



Position Statement on Health¹

The need for a position statement

It is well documented that inactive people spend more days in hospital or receive treatment from healthcare professionals than those who engage in regular activity. With the NHS under significant pressure and struggling to meet the rising demand of care, sport and physical activity can play a vital role in the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the population. To truly support these challenges, both sectors are considering how to align and work together to limit the demand on our healthcare providers. As the professional development workforce body for the UK's sport and physical activity sector, CIMSPA has a significant role to play in ensuring workforce training qualifications and skills development opportunities are high quality and set a standard for fitness professionals working alongside practitioners, clinicians and deliverers. CIMSPA promotes endorsed training through the [Training Academy for Sport and Physical Activity](#). The sport and physical activity workforce include 586,000² paid professionals, with the wider coaching workforce (including unpaid) is estimated at 3.1 million³ all of whom could offer critical support and create significant impact on health care pathways.

CIMSPA has completed the development and publication of thirty five professional standards outlining the knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to working in

¹ **NHS:** Defines health as a positive state of physical and mental health, along with wellbeing. This means that the NHS considers how healthy and well people are, not just whether they have a health condition. (Dept of Health 2010, Our Health and Wellbeing Today). **WHO:** Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (WHO constitution).

² CIMSPA Workforce Insight Report, 2023

³ UK Coaching, Coaching Workforce Survey, 2022

sport and physical activity⁴. Over 275 education partners (awarding organisations, training providers and further and higher education institutions) align their qualifications, degrees and CPD to these professional standards. Over 1000 education products (degree programmes, qualifications, CPD opportunities and apprenticeships) are endorsed against the employer-led professional standards. Over fifty training provider partners have completed and been graded through the second generation of CIMSPA's quality assurance framework⁵. Physical activity can be used to manage and prevent up to twenty lifestyle related diseases, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, MSK health and diabetes⁶. With the right workforce skills sets available in the right places at the right time, there is potential to achieve the scale of change needed to impact the inactivity and health landscape.

The CIMSPA Workforce Development team bring together employers, healthcare and education providers, and employability focussed organisations to effectively and efficiently match supply and demand in the sports and physical activity sector through local skills action plans. The goal is to collectively produce a local skills implementation plan which can deliver health, economic and social benefits at a local level through collaborative working and networks. This incredible resource has built a foundation in which to engage relevant, knowledgeable and specific partners who will work towards a common outcome benefitting the health and wellbeing of local populations. Such local plans feed into the Local Skills Accountability Boards (LSABs) supporting the diverse needs of the health and social care landscape in its devolved form, including different regional and localised pressures across the Integrated Care System (ICS). Therefore providing a local plan to meet local needs.

⁴ Over 1000 organisations and individuals consulted in the development.

⁵ CIMSPA Strategy 2024 – 2030: Releasing the Power of our Profession

⁶ Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. "The miracle cure and the role of the doctor in promoting it" 2015

The sport and physical activity sector have the unique ability to match the NHS focus of moving towards prevention and encouraging the population to support and manage their own health. Three strategic shifts by the NHS include moving care from hospital to the community, analogue to digital and from treatment to prevention⁷. The sport and physical activity workforce have the capability of providing people with the motivation, capability and capacity to choose a de-medicalised approach. This matches the ambition of the government to move healthcare away from the acute setting and back into primary care and prevention.

Through recent consultation within the physical activity and health sectors⁸, CIMSPA research and insight suggests the sector's approach to workforce within the healthcare setting⁹ differs depending on demands, needs and capacity, with a number of examples of models, approaches and good practice to show this. CIMSPA leads by listening with a mandate to lead and regulate¹⁰ the sport and activity sector, this is grounded in strong regulatory, governance and education foundations. The impact of health and physical activity is significant, and the solution can be complicated as it's not one size fits all, but through collaborative and close working and from the developments already shown in the sector, we can create a new determination to move forwards.

⁷ NHS Ten Year Plan to reform the NHS, 2024

⁸ NHS Horizons, NHS ICS, ukactive, Richmond Group of Charities, Sport England, FSEM, NCSEM, APNO, MOVE consulting, CIMSPA internal teams.

⁹ An array of services and places where healthcare occurs, including hospitals, urgent care centres, rehabilitation centres, long term care facilities, outpatient services. (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.)

¹⁰ [The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity | CIMSPA](#) leads to the regulated professions register, [Regulated Professions Register | Chartered Fellow/Member of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity](#)

A number of key external working groups¹¹ have been formed within the sector to look at the connection between physical activity and health. Through discussions, CIMSPA has identified the need to be clear on how the sector workforce could be trained, retrained and upskilled to reflect the needs of the health agenda. Through a recent consultative period, quickly it became evident there was a perceived confusion on how qualifications and professional standards can be applied in a health setting. There are a range of workforce training options within both the physical activity sector and health sector to choose from. Within the healthcare workforce roles such as clinical exercise physiologists, sports rehabilitators and others, are highly skilled, regulated and more specifically equipped than fitness professionals to support individuals with certain health conditions. Discussions have been brokered with CIMSPA's key stakeholders and organisations to ascertain a positioning and response to the current landscape.

The role of CIMSPA is to bring consistency to qualifications and aid the sector to establish a common language describing its workforce, which applies a clear message to healthcare professionals as well as those who deliver physical activity and those undertaking physical activity.

Position Statement

As stated in the CIMSPA strategy 'Releasing the Power of our Profession', workforce makes a valuable contribution to the health and wellbeing of the nation. CIMSPA's position statement has been created to inform partners, stakeholders, and professionals, of the key challenges within the workforce as they increase their work in and with the health sector. CIMSPA also sets out a commitment and the action

¹¹ National Sector Partnerships Group (NSPG), Placed Based Physical Activity Leadership network (PALN), National Physical Activity and Healthcare Collaborative Group, NHS Horizons. Exercise and Fitness Professional Development Committee. ukactive and Active Partnership Network Blueprint operating model for ICS.

needed to establish a stronger and more meaningful connection between sport and physical activity professions and health professionals.

The position statement is for the sport and physical activity professionals and is defined as:

To provide a clear, easy to follow, training and professional development pathway for those working in sport, physical activity, and active wellbeing.

- To provide opportunities to equip the sport and physical activity workforce with the necessary competencies, skills and resources to support the right experience for the individual based on a sound knowledge of community needs.
- To work alongside healthcare professionals to assist where required, with training, skills and confidence in promoting physical activity to those with health needs. Bring a continuity and clearer recognition to qualifications across both the sport, physical activity and active wellbeing sector.
- Clearly communicate through our membership networks and partnerships with key stakeholders, of how CIMSPA will work with the health sector workforce, employers and commissioners.

Our intention

CIMSPA's work is centred around collaboration and creating a positive attitude to behaviour change. CIMSPA aims to proceed with a coordinated attempt to promote and support the development of the workforce delivering in both the physical activity and health landscape. Communicating this through the member networks and partnership with key stakeholders is critical to contributing to the whole health and physical activity agenda.

Undoubtedly, we need to amplify the role of the workforce within the health setting, CIMSPA clearly states in the 2024-2030 strategy 'Releasing the Power of our Profession' there is a need for greater recognition for the workforce. Recognition refers to the status of qualified and experienced professionals, how the value of their work extends beyond narrow perceptions to positively impact lives and communities, and also how experience and commitment is delivered ethically, through safe practice and engagement. Importantly we also need to define what success looks like and where the greatest impact can be made. This is necessary to steer a change in perceptions of what physical activity means to health practitioners and how we can overcome the potential legal implications of recommending physical activity, without trepidation. There is a clear distinction between promotion, prescription and programming of physical activity.

Promotion of physical activity is the responsibility of every practitioner. It involves encouraging and advocating for active lifestyles.

Prescription of exercise should be reserved for qualified exercise professionals who are skilled, regulated, and capable of clinical reasoning.

Programming refers to the design and planning of activities. This skill is relevant to professionals working with both clinical and non-clinical populations, focusing on tailored plans.

Whilst a long-term condition does not inherently imply 'risk'. The issue can lie in the screening process which often mandates medical clearance before the person can start being more active within an organised setting. The perceived risk of adverse effects is high in both the physical activity and healthcare sectors. However, the actual risk is very low, and the benefits far outweigh the risks, it is more about having access to the right professional at the right time. The FSEM is currently working to shift risk and efforts from medical clearance to medical guidance¹².

¹²Faculty Sport Exercise Medicine (FSEM) [Moving Medicine](#)

The recent consultation highlighted how healthcare professionals are limited in time, capacity and resource when meeting with a patient, often resulting in a lack of physical activity recommendations with a varied understanding of where or who to signpost to. CIMSPA is keen to understand what support would benefit and connect the healthcare workforce and increase more recommendations to physical activity services.

Four key themes have been identified in order to deliver the position statement:

1. Provide high quality standards for training, to enable well qualified workforce to deliver physical activity opportunities
 - a. Create pathways into employment, through training opportunities.
 - b. Coordinate and share evidence to support development of national, regional and local policies
 - c. Promote CIMSPA endorsed physical activity health qualifications, to offer a balanced model of support of health and wellbeing through participation in physical activity.
2. Explore how CIMSPA can support the workforce training of the healthcare sector.
 - a. Build a picture of what the healthcare workforce looks like and can look like through innovative mapping. Refer to learnings from local partners and health colleagues.
 - b. Identify when there is convergence, divergence and gaps within the workforce (physical activity and health).
 - c. Enhance the standards of training for fitness professionals to ensure they are equipped to work with a wide range of health needs and inactivity, giving the health sector greater confidence to signposting to them.
3. Develop a strong supply chain

- a. Develop a mutual assurance to ensure all CIMSPA partners understand, promote and use the workforce qualifications and standards relating to physical activity, health and active wellbeing¹³.
 - b. Give clarity and confidence to the healthcare sector in workforce training, to understand what to use and in which environment¹⁴.
 - c. Ensure healthcare professionals can adequately and confidently signpost to sport, physical activity and active wellbeing professionals within their area.
- 4. CIMSPA local delivery team link the local skills plans to local health needs and priorities.
 - a. Interpret relevant data on local or national needs
 - b. Upskilling of the local skills hub managers and delivery team to ensure continuity, a coordinated approach and focussed intervention.
 - c. Link through to ICSs and ICBs is critical to encourage commissioning of physical activity interventions, and workforce training.
 - d. Workplace health is critical to the economy. Connect through the local skills implementation plans, local skills accountability boards and align to government priorities and the key drivers in changing the national health picture.

An operational plan has been devised to detail how the themes will be achieved and relate to the overall CIMSPA strategy. Regular dialogue with the sector through the Exercise and Professional Development Committee¹⁵ will ensure relevance,

¹³ Standards are regularly reviewed and updated by the CIMSPA professional development board and committees. Comments and suggestions can be made via the website:

[Feedback form](#)

¹⁴ CIMSPA sets the policy ([Policy](#)) develops and maintains the standards ([Standards](#)), endorses the training ([Endorsement](#)), and accredits the professionals ([Endorsement](#))

¹⁵ One of four committees put in place by CIMSPA. Provide technical advice, guidance and support.

accountability and market testing. Reporting and review will regulate the achievement of the objectives.