

INCENTIVES

Small rewards show big impact

p24

IN-SOURCING

Bringing leisure back in-house

p28

COMMUNITY

Time for a tennis resurgence

p32

S&PA Professional

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THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDUSTRY MAGAZINE



TAKING THE PLUNGE

Swim teachers have a central role in improving inclusivity as swimming in the UK remains predominantly an able-bodied, white dominated sport

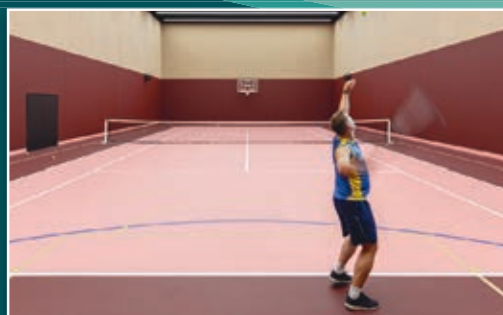


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5

Upfront

5 Editor's leader

News

- 6 Call for new national plan for sport
- 7 Message from CIMSPA CEO
- 8 Include Summit launches to tackle EDI
- 8 London Sport appoints Robinson
- 9 Gyms get exposure in national fast-food chain campaign

10

In depth

10-18 CIMSPA update

- 10 Reflections on 2021
- 16 Benefits of ReTrain to Retain
- 18 **Right Directions:** Don't fall foul of the health & safety law
- 20 **Agenda**
Inclusivity in swimming
- 24 **Incentives**
Motivation to move
- 28 **In-sourcing**
Councils bring leisure back in-house
- 32 **Community**
Breathing new life into tennis

36

Tech toolkit

- 36 **Product round-up**
Integrating digital

38

Management

- 38 **Workplace focus**
- 39 **Expert Advice**

41

Last word

- 41 **Sporting life**
Tully Kearney, swimmer & ambassador for the Cerebral Palsy Organisation
- 42 **Sport ambassador**
Jamie Hooper, founding director of Inclusive Cultures



"With the interest generated by Emma Raducanu's US Open victory and the promise of cash for renovation of derelict park courts, the time could be ripe for a resurgence" (p33)





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► DeeDee Doke

A year of discovery



A new business model for our sector in 2022?



We waited – and the feared national lockdown, or ‘more severe restrictions’ as such events are euphemistically known, didn’t come. Our gyms, pools and leisure centres stayed open, despite the high-speed spread across the UK of the Covid Omicron variant.

In government, the Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation last month published its report calling for the establishment of a national plan for sport, health and wellbeing. The jury is still out on the benefits and disadvantages of the specifics of the

plan itself for the sector and its operators, but its publication does acknowledge improved recognition that what our sector provides is necessary for the national good.

2022 cannot be considered a post-pandemic period, not with the current rates of the Omicron variant shooting as high as they are, but it will likely offer an opportunity to reflect on what has been learned to date and how to proceed. Not just in preventing Covid transmission, but in the everyday world of operating gyms and leisure centres and working in them, with or without Covid. What is

the new business model for our sector? Let’s look forward at 2022 as a year of discovery – we have an exciting future.



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CIMSPA

S&PA News

A round-up of the latest developments in the industry



CALL FOR NEW NATIONAL PLAN TO CHANGE LIVES

The Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation (NPSR) has published a report calling on the government to establish a national plan for sport, health and wellbeing.

The aim is to turn around failings in sport and recreation policy, along with fragmented delivery, that have resulted in little progress being made in tackling levels of inactivity, particularly in certain groups including women and

girls, disabled people, ethnic minorities, senior citizens and people from less affluent backgrounds.

“A national plan for sport, health and wellbeing will set clear goals and better co-ordinate departments to deliver real change,” said a statement accompanying the report from the House of Lords’ NPSR Committee.

A key recommendation calls for a new role of Minister for Sport, Health and

Wellbeing, with responsibility for sport policy to move to the Department of Health from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The chair of the Committee, Lord Willis of Knaresborough, said: “Sport and physical activity can change lives. The pandemic has made abundantly clear the pressing need to get the country fitter and more active. However, participation in sport and recreation is flatlining. The Olympic legacy did not deliver the more active population we were promised, and the latest figures show activity levels have declined since the pandemic. Something needs to change and now is the time to do it.

“It is time for a new national plan for sport, health and wellbeing. That plan needs to be ambitious and co-ordinated,” said Lord Willis, “and carry the weight of the government and prime minister behind it.”

He went on to say: “That cannot be delivered if it is led by DCMS, a small department with an increasing focus on its digital portfolio.

“There is currently a Health and Care Bill making its way through the House of Lords. Members of our Committee will now explore where we can propose suitable amendments to that Bill to deliver the changes we think are needed on this vital issue.”

The committee set out a range of recommendations spanning education, duty of care and safeguarding, and the workforce to establish key areas which need to be covered by the national plan. The committee’s recommendations include:

- A new statutory requirement for local authorities to provide and maintain adequate facilities for sport and physical activity.
- Funding for sport should coalesce around the new national plan. This will include reviewing the tax environment for the sport and

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

recreation sector to develop a more favourable tax environment. Sport England should improve its funding and support for organisations delivering to underrepresented groups.

- PE should become a core national curriculum subject in schools.
- Schools and colleges should be encouraged to develop closer links with local sports clubs to tackle drop-out from physical activity that often occurs when people leave full time education. This would include supporting schools to make their sports facilities much more readily available to local grassroots sports clubs.
- Encouraging more people to be active requires a welcoming and inclusive

environment around sport and this is not possible without a robust approach to duty of care and safeguarding. The government should quickly implement the outstanding recommendations of the independent review on Duty of Care in sport, prioritising the establishment of an independent sport ombudsman.

- The government should introduce mandatory reporting in sport and recreation settings to tackle abuse. Sport England and UK Sport should impose financial sanctions on sporting bodies that fail to demonstrate that their safeguarding and duty of care provisions are being effectively implemented.

SECTOR NEEDS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL SKILLS

A new report from ukactive and Sport England has flagged up a gap in digital skills and strategies at both private and public operators. The report's organisers announcing plans to design a new knowledge programme to improve the sector's digital maturity and effectiveness.

The report 'Digital Futures: A review of the digital maturity and digital effectiveness of the UK's fitness and leisure sector' followed a three-month consultation, completed by 44 organisations, representing more than 1,300 facilities in the UK and about 4m digital touchpoints for members.

A tool designed by digital consultancy Rewrite Digital formed a core component of the consultation, allowing operators to receive analysis and score for their digital maturity, ukactive said: "It also means that for the first time, an overall benchmark can be set for the sector and tracked annually through the report."

Key findings included:

- Around 30% of operators don't have a digital strategy, and 84% don't have a digital strategy that is up to date, complete, ambitious enough and supported by an achievable roadmap.
- Overall, a statement from ukactive said, organisations scored an average of 55% for digital maturity and effectiveness, putting over half of operators are 'digital experimenters'. Typically, this means that operators are making significant strides forward but missing the investment, goal alignment and rapid advances to yield a strong performance.
- The average score for private operators was higher at 63%, with public operators scoring 55% on average.
- Private operators with more than 51 sites were the highest-scoring cohort at 72% – the 'digitally established' level of 60-79%. Only one operator was classed above that level as a 'digital leader'.

MESSAGE FROM CIMSPA CEO



TARA DILLON ON COLLABORATION WITH THE HEALTH SECTOR

2021 was another difficult year for the sector and, frankly, this year doesn't look much better, with uncertainty around the pandemic. But work over the last two years and the unprecedented level of collaboration we've seen among key stakeholders, as well as the health sector, means we are starting the year in the best possible situation given the challenges we face.

I've seen more collaborative working in the last two years than in my entire 35-year career. As a result, we're beginning to see greater traction and cooperation with government. Clearly the political will to recognise the sector's scope and potential is still work in progress but I do believe the dial has moved. We will continue to build on this work this year, speaking with one voice, getting smarter with our evidence and clearer with our demands.

The level of reflection in the sector is encouraging. With growing inequalities in health and physical activity – exacerbated by the pandemic – local authorities and trusts are considering what they offer and for whom. This is a promising sign that we understand our role in reducing these inequalities, providing products and services that benefit those who need them the most.

There's fantastic work already taking place and some inspiring examples of partnerships with the health sector that positively impact local communities. We need to make sure this continues at scale this year. We are not just about fitness; we are a force for change in public health, and thanks to the progress made I'm confident we can do just that.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

ROBINSON JOINS
LONDON SPORT AS CEO

Emily Robinson, the interim CEO at UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), has been appointed London Sport's new CEO and will take up her new post in February.

An experienced senior leader, Robinson (*pictured below*) spent the second half of 2021 as interim CEO at UKAD, which aims to ensure sport is clean from drugs, and has a strong track record of working closely with central and local government leaders.

She was appointed chief accounting officer by DCMS Secretary of State at UKAD in 2017, and as interim CEO led the senior management team and 75 staff across two sites and home working.

Speaking on the announcement, Robinson said: "This is a hugely exciting time to be joining London Sport as they push on with delivering their fantastic LDN Moving strategy to make the capital the most active city in the world."

"As we look ahead to the 10-year anniversary of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London next year, I am particularly keen to work with the entire London Sport team to focus on the needs of children and young people, and physically less active adults."

Jane Rumble will take over the position of CEO from Robinson at UKAD in March 2022, joining with extensive experience in the UK regulatory sector, directly from Ofcom as change director.



By Vanessa Townsend

Jamie Hooper, founder of Inclusive Cultures and S&PA Professional's Sport Ambassador this issue (p42), has teamed up with business partner Meji Media to develop and launch Include Summit.

Taking place on 8-9 March 2022, the Include Summit aims to be the UK's biggest conference focused specifically on tackling equality, diversity and inclusion in sport, bringing together intersecting aspects of exclusion and discrimination across all areas of sport to be discussed in one place for the first time.

Hooper said the summit is a chance to hear from leading voices across the sector, to attend expert workshops and to connect with others who are passionate about driving change.

Among the more than 50 speakers signed up for the two-day conference are broadcaster and Olympic Gold

medallist Denise Lewis, former Premier league footballer Rio Ferdinand and tennis coach Judy Murray.

Hooper told S&PA Professional: "The sport sector needs to better reflect society, needs greater diversity of thought in decision making and the system needs an overhaul. Our mission of getting 1m underrepresented and underprivileged young people into sport will go some way to addressing these issues. We want to make change happen."

"I am absolutely delighted that CIMSPA will be an important partner at the event, showcasing the trailblazing work they are doing to address diversity and inclusion challenges within the workforce of the sector."

The event will be held at Unique Venues Birmingham, the city that will be hosting the Commonwealth Games 2022.

For more information and to attend Include Summit, visit the website here – <https://includesummit.com> – and register.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

GYMS GET MORE EXPOSURE IN FAST-FOOD CAMPAIGN VIA HUSSE

A major McDonald's promotion this summer has led to a 71% increase in the number of people looking at gyms via a widely used online platform for gyms, pools, spas and health & fitness apps.

Hussle, a network of gyms, pools, spas and health & fitness apps, partnered with the fast-food giant on its annual MONOPOLY campaign, based on the MONOPOLY board game. "This is the first time a gym offering has been included in the annual McDonald's giveaway, and it has created unprecedented exposure for the fitness industry," said Jamie Owens, director of fitness partnerships at Hussle.

Owens went on to say that 87% of the customers viewing the gyms were new to the marketplace, having never visited

Hussle's gym partners before, representing "a significant increase in brand awareness for the gyms listed".

The McDonald's campaign also had a big impact in diversifying the location of customers, Hussle said. Typically, London and the South-East get the most customers through Hussle. During the promotion, gyms in the North-West of England were the biggest winners – the percentage of customers using the Hussle marketplace through McDonald's doubled from 7% to 14%, while the West Midlands and North-East of England saw comparable gains.

At the same time, the average age of customers was lower through McDonald's – dropping from a 2021 average of 33.5 years old to 28.7 years old.

Hussle suggested that the campaign has apparently opened up a whole new joiner channel in "a notoriously tricky age group".

Owens said: "MONOPOLY at McDonald's is one of the UK's largest consumer marketing campaigns and partnering with such a colossal brand presented a unique opportunity for our industry to reach a lot of people ... we may never have reached otherwise."

"McDonald's might not be the first brand [a fitness partner] would think of connecting with but having the confidence to partner with a less obvious brand has, in this instance, led to positive results and valuable exposure for our gym partners."

See our feature on incentives, pp24-26.

SUPPLIER'S VIEWPOINT

THE WELCOME BUZZ OF SHOW BUSINESS RETURNS

By Michele Bridle, Show Organiser

The 'hum' of people interacting in an exhibition hall is akin to the 'buzz' of worker bees around a nest... engaging and productive.

If the pandemic has taught us one thing, Zoom meetings

and virtual exhibitions only take us so far. When it comes to doing business, nothing beats eye-to-eye contact and a solid shake of hands.

Take the show I organise – SPATEX – the UK's only dedicated annual water leisure exhibition, now proudly celebrating its 25th

anniversary. It's a glittering showcase of everything under the water leisure umbrella, from pools, spas and enclosures to saunas, steam rooms and water features. Over 100 leading companies, drawn from around the world, use SPATEX as their launchpad for introducing new products. However, we are, however, much more than just an exhibition. We also host a double seminar programme which is widely regarded as a most informative source of free technical knowledge in the industry.

So many deals are struck at SPATEX. It provides a unique platform to assess opinions from visitors, develop

commercial structures by identifying new manufacturers and suppliers, initiate joint ventures and partnerships and, most importantly, bring an industry together. All essential for developing a healthy marketing strategy. Long live exhibitions! **Registration is FREE here: <https://bit.ly/3ytMv1l>**

SPATEX 2022 – Tuesday 1 to Thursday 3 February 2022. The Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry CV6 6GE is just 500 yards off the M6 and within two hours commuting time of 75% of the population, it offers 2,000 free on-site car parking spaces.



IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



REFLECTING ON 2021

Tara Dillon, Tim Hollingsworth, Huw Edwards and Lisa Wainwright share their thoughts after a second year of living with the impact of Covid-19



**TIM HOLLINGSWORTH,
CEO, SPORT ENGLAND**

For me, the pandemic has reaffirmed just how important grassroots sports & activity is to this country; it's part of the fabric of what we do. We've seen how important that ability to go out and play sport in clubs is for local communities and for social connections. It's been sorely missed.

For Sport England, the pandemic has highlighted where we can start to make a difference by convening, advocating and working for a common purpose. The sector works better if we have a unified approach to getting people moving more. It's not just about the money; it's also about how we align all the resources we have collectively at our disposal.

I've understood more profoundly the inequality of sport and physical activity, and accessing facilities and programmes. People who struggled to be active before, found it even harder to do so during the pandemic. We need to think about our audience more and tackle the historic barriers to inclusion and engagement.

One of the biggest opportunities for the sector now is to align more with public health and wellbeing. We've understood the link for a long time, but it's a central theme to emerge from the pandemic. There's a really good opportunity to make a difference to public health as well as the economy if we work collectively. Every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity generates £4 for the national economy – that's the dividend of investing in the sector.

There's also an opportunity to think about the future of public leisure provision. The historic model for funding public leisure has proved unsustainable in many cases. We need to think more creatively about what

“People who struggled to be active before, found it even harder to do so during the pandemic. We need to think about our audience more and tackle the historic barriers to inclusion and engagement”

leisure should look like in this country. What do communities need and how can we best serve that?

We have a depleted workforce and there are challenges for getting both paid and volunteer staff back into the sector (see also *Expert Advice*, p39). There are also significant challenges around leadership and governance and how we ensure sports organisations are well run, and providing safe and positive environments.

As a sector, we need to innovate to meet the 21st century agenda on climate change and net-zero targets and become greener and more sustainable. As part of that drive for innovation, we must invest in the digital skills and capacity in the sector to match the increasing digital expectations of the population. The new Digital Marketing Hub, which we've launched with CIMSPA, is an important initiative to upskill organisations and their staff as is the current ReTrain to Retain programme.

2021 was characterised by real uncertainty but we should be very proud of how the sector continued to operate during this time, how quickly it adapted and worked collectively, and how it now looks to improve to encourage more people to be active.

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



**LISA WAINWRIGHT, MBE,
CEO, SPORT AND
RECREATION ALLIANCE**

As a sector we've been knocked back, and one of our key challenges has been getting people back into regular activity. Our research with Sheffield Hallam University showed that membership of grassroots sports clubs is only projected to recover to 75% of pre-pandemic levels, while 33% of coaches are not expected to return. The inequality gap remains one of the biggest challenges and if it was difficult for some people to take part in activity pre-Covid, it's going to be even harder for them now. There's still a lot of hesitation about returning to sport, especially among vulnerable groups as well as volunteers, many of whom are older. It means that

we need to be even more friendly and more inclusive going forwards and continue to demonstrate the safety of our sector, but it's going to take time.

The profile of sport and physical activity was lifted to new heights during the pandemic and I'm proud the sector was at the forefront of decision making with government so that it was one of the first to reopen after the last lockdown.

This is testament to our passion, resilience and the new level of collaboration, both with government and the membership organisations, that we saw throughout the pandemic.

Despite the challenges, we've learned a huge amount especially about the benefits of technology. Pre-Covid, we hadn't embraced technology as much as we should have, but the pandemic has

shown us its potential for getting people active. For example, one of our members developed and delivered online training for 45,000 children with special needs. As a sector, we've shown that we are flexible and can adapt at pace. We need to make sure we take that forward.

We also need to focus on how we can contribute to bigger societal issues, using our ambassadors and role models. Just look at Marcus Rashford's fantastic work around child hunger. We have the potential to do much more of this, especially around environmental sustainability. We need to show what we can do and make all elements of good practice easily available across the sector via a central portal – we are currently in discussions to see how we can deliver this.

We are still feeling the impact of Covid – on people and the economy – the effects of Brexit as well as general uncertainty, which is the biggest challenge for any business. We will have to look at our financials under an even finer microscope because we are going to have to deliver more with less in the future. But it's a sign of the maturity of our sector that we can work so effectively together to deliver for the wider cause rather than for individual organisations.



“Pre-Covid, we hadn't embraced technology as much as we should have, but the pandemic has shown us its potential for getting people active. We need too make sure we take that forward”



HUW EDWARDS,
CEO, UKACTIVE

The start of 2021 was hugely challenging as the fitness sector went into extended lockdown at what is traditionally its most important period of the year. Operators, suppliers and the workforce demonstrated incredible resilience, determination and spirit to get through that time, while facing their own personal and professional challenges. We worked hard with government to secure a package of support to members to help them through lockdown and to aid their long-term survival, and we all worked together to collate valuable evidence to show the safety of the sector ensuring we were front of the queue when it came to reopening for business.

We've never seen that level of collaboration before. Membership

organisations met – and continue to meet – regularly to provide a collective voice on areas of commonality. And we will look to work with government on areas of shared concern and opportunity in the future to ensure we better represent our members and the sector.

We haven't taken our eye off the ball and challenges remain for all four nations around Covid. We are in constant engagement with government about the extremely low prevalence of Covid-19 among people who have visited our facilities, which is critical as we head into winter and next year. We have got to lead the conversations across the four nations to make sure any decision made on potential closures in the future is based on robust evidence.

The recovery of the public sector has been more cautious, and it faces

“We have an opportunity to play a bigger role in society and we believe we can attract over 5m more people to regularly use our centres by the end of the decade”

ongoing challenges around revenue, age of the building stock in addition to staff shortages and the rising cost of utilities. Working with the LGA, Sport England and the government we want to redefine the suite of services delivered by the public sector and how they support particular services and needs to act as the front line of NHS prevention.

Ukactive has been around for a long time, but the pandemic really helped crystallised our purpose, which is to support, guide, protect and champion our members and support their growth. We will continue to work constructively with government and maximise opportunities for growth. We have an opportunity to play a bigger role in society and believe we can attract over 5m more people to regularly use our centres by the end of the decade. To achieve this, we have to improve the landscape in which we operate, from business rates and VAT to planning regulations to investment opportunities.

If we achieve this objective for growth, we will have a transformational impact on activity levels in the country, which will be a win for government, for the sector and for millions of people.

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TARA DILLON,
CEO, CIMSPA

As we come to the end of a second year of living with the impact

of Covid-19, I remain hugely impressed by the resilience shown by the sector in dealing with all the challenges that have come its way.

Operators (from the largest through to the many micro-business and self-employed) showed great patience through the extended period of lockdown that our sector was placed under. I was particularly struck by the agility and efforts that were made to continue serving customers, whether it was shifting to online delivery, outdoor classes or rapidly putting in place Covid-secure processes and staff training.

2021 has also seen continued close collaboration between different organisations, working together on behalf of the sector. CIMSPA worked closely with Sport England, ukactive, EMD UK, UK Coaching, the Sport & Recreation Alliance, CLUK and many more bodies around the UK to deliver as much support as possible to everyone in the sector. Despite this, some venues, especially in public leisure, have been forced to close, and we need to see rapid investment (and a different funding model) to bring them back and avoid any further casualties.

The effects of prolonged lockdown earlier this year also saw many people being forced to leave the sector. This has left many operators with staff shortages and in many cases unable to fully open facilities, leaving customers with nowhere to go. Programmes like ReTrain to Retain are designed to help keep people in the sector and support those wanting to come back, but there is still a challenge ahead.

The pandemic really has underlined the importance of sport and physical



**“Looking ahead,
we should now be
treating this sector
as an essential service
and aligning it
much more closely
to the wider health
and social care
system”**

activity to the health of the nation. Not just physically, but also for mental wellbeing, community cohesion and local economic impact.

Unfortunately, data from Sport England reveals some stubborn inequalities in engagement with sport and activity. We've seen levels of activity stagnant or falling among people from ethnic minority groups, those in less affluent areas and young people. Much of this is linked to cost,

time and access to facilities, but there are also issues around equality of representation in the leadership of sport that need to be dealt with. This will be a particular focus for us moving forwards, working in close collaboration with Sport England and UK Sport on the implementation of the revised Code for Sports Governance.

Looking ahead, we should now be treating this sector as an essential service and aligning it much more closely to the wider health and social care system. Sport and physical activity has so many benefits to offer society, but we need real political will (backed up by serious investment) to reap those rewards.

The recent House of Lords National Plan for Sport, Health and Wellbeing is a really important step in the right direction, with many positive and bold recommendations. If some of those can be acted upon by the government, we have a real chance of unleashing the full potential of this sector in the years to come.

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS BENEFIT FROM RETRAIN TO RETAIN

Thousands of fitness professionals, group exercise instructors, sports coaches and volunteers have signed up to the new skills, funding and support programme, says Colin Huffen, CIMSPA's head of standards & regulation

ReTrain to Retain is helping thousands of sport and physical activity professionals stay in or return to the sector by providing access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities.

The programme is part of an ambitious £5m job retention and support package to help the sector recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Funded by Sport England through the National Lottery, it is being delivered by CIMSPA, alongside UK Coaching and EMD UK.

After an incredible start, ReTrain to Retain is being opened up to professionals whose working hours weren't affected by the pandemic but who deliver sessions that tackle inequalities – for example, working with people from culturally diverse

communities, those with disabilities or people who have long-term health conditions.

Sport and physical activity professionals who want to work to tackle inequalities are also invited to apply for the scheme where they can take advantage of the wealth of resources based on individual roles and personal circumstances (such as where they work and the type of people they work with).

Benefits of the programme include access to:

- The Digital Marketing Hub, a free hub consisting of on-demand training, webinars and mentorship to help





people upskill their digital marketing ability.

- 20 pieces of digital learning and 30 webinars to help professionals get back into work or increase their working hours. Elements covered include advice on job applications, interview techniques, being resilient, managing personal and business finances.
- A job matching service to support people in gaining new employment or additional hours.
- Discounted endorsed training from CIMSPA education partners in areas such as marketing and personal development.
- Discounted training from a range of providers including Les Mills, TRX, Net Profit Explosion, inside track, Fibodo and Burrell Education.
- Regular bulletins from CIMSPA to keep in touch with the latest developments in the sector.
- Group exercise instructors can also benefit from free membership of EMD UK, discounted training courses, £50 of PPL music credits and more.
- Sports coaches who live in areas of socioeconomic deprivation will receive 12 months unlimited access to over 500 learning resources provided by UK Coaching.

“We are delighted by the sector’s response to the ReTrain to Retain programme. Designed for anyone involved in the delivery of sport and physical activity in England, the scheme is upskilling staff and funding essential training to provide a practical solution to the staff shortages currently experienced across the sector as a result of the pandemic,” said Colin Huffen, head of standards and regulation at CIMSPA.

The programme will run until September 2022, so there’s still time to take part. For more information, visit <https://retrain.cimspa.co.uk/>

IN DEPTH

RIGHT DIRECTIONS

DON'T FALL FOUL OF THE LAW

Health & safety (H&S) has always been a minefield for leisure centre operators. But navigating the seemingly endless checks and tasks in a world still dominated by a pandemic has never been more important, and falling foul of the law could literally mean 'the end' for a business.

H&S and quality management expert Right Directions knows only too well the implications of not ensuring staff are following company procedures or kept up to date with the latest regulations.

"Getting it wrong can cost an organisation; when workers are injured or suffer ill health following an accident, in addition to the costs of personal injuries, the costs from damage to property or equipment and the lost production may be far greater. It could also lead to enforcement action from HSE, which could result in prosecution, both corporately and individually," says Gill Twell, group development head at Right Directions, which also delivers Sport England's Quest quality

scheme, the pilot assessments for ukactive's 'The Active Standard', the Activity Alliance IFI Mark and accreditation for Swim England's Learn to Swim Pathway.

"The consequences of not ensuring statutory and best practice processes are fully in place, not carrying out suitable and sufficient risk assessments or developing and implementing H&S procedures could be considerable. The law also says organisations must consult with workers about H&S matters, such as reducing the transmission of Covid-19, and by talking to workers, organisations can explain the changes that have been made to keep them safe and to assist them to continue running the business safely."

WORKING SMARTER

Twell continues: "It can be difficult to ensure every aspect of H&S legislation, code of practice guidance and statutory inspections are up to date, as well as ensuring staff receive appropriate training, are competent in

their role and kept up to date with important changes to legislation and operational procedures. But if not followed properly, failures in these areas could be catastrophic for a business.

"Companies should undertake regular staff refresher training; everything from customer care and safeguarding to health & safety, as well as ensuring the team are adhering to day-to-day operating standards. But in an ideal world it shouldn't stop here. Organisations should carry out reviews following audits and their Quest assessments to demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement too, and regularly review their team's training needs."

Right Directions is an approved CIMSPA training provider; all its training has been designed specifically for the fitness and leisure industry. "The aim of our training is to provide delegates with the appropriate knowledge, so they can understand the specific requirements of the leisure and fitness industry, how to undertake their responsibilities in a day-to-day setting and how to contribute to promoting a safety culture within their organisation," explains Twell.

Right Directions' trainers are all active H&S and quality consultants, who, when not teaching, advise companies on H&S compliance. Visit rightrightdirections.co.uk or call 01582 840 098.

Quick wins guide

- Complete and record health & safety refresher training annually for all staff on site; it doesn't have to be a massive task. It can be completed in 'bite size chunks' during staff meetings.
- Ensure health & safety and operational procedures are in place and implemented
- Don't forget safeguarding. Have a process or a matrix in place that alerts you for refresher DBS checks
- Develop a process to track expiry dates of statutory inspections and certificates; it helps if all the documents are easy to retrieve
- Following the receipt of inspections, ensure any highlighted findings are actioned in the specified timescales
- Implement a process to record and monitor accidents, incidents and near miss trends, such as Right Directions' online accident reporting tool, STITCH
- Develop a document, such as a Risk Reduction Plan or Service Improvement Plan, to record any health & safety findings/actions along with specified target dates for completion. This document should be regularly reviewed and signed off.

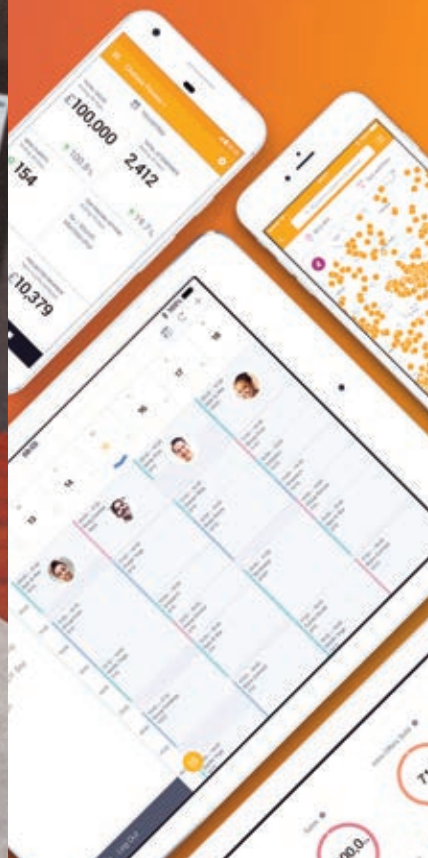
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IN DEPTH

INCLUSIVITY

GETTING MORE PEOPLE TO TAKE THE PLUNGE

British swimming remains a white dominated sport – both competitive and recreational. Swim teachers have a central role in improving inclusiveness, says new study

By **Rachel Masker**

Pool closures and the loss of swimming lessons during the pandemic have widened barriers and increased inequalities, according to a major study.

The survey of 405 members of the Swimming Teachers Association (STA) found nine out of 10 respondents believe swimming is an activity everyone 'should' and 'can' engage in. But this highlighted a glaring disparity as only 18% think everybody is participating;

just half (51%) feel there is diversity in swimming.

According to the survey, 'Inclusion in the Swimming Industry', commissioned by STA in partnership with ukactive, those on low incomes, black and Asian communities, Muslim women and disabled people are among those missing out. On the upside, 71% felt that 'small changes' that teachers make to adapt their methods, coaching and communication can make swimming sessions more enjoyable, accessible and inclusive.

"We know that Covid-19 has widened disparities, increased barriers and shone a light on certain inequalities,"

said Tim Mathias, head of inclusion for ukactive. The STA partnered with ukactive to better understand inclusion and diversity in the teaching arm of the swimming industry. "We also sought to understand any vulnerabilities or 'blind spots' – a crucial element to making improvements." Swim teachers are central to progressing the inclusion agenda, said Mathias.

LACK OF DIVERSITY

When Alice Dearing won her place at the Tokyo Olympics, she spoke of "decades and decades of historical and cultural racism in the sport". The 24-year-old student was the only black



swimmer to represent GB and the first woman of colour. To see someone like her at the top of the sport is rare.

Swimming has a way to go when it comes to diversity at grassroots level, too. The latest Active Lives survey carried out by Sport England reveals 15% of black adults compared to 29% of white British adults went swimming in the past 12 months. Asian adults don't take part in the sport much either (17%). The figure for disabled adults and those with a long-term health condition is 20%.

Meanwhile, 18% of youngsters from ethnically diverse communities go swimming weekly compared to 25% of white British children.

GETTY



AGENDA

INCLUSIVITY



In the STA survey, most respondents had not recently seen, read or heard anything related to BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) groups and swimming. Visibility was even lower for LGBT or transgender swimmers. “In general, there were low levels of visibility of swimming information being seen across all groups apart from ‘disability’, where only 31% reported having not seen anything recently,” said the report.

“There are a lot of black swimmers and it is more diverse now but we aren’t highlighted,” said Audrey Livingstone, a London triathlon coach. “Making black and Asian swimmers, lifeguards and swim teachers more visible in promotional material and training manuals will make a big difference.”

Under-represented groups need role models at club, regional and national level to feel included, she said. “It’s important to have people who look like you doing things that are supposed to be impossible because of the myths.”

In a bid to encourage more black and Asian women to take up swimming, Livingstone and swim teacher Debbie Croydon, set up Soul Swimmers. The friends came up with the idea when they

met for exercise and a socially distanced coffee on the banks of the Thames during the first national lockdown.

“A lot of black and Asian adults don’t swim and because they can’t swim, they don’t encourage their children to learn to swim.”

In September 2020, the pair ran their first pool sessions specifically tailored to the needs of Black and Asian women. The aim is not just to get these women into the pool but also swimming in open

water, triathlon, paddle boarding and surfing. The sessions aim to address the needs of each individual swimmer based on their cultural backgrounds and fears.

Livingstone said: “The biggest barrier many black women struggle with is what to do with their hair. The swim hat not being big enough is not such an issue now there are companies that make swim hats for Afro hair and dreads like Swims scarf and Soul Cap.”



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

When asked why some groups don't take part in swimming, the STA survey pointed to several issues. Access to pools, including public transport, is a big barrier. Physical facilities not accommodating those with particular needs was also cited as a reason some groups are excluded – steep entrances, heavy swing doors or no hoists to lift wheelchair users into the pool.

Affordability is a challenge too. Private swimming classes are expensive, so school swimming lessons will be the only time some less affluent kids get in the pool. Learning to swim is part of the national curriculum. But one in four children leave primary school unable swim the statutory 25m, says Sport England.

The survey of STA members also found religious and cultural beliefs “related to clothing, modesty and sensitivities to male/female segregation”, are reasons some groups don't swim. Finally, “fear” related to naivety or lack of knowledge or understanding of the activity and feeling ‘different’.

Livingstone explains female-only swim sessions won't attract Muslim

“A lot of black and Asian adults don't swim and because they can't swim, they don't encourage their children to learn to swim... The biggest barrier many black women struggle with is what to do with their hair”

women if there are male lifeguards or if people can sit in the stands and view the sessions or can watch through windows. It's important to talk to representative groups to meet their specific needs, she said.

IMPROVING INCLUSIVITY

So how do we encourage more people to take the plunge? Keeping pools open and reducing entry prices would be a great start. When the new eco-friendly ‘Everyone Active’ leisure centre at Winchester opened earlier this year pool entry prices were hiked to £3 for juniors and disabled people – a 33% and 40% increase respectively. Seniors no longer swim for free. Should local councils make swimming affordable for all?

The STA study recommendations include:

- Explore the establishment of key role models and ambassadors across the STA membership
- Embed diversity, inclusion and equality into basic qualifications issued and administered by the STA
- Explore setting up ‘affinity networks’ or groups with a shared background and best practice forums
- Update communications and raise awareness of under-represented groups, including BAME, religious and LGBT individuals
- Celebrate diversity and inclusion and role models across swimming
- Establish links with representative and campaign organisations for each specialist group
- “Swimming is a vital and potentially life saving skill for individuals and once learnt the benefits can last a lifetime”, said the report. “STA members play a key role in fostering a sense of inclusion, embracing and celebrating diversity, making adaptations to the sport and welcoming diverse and under-represented groups into the activity.”



Paralympian swimming gold medalist: Peter Hull MBE

Despite being born with no legs and arms ending at the elbow, Peter Hull won three gold medals for swimming at the 1992 Barcelona Paralympics – all in world record times.

But his first swim class nearly ended in disaster. “My first memory of getting into a pool is falling off the steps and nearly drowning. A friend of mine saved me.”

Hull learned to swim at the age of five. “The occupational therapists early on realised that if I was going to be independent and live a relatively normal life, I needed to be physically fit. Because I rely on my upper body strength for everything from eating and drinking to dressing – swimming is a good exercise. It's gentle on the joints, uses all the major muscle groups and strengthens the core.

“Also in the early days it was fun to get in the water and splash about,” said Hull who works as Engagement Lead for Active Nation in Southampton. Swimming has strengthened him, he said, not only physically but mentally too.

When teaching people to swim who may be missing limbs, partially paralysed, have learning disabilities or sensory impairments, it's important to have a Plan B, C, D and E, said Hull, adding: “Coaches need to be flexible and adapt to individual situations. I'm a strong believer there is a solution to every problem.”

BUSINESS

INCENTIVES

MOTIVATION TO



The government's new health incentives pilot will encourage participants to increase their step count. But will these steps ultimately lead them to the door of physical activity providers and bring about lasting behaviour change?

By Caroline Roberts

MOVE

Almost two-thirds of adults in England are overweight, with half of these falling into the obese category, and, according to government calculations, the consequent health issues are costing the NHS £6bn a year. The pandemic has further highlighted the issue as research has found that people who are obese are 33% more likely to die with Covid.

As discussed in the Autumn 2021 issue of *S&PA Professional*, the government's new £100m obesity strategy aims to tackle the problem and Fit Miles, the incentives pilot, is one of the initiatives included. The six-month scheme launches early in 2022 and will take place in Wolverhampton, a city chosen because a third of its population is classed as being physically inactive. Residents who choose to sign up will be provided with free wrist-worn devices linked to an app that will generate personalised exercise and diet recommendations. Making these lifestyle changes will enable them to earn points that can be redeemed for a range of rewards, likely to include retail vouchers, theme park passes and cinema tickets, and £3m has been earmarked to pay for these.

The government is hoping the pilot will shed light on how small rewards can have a big impact on encouraging people to take more exercise and improve their diet. But do such schemes work, especially in the longer term?

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Fit Miles is modelled on Singapore's successful National Steps Challenge (NSC), a five-month challenge period that has run annually since 2015.

Participants use wearables and smartphone apps to track activity and

“The government is hoping the pilot will shed light on how small rewards can have a big impact on encouraging people to take more exercise and improve their diet”

earn 'healthpoints', which count towards three tiers of reward, mainly in the form of vouchers that can be spent with a wide range of partners. Figures

up to the start of the pandemic show that participation numbers grew from 129,000 in 2015 to 810,000 in 2019, and 26% of Singapore's adult population had taken part over that period.

However, the NSC is about more than just small incentives; its success is the result of a very large network of collaborations, including with sports and recreation providers. And sustained investment has allowed the scheme to evolve over the years. It has been continually refined through ongoing data analysis, the introduction of new technology that enables more flexible participation and targeted interventions – by the fourth season, rewarding of heart-rate-measured moderate to vigorous activity had been introduced. Mass media campaigns have helped to

Loss-framed or gain-framed? The psychology of incentives

Some behavioural studies have found that loss-framed incentives – rewards that are given upfront but then clawed back if certain targets are not met – can provide an extra spur to action. One example specifically related to physical activity is the large-scale study conducted by global research institute Rand Europe on behalf of the insurer, Vitality.

Vitality Active Rewards is a weekly gain-framed incentive in which members earn vouchers and other treats for physical activity. In the research, members were given the option of buying an Apple Watch at a heavily discounted upfront cost. The monthly repayments were then linked to the amount of physical activity achieved that month, giving them the

opportunity to bring the cost to zero. The research found that the combination of this loss-framed incentive and the Vitality Active Rewards was more effective in encouraging exercise than the gain-framed rewards alone and resulted in an average increase of 34% in tracked activity days per month. The results also suggested that this approach may also work well with populations that tend to be inactive, such as those who are obese.

But, Dr James Newman warns:

“People often fall into two categories: for some people, school PE was the thing they looked forward to all week; for others it was the thing they dreaded. I'd be wary of bringing

any sense of punishment into the physical activity context as it can reinforce some of those feelings.”



BUSINESS

INCENTIVES

recruit and encourage participants, and community and corporate challenges run alongside it to provide a social element. It also includes integrated nudges to join other healthy lifestyle and physical activity schemes that run outside of NSC seasons.

It remains to be seen whether this can be replicated in the UK. Sir Keith Mills, founder of the Air Miles and Nectar customer loyalty schemes and CEO of London 2012, who is advising the government on the scheme, has said the intention is to bring together a wide range of partners for the pilot, and David Parfitt, strategy director of HeadUp, the app developer, has talked of the commitment to engage with local stakeholders to help shape and refine the pilot. But, at the time of writing, the details of the programme were yet to be worked out and it was unclear how local physical activity providers would be involved.

"Incentives can offer some encouragement initially, but the effect can wear off fairly quickly, particularly with adult populations," says Dr James Newman, a sport and exercise psychologist at Sheffield Hallam University, who has a particular interest in motivation. "Ultimately, you want to

create conditions where people are intrinsically motivated as they find the experience pleasurable and are rewarded by building relationships with other people. In the longer term, we need a wider culture of social support, to make activities financially accessible, and to give people choice and opportunities to explore activities that interest them."

"There will be some brands that say they don't want to have an association with a fast-food outlet. As a marketplace, we can overcome that as it's Hushle that has the brand alignment"

Brands and fitness rewards – an ethical dilemma

McDonald's is not a brand that's usually associated with fitness. But, throughout last August, the fast-food chain offered gym passes as one of the prizes in its annual Monopoly game, turning the idea of incentives for exercise on its head. Rather than 'do some exercise, earn a reward' it was more a case of 'eat a burger and win some exercise'.

The passes were provided through a partnership with the online platform, Hushle, whose day passes offer a more flexible alternative to gym membership. The platform has almost 2,000 facilities on its book and the passes could be redeemed at any of these. Statistics gathered show a 70% increase in visits to Hushle's online gym listings. Of these prospective customers, 87% had never previously visited an exercise facility via the platform, and there was a shift in demographic, with just over half being female, up from the 2021 average of 36%. The average age was also slightly lower and the number of customers from the North of England and West Midlands doubled.

However, it's important to point out that these figures don't necessarily translate into gym sessions. "In terms of the number of customers that actually visited, we're not in a position to say, I'm afraid," says Jamie

Owens, Hushle's director of fitness partnerships. "It is commercially confidential as part of the deal, and we can only talk about increased brand awareness."

The partnership was far more far more beneficial for the fitness industry than for McDonalds, he says. "One-third of the population are McDonald's customers so from our perspective it felt like a bit of a no-brainer as it's a huge market and tends to be of that younger age group that gyms often struggle to attract. For us, it's about getting eyes on a gym. Only 15% of the population join a gym and that's been a hard fact for a long time. If we want to engage more people in fitness and try to create pathways by which they can find their way to a different lifestyle, we have to go where people are.

"There will be some brands that say they don't want to have an association with a fast-food outlet. As a marketplace, we can overcome that as it's Hushle that has the brand alignment, and the gyms that sit on our marketplace get the benefit of that relationship without having the direct association. We've not had one negative comment from partners we work with; everybody saw it as way of increasing traffic. We'd definitely do it again. From our perspective, it's been a valuable partnership."





ADVERTORIAL

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REACHING NEW HEALTH SEEKERS WITH **WHOLE-BODY EMS**

Industry reports show that when gyms reopened, fitness enthusiasts flocked back to their local gyms. While this is encouraging news, the one thing these reports often miss is the opportunity that has been created in the last year and a half. Large numbers of people have realised, during the pandemic, that they need to focus on their health and are still looking for suitable workout options to meet their specific needs. These are audiences that may otherwise not have considered stepping into a gym before the pandemic raised awareness of the importance of staying fit and healthy.

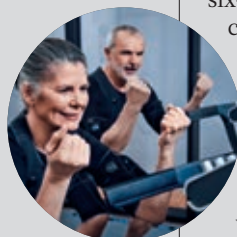
Despite the myriad of digital options available, older age groups, those recovering from childbirth or injury or those who are unconditioned and sedentary, often struggle to find fitness options or personal trainers who can develop safe, effective workouts for their needs.

Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS) training is perfect for these sorts of special populations. Used for decades by sports scientists and experts for rehabilitation, this form of training it is also perfect for postnatal and injury recovery. EMS devices offer the same benefits as a high intensity workout, but without the impact or stress on the joints. Using electrical impulses, an EMS device does this by mimicking the

natural signal sent by the brain to the muscles, but more powerfully. One 20-minute session, once per week can activate up to 98% of muscle fibres, compared to just 60% in conventional training methods.

Sessions are always one-on-one, maximum one-on-two, so there's no intimidating gym floor or group exercise studio for people who don't like the typical gym environment. Similarly, for people still concerned about COVID-safety, it lends itself naturally to social distancing

For those older groups or who may be new to exercise, EMS is a full-body, low-impact workout that is accessible, completely safe and scientifically proven to reduce sarcopenia. With a dedicated EMS PT, there is a very short learning curve and very low chance of injury in a workout that uses slow, controlled movements while a machine activates the muscle fibres. There is no additional stress on the tendons, ligaments or joints also making EMS a perfect workout option for those recovering from injury, helping them quickly get back to the activities or sports they love. EMS training is also highly effective for alleviating back pain as it activates deep seated spinal muscles, ideal for those who have



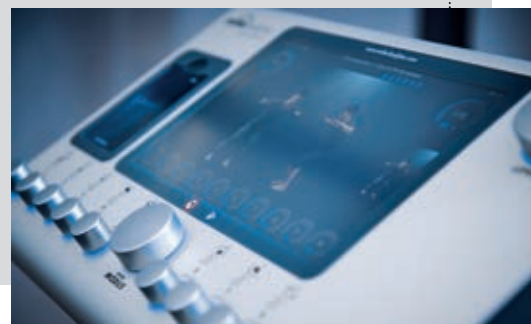
suffered back pain following periods of inactivity during the pandemic.

These same benefits are also perfect for any woman recovering from childbirth. EMS is proven to help increase pelvic floor strength, a key area of concern for postnatal women. It can also help with diastasis recti, the partial or complete separation of the "six-pack" muscles, which is very common during and following pregnancy by quickly strengthening the abdominal muscles and closing any separation. In addition to the body-sculpting benefits of EMS, these short, time-efficient workouts can be an incredible advantage for busy new mums over traditional postnatal exercise options.

The pandemic has heightened people's awareness of the importance of health and physical activity and as a result we are seeing more people look for fitness solutions who would otherwise not have considered stepping into a gym. EMS has been thriving in the rest of Europe for many years with over 80 studios opening in Germany last year alone, and the UK is starting to follow suit - since lockdown the EMS market is developing at pace in the UK. With new players like Iron BodyFit and Feel Electric coming on board every month, the rise of EMS training is really just beginning.



To see how EMS could fit into your business, get in touch to book a free demo session



IN DEPTH

IN-SOURCING

WHY COUNCILS ARE BRINGING LEISURE SERVICES BACK IN-HOUSE

By Rachel Masker



Councils face a ‘perfect storm’ as Covid-19 piles pressures on those running ageing leisure centres and swimming pools

When a contract to run South Kesteven’s leisure services ended in early 2021, the Lincolnshire council decided to bring all its facilities back in-house. Council chiefs set up a local authority trading company (LATC), LeisureSK, to take over leisure centres in Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and Deeping. South Kesteven is not alone.

In the past year, local councils, including those in the London borough of Hounslow, and Exeter, have brought millions of pounds worth of outsourced leisure services back under council control with the Local Government Association (LGA) publishing ‘A Guide to the emergency insourcing of leisure services’. Since the pandemic, there has

been a noticeable trend “though numbers are still low – less than a dozen”, said an LGA spokesman. To put this in context, 266 (86%) of district or unitary authorities in England had outsourced leisure services in December 2020.

Outsourcing started in the 1980s under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government with compulsory competitive tendering. The idea was to save money and improve services from bins to bridges and from parks to pools. But Covid curbs weakened the leisure market and some councils have been unable to find bidders when retendering contracts. This situation is expected to continue in 2022. “This has resulted in councils taking emergency measures to protect their leisure facilities and

services by stepping in to bring the service in-house, ensuring these essential community assets are not lost,” said the LGA guide.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Public sports and leisure services are facing a “perfect storm”, according to a separate report, ‘Securing the future of public sport and leisure services’, commissioned by the LGA and others. “While financial pressures have been building for many years, Covid-19 has had a crippling impact on leisure providers. Analysis forecasts an estimated £411m revenue loss for centres run by districts alone as a consequence of lockdowns, rising to nearly £600m if other councils are considered.”

Government support helped, including the £100m National Leisure Recovery Fund, but it still fell short of £700m needed to cover the industry’s estimated losses to date, says the LGA. In addition, local authorities stumped up emergency funding totalling £159m to help the survival of operator and in-house teams, while leisure providers contributed £144m. But the sector’s finances “remain on a knife edge”, said the report. One in three councils are considering closing venues next financial year, according to the District Councils’ Network. Swimming pools are most at risk due to the high costs of continuing to heat and repair them.

Public sport and leisure services provide a “unique offer” with a range and depth of services outside the scope of a commercial gym, said the LGA report. They don’t target people just for membership for profit but support NHS exercise referral schemes, grassroot clubs, elite sport and drowning prevention. From national curriculum swimming lessons for primary school children to rehabilitation following a stroke, they have a unique role in keeping the local community active and healthy.

IN DEPTH

IN-SOURCING

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, chairman of the LGA's culture, tourism and leisure board, said: "With many public sport and leisure services facing financial uncertainty as a result of the pandemic, many councils are considering their best option to protect them in the long term while making the necessary financial savings. This can include bringing these services in-house temporarily or permanently while the provider market stabilises, allowing councils to have more direct control... and to target the less active parts of their community."

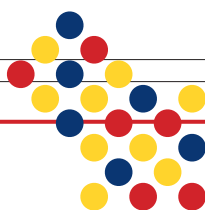
But bringing services back in-house won't be cheap or easy. Challenges include transferring staff and TUPE implications, loss of income and facility maintenance. Ditching outsourcing means learning how to run the service from bottom up, including replacement websites, membership management, rebranding the service, providing courses and running back-office functions like HR and payroll.

COUNCILS IN-SOURCING LEISURE SERVICES

South Kesteven set up the LATC LeisureSK when its contract with 1Life ended. Before the pandemic the council intended to extend the contract for 15 months while it went out to tender. But Covid-19 made this unviable. The council was giving significant cash support to its contractor and there was little market interest in a new contract, so the service was taken back in-house via a LATC.

The LeisureSK contract is for a maximum five years. Karen Whitfield, head of leisure and cultural services, said: "No decision has been made whether this will be a longer-term solution, although the council recognises the benefits of having more control over the service and is pleased with the uplift in service delivery. The deciding factor will be whether the leisure operator market is able to





recover, and if so whether there would be any benefit in procuring a new contract arrangement.”

According to Whitfield, in-sourcing leisure services has enabled more control over service provision, as well as closer links with other council initiatives and a stronger tie-in with the council’s corporate plan. “We are launching a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, which will focus on wider leisure provision across the district and healthy lifestyle interventions,” she said.

LeisureSK staff have retained their original terms and conditions of employment, so they don’t have the same benefits as their council counterparts or membership of the generous local government pension scheme. This was possible because the council opted for an arm’s length LATC rather than direct management. “The costs of bringing the service directly back in-house were prohibitive, especially in terms of increased salary and pension costs. The LATC has also been set up not for profit, so there are tax and business rate efficiencies,” said Whitfield. These include VAT relief.

Among the challenges faced by the council was lack of experience of running a leisure service as it has been managed by a private contractor for more than 20 years. While council departments now provide some back-office functions, such as finance and IT, other expertise was hired in, including marketing, as the council lacked in-house capacity.

In Exeter, the city council decided to in-source all built leisure facilities in July 2020, returning them to direct management for the first time in two decades. The council had six sites that were operated by Legacy Leisure with a new £45m Passivhaus leisure centre, St Sidwell’s Point, due to open in spring 2022. After the first lockdown in March 2020, the council checked for continued



interest from bidders but didn’t feel confident of any firm’s viability, so brought the service back in-house.

Civic chiefs earmarked £1.5m to cover the cost of transfer and relaunch the service, £330k to reopen the centres in a Covid-secure manner and £270k to cover a cost recovery agreement with the incumbent provider. The actual spend was £845k less than budgeted, according to the LGA guide. Aims include reducing the service subsidy with projections of break-even or possibly a surplus in 2023.

Unlike South Kesteven, all 168 employees are on the same terms and conditions as council staff. Jon-Paul Hedge, director of culture, tourism and leisure, said: “Under the previous operator the workforce had a high ratio of zero-hour contracts and many staff working a very small number of hours on less than the Living Wage. The transfer allowed the council to have control. It allowed us to set the culture, expectations and standards.” This came at a “significant financial cost”, he said, but the council can “deliver

more than the bottom line financially. We can now deliver an exceptional service. We can truly deliver on the needs of the community”. Exeter leads that way nationally on social prescribing, said Hedge.

Elected councillors want to tackle financial barriers to exercise. While there are no student or OAP discounts, leisure centre membership cost is set low at £25 per month to all wet/dry facilities and there is also a casual rate for people who can’t afford monthly memberships. Junior membership includes swimming lessons. “When St Sidwell’s Point opens, residents will have access to one of Europe’s best leisure facilities at a fraction of high-end leisure membership costs,” said Hedge.

“It’s a long-term solution and investment. This route is the only way to ensure you can deliver the quality service residents expect. It comes at a financial cost however – so it will be a political decision for elected members to decide. In Exeter, they supported it unanimously.”

IN DEPTH

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

BREATHING NEW LIFE

INTO

Thanks to Emma Raducanu, Britain's newest tennis star bursting on to the scene, is now the time for a resurgence in tennis?

By Caroline Roberts

TENNIS





As a form of exercise, tennis has a lot going for it. It improves aerobic fitness, muscle strength and co-ordination; it promotes mental agility; and it's a sociable sport that can be played throughout life. However, participation has declined significantly over the past decade.

Now, with the interest generated by Emma Raducanu's US Open victory, the introduction of fun, easier-to-play versions of the game and the promise of cash for renovation of derelict park courts, the time could be ripe for a resurgence. How can operators capitalise on this and encourage more people to pick up a racket?

In 2019, national governing body the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) published Tennis Opened Up, its five-year strategic plan to grow the sport. Research carried out for this found that tennis still suffers from a longstanding image problem, with many seeing it as elitist, lacking in diversity, expensive and hard to access. The strategy sets out the LTA's plan to widen the appeal of the sport, engage with underrepresented demographics and invest in community facilities. It has earmarked £8.5m which, along with the £22m of funding announced by the government in October, will be targeted at rundown park facilities. It also wants to attract a new audience by growing non-traditional formats of the sport, such as padel, a mix of tennis and squash.

The LTA currently has 13 national partner organisations, including five large leisure providers. Now that a level of normality is returning following the pandemic, the body is keen to build relationships with many more operators within the sector, says head of operations Gary Stewart. "It very much fits our agenda of 'tennis opened up' because of the sector's diversity of audience and affordability – all the things our vision stands for. It's about maximising opportunity. If all leisure centres in the country were able to offer some form of tennis using the facilities they have, that's got to be good for them and for tennis."

Centres may benefit from installing the LTA's gate access system, particularly where courts are sited away from the main building, says Stewart. The system links to Rally, an LTA product that allows people to search for local tennis courts, pay online and then punch in a booking code to gain access. "I believe it could drive more traffic to leisure centres and we'd be happy to hear from operators who would like to explore this. As long as it hits our community tennis agenda, we would then work with them on a plan."

Another option is to use indoor areas for the early years of the LTA's Youth Programme. "We're looking to pilot our blue and red stages – ages three to eight – on badminton courts in sports halls as they're an appropriate size for that age group. It could create a new product and revenue stream for the leisure sector. If there's indoor space that's not being used to the maximum, we could help by training a centre's existing staff to deliver tennis within LTA Youth. They just need to be fun, engaging and able to manage large groups of children and we can teach them how to do the job. Where a centre has outdoor tennis courts, the programme could then continue up to age 18."

IN DEPTH

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY



Padel

The LTA's strategy includes growing the relatively new and easier-to-play sport of padel, for which it is also the governing body, and Stewart believes it has the potential to be a great revenue generator for the sector.

A hybrid of tennis and squash, padel is played in an enclosed court that is around a third smaller than a tennis court. The rules are similar to those of tennis, except that the ball is allowed to bounce off the walls. It's usually played as doubles and, due to the smaller court size and the fact that it's not a power-based game, it can be played by groups of mixed abilities and ages. Padel has become one of the fastest growing sports across Europe over recent years, although it has been slower to take off in the UK. As of November 2020, there were around 6,000 active players and 59 venues offering padel in the UK.

The padel court at The Triangle Leisure Centre in Burgess Hill, West Sussex,

operated by CIMSPA partner Places Leisure, was opened in July 2019 and was the first to be built at a UK local authority leisure centre. "It's been a great addition to our existing facilities and complemented the established tennis provision and outdoor court space," says Mark Haslam, head of sport. Usage statistics have gone from 60% when it was first installed to 80% at present, with most slots booked out each day, and the facility is now considering adding another court.

"The ball stays live for longer, so it lends itself to new players just starting out on their tennis journey and tennis veterans alike," adds Haslam. "It's also fantastic for players who have less mobility and would otherwise struggle on a full-sized tennis court. Plus, you don't have to keep fetching stray balls from other courts as you do in tennis. It has definitely attracted members to the centre who wouldn't otherwise have visited."



CIMSPA partner GLL has been working with the LTA to develop its tennis offer across its facilities over the last five years. One standout example is Gosling Sports Park in Hertfordshire. With support from the LTA's Open Court disability tennis programme, which provides funding, coaching support and adaptive equipment, the centre has set up wheelchair tennis, sessions for players with other physical, visual or hearing impairments, and sessions for those with learning difficulties or mental health problems.



The first step was to establish links with special schools, community groups, such as those run by the charity Mencap, and day care centres for all age groups, explains outreach manager Philip Martin. "Disability tennis is a really great way of engaging with the community, and participants not only benefit physically, but also socially. After sessions, groups will stay in the centre for an hour and have lunch and a catch-up. It's also a really good way of increasing court usage as they're often quiet in the daytime when most disability sessions take place. We try to make it inclusive and encourage participants to link into our mainstream tennis where possible."

For younger players, the centre offers coaching in schools and runs the LTA Youth Start

programme, a low-cost, six-week course aimed children aged 4 to 11 who are new to tennis, on site. "We've had some real success with that," says Martin. "Last term, we had 78 new players, and over half of them then signed up to our weekly programme and continued playing."

The best way to build bridges with schools is to link with your local School Games Organiser (SGO), he adds: "They know the right people to speak to in the schools they cover and can promote your tennis offer in the local area. If you go in and offer a free taster session at a school and you get one player from that into your programme for a year, it pays back and more. Once you bring in more younger players, you get the parents coming along and playing as well. The benefits are huge."



Useful contacts

- Visit lta.org.uk/play-competes to find out more about Open Court disability tennis, the Youth Start programme and padel. The padel section has a wealth of information about court installation and funding options, along with technical guidance.
- Facilities wishing to build padel courts may be eligible for the LTA's Quick Access Loan, an interest-free loan of between £25k to £250k. Quick Access Loans can also be used for things such as floodlighting and the erection of temporary 'bubbles' over outdoor courts to allow more use during the winter months.
- Operators interested in partnering with the LTA or finding out more about what it has to offer should email scott.reid@lta.org.uk.

TECH TOOLKIT

PRODUCT ROUND-UP

INTEGRATING DIGITAL

Bridging the gap between home and gym

BY SUE WEEKES



GYM-HOME SPLIT SET TO CONTINUE

Les Mills has launched the Les Mills+ fitness channel that aims to bridge the gap between digital and live workouts. It features more than 1,500 workouts covering strength, yoga, cardio, high intensity interval training, dance and more and includes its trademark Bodypump, Bodycombat and Bodybalance sessions. The workouts are also found in 21,000 gyms globally and the app includes a feature that connects users to live workouts in their own area. It replaces the previous digital platform Les Mills On Demand. The company believes the Covid-driven rise in digital fitness will continue and its own research published in September (Les Mills Global Consumer report) found that most exercisers favour a 60:40 split between gym and digital workouts. The research reveals that 80% of gym members plan to continue using digital workouts post-pandemic. Les Mills+ also includes personalised workout dashboards and tracking technology and tailored user journeys. The omnichannel is available as a mobile app and can be streamed by any internet browser.

www.lesmills.com/ondemand/



Create a swimming challenge

Swimtag, the online platform used by pool operators to motivate and attract members, has launched a new feature for swimmers and operators to map a swimming challenge virtually on an interactive map. Challenge Builder allows you to plot a custom route, and the challenge will be available for other swimmers to use or can be set up as a featured challenge to invite members to join. This facility was previously only available with the help of a member of the Swimtag team. It has also launched the Training Plan builder tool which allows you to upload training plans to the training area of the site where swimmers can choose to take part in a plan and select which dates they will be swimming on.

Swimmers are given a score for each training day that corresponds to how closely they follow the plan. Once all the training days have been completed, they will receive a gold, silver or bronze medal based on their overall score.

www.seeyourswim.com



TAKING CRYOTHERAPY TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

CryoAction is offering customers a range of whole body electric cryochambers in different sizes that can reach temperatures as low as -140 deg centigrade and which claim to have extremely low running costs. The range spans chambers for one up to eight people. The company says the launch follows many months of research and innovation, and it hopes the new range will help to make cryotherapy more available to a wider audience across the wellness, fitness, leisure and sports centres. The units can be kept running for up to 10 hours a day with automatic scheduling of cooldown and regeneration cycles. Temperatures and durations can be varied to offer users a personalised cryotherapy session. CryoAction claims that unlike other electrically cooled cryochambers, its range does not rely on the intensive use of fans to direct cooled air on to the user. "We have no need to simulate session temperatures in our units," said CryoAction CEO, Ian Saunders. "The temperatures are real as is the efficacy of the cryotherapy session for the user." The company also offers nitrogen-cooled chambers.

<https://cryoaction.com/>

Price: On application

INTEGRATING DIGITAL WITH CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Matrix Fitness is partnering with video-on-demand and digital tech specialist Intelvideo to integrate the latter's hybrid fitness content platform into Matrix's commercial fitness equipment. Fitness operators will be able to provide members with access to their brand's on-demand and trainer-led programming through Intelvideo's direct integration into the Matrix Touch and Touch XL consoles as well as Matrix's new Virtual Training Cycle. Members can access the full suite of functionality that the Intelvideo platform offers, which includes

accessing on-demand or livestreaming content directly from mobile devices, browsers and other devices. The integration allows touchpoints for members to engage with club staff and trainers as well as other members. The two sides believe the 'hybridisation' model will support both Matrix and Intelvideo customers into the future and help realise a longer lifetime value as members develop "stronger hyperlocal affinities" to their fitness communities.

www.matrixfitness.com



WORKPLACE

FOCUS

SETTING A BALANCE GOAL

How to manage your work-life balance without it impacting your career

For so many of my clients, as their careers accelerate, they find it increasingly hard to manage their work-life balance.

Throughout my own senior leadership career, better work-life balance was a reoccurring goal. I thought this meant that I needed to spend more time enjoying things away from work. In my mind I saw a pie chart labelled 'Work - 80%'. 'Everything else - 20%'.

I've since learned that what I really wanted was for my life to be filled with all the things I wanted to experience. It was not simply a case of allocating the pie more evenly between work and life, a 50/50 split.

In work, I was positive and enthusiastic but at home I was numb and lacked enthusiasm, so I was literally spending my emotional and physical energy in one direction. Without doubt, I was out of balance.

Now I understand what is really meant by work-life balance: To have enough time and emotional capacity for the people I care about, to do the things I enjoy and pursue goals I wanted to achieve outside of work.

Are you out of balance? Here are some of the signs:

1. Loss of enthusiasm
2. Spinning plates
3. Worrying (about small things)
4. Multi-tasking (badly)
5. A cluttered mind (lack of focus)
6. Living on adrenaline
7. Frustrated that you don't have time to try new things
8. You're self-critical



“Listen to a podcast you're interested in even if it has nothing to do with your work”

9. Saying no to things you wish you had time to do
10. Unable to 'switch off'

Number 10 caused me to miss out on real enjoyment; I'd be present physically, but not mentally. I'd go on holiday, but be 20% niggled about something work-related, even if there was nothing wrong.

With busy lives and jobs, how do we achieve balance? Managing your balance means two things:

1. Peace of mind (feeling at ease).
2. Doing what brings you joy and distributing your pie chart how you want to, rather than accepting the cards you're holding in this moment.

Sometimes we assume that changing certain circumstances in our life will lead to happiness, but without serenity

of mind, your cup will never truly 'runneth over'.

When you achieve balance in your mind, it expresses itself everywhere and circumstances naturally shift in your favour. Simple steps to peace of mind:

- Spend a few minutes at the start and end of each day thinking about everything that's going well for you.
 - Use an affirmation and repeat regularly, such as: 'I move through each day feeling calm and confident.' 'I feel poised and totally at ease.'
- Simple steps towards joy:

1. Think of one thing you love to do and do it immediately or schedule it in your diary to guarantee it. For example, listen to a podcast about something you're interested in even if it has nothing to do with your work; walk outside for 20 minutes to chat with a friend who you never see; play tennis, read, draw, play an instrument.
2. Schedule a day off work to do something totally random. For example, A Driving Adventure Day, buy a canvas and paint a picture, walk in a totally different part of town, feed the ducks.

Doing something random activates important mental muscles:

- Imagination – to come up with a random idea requires the use of your imagination.
- Perception – to open yourself up to doing something different you must have an open mind and be able to see things from different perspectives.

Inserting activities into your life that light you up can only ever be a good thing. These type of light-hearted strategies will shake things up, and help you become more aware and more mindful. ☺

Lorna Dunning, professional development coach

EXPERT ADVICE

TAPPING INTO HIDDEN TALENT

The sport and physical activity sector needs to change its recruiting methods to fill the gaps in its missing workforce

As organisations experience a 'great resignation' and develop more flexible workforce models in the shadow of the global pandemic, the time is ripe for overhauling recruiting and hiring processes, a new Accenture report says.

Focused on the public sector, including leisure workers, the report, 'Hidden workers: Uncovering untapped talent', explores the ways in which individuals who are often prevented from realising their full potential in the workplace – for example, people with disabilities, those without traditional education qualifications, family care commitments, veterans, immigrants and refugees, and ex-offenders – can see their participation increased and deepened.

The research suggests that in the US alone, there are more than 27m hidden workers. "We estimate that there are similar proportions of hidden workers across the UK and Germany," the report said. "These numbers underscore the

potential impact that their integration or re-integration into the workforce would have – not just on the livelihoods of the individuals involved, but also on government workplaces and society as a whole."

In one question, 87.5% of survey respondents said they believed that employers' hiring processes discarded their applications when they could successfully perform the job in question but didn't fit the exact criteria in the job description. "And employers agreed," the report said. "Roughly 90% of all executives surveyed noted that qualified (at all skill levels)... candidates are vetted out of the process because they do not match exact job criteria."

Researchers identified three critical barriers preventing organisations from considering a larger pool of talent to meet their skills needs:

- Recruiting systems that automatically screen out eligible candidates
- Recruitment functions that don't elevate the business case. This means, for instance, many organisations that engage with hidden workers do so as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, rather than as part of a business strategy grounded on return on investment (ROI). "This sends a message that hiring hidden workers is an act of charity or good corporate citizenship, rather than a genuine source of competitive advantage," the

report said. However, the research showed that the organisations hiring hidden workers benefitted from improved potential, performance and innovation. They were also 36% less likely to face talent and skills shortages than organisations that don't hire hidden workers.

- A widening training gap, which makes it hard for workers to obtain relevant skills – a situation that is magnified if candidates are not already employed.

"Tapping into hidden talent holds the promise of reducing job vacancies, stemming skill shortages and boosting diversity and belonging across government," the report said.

Accenture has identified five ways that public sector organisations can tackle the issue:

- Shifting job filters from negative to affirmative
- Refreshing job descriptions to focus on critical skills
- Adopting an experience mindset to make the recruitment processes more tailored and personal
- Undertaking more targeted outreach
- Fostering a culture that is more explicitly supportive and inclusive of hidden workers. 🧡

Excerpted from the report 'Hidden workers: Uncovering untapped talent' from Accenture



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LAST WORD

SPORTING LIFE



Tully Kearney, gold medallist at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic games, spoke about sports and her role as ambassador for the Cerebral Palsy Organisation

FREEDOM THROUGH SPORTS

From a young age, Tully Kearney always looked up to her older brother. Yet, having cerebral palsy meant she was unable to keep up with him physically, despite her urge to do everything he could.

When he started swimming, she would go and sit poolside, watching him train, until one day she was approached by the coach who asked her whether she wanted to join in. "I realised that I didn't feel disabled in the water, and not only could I keep up with everyone else, but I could now do what my brother could do, and I just completely fell in love with the freedom that it gave me."

This love led her to be classified (as a parathlete) in 2011 by the age of 13, and straight away she was put on to the world class programme. By 2015, she won four gold medals, a silver and a bronze at the World Paralympic championships. Kearney continued her successes competing in multiple championships, and breaking multiple British, European and World records.

Just before the 2016 Rio World Championships, she suffered a devastating shoulder injury that triggered her dystonia [involuntary contractions of the

muscles]: "The trauma of the constant injuries and also the stress of the situation I was in at the pool triggered this massive progression and dystonia. So it got to the point where I couldn't lift my arms above shoulder height and I had really bad nerve pain constantly and I lost a lot of function in my legs so I physically couldn't swim."

Although Kearney was forced to withdraw from the 2016 Paralympic games in Rio, and take a year away from swimming, by 2018 she qualified for the European Championships and won gold in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic games.

As ambassador for the Cerebral Palsy Organisation (CPO), Kearney enjoys the fact that through the CPO, she gets to help others with CP to engage in physical activities. One of her favourite sports, which she found through CP Sport, was Frame Running. "For me, as a full-time wheelchair user, and someone who can only use their upper body at the pool, it was actually amazing to find something where I can actually use my legs."

She then went on to introduce the sport to a young boy, which led to

life-changing results. "There's a local family that I introduced to [the sport] recently. Their little boy wasn't allowed a walker on the NHS, but by him being able to get on Frame Running, it proves that he is actually ready for a walker."

From seeing his face light up, Kearney realised that the benefits for him were not only being a part of a team, but actually being able to move.

People take walking, talking and moving in general for granted, and with this frame, the young boy gained an opportunity for independence. She said: "I think that's what hit home for me – not only how amazing the sport is, but just how amazing CP Sport is to give these little kids these opportunities."

Reflecting on the role CP Sport played in her career, from her first swimming meet at the age of 11, to multiple competitions and events over the years, for Kearney, the organisation not only prepared her for the Paralympics, but gifted her with lifelong friendships. "For a young child growing up, it's really important to feel like you're not the only one, and that you've got other people just like you that are going through the same things."

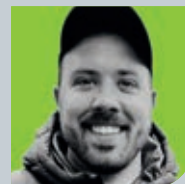
Tully Kearney spoke with Lisa Hanley



LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR

Jamie Hooper is founding director of Inclusive Cultures, driving inclusive culture change in sport



TACKLING DIVERSITY IN SPORT

I started my career in sport with Hockey Wales in a general business support role, giving me fantastic experience of all areas of a sport Governing Body. I was able to lead on projects that I was personally passionate about, like the Young Ambassador programme, the development of ParaHockey and representing the organisation on the newly formed LGBT Sport Cymru network.

It's safe to say that I'm obsessed with sport and will watch and have a go at anything. More recently I've been getting into rugby and more outdoor sports, especially since moving to the Lake District this year. My ideal triathlon would be a decent fell hike, a paddleboard and a dip in a lake!

Hockey has always been my sport since moving to rural mid-Wales from Brighton. There wasn't much going on in the village but Clwb Hoci Dysynni was the beating heart of the community!

Thanks to my time with the club I went on to establish the European Youth Hockey Panel, which I chaired for eight years; I coached hockey in clubs,

schools and camps all over the world, and have been very lucky to have an international umpire career, culminating in umpiring at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018.

I was then lucky to move into a brand new equality and diversity programme manager role with Swim England, working across all aquatic sports to make them more inclusive.

After four years, I joined Sport England in another newly created role as a senior equality & diversity manager, predominantly leading on LGBT+ and ethnic diversity participation. After two and a half years, I wanted to take a more hands on approach to driving change, and so Inclusive Cultures was born!

I launched Inclusive Cultures because I wanted to work more directly with the sector to help make a difference. Our mission is to create a fully inclusive experience for everyone in sport, with a focus on growing the diversity of people working and participating in sport. Sport has the power to bring people, societies and cultures together, and to help change lives for the better.



I have been so humbled by the opportunity to work with so many colleagues and organisations that I worked with in previous roles, and it was a complete full circle moment for me when Hockey Wales was the first organisation I invoiced after starting my career in sport there.

In its first year of trading, Inclusive Cultures has gone from strength to strength, developing several new partnerships and making a real difference supporting organisations to properly embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within their fabric.

2022 is going to be a huge year for Inclusive Cultures and myself, as I have teamed up with business partner Meji Media to launch the Include Summit on 8-9 March 2022 (see News, pp6-9).

The sport sector needs to better reflect society, and needs greater diversity of thought in decision making – the system needs an overhaul. Our mission of getting 1m underrepresented and underprivileged young people into sport will go some way to addressing these issues. We want to make change happen.

I hope to continue to lead the organisation with this work, ultimately to a place and time where Inclusive Cultures no longer needs to exist.

Jamie Hooper spoke with Vanessa Townsend



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