact of £100m provided by government through Sport England's National Leisure Recovery Fund and inform future investment decisions to strengthen communities and improve our nation's health and wellbeing.

Sport England and the government recognise the vital role gyms and leisure centres play in helping people to be active, and have

enhanced and repurposed the National Benchmarking Survey (NBS), working with Leisure-net Solutions in partnership with 4global, Max Associates, Quest (managed by Right Directions) and the Sport Industry Research Group at Sheffield Hallam University.

Moving Communities will provide a bespoke view of financial performance, participation levels, facility quality scores, social value reports and customer experience survey results for sites involved in the Fund, which can be compared to the national picture and filtered to enable local analysis and learning.

The facility quality scores will be delivered via Quest Prime, a new assessment delivered by Right Directions on behalf of Sport England, conducted against seven Prime core modules, including Community

Engagement, Programming, Cleaning and Hygiene and Operational Management, to help operators demonstrate they have robust Covid-19 control measures in place for both customers and stakeholders and a strong route to recovery.

Customer experience will be measured via what is considered to be the largest consumer survey ever completed in the sector – with more than 1,000 leisure facilities taking part across 300 local authorities.

Participating local authorities will be provided with access to new Moving Communities dashboards, which can be used with their key stakeholders to help inform and evidence local decisions.

A quarterly, comprehensive overview of the nation's public leisure services will be published and regular webinars will also be held, to help provide further insights to support the delivery of Sport England's strategy Uniting the Movement.

"The new Moving Communities platform will act as a local tool to help support leisure operators and their understanding of their service. It will be shared with other local authorities to help the whole sector recover from the Covid crisis, and will demonstrate the value and impact of the sector as it emerges from the pandemic and at time when it is needed most," says David Monkhouse, Director of Leisure-net, customer insight provider for the active leisure sector, which is delivering Moving Communities on behalf of Sport England.

You can find out more here: www.movingcommunities.org or Twitter @MovingCommunit1



ADVERTORIAL

FISIKAL



FRAME FITNESS STUDIOS PARTNER WITH FISIKAL TO GROW A GLOBAL FRAME COMMUNITY

When the government closed facilities back in March 2020, innovative fitness brand Frame Fitness Studios set to work remodelling their offer. The result has been a growing, global community of 'Framers' and a new, digitally driven revenue stream that future-proofs the business and drives a more sustainable future.

"Closing our doors was horrible," explains Frame co-founder, Pip Black. "We immediately started to explore ways we could continue to service our extremely loyal community and looked to Fisikal to help us develop a premium digital platform."

When facing lockdown restrictions, Frame successfully extended its high energy in-club experience to an online offering. This included integrating with Fisikal, experts in digital business solutions, to ensure a seamless digitalisation of the business and a website to cater for studio, on-demand and live-stream classes.

Frame co-founder Joan Murphy adds: "Our technology had evolved into a 'filo pastry' of multiple layers and needed to

be simplified and restructured. Thanks to Fisikal, Framers can now find schedules for studio, on-demand and live-stream classes all in one place.

"Fisikal is a one-stop shop, with an impressive offering which I haven't seen elsewhere. It integrates everything into one system, allowing us to provide a very personalised, efficient front and back-end to the business. We have also streamlined our payments and bookings through Fisikal's single solution, which has already saved thousands in monthly software and professional fees."

By integrating with Fisikal, Frame can now offer a whole suite of workout options to Framers. Through the online studio, Frame already has 6,000 Framers on on-demand subscriptions and thousands more booking onto livestream classes.

This project also involved Fisikal developing bespoke functionalities for Frame including: dynamic pricing of the 'Frame Card', a pre-paid member top-up option via the member portal; an

interactive option for Framers to tag classes by their moods; and a waterfall filtration system so specific classes can be easily found through the application of Frame filters.

"Fisikal has future-proofed our business," Frame co-founder Pip

Black adds. "Our online studio is essentially an entirely new studio with no property costs.

We can engage Framers not just in the UK, but across the globe. Digitalisation is a

long-term strategy for us and our online studio fits with our core values and vision of getting more people, more active, more often."

Rob Lander (*pictured*), Fisikal CEO, says: "The Frame community has really embraced the digital offer. This project has resulted in a simplified and seamless digital offering and the great thing is, we can always add more functionality as their digital offering, and the needs of their community, continues to evolve."

To learn more visit
www.moveyourframe.com or
www.fisikal.com



AGENDA

LEISURE FACILITIES



LEISURE CENTRES IN BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

BY CHRISTIAN KOCH

Covid-19 has been devastating for the UK's 7,200 gyms and leisure centres. But for those facilities dependent upon funding from cash-strapped councils, it's been particularly tough. As they prepare to reopen (hopefully) this spring, can the relationships between local authorities and leisure centres survive?

Leisure centres don't usually play a pivotal role in changing pop history, but if Liam Gallagher hadn't chanced upon the name of Swindon's Oasis Leisure Centre as a teenager, it's tempting to ponder whether Britpop band Oasis would have achieved their multi-million selling success using their previous name, The Rain, instead.

Last November, three decades after Gallagher spied Oasis Leisure Centre's name on a gig poster in his bedroom, the facility – famous for its unique dome and concert hall – announced it would close, yet another leisure casualty of the pandemic.

The financial pressures of being closed under three national lockdowns

(think absence of income, cancelled/refunded membership fees and keeping expensive swimming pools running) has saddled many leisure centres with severe cashflow issues. Last year was bad enough. But the winter lockdown arrived at the worst possible time for sports facilities, given January and February are their most lucrative months. According to ukactive, lost revenue during lockdown costs the sector an estimated £90m a week.

While deep-pocketed investors have rushed to the rescue of many big chains, the situation is more nebulous for operators behind the UK's 2,500+ council-owned sites (roughly one-third of gyms/leisure centres are run by councils or operators on their behalf),

which often deliver services for disadvantaged communities. Many providers are now falling behind in payments to local authorities, with the likes of Better Gym Lincoln and Chatham's Park Club joining Swindon's Oasis on the list of well-loved leisure centres shuttering doors permanently.

"Many swimming pools and leisure centres will close unless the government produces a lump of money," says Gerald Vernon-Jackson, chair of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Culture, Tourism and Sport Board. "These leisure centres tend to serve the poorest parts of communities, and the BAME community disproportionately well, who are also more likely to be

AGENDA

LEISURE FACILITIES

badly-hit by Covid-19 [BAME groups make up 26% of members in publicly-operated gyms/leisure centres and suffered higher death rates from Covid-19 than other ethnic groups].

However, councils haven't been in a position to fund operators over the past year because they are facing financial struggles of their own. According to thinktank The Centre for Progressive Policy, eight out of 10 English councils were at risk of bankruptcy last summer, such as Croydon Council, which declared insolvency. As such, they've had to make difficult decisions when cutting services.

"When receiving government money, there are certain statutory services councils must deliver first, such as education, social care and maintenance of the city," says Stuart Haw, who is covering leisure centres' woes in his role as PhD researcher at Northumbria University. "Sports are often discretionary, which is why [leisure centres] have fallen to the wayside not just now, but before the pandemic too."



Leisure centres vs pubs

There's also consternation that the government allowed pubs to reopen last summer before gyms and leisure centres, despite the proven benefits of exercise on physical and mental health. "I was incredible disappointed that leisure centres were at the back of the queue for opening; I can't for the life of me understand why pubs reopened four weeks before leisure centres," says Ivan Horsfall-Turner, MD at Freedom Leisure.

Indeed, the older the facility, the more it is at risk. "There will be some buildings that will be difficult to justify reopening after Covid," says Mark Sesnan, CEO of operator GLL, which trades under the name Better and runs over 270 public sport and leisure centres. "Many swimming pools were built in the 1970s to old specifications, so are expensive to run and falling to bits." For example, GLL referenced Swindon Oasis's "unique, albeit very tired, leisure pools" when announcing its closure. Both local authorities and operators will be looking at these things and thinking, 'Is this still a relevant asset?' There are places where we're losing money that aren't well-used."

It's a scenario Sesnan has regularly confronted throughout the "rollercoaster" 2020, a year which also saw the operator post a £20m loss. "It's the first loss we've had in 26 years, but this £20m uses up all our reserves," says Sesnan.

In January GLL announced it would be bailed out by local authorities in every area where it runs facilities, through a mixture of direct grants, deferred payments and loans. However, as Sesnan points out, the story is far from over: "The bailouts are obviously very welcome; they're on 'sensible' terms - they'll only be repayable when we're generating services again. But it doesn't solve the problem; it just reduces our losses, rather than resolving them."

Although the partnership between local authorities and operators is being tested in many parts of the UK - such as the recent court cases involving Westminster and Caerphilly councils and their leisure providers - GLL's rescue package isn't the only example of local authorities providing support. Last spring, Swansea Council stepped in to top up the 20% of wages of workers furloughed at sites run by Freedom Leisure. Lasting three months, "it was



our way of showing that at the very earliest we'd go over and above", said Jamie Rewbridge, strategic manager, Leisure, Partnerships, Health & Wellbeing, at Swansea Council.

"I can't pretend there's been a consistent level of support among the 23 local authority partners we have across England and Wales, but the vast majority of them have absolutely understood the service they provide to residents and the importance of supporting it," says Ivan Horsfall-Turner, managing director at Freedom Leisure.

Council support has also been crucial

CLOSED
DUE TO COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS

“Many leisure centres will close unless the government produces a lump of money”

for Active Tameside, which runs eight leisure centres in Greater Manchester.

“We were looking over a cliff-edge from day one but the council has been fantastic,” says CEO Chris Rushton. “First, they paid our full management fee upfront and deferred our prudential borrowing obligations to them. That helped us until late 2020, when we started struggling with cashflow again. We then negotiated a £1.8m loan from the council. Along with our insurance policy covering us with a business resilience clause, we’ve managed to retrain all our non-casual staff.”

Not every provider has had the same experience. “The community groups that run leisure centres transferred from local authorities are the most vulnerable because they’ve got limited reserves,” says Haw. “Prior to Covid-19, they may have been operating hand-to-mouth, but now with no income and ongoing utility costs such as paying for out-of-date boilers, it’s particularly risky.”

Vernon-Jackson maintains that councils have been continually lobbying the government for more financial support, singling out the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for criticism.

“DCMS doesn’t appear to understand how the leisure market is operated,” he says. “DCMS have refused to work with councils on a strategic basis. Their default position has been to exclude local councils from their discussions... We’ve sent seven letters to the secretary of state [Oliver Dowden], but he’s refused to meet us. I’m not sure whether dogs have eaten these letters...”

On the relationship between leisure centres & councils

“There were a few [local authorities] who said it wasn’t their problem, plus there was always a danger with negotiating that the councils would have said, ‘We can’t give you money because we haven’t got it or we think you’ll go bust and our money will go down with you...’ Generally, I think our good relationships with the authorities over the years have paid back,” says Mark Sesnan, CEO of operator GLL.



AGENDA

LEISURE FACILITIES

Vernon-Jackson notes that the £100m allocated by DCMS last autumn to help those leisure centres most in need has “only helped councils who directly run their leisure centres, and most councils don’t do this [most council-funded facilities are run by operators, typically charitable trusts]”. The fund was followed by one-off grants of £9,000 for small businesses (“no more than a sticking plaster”, says ukactive CEO Huw Edwards).

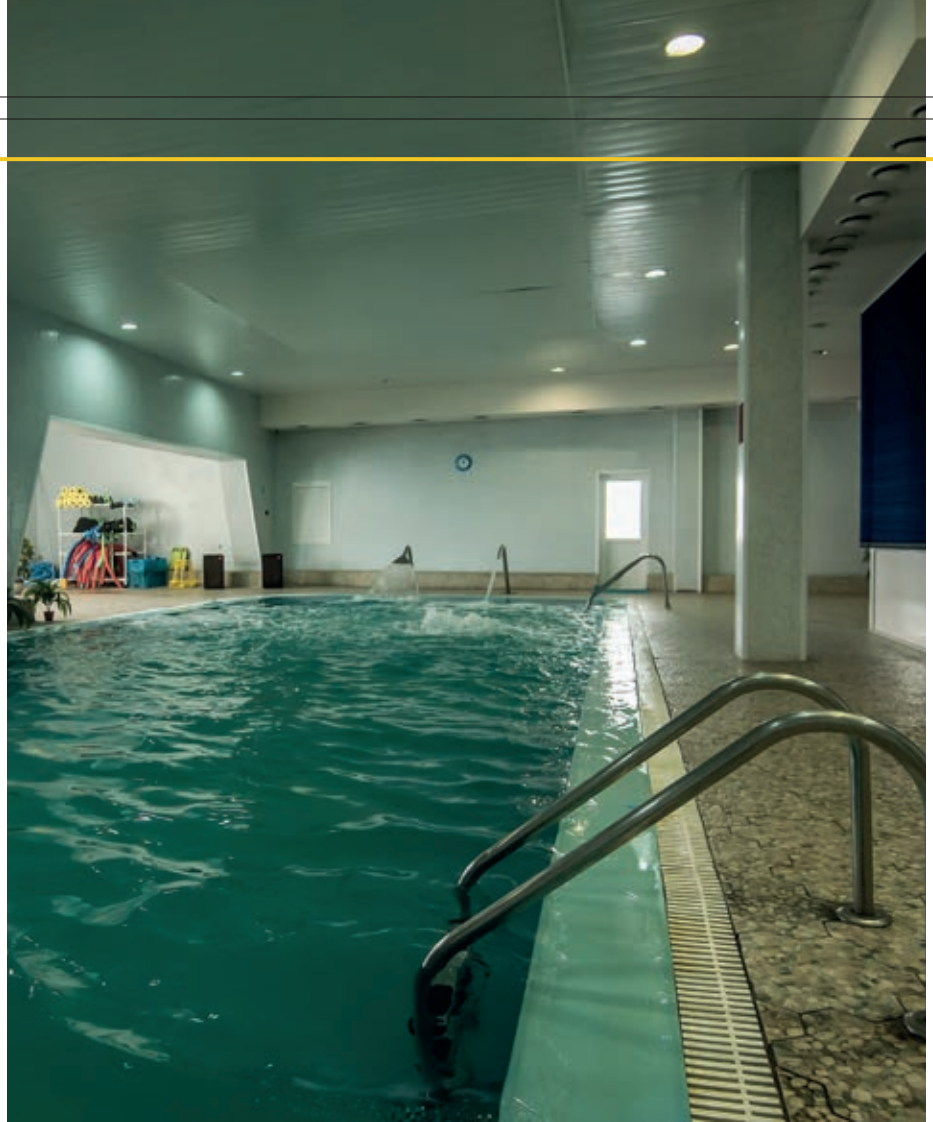
In particular, the leisure industry is chagrined at the seemingly preferential treatment given to the arts. Last year the Arts Council received a £1.57bn rescue package; a sum many found surprising.

Given local authorities’ financial distress, the panacea



Why it’s a bad idea for councils to take control of leisure centres

“The council process looks at other things such as local housing and schools,” says Mark Sesnan. “You never get the right decision if you put these things alongside each other, but the leisure trusts are able to just get on with it.”



is unclear. If leisure centres reopen this spring, they face a cornucopia of obstacles meaning it could take a few years before balance sheets return to growth.

Social distancing measures will limit visitor numbers, with extra staff needed to enforce new health & safety measures. The timing of reopening hardly helps membership renewals either. Many former treadmill fiends have taken to using local parks as an outdoor gym over the past year and will possibly be less inclined to swap their new habit for costly monthly fees, especially in warmer late spring. Reopening may also

clash with the possible end of furloughing, meaning those suffering pandemic-related redundancies may ditch their memberships.

“We’ve got a difficult road ahead in

terms of getting back to viability; it might take us 12-18 months,” says Horsfall-Turner. “I’m optimistic it can be done. People are social animals and are craving

“People are social animals and are craving the community aspect of public sector leisure”

the community aspect of public sector leisure... The last year has shone a light on why these services are so important.”

“Even when we reopen, we could still lose money as social distancing means we have less ability to generate income,” adds Sesnan. “And we’ll still need to pay



back the £20m we borrowed from Barclays to keep the business going.”

There’s also concern that leisure centres could be forced to jettison expensive-to-run swimming pools or running tracks, which take up large amounts of space.

One possible solution is for local authorities to take back control of leisure centres. In January, Wigan Council brought the area’s leisure and wellbeing services under its wing, while trade union Unite has suggested that zero-hours workers not eligible for furlough could benefit if local authorities started running leisure centres again.

“I’m not sure those who want to run [leisure centres] in-house have really thought about it properly,” says Sesnan. “Trade unions are putting pressures on councils to bring things back in-house, but I don’t recall it being better. Local authorities aren’t dynamic enough organisations to manage services semi-commercially. To generate income to subsidise for disadvantaged and younger people, you need to generate cash. To do that, you’ve got to act in the same way the private sector would.”

Another option could be community asset transfer (CAT), where management of leisure centres is run by local community groups, a model which has worked (pre-Covid) in Liverpool, Newcastle and Peterborough.

The burgeoning awareness of the ‘social value’ of sports and exercise – in other words, the positive impact it has on education, productivity, crime reduction and physical/mental health – could potentially persuade councils to earmark more funding to its leisure facilities. Research from sports consultancy 4Global recently showed the total social value of gyms and swimming pools in 2019 was nearly £4bn.

“[Social value] could help raise the identity of sports and leisure as an essential value, rather than a

Impact on grassroots sport

Meanwhile, the impact on grassroots sport can’t be understated. “Many community-based facilities operate in relatively deprived or disadvantaged areas; it’s often the only local place they can go for exercise – they’ve lost a vital community hub,” says Stuart Haw, researcher at Northumbria University. “I know some young amateur athletes, who I’ve since bumped into, and they’re drinking on the streets [rather than running] because there’s nowhere else to go. [If leisure centres remain shut] it’s a bleak road to be going down...” “If swimming is your daily exercise as it is for a couple of million people in the UK, they’re not going to naturally start weightlifting at home – they need pools to be open,” says Mark Sesnan. “With people having gone from six days a week in the pool, competitive swimming will definitely be damaged by this.”



discretionary service,” says Haw. “We could see gyms/leisure centres working with their local health trust, with GPs/nurses prescribing people services at their local leisure centre... But at the

moment, there’s a cognitive dissonance between the government recommending one hour of daily physical activity and places for that activity being considered ‘discretionary’.”

Rewbridge believes local authorities have a duty to keep people healthy, noting that the “leisure centres are important to us delivering the [Welsh government’s] Wellbeing of Future Generations Act”.

Yet, despite the challenges, operators have identified silver linings that could reboot the relationship between councils and leisure centres.

“Covid-19 has been a wake-up call,” says Sesnan. “I’d say the majority of our relationships [with local authorities] are much stronger because we’re now working *together*... Previously, growth was important for us. But we’ve now got to focus on *quality*. Rather than bidding [for contracts], we want to become the partner of choice for those councils that want to work with us... We shouldn’t collaborate with people who think it’s about delivering leisure at the cheapest price.”

Although the future holds yet more frustration for the 76,000 people employed at public-owned leisure centres, Rushton believes there is reason to be optimistic.

“There’s a major existential crisis facing the sector; it’ll continue to be a rocky road,” he says. “But I’m confident we’ll return to original revenue levels over the next few years and there’ll be growth, because there’s recognition that exercise is part of the answer, whether it’s mental wellbeing, quality of life or Covid resilience. But we need to find some bridge to recovery; arguably government funding because leisure centres’ viability is inextricably linked to councils, who are also struggling to balance books... Leisure centres are well-placed; we’ve just got to survive first...” 🙏

IN DEPTH

PROFILE



A As Sheffield's active travel commissioner, **Dame Sarah Storey** is determined to get more people walking and cycling. It's a daunting challenge, as **Simon Wicks** discovers, but one that Britain's most-decorated Paralympian relishes

NATURAL

FIT

The supermarket is less than 4km away, so it's easily doable on an e-cargo bike. But the route is along the main A6 from the Peak District where all the big quarry trucks go."

Dame Sarah Storey, multiple world champion cyclist, is explaining the challenges she faces cycling safely near her Cheshire home. These have nothing to do with her disability – she is Britain's most successful Paralympian, after all – and everything to do with poor transport infrastructure.

"There's no part of the strategic road



network where we live, so there's no route for those vehicles that isn't through little villages. It's just been made into a road for everybody – but the everybody is very much now focused on big, motorised, polluting vehicles.”

There's a paradox at the heart of transport planning: by meritocratically requiring 'everybody' to use the same infrastructure, we exclude those who could benefit most from travel networks tailored to their needs and means.

The excluded, Storey explains, include not just mums like her who want their children to be active. “It doesn't feel safe to walk everywhere – so more people drive and that means the volume of traffic increases, so even more people feel unsafe and they choose to drive, too.

“This spiral upwards in terms of vehicle numbers then comes back to affect the poorest people in society, and so the gap between their opportunity and the opportunity of those people who have the choice to drive widens. If we want to create a fairer society it's one that doesn't see the car as king.”

As Sheffield City Region's Active Travel Commissioner, Storey is more aware of the “gaps” than most. The region's Active Travel Implementation Plan (*see box 'Activating Sheffield'*), dissects the problems with our over-reliance on cars.

Among its eyebrow-raising statistics are: almost 40% of work journeys of 1km within Sheffield City Region are by car; 66% of the region's adults are overweight or obese; one in 20 deaths in South Yorkshire are caused by particulate air pollution; and one in five households have no access to a car.

The statistics tell a compelling story: inactivity and pollution have a devastating effect on the health of Britain's poorest communities. These communities are united, too, by lower levels of access to employment, leisure and even healthcare and supermarkets.

The common thread is the car. Or, rather, the extent to which we have presumed that cars are the default mode of transport for all and designed our living spaces accordingly.

“If everywhere is only accessed by vehicle, then you're instantly removing a third of the population who don't have access to that vehicle in the first place,” Storey submits. “The prerequisite of having access to opportunity shouldn't be that you need a car.”

She continues: “We have to make sure that we provide journey options and choice for everybody because the more people that are working, the better the economy is, the more they can contribute, and the more opportunities to get a diverse population within the roles.

“This is literally about providing for everybody, because everybody can walk in some way shape or form. If they're walking as a wheelchair user, that's still a walking journey.”

It doesn't have to be this way. Storey has learned from cycling in the Netherlands where active travel provision is good and, in most circumstances, cars are not given

Cancelled appointments

“Physical activity is vital in everybody's life and not everybody's going to want to take it into a sporting realm. It's almost like a pyramid shape: everyone should have the opportunity to be physically active at the base of that pyramid. For some people, they'll have a competitive streak and they'll want to compete or test themselves in some way. They may do the sportive style events, or run the London Marathon.

“We seem to be very good at the bit from that amateur charity run, cycle or swim. We're not so good at defining what we mean by that very base of the pyramid. Often everyone assumes that in order to be physically active, they need to book a class and have an appointment in their diary. But they don't if they are making the most of their journeys to be active, so walking or cycling more from day to day.

“That's just because of the mindset of the way we've designed our streets because it's so convenient to drive from door to door. We're trying to get people to see that physical activity is not just an appointment in your diary.”

IN DEPTH

PROFILE

priority over pedestrians and cyclists. People walk and cycle as a matter of course. “That for me shows just how far we have to go in ensuring vulnerable road users are protected here in the UK.”

FROM ATHLETE TO ADVOCATE

This really matters to Storey. But how has she gone from athlete to advocate? Currently, she is one of just five active travel commissioners in the UK, the others being in Manchester, Liverpool, London and Scotland.

Previously, she spent six years as a policy advocate for British Cycling underneath the organisation’s policy adviser Chris Boardman (pictured opposite, p29, who is also Manchester’s walking and cycling commissioner). “That gave me that opportunity to understand the processes that are gone through to formulate new strategy,” she observes. Advocacy also gave her the chance to “have a voice in a different way, a different platform, but use my athletic platform for good”.

“That’s where the similarities to sport are really strong. If we constantly thought about that 2040 map, it would become massively overawing”

Boardman was among those who encouraged Storey to apply for the Sheffield role in 2019. She’s a natural fit: crusading without being overbearing, articulate and able to bring her experiences as a parent, commuting cyclist and athlete to bear on the role.

But Storey faces a huge task – Sheffield City Region encompasses four large conurbations and a population of 1.8m. It has the entrenched issues of other post-industrial areas in the North of England. Moreover, the Active Travel Implementation Plan’s targets are

ambitious: more than 600 miles of accessible routes and 200 square miles of low traffic neighbourhoods by 2040, with corresponding increases in walking and cycling.

The commissioner is undeterred. She’s been planning for “just out of reach” goals since the 1992 Paralympics, where she won two gold medals in the pool at the age of just 14. “My parents always talked about controlling what I was able to control, and having a plan and always looking for the solutions,” she recalls. “I think it becomes part of your DNA eventually.”

At the heart of reaching goals is the mental trick of separating process from outcome. “We focus on the process,” Storey insists. “That’s where the similarities to sport are really strong. If we constantly thought about that 2040 map, it would become massively overawing and Pete [Zanzottera, active travel project director] and I would be crying under our desks.”

Foremost for Storey among the rewards of reaching the plan’s goals is the increase in social inclusiveness that active travel infrastructure can provide. She talks about “spreading the inconvenience” more equally among all road users; and envisages people with disabilities moving around as easily as anyone. She refers to “active travel lanes” and “journey chains”, the concept of linking different travel modes to enable complex journeys without a car.

Storey clearly has a strong technical grasp of her role, as well as strategic and political. But active travel infrastructure is not the easiest sell to a population for whom car use is so entrenched and whose attachment to cars – as necessary means to get around and as status symbol – is reinforced every time they set foot in the street.

“You have to have a strong strategy and leadership for that strategy – and



Sarah Storey, super cyclist



Born in Manchester, Sarah Storey took part in her first Paralympics in 1992 at the age of just 14 – and won six medals as a swimmer, two of them gold. She carried on her winning habits before switching sport to cycling in 2005.

She is now Britain’s most successful Paralympian, having taken part in seven Games, winning 14 gold medals and more than 20 world titles. But she has also successfully competed

alongside able-bodied athletes, winning multiple British and world titles on the track, as well as representing England at the Commonwealth Games in 2010.

Alongside her work as Sheffield City Region’s Active Travel Commissioner, Storey runs a women’s cycling team, is principal of Skoda UK Cycling Academy and mum to two young children. “Sport is an integral part of my life, so I don’t remember a life that didn’t include physical activity.”



Activating Sheffield

Launched in mid-2020, the Sheffield City Region Active Travel Implementation Plan sets out how a network of high quality walking and cycling routes criss-cross the Sheffield City region by 2040. The plan envisages more than 620 miles of accessible routes, 800 safe crossings and nearly 200 square miles of low traffic neighbourhoods through and between Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster.

Sarah Storey herself has set out four pledges to guide the vision embodied by the plan, and five guiding principles for the infrastructure itself:

Four pledges

1. That we will be led by our communities
2. That we will enable active travel, not just encourage it
3. That all our infrastructure will meet or exceed minimum standards
4. That all our infrastructure will be fully accessible.

Five guidelines

Active travel infrastructure should:

1. Give active travellers confidence by separating them from traffic
2. Continue across junctions
3. Have sufficiently wide tracks and paths to include all active travellers
4. Be inclusive and accessible
5. Have legible routes with clear signage and wayfinding.

Download the plan:

<https://bit.ly/3vi9vhX>



the constant underlying bubbling of the right messages: the reasons the standards are the way they are, the reasons we have to address this, the reasons why the other parts of the jigsaw puzzle are so important, like driver behaviour, revenue funding, the health agenda, the pollution and air quality agenda, all of those other things.

“It needs to be thorough, and there’s so many opportunities for people to try and pick holes, more so than if they were building roads for vehicles. So you need to cover off. Whenever we have a meeting, we’re always looking one or two steps ahead.”

ANOTHER APPOINTMENT

People will also need to divorce physical activity from “appointments”, says Storey (see box ‘Cancelled appointments’), in line with Sport England’s own active travel strategy. Behavioural change is necessary to

creating a more physically active population, and persuasion is key.

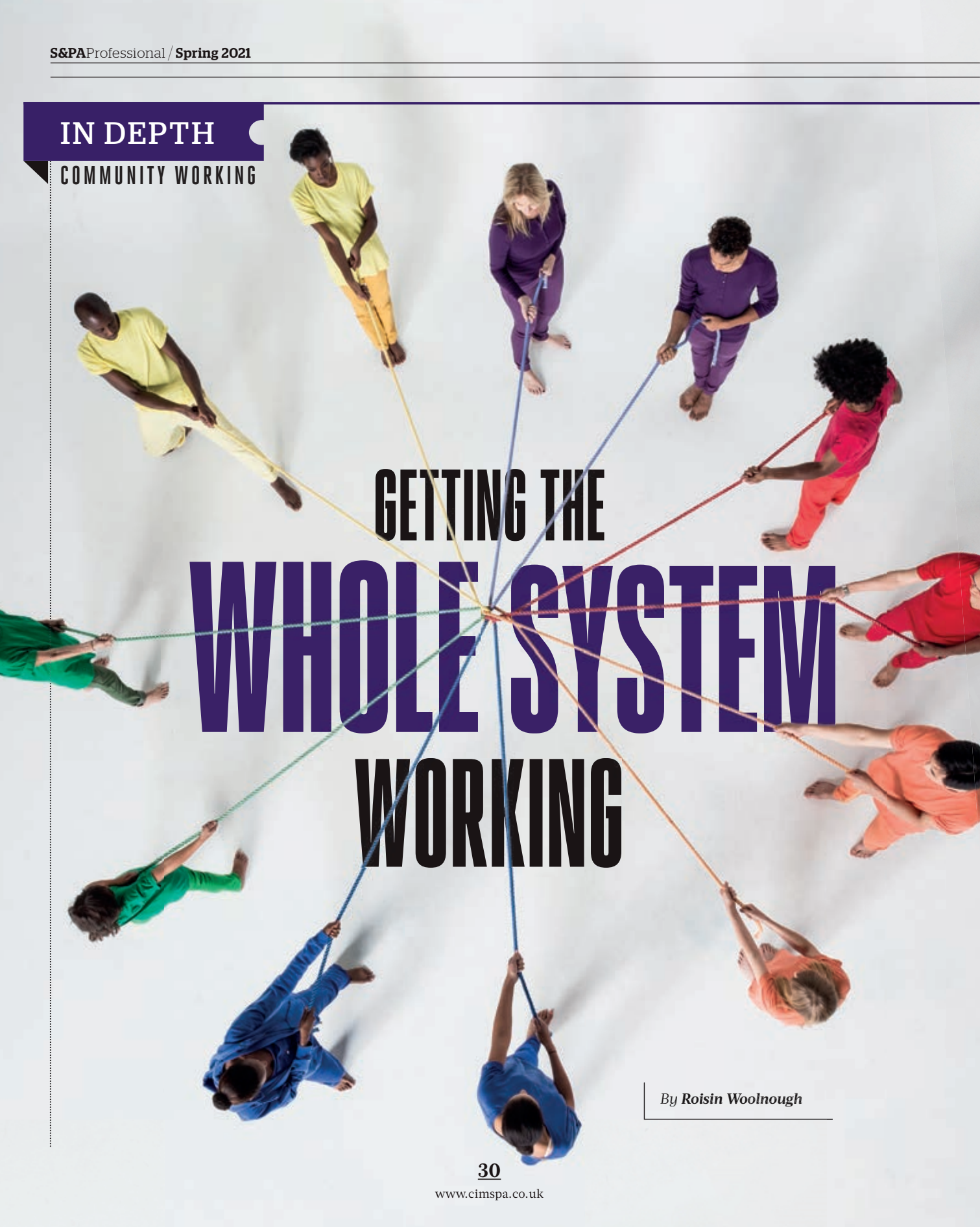
The fitness industry has a vital role to play in supporting all-round active lifestyles, says Storey. Society needs to get past the idea that there is only one healthy body shape, for instance; the health industry can do more to promote active lifestyles, and even GPs can use e-bikes for community visits. “There are so many ways everyone can be involved and promote this as a force for good.”

Then Dame Sarah Storey, the exemplar of an active life, is off. She has another meeting, homeschooling, an active travel strategy to roll out, a Paralympics to prepare for – medals don’t win themselves, you know.

“Strategy planning, that was one of my strengths as an athlete,” she concludes. *Simon Wicks is deputy editor of The Planner, the membership magazine of the Royal Town Planning Institute, and a keen cyclist.*

IN DEPTH

COMMUNITY WORKING



**GETTING THE
WHOLE SYSTEM
WORKING**

By Roisin Woolnough

Working closely with public health organisations to help local communities is an area where the sport and physical activity sector can really make a difference

What is 'system working', and what is its relationship to the sport and physical activity (S&PA) sector? It's when individuals and organisations in the field of public health work closely together to achieve better outcomes for the communities they serve. It includes policy, the physical environment, the social environment, organisations, institutions and individuals – so, leisure centres, councils, GP practices, schools, town planners, community centres, commissioning bodies, politicians, youth centres, children's services.

Sport England is on a mission to get the S&PA sector engaged in place-based change through whole-system working. It launched its Local Delivery Pilots in 2017 and then in 2019, it launched a new initiative – Navigating Local Systems (NLS) – in association with the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA).

NLS was set up to explore how place-based organisations can work in a whole-system way to increase participation in physical activity. It focused on three areas – Liverpool, Luton and Wakefield. A recent report, 'Navigating Local Systems: Test and

Learn approach to system change', details how NLS has helped those three areas. It shares their learning and gives practical tools that could help others on their system working journey.

"When we talk about systems, we think very much beyond physical activity and sport," says Nicky Yates, strategic physical activity and sport development manager at Liverpool City Council, and Liverpool's place lead for NLS. "The system is bigger than one sector, and so many factors influence people's behaviours. If all of the services and the offer are connected and meeting people's needs collectively and in a complementary way, rather than in a siloed way, local people get access to a better offer. It really is a case of 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'."

Sport England and CLOA chose the three areas because they have high levels of deprivation and obesity and very inactive populations. Louise Upton, head of local learning and improvement hub at Sport England, says NLS has already produced interesting results, but that the real benefits will take several years to emerge. "System change is very difficult and takes years. It's about long-term, sustainable change but a lot of people give up before they see the change."

Each of the three areas were assigned an independent facilitator with experience of system change. The facilitators went through an audit process, meeting with key stakeholders to discuss system working, attitudes towards sport and physical activity, the barriers and opportunities and what needed to change. One of the main findings to have emerged from NLS, according to Upton, was that the facilitated support was crucial. "The facilitators acted like a critical friend and that impartiality was really

Wakefield

Building capacity & sharing learning

Making physical activity everyone's business

What Wakefield wanted to achieve

It wanted to make physical activity everyone's business. It wanted to build on existing foundations of knowledge and practice and build a stronger and wider network of relationships. It wanted to make practices and behaviours real and sustainable, and to identify and articulate signs of shifting behaviours and action. The initiative identified the key agendas being worked on throughout the area.

What has changed

It is taking a shared ownership approach, involving more stakeholders in conversations. It is striving to share knowledge, skills and ownership more effectively. There are more open conversations and challenges about how physical activity happens in Wakefield.

What was learnt along the way

- Approach is key. You have to create the right conditions.
- Capacity is important.
- The need or situation is not always sufficiently clear, leading to a situation where partners are sometimes not involved enough.
- There is growing confidence in the system. This is enabling stakeholders to talk about what's happening in communities and what work is required, without feeling they have to provide numerical success indicators.
- There needs to be flexibility on spending timeframes as systems work takes time.

IN DEPTH

COMMUNITY WORKING

Liverpool

Tackling inactivity at scale

Making physical activity and sport truly accessible for people that need it the most

What Liverpool wanted to achieve

It wanted better collaboration and co-ordination and to build on existing efforts to make physical activity a more strategic priority across the system.

The facilitator conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders across the system – inside and outside the council – which identified barriers and opportunities to achieving the physical activity vision.

What has changed

- There has been a shift from ‘doing’ to ‘doing and learning’.
- There is more focus on the system and on boosting physical activity and less on ‘projects for projects’ sake’.
- There is a lot of reflection on relationships, leadership and culture.

What it learnt along the way

- There needs to be a broader reach and more co-ordination across the council and with partners.
- The council needs to be more of an enabler and strengthen its role as a system steward.
- Prioritisation should be based on evidence.
- There needs to be consistency of focus.
- New allies are needed.
- Links between money flows need strengthening (such as individual support budgets).
- Top-down strategy needs to be connected with bottom-up activity.

useful. It helped people look at the system with fresh eyes.”

The three places all learnt different things from the facilitation. For Helen Barnett, CEO at Active Luton, and NLS place lead, it showed that their system approach relied too heavily on a few key people. “We realised, we had to distribute it to a greater number of people. Otherwise, it was always the same people and if they were off work for three months or moved on, nothing would happen.”

Liverpool and Wakefield took a whole system approach, but Active Luton honed in on children’s social care, an area with great need but where relationships were weak. “We were seen as a physical activity or wellbeing organisation, but what did we know about children on the edge of care?” Barnett asked.

The facilitation process enabled Active Luton to have meaningful conversations with a variety of important stakeholders and to broker new relationships. Barnett says it has opened doors, helping other individuals and organisations in the system to recognise the vital role S&PA has to play in improving the physical and emotional wellbeing of young people. “The partnerships that now exist across the town are stronger than they have ever been. It used to be us knocking on doors, but now we have people coming to us.”

Also, says Yates, the facilitation process highlighted the need for a more distributed leadership for system working to be effective. She says the council realised it needs to take more of an enabling role, rather than always being the lead. “So, for the council, some of it is about letting go and acknowledging that it’s a collective – everybody is contributing differently but just as importantly as everyone else.”

For Yates, taking the time to pause and reflect on the existing system-working

approach was crucial: “One of the main benefits was stepping back, holding up the mirror and recognizing that we had reached a plateau.” NLS helped the council and its partners reinvigorate relationships and reassess the best way to move whole system working forward.

And for Gayle Elvidge, development manager at Yorkshire Sport Foundation, and place lead for NLS at Wakefield, the facilitated process made her realise that they still had a long way to go on their system working journey. “We thought we were further along than we were! This whole process made us reflect on what had gone before and consider a different approach.”

However, the findings and the process have made Elvidge and others in the system feel more confident and comfortable about taking a shared ownership approach and having open conversations. “Being able to work with others on a common purpose unlocks different parts of the puzzle,” she says. “No one single organisation has all of the answers, nor should it, but





collectively, our different experiences and learning start to help us figure out some of the complex changes we're trying to bring about."

Sport England and CLOA are so pleased with how NLS has helped the three areas progress their system working that it has provided funding for a second phase. The areas were free to choose how to spend that funding, but they have all made the same decision: to invest in more facilitated support. "The beauty of this work is that it shows what a small investment can do," says Ian Brooke, executive member at CLOA. "The cash investment was small, but it meant someone could go into those places, have independent conversations and look for opportunities to connect the system. Systems are complex, messy and different and sometimes you need to stand back and look to understand them more."

For the full report, visit <https://bit.ly/3ry5Yck>

Luton

Reigniting relationships

What Luton wanted to achieve

Luton wanted to develop a system approach to sport and physical activity that would improve the lives of primary school children in troubled circumstances or on the edge of care. It wanted to change mindsets so that physical activity becomes everyone's business. And it wanted to map the system, build new relationships and reinvigorate old ones, and turn personal commitment into systematic action.

What has changed

- Individuals have developed system leadership knowledge and confidence,

and can facilitate system mapping.

- New and reinvigorated relationships have led to a broader understanding of the opportunities and challenges.
- Key action points to embed physical activity in support arrangements for children and families have been agreed.
- Learning from the work is supporting the development of a Community Health bid. If the bid is successful, it will map out and aim to enhance the community's involvement in decision making and accountability.

What it learnt along the way

- People engage with system working

when the purpose is clear and strategically relevant.

- Engagement is improved by having a senior 'hands-on' person driving communication.
- Systems are complex so change is difficult and takes time. Priority setting and quick wins that support positive outcomes builds relationships, respect and trust.
- Those involved in system working need to have it identified as a strategic priority for their organisation and for their role.
- One-to-one interviews worked well during the scoping phase, leading to greater reflection and engagement.

IN DEPTH

FITNESS & HEALTH

With the continuing success of the UK's vaccination programme, infection numbers falling and the sport & physical activity sector set to open up, the country is taking its first tentative steps towards something approaching normal.

But the pandemic has left a huge legacy of ill health in the form of post-Covid syndrome, more commonly referred to as long Covid. Office for National Statistics figures show that one in 10 people who've had Covid-19 are still experiencing debilitating symptoms 12 weeks after the initial infection, with a significant number continuing to suffer for months. Symptoms are wide-ranging but the

most common include extreme fatigue, breathlessness, 'brain fog' and depression. In some cases, sufferers are found to have ongoing inflammation of major organs, such as the lungs and heart damage, or neurological problems.

It's currently unclear what proportion of the population is affected by long Covid but, given that modelling suggests around 15% of people in the UK have been infected with Covid-19, the numbers are expected to be high. And over the coming months, the physical activity sector seems likely to be faced with an influx of clients who are struggling to regain their previous fitness levels. Managed exercise will undoubtedly play a role in recovery

and, with government funding being made available and plans for a rollout of specialist NHS long Covid clinics around the country, there's also likely to be a surge in exercise referrals.

Some health and fitness industry operators and training providers are already turning their attention to developing their offer for long Covid sufferers and those who work with them. However, given its wide range of symptoms and still poorly understood pathology, it's clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to long Covid rehab isn't going to work and those with the condition will need more of an individualised approach than is the case with other exercise referral programmes.

The sport & physical activity industry is set to play its part in helping people suffering from the debilitating effects of long Covid recover their fitness levels again

LEGACY OF L

By Caroline Roberts

CIMSPA employer partner Nuffield Health has a strong track record of delivering industry-leading clinical rehab interventions and, in autumn last year, it piloted its own 12-week long Covid programme. It was designed by a team that included respiratory experts, physiotherapists and exercise physiologists along with the 100 participants, who provided input and feedback throughout. The programme is delivered by fitness professionals trained in rehab, who work with patients virtually for the first six weeks, and then in face-to-face sessions at the gym.

At the time of publication, Nuffield

ALAMY/SHUTTERSTOCK

“We train our coaches how to assess a client and determine the right pace for them”

COVID

ADVERTORIAL

EGYM

EGYM'S FITNESS HUB ELEVATES THE CONNECTED GYM FLOOR TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Fitness Hub is a fully integrated solution that augments EGYM's smart ecosystem, elevating the user's training experience to a new level. With its advanced 3D-imaging technology and machine-learning optimised software, Fitness Hub couples contactless onboarding with accurate self-service assessments and performance reviews. This enables fitness enthusiasts and health seekers to self-manage their training experience whilst freeing up trainer time for more member-focused mentoring and coaching.

"We are driven by the vision that the gym works for everyone. With Fitness Hub, we are setting another milestone in terms of connected training space and the best possible training experience for members," emphasises Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer, EGYM co-founder and CEO. "By optimally interacting with the EGYM ecosystem, Fitness Hub provides a consistent, high-quality and personalised training experience that excites both members and trainers."

Fitness Hub addresses three core, gym floor needs. Firstly, seamless, contactless onboarding. Using its built in, Microsoft 3D camera Azure Kinect 3.0, Fitness Hub carries out a full body scan and weight measurement. This data then enables automated optimal setup and exercise prescription for each piece of EGYM's Smart Strength and Smart Flex Series, linked directly to the members training

ambition. The touchless element reduces the risk of viral transmission and cuts down on equipment set-up times, ensuring the member is able to focus all of their time and effort on the actual workout experience.

Secondly, Fitness Hub delivers easy to understand and interpret visual feedback, creating effective and accurate assessment and performance tracking. This provides the member with ongoing feedback relating to improvements in muscle length, strength and body composition that were previously very difficult to convey. Performance data is all packaged into EGYM's popular BioAge format – separately detailing strength, cardio, metabolism and mobility that can be easily understood and digitally shared, creating an understandable metric that members can share with the trainer and other members.

Thirdly, Fitness Hub helps operators focus trainer time where it most benefits the member. Rather than having to spend time generating and explaining equipment settings, plus manually measuring and recording health indicators, trainers can take on more of a

mentoring and coaching role, focusing a much higher percentage of their limited time driving member health outcomes.

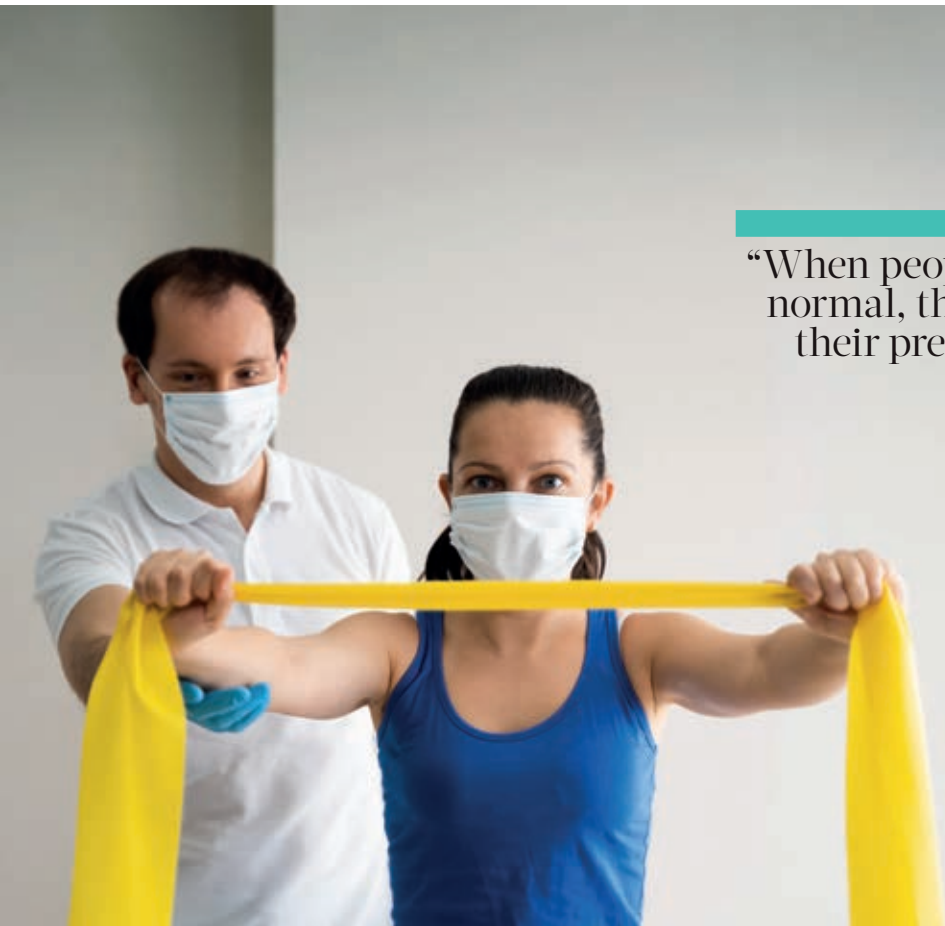
Fitness Hub is the next generation in gym floor training, enabling members to manage and measure their own, highly personalised, self-care health plan. The sophisticated yet easy to access and understand performance feedback, helps members to better understand the effects of their training on their personal health and fitness, maintaining engagement for longer.

EGYM CEO Roesch-Schlenderer adds: "Leveraging technology will not only fulfil the expectations of current members but also attract a wider group of health-seeking gym-goers who now understand that physical wellness has broader benefits, including overall health and resiliency. With the EGYM Fitness Hub, we are taking the next big step in making fitness and health facilities more successful, training more effective and members more motivated."

EGYM's Cloud connects Fitness Hub to EGYM's Smart Strength Series, and EGYM's Smart Flex and also integrates with market-leading, third-party data providers such as body composition scales from leading manufacturers Seca, Tanita and InBody plus Smart Cardio equipment from manufacturers such as Precor, Matrix and Life Fitness. This creates a training ecosystem where all components work together to provide a person-centred, results-focused experience for each and every member regardless of aims and abilities.

To find out more about EGYM Fitness Hub visit <https://egym.com/uk>





“When people start to feel a bit more normal, they want to rush back to their previous fitness routines”

It's common for patients get trapped in a 'boom and bust' cycle in which they over-exert themselves and then are knocked back by a period of extreme exhaustion, explains CAWS' managing director Mel Spooner. “When people start to feel a bit more normal, they want to rush back to their previous fitness routines when what they ought to be doing is going super slow with their recovery. They just don't realise how slow that pace that needs to be. We train our coaches how to assess a client and determine the right pace for them. We always say the slow road is the fast road and it can take months.”

The Rebuild course is designed to respond to an evolving situation and is available through a monthly membership package, which allows access to updates as new research emerges, as well as two follow-on courses. Its approach is based on an interpretation of a wide range of peer-reviewed publications, investigations and analyses, says Dr Col Robertson, sports scientist and CAWS' education director. “Essentially, we function as knowledge brokers, giving people a reliable interpretation of both best practice and evidence from across the field of human physiology, rehabilitation and performance.”

The training programme is offered internationally and CAWS projects that, by the end of April, around 3,000 fitness professionals will have gained certification. These comprise a mix of independent trainers and employees of large operators, including some CIMSPA partner organisations.

CAWS courses

The Rebuild course requires at least a Level 3 qualification and involves 22 hours of study to achieve certification. It's accessed through a membership package costing £33.50 a month for individuals and £93 for sites wishing to enrol their team (both prices are exclusive of VAT). Membership gives access to updates, additional content and two other certifications: Rebound, which focuses on deconditioning, and Fortitude, which focuses on behaviour change in vulnerable groups. However, it's also possible to sign up for a month to access the Rebuild course and then cancel.

[Trainwithcaws.com](https://www.trainwithcaws.com)

was still in the process of collecting data but, says Dr Ben Kelly, head of clinical research and outcomes: “Anecdotal feedback from participants and our NHS colleagues so far has been extremely positive and we are continuing to refine our processes to improve the experience for participants. Early indications show our programme has positive benefits for reducing breathlessness, increasing functional capacity, reducing anxiety and improving physical fitness. We look forward to sharing our outcomes in the coming months.”

Rollout of the programme began at the end of February and it will be running in over 40 Nuffield Fitness and Wellbeing centres by May.

Meanwhile, CAWS, a CIMSPA training partner, has developed Rebuild, a course that teaches fitness professionals how to work with long Covid patients.

NEW
QUALIFICATION

ACTIVE IQ LEVEL 3 AWARD IN UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF END-POINT ASSESSMENT

This qualification is designed to provide learners with an understanding of how End-point Assessments are developed and delivered and the knowledge and skills to be able to plan an End-point Assessment.

Learners will also cover how to involve apprentices, employers and training providers in End-point Assessments, how to make End-point Assessment decisions and how End-point Assessments are quality assured.

Active iQ

Entry Requirements

This qualification is open to all (learners must be 19 years old or over).

Qualification Structure

The learner must complete the one mandatory unit:

- Unit 1: Understanding the development and delivery of End-point Assessment

Assessment

This qualification is assessed by:

- Practical demonstration/ assignment
- eAssessment

Learning Resources

- Manual
- eLearning

PARTNER WITH ACTIVE IQ FOR YOUR End-point Assessment

Active IQ was one of the first End-point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) within the physical activity sector to be approved on the Register of End-point Assessment Organisations.

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We are currently offering End-point Assessments for the following apprenticeship standards:

Personal Trainer	Leisure Duty Manager	Teaching Assistant
Community Activator Coach	Business Administrator	Assessor/Coach
Facilities Management Supervisor	Team Leader/Supervisor	Learning Mentor
Customer Service Practitioner	Leisure Team Member	Early Years Educator
Passenger Transport Service Operations Onboard and Station Team Member		Community Sport and Health Officer

#Beginwithbetter

www.activeiq.co.uk



Proud to be part of CIMSPA ReTrain

Courses available through CIMSPA ReTrain include:

- › SEQ Level 1 Swimming Assistant (Teaching)
- › SEQ Level 2 Teaching Swimming
- › PWTAG Approved Pool Plant Operator

swimming.org/ios



What exactly is long Covid?

Scientists are currently trying to answer this question. Because of the wide range of symptoms, many researchers believe it is caused by a combination of different reactions to the initial infection rather than being a single condition. These could be a type of post-viral syndrome or an autoimmune response prompted by over-stimulation of the immune system during the initial infection. Symptoms may also be caused by continued inflammation in organs such as the lungs, heart and blood vessels.

Many young and physically fit people can be affected by long Covid – there are reports of athletes suffering ongoing symptoms. However, the risks of developing the condition appear to increase with age, and those who are overweight or have asthma also have an increased risk. Women seem to be more prone to long Covid than men, although it's unclear if this is because they are more likely to report symptoms and engage with health services. The good news is that studies tracking those with long Covid over the last year have found that most people recover with time, although this can take many months.

At the time of writing, CIMSPA employer partner Places Leisure was exploring options to deliver the Rebuild training to fitness professionals across all its locations. Alongside this, it will run a long Covid awareness programme for other staff. The aim is to offer help to clients with long Covid over a period of 12 months with a mix of on-site and online support, according to individual need. “It’s important to make sure we have the skills and knowledge in our teams,” says head of fitness Sarah Roberts.

Another CIMSPA employer partner, Your Personal Training, is running a pilot that involves funding the course for 12 personal trainers employed at one of their partner operators, the Waterside Hotel and

Leisure Club in Didsbury, Manchester. The hope is that the centre can be signposted as a North-West hub for expertise in long Covid exercise rehab. It’s not just about helping participants to recover physically but also about supporting their mental health, says Aaron McCulloch, managing director of Your Personal Training.

“There’s a lot of frustration that comes post-illness,” McCulloch says. “Top athletes with long Covid have a lot of professional support but normal people don’t know how to deal with it. It’s good to have someone who’s able to say, ‘You can get back to where you were. It might take a bit longer but we’ll get you through this and here’s a map of how we’re going to do it’.”



TECH TOOLKIT

PRODUCT ROUND-UP

FITNESS FROM AFAR

Digital fitness comes to the fore



GAMIFYING FITNESS AND HEALTH

Digital fitness expert FunXtion is partnering with WeFitter, developers of digital health tracking software, to help fitness professionals and coaches deliver a fully connected fitness experience. WeFitter makes use of technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, and collects data from various lifestyle apps and wearables. Operators and facilities can then present this information back to individuals using the FunXtion app. WeFitter has also developed a framework that uses gamification to enhance the user experience by integrating multiple challenges, events, leaderboards, badges and rewards. The companies want to help users better understand the impact of their activity through health markers such as resting heart rate, heart rate during exercise, calories burned and sleep patterns.

Price: On application

www.funxtion.com

www.wefitter.com

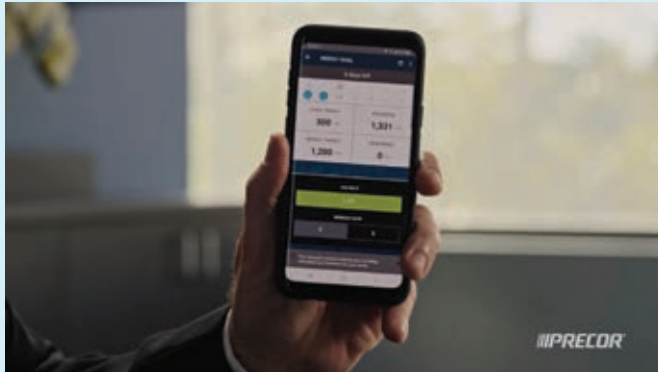


Vested interest

Bodyweight training equipment specialist Auster has launched the functional training Power Vest. It utilises aerospace-grade aluminium carabiners and clips to secure the vest to the body; steel weight plates slide into the chest and back pockets. These can be easily removed when an individual changes their exercise programme. It also features attachment points for power bands and mini bands to enable exercises such as resisted sprints and jumps. The Power Vest is available in three options: weighted mode with three steel plates; plyometric mode, which also includes heavy power bands, carabiners and attachable rope handles; and full power mode that also includes ankle straps and mini-heavy bands. The vest is designed to be used on its own or with Auster's current range of equipment.

Price: to come

www.austerfit.com



MAINTAINING THE DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL LINK

Apps and products can ensure members feel connected and engaged, even when they aren't able to attend a physical location. Precor, which delivers a range of flexible fitness packages in partnership with eGym, said it wants to help operators "be with individuals" whether it's at the group class on a Monday or their cycle ride with the family at the weekend. Precor is launching a mobile app for its networked fitness solution, which can be white-labelled to match operator branding. Preva Mobile captures workout data from popular fitness apps such as Apple Health, Fitbit, Garmin and Strava and also uses gamification by awarding badges to help users reach significant milestones and monitor progress across all their activity. It is also integrated with the hardware and software solution Advagym by Sony, enabling users to undertake strength and functional workouts, as well as the more general ones offered in Preva.

Price: On application

www.precor.com

VACCINATION VERIFICATION

While there is still ongoing discussion around Covid-19 vaccine certification and verification, more tools are likely to emerge to help those whose business viability may depend upon operating at capacity, such as gyms. MyGP, the UK's largest independent GP booking and healthcare management app, is launching myGP TICKet, which aims to provide a simple and clear means for an individual to communicate their verified Covid-19 vaccination status via a smartphone. The status feature will display within the patient profile page. If a person has been vaccinated, a green tick will appear 21 days following the final dose of the vaccine, when a person is considered protected from the virus. MyGP has been developed by iPlato Healthcare and is currently available to patients at 97% of England's GP practices. At the time of writing, myGP TICKet was planned for release in February 2021 – dependent upon availability of the clinical data.

www.myGP.com/ticket



COUCH-TO-EXERCISE PROGRAMME

While the RISE 'couch-to-exercise' fitness programme is aimed at those who wouldn't traditionally be gym members, the ultimate aim is to funnel participants to more mainstream physical activity. The programme, which launched in February 2021, consists of three six-week programmes offering gentle and targeted progression throughout each stage, including chair-based exercise, low intensity interval activity as well as yoga and mindfulness. RISE has been launched by Professor Greg Whyte and Kevin Cahill, former CEO and honorary life president of Sport Relief, who want to combat inactivity in the UK. Whyte, who previously worked on the 'Couch to 5K' initiative, has created bespoke training programmes that connect users via an online platform donated by virtual exercise hosting specialist Venueserve Fitness. It has been built on Venueserve's white label platform.

<https://riseexercise.com/>

WORKPLACE

PAYROLL

By Les Potton

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

KNOW THE RULES... KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



From mid-March this year, all 70,000 drivers of the private hire driving company Uber in the UK are receiving a National Living Wage, holiday pay and, where they qualify, pension. This follows a court ruling in February that the Uber drivers were 'workers' and not, as Uber had claimed, 'self-employed'.

This development in the world of work illustrates contemporary dilemmas for employers and hirers, the people who carry out work on their behalf, and sometimes even intermediaries involved in the arrangement for either the employer or the person doing the work.



Legal employment status

Currently, people working in the UK come under three legal statuses:

- **Employee:** Full employment rights
- **Worker:** Limited employment rights such as National Minimum Wage pay, holiday pay and pension
- **Self-employed:** No employment rights

Today, the concept of 'status' in the work environment is blurred for many, a situation exacerbated by the rise of the so-called 'gig economy' in which people in the labour market offer themselves to work non-exclusively and create a portfolio of clients who they work for.

HOW DOES THIS CONFUSION AFFECT THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR?

The leisure industry requires a flexible workforce. There are inevitable peaks and troughs in customer activity, and a seven-day per week service is often required. So people participating in the gig economy workforce can provide a pool of flexible resource that can be used to cover those peaks and troughs and varied shift patterns.

The industry has a lot of independent freelancers, such as personal trainers, class instructors and coaches, who want to work for a portfolio of clients either on a retained basis or ad hoc, or a combination of both.

The problems start when either the correct type of contract or working arrangement does not suit one or either of the parties, or when one party seeks cost savings or tax advantages, by using an inappropriate type of arrangement.

Here's an example: A leisure centre needs somebody to run circuit training

Variants of workforce type



Fixed-term employment: Similar to permanent employment contracts but with an end date. The individual is an employee paid through the employer's payroll, with tax and National Insurance deductions. Also has full employment rights for the duration of the contract. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/2034/contents/made>

Casual workers: Typically, will be held on a list of staff that can be called on to undertake short assignments. Have the status in law of 'worker'. There is an absence of 'mutuality of obligation' - no obligation to offer work and no obligation to accept it.

Zero-hours employees: Common in hospitality, leisure and industrial, such contracts provide a contract of employment with full employment rights where there is an expectation of work being offered and an expectation that work offered will be accepted. However, there is no certainty how many hours, if any, will be offered in any given period. The law has banned exclusivity clauses, which stop the employee working elsewhere while under a zero-hours contract.

What is the correct employment status?



- **Control** How much control does the client/employer exercise over the individual?
- **Substitution** Can the individual unilaterally substitute another person if they are not available? The genuine ability to send a substitute will be one of the strongest pointers towards self-employment.
- **Contract** What is included in the contract between the parties. For example, it would indicate an employment relationship if holiday and sick pay were granted.
- **Mutuality of obligation** Is there an

expectation of regular work and if work is offered is there an expectation it will be accepted?

- **Equipment** Does the person use their own or the client/employer's equipment? Is it a real business? Does the person run a business, marketing to multiple clients?
- **Integration** Is the person integrated into the client/employer's organisation structure?
- **Business decision-making** Does the person have the ability to increase their profit, eg by taking on new clients, changing their pricing structure etc?

is paying less tax and NI. The leisure centre has a part-time employee for all intents and purposes who is under their control for three days a week but avoids the 'on costs' of employment.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

As Uber and other organisations have found, the cost of getting employee status wrong can be staggeringly high, and any organisation using a flexible workforce should carry out a thorough review of all of their roles and contractual arrangements.

From that review, implement the correct working relationship and contract for each person. It may not suit everyone, and some may choose not to continue, but you will reduce the risk of non-compliance and the resultant costs.

sessions three days a week, throughout the day, with breaks, from 9am to 5pm. The trainer must work all day Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. They use the leisure centre equipment and have to request 'holiday' if there is a day in any week they do not want to work. They are not allowed to substitute another trainer.

To take advantage of the lower taxation for dividends, the trainer has set up their own limited company and charges the leisure centre a day rate payable to their company. The trainer works under a retainer contract that requires them to work three days a week with the leisure centre.

This arrangement reduces tax for the trainer and saves the leisure centre the 'on costs' of employment such as the employer's NI, pension contributions and holiday pay. It works for both parties.

However, this situation may fall foul of the Off-Payroll Working Rules IR35 (see box, right) and be seen as disguised employment. The trainer is operating exactly as a part-time employee working three days a week would, but

IR35 – Off Payroll Working Rules



This set of tax rules aims to stop individuals from setting up their own personal service companies (PSCs) and claiming to be self-employed, as well as those who engage them, from creating 'disguised employment' and paying insufficient tax and National Insurance.

For example, a fitness instructor sets up their own limited company and agrees a contract with a leisure centre to teach classes at the same times every week. They must use the centre's equipment, wear branded uniform and conform to centre rules, standards and procedures. Also, they must run the classes personally and cannot send a substitute. This would be disguised employment, and the hirer is avoiding 'on costs' such as employers' National Insurance. The service provider is

paying lower rates of tax and NI by drawing dividends from their company. The 'engager' could conceivably take further advantage by paying the 'contractor' a higher day rate, by using some of their 'on cost' savings.

IR35 rules have been in place since April 2000, and until now required the individual service provider to decide on the status of a worker. From April 2021, if the 'engager' gets the status decision wrong, the 'engager' may be liable to pay all the outstanding tax and NI the 'deemed employee' would have been due to pay.

The rules changed in April 2017 for the public sector; the responsibility was placed on the 'engager' to make the judgement on the correct status. From April 2021 this responsibility extends to medium and large private sector firms. meeting two or more of the following criteria:

- More than 50 employees
- A balance sheet of more than £5.1m
- Annual turnover of more than £10.2m

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LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR



Keith Burnet is CEO of Global Markets at Les Mills

CHALLENGES FOR CHARITY

I'm not a rower but I recently did The Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, a rowing event from the Canary Islands to Antigua. It was more than 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean.

I did it with three other people. However, I don't have a nautical bone in my body, and used to joke with the boys that my experience of the sea was the ferry to the Isle of Arran. So why did I do it? I like to keep fit and I'm at my best when there's something I'm aiming for. If you have something to shoot for, it's an important part of living life to the full.

I've done challenges before, such as the Marathon Des Sables, a six-day, 251-km ultramarathon, the toughest foot race in the world.

I did the rowing challenge with my friend from school, a friend from university who lives in Indonesia, and a colleague of his, who lives in Hong Kong. We signed up 18 months before the race, and it took a lot of planning – getting to the start line is almost half the battle.

Normally, 30-40 boats take part, but there were only 21 this year because of Covid. And due to Covid, we only got together as a team for a week before the race – so we only spent one week on the water. In that week, we realised that we didn't really know what we were doing – we were learning how to do it while we were doing it!



We went into the challenge very fit as we had done a lot of training, but it was life on the boat we hadn't prepared for so much. Every day was a learning experience, whether it was learning how to row properly, the weight of the boat, navigation...

We had to find a different way to sleep, because we were rowing two hours on, two hours off, 24x7. We grabbed half an hour here and there, averaging about three hours a day.

We had a really mixed bag of weather. Normally, the currents and winds go east to west and they help you. Not this time. For three to four days we had not a breath of wind. Then we had the other end of the spectrum when we had a big storm, with waves that were 30-40ft high and 30-40 knot winds.

It took us 42 days, and we came sixth. But it's a life experience – you don't come back the same person. You have to be very strong mentally as it's a real endurance thing. You have to be able to set big goals and follow through on them. And it's a team thing so empathy is a huge part of it – understanding how someone else is feeling.

Of course, there are moments when you wonder why you are doing it. I had really bad seasickness for the first two weeks, which was the worst bit for me. Losing sight of land for the first time was also tough.

At Les Mills, we want to inspire people to do something, to get moving. I did a lot of engagement stuff to encourage people to take on their own challenges. We (the team) did a couple of indoor 24-hour rows, two hours on, two hours off and had people joining us from all over the world – people cycling around Chicago and running around Tokyo, for example.

I was talking to the boys the other day about doing another challenge. We haven't found anything yet, but probably not rowing again – something a bit shorter. [Editor's note: Keith Burnet raised £150k for charities UNICEF and Workout for Water through the Challenge.] 🌱

Keith Burnet was speaking to Róisín Woolnough

LAST WORD

SPORTING LIFE

Alex Joyce joined the RAF from the world of hospitality and found he was able to use his passion of bodybuilding and physical activity to train as a PT instructor



Alex Joyce

Rank: A/Sgt (acting sergeant), Royal Air Force

Previous station/unit: RAF High Wycombe

Trained at: School of Physical Training (SofPT) at RAF Cosford

Certificates:

Physical Training Instructor (PTI)
Defence Health & Well-being Advisor
Lvl 1 CrossFit coach
Personal Training level 3
Core group instruction practitioner level 3
Gym instructor practitioner level 2

Currently specialising as Exercise Rehabilitation Instructor (ERI).

PTI FLIES HIGH AT RAF

Alex Joyce's work has national, even international, implications for the defence of the realm. At his Royal Air Station in Buckinghamshire, populated by about 1,500 airmen and civilians working at Headquarters Air Command and the headquarters of the European Air Group, Joyce's job "is to keep them [airmen] fighting fit for operations".

"We're essentially free physical trainers (PTs) for them to utilise, so often they'll come to us, and we will train them adequately to get them through the tests and keep them generically fit," Joyce says of the work done by himself and his PT colleagues.

Before Joyce went on active duty in the RAF in July 2017, he had worked successfully as a restaurant manager. "But then it came to a point in life where you kind of want to chase your dreams," he explains. "And by that time, you kind of find yourself, and I found that a big, big joy of mine was physical training, like bodybuilding and weight training."

Signing up to serve as an RAF PT means a commitment of 12 years. "Normally, three years in, you will be asked to choose one of three routes as a

specialisation," Joyce says. The three are Parachute Jumping Instructor, Force Development Instructor and Exercise Rehabilitation Instructor (ERI).

In fact, Joyce is currently in six months of training for his ERI career at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Stanford Hall, Nottinghamshire, near Loughborough. When an airman is diagnosed with a physical injury, he or she will be referred to an ERI, who then helps the person work through their injury with exercise. "I'll be able to fix and rehabilitate people with everything from blown-off limbs to a small ankle sprain," he says.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic,

Joyce is taking his course virtually and still is in residence at RAF High Wycombe because he was stationed there when he was chosen to attend DMRC. "We go up on occasions where they might be a week of hands-on learning; obviously, with exercise therapy there's only so much theory you can do. We go up, learn by hands-on, go home, learn the theory, and then we go on placement," he explains.

PT for the airmen "wasn't completely switched off; it was switched off to the bare minimum", he says. However, he



and his PTI colleagues also adapted training for those airmen at High Wycombe by creating a Facebook group and "then we recorded videos to provide some activity to do", he says.

"We ended up having a following of about 500," he says, pointing out that the followers represented a healthy portion of the camp population. Another aspect of their adaptation to lockdown conditions was to issue all of the camp gym's equipment to airmen to use.

So what advice would he give other potential PTIs who are attracted to an RAF career in fitness? "A lot of people won't get in the first time. Be prepared to fail and then come back stronger." 🍀

Alex Joyce spoke with DeeDee Doke.



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