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ActiveIQ tackles climate change

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GUERNSEY

Rejuvenating the sea pools

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SPORT AMBASSADOR

Game changer for the deaf

p41

S&PA Professional

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THE SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INDUSTRY MAGAZINE



NEW ROAR

As more and more female role models emerge on the public stage, girls are discovering their pride in exercise

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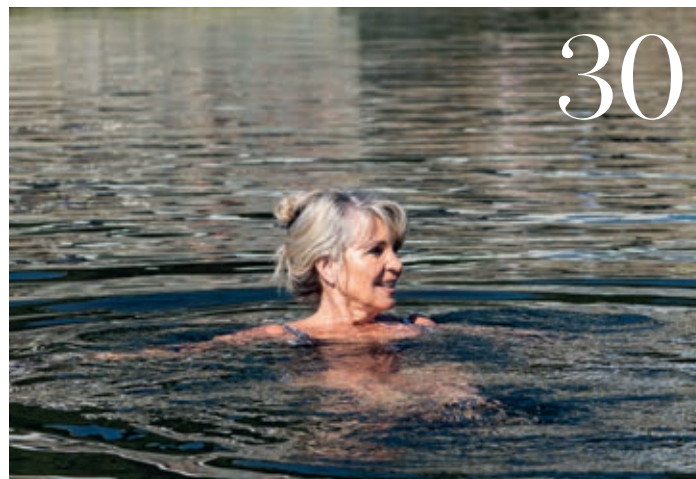
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Andrew Palmer, CEO of Cambridgeshire Deaf Association



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"If we're to give [girls] an equal chance we need to ensure there are enough well-designed opportunities for girls to participate, led by a workforce that understands their needs" (p25)



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- Suitable for both new and existing installations

▶ DeeDee Doke

Excited to exercise



*Women's sport
roars girls on to
be more active*

Our cover for this issue exudes promise, doesn't it? Our Lionesses brought more than the potential of women's sport into play this past summer; in moving up to the final round of the women's World Cup, they showed generations of girls and women the possibilities open to all who dare.

This was a win for all girls and women who will be encouraged to exercise in any fashion, to get active and to move their bodies more as a result of seeing the Lionesses in action.

Perhaps the trophy did not "come

home", as one might say. But there was victory beyond that symbol of emerging first.

Setting aside the politics, the financial issues staring down the Birmingham City Council will hopefully have limited effect on their constituents' physical fitness facilities.

The council is still expected to contribute a chunk of change, along with other bodies, to the renovation of the heritage Moseley Baths, for instance, and our conversations with operators in Birmingham say it's all business as usual at their facilities.

We hope this is an accurate picture

of the current situation – after being at the centre of our elite Commonwealth Games last year, our 'second city' cannot fall behind in delivering fitness services to its residents.



Contact us on X, formerly known as Twitter at @SAPA_Pro and email at sandpa@redactive.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Editor DeeDee Doke

Assistant editor Patrick Appleton

Designer Will Williams

Production editor Vanessa Townsend

Contributors Laura Eggo, Dean Gurden, Caroline Roberts, Sue Weekes, Roisin Woolnough

Picture editor Akin Falope

Publishing director Aaron Nicholls

ADVERTISING

Sales

020 7880 6230

sandpaprof@redactive.co.uk

PRODUCTION

Production director

Jane Easterman

Senior production executive

Rachel Young

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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CIMSPA ENQUIRIES

Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity
SportPark, Loughborough University, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough, LE11 3QF

Tel 03438 360 200

E-mail info@cimspa.co.uk

Web www.cimspa.co.uk



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S&PA News

A round-up of the latest developments in the industry

SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES MAY BEAR BRUNT OF BIRMINGHAM BANKRUPTCY



By Roisin Woolnough

On 5 September, Birmingham City Council was the latest in a series of councils to issue a Section 114 notice, effectively declaring itself bankrupt. Soon after, the government sent in commissioners to take over the running of the council, the largest local authority in the UK.

The council faces an £87m budget shortfall for the current financial year and needs to settle a £760m equal pay claims bill. Council leader John Cotton has said that “tough and robust decisions” need to be made. There is much speculation as to what those “tough and robust decisions” might be,

with fears that cuts are inevitable – from the selling of council-owned assets such as the Alexander Stadium to cuts to non-statutory services, such as sport and leisure.

As yet, neither the council nor the Birmingham Community Leisure Trust (BCLT), which runs leisure services on behalf of the council, have said whether sport and leisure services will be affected. According to a BCLT spokesperson, it’s business as usual at the moment. “We are committed to providing high quality, value for money leisure services to the people of Birmingham. We will continue supporting our client, Birmingham City Council, during this challenging period.”

Many other leisure and sporting

groups contacted by *S&PA Professional* were unable to provide comment on the current situation.

A Sport England spokesperson said: “We acknowledge the challenging circumstances that the Council finds itself in and are in close contact with colleagues around the sport and physical activity agenda. It’s too early, however, to provide any certainty on the impacts while the Council is reviewing their financial position and priorities. It would be unhelpful at this point to speculate any further on implications regarding leisure and sports facilities.”

Mike Chamberlain, CEO of Sport Birmingham, part of a national network of county sport partnerships, agrees that

it's a worrying time for the local sport sector, but he is hopeful that existing collaborations between local, regional and national partners will ensure services remain strong: "A number of things give me optimism, despite the challenges that the council faces, and we must realise that there are many other players leading and driving community sport development and initiatives."

For example, he says Sport Birmingham is co-ordinating much of Sport England's investment into Birmingham post the 2022 Commonwealth Games. "Sport England are committed to significant additional place-based investment in Birmingham for the next three to four years, and collectively partners will agree and plan how this can be invested to provide biggest impact where need is greatest; so much more community-led sport and physical activity opportunity will develop," he says.

But Kirsty Cummings, CEO at Community Leisure UK, is less optimistic about the future for sport in Birmingham and in other struggling local authorities, given the financial pressures facing public services across the UK. "When local authorities have deficit budgets, the first thing they look to cut tends to be non-statutory. Sport is still seen as a nice-to-have, not a core service so the risk to these services is higher." Facilities with the highest carbon footprint – swimming pools and ice rinks, for example – are particularly vulnerable. "Decisions will be made on whether to close facilities, particularly sites that are seen as a burden. And areas that don't generate income and are just seen as a cost – outreach work and concessionary access, for example."

Leisure centres are under constant pressure to reduce costs, but Cummings says cost-saving measures such as reducing opening hours, reducing pool temperatures, training staff on the

importance of closing doors and using pool covers have already happened in response to the energy crisis. "All the simple approaches have been done already. There has also been a reduction in the workforce – most centres are averaging two-thirds of the workforce compared to pre-Covid levels. Going forward, everything is reduction – buildings, services, hours..."

Any further steps to improve energy efficiencies, such as solar panels and heat pumps, require investment, and councils like Birmingham may not have the budget. Cummings thinks there will be redundancies in the sector instead, and an increase of community asset transfers, with some small sites being taken over by community groups.

Like Cummings, Philip Brownlie, head of public affairs at Swim England, is very concerned about the impact of the council's finances on local swimming services. "The local authority already has the largest shortage of publicly available swimming pool space in the country. This is reflected in swimming attainment levels," Brownlie says. According to Swim England's Active Lives Survey, only 41% of children in Birmingham leave primary school able to swim 25 metres, compared to a national average of 74%, and just 16% of adults in Birmingham swim, compared to 23% across England.

Any reductions to services and facilities would dent swimming levels further, says Brownlie, as well as having an adverse effect on the local community and economy. "Figures from Swim England's recent Value of Swimming report showed that swimming generates over £32m of social value in Birmingham each year, helping reduce pressure on local NHS and social care services and contributing to improved life satisfaction and community cohesion," he says.

MESSAGE FROM CIMSPA CEO



TARA DILLON
ON THE
HEALTH AND
ACTIVITY OF
THE NATION.

Since the last issue of S&PA, CIMSPA, along with other members of the National Sector Partners Group (NSPG), has launched what I believe is the UK's most ambitious pledge ever to improve the health and wellbeing of our nation.

Our vision is to make the UK the most physically active nation in Europe and in doing so to unlock the full social and economic potential of sport, recreation and physical activity for the benefit of everyone in the UK.

It's been a busy summer. The DCMS has launched its strategy for the future of sport and physical activity – read our thoughts on p16. And on p10, our chief strategy officer Spencer Moore shares CIMSPA's own strategy – the first to be unveiled to the public.

The result of almost a decade of groundwork, our new strategy addresses the core challenges facing the sector and the people working in it. It sets out how we will support professionals, education providers and employers to ensure we have the right people with the right skills in the right places and gain greater professional recognition for our workforce and all the fantastic work our sector does.

Meanwhile, on p17, we unveil the findings of our 2023 Workforce Insights Report, which gives a fascinating insight into the sports and physical activity workforce examining key areas such as recruitment, retention, diversity and skills. This unique research will help us navigate the challenges we face so we can deliver even greater impact and work towards our goal of becoming the most physically active nation in Europe.

UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS

GETTING ACTIVE WITH NATIONAL FITNESS DAY

By Patrick Appleton

Fitness flash mobs, school children getting active, group exercises and more – it was all happening on ukactive's National Fitness Day (NFD) on 20 September where many attended thousands of free activities across the UK to celebrate the day.

The theme for this year's campaign is 'Your Health is for Life', encouraging people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to recognise and celebrate the life-long physical and mental benefits of being active.

GM Active was part of the flagship ukactive event in Greater Manchester where its Prehab4Cancer programme was in full swing, using group exercise to support those diagnosed with cancer to manage their recovery and treatment in the community.

One National Fitness Day flash mob took place in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire where over 30 retirees, aged between 65 and 87, according to

the *Stratford Observer*, donned their lycra and gathered outside Shakespeare's birthplace in Henley Street to perform a surprise flash mob to a medley of songs.

From the old to the young, NFD had a big impact on a group of schoolchildren in Kent, as *Isle of Thanet News* reported that Priory Infant School participated in '10@10'. This involved going outside and getting involved in a variety of fitness activities at 10am for a minimum of 10 minutes.

Elsewhere, ukactive commissioned a poll, conducted by Savanta, where people named their ideal gym buddy (see box, right).

An NFD survey also found that mental health (54%) was the main reason for people to keep fit but many don't know the recommended activity levels. Some 38% think less than 90 mins activity is enough, but that is half of the recommended amount by the government's chief medical officer, Professor Chris Whitty.



UPFRONT

S&PA NEWS



WHO'S YOUR DREAM GYM PARTNER?



Top 5 dream male workout partners

1. Dwayne Johnson (The Rock)
2. Arnold Schwarzenegger
3. Joe Wicks
4. Mr Motivator
5. David Beckham



Top 5 dream female workout partners

1. Margot Robbie
2. Scarlett Johansson
3. Dawn French
4. Jane Fonda
5. Joanna Lumley

Poll commissioned by ukactive and conducted by Savanta

CIMSPA AGM HERALDS SUCCESSFUL FUTURE FOR THE ORGANISATION

A successful year for CIMSPA has found the chartered institute launching the first version of its new member portal, a member webinar series that is growing in popularity and another launch, the chartered route for high-performance coaches, as highlighted by the organisation's CEO Tara Dillon at the 13 September Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Dillon's review of 2022-23 also pointed out that CIMSPA received a score of GOOD on Governance and GOOD on Finance in the Sport England Governance and Finance Audit conducted in June 2023 by accounting consultancy BDO.

"Overall, CIMSPA demonstrated good governance, led by an effective Board with a strong Committee structure," the auditors said of the organisation's governance. It went on to describe CIMSPA's financial control environment as "robust, and there was a clear, positive culture demonstrated by the Finance team for implementing controls".

The annual update further revealed that CIMSPA's membership has stabilised over the last year, remaining at 22,000 for a second 12-month period.

The organisation's partnership roster for 2022-23 includes 170 employer partners, 225 training providers and 36 higher education partners.

CIMSPA's thanks go out to the volunteers who contributed time and expertise to the organisation's success and impact across boards, committees and panels increased over the past year to 166 from 126, Dillon reported.

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

RELEASING THE POWER OF OUR PROFESSION

Chief strategy officer Spencer Moore talks about CIMSPA's first public strategy released after years of extensive groundwork

'Releasing the Power of our Profession' is the name of CIMSPA's brand new strategy, which shares the chartered institute's vision and goals from 2023 to 2030. This is the first CIMSPA strategy to be unveiled to the public and is the culmination of almost a decade of planning and preparation.

"We've been working to get to this point ever since Tara [Dillon, CIMSPA CEO] and I took over the helm at CIMSPA nine years ago. We've spent all this time putting all the necessary pieces in place to be able to execute the strategy and we probably would have done it a few years ago if the Covid-19 pandemic hadn't struck," explains Spencer Moore, CIMSPA's chief strategy officer.

Now that the foundations are firmly in place, and with committed investment and support from Sport England, CIMSPA is ready to hit the accelerate button, he says.

"Having invested heavily in insight over the last 18 months, we now have more data than ever before. We've spent some 15 months developing our new strategy, and we believe it will deliver something that is truly transformational for the sector."

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS

The strategy aims to address the core challenges facing the sector and the people working in it to realise the industry's full potential. Creating



greater professional recognition for the workforce is key to this, says Moore.

"We want the sector to be recognised and understood by the public, the health sector and the government for what it truly offers. Being recognised by the government is crucial because it opens opportunities for us to contribute more to public health. But to achieve that, we need those working in our sector to be acknowledged and valued as a professional workforce,



“We want the sector to be recognised and understood by the public for what it truly offers. To achieve that, we need those working in our sector to be acknowledged as a professional workforce, like lawyers and architects are”

Spencer Moore,
CIMSPA chief strategy officer

in much the same way as lawyers and architects are.”

Addressing career development and pathways is vital to achieving this and is therefore a major focus of the strategy. Over the next two years, CIMSPA will develop a new careers hub, which will build on the success of the sport and physical activity sector’s first careers hub to become the single destination for careers advice and support in the industry. As the only resource that someone working in or seeking to fulfil their ambitions in sport and physical activity will need, the careers hub will define and promote flexible pathways and support for every career stage. It will also be the largest source of employment opportunities in the sector, including job adverts, work placements and internships, with a continuous focus on ensuring it reaches under-served communities and realises the power of diversity and inclusion.

“We are committed to creating clear policies and standards that guide individuals from student level to CEO within our sector. This means that if someone wants to start as a lifeguard and progress to a senior personal trainer, we now have the rules and standards in place to make that a reality,” says Moore.

CIMSPA will publish and share comprehensive career guidance information resources for the public - parents, students and educators - that showcase the opportunities available within sport and physical activity. It will also host webinars and virtual career fairs to engage and inspire the workforce of the future. In addition, CIMSPA will train and support careers advice and guidance professionals so they understand the career prospects that sport and physical activity can offer.

“This is a big piece of work that we will be undertaking over the next

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



94,500

CIMSPA will prioritise support for small businesses and start-ups after its research found that **91% of the 94,500 businesses in sport and physical activity have 49 employees or fewer**

two years, but it's absolutely critical. How can we make our sector more attractive if we don't appear in career guidance? And if we don't tell young people about the jobs in sport and physical activity, how can we expect them to want to work in it?"

SUPPORTING EDUCATION PROVIDERS

High quality education and training is fundamental to shaping a respected, regulated and recognised profession, and ensuring the sector has the right people with the right skills in the right places. To this end, CIMSPA is introducing the National Training Academy (NTA), the sport and physical activity sector's first network of education providers designed and ready to deliver against local skills strategies to close skills gaps for employers.

The NTA will serve as a one-stop shop for education and training in the sector, offering comprehensive training pathways and providing support to individuals looking to advance their careers.

"It's our ambition to bring all our education partners into the NTA, so that we can point learners and employers to high quality training and education. We will identify where the gaps are and work with our partners to deliver education products across the nation."

CIMSPA's endorsed education partner provision will be reshaped as follows:

- **Academy Providers** – the highest quality training provider partners will be commissioned to deliver apprenticeships, regulated and unregulated training and CPD as well as micro-credentials.
- **Further Education Skills Hubs** – a network of further education colleges that develop and deliver high quality endorsed 'employability' pathways that respond to local demand and are committed to working with CIMSPA Tier 1 providers on adult



education and apprenticeships.

- **Higher Education Skills Hubs** – a network of higher education institutions who develop and deliver high quality and endorsed ‘employability’ pathways that respond to local demand and are also committed to working with CIMSPA on the delivery of higher-level skills provision.

The NTA will offer education providers a competitive advantage, says Moore.

“By being part of the NTA, they can tap into a pool of learners and employers seeking high quality training and education. We’ll be driving business their way and aligning with Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPS) to ensure education products are employer-led and meet local demand.”

The launch of a new quality assurance framework will help training providers and education partners to meet the high standards required to be

part of the NTA, helping to raise the bar for education providers and ensure individuals have access to the best education available.

CIMSPA is due to pilot the NTA with a group of education partners in the next six months.

SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS

A new business support hub will support businesses of every size in the sector to build business resilience and success. Building on the success of CIMSPA’s Digital Marketing Hub, it will provide essential content and community engagement to help employers maximise their investment in people.

CIMSPA will prioritise support for small businesses and startups after its research found that 91% of the 94,500 businesses in sport and physical activity have 49 employees or fewer. And these SMEs employ more than half of the people working in the sector (56%).

CIMSPA research also shows that 82% of these enterprises are start-ups.

“Our goal is to make businesses more resilient and sustainable to ensure these startups evolve into mature models. We know that startups spend more time working in their business than on their business, so we will provide support by upskilling them in the key areas of marketing, finance, operations and HR. This is a key pillar in our talent retention strategy: if we can help these businesses become more resilient and give them suitably skilled people, we will reduce churn and strengthen both the sector and the workforce.”

For employers, the new strategy focuses on building the profile of the sector as a sustainable career choice. This helps address recruitment and retention issues by making the sector more attractive to potential employees.

CIMSPA’s new strategy is poised to bring transformative change to the sport and physical activity sector, but these changes won’t happen overnight, says Moore.

“We are taking a phased approach and will be publishing regular milestones to keep our stakeholders informed about our progress. We have a lot of work ahead of us and I’m excited about the positive impact this strategy will have on the sector.”



ADVERTORIAL

ALLIANCE LEISURE

EVOLVING SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVISION

Alliance Leisure gears up for growth

Leisure development specialist Alliance Leisure is set to deliver more than £500m worth of leisure projects across the UK helping sport and physical activity operators to align more closely with health and wellness and meet their sustainability targets.

John Leaver (*pictured below, inset*), former Head of Marketing, has been promoted to Marketing & Framework Director to drive the marketing strategy to support Alliance Leisure's growth and maximise the potential of the UK Leisure Framework (UKLF).

Collaborating with Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, the UKLF is a proven tool in bringing modern, inclusive and fit-for-purpose sports and leisure facilities to market, from ambitious new build and refurbishment schemes to smaller, but no less impactful projects such as 3G pitch installations and outdoor gyms. The UKLF has the potential to deliver up to £2bn worth of leisure projects across the UK.

"The leisure sector needs to adapt and align with health and wellness trends to cater to the changing needs of consumers. We recognise this shift and bring innovation to the traditional leisure market, providing added value in affordability, cost certainty, risk reduction and speed of delivery," says Leaver.

"We work with local authorities, leisure trusts and other operators to develop sport and leisure facilities that deliver against a wide range of objectives from creating more active populations and better engagement with disengaged groups to contributing to the physical fabric of communities and providing a sense of civic pride."

Alliance's extensive pipeline include spas, tenpin bowling, skateparks, fitness centres, soft play areas, climbing walls, outdoor pitches, swimming pools, waterparks and changing facilities.

These projects will help

clients transform their provision to meet their business objectives and get more people active, thereby helping to improve public health, create positive wellbeing within communities and reduce the burden on the NHS.

Alliance also supports operators with comprehensive sales, marketing and training services through its TA6 brand. The company works with over 250 leisure sites each year, offering programmes to increase income, develop staff and improve the health of local communities.

LEVELLING UP COMMUNITIES

Alliance is working with its partners to reinvent and grow public leisure, helping to drive economic growth and urban renewal via the government's Levelling Up agenda.

It is delivering a number of Levelling Up funded projects. These include building a new wellbeing hub in Caerphilly, Wales, after Alliance supported Caerphilly County Borough Council in its successful bid for £20m. Procured through the UKLF, the flagship venue will offer a range of facilities to support health, wellbeing and community cohesion.

Alliance is delivering several other leisure projects funded by the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, including a £24m new-build development on behalf of North East Derbyshire District Council, and Mablethorpe Leisure and Learning Hub, which is due to open in the summer of 2024.

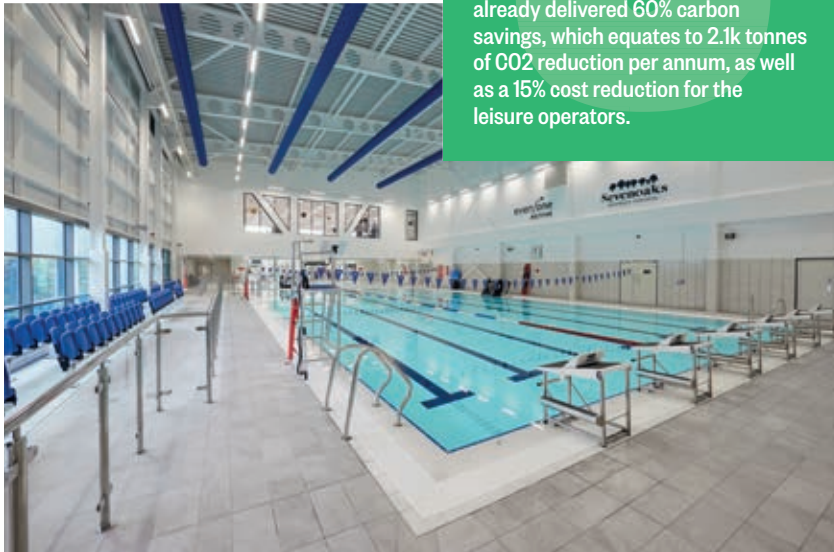
WORKING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Through its participation in the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), Alliance is supporting councils to become more energy-efficient, reducing emissions and contributing to the government's net-zero targets.





To date, Alliance has delivered multiple PSDS funded projects with a combined value of more than £30m. The company has made energy efficiencies at 23 leisure venues in partnership with 10 councils. An initial 10 leisure centres have already delivered 60% carbon savings, which equates to 2.1k tonnes of CO2 reduction per annum, as well as a 15% cost reduction for the leisure operators. By working collectively,



Net-zero targets

Through its participation in the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), Alliance is supporting councils to become more energy-efficient, reducing emissions and contributing to the government's net-zero targets.

An initial 10 leisure centres have already delivered 60% carbon savings, which equates to 2.1k tonnes of CO2 reduction per annum, as well as a 15% cost reduction for the leisure operators.

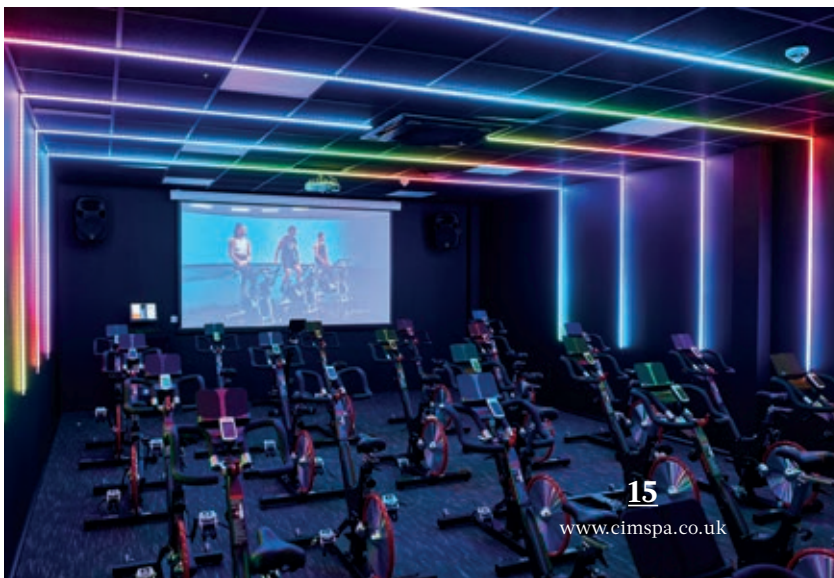
suppliers, operators and contractors are taking significant steps towards creating a more sustainable leisure industry.

To support its sustainability and growth, Alliance has partnered with Roster, an emerging technologies Web3 education business. This collaboration demonstrates the company's commitment to innovation, continuous learning and staying ahead of industry trends. By harnessing the power of emerging technologies, Alliance and Roster aim to drive evolution within leisure development, ensuring the continuation of exceptional service delivery to clients.

"The world is changing and it's changing fast. Web3 and blockchain technologies are presenting opportunities to improve data efficiencies and securities at all levels of the supply chain whilst AI and machine learning are driving faster and more informed decisions that have the potential to reduce costs and improve delivery times. As a forward-thinking innovator within the leisure development space, it's vital that the Alliance team recognise the possibilities and understand how technologies might be applied to drive efficiencies and improve outcomes, both for our own business and for our clients," says Leaver.

Alliance is committed to evolving the sport and physical activity sector, promoting sustainability and driving innovation. Working with its partners to develop modern, inclusive and sustainable sports and leisure facilities, Alliance will continue to improve public health, foster community engagement and contribute to economic growth and urban renewal across the UK.

To find out how Alliance Leisure can help you meet your business objectives, email info@allianceleisure.co.uk or visit <https://www.allianceleisure.co.uk>



IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The recently launched DCMS strategy recognises the valuable role of the workforce in meeting activity targets and contributing to the nation's health, wellbeing and economic growth

The government's strategy for the future of sport and physical activity not only outlines its plans for the sector but also highlights the major role CIMSPA plays in driving crucial initiatives forward.

We're pleased that the DCMS recognises our work supporting professionals across the sector. A dedicated and motivated workforce is essential to encouraging people to engage in physical activity and is therefore key to helping the government meet its ambitious new participation targets.

We've long called for greater collaboration across government departments, so we applaud the creation of the new National Physical Activity Taskforce, which will see government departments working with the sector to tackle inactivity and reduce existing inequalities. It's this type of cross-departmental work that will help maximise the impact of our sector and we hope to see more of it going forward.

One of the most notable aspects of the new strategy is its emphasis on place-based solutions. It acknowledges that decisions about funding, services and provision should be driven by those who understand the needs of the local community.

This very much aligns with our work around Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP). The DCMS recognises the value of LSIPs, which aim to address the evolving needs of the sector by aligning education and training with the requirements of local employers.

LSIPs prioritise employer involvement, putting them at the heart of education provision to bolster the local job market and stimulate economic growth.

We are working with education providers, local authorities, health authorities and other strategic stakeholders to identify the objectives for local areas, the future skills and occupations required to meet these objectives, and crucially how education

providers can bridge these skills gaps.

LSIPs are helping to address the sector's skill shortages by meeting the specific workforce needs of local areas, addressing both existing shortages such as lifeguards, swimming teachers, fitness instructors and swimming coaches, as well as meeting growing demand for health-related skills.

We are rolling the LSIP programmes out across the country and we want all employers in the sector to get involved so we can create a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

The initiative is generating greater recognition of the sport and physical activity sector's impact on local priorities and with it a greater respect for our workforce.

Which leads nicely on to another significant aspect of the DCMS strategy – the pilot project for the National Workforce Registration Scheme.

CIMSPA has been tasked with leading the scheme, which will enhance the professional recognition of individuals working in our sector and embed the highest standards of professionalism to ensure that everyone taking part in sport and physical activity can enjoy safe and high-quality experiences.

To get involved in the LSIP programme, please visit
<https://www.cimspa.co.uk/localskills/>



IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE

2023 WORKFORCE INSIGHTS REPORT

CIMSPA's new workforce report sheds light on the changes and challenges facing the sector and its workforce in the wake of the pandemic and outlines key recommendations for a brighter, more sustainable future

The sports and physical activity sector plays a pivotal role in society, promoting health and wellbeing, fostering community cohesion and contributing significantly to the economy. Yet, like so many sectors, we have encountered our fair share of challenges in delivering our services effectively, none more so than the global pandemic. ▶



IN DEPTH

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3m

In 2022, the UK's sport and physical activity workforce comprised 586,000 roles, as well as more than 3m volunteers

Our '2023 Workforce Insights Report: Understanding the Shape of the UK Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Post-COVID-19' provides comprehensive analysis of today's sport and physical activity workforce. The result of extensive research, it examines key areas such as recruitment, retention, diversity and skills to give unique insight into the state of the workforce, highlighting its strengths and where improvement is needed.

Our workforce has shown itself to be adaptable and resilient, filled with brilliant professionals who are committed to supporting people to get active, however they choose to do it. But significant challenges remain, including those around retention, diversity and inclusion, and career progression.

We want this report to act as roadmap to guide the industry towards a brighter future. Armed with its insights and by following its recommendations, we can work together to deliver even greater impact not only for our partners and stakeholders, but for all those working in our industry, both now and in the future. And in doing so, we can unlock the true power of our profession to maximise the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of our nations.

KEY FINDINGS

THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LABOUR MARKET

In 2022, the UK's sport and physical activity workforce comprised 586,000 roles as well as more than 3m volunteers. However, the workforce has not fully recovered from the pandemic, with job numbers still 3.1% below 2019 levels. The government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme played a critical role in preserving jobs that would otherwise have been lost due to the sector's inability to operate during the pandemic. Specialist occupations, like sport coaches, have broadly returned to pre-Covid levels.

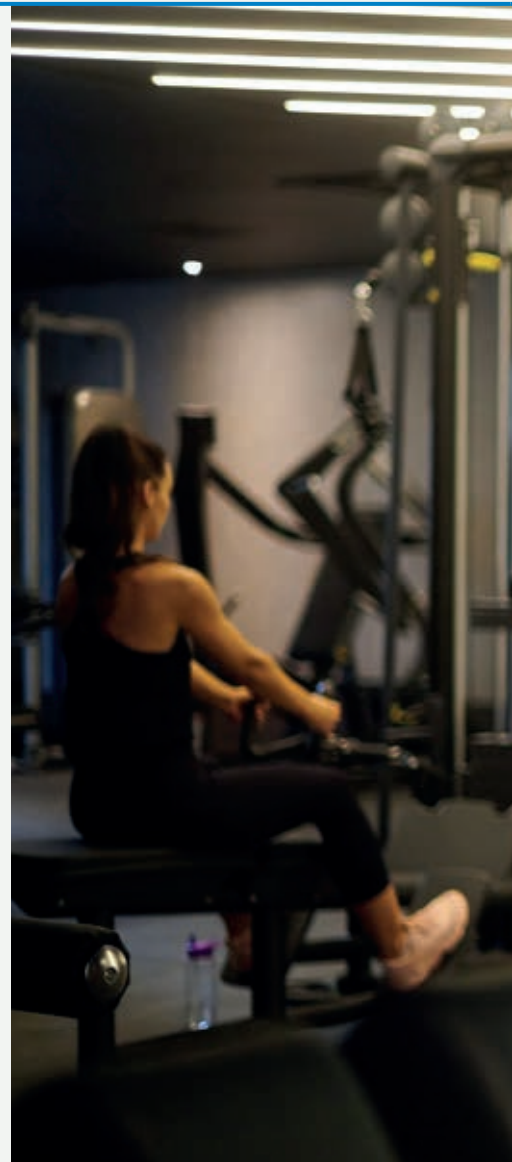
WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

The workforce is younger and more male-oriented than the wider economy, with 30% more 16-to-24-year-olds in the sector. Although 56% of jobs are held by men, compared to 52% of the wider economy, the workforce has a more balanced gender ratio compared to our previous Workforce Insights Report. However, ethnic diversity remains a challenge, with 87% of the workforce being of White British ethnicity. Additionally, fewer workers within the workforce report having a disability (13%), compared to the average of all occupations (16%). The sector has a higher proportion of workers in lower socioeconomic groups (28% vs 23% workforce-wide), driven by students and semi-routine occupations.*

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

Client-facing occupations experienced a sharp decline in recruitment activity during the pandemic. While recruitment activity surged in 2022, this appears to be due to labour market churn rather than genuine job growth.

*Semi-routine – the ONS description for the types of contracts/working arrangements typically found in the sports and physical activity sector.



The tight labour market is contributing to the sector's recruitment and retention challenges, with intense competition among employers to fill vacancies. Despite median advertised salaries for sector occupations approaching the workforce average since 2019, they remain lower, making the sport and physical activity industry less attractive for talent attraction and retention.

WORKFORCE SKILLS

Sports and physical activity occupations prioritise common skills like customer service, communication and



professionalism, reflecting their people-oriented nature. However, it's clear that different roles require distinct skills, with each occupation having unique skill requirements specified by employers. There has been a shift towards more general skills, possibly to broaden the talent pool, and this may also reflect employer recognition of the importance of common skills beyond specific sport-related requirements.

There are various career pathways within the sector – aligned entry-level positions and next-step progression roles – which offer solutions to the

“There has been a shift towards more general skills, possibly to broaden the talent pool”

ongoing recruitment and retention challenges and will help sustain the sector workforce in the future.

REGIONAL PRESENCE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Sport and physical activity jobs are dispersed across the country based on

local demand. London and the South East have the highest job numbers, corresponding with their population sizes. Areas with higher participation rates in sport and physical activity, such as the South East and South West, tend to have more job postings.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The report's findings provide valuable insight into the state of the workforce post-Covid. Based on these, we and our partners have made recommendations to ensure the long-term viability of the sector. These include:

IN DEPTH

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TALENT RETENTION

We need to develop better talent retention strategies, with improved recognition, reward and development opportunities for professionals. As the sector continues to professionalise, it's critical that the workforce receives parity in the recognition, reward, security and opportunities reflective of their high levels of skill, experience and value.

A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE

For the sector to reach broader audiences, we need a more diverse workforce that reflects the general population. The shift towards greater demand for general skills signals is encouraging, but much more work is needed to remove the barriers to entering the workforce and making careers more accessible for all.

ENGAGE WITH VOLUNTEERS AND NON-SPECIALIST ROLES

Encouraging volunteers and non-sport and physical activity specialist roles already involved in the sector to consider joining the professional workforce can help address recruitment challenges.

HARNESS THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

To serve regional communities effectively, the sector must leverage the power of community engagement to match local services and skills with local needs. We want all employers and educators to engage with our local skills hubs so ensure we effectively service the needs of all UK communities.

“We need to develop better talent retention strategies, with improved recognition for professionals”

CAREER PATHWAYS

We must continue to provide clear career pathways for individuals at all levels of the workforce. Well-defined, long-term career pathways are crucial for retaining talent and boosting the sector's professionalism.

Our new Workforce Insight Report represents the first step in addressing the challenges facing the sports and physical activity sector and its workforce. We trust it acts as a catalyst for positive change and that by working collaboratively, we can address these issues and continue to drive the sector's growth and sustainability.

87%

Ethnic diversity remains a challenge, with **87% of the workforce being of White British ethnicity**



ISTOCK

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



QUEST LAUNCHES LONG SERVICE AWARDS TO RECOGNISE CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Sport England's quality assurance scheme, Quest, is relaunching its Long Service Awards.

Designed to recognise and reward leisure centres that have shown a long-standing commitment to continuous improvement and delivering quality facilities and services, they will be awarded every five years following the first five years of maintaining Quest Accreditation.

Caroline Constantine is

managing director at quality management expert Right Directions, which manages Quest on behalf of Sport England and Quest's operations director.

"Quest has been defining industry standards and good practice for more than 25 years, encouraging their ongoing development and delivery within a customer-focused management framework," says Constantine. "It's a very

in-depth assessment, consisting of a mystery visit to try the facility and talk to as many staff as possible whilst on site, as well as a minimum of three telephone calls to the centre, at least two online interactions, and a full one-day or two-day in-person assessment with the management team and frontline staff.

"Some of our operator clients and their leisure centres have been

undertaking this assessment process for 25 years – since its inception. It's time we helped demonstrate their commitment to excellence to their local community, who probably use the facilities day in and day out without considering the effort that goes into ensuring a clean, safe environment whilst still offering high-quality facilities that are both affordable and accessible. We hope this new certificate will do just that."

Some of GLL's facilities have been undertaking Quest since the late 1990s. Chris Hebblewhite, GLL's director of standards and compliance, said: "As the UK's largest public provider of leisure facilities, GLL greatly values Quest as our primary quality and improvement tool. It is quite simply the gold standard for our industry and we've been using it since we were a small leisure trust" 

IN DEPTH

CIMSPA UPDATE



“As the UK’s largest public provider of leisure facilities, GLL greatly values Quest as our primary quality and improvement tool. It is quite simply the gold standard for our industry”

Chris Hebblewhite, GLL’s director of standards and compliance

right through to the 260 leisure facility network – spanning England, Wales and Northern Ireland – that we are today.

“Quest’s strength is in keeping standards high. It helped us to stay focused after the Covid pandemic and it challenges our facilities to get better and better and adapt to the ever-changing environment. GLL is pleased to be part of and support the long service awards.”

The Long Service Awards, which were paused during Covid due to the interruption of renewal dates, will be relaunched in October 2023.

Quest was first established 25 years ago as a continuous improvement tool to measure how well a facility is operating and how effective organisations are across a range of topics. The renowned award has evolved over the years to keep pace with the ever-changing sport and leisure industry and is still the sector’s best-known improvement programme, with its rigorous assessments challenging even the very best leisure centres in the UK.

The Quest assessment enables operators to be nationally recognised and accredited for their hard work and provides a view of what ‘Good’ and ‘Great’ look like so they can benchmark and review their services against a national picture to enable their teams and their facilities to deliver greater impact and social outcomes. To ensure Quest remains

understandable and valuable to the industry, numerous changes have been rolled out across the years. The most recent change is known as Quest 2022.

Each Quest assessment is made up of six core modules. The core modules provide the key building blocks for success, including ensuring facilities are safe, clean and well-maintained, with knowledgeable, qualified and trained staff who deliver customer service, whilst a

number of additional choice modules allow centres or teams to tailor the assessment to suit their own operation and activities within their facilities. For example, there are more 30 choice modules including sales and retention, lifeguarding, safeguarding, marketing, food and beverage, ice rinks, event management and fitness suites, as well as a range of engagement modules.

Each module has a structured framework and up-to-date guidance to make sure all the essential bases are covered.

Benefits of Quest include:

- An opportunity for leisure management teams to have the quality of their work recognised and nationally accredited
- A process for leaders to assess what ‘Good/Great’ looks like and

how that measures up

- An independent review of service and activities offered
- High-quality senior leisure professional assessors with a vast range of knowledge to share
- Helping facilities and teams deliver greater impact and social outcomes.

The ‘Plan-Do-Measure-Review-Impact’ methodology across all modules ensures there is:

- A strong focus on outcomes and evidence-based decision-making
- An emphasis on learning about what works best in the operating environment and for target audiences within the operations
- A forensic lens on how to measure, demonstrate improvement and positively manage performance
- A good balance between continuity and change, resilience and agility.

“Quest is dedicated to improving all aspects of the leisure industry, including health and safety,

environmental management and quality, and our

Quest team, along with Sport England, are looking forward to relaunching the Long Service Award and presenting the first awards this October,” concludes Constantine.



30

There are more **30 choice modules** including sales and retention, lifeguarding, food and beverage, event management and fitness suites



AGENDA

GIRLS AND EXERCISE

FINDING

THEIR

PRIDE

By
Caroline
Roberts

Girls can drop off leisure and PE activities at school for a myriad of reasons including low self-confidence and period worries, but some organisations are fighting back and welcoming girls to activity again

AGENDA

GIRLS AND EXERCISE

Research has found that many girls fall out of love with sport and exercise once they hit their teens. How can operators help them overcome the barriers and stay active?

The success of England's Lionesses has the potential to provide a much-needed boost to girls' participation in sport, but the reality is that too many obstacles remain. A report published earlier this year by the charity, Women in Sport, showed that gender stereotyping is still rife and that girls' sporting efforts are often overshadowed by that of their brothers. Sport, Stereotypes and Stolen Dreams, found that only 30% of parents think playing sport is very important for their daughters, whereas 41% believe it's important for their sons. Parents also reported feeling less confident in supporting their daughters to be physically active.

A previous study by the charity found that 43% of girls who considered themselves sporty at primary school had disengaged with sport once they reached secondary school. Although many understood the benefits of physical activity, they said they found it hard to motivate themselves. The main reasons given included a lack of confidence in their abilities and a fear of being judged by others. The physical changes of puberty and particularly the onset of periods was another disincentive – seven in 10 said they avoided sport when menstruating due to pain, tiredness and self-consciousness.

"The Lionesses have shown us that girls are resilient, courageous and determined, and they belong in football," says Lisa West, head of partnership, policy and public affairs at Women in Sport. "But still far too many girls are missing out on the joy and vital life skills that team sport can teach. Rather than being encouraged to achieve whatever they set their mind to, girls are



surrounded by messages telling them they're fragile, weak and don't like competition. If we're to give them an equal chance we need to ensure there are enough well-designed opportunities for girls to participate, led by a workforce that understands their needs."

The Big Sister project has provided one such opportunity. The collaboration between Women in Sport, Places Leisure and Hey Girls, a period product social



3,000

Over 3,000 girls participated in the project and 64% reported enjoying exercise more, with a similar percentage feeling more confident about trying new things in general.

BIG SISTER PROJECT



Encouraging girls and young women to take part in team sport and exercise has even been given royal approval by the Prince and Princess of Wales in recent years



FUNDING SCHEMES

Tackling period poverty

Period products are expensive and lack of them can be a barrier to exercise for many girls and women. How can operators help?

Edinburgh Leisure is one Scottish operator that's partnered with Hey Girls to provide free, sustainable period products to customers. These are now available across all sites. Funding comes from the Scottish government, which has legislated to make products freely available in all public buildings in the country, where period poverty is estimated to affect one in four women. A similar scheme operates in Wales and the measure is due to be introduced in Northern Ireland.

As yet, there's no clear plan to introduce it in England. However, some councils and organisations have been able to provide free products by accessing other funds targeted at sustainability and poverty in general. Hey Girls recommends that leisure operators and other exercise facilities explore funding options with their local council. Ideally, products should be available in the foyer with signage rather than just in areas accessible to members. This has the added advantage of increasing footfall into the facility, as well as helping the local community.

“If we're to give [girls] an equal chance we need to ensure there are enough well-designed opportunities for girls to participate, led by a workforce that understands their needs”

Lisa West, head of partnership, policy and public affairs at Women in Sport

enterprise, was set up in May 2022 with a £1m grant from the Tampon Tax Fund. The 10-month project was piloted in deprived areas in South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Norfolk with the dual purpose of encouraging girls to get active and addressing period poverty by providing free sanitary products along

with advice about managing periods and exercise. Over 3,000 girls participated in the project and 64% reported enjoying exercise more, with a similar percentage feeling more confident about trying new things in general.

Big Sister offered girls aged 9 to 15 three months' free access to their local ▶

AGENDA

GIRLS AND EXERCISE

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A teen's view

KATIE KIMBER, 17, EXPLAINS WHY SCHOOL PE ISN'T HITTING THE MARK

"A lot of female PE teachers specialise in things like netball, dance and gymnastics that are usually labelled girls' sports. It would be great if schools were more open to introducing other sports and activities. I'd look at some of the equipment in the shed and I had no idea what you'd use it for. When we played something different, it was quite exciting and that could really generate enthusiasm. It's also very easy for teachers to focus on the girls that are good at sport and that definitely doesn't promote enjoyment in the others.

"My school introduced a new PE kit. It worked for some girls but I felt really uncomfortable as it didn't fit properly. Being asked to tuck your shirt into a skirt that really shows you're bloated with your period on a Monday morning in winter doesn't exactly make PE seem like fun. For the girls with bigger bums and boobs, it would also make that much more apparent. All the things teenage girls are often self-conscious about are very much more visible. It's so much better when you can wear the kit you're comfortable in. It's all these little things that add up and put girls off sport and exercise."



Organisations such as Places Leisure and Big Sister offer girls and young women sessions ranging from yoga to boxing, which encourages them to move into team sports such as football or netball

Places Leisure centre, where they could take part in dedicated 'We Move' sessions

– anything from boxing to yoga, as well as using the rest of the facilities. The operator also created a Big Sister-specific channel in its app, Places Locker, which girls could continue to access after the initial three months. Involving girls directly in the design of the project was vital, says Sarah Roberts, head of fitness at Places Leisure.

"They identified key things we should be targeting around body confidence. We got some great insight and feedback and that enabled other girls to buy into it because the tone of it was right. They were keen to try lots of different activities and it was clear that feeling comfortable in a group, making friends, and doing things together was very important. It wasn't sport-driven or competitive, which can be a turn off. From We Move, we've seen the girls gain the confidence to go off and play football and basketball because they are more comfortable in a sporting environment so more willing to try something else."

"For a large number of girls school sport is the only experience they've had of exercise," adds Rory Monaghan who, as active communities manager with Places Leisure, oversaw the Big Sister project. "We wanted to show them what fitness and exercise can be like. The really important thing was to take the message to where girls are and get into schools, community groups, charities and local clubs to speak directly to them and provide taster sessions. Once you get the girls across the leisure centre threshold, you're away. It was also important to get all staff behind it and



not just female staff. We put period products in the male customers' changing rooms too as many of them will have female family members and there's a cost-of-living crisis." Since the initial

funding ended, Places Leisure has found ways to continue the programme using funding from various sources, including Sport England and its charitable arm, Places Foundation. Girls can access a further three months' membership at half the price of junior membership, along with unlimited access to the app. The operator has also worked with Women in Sport to develop a licensed model that will allow the project to continue in 12 centres and is looking to expand across more locations.

The impact on some girls has been huge, says Morgan Rowley-Hill, assistant fitness manager at Riverside Leisure Centre in Norwich and one of the

'Big Sisters' delivering the We Move sessions. "There was one girl with additional needs and it was hard to get her involved with the group. But now she's coming to the gym more regularly and doing classes. Her whole demeanour has changed and it's great to see she has so much more confidence and is socialising with the other girls. The classes have also opened up the conversation about periods. They know the products are there if they need them and they are more secure talking about their concerns."

30%



Only 30% of parents think playing sport is very important for their daughters

SPORT, STEREOTYPES AND STOLEN DREAMS, REPORT BY WOMEN IN SPORT



CASE STUDY

CLIMATE CHANGE

Active IQ believes that healthy living goes hand in hand with a healthy planet, which is why it's made it the central tenet of its new sustainability strategy called Healthy People, Healthy Planet. As an awarding organisation of qualifications recognised and regulated by Ofqual within the active leisure sector, it has set itself the task of becoming more sustainable – financially, operationally and environmentally – and carbon neutral by 2024.

“Fighting climate change is one of the most urgent challenges for society and we all need to do our bit,” says Jenny Patrickson, managing director of Active IQ. “In 2003, our company began in the active leisure space with the goal to help people live healthier lives, but today our goal has broadened to help the planet as well as its people.”

It is a laudable goal, but what kickstarted the initiative in the first

place? Patrickson admits it was probably a combination of the awarding body extending its reach internationally and the pandemic that made it decide to do something about its carbon footprint. It enlisted the help of consultancy Our Carbon, which calculated that it had produced an estimated 207.46 tonnes of CO₂ emissions in 2019 and 103.67 tonnes in 2021. That last figure equates to flying from Paris to New York and back 63 times. So, although the amount might have gone down, the company realised it could and should do better.

Key contributors to Active IQ's emissions included the production and purchase of materials, road, rail and air travel, energy consumption, staff commuting, delivery of physical products and IT and data storage. So it established four key areas in which it felt it could have a real-world effect. Business travel, its head office, online data storage and stock additions.

“Try to find a happy blend of offsetting emissions and saving costs, but not losing that face-to-face contact that is so important. It's all about finding a balance”

Jenny Patrickson, managing director of Active IQ

“During the pandemic years, we moved to entirely online meetings like everyone else,” explains Patrickson. “The operations of our remote-based quality assurance team who normally go and visit centres to look at the delivery and assessment of our qualifications, as well as our remote-based business development team, all went online via Teams or Zoom. “And while we rowed back on some of

Active IQ is tackling climate change through a range of different means

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY PLANET

By
**Dean
Gurden**

CO₂
emissions
(estimated)

207.46

tonnes in 2019

103.67

tonnes in 2021

that as we came out of the pandemic, we've maintained a lot of it. The number of hours you could have someone in a car on the road visiting customers and the emissions related to this just weren't viable. So we've really cut our travel down significantly."

This also applies to international travel. "Yes, we need to go to trade shows to make ourselves known and to initiate new business, but once we get up and running, it's quite possible to do it remotely," she adds.

As to the associated costs and carbon emissions associated with maintaining a functioning office, these are now zero as it no longer has an office. "Even pre-pandemic, we didn't actually have that many people working in the office," says Patrickson. "And then when the office eventually reopened [post-Covid], the consensus was that the team was happy working from home, as long as we all had opportunities to get together at regular intervals. In a fashion, Covid showed us another way we could all work effectively and more sustainably."

ISTOCK

Its relatively recent acquisition by NCFE also gave Active IQ a perfect opportunity to address its online data storage needs, with the purchase involving a massive transfer of its IT systems. "As you can imagine, there were a lot of files and not all of them could comfortably move over, so it was a good excuse for a clean-out, which is actually still a work in progress," says Patrickson.

And as a provider of teaching and learning resources for its qualifications, Active IQ obviously produces a lot of

manuals. Where they used to be plastic-bound, they are now completely composed of paper. Naturally, e-manuals are promoted wherever possible, but where they are printed, the process has also been refined.

"We have two ways of printing," explains Patrickson. "For our more popular qualifications, we opt for litho printing, using wet ink and printing plates, which can be more cost-effective printing in bulk, but requires storage. For the less-selling qualifications, we print on demand. So we're making sure we are able to forecast accurately the amount of stock that we need so we don't end up with all this wastage – not only in terms of the stock itself, but the space it takes to store at our print supplier."

Unfortunately, Active IQ is still in the process of collating its carbon accounts for 2022, but it is hopeful its altered business practices are having an impact and that it is on target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2024. And have any lessons been learned along the way that it could share with others?

"If I was advising other training providers about how they could improve their sustainability, then the obvious answer would be around digital delivery and assessment," says Patrickson. "But the main advice would be not to go too mad.

"You've got to remember that our sector is about producing well-qualified individuals who are able to engage with their clients effectively with good communication skills. So try to find a happy blend of offsetting emissions and saving costs, but not losing that face-to-face contact that is so important. It's all about maintaining quality and finding a balance."



GUERNSEY

SEA POOLS

SEA WHAT RAWING

Sea swimming in Guernsey is booming again thanks to innovation, revitalising the services and social awareness



EVERYONE'S

By
Laura
Eggo

ABOUT



GUERNSEY

SEA POOLS

The health benefits of sea bathing in clean water have been recognised for almost four centuries since

Dr Robert Wittie from East Yorkshire encouraged some of his patients to dip into the North Sea. Our understanding of these benefits is more sophisticated and holistic now.

However, sea bathing has risks as well as benefits. By global standards, most of the UK's coastline has fairly large tidal ranges. Large tides improve the cleansing of our seashores but also create the challenges of currents and potential difficulties for swimming and other open water adventures. With a tidal range of 33ft, Guernsey in the Channel Islands has some of the world's largest tides. On an island where nowhere is more than two miles from the coast, the sea has carved 27 stunning beaches. Spectacular cliffs on the southern shore mean that some of these beaches are inaccessible for those with mobility issues.

Inventive Guernsey residents found a solution as long ago as 1844. The principal settlement and harbour of St Peter Port were expanding, resulting in the loss of much loved local beaches for swimming. A quarter of a mile south-east of the town, sea bathing pools were built on the La Vallette headland. Originally there were three separate tanks for men, women and children. Filled by the rising tides, the pools offered a safe place to swim in all but the fiercest storms with no need for chlorination. Basic changing facilities did not arrive until the 1930s.

In 1976, Guernsey opened the large Beau Sejour Leisure Centre including a six-lane, 25 metre indoor pool and 10 metre learner pool. Many hotels also have smaller swimming facilities. Meanwhile, the historic La Vallette sea pools were deteriorating. According to a March 2023 article in the *RIBA Journal*: 'The upkeep of the four pools themselves

was left to volunteer regular swimmers repairing the sea wall with buckets of sloshing hand-mixed concrete.'

Despite this, local commitment to enhanced sea bathing facilities remained strong. Even in their dilapidated condition, 600 people had access keys for the pools. A significant proportion of Guernsey's 64,000 population have learned to swim at this free facility. Vive La Vallette was established in 2019 as a charity, a public and voluntary partnership to renew the pools, and to bring this traditional Guernsey experience into the 21st century. The core of the project is to reinvigorate the swimming facilities. It also sets out to create a vibrant destination where everyone – islanders and visitors – can feel welcome and valued.

The new building, on the footprint of the old, consists of three levels – changing facilities with warm showers, community café on the middle floor and a function room on top. As one would





The Vallette pools and building redevelopment projects brought architects, builders and the community together, as many Guernsey residents learned to swim in the sea pools. The new building comprises changing facilities, a community café and a function room at the top



expect, the building is fully accessible with DLM Architects, a RIBA Architect practice, being responsible for design and construction. They worked patiently to filter the ideas of the wider group of collaborators and users. This necessitated easing local concerns that, once redeveloped, the pools and café would be priced beyond regular use. The building's footprint has consequently remained largely the same. The additional volume of the café was created by digging into the mound at the rear rather than obtruding further across the headland. David De La Mare, lead architect and director of DLM Architects, says: "The community was always at the heart of our design. The pools are magical and most people in Guernsey learned to swim here. We hope we have enabled future generations to do the same, whilst giving more people the ability to access both building and the pools."

The facility is owned and maintained by the States of Guernsey. The States' 2015-2025 Tourism Plan includes a policy priority to strengthen the five islands' unique product offering. In 2018, six projects comprising the

"We want to ensure this wonderful community asset is well-used and relevant to Guernsey and all people that visit"

Helen Bonner Morgan,
operations director for Vive La Vallette

Seafront Enhancement Programme on Guernsey's east coast were identified as a means of strengthening the Islands' unique product. The Vallette pools and building redevelopment were prioritised as two of the six projects. The sea pools hit Government targets in terms of accessibility, inclusivity and affordability. Nevertheless, the charitable trust had to raise £1m in order to trigger £300,000 of States' funding and money came in via large and small contributions. The top floor was funded by a single donor. In contrast, the distinctive cladding from recycled plastics was sponsored by hundreds of families with their names engraved on single strips.

Whilst the new building reopened in June 2022, wheelchair and ramp access to the pools themselves was an additional challenge met by further fundraising of £150,000, 10% of which



On an island where nowhere is more than two miles from the coast, the sea has carved 27 stunning beaches.

GUERNSEY

SEA POOLS

was given to Guernsey Disability Swimming. More than half of the total was raised by local, Adrian Sachet, on a sponsored 24-hour swim in the adjacent ladies' pool during which he covered more than 60km. Corporate teams joined him throughout and the event was seen as a phenomenal success. The ramp access down to the main pool was installed late in 2022.

The 50 metre length of the main pool offers a challenge for everyone but the fittest and most accomplished. Members of the swimming community were determined that the pools remain free to use for locals and visitors alike. Located on the edge of St Peter Port and with stunning sea views of Castle Cornet and neighbouring islands, the experience, wet or dry, is guaranteed to lift the spirits. Locals swim early morning, at lunchtime, after work or after school. For the hardy, this is a year-round part of their healthy lifestyle. Meanwhile the light-infused modern cafe has become a popular venue for social meet ups and a place of work.

As always, committed, inspirational

WEBLINKS

For further information...

Vive La Vallette
<https://thebathingpools.com/>

DLM Architects
<https://dlm.gg/our-work/the-bathing-pools/>

Royal Institute of British Architects
<https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/dlm-architects-la-vallette-bathing-pools-guernsey-channel-islands-retrofit-victorian-swimming>

Visit Guernsey
<https://www.visitguernsey.com/>



La Vallette sea pools offer residents and visitors alike the chance to swim together for their health and exercise



people drive change. Operations director for Vive La Vallette, Helen Bonner Morgan, is broadening the focus from the core activity of swimming into creative workshops, reading groups, sunrise yoga sessions, parties, team building days, group meetings, and outdoor learning. “We want to ensure this wonderful community asset is well-used and relevant to Guernsey and all people that visit,” she says. “We’ve created an accessible and welcoming environment to allow for connections and meaningful activity to take place.”

Guernsey Sports Commission has been an integral partner throughout the project and appointed their first outdoor and adventure sports officer, Alan Jenner, to maximize community opportunities. “My ambition is to make the area around Havelet Bay and La Vallette a centre of excellence, providing a stepping-stone for people on their outdoor and adventure sports journey,” Jenner says. “It’s about initially getting into the ocean in an enclosed and protected environment.”

A key part of Jenner’s role is educational – co-ordinating training and providing support to teachers, coaches,

33ft

With a tidal range of 33ft, Guernsey in the Channel Islands has some of the world’s largest tides.

and volunteers to ensure that the delivery of adventure sports is safe and follows appropriate risk management practices. This involves working with the existing service providers in the outdoor and adventure sports community to develop a water safety strategy. Work also extends to life skills, learning about the natural environment, the tides, the weather, including how to decide when it’s safe to go out on the water.

Many general practitioners on Guernsey are keen sea swimmers. By example and gentle suggestion, it is easy to encourage patients to experience the benefits for themselves. The fact that this

“The community was always at the heart of our design. Most people in Guernsey learned to swim here and we hope we have enabled future generations to do the same”

David De La Mare, lead architect and director of DLM Architects

is a free activity means there is no cost barrier to continued participation. The island has multiple swimming groups who socialise and engage on beaches and bays around the coast. These local residents are not necessarily exercising hard or training. Most mornings, one will see larger groups, sometimes more than 30 people, simply bobbing in the water. Many of these people will have started at La Vallette Sea Pools. Dr Bob Gallagher from Queens Road Medical Practice has been sea swimming regularly for the past 15 years and is a passionate advocate. “The whole concept is fabulous – sea swimming is so important for mental and physical health,” he says. “The sizes of the early morning swimming groups I see today are often four or five times that of 15 years ago. By experiencing the sea and the environment, by engaging with a relaxing community of friends, everyday life is enriched for everyone.”

Visit Guernsey promotes travel not only to the main island, but also to nearby Herm, Sark, Alderney and tiny Lihou. Island-hopping plus outdoor adventures on land and sea are quintessential parts of the Guernsey experience encapsulated by their current strapline, ‘Find Your Island Feeling’. For many visitors that will also include sea bathing. The rejuvenated La Vallette sea pools extend the times of day and months of the year when this activity is attractive. It provides excellent opportunities for visitors to mix with local residents over a hot or cold drink after a swim. Rewarding experiences, memories and connections enrich all of us. These Guernsey sea pools now enable such experiences for all.

Laura Eggo is a CIMSPA member and long time resident, born in Guernsey, and currently manager of the gym at The Old Government House Hotel & Spa, and personal trainer.

TECH TOOLKIT

PRODUCT ROUND-UP

AT THE CORE OF IT

Getting active and fitter with these dynamic fitness solutions

BY SUE WEEKES



TAKING THE PAIN OUT OF MANAGEMENT

Gym management software provider Fisikal is joining forces with NetGym to offer a digital management solution that aims to take “all the pain” out of team management as well as optimise revenue for operators. NetGym provides instructor cover and internal communications to clients in the US, as well as Australia, Canada and the UK. It facilitates automated updates to live schedules and two-way comms between managers and instructors. NetGym’s product will be combined with Fisikal’s scheduling management and benefit from the software provider’s ability to integrate with leading payment CRM providers. The integration has already gone live at more than 80 clubs in the US.

www.fisikal.com



The smartwatch that even tracks napping

Garmin is introducing its latest smartwatch, the vivoactive 5. It provides a broad range of health monitoring features and is designed to help users learn about their body, coach them on living an active lifestyle and support fitness goals. It offers 11 days of battery life in smartwatch mode so users don’t have to charge the watch every night to receive around-the-clock health metrics. Users can access a sleep score and personalised coaching for recommended sleep, as well as keep track of different sleep stages and other key metrics such as Pulse Ox and heart rate variability (HRV) status. Garmin says by automatically tracking or logging naps, users can see how they may benefit the body. It has a wheelchair mode that lets users track daily pushes and receive weight shift alerts, plus wheelchair-specific sports apps and workouts. There are also guided meditation practices to help reduce stress. And more than 30 preloaded GPS and indoor sports apps ranging from walking to rowing and pickleball.

www.garmin.com



BE A VIRTUAL CYCLING STAR

Core Health and Fitness is launching the Star Trac Virtual Bike, which combines commercial-grade group cycle with a 21-inch touchscreen display. Star Trac has partnered with indoor cycling software and content providers Intelligent Cycling to provide a wide range of training options. These include instructor-led rides, scenic journeys, virtual worlds and professionally designed training programmes. New content, partners and features will be added, and other media apps can be accessed, including Netflix, YouTube, Instagram and Reddit. Users can also connect to cycling apps such as Zwift, Sufferfest, Rouvy and Trainer Road and can tap to pair with Apple GymKit and the Samsung Galaxy Watch. The Virtual Bike has a footprint of 135cm x 53cm x 158cm.

Price: TBA

<https://corehandf.com/>



NEURO-FITNESS TRAINING WEARABLE FOR TENNIS

Technology company Evolution Optiks is partnering with the John McEnroe Tennis Academy (JMTA) through its division OcuRay to adapt its FalconFrames wearables to the specific requirements of tennis. The glasses are born out of years of innovation in light field technology with built-in gaze-tracking that analyses eye movement. They also use a dynamic linear light field array with retina-tracking guide lights to give visual clues on where to look in real-time. The ultralight wearable is designed to be used while training and interfaces with a smartphone app that allows the user to follow preset training routines with increasingly challenging settings, set goals and track progress. Evolution Optiks will work with coaches at JMTA to develop the training routines best suited to tennis.

<https://www.evolutionoptiks.com/>

Integration allows users to race around the world

Interactive fitness platform Kinomap is partnering with SportsArt, developers of the energy-generating range of cardio equipment, which includes treadmills, cycles and ellipticals. The companies are working together to improve and personalise the experience of cardio equipment users worldwide. Kinomap is an interactive training app for indoor cycling, running and rowing and claims to be the world's largest geolocated video-sharing platform, with

thousands of videos from tracks around the world. The app pairs with cardio equipment and responds to the inclines and resistance seen in the video on the screen. It is available in 15 languages. It is also adding road race simulations to the app this year. Kinomap has also announced a new integration with Strava that enables users of both platforms to upload 10-second video clips.

kinomap.com

www.gosportsart.com



WORKPLACE

FOCUS

MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

How can the fitness sector support an active NHS? Dr Hussain Al-Zubaidi explains

Movement, community and nutrition are the three cornerstones of my personal and professional life. Leaving behind a sedentary lifestyle, losing weight and realising the physical and mental health benefits of being active spurred me to be a lifestyle medic, clinical adviser to Swim England and the Royal College of General Practitioners' lifestyle and physical activity lead.

NHS staff should be active, fit and well not just for their own wellbeing but to be credible advisers, role models and prescribers of physical activity for their patients. However, encouragement and support from fitness professionals is vital to get people started and keep them on track.

ACTIVE PRACTICE CHARTER

One way we help is through the Active Practice Charter, which I created alongside colleagues at the Royal College of GPs. It encourages GP

practices to embed physical activity into their work by meeting five criteria:

- Reduce sedentary behaviour in staff
- Reduce sedentary behaviour in patients
- Increase physical activity in staff
- Increase physical activity in patients
- Partner with a local physical activity provider

Involving staff, patients and the wider community, the Active Practice Charter is a great example of social prescribing. An active NHS worker will be better able to cope with their workload. And better informed to advise their patients to be active. It seems straightforward but, remember, most NHS staff are neither trained nor expert in the provision of physical activity. This is where fitness professionals can help by acting as a catalyst to speed its progress and success.

Do you think you can help? Firstly, don't assume your local GP or Clinical





Dr Al-Zubaidi wants sport and physical activity professionals to do their bit to help staff and patients get fitter and stay healthy

Commissioning Group (CCG) know about your services: connect with them and tell them what you offer. This could be anything from walking, running and cycling groups to gym, swim sessions and group exercise. My tip is to first email or direct message them on their social media platforms. Suggest a plan on how you think you could support their patients and staff to get active. Become the solution to their problem! For example, if they want to reduce the risk of falls in the older population, offer a strengthening programme. If you hear nothing, then visit in person and hand them some information to give to the practice manager. Persevere!

If your local GP has signed up to the Active Practice Charter, they'll welcome you helping their staff and patients access physical activity. It'll also do your local reputation a power of good.

STEPPING UP

This year's 75th anniversary of the NHS was marred by the release of figures that showed staff sickness reached a record high last year, with the health service losing almost 75,000 staff to illness.

NHS staff are the gatekeepers to preventative health and we must protect them. Another route to this is the Doing Our Bit one-stop-shop for fitness, health and wellness via on-demand sessions and mental wellbeing resources provided free for NHS and social care staff. It dovetails completely with our Active Practice Charter, so do look into it.

Medical and fitness professionals share the belief that movement is medicine: working together we can encourage an active NHS.

Dr Al-Zubaidi is ambassador for #DoingOurBit and Royal College of General Practitioners' lifestyle and physical activity lead

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LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR

Andrew Palmer, CEO, Cambridgeshire Deaf Association on how to be a positive force for sport within the deaf community



CHANGING THE GAME

Ask Andrew Palmer, CEO of the Cambridgeshire Deaf Association (CDA), if deaf or hearing-impaired people are marginalised when it comes to participating in sport and physical exercise and he posits a striking scenario. “Imagine if all the gyms and social clubs that involve physical activity in this country spoke exclusively in Turkish and you personally don’t speak the Turkish language. Are you really going to want to patronise them?” he asks.

“That’s not to denigrate Turkey, but if

you’re not sharing a language with the people around you to enjoy the social element – and most physical activity and sport involves a social element – then you’re less likely to engage with that activity. That’s why sport and physical activity is sometimes off limits for a lot of deaf people.”

And that’s why Palmer is passionate about making a difference, having spearheaded all sorts of physical activity projects for the deaf in his role as CEO of CDA, including yoga, walking, archery and bowling. “Everyone knows that being physically active benefits

both physical and mental health, and that’s why at CDA we prioritise making sure that there’s always something for people to get involved with.”

It was during the pandemic and lockdowns that this became an acute issue, as people weren’t getting out and about and seeing each other. “At that point, Joe Wicks was just taking off in terms of the national consciousness, so we decided to contact him and asked if we could put British sign language and subtitling to a couple of his lighter, more chair-based exercise videos,” explains Palmer. “Thankfully, he said ‘yes’ straightaway.”

With lots of experience producing video content, having created over 250 videos with British Sign Language (BSL) and subtitles, it was something CDA could arrange quite quickly. “We’ve got Matt Wheeler, the international deaf footballer, who is a translator and skilled sign language user to help. And Joe’s team was forthcoming as well. It’s had a great reaction, not just in our area, but nationally with lots of deaf people taking part.”

But this is not Palmer’s only hat. He also works for the Football Association as an accessible information lead for its entire Para programme, which involves being a BSL interpreter for its elite deaf football teams, and more.

Palmer is not deaf himself, but both of his parents are, so he grew up in a family and community that used sign language as the main form of communication. His son, Will (*above, right*), is also deaf and happens to be a very good footballer, currently playing for the FA’s England Deaf Men’s Squad. “When he started out playing for

LAST WORD

SPORT AMBASSADOR

“The great thing is that [deaf] people can then go on and inspire generations of other athletes who also might be feeling marginalised in their sport. It's a beautiful thing to be involved in.”



England's Deaf Futsal Squad, I used to go along and one day the BSL interpreter wasn't there, and they asked me to step in. So ever since then, I've also worked for the FA," he explains.

"Basically, the FA recruits coaches who are highly qualified and professionally capable, but all that's going to go to waste if the people they're talking to aren't getting the message. That's where my job comes in," he says.

It's a job he finds enormously satisfying. "What I love most is seeing young, deaf or para-athletes achieving their full potential," he says. "I see

players who probably felt marginalised in mainstream football for a very long time. They have probably had to fight against discrimination and backward attitudes towards players with disabilities, but at the FA and in my current role, you can see the philosophy of the pathway is purely and simply about people reaching their full potential and performance.

"And the great thing is that those people can then go on and inspire generations of other athletes who also might be feeling marginalised in their sport. It's a beautiful thing to be involved in."

As a dad, Palmer cites his proudest moment as seeing his son come on to get his first cap for England. But in a purely professional capacity, it has to be the England Deaf Men team's four-nil win over Germany, which happened earlier this year in Telford.

"There was a lot of interest in that game with a thousand people coming to watch it,"



he says. "And we performed so well. It was great to see the development of the squad, and the coaches have really worked on their ability to communicate with deaf players. I think it was in this game against Germany that you could see all those elements coming together."

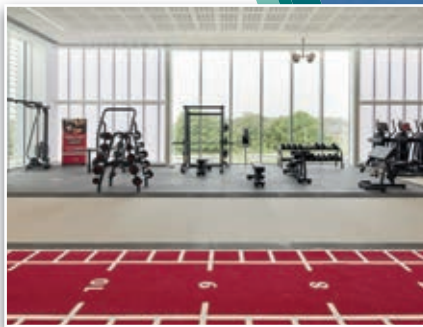
Palmer is heartened by the fact that deaf football is gradually getting more coverage in the news and on social media. "This is great for the players who, although amateur and not getting paid to play, are training four or five times a week and following elite performance programmes," he says. "More recognition for these players, who really want to do well for their country, would be a beautiful thing."

Andrew Palmer spoke to journalist Dean Gurden

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