

Life Lessons

## Sondré Gravir

"I ended up behaving like a cartoon character"

p74

## Mental health

The industry's new purpose

p54

## McFit's NEW LOOK

Playful,  
bright and  
social

p80

## Mário Barbosa



Go Fit's proposition is overwhelming

p40

ON THE COVER

# Ronaldo

Blasts into the fitness industry with Erakulis p16





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## Mental health training

Members are telling us they need support with their mental and spiritual health and the industry is starting to see this need. Now's the time to fast-track our response

Insight is telling us the pandemic has prompted permanent changes to consumers' aspirations and lifestyle choices, with health – especially mental and spiritual – now a significant priority for the majority.

We're increasingly hearing that the main reason people are joining health clubs is to support their mind, as well as their body and in this issue of *HCM* we dive into the subject, exploring ways the industry can support members in their aspirations to be more whole, balanced and well in this Stresszocic Era.

This change in priorities from 'how I look', to 'how I feel' is a huge shift that's taking us ever closer to the health sector, with all the opportunities that brings for partnerships: it's about 'mind, body and spirit' rather than an obsession with physical perfection.

The challenge is meeting customers where they are with services that exceed expectations, in ways that are sustainable operationally and focused on prevention.

On page 62 Kath Hudson reports from an excellent ACE (American Council on Exercise) summit on mental health, sharing insights into key areas of support for both staff and members, along with the science.

We also talk to our panel of experts about the opportunities that exist to upskill the workforce to deliver preventative mental health support (page 54).

Interventions can take the form of programming – as developed by Gymbox, with its 'Weight lifted' classes that use therapeutic tremoring (page 58) and The Soma Space, that delivers trauma-informed weightlifting (page 57), while there are also examples of new courses from the John W Brick Mental Health Foundation and Mental Health & Exercise Coaching (page 59).

As EMDR psychotherapist and personal trainer Andrew Keefe says, "the idea that there's a distinction between physical health and mental health is completely arbitrary and I encourage colleagues on both sides to talk to each other more, because there's an enormous amount to gain. Eventually I'd like us to get to a point where we don't have



The Gymbox 'Weight lifted' class uses therapeutic tremoring

“We'd like to see training bodies creating qualifications that deliver expertise in supporting both the body and the mind”

PTs and psychotherapists, but one training that incorporates both the body and the mind.”

We'd like to see qualifying bodies embrace this approach and integrate disciplines to create a new style of mind/body training, so the sector can take the lead in delivering mental health support in a de-medicalised setting.

Fundamentally, this must be as a preventative measure, as health clubs are not an appropriate setting for serious mental health interventions, but – just as we have spent decades advocating prevention for physical health – now is the time to do so for mental health too.

Liz Terry, editor  
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

# HCM CONTENTS

## Uniting the world of fitness

ISSUE 3 2024 No 324

**40** Mário Barbosa, CEO of Go Fit talks to HCM



Mário Barbosa



### 05 Editor's letter

With consumers telling us their main motivation for joining a health club is to improve their mental health, the stage is set for a new phase in the development of the industry, says Liz Terry

### 12 Letters

Anna Langridge details work by 1FitLife to help Parkinson's sufferers get active and improve their symptoms, while Martyn Allison asks a critical question

### 16 HCM people Cristiano Ronaldo

The footballing legend is launching a wellness app to deliver wellbeing and health to his fans and followers

### 20 HCM people Jonathan Leary

The CEO of Remedy Place talks about growing the company's concept of 'social wellness', and the launch of its new and free holistic fitness education platform

### 28 HCM news

Basic-Fit considers global franchising, TRIB3 launches a pilates reformer brand and a new 'health city' is under construction in Sweden

### 40 Interview Mário Barbosa

The CEO of Go Fit talks to Kate Cracknell about the company's year of record revenues, reaching new demographics and its expansion into Italy

### 54 Talking Point Mental health training

Now mental health is the number one reason people join health clubs, do teams need a grounding in counselling? We ask the experts

### 62 Mental wellness

An ACE summit on mental health shared methods fitness professionals can build into their toolkit, as Kath Hudson reports

### 74 Life Lessons Sondré Gravrir

Imposter syndrome over a promotion taught the CEO of SATS that behaving authentically is the most important part of leadership



16 Cristiano Ronaldo

PHOTO: GUYERBAULIS/DA



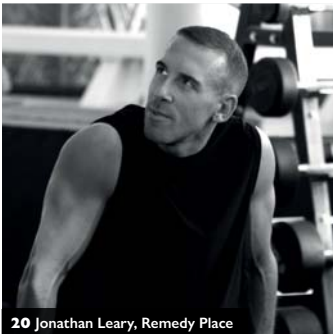
74 Sondré Gravrí's Life Lessons

PHOTO: SAMS / ANITA ARNTZEN



80 McFit gets a makeover

PHOTO: HIGHT PULSE GROUP



20 Jonathan Leary, Remedy Place

PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE

### 80 Design McFit gets a makeover

The original low-cost gym concept is getting its third major makeover since being established in 1996, with the first club opening in Cologne. Liz Terry takes a look

### 96 Strong growth

The explosion in consumer demand for strength training is driving a raft of innovative new launches from equipment suppliers, as Steph Eaves report

### 112 Cool systems

As clubs look to add more recovery options to meet growing demand, Steph Eaves looks at what cryotherapy and ice bathing technology can bring to the mix

### 128 Product innovations

Steph Eaves rounds up the latest kit from leading suppliers. This issue, Life Fitness, Keiser, Skillcourt and Myzone

### 130 Reader services HCM Directory

If you're in procurement, the HCM directory is part of a network of resources designed for you that includes [www.HCMmag.com/CompanyProfiles](http://www.HCMmag.com/CompanyProfiles)

### 132 Research False readings

New research from the Children's Health and Research Centre at the University of Exeter, UK, has found BMI is not accurate as a measure for children



112 Cold recovery

PHOTO: SAMS / ANITA ARNTZEN

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**Print and distribution** Printed by The Manson Group Ltd. Distributed by Royal Mail Group Ltd and Whistl Ltd in the UK and Total Mail Ltd globally.

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*Life Fitness*

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# Write to reply

Fuel the debate about issues across the industry and share your ideas and experiences. We'd love to hear from you. [letters@leisuremedia.com](mailto:letters@leisuremedia.com)



*Neuro physiotherapists and Parkinson's nurses are signposting their patients to our HIIT exercise content*

**Anna Langridge**, director of production, 1FitLife

## Exercise can support people with Parkinson's

I read with great interest the initial findings from the Yale School of Medicine in HCM that revealed HIIT can reverse neurodegeneration associated with Parkinson's disease. This is obviously exciting

news for the 12 million people globally living with this disease.

At 1FitLife, we work with charity Parkinson's UK creating digital resources and workouts to help its community more easily access exercise. The Yale pilot supports the charity's own findings that being active for two and a half hours a week or more can help manage Parkinson's symptoms; members of the community are increasingly reporting that physical activity – especially vigorous workouts – are helping temporarily alleviate symptoms.

We recently created a series of eight 30-minute video workouts focused on HIIT-style training and this has already had over 40,000 views. The charity has reported that neuro physiotherapists and Parkinson's

nurses are signposting their patients to the content, as it can be used to supplement people's own training or to help them to try something new. Our content was also referenced at the World Parkinson's Congress and signposted to delegates.

### Useful to other users

The classes can also be used by anyone with barriers to getting out, such as mobility or mental health issues, who wants to be active. They also give people options during the winter or bad weather and while addressing the cost of living crisis, as classes are free.

However, feedback to Parkinson's UK from its community found that this level of activity isn't achievable for everyone. Some don't feel capable of doing 30 minutes' exercise in one go.



Anna Langridge

PHOTO: RITLIFE / ANDREW DENNIS



1FitLife has designed workouts that benefit people with Parkinson's

With this in mind we're filming a second series for the Parkinson's community. The directive is to engage people who are newly-diagnosed, inactive or not confident, to encourage them to try new activities. The content is based on six different activity types: total body walking, Pilates, strength training, dance, boxing skills and football and the videos are between 10-20 minutes long, with exercises broken down into manageable parts and including seated options and breaks.

#### Other examples

We've also had the pleasure of creating bespoke content for Carers UK, whose community often can't access gyms or leisure centres due to their caring responsibilities and for charity

IIH UK (Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension), which supports people living with an incurable neurological condition associated with fluid pressure around the brain.

Sufferers often fear 'normal' exercise and certain movements – such as bending down – could worsen their symptoms, which include disabling daily headaches, brain fog, fatigue and visual loss. These specialist physiotherapist-lead videos mean the IIH community can safely access physical activity at home.

It's heartening to see research being done into the most effective exercises, as these communities have very particular needs for accessing activity and education, but it's important to remember that even within these targeted groups, one size doesn't fit all.



*A free swim or activity session is a life-saver, creating new habits for better times*



Martyn Allison

## Should we be creating Activity Banks?

**Martyn Allison,**  
Social change agent

While I hate the idea that some people have become reliant on food banks, they're life savers for many.

I suspect many who use them are also our least active members of society, with significant health needs. I also hear there's an app where people can access food from shops and restaurants wanting to minimise their food waste by giving it away.

Has anyone considered applying this idea to physical activity and creating activity banks? Most operators – whether public, private or voluntary – have off-peak capacity that, like food, has time-limited availability.

Could we, as a sector, use tech to put this into a 'bank' to be accessed free or cheaply by people and families under the same referral schemes we use for food banks?

A free swim or activity session can be a life-saver for all ages, creating new habits for better times.

Just an idea. What do others think? Connect: [martyn.allisonmis@gmail.com](mailto:martyn.allisonmis@gmail.com)

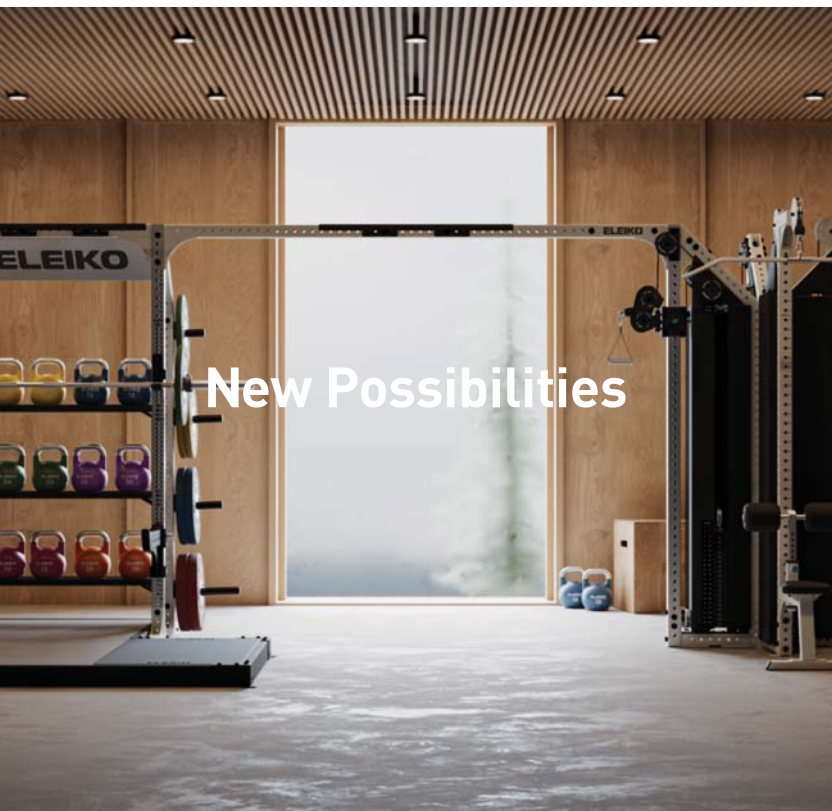


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# HCM people



*Taking care of your physical  
and mental health is  
essential for a fulfilling life*

## Cristiano Ronaldo

**Footballer and entrepreneur**



Ronaldo launched the Erakulis fitness app on 3 April

Supporting legend, Cristiano Ronaldo, whose outstanding skill and fitness levels have seen him dominate the top of the professional football game for decades, launched a new fitness app on 3 April as he ramps up his investments in the wellness industry.

Called Erakulis ([www.erakulis.com](http://www.erakulis.com)), it's been designed to be "more than an app", according to Ronaldo, who says it's an all-in-one wellness experience that will teach people "how to be fit, how to protect their body and how to prepare for life – physically and mentally.

"Taking care of your physical and mental health is essential for a fulfilling life and Erakulis is here to support you every step of the way," he explains. "Behind your customised plan, we have a team of certified experts who will take the time to listen to your story, understand your aspirations and craft a tailored wellness experience plan that aligns with your goals and lifestyle."

Features include video call appointments with experts, activity and progress reports, a water tracker for hydration, audiobooks for 'inner balance' and a challenges and rewards feature.

Workouts, fitness and nutrition plans can be customised and an interactive feature enables subscribers to give feedback on the app after workouts.



Ronaldo has a record 627 million Instagram followers



*A team of certified experts craft tailored exercise plans and wellness experience that align with subscribers' goals*



Erakulis says its pricing plan, which starts at €4.99/month, is cheaper than 'similar apps' which charge an average of €11.61/month. The Erakulis founder offer was for a 30-day trial and 50 per cent off for the first month for everyone who signed up before 3 April.

The launch of the app, with its focus on 'fitness, nutrition and mental balance' puts Ronaldo head to head with Chris Hemsworth's Centr, which covers very similar ground, albeit with a very different style.

Ronaldo currently plays in the Saudi League for Al-Nassr on a US\$215 million a year contract. He's also an ambassador for Saudi Arabia's 2034 World Cup bid.

Turning 39 this year, he's showing no signs of slowing down, finishing 2023 as the top scorer in world football, netting 54 goals for his club and the Portuguese national team during the year.

### **Ronaldo in the business world**

The foundation stone for Ronaldo's business interests is his company – founded in 2006 and called CR7 after his nickname, which is based on his initials and shirt number.

The brand started out in the world of fashion with shoes, underwear, eyewear and clothing, before diversifying into lifestyle sectors such as health and fitness, beauty/fragrances and hotels.

In 2016, Ronaldo ventured into the health and fitness industry in partnership with Crunch Fitness to meet growing consumer interest in self-care and wellness. His franchised CR7 health club chain ([www.cr7fitnesscrunch.com](http://www.cr7fitnesscrunch.com)) now has 11 locations in Spain and Portugal offering PT, advice on nutrition and a wide range of classes, as well as a gym floor.

### **Hotels and clinics**

CR7 hotels, a partnership with Pestana Group, launched in 2015 and currently has five luxury properties in New York, Madrid, Madeira, Marrakech and Lisbon, as well as a development pipeline of hotels in places such as Porto, Paris, Newark, US and Montevideo.

Beyond lifestyle and fashion, Ronaldo's investment in hair transplant clinic brand Insparya ([www.insparya.es](http://www.insparya.es)), has seen locations opening across Spain and Portugal, as well as in the Middle East. ▶



*Ronaldo is estimated to command up to \$3.23 million per Instagram post*

Erakulis gives Ronaldo a global platform on which to build a wide-ranging wellness business

#### ► Social media record breaker

Ronaldo's fan-base is the foundation of his business activity, with much of this centred around social media, where he has 627 million followers on Instagram.

This makes his @cristiano account the most-followed in history by some margin against second-ranked Lionel Messi with 502 million and stars such as Selena Gomez and Kylie Jenner with 429 million and 400 million respectively. Hemsworth has 58.7 million by comparison.

This direct-to-consumer firepower sees Ronaldo estimated to command up to US\$3.23 million per Instagram post this year, up from US\$2.1 million in 2023 and US\$1.6 million in 2021.

The channel is used to promote his various product lines and endorsements, with the initial post for the Erakulis app seen by nearly 11 million people in the first few hours following the announcement of the impending launch.

#### **Erakulis – the background**

The Erakulis app was three years in development, with financial support from the EU, which provided

€787,942 from the European Regional Development Fund between 2021 and 2023 to enable the startup.

The funds came via two bodies, Portugal 2020 – an investment partnership between the Portuguese government and the EU to drive the development of SME activity – and NORTE 2020 (Northern Regional Operational Program 2014/2020), a financial instrument designed to support regional development in the North of Portugal.

Although ownership of the Erakulis app has not been officially confirmed, a trademark registration filing by Erakulis LDA on 30 December 2022 gives the same address as one of Ronaldo's businesses in Porto, Portugal, indicating a strong involvement by the footballer.

The registration also gives an indication of the likely eventual scope of the Erakulis business, covering as it does everything from nutritional supplements and software, to physical training services, psychological counselling and medical services.

As the app launches, it's likely this is just the beginning of a new business venture for Ronaldo that will cover multiple aspects of wellness. ●





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PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE


## Dr Jonathan Leary

Founder, Remedy Place



*It was as though  
the whole world  
woke up at the  
same time*

The IV Tunnel at Remedy  
Place New York City



Remedy Place is a social wellness club for people who prioritise health

**You're launching a new education platform – The Framework – tell us more**

The Framework – a free-to-use platform – is our way of giving back as a luxury brand and is part of our mission to deliver education for all.

The human body doesn't come with an instruction manual, but these trainings, which are based on my own lived-experience, offer a road map to show people how to feel better in every aspect of their lives.

The Framework is composed of seven pillars: **human connection**, which is at the core of everything we do; **intentional environments** that put our body in a better state to regenerate and raise its energetic frequencies; **time training** – time is a limiter, but when used properly is an expander, so this will coach people on how to maximise their time to unlock their potential.

Also **stress training** to harness stress as 'resistance training' to strengthen the mind; **growth and development** – offering tangible pathways for people to identify who they want to be and give them the tools to get there; **appearance training** – how to address external imbalances that are affecting us internally; and **conventional health** – speaking to the obvious and not-so-obvious metrics and methods that can enhance a health-minded lifestyle.

**Looking at your journey, you launched at the start of the pandemic. What was the impact?**

We never expected to close right after opening, so the first couple of months were obviously traumatic, but one positive by-product of the pandemic has been the mass awareness of health and the trajectory of self-care. ▶

PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE / JESUJANNI HOUSTON

PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE / JESUJANNI HOUSTON



► It was as though the whole world woke up at the same time. The self-care industry is going to blow up. Just as there's a gym on every corner, soon enough there will be some type of self-care facility on every corner.

**As a social wellness club, your mission is to redefine social occasions, so people can celebrate with an ice bath, as opposed to a bottle of wine. How is this playing out?**

People are really connecting with the social side of our offering and with each club we develop, we're putting more emphasis on this pillar of our identity.

More members and guests are having meetings at Remedy Place and using it as an after-work hangout in place of other social options, such as happy hour. This inspired us to launch Remedy After Hours, where people can rent the club at night and work with our events team to design a bespoke experience for their needs and budget.

**Have you seen social wellness percolating through the rest of the industry?**

One hundred per cent and not only in our industry. Everyone is trying to identify their unique wellness edge. When we first launched Remedy Place the premise was a hypothesis, based on my experience in medical practice. Yet since 2019, with no paid advertising, we've enjoyed widespread enthusiasm and adoption, creating buzz in the cultural conversation, attention from industry giants and recognition from The Global Wellness Summit as a top 2023 trend.

**Who are your customers turning out to be?**

Pro-active people who prioritise their health and seek happiness. Although we host a range of guests from 18-year-olds up to octogenarians, our core is people in their 30s. It's an almost even split (51 per cent female) showing men are now just as invested in the self-care category.

People are really connecting with the social side of our offering and with each club we're putting more emphasis on this pillar of our identity



The plan is to open a total of 15 Remedy Place sites in the US



We're inclusive, so we allow anyone to make a reservation and we cap the amount of members per club, so we have less member visits than non-members. The split is around 35/65. Although we cater to an affluent demographic, we're seeing many people who have shifted their spending to prioritise wellness with us.

#### **What are your expansion plans?**

We're aiming to get to 15 locations in total. We have two clubs in construction and plan to open two a year going forward. Our third club will be in New York City's SoHo neighbourhood. We haven't disclosed the location of our fourth property yet, but it will be outside New York and will have the biggest footprint with the most amenities to date, setting a whole new standard for the brand.

#### **Why did you decide to go after the home market with your Tech-Remedy Collection?**

Guests asked for it over and over again. There's a growing market for creating the type of experiences we offer in the convenience of one's own home and as we continue to lead and innovate this new self-care industry, we also want to supply it, continuing to educate and inspire.



PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE

The US\$11k Remedy Roller is designed for home use

The Tech-Remedy Collection represents a new arm of the business in product design and is a really cool vertical which may end up bigger than our brick and mortar presence. However, clubs will always be our foundation, because that's where we create the authentic connections and communities with our guests.

#### **Why did you choose the Remedy Roller as your first product and how does it work?**

Pain is a major issue in America, which has resulted in an opioid crisis. Everyone is tight and in order to restore motion in the muscles you need to release the fascia and break down the scar tissue. The Remedy Roller is a great way of restoring movement and blood flow to the muscles, fascia and joints – it can get into every crevice of the body, like the backs of the knees, which frequently get overlooked in treatments.

It works by pushing the parts of the body against it, for example sitting on the bench and putting the feet on it and then moving up the legs. You can sit against it for your back and lean over it for abs and side muscles, or even straddle it to do the adductors. ▶

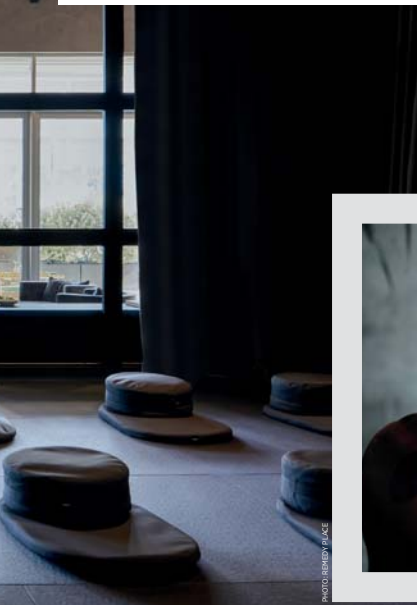


PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE



The range of wellness services is extensive and includes cupping



*The Remedy Roller restores movement and blood flow to the muscles, fascia and joints. At \$11,000 it's expensive, but will make a huge impact*

## FACT FILE

Remedy Place is the brainchild of Dr Jonathan Leary, who has a doctorate in chiropractic medicine and came up with the concept while working in private practice.

There are currently two clubs: the first launched in West Hollywood in 2019 and Flatiron, New York followed in 2022.

Because good design has a direct positive effect on internal physiology, all the clubs are designed down to the smallest detail, so people feel at ease as soon as they enter.

Ancient medicine is blended with modern technology to create a holistic approach to better health and to put the body into the optimal state to heal.

Offerings include breathwork ice bath classes, cryotherapy chambers, hyperbaric oxygen chambers, infrared saunas, lymphatic drainage massage, contrast suites (infrared sauna and cold plunge) and sound baths, as well as healthy food and beverage options.

■ Read HCM's previous interview with Jonathan Leary at [www.HCMmag.com/Leary1](http://www.HCMmag.com/Leary1)

Remedy Place in West Hollywood, LA – the original location

- ▶ At US\$11,000 it's still an expensive product, but it's something which can be used every single day and will make a huge impact for anyone who's trying to move better, eliminate pain, or alleviate any tightness in their body.

### **What are your distribution plans for your new fit-tech launches?**

We have a long list of contacts I've built over the years and we're establishing initial connections directly that way. It's the first time we've ever done a release outside of a club, but I've consulted with our entire database of customers from gyms and hotels to country clubs and recovery centres to ensure it's fit for purpose and is what they and their customers need.

We're currently working on six more new Tech-Remedy products to add to the range, with the next product launch planned for later in 2024, so watch this space. ●





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Precision for health

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April 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>  
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## 'Health city' in Sweden to lead on innovation

A new urban city centre in Gothenburg, Sweden is in development with the aim of accelerating health innovation.

Next Step Group and Vectura Fastigheter joined forces to create GoCo Health Innovation City, with over US\$400 million being invested in the 200,000sq m project.

The architects for the development are Semrén + Måsson. When complete it will create a new life science district and urban city centre with a health and wellness focus, attracting researchers, entrepreneurs and talent from around the world to accelerate health innovation within an inspiring environment.

GoCo Health Innovation City is currently in the construction phase and it is expected that 350 life science companies will eventually be based there, creating 7,000 new jobs. Medical solutions company, Mölnlycke HealthCare,



GoCo Health Innovation City will link commerce, research and consumer services

is relocating its headquarters there this year in a new building which will accommodate 800 employees.

The 21,000sq m signature building, GoCo House, opened in February 2023, a multi-tenant building designed for collaboration and spontaneous meetings, with lots of social areas across two floors.

The first residential neighbourhood will be fully built by 2025, offering 450 apartments constructed with sustainable materials, sedum roofs and solar panels. Service industries are also moving in, with health clubs, restaurants and retail springing up.

More: [http://lei.sr/4M9p2\\_H](http://lei.sr/4M9p2_H)

## Egym snaps up Hussle in corporate wellness play



Egym has bought Hussle as corporate wellness is increasingly prioritised

Egym, has signalled its intention to become a dominant force in the corporate wellness sector with the acquisition of UK-based aggregator, Hussle.

The integration gives the company access to a network of around 1,500 gyms, pools, and spas in the UK to expand its corporate wellness product, Wellpass, which is available in Germany, Austria, Belgium and France.

Egym Wellpass offers employers subscription-based corporate health and wellness solutions, allowing them to offer employees access to sports and health facilities and Egym training programmes.

The partnership with Hussle allows Egym to gain a strong footing in the UK's corporate wellness market at the right time. With absenteeism



### The NHS's prioritisation of prevention over repair fits well with our mission

Philipp Roesch-Schländler, CEO, Egym

causing an economic drag, creating a more healthy workforce must be a priority for the next government.

Hussle was formed in 2011 by Neil Harmsworth and Jamie Ward and works with AXA, Bupa and IwG.

● Turn to page 108 for more details

More: [http://lei.sr/u4w4d\\_H](http://lei.sr/u4w4d_H)



## Basic-Fit considering global franchising move

Despite high inflation and energy costs, Basic-Fit lifted 2023 revenues by almost a third and achieved a record number of openings.

Announcing full-year results, CEO, Rene Moos, confirmed revenues increased by 32 per cent to €1,047 million, while underlying EBITDA less rent increased by 28 per cent to €261 million and mature club return on interest capital (ROIC) was up by 35 per cent.

Underlying net profit increased by 55 per cent to €27.5 million (€23.5 million, US\$30 million).

Growth was driven by expanding the network, increasing memberships at clubs which were in their growth phase during the pandemic and increasing average revenue per member per month.

Memberships increased by 13 per cent and the company achieved its aim of 3.8 million members by the year-end.

Basic-Fit is setting its sights on further aggressive expansion, with plans for 3,000 to 3,500 more clubs in existing markets by 2030. Moos said franchising is also being considered for expansion outside Europe.

"We have initiated a process to determine which approach to franchising would be most suitable to further enhance our company's growth and return profile," he explained. "The franchise initiative should be extended to cover markets that are not geographically adjacent to our current operations," he said.

● Turn to page 92 for more details

More: [http://lei.sr/4e4W6\\_H](http://lei.sr/4e4W6_H)



Basic-Fit is aiming to get to 3,000 - 3,500 clubs by 2023

## TRIB3 launches PILAT3S reformer brand

The team behind TRIB3 has launched a reformer Pilates studio concept called PILAT3S, which will be available either as a standalone franchise, or as a club-in-club concept, aiming to take the new exercise modality into the mainstream.

Blending traditional Pilates with TRIB3's methodology and tech ecosystem, the concept features three 50-minute classes – Tone, Align and Power. All programmes include regressions and progressions to make them suitable for all fitness levels.



Pilates has been given the TRIB3 treatment



**HIIT users are very interested in complementing their training with reformer Pilates**

Jonathan Fisher

PILAT3S offers a 'twist' on traditional Pilates that will help demystify it and appeal to a broader audience, explains CEO, Jonathan Fisher, saying: "HIIT users are very interested in complementing their training with reformer Pilates."

"Our goal is to maximise the enjoyment and benefits of Pilates by giving it the TRIB3 treatment

and making it scalable," says TRIB3 COO, Matteo Cerruti.

"TRIB3's tech is key to its success and we've taken the lighting, programming and music and moulded them to complement PILAT3S."

Studios will open in the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and the UAE in 2024.

More: [http://lei.sr/6M8d2\\_H](http://lei.sr/6M8d2_H)

## UK private sector benchmark data unveiled

The first annual *Private Sector Benchmarking* report for the UK was released on 27 March by Dr Matthew Wade from the UK Active Research Institute.

A collaboration between UK Active and 4Global, report aims to provide accurate insight into the state of the private sector health club market.

Twelve operators with 1,089 clubs are on board, sharing data every quarter since January 2022.

Results indicate that despite the economic challenges involved in



Pure Gym is one of 12 operators contributing to the new benchmarking study



PHOTO: UK ACTIVE

**Benchmarking will help us understand the real value our sector brings**

Dr Matthew Wade

running clubs, operators are continuing to expand – memberships increased by 10.2 per cent from January 2022 to December 2023, with a net gain of 78 additional clubs counted – a rise of 7.7 per cent when openings and closures are accounted for.

Huw Edwards, CEO of UK Active, believes the initiative will boost

lobbying efforts, saying: "This data is essential in helping show the government the value and potential of the physical activity sector and its role in addressing some of the nation's biggest challenges, in terms of public health and economic growth."

More: [http://lei.sr/h8Z9W\\_H](http://lei.sr/h8Z9W_H)

## Adidas partnership delivers menstrual course



Working with menstrual cycles can optimise training

Adidas and its Breaking Barriers Academy has announced a partnership with female health experts, The Well HQ – led by Baz Moffat – for the launch of a free training course to raise awareness about menstruation.

*'It's time to talk. Period: advancing menstrual awareness in sport'* covers subjects such as cycle-tracking; misconceptions and biases and how to create safe, supportive environments for women to exercise. Available free of charge, the course takes an average of 2.5 hours to complete.

Moffat says: "It was a huge team effort to get this one over the line, but we're delighted with the results. Working with three professional athletes, Jazmin Sawyers, Sarah Zadrzil and Michelle Coleman – from



PHOTO: THE WELL HQ

**The resources Adidas was able to put behind the production make it top-notch quality**

Baz Moffat

athletics, swimming and soccer – took the project to a whole new level."

Adidas says it's time to normalise the conversation around menstruation.

● Baz Moffat will keynote at the HCM Summit 2024. Find out more at [www.HCMmag.com/summit](http://www.HCMmag.com/summit)

More: [http://lei.sr/x5D9k\\_H](http://lei.sr/x5D9k_H)



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## Anytime Fitness signs UAE franchise deal

With a new master franchisee on board, the rollout of Anytime Fitness in the Middle East will get underway later this year, with the first club opening Dubai, following the move to the Middle East which is gripping the sector.

Parent company, Self Esteem Brands, has signed a master franchise deal with an investment group led by Mark Mobius – specialist in emerging marketing – along with fellow investor, John Ninia and two long-time Anytime Fitness Philippines franchise operators



L-R Wind, Matute, Runyon, Ninia, Mitchell, Mobius, Mortensen, Sy and van den Born



PHOTO: SELF ESTEEM BRANDS

**When we look at the places our brands can capture strong growth, the UAE is top of the list**

Sander van den Born

– Ben Matute and Richmond Sy – who are relocating to Dubai from the Philippines to drive the new business.

“When we look at the places where our presence and brands can make a meaningful difference and capture strong growth, the UAE is top of the list,” says Sander van den Born, executive VP, international at Self

Esteem Brands. “It’s also a testament to the strength of the Anytime Fitness model to see franchisees relocating from a successful region such as the Philippines to help set up operations in the UAE. We’re aligned on values and purpose.”

More: [http://lei.sr/E3W5C\\_H](http://lei.sr/E3W5C_H)

## Orr presents new strategy for The Gym Group



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP

**The Gym Group is planning to open more high-yielding locations in 2024**

Will Orr, CEO of The Gym Group, has revealed the company’s results for 2023, along with a new three-part strategy for the business, called Next Chapter.

The Gym Group (TGG) had a strong year in 2023, with revenues up by 18 per cent from £172.9 million to £204.0 million, thanks to growth in membership and an increase in yield.

The year closed with membership at 850,000 and this growth has continued into 2024, with the count reaching 909,000 as of March. The increases were driven by the opening of new sites.

In terms of yield, average revenue per member per month was up 9 per cent in 2023.

Orr said that while the focus in 2023 was on improving yield, the priority this year will be on driving



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP

**We aim to accelerate The Gym Group’s rollout over the next three years**

Will Orr, CEO, The Gym Group

member retention and lifetime value with more powerful engagement.

The new strategy will involve strengthening the core business, rolling-out more high-yielding sites and establishing new revenue streams.

● *Turn to page 122 for more details*

More: [http://lei.sr/A4h8Y\\_H](http://lei.sr/A4h8Y_H)



## The longest running one-to-one fitness event in Europe comes to chic Monte Carlo

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## Total Fitness sees post-COVID profits boost

Total Fitness has released results for its most recent financial year (to June 23), which saw a return to pre-COVID membership levels following a year-on-year uplift in membership numbers of 5 per cent.

Members also used the clubs more, with total visits up by 8 per cent. Revenues grew by 11 per cent to £39.97m and group EBITDA by 11 per cent to £5.1m.

The company made a bottom line profit of £271k on this turnover, making it one of the few large gym chains to turn a profit for two consecutive years since the pandemic.

In a trading update, it reported a record number of new memberships were sold in January 2024. Chief financial officer, Tom Rayner, said: "We're seen as an



PHOTO: TOTAL FITNESS

**High rates of engagement with members makes us less susceptible to economic pressure**

Tom Rayner

essential rather than a luxury by the majority of our members."

The company's financial position was boosted in recent years via a CVA (from April '21 to Feb '23), which it exited early, shedding £13.2m of losses at £0.48/£.

More: [http://lei.sr/r3V3z\\_H](http://lei.sr/r3V3z_H)



PHOTO: TOTAL FITNESS

The Women's Gym has been a trailblazing move

## New BSI guidelines for out of school activities

The British Standards Institution (BSI) has introduced safeguarding guidelines to protect children in out-of-school settings, such as health clubs and sports facilities.

The *Child Safeguarding: Provisions for out-of-school guidelines* are applicable to all providers of activities for children in out-of-school settings, offering a framework to embed safeguarding measures into governance, policies and procedural operations, including free or at-cost activities provided by paid staff or volunteers.



PHOTO: BSI

**The standard is intended to address the lack of statutory guidance**

Anne Hayes, British Standards Institution



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

BSI says out-of-school settings should have safeguarding policies in place

The launch follows the release of the *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse* report in 2022, which raised concerns that children were at risk in some out-of-school settings due to a failure of management to adhere to basic child protection standards.

It recommended that all those who come into contact with children should follow child protection

standards and have suitable policies and procedures in place and that safeguarding policies should be clear and easy to follow and implement.

"This standard is intended to address the lack of statutory guidance," said Anne Hayes, director of sectors at the British Standards Institution.

More: [http://lei.sr/M7P4a\\_H](http://lei.sr/M7P4a_H)



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## Jen Holland is new leader of Edinburgh Leisure

Edinburgh Leisure has appointed Jen Holland as chief executive, taking over from June Peebles in March.

Holland, an accountant, has been director of strategic commissioning and partnerships at Scottish Borders Council since March 2019 and has a wealth of sector experience and insight, having previously worked with various public sector and charity organisations, including Fife Cultural Trust, NHS Fife and Live Borders.

Holland is committed to continuing the community focus of



Edinburgh Leisure works to deliver health and wellbeing to the people of the city



PHOTO: EDINBURGH LEISURE

***I'm committed to continuing the community focus of Edinburgh Leisure***

*Jen Holland*

the organisation, saying: "Edinburgh Leisure has an incredible track record and commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Edinburgh through a huge variety of services, programmes and projects. I'm proud to be able to lead the organisation in the continuation of this work."

Scott Haldane, chair of Edinburgh Leisure's Board, paid tribute to long-standing chief executive, Peebles, saying her "outstanding leadership leaves an indelible mark on the business, exemplifying exceptional skills and a clear vision for performance".

More: [http://lei.sr/D7a8K\\_H](http://lei.sr/D7a8K_H)

## Everyone Active gains North Herts contracts



The look and feel of the North Herts centres will be similar to Harpenden

North Herts District Council has entered into a 10-year partnership with Everyone Active to run five of its leisure centres from 1 April.

The facilities were previously run by trust, Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL).

The contract covers North Herts Leisure Centre in Letchworth, one of the first leisure centres in the UK, which was built by Module 2 and opened by Queen Elizabeth II in February 1982, as well as Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, including Archers Health Club, Royston Leisure Centre, Letchworth Lido and Fearnhill Sports Centre.

A wide range of refurbishments and reprogramming are planned across the sites, including a full gym refurbishment at North Herts Leisure Centre this July.



PHOTO: EVERYONE ACTIVE

***We've got exciting developments in the pipeline for these fantastic centres***  
*Duncan Jefford, Everyone Active*

Hitchin Swimming Centre and Archers Health Club will benefit from a full gym refurbishment in spring 2025. A new group cycling studio will be added at Royston Leisure Centre this summer, followed by a new gym and dance studio in autumn 2025.

More: [http://lei.sr/4k6U6\\_H](http://lei.sr/4k6U6_H)

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## Phone data to help drive health interventions

The UK government acknowledged in its recent budget that economic recovery depends on the health of the nation, but failed to find the investment needed to boost the prevention agenda.

In a nod to the physical activity sector, health secretary Victoria Atkins said the health service would be investing in its NHS app to turn it into an exercise tracker, so doctors can make use of smartphone data. The NHS app could monitor patients' step counts and offer therapy.



PHOTO: UK PARLIAMENT

**The NHS will invest in the NHS app to turn it into an exercise tracker**

Victoria Atkins MP, UK health secretary



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANWAR

The NHS App could be used by doctors to track activity and prescribe exercise

It's not clear if this idea has been piloted to see how comfortable consumers are with having their steps tracked by their doctor, whether they would welcome therapy when delivered in this way or if it prompts them to uninstall the app.

Over the next three years – should the current government win this

year's general election – £3.4bn will be invested in "modernising the technology of the NHS", in many cases using AI. The government says that this would unlock £35bn worth of savings, and bring about efficiencies for NHS services.

More: [http://lei.sr/z456K\\_H](http://lei.sr/z456K_H)

## Myzone launches MZ-Open on smart watches



PHOTO: OLIVER

**MZ-Open makes Myzone available on smart watches**

Myzone is now available on smart watches, allowing Android and AppleWatch wearers to record workouts without an additional device, and taking the tech company into the multi-billion dollar smart watch market.

Myzone founder, Dave Wright, said the development of MZ-Open is in response to customer feedback, has been years in the making and is one of the most significant launches in the company's history.

Global CEO, David Stalker, says this reduces barriers to entry and will help more people join the Myzone community: "Our research proves that gym-goers engaged with Myzone remain members 24 per cent longer than those who don't, driving significant additional revenue for



PHOTO: MYZONE

**Gym-goers engaged with Myzone remain members 24 per cent longer**

David Stalker

operators while also creating healthy, active, long-term habits for individuals."

Myzone is used in more than 9,000 facilities across 84 countries, and Statista says that by 2028, the global smart watch market will be worth more than US\$62bn (£57bn, £49bn).

More: [http://lei.sr/c857y\\_H](http://lei.sr/c857y_H)

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INTERVIEW

Barbosa says Go Fit is a 'very democratic brand' that looks to serve the whole community








*Go Fit's value proposition is overwhelming. It makes us very attractive to a lot of people*

# Mário Barbosa

Go Fit is spreading its wings, with a five-year plan for growth and new projects already under construction in Italy.

Its new CEO speaks to Kate Cracknell

TECHNOGYM



Go Fit has reimagined public-private collaboration in Spain

### What excites you about Go Fit?

The company has a hugely powerful vision of creating the wellbeing infrastructure that society needs, inspiring individuals, families and communities to live healthier, more active, more sustainable lives.

We've redefined the model of public-private collaboration in Spain and are now entering the Italian market. We've been recognised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe as delivering best practice in public-private collaboration.

On average, we enter into 40-year agreements with local authorities and other social value-minded landowners, committing to delivering the investment and expertise to transform the wellbeing of local communities in a long-term, sustainable way.

Through our research body, the Go Fit Lab, we also put science and data at the heart of our business. People are looking for services that bring proven results, and our research evidences those results to give customers confidence in the proprietary Go Fit Method.

When you combine this with our huge breadth of facilities, products and services – an average of 50 team members to support you in every centre – and pricing that's always affordable and accessible, Go Fit's value proposition is overwhelming. It makes us very attractive to a lot of people.

Our research helps to open important doors; there's an incredible hunger from governments and policymakers for research- and evidence-

based best practice, and we're happy to share our data and insights with them.

We believe we should be doing this as an industry, not just as individual brands. Together, we must evidence our impact to stimulate the market, combat any possible notion of 'healthwashing' our business models, and gain strength as a sector. It's why Professor Alfonso Jimenez, our Go Fit Lab research director, not only pushes this agenda for our organisation, but also at EuropeActive and globally in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

In 2019, PricewaterhouseCoopers calculated Go Fit's social value in Spain to be €300m and now we're setting up social value monitoring site-by-site and in real-time with Alfonso and the Go Fit lab – this will launch in the next 12 months.

### Tell us more about Go Fit's social conscience.

I very much appreciate Go Fit's willingness to think long-term, making decisions because they're the right thing to do. For an example of taking good long-term decisions I can point to 2019, when the business invested in a 10-year green energy contract. ▶



PHOTO: GO FIT

Go Fit believes that social impact pays off

Post-COVID, more people recognise the health benefits of activity



*The goal is for all new centres to be Net Zero. Sustainability is something we're investing heavily in across the business*



PHOTO: GO FIT

INTERVIEW




PHOTO: GO FIT

Club revenues hit a record €77m in 2023



PHOTO: GO FIT



Families make up  
over 50 per cent of  
Go Fit's members

*We already have an incredible organisation,  
but we're humble enough to recognise there  
are still areas for continued improvement*

► It was a brave move, because when the deal was signed it was going to cost above-market prices, but it was the right move for the sustainable world we want to help build. In the end, we also saved millions during the energy crisis, but that wasn't why we did it.

Sustainability is something we're investing heavily in across the business because it's the right thing to do: the goal is for all new centres to be Net Zero.

We believe social impact pays off. I'm still sufficiently fresh in the sector not to feel able to offer too much advice to other operators, but I think Go Fit clearly shows how investing in society can also drive long-term commercial success.

#### **Tell us about your move from fast food to fitness**

I worked for McDonald's for 23 years, starting in Portugal as product manager and ultimately moving to the US as president of the east coast,

responsible for a P&L of more than US\$22bn. It was an exciting journey with an exciting company.

In 2022, as I took a moment to think about my next career steps, I was presented with a fantastic opportunity: to come back to Europe and Go Fit – a business where it's impossible not to feel excited as you step through the doors and with the move meaning a transition for me to a market that's young, dynamic and full of opportunity.

Especially since the start of COVID, attitudes around health and fitness have changed in a positive way: a McKinsey study shows that 81 per cent of people now recognise the health benefits of being active. So there's huge potential here, and what McDonald's taught me was how to evolve and adapt to new circumstances: seeking out the opportunities, looking beyond where one might normally look for inspiration, forging different paths to overcome new challenges. ►



- This is a mindset I'm excited to bring to Go Fit, where I believe the team is already best-in-market: passionate, with diverse backgrounds and expertise and zero complacency, even though Go Fit already has huge momentum and a proven social impact. Across the board, there's a powerful desire to continually improve and learn, which I find really interesting.

But then Gabriel Saez, founder of Go Fit, is a very special person, and in Go Fit he created something exceptional. I'm delighted he was so closely involved in the selection process and that he chose to hand the baton to me in January 2023.

#### How has your first year been?

I'm fortunate to be able to lead an incredible organisation that was already in great health and enjoying momentum. It afforded me the time to get to know the business, the market, the challenges. I've spent a lot of time in our centres, getting to know our people, understanding their needs, seeing how the centres work and how our frontline teams interact with customers.

I've also spent time with the CEOs of some of the largest brands in the sector, both domestically and internationally, listening to their thoughts on the purpose of the sector and the opportunities for growth and progression. I've really learned from them.

This has helped shape Go Fit's refreshed vision and new five-year plan. We already have an incredible organisation, but we're humble enough

to recognise that there are still areas for continued improvement if we want to move to the next level.

So it's been a year of transition, but we've still had an outstanding year, with record revenues of €77m in 2023, and €31m in EBITDA. This once again speaks to the quality of the team, which hasn't allowed itself to be distracted.

I would say those results, along with the team's total lack of complacency – their desire to keep improving – have been the two big highlights of my first year.

It's this desire to continually learn that has led to one of our first new initiatives: launching a Go Fit University in collaboration with King Juan Carlos University in Madrid.

What impresses me in this sector is that it's really seen as a profession; we want to reward this by finding and investing in new ways to retain and develop our people.

We'll offer certified continuous training that's adapted to our needs, addressing technical gaps in knowledge but also developing the skills we need to thrive in this changing world. We're laying the foundations for the years ahead.

#### Tell us about your five-year plan

This is a company that's already having a huge impact on the communities it serves, but there's lots of opportunity to achieve even greater scale and we have a clear plan to make that happen.



Barbosa is leading a fresh new vision, along with a five-year plan







*I would say those results, along with the team's total lack of complacency – their desire to keep improving – have been the two big highlights of my first year*

First, we talk a lot about relevance. How do we keep investing in the relevance of our offering and our products, responding to new trends and the changing demands of our customers? How do we bring the voice of the customer into the heart of our decision-making and how do we build a stronger emotional connection with all our customers?

We're a very democratic brand – we serve the whole community – and we need to connect with every customer segment in a way that's relevant, authentic and human. This human aspect is a big part of Go Fit, so we'll work hard to recruit and retain the talent that will help us adapt to the challenges and stay relevant.

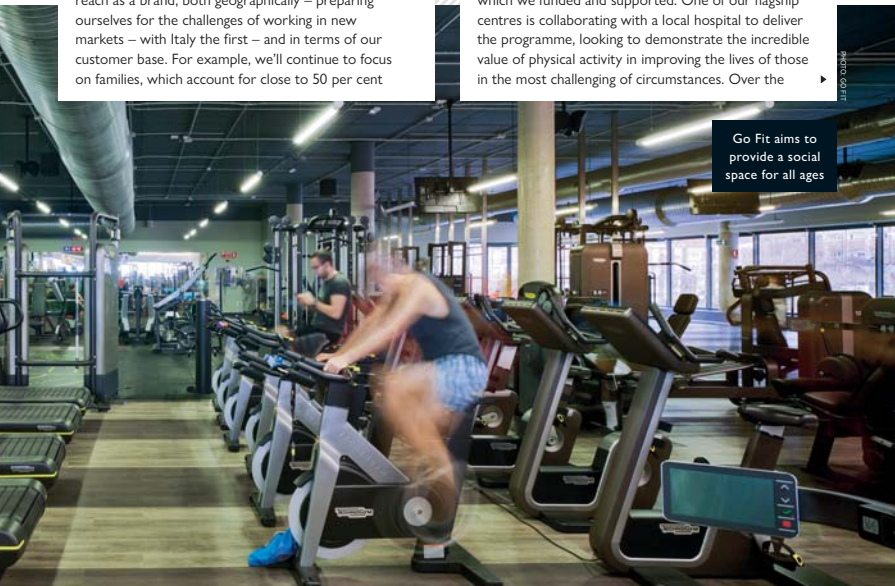
The second pillar is all about extending our reach as a brand, both geographically – preparing ourselves for the challenges of working in new markets – with Italy the first – and in terms of our customer base. For example, we'll continue to focus on families, which account for close to 50 per cent

of our business, but we're also seeing dramatically increased demand among seniors and we've become the new social club for young people too. How do we continue to deepen that richness and diversity?

Pillar three is about maximising our impact on society by unleashing the power of our greatest asset: our people. Our new Barrio Go Fit concept is a lovely example. 'Barrio' means 'neighbourhood' and it's an umbrella term that allows us to give a combined voice to our various community projects, show people what we're all about and help them feel part of Go Fit.

One great Barrio project that's being led by the Go Fit Lab is our breast cancer programme, which is being rolled out following three years of PhD research, which we funded and supported. One of our flagship centres is collaborating with a local hospital to deliver the programme, looking to demonstrate the incredible value of physical activity in improving the lives of those in the most challenging of circumstances. Over the

Go Fit aims to provide a social space for all ages



The brand will be taking its model from Spain to Italy

▶ coming years, we hope to scale it across the country as a flagship initiative of our Barrio Go Fit programme.

Finally, we're looking to further exploit new technology to enhance the experience of our customers and make us continuously more efficient.

#### You mentioned a growth in younger audiences?

We've reached close to 230,000 members in total – around 12,000 in each facility – and all our customer segments are returning and engaging with us. There's full optimism for the years ahead, but what's really interesting are the higher usage rates we're seeing in our existing centres.

We broke our all-time record as early as March 2023, far exceeding like-for-like pre-pandemic figures, and like many we've seen an intensification in usage among young people. Young people attend more in groups and they attend more frequently. We are the new youth club, a social place for young people to connect.

Meanwhile, we're seeing growing demand for strength training among women, as well as growing recognition of its health benefits among older adults. As a result, more than 40 per cent of customers now use our free weights areas frequently, up from 25 per cent.

We're seeing great hunger from all customer groups for personal training and other additional products, too.

So there's definitely a change in the way people are using our centres, and we've been interrogating our product and service models to ensure what we offer is the most effective and relevant for this changing user profile.

We've already doubled our free weight areas and added starting points to every location to help engage

new joiners. We've expanded our functional areas and designed new spaces and layouts, including new recovery zones. We're seeing a greater use of our outdoor spaces – a merging of outdoor and indoor training. Our app is helping us deliver a seamless customer experience. And we have new options for premium membership tiers including personal training.

#### What are Go Fit's plans for Italy?

We're very excited by Italy. Our model doesn't exist there yet – there's no successful model of sustainable public-private collaboration – and with our approach generally involving the regeneration of abandoned buildings and areas of cities, we expect there to be significant interest from local authorities across the country.

We believe our value proposition will be of great relevance to the Italian population, too. At the moment, the market is characterised by either low-cost or premium clubs: there's nobody offering Go Fit's variety of products and services at our affordable price point. In fact, in the decades ahead, we believe Italy has the potential to become as big a market as Iberia for us – potentially bigger.

Our first project is in Turin where we're converting an historic flower market into a flagship Go Fit. ▶



## On site with **Go Fit**

### ■ Santa Cruz, Tenerife

Project Type: Public-private partnership concession  
Go Fit Investment: €20m  
Opening Date: H1 2025  
Built Area: 25,000sq m

### ■ The Flower Market, Turin

Project Type: Private project  
Go Fit Investment: €19m  
Opening Date: H2 2025  
Built Area: 14,500 sq m  
Outdoor area: 2,000sq m

### ■ The Lido, Milan

Project Type: Public-private partnership concession  
Go Fit Investment: €25m  
Opening Date: H1 2026  
Built Area: 20,000sq m  
Outdoor area: 84,000 sq m



*We are the new youth club, a social space for young people to connect*



Go Fit is attracting younger members and more seniors



Go Fit will accelerate growth with new openings in 2025

*We've had an outstanding year, with record revenues of €77m and €31m in EBITDA in 2023.*

- ▶ We've purchased this building ourselves and are in construction now, with a plan to open in 2025.

Our first public-private concession is Milan Lido, a huge area in the centre of the city where we've entered into a 40-year agreement. We're responsible not only for building the centre but also regenerating the park: the green areas, lake and so on. We've started construction, but the size of the project means we expect to open in 2026. When it's done, we believe it will inspire many other cities to look at opportunities to collaborate with us.

#### What are your expansion plans elsewhere?

We currently have 18 centres in Spain, with a 19th to come in Tenerife in 2025. It's the largest infrastructure investment in the Canary Islands, with a lot of excitement in the community.

Our intention moving forward is to open two locations a year, starting with Turin and Tenerife in 2025, then Milan Lido and another location in Italy in 2026. We have a clear focus on Italy for now, but Spain is and always will be a very important market for us: we already have a couple more projects being developed there. We also have two centres in Portugal, and will look at other opportunities that arise there.

We believe our model could work well in other markets and see the UK as a big opportunity, with no shortage of partners keen to progress with us.

So Italy is our priority for now, and our systematic approach will see us launch and get results in one market before moving on to the next. But we will definitely continue to explore the UK, taking one step at a time.

#### And what can you tell us about your growth forecasts generally?

2024 is looking positive so far. We're expecting a steady growth in revenues this year before accelerating from 2025 as we start opening new centres.

We've set out ambitious aims to double our revenues and EBITDA over the next five years.

Bigger picture, we want to grow the company; enter new markets and prove our model can work; continue to inspire individuals, families and communities to be more active, healthy and sustainable; support the conversation in our sector around social impact, showing how we can create the wellbeing infrastructure our society so badly needs; and ultimately redefine the category we're so proud to be a part of, by demonstrating the immense contribution that we make.



PHOTO: GO FIT

## Go Fit What's inside?

**Barbosa explains: “A Go Fit facility is a vast playground of wellbeing,** with a range of activities on offer that cater to fitness enthusiasts, first timers and everything in between.

“We strive to provide a complete value proposition in terms of its affordability, scale, convenience, breadth of offer and universal consumer appeal. Our standard facility mix involves an extensive water area with 25m pools, group activity pools and spa recuperation areas, and a very large health and fitness area of at least 1,300sq m, equipped with top-of-market equipment – historically Artis by Technogym

“There are four 250sq m group activity rooms which cater for a programme of more than 1,000 group activity classes per month; an outdoor training zone or terrace; outdoor areas such as gardens and pools; family areas including dedicated kids zones; and – depending on the needs of local partners – additional facilities such as sports halls and courts for tennis and padel.

### **This is the hardware of Go Fit**

“On paper, it reads like any other large facility and many have sought to replicate the designs, facility mix and concept, but it's not the hardware that defines us, it's the way in which we operate – the



A Go Fit club is  
‘a vast playground  
of wellbeing’



*We strive to provide a complete value proposition in terms of its affordability, scale, convenience, breadth of offer and universal consumer appeal*

Go Fit Method that curates the customer journey of each customer, the culture of our team and the way we maximise our impact on the local community.

“This ‘software’ of the organisation – in contrast to the hardware of the box – is impossible to replicate in its entirety. It's this that delivers the differential experience and results that we enjoy, with an average of nearly 12,000 customers in each Go Fit site and an outsized social value.” ●



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## *Everyone's talking about...*

# Mental health training

Now mental health is the number one reason for people to join a health club, do fitness professionals need a grounding in counselling to offer a more holistic service? Kath Hudson asks the experts

When people are processing trauma, they often want to throw some punches





*The idea that there is a distinction between physical health and mental health is completely arbitrary*

PHOTO: ANDREW KEEFE

## Andrew Keefe

**EMDR psychotherapist and personal trainer**

It's important for gyms to start responding to people's need for mental health support because it's already happening. Many people are joining gyms to help with their anxiety and depression and are often more inclined to do this as their first port of call, rather than seek out a therapist.

PTs are often good listeners, so it's a natural progression for them to learn some counselling skills.

The idea that there's a distinction between physical health and mental health is completely arbitrary. I encourage colleagues on both sides to talk to each other more because there's an enormous amount to gain. Eventually I'd like us to get to a point where we don't have PTs and psychotherapists, but one training that incorporates both the body and the mind.

I chose to train as a personal trainer because of my own experience. Twelve years ago I was the clinical director of a charity that rehabilitated survivors of torture. It was stressful and I got very unfit, so I started going to BMF's bootcamps. By the time I'd done the workout and cycled home I felt so chilled it inspired me to introduce physical techniques with my own clients.

I also started working with EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) which is about processing trauma stored in the body and noticed that when people were reliving memories of assaults, or other trauma, they wanted to move and often to throw some punches.



Movement can help with all the body's stress responses: fight, flight and freeze. With fight or flight it releases the adrenaline created when the sympathetic nervous system is activated. Although the freeze response is mainly parasympathetic, it also contains sympathetic activity as it's a result of the fight or flight response: adrenaline is released and instructions are sent from the brain to the body to fight or flee. If the brain decides neither of these will work the body freezes.

The theory is that to fully bring someone out of freeze and resolve trauma, you need to complete the instruction to fight or run, as that's the only way to switch off the signal. Once the movement is completed, the brain will be satisfied they're safe and the freeze state is lifted.

This idea comes from Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, the work of Pat Ogden. She recommends having a client punch a cushion or run on the spot. My view is why stop there, which is why I use Boxercise and running in my work.

Although I'd love to see colleagues in fitness and mental health broaden their skills, it's a big commitment for a PT to become a psychotherapist. However, there are levels of counselling that can be undertaken, as well as Mental Health First Aid training. Other options are to make friends with local psychotherapists: wouldn't it be great if every gym had a therapist coming in one day a week? ▶

## Hugh Hanley

Head of personal training  
PureGym

There's an ever increasing awareness of wellbeing being influenced by nutrition, recovery, sleep, the environment, stress levels and overall mindset, so it's vital that the fitness industry looks at the bigger picture and views health holistically.

We believe gym floor trainers need to have a broad understanding of five components of wellbeing – movement, nourishment, environment, recovery and mindset – and how they contribute to an individual's health.

At PureGym we're empowering our trainers to support all aspects of health and wellbeing with the introduction of a Coaching Wellbeing course. Run by FuturePractice and led by subject matter expert, Oliver Patrick, this has helped our team to

understand what wellbeing means as a proposition for members.

We're also putting in place training to help our teams to support their own mental resilience, with a mental fitness course in partnership with Tribbox. As well as equipping our trainers with tools to support their own mental health, it will foster better emotional intelligence to enable them to coach and understand their clients.

The evolution of science means it's becoming easier to personalise training and improve overall health.

We've already noticed people are seeking wellness coaches to support the different aspects of their holistic health, such as sleep, nourishment and fitness, which has positive implications for the gym industry, as members seek more guidance beyond their physical health.



PHOTO: SHANE O'CONNOR

*Expectations of fitness staff will increase over time as members seek more guidance beyond their physical health*



PHOTO: SHANE O'CONNOR / FUTUREPRACTICE

The principles of trauma-informed weight lifting are: do less harm, then do good



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / GROUND PEARL



## Jo Hazell-Watkins

Co-founder  
The Soma Space

I came to fitness after suffering a period of mental illness and discovering how effective working on my physical strength was in terms of managing my symptoms. This experience made me

appreciate the barriers to physical exercise which living with a mental health condition can present, as well as the barriers the gym environment presents to many people with its one-size-fits-all approach and use of unrepresentative models in marketing.

Wanting to work with the whole body, including the feelings and emotions, I embarked on a range of qualifications to bring together both mind and body training, including PT, exercise on referral, trauma-informed weightlifting ([www.tiwl.org](http://www.tiwl.org)) and counselling. With this approach I love

seeing clients develop the ability to tune into their health, discover confidence and better self-esteem and start to invest in themselves.

For fitness professionals to start supporting the mental health of clients there needs to be a minimum of Mental Health First Aid and basic listening skills training and the knowledge of how to signpost to other services. Furthermore, operators should be pushing back against toxic diet culture, using marketing imagery which reflects real people and talking more about how exercise makes us feel psychologically. There also needs to be more understanding of the barriers many people encounter when entering the gym environment and a commitment to removing them.

*I embarked on a range of qualifications to bring together both mind and body training, including trauma-informed weightlifting*



## Jessica Parkinson

Head of holistic and mind  
Gymbox

Stress and burnout are a pandemic in themselves and more chronic conditions can come from excessive stress, such as obstructive sleep apnoea and high blood pressure. As a population we need to tackle this crisis where people feel they have to achieve all the time. This was the reason for Gymbox launching its holistic and mind category last October. Our classes aren't clinical, we've just upskilled a number of our holistic teachers to offer a suite of classes that address mental health.

These include 'Catch some ZZZs' which uses breathwork and progressive muscle relaxation to promote a good night's sleep. 'Cocoon', where members can chill out in a hammock after a stressful

“  
We need to tackle  
this crisis where  
people feel they  
have to achieve  
all the time

day. 'Regulate' provides a safe space to soothe the nervous system through journaling, visualisation and regulation techniques.

We also bring in breathing techniques, such as pranayama and buteyko; hot relaxation wrapped in a sauna blanket and other modalities to regulate the nervous system, including EFT tapping, sound therapy and chakra focus.

Our 'Weight Lifted' class is aimed at people who are feeling stressed and combines therapeutic tremoring, tension release exercises and deep relaxation.

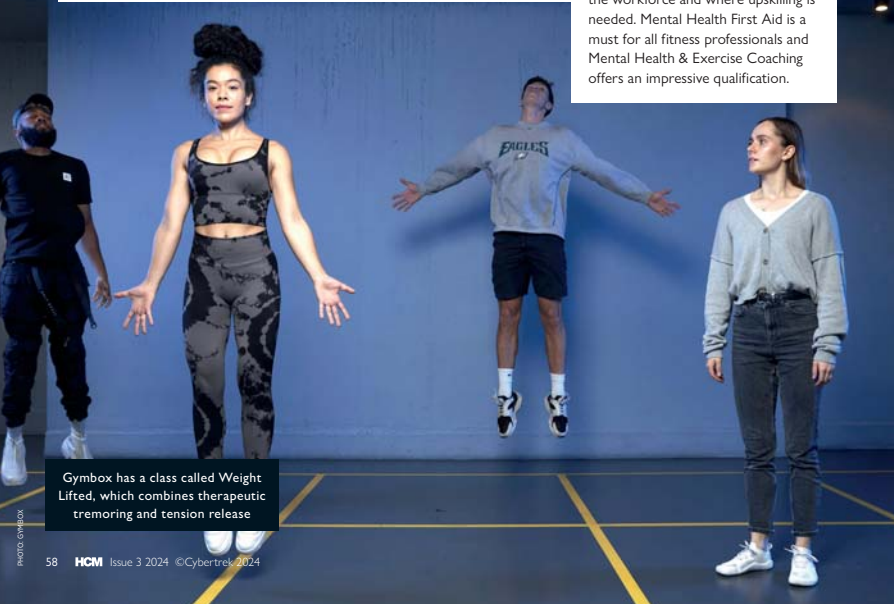


PHOTO: GYMBOX

When supporting clients with their mental health it's important to stay in our lane and know when to refer on. Although we can help people to find that link between mind and body, most of us aren't therapists so must be able to signpost if necessary.

At Gymbox, we have four different avenues to signpost clients: the GP, Psychology Today and the Hub of Hope app, as well as more immediate help, such as the Mind helpline.

To offer mental health support, the first step for gyms is to appoint someone to pull the programme together, identify which skills exist in the workforce and where upskilling is needed. Mental Health First Aid is a must for all fitness professionals and Mental Health & Exercise Coaching offers an impressive qualification.



Gymbox has a class called Weight Lifted, which combines therapeutic tremoring and tension release





*Workouts are a great time for people to talk because they're releasing hormones such as serotonin that help them be more aware, open and optimistic*



## **Dan Hancock**

**Founder**

**Mental Health & Exercise Coaching**

**M**any gym-goers open up to their trainers about personal issues. In my own experience as a PT I realised my clients were often struggling with deeper issues than the typical surface level reason for hiring

a coach. As a result, I developed methodologies to use exercise as a tool to improve their mental health, which led to me creating the Award in Mental Health & Exercise Coaching three years ago. Since then we've trained more than 300 coaches across the UK – in partnership with The Gym Group – as well as Europe, the US and Australia.

We teach fitness professionals how to talk to clients about their mental health during exercise, using

a tool called Informal Exercise Therapy. Workouts are a great time for people to talk about their issues, because they're releasing hormones such as serotonin that help them be more aware, open and optimistic.

Anyone can sign up to the MHEC Award: it's a 12-month programme, which can be completed online with one-to-two hours' learning week. Find out more: [www.mymhec.com](http://www.mymhec.com)

## **Victor Brick**

**Founder**

**John W Brick Mental Health Foundation**

**T**wo major research surveys, one conducted by Euromonitor and the other conducted by Well to Do, found the main reason people worked out was for mental wellbeing. Not to get bigger or to get smaller, like in the 'good old days'.

The best way to be successful in business is to give people what they want, so this is the path to take not just for humanitarian reasons, but also for business reasons.

Globally, we're in the middle of a health pandemic but at the beginning of a mental wellbeing renaissance. People are more focused on their mental health and

wellbeing than ever and they are asking for help. Evidence-based research has conclusively shown that movement and exercise should be included in any protocol for the treatment of mental illness and the promotion of mental wellbeing, so fitness professionals need to be equipped with the skills to support individuals in this respect.

We need to know what mental wellbeing benefits can be gained through holistic self-care approaches and how best to communicate these benefits. To this end, the John W Brick Mental Health Foundation has created the Mental Wellbeing Association, which is focused on developing certifications for different industries. The first certification, released at the end of March 2024, is for fitness professionals. Find out more at [www.johnwbrickfoundation.org](http://www.johnwbrickfoundation.org)



*We're in the middle of a health care pandemic but at the beginning of a mental wellbeing renaissance*

*Technogym has an incredible reputation and delivers so much support beyond the equipment itself*

”



Andrew Cox, director of sport and physical activity, Goodwin Sports Centre

# TRANSITION TO WELLNESS

University of Sheffield Sport has opened the doors of its flagship Goodwin Sports Centre following a major refurbishment

In 2022, students at the University of Sheffield were surveyed to find out if sport was important to their student experience and 94 per cent said it was. This is a clear indication of the value of physical activity as a personal and social outlet.

In 2023, the university refurbished the gym at its Goodwin Sports Centre, with cutting-edge Technogym solutions. Andrew Cox, director of sport and physical activity believes the refurbishment will support the next phase of the university's strategy, saying: "The Goodwin Sports Centre is the heart of the community and this major refurbishment will enable more people to get involved in physical activity and enjoy the connections sport can bring.

"This is the start of a phase of investments that will strengthen sports and activity as the heartbeat of our university community."

**“We want our future sports centre to act as a co-location for health and wellbeing services, furthering our connections with GP referrals and digital health platforms”**

## Future-proofing with quality solutions

The University of Sheffield plans to build an entirely new sport and physical activity centre in the near future, so this final refurbishment of the Goodwin Sports Centre needed top-of-the-range products to take it through this phase.

"Technogym was our first choice of equipment partner," said Cox. "It understands the challenges faced by operators of fitness facilities in higher education and is also the premium choice across every sector. The company has an incredible reputation and delivers so much support beyond the equipment itself."

Sport and physical activity facilities contribute to the student experience in a number of measurable ways beyond fitness. The Goodwin Sports Centre gym caters for recreational users, elite athletes, and BUCS sports teams, while also supporting international students as they settle in.

"Having a top-quality gym is a big selling point for student recruitment, and contributes massively to the student experience," said Cox. "Physical activity can really help first-year and international students settle in and make friends and it helps students stay fit and healthy, which supports their academic work."

## Reflecting changing exercise trends

Technogym ensured the equipment selection, design, and zoning of the refurbished gym would cater to modern



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

fitness trends such as strength training, functional fitness, small group sessions and digital content.

The gym is set over two floors, with platforms and weights on the lower floor, and cardio, functional training upstairs.

With design advice and equipment recommendations from Technogym, Cox and his team have been able to achieve the optimal balance of cardio and strength while retaining flexibility of space for users and personal trainers.

"Technogym helped us design a cutting-edge gym that makes an impact as soon as you walk through the doors," says Cox. "We knew we needed more lifting platforms, plates, cables, and strength equipment, as well as content-rich cardio and the new equipment has had amazing feedback from users."

#### **At the heart of the University community**

Upgrading to Technogym's multi-use equipment with a small footprint has meant the University can get a lot of quality products into the gym, while freeing up space to increase flow.

"Technogym products look great and help us support beginners, recreational users, and elite athletes, and enables our personal trainers to deliver a higher standard of coaching," says Cox. "Technogym puts a lot of thought and research into its designs. The equipment is user-friendly, with the complicated stuff being taken

care of by the advanced technology, content and data capture capabilities of the Technogym eco-system."

University of Sheffield Sport chose Technogym's advanced cardio equipment with built-in content to motivate and coach users. Members are already saying they enjoy their sessions more and stay engaged longer than on the previous equipment.

#### **Advanced equipment, valuable data capture**

Using Technogym App helps University of Sheffield Sport capture valuable user data, helping them make more data-informed decisions on future investments.

"One of the many benefits of partnering with Technogym is that it's ahead of global consumer trends and trends in the higher education sector," said Cox. "We can now combine our own user data with advice from Technogym to stay ahead of fitness themes."

"We also want our future sports centre to act as a co-location for health and wellbeing services," says Cox. "We'll be looking at ways to further our connections with GP referrals and leverage digital health platforms to encourage people to engage."

"The new equipment at Goodwin Sports Centre will play a key role in understanding how we need to move forward," says Cox. "I'm confident Technogym will support us through this next phase with advice, staff training, after sales support and trend analysis." ●

● More: [www.technogym.com](http://www.technogym.com)

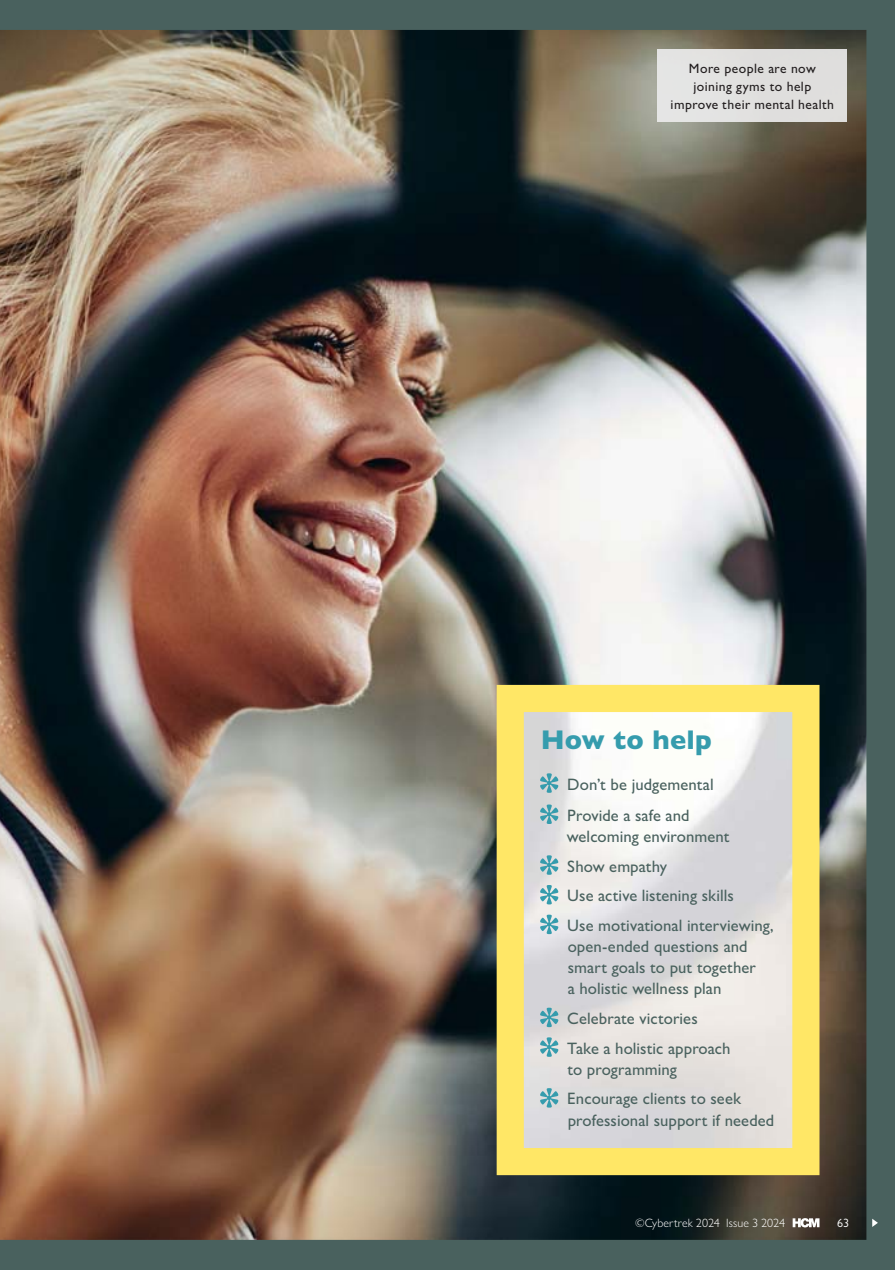
# MENTAL WELLNESS

As more people join clubs to support their mental health, fitness professionals need to be empowered to take a holistic approach. Kath Hudson shares useful tools discussed at the ACE summit on mental health

**M**ental ill health is on the rise around the world, with the World Health Organization reporting that 280 million people globally suffer from depression. However, exercise has been proven to help and for the first time, more people are joining gyms in the US for their mental health than their appearance.

Introducing the ACE Health and Fitness Summit, Dr Sabrena Jo, ACE's director of science and research emphasised the importance of fitness professionals being able to support these clients, while also acknowledging that support given in health clubs can't be a replacement for professional mental health care.

Many speakers emphasised the point that fitness professionals should start by incorporating mental health practices into their own lives to support their own holistic health, before using it to support their clients. ▶



More people are now joining gyms to help improve their mental health

## How to help

- \* Don't be judgemental
- \* Provide a safe and welcoming environment
- \* Show empathy
- \* Use active listening skills
- \* Use motivational interviewing, open-ended questions and smart goals to put together a holistic wellness plan
- \* Celebrate victories
- \* Take a holistic approach to programming
- \* Encourage clients to seek professional support if needed

# MOVEMENT



*If a client is unmotivated, encourage them to change their routine*

Encourage members to move every hour and get outside in nature as much as possible

## Karson McGinley

### Movement for Mental Health

There is a plethora of research to show how positive movement is for mental health. Physical activity improves neurochemistry (function), neuroplasticity (making new connections) and neurogenesis (making neurons). Regular aerobic exercise also increases the size of the hippocampus – the area of the brain which deals with verbal memory and learning – which otherwise decreases with age.

Exercise ticks all the boxes in positive psychology's PERMA model of wellbeing: **positive emotions, engagement, social relationships, meaning and accomplishment**, so when planning a class, aim to make it fun and offer the opportunity for people to get into flow state. Encourage those in the class to interact – smile, make eye contact or learn



people's names. Build in challenges and progression and encourage them to pay attention to how they're improving, as well as acknowledging how far they've come.

To help clients to reach their activity goals, encourage them to plan the week ahead on Sundays, establishing habits and non-negotiables. Choose something they enjoy and remove friction by laying out their yoga mat, or putting their trainers by the door.

Encourage them to move every hour or so throughout the day and to get outside in nature as much as possible.

If the client is unmotivated, encourage them to change their routine: maybe by picking up an activity or sport they used to enjoy, or by trying something brand new. Any exercise is better than nothing and small bouts add up. Although 10,000 steps may seem a daunting target, encourage them to start by doubling their daily step count.



## Erika Quest

Founder, Level-Up movement



Breathing is one of the few bodily systems we have control over and how we breathe influences the brain-state, so introducing some breathing exercises at the start or end of a class is a great way to educate people on how to regulate their stress levels. Encourage people to bring the breathing exercises into their daily routine, especially when they're feeling stressed.

One of the common problems impacting so many of us is getting stuck in the fight or flight response when we feel under pressure. Using breathing exercises can move us from the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) into the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest state) and it's easy to do. ▶



*Introducing breathing exercises at the start or end of a class is a great way to educate people on how to regulate stress*

# BREATHWORK

## Breathing exercises to add to a class

**Balancing breath:** while sitting down, breathe in for six and out for six. Scan your body to see if you're holding tension anywhere, such as the jaw.

**Physiological sigh:** a simple technique if you are stressed. Take a deep drink of air in through the nose, pause, sip in a bit more, then let it out through the mouth with a long, slow breath.

**Box breathing:** in for four, hold for four, out for four and hold for four. Do for one to two minutes and notice if thoughts have calmed and the heart rate slowed.

**Restorative breath:** Close off one nostril with the thumb, breathe in deeply, then close off the opposite nostril and exhale. Repeat evenly with both nostrils.

**Recovery breath:** inhale for four and exhale for eight. Incorporate this as part of a gratitude practice at the start or end of the day. Think about what you have in your life and what you might want to say yes or no to.



How we breathe influences the brain-state

Mental health is linked to a healthy microbiome, fuelled by natural foods

# DIET

## Dr Rachele Pojednic

CEO, Strong Process Education



It's important not to get too involved in advising around the subject of food, which is complicated and frequently has an element of emotion attached, so meal plans should be left to nutritionists or dietitians. However, understanding the basics can be useful.

A diet which is rich in fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, whole proteins (especially chicken and fish) and olive oil has been proven to be most beneficial to mental health.

On the flip side, diets with high intakes of confectionery items, butter, high-fat cheese, added sugars, and low intakes of fresh fruit and vegetables are associated with a higher risk of depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Added sugar can lead to chronic inflammation, increased blood pressure and can have an impact on depression, anxiety and the immune system. It's also best to avoid ultra-processed foods.

The body loves Omega fatty acids, especially Omega 3 – from fish and vegetable oils – which is important for brain function and to reduce inflammation. Most people don't get enough Omegas in their diet, which

*The body loves omega fatty acids, especially Omega 3, which is important for brain function*

is where supplements shine, but stick to the daily dose recommendations for all supplements, as taking too much can also be problematic, as over-nourishment brings its own problems. The Omegas (3,6,7 and 9) need to be consumed in the correct proportions.

There's increasing research about how important gut health is for mental health, as the brain and gut communicate. Gut microbiota – the beneficial bacteria living in the digestive tract – play an important role in this. We all host thousands of species and our microbiomes are as unique as our fingerprints.

Good mental health is correlated with a diverse microbiome and people suffering from depression tend to have a less rich microbiota. Fibre, from the exterior wall of plant cells, is the preferred habitat of gut bacteria.



*We need to spend time every night in each of the five stages of sleep*

Avoid brain wave activity, such as social media or watching the news for a couple of hours before bed

## Ryan Glatt

FitBrain director, Pacific Neuroscience Institute



PHOTO: PACIFIC NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE

Although it often slips into the background of other fitness goals, sleep is vital for our overall wellbeing and mental health.

Less sleep quality and quantity can reduce oxygenation to the brain, leading to reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive function such as memory and impulse control. It also leads to reduced activity in the hippocampus; higher levels of amyloid plaque leading to neurodegeneration and a higher risk of Alzheimer's. Additionally lack of sleep impacts the glymphatic system – the brain's waste clearance system.

Adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep a night, but adding more hours is not necessarily better, it's the quality of sleep which has been shown to drive the mental health outcomes. We need to spend time every night in each of the five stages of sleep.

In order to improve sleep, there are a few important recommendations: avoid fast brain wave activity for a couple of hours before bed, for example social media or watching the news. Environmental factors play their part: sound and light levels, temperature, people and pets. Alcohol, caffeine, hydration levels, medication and supplements all impact sleep quality.

Exercise is important, but not too close to bedtime. Napping can reduce sleep drive and stimulants such as caffeine can mask tiredness. Nutrition is important, as is managing stress levels, so a good night's sleep really is impacted by how one spends the day. ▶

# SLEEP

# CONSUMER GOALS

## Reena Vokoun

Founder and CEO, Passion Fit



STUDIES SHOW CONSUMERS HAVE CHANGED.

They're now more focused on preventative health, their relationships with other people and how they feel about themselves. They're seeking happiness and peace and looking to decrease their anxiety and stress. This is more important than their weight, how they look or material success.

According to the Centre for Disease Control, loneliness and social isolation can be as detrimental to our health as smoking and obesity, potentially leading to depression, anxiety, stroke and dementia. Conversely, being socially connected positively impacts longevity and self-esteem, makes us more collaborative, trusting and emotionally intelligent as individuals, as well as more conscious of the power of our actions, behaviours and words.

As consumers' goals are changing, the fitness industry can make a huge impact. While staying within their scope of practice, fitness professionals should look to incorporate the following into their own lives and then into their work with clients:

\* **Self care** has become a buzzword, but it's human nature to prioritise others at the detriment of ourselves. Seven out of 10 people say they know they need to self-care but often neglect it. We all need to claim time for ourselves to prevent burnout, so look after yourself and also talk to your members and clients about how self-care might look for them.

\* **Mindfulness** is a wonderful tool to combat stress and even five minutes a day is beneficial. This could take the form of meditation and breathing exercises at the start or end of a class.

\* Think about how you can create **social connections and community** among your clients. This could be encouraging interaction within classes, or looking for opportunities to expand beyond that, such as wellness retreats, workshops, fun events, hikes, or bike rides.

\* People can get overwhelmed when **changing behaviours**, so take it one step at a time and make it simple. For example, if they need to eat more vegetables, just add one more vegetable to their dinner menu each week and encourage them to associate a positive feeling with the action to keep them motivated.

\* **Progress isn't linear** and if they take two steps back, reassure them that they haven't failed. Some say it takes 66 days for an action to become a habit, then you can focus on the next change. ●

Clubs should think about how they can create social connections between their members



*Consumers are seeking happiness and peace, and looking to decrease anxiety and stress*



# Shared ethos

The partnership between PureGym and Belfast-based supplier BLK BOX is transforming the gym floor

PureGym is growing globally and in the UK



PHOTO: PUREGYM

Ever since BLK BOX won the tender to supply a bespoke Functional Training Zone concept to all PureGym's UK sites in 2018, the enthusiastic adoption of this form of training by members has been gathering pace at the operator's 370 clubs.

As PureGym sets its sights on global expansion – with BLK BOX as a trusted partner and supplier – the Functional Training Zones are maturing from a 'concept-within-a-concept', into an integrated core offer.

Commercial director of BLK BOX, Miles Canning, says: "When we embarked on the contract with PureGym, there was trepidation in the market that functional fitness might be too hard-hitting for the average gym member.

"However, we were able to deliver a softer introduction to functional and strength training that fitted into the PureGym environment. This included everything from the concept, design, manufacture, delivery and installation, through to the education of PTs on how functional training can be delivered.

"The fact we were able to install these zones in 150 PureGym sites in the first 18 months is testament to how quickly the concept was taken up by members and it's been one of PureGym's most successful launches ever."

The Functional Training Zones were designed as flexible spaces, adaptable for one-to-one workouts and group classes. They included a Goliath series





BLK BOX has been working with PureGym to fit out functional areas



Photo: PureGym

Photo: PureGym



functional rig, agility turf flooring, smart storage and a range of BLK BOX equipment, designed and manufactured at the company's factory in Belfast.

### Moving into the mainstream

As the popularity of functional training continues to grow, so the PureGym/BLK BOX relationship has evolved, with the line between 'regular' gym offerings and functional training becoming blurred.

Initially the Functional Training Zones covered 1,000sq ft, but more recent installations have morphed into larger combined functional and free weight zones that cover up to 5,200sq ft.

With PureGym being the UK's largest gym operator, with around 1.5 million customers, the collaboration is bringing this combined experience to many more people.

PureGym plans to continue its UK and international expansion and BLK BOX is supplying functional, free weights and accessories to sites in Denmark, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia as a result.

*The synergy between PureGym and BLK BOX has been key to our success in developing the functional and strength training zones that have become integral to our gyms*

**Richard Annetts, PureGym**



On-site installations at PureGym

BLK BOX has an end-to-end supply chain, meaning total quality control

Ben Stocks, MD of BLK BOX says: "Each country presents cultural and logistical challenges that operators and suppliers must navigate, however, BLK BOX already had market knowledge and experience of working in Saudi Arabia, which helped get the ball rolling.

"Since 2019, we've had to navigate challenges presented by pandemic lockdowns, supply chain disruptions and Red Sea shipping delays. Full transparency and accurate forecasting from both sides have helped steer us through and our partnership is as strong as ever."

### Global expansion

For its next phase of growth, PureGym has plans to open sites across the UK and Switzerland, to invest in and optimise its Danish estate and expand internationally through franchising.

While some suppliers might struggle to keep up with such an ambitious rollout, BLK BOX is built on firm 'Made in Northern Ireland' foundations. It has control of its end-to-end supply chain, bolstered by in-house teams covering design through to installation, as well as products with built-in scalability and industry-beating lead times.

Canning says: "For BLK BOX to be able to adapt, scale and deliver on all PureGym's goals and support its vision means the relationship has already been a success and we look forward to what the continuing partnership will bring."



Richard Annetts, head of gym format and equipment at PureGym, says: "The BLK BOX team's willingness to invest resources and proactive support towards PureGym's objectives demonstrates a pace and ethos that mirrors our own.

"The synergy between our teams has been key to our success in developing the functional and strength training zones that have become integral to our gyms.

"The next 12 months will be particularly exciting in Denmark as we roll out a significant investment programme, within which we'll be trailing a number of new products from BLK BOX," he says.

"With this continued focus on innovation, BLK BOX will help us to maintain our commercial edge, delivering substantial value to our members and leading the way in gym offerings." ●

More: [www.BLKBOXFITNESS.com](http://www.BLKBOXFITNESS.com)

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Life  
Lessons

# SONDRÉ GRAVIR

Imposter syndrome about a promotion taught the CEO of SATS that behaving authentically is the most important part of leadership. He talks to Kath Hudson

**A**n experience which has had a big impact on my career, and especially how I lead teams, is when I took over as acting CEO for a regional newspaper. Previous to that I'd been a line manager and it was a big step up, at short notice, with a lot of responsibility.

I didn't feel I had enough experience and was insecure about taking the position. To prepare myself, I thought about the leaders who had inspired me and made up this picture in my head about how I should act as a CEO. I tried to play the role of this theoretical version of a leader I had made up, but I ended up behaving more like a cartoon character. It was a disaster and I didn't gain any trust from the team.

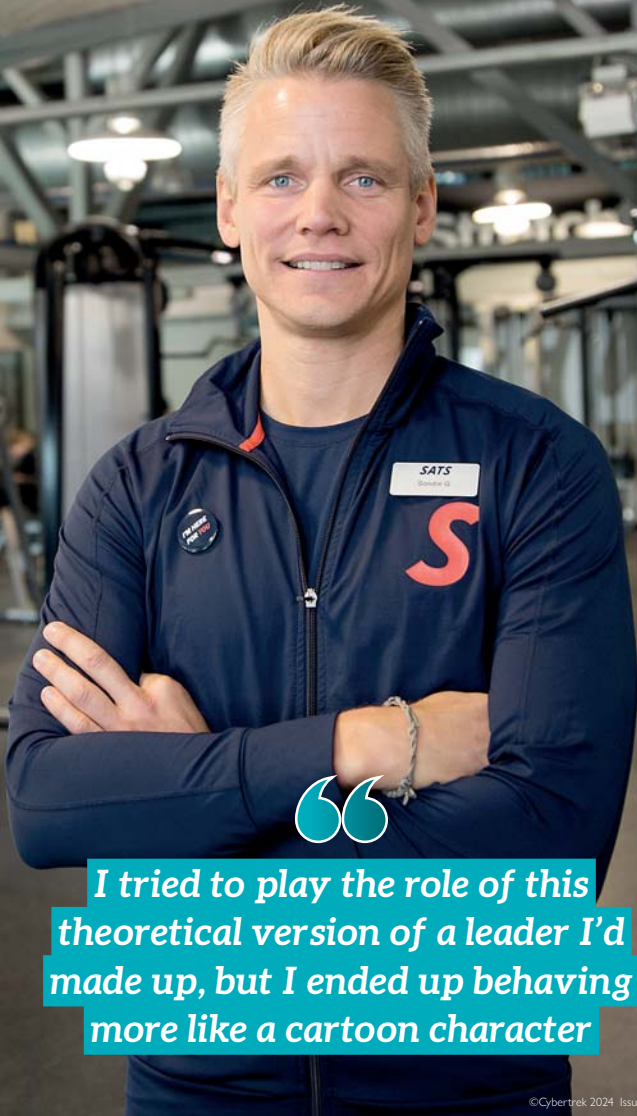
After a couple of weeks I had to fly back to Oslo to meet my mentor and I explained the situation. I

remember he said to me: "Why don't you just be the person that you are in your private life? Don't try to play a role that you're not comfortable with." After taking his advice, it worked out well over time and I built a very strong relationship with my colleagues.

The biggest learning for me was that when you take leadership positions you have to act as yourself. I want people at work to see me as the same person my friends do. If the way you are doesn't fit the role you're stepping into, you have to take the consequences. Do something else – change your job – don't try to change yourself.

Of course, you can always try to improve and develop as a leader, but you cannot change your personality. It will never have a successful outcome, because you won't be real and you won't gain the trust of your colleagues. ▶

Gravir shares his learnings about trusting your authentic voice



*I tried to play the role of this theoretical version of a leader I'd made up, but I ended up behaving more like a cartoon character*





**Don't think too much about positioning yourself for future roles. If you deliver with passion, great things will come your way**

▶ Leadership isn't about acting a certain way or playing a role, it's about building strong relationships. When you trust yourself and have trust among your colleagues, then there's room for failure, there's room to be honest with each other and to give each other feedback without taking things in a negative way.

Trust creates the environment and culture that drives performance. However, you cannot build trust without having close relationships and you can't build close relationships if you're not your true self.

I have a few guiding principles. I need to work with a brand that I'm really proud about and I need to be able to act myself at work. If that doesn't work, the solution to the problem is not to try to change myself, it means I have to change my job.

### **Professional and personal**

I found the pandemic particularly challenging from a leadership point of view. It was extremely difficult having to temporarily lay off thousands of employees from our gyms in four countries.

From a professional point of view we were all very concerned about the company, the future and trying to find the right things to do to come out of

a difficult situation in a positive way. But, for me, the really tough part went back to the relationships again and the consequences for our employees.

I remember going to the grocery store and meeting a colleague – who is now back with us as a club manager of a site which is doing fantastically well – but at that time she'd been laid off for almost a year and as a single mother was finding it very tough. The conversation has stayed in my head ever since, because I felt such a burden of responsibility for all of our colleagues who were struggling as a result of being laid off.

As a business leader it's important to keep the perspective about how your decisions will impact





Gravir says if you decide to open a club, you should believe it will provide secure employment for a long time

your employees. A good leader makes decisions not only around professional values, but also private and personal values. For example, if you make a decision to open a club, it should always be because you believe it will offer secure employment for a long period of time.

There's a huge misunderstanding that this approach is soft and doesn't result in good business decisions. For me, being people-driven in your leadership and making rational business decisions go hand-in-hand. You still have to make good decisions, based on the facts and reality, it's more about the way you implement them, considering the consequences for people's lives in those decisions.

If you have to close down a business and lay people off, be compassionate, transparent and allow them enough time to find another opportunity.

If I were to give some advice to young people, it would be around doing what you love doing and delivering in your role. Work with a product, service or a brand you love, and where you feel true engagement around the purpose of what you are doing.

Then focus on doing the absolutely best possible job in your current role. Don't think too much about positioning yourself for future roles, or what is the next step. If you deliver in your role, and with passion, great things will come your way. Simple as that! ●

GymNation is pioneering the future of fitness with software specialist Perfect Gym providing a scalable tech platform to power and sustain its growth

# Strong foundations



**A**s one of the most technologically advanced fitness companies in the world, GymNation is revolutionising the fitness landscape in the UAE, with a strong emphasis on delivering digital experiences and driving technological advancements.

This year, the company is expanding by five new locations in the UAE, reaching a total of 16, as well as adding six new locations in Saudi Arabia.

With its strategic focus on technology, the operator has set a new benchmark for the customer journey, through innovative solutions that align with its forward-thinking approach.

In its pursuit of rapid expansion, both domestically and internationally, GymNation recognised the need for a robust management system that could scale with its ambitions. Perfect Gym's open interface and custom integration capabilities proved to be the optimal fit, seamlessly integrating with GymNation's existing infrastructure, facilitating smooth operations across multiple locations and acting as the foundation of its operational excellence strategy.

The improvement in the system delivered by Perfect Gym has already contributed to a 33 per cent year-on-year increase in membership numbers for GymNation.

## Elevating security and member experience

Having a secure, cloud-based platform is vital for modern, agile fitness businesses, ensuring information

integrity, accessibility and operational efficiency.

Transitioning to Perfect Gym's software, which is ISO 27001-Certified and GDPR-compliant, ensures data protection, while integration with modern Gantner hardware facilitates safe, automated 24/7 access via QR codes, enhancing security and convenience.

Adopting an omnichannel approach, GymNation maintains a strong digital presence across various platforms. Leads generated from these sources seamlessly flow into Salesforce CRM, fully integrating with Perfect Gym via an open API. This ensures a straightforward customer journey from first contact with the brand, right through to membership activation.

Leading on innovation at GymNation's is Karl Foster, chief technology and innovation officer, who values performance and reliability in the tech solutions he develops. Foster says, "The rating I would give the Perfect Gym API is extremely high because of the speed and the support that we've had from the team. We've had zero downtime, which has been fantastic for us because we're heavily relying on data."

## Digital evolution: advancing experiences

Data-driven decision-making is at the heart of GymNation's strategic approach, enabling the team to better understand market needs, identify gaps and ultimately position the company as an industry leader.

To fortify its analytical capabilities, Foster integrated Tableau in the set-up. This powerful business analytics



## “ No matter how many gyms we open, Perfect Gym can support our growth ”

tool from Salesforce enables the company to realise the full potential of its data, while integration with Perfect Gym's API enhances back-end data flow, facilitating real-time analytics to power member retention strategies.

Leveraging insights gained from these systems, GymNation focuses on better understanding member engagement, delivering gamification functionality and giving personalised feedback, with this activity already resulting in a 1 per cent increase in retention and overall success.

### The power of AI and business intelligence

The introduction of AI member assistants has enabled GymNation to provide hyper-personalisation, round-the-clock support and multi-channel communications, which has led to a significant reduction in dormancy rates among members. Moreover, the seamless

integration of advanced technological capabilities, including Business Intelligence tools and predictive machine learning, has delivered an impressive 87 per cent accuracy score when it comes to forecasting churn.

With an unwavering commitment to providing more people with affordable access to its cutting-edge fitness facilities, GymNation's mission is to continually redefine industry standards, enhance its services and expand its presence internationally.

The strategic partnership with Perfect Gym future-proofs GymNation, ensuring a solid foundation for further development. As Ant Martland, co-founder and CCO at GymNation, explains, "In terms of technology, Perfect Gym can scale with us, so, no matter how many new gyms we open and no matter the geographies, Perfect Gym can support our continued growth."

● Learn more at: [www.PerfectGym.com](http://www.PerfectGym.com)


The launch of McFit in 1996  
reset the industry and unlocked  
unbelievable areas of growth

# McFit gets a makeover

McFit, the original budget gym is undergoing a transformation with a new look and estate-wide overhaul, as Liz Terry reports







The new-look McFit has special workout areas for women, some with separate access

**W**hen the late, great Rainer Schaller conceived the idea for McFit in the mid-90s, the health and fitness industry in Europe was approaching stagnation in its economic lifecycle and having boomed through the 80s and into the 90s, was starting to plateau, with decline not far off.

This general malaise was exacerbated by the recession that had gripped the world in the early 90s, meaning it was a volatile time for the sector.

The launch of McFit in 1996 was to change all that, resetting the industry and unlocking unbelievable areas of growth with its new budget pricing model that put health club use within reach of the majority of the population by largely removing price resistance, with Schaller having the ambition to make fitness training 'affordable for all'.

#### The first location

The first McFit was located in Bavaria and as word about it spread through the industry, the club became a magnet for operators and investors, who were interested to see the new business model in action and understand its potential.

As it turned out, Schaller had a ten-year head start with McFit, but the following decade, entrepreneurs began to launch their own budget concepts, John Treharne at the The Gym Group in 2007; Jan Spaticchia with *énergie* and JJB with MiFit in 2008; Peter Roberts with PureGym and James Caan with Nuyuu in 2009; Spaticchia again at FitLess (which became Fit4Less) in 2010; and Mike Balfour's Fitness First budget concept, Klick Fitness, in 2011 – the same year Rene Moos opened the first Basic-Fit. These were a few of the early pioneers. Some survived and thrived. Some didn't. ▶

**McFit Mark III****What to expect**

- ✿ Spacious womens' areas with comprehensive strength training facilities. Some with separate access
- ✿ A larger range of equipment
- ✿ A bright, modern colour scheme with the main materials being steel, concrete and wood
- ✿ More functional training: functional hubs, assault bikes, rowing ergometers, glute booster racks and functional towers
- ✿ Cardio areas with treadmills, ascent trainers climb mills, cross trainers, recumbent and seated bikes and rowers
- ✿ Strength areas with athletic half-racks including platform, reverse hyper extension, squat machine and dumbbells up to 50 kg
- ✿ Special features such as a table tennis table in the studio

McFit is still a volume business, but has plenty of equipment to avoid wait times





► But it's hard to catch a first-mover, especially when that person is Rainer Schaller and they have a decade on the competition and so McFit scaled steadily, reaching 243 clubs by 2017, when *HCM* spoke to the top team ([www.HCMmag.com/McFit2017](http://www.HCMmag.com/McFit2017)).


Having pioneered the sector and grown the McFit brand, Schaller widened his remit, renaming the company – previously The McFit Group – to be the eponymous Rainer Schaller Group (RSG) and launching businesses and brands across numerous health and fitness verticals until his untimely death in October 2022, aged just 53.

These multiple concepts – the product of is creative imagination – included everything from the high-end John Reed and Heimat to John & Jane's and Gold's Gym. There was also a super-budget concept,

HIGHS, which undercut McFit, as well as restaurants, night clubs, fit tech and nutrition businesses and modelling agencies within the diverse group.

Although many health club businesses have exceeded McFit in terms of scale, the brand is still lauded as a groundbreaker, so news that the estate is to have a major overall got *HCM* interested and here we share with you the new look and feel for the McFit estate – playful bright and social – which is currently being rolled out across all clubs following trials in Vienna, Austria and Heilbronn, Germany.

In addition to refitting the clubs, RSG continues to fine-tune its McFit portfolio, having just sold its 47 Spanish clubs to Basic-Fit, in a deal that concluded on 27 March.



**The new concept has bright modern colour schemes with the main materials used being steel, concrete and wood**

The first McFit will open in Cologne in Q2 2024 following pilots in Austria and Germany



The new clubs have a social area with table tennis

PHOTO: HOTEL



Cardio areas have ascent trainers, climb mills, cross trainers, rowers, recumbent and seated bikes and treadmills



## THE HISTORY

### McFit refits

McFit had its first major refit and reorientation in 2012, when the concept moved from the original 'affordable for all' concept to be the 'Home of Fitness' – a change that was completed across the estate by 2017.

The pricing was still discount-scale, but the offering looked and felt more premium. Modular training systems were added to the gyms, which also had group exercise added in the shape of cyber training.

Fast forward to December 2023 and RSG opened the two pilots for the new-look club with a fresh concept and design. Following these successful pilots, the first completely new studio is expected to open in Cologne in the second quarter of 2024.





Dr Jobst Müller-Trimbusch & Hagen Wingertzahn

© 2024 RSG GROUP



*We're planning further studio openings for Gold's Gym, McFit and John Reed in their respective core markets*

## Look to the future

Following Schaller's death, new co-CEOs, Dr Jobst Müller-Trimbusch & Hagen Wingertzahn told HCM their strategy was to remain 'one of the most successful fitness companies in the world over the next 25 years' by growing the portfolio. "We see the greatest potential in the diversity of our fitness club concepts," they said. "Across the spectrum – from McFit to John Reed to Gold's Gym and more – Rainer has managed to give each brand its own distinct personality. Every fitness concept delivers a completely different experience to its members. We plan to build on this and push it even further and it's also possible that another brand will be added in the future if it fits well into our portfolio," they said.

"Alongside the European market, we see the US as offering the greatest overall growth potential for RSG Group," they explained, "We're also planning further studio openings for Gold's Gym, McFit and John Reed in their respective core markets across Europe and the US." ●  
Read the complete interview at [www.HCMmag.com/RSG2](http://www.HCMmag.com/RSG2).





Strength training is well catered for, with dumbbells up to 50kg and half racks – among others





*Health assessment can be an incredibly powerful retention tool for health club owners*



InBody delivers medical-grade test results

JACOBINE COOPER

# Attract & retain

**Francesca Cooper-Boden says health assessment services can boost health club retention**

PHOTO: INBODY



Francesca Cooper-Boden

**W**ith *Wellbeing News* reporting that one in 10 adults are expecting to fail their health and wellbeing goals in this year, it's more important than ever that gym owners and fitness operators put measures in place to help retain new and existing members.

Health assessment services are a great solution as they allow individuals to not only develop a good understanding of their health at the start of their fitness journey, but also to track and monitor their progress at regular intervals.

Francesca Cooper-Boden, InBody UK co-director, believes health assessments are incredibly valuable and deliver important benefits to gym owners and gym members alike, saying: "Highly accurate health assessment services are a great way to establish a true reflection of an individual's health.

"With solutions that provide a full overview of body composition, members can learn and focus on their own health at the beginning of their fitness journey.

"It's no secret that motivation is a key driver for many gym-goers, so being able to accurately

measure body composition is fantastic for understanding how the work they're putting in is impacting their body."

## Tracking improves retention

Guaranteeing members can accurately track their health while visiting the gym is a fantastic way to improve membership retention and should be encouraged, as Cooper-Boden explains.

"If implemented correctly, health assessment devices can be an incredibly powerful retention tool for health club owners," she says.

"Unfortunately, many people embark on a fitness programme without the right guidance or knowledge of exactly what they need to do to see real results. But when a body composition device is readily available, PTs can work more closely with members to create bespoke fitness plans.

"A tailored approach that's perfectly aligned to an individual's health goals will not only add more value to membership, but will also help increase the chances of retaining customers for longer."

## Expanding membership offerings

Although it's fantastic to see that health assessment services are becoming a regular feature in some health clubs across the UK, there are still lots of fitness facilities that are yet to invest in body composition devices.

The UK team has logged 1.5 million scans since it launched its app three years ago

“*InBody logged an amazing 100,000 scans in January 2024 alone*”

To support those who are interested in expanding their membership offering, but not feeling confident about where to start, Cooper-Boden offers advice on what to consider before investing.

“It sounds obvious, but it’s really important to do thorough research to make sure you’re clear on what devices are available on the market,” she says. “At InBody UK, we always recommend you use a medical-grade product, so you can be confident with the results provided. Plus, you need to be clear on the type of scan being completed, how it works in practice and how the results are displayed and reported.

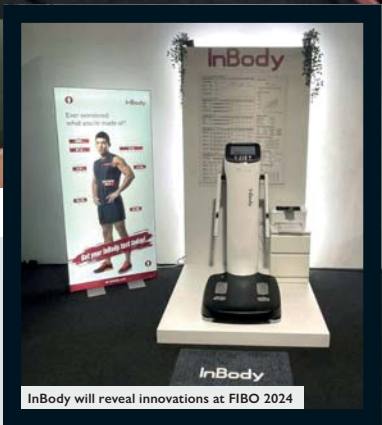
“Think about the overall experience you’ll be creating within your gyms. You’ll need to find relevant products and services that come together to form the perfect customer experience and journey.

“Another important element to remember is the type of support you’ll receive from the provider. Training should be a given so your team is up to speed, but you also need to guarantee that help is available whenever you need it.”

#### High quality body composition devices

For those on the hunt for high quality body composition devices that deliver fantastic results, InBody UK offers a range of excellent options.

Originally founded in Korea to enable more people to monitor and understand their overall health, the company is leading the way in body composition. The UK division launched at the end of 2017 and



since then, its team of specialists has worked tirelessly to build relationships with key players across a range of health and fitness businesses.

After three years of the InBody app being live, the team had registered 1.5 million scans by December 2023 before going on to log an amazing 100,000 scans in January 2024 alone, showing the growing interest in this technology.

#### Find out more at FIBO

Members of the UK InBody team will be joining their European colleagues at FIBO and are taking bookings for bespoke visits to their stand – reach out to Francesca Cooper-Boden or Luke Smith directly on LinkedIn to make an appointment.

The team will be showcasing something very exciting at FIBO so make sure you pop by Hall 6 Stand 6B19. ●

● More: [www.uk.inbody.com](http://www.uk.inbody.com)



*The Basic-Fit franchise initiative will cover markets not adjacent to current operations and could enable us to enter other continents*

# Basic franchise

Basic-Fit – which has been scaling rapidly across Europe – is considering franchising to ramp up growth further afield

**R**ene Moos, CEO of Basic-Fit has signalled that the company is considering growth by franchising. The operator currently has 1,402, locations, including 47 clubs recently purchased from RSG Group, the deal for which concluded on 27 March

Basic-Fit is setting its sights on aggressive expansion, with plans to get to 3,000 – 3,500 clubs in its existing markets – the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and Benelux – by 2030.

Moos explained that franchising is then being considered for expansion outside Europe: “We’ve initiated a process to determine which approach to franchising would be most suitable to further enhance our company’s growth and return profile,” he said. “The franchise initiative will cover markets that are not geographically

adjacent to our current operations and could possibly expand to enable us to enter other continents.”

Some of the biggest health club brands – such as Anytime Fitness and Planet Fitness – have grown through franchising, thanks to the access to capital and entrepreneurial energy it gives. Operators such as PureGym, which have traditionally owned and operated their own clubs, are also growing by franchising outside their core territories, so it’s a natural move for Basic-Fit.

## Basic-Fit 2023 results

A record 202 club openings/acquisitions happened in 2023 and the company is optimistic about 2024, with plans to increase the club network to at least 1,575. The purchase of the RSG portfolio makes Basic-Fit market leader in Spain, with 200 sites and will lift the group membership to 4 million from the current 3.8 million. These 47 clubs will be rebranded from McFit to Basic-Fit ready for the important post-summer sales period.

In terms of current trading, Benelux and Spain are Basic-Fit’s best performing markets, said Moos in presenting 2023 results, while Germany has yet to make a meaningful contribution, but the company’s presence there will be increased over the next two years, with an accelerated roll-out in 2026.

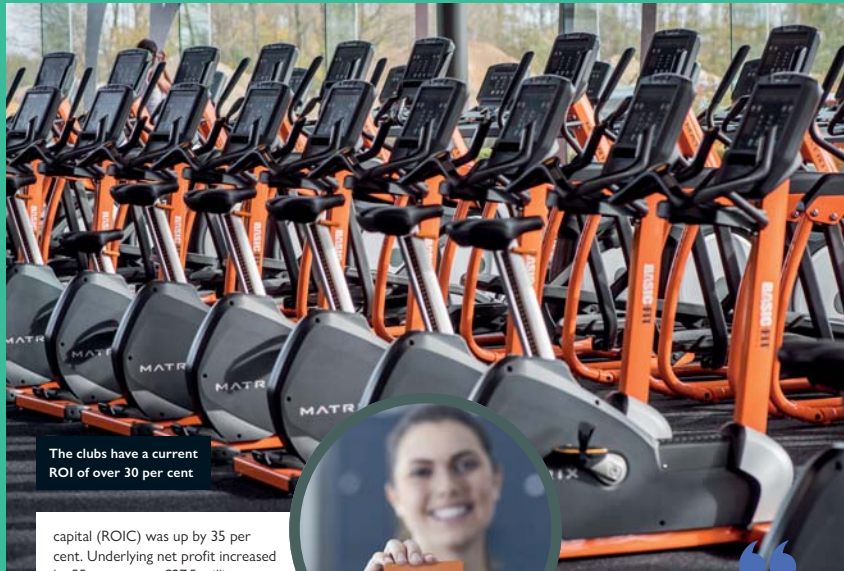
## 2023 results

Moos also revealed trading results for 2023, saying that despite high inflation and energy costs, Basic-Fit lifted its 2023 revenues by 32 per cent to €1,047 million.

Underlying EBITDA, less rent, increased by 28 per cent to €261 million and mature club return on interest



Rene Moos, CEO of Basic-Fit is planning to franchise outside Europe



The clubs have a current ROI of over 30 per cent

capital (ROIC) was up by 35 per cent. Underlying net profit increased by 55 per cent to €27.5 million.

Growth has been driven by expanding the club network, increasing memberships at clubs which were in their growth phase during the pandemic and an increase in average revenue per member per month.

Premium memberships (priced at €29.99 per four weeks) increased by 10 per cent, to 44 per cent of the membership base. Costing €5 more than the Comfort membership, the Premium membership allows people to bring a friend anytime they visit. The potential cannibalising effect of this is being monitored, but it has appeared to have a positive impact on revenue in 2023, due to the higher average yield per member.

Founding memberships were offered at the majority of new clubs in 2023, which give access to a single club at a life-time discounted price for a limited time before the club opens. This was found to reduce the time to cashflow break even. Memberships increased by 13 per cent, with the company achieving the aim of 3.8 million members by the end of the year, as previously mentioned.

Other club revenue increased to €29.5 million (from €24.3 million) with this coming from PT, physiotherapists, day passes, vending and advertising revenue on screens.

### Challenges from 2023

The strong performance in 2023 came with some challenges, including weaker consumer sentiment in France, which continued to be slightly behind expectations going into 2024.

*Basic-Fit is setting its sights on aggressive expansion, with plans to get to 3,000 – 3,500 clubs in its existing markets by 2030*

Costs were also significantly higher at the start of 2023, due to inflation and energy, which nearly doubled on a per-club basis. To offset this, the price of a Comfort membership was successfully increased from €19.99 to €24.99 and a deal struck with suppliers on energy prices, which stabilised the situation.

“With our new long-term energy price contracts, we expect the average energy-costs-per-club to decline by close to 30 per cent in 2024,” said Moos. “Barring any unforeseen developments, we expect revenue to increase to between €1.20 billion and €1.25 billion in 2024.”

At the end of the year, Moos reported that Basic-Fit had €215 million (£184 million, £235 million) in available liquidity, which paid for the acquisition of RSG Spain and will fund the continued rollout, while maintaining sufficient financial headroom for cashflow to cover operations. ●  
More: [www.hcmmag.com/BFfit14/3/24](http://www.hcmmag.com/BFfit14/3/24)





*Nuffield Health has 8,300 assets that are outside the original manufacturer's warranty and are now being maintained by ServiceSport UK*

# DECADE OF EXCELLENCE

**Nuffield Health has worked with ServiceSport UK for more than ten years, ensuring the equipment in its clubs is commercially optimised**



In an ever-evolving fitness landscape, a steadfast partnership between ServiceSport UK and Nuffield Health has stood the test of time.

For more than a decade, ServiceSport UK has been the go-to service provider for commercial gym equipment maintenance and repairs for 160+ Nuffield Health sites across the UK.

The Nuffield Health estate is made up of commercial and corporate facilities that include gym equipment from popular manufacturers such as Technogym, Life Fitness, Concept2 and Wattbike.

There are currently more than 8,300 assets across the estate that are outside the original

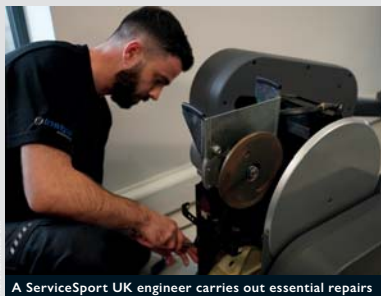
manufacturer's warranty period and are now being maintained by ServiceSport UK. That is a lot of gym equipment to keep track of and keep in full working order for the high volume of members that rely on Nuffield Health to achieve their goals.

## The power of software

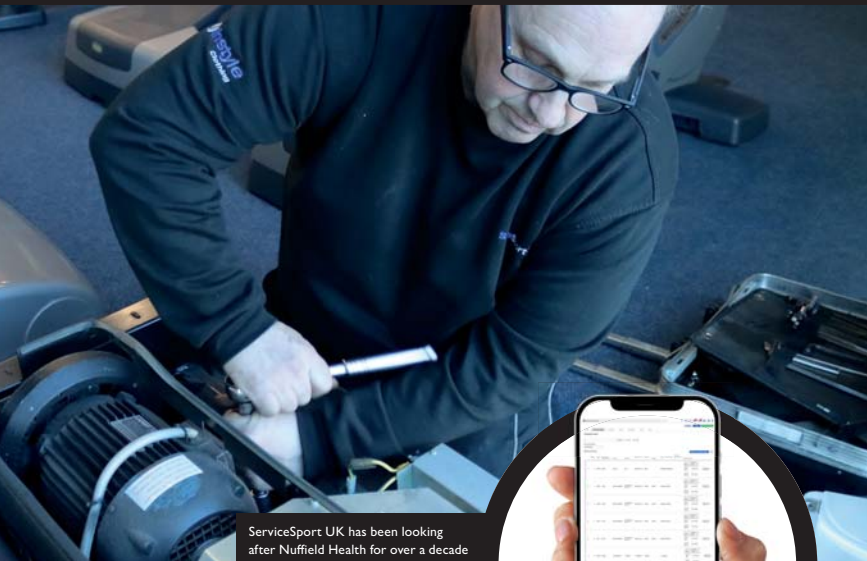
Over the years, ServiceSport UK has supported Nuffield Health's operational efficiencies in a number of ways. One of which is eliminating the many administrative tasks associated with managing and maintaining its gym equipment, such as tracking assets, reporting faults and scheduling engineer visit dates and this has been achieved by ServiceSport UK providing each Nuffield Health site with remote access to its own asset management software system.

This software allows each Nuffield Health site access to its full range of assets, remotely report any equipment defects and view the progress of jobs at the click of a button. No more phone calls or emails into a customer service team relating to ongoing jobs – all the information the team requires is available at their fingertips via one easy to use dashboard.

The time saved courtesy of the asset management software has allowed the Nuffield Health team to focus on what they do best – their members' health and wellbeing.



A ServiceSport UK engineer carries out essential repairs



ServiceSport UK has been looking after Nuffield Health for over a decade

PHOTO: SERVICESPORT

"The software ServiceSport UK has provided has drastically streamlined the operational management of our assets," says Joanna Seldon, senior proposition manager for Nuffield Health. "We now know when a preventative maintenance visit is due at each of our clubs, we can easily see what equipment is installed at each site across our estate and more importantly, we can easily view dates for when repair work is due to be carried out".

#### Informed business decisions

Such data also allows senior managers at Nuffield Health to make informed business decisions regarding their equipment. For example, where there's a need for a new install, existing equipment from the site that's still serviceable can be moved to another Nuffield Health site, rather than being disposed of. This is not only a sustainable way of operating, but is also the perfect way to meet the needs of sites that need more equipment.

"We review the product on our gym floor to ensure we're providing our members with the right mix of equipment to support their goals," says Seldon. "The data in the asset management software supports our business when it comes to reviewing the equipment on our gym floors and gives us an indication as to its expected lifespan. This is invaluable when we implement transformation projects at

*The data in the asset management software is invaluable when we implement transformation projects at sites across our estate*

sites across our estate. The data from the asset management software ensures we're making the right decisions and putting equipment into sites that still has a good amount of life left in it," she explains.

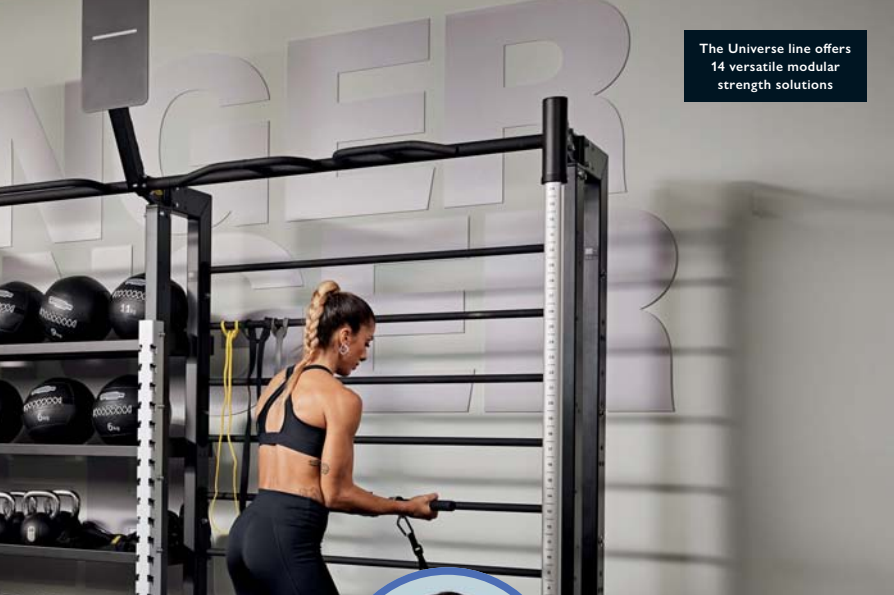
As well as prolonging the life of existing gym equipment, ServiceSport UK supports Nuffield Health with the refresh of existing gym equipment; the extraction of existing gym equipment that has reached the end of its useful life and the installation of new gym equipment at sites across the UK. ●

More: [www.servicesport.com](http://www.servicesport.com)



# STRONG GROWTH

Industry suppliers are responding to the exponential increase in consumer demand for strength training with a raft of new and innovative launches and concepts, as Steph Eaves reports



## Nerio Alessandri

### Technogym

#### Tell us about your latest strength launch?

We've introduced the Technogym Universe, a functional strength line designed to empower users to achieve peak performance and enhance their overall journey.

With a focus on promoting strength, mobility and functionality, the Universe line offers 14 versatile modular solutions accompanied by a wide range of functional accessories. This comprehensive line allows operators to tailor their functional strength zones to meet the unique needs of their users, offering endless training variety and effective workouts.

Whether performing exercises with weights, isotonic, magnetic, calisthenic, elastic, or eccentric resistance, users can maximise their results and engage muscles more effectively.

In addition to its diverse resistance options, Technogym Universe provides users with access to

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



training content through Technogym Visio. This platform offers guided Technogym sessions led by athletes, pre-designed routines for motivation, a library of functional strength exercises with proper form guidance, and a convenient timer function for HIIT or strength workouts.

#### What need does this meet?

Strength training has undergone a significant evolution in recent years. One notable trend is the shift towards functional strength training. This approach not only builds muscle strength but also enhances mobility, stability, and balance. Another trend gaining traction is the integration of technology into strength training routines. From wearable fitness trackers to smart equipment, technology offers real-time feedback and data analytics, allowing individuals to track progress, optimise workouts and stay motivated. Moreover, there's a growing emphasis on diversity and inclusivity in strength training, with a focus on making fitness accessible to individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

*“Technogym Universe focuses on promoting strength, mobility and functionality”*



## Erik Blomberg

### Eleiko Sport

#### What's your latest strength launch?

Our new collection of cable machines comprises the Eleiko Dual Adjustable Pulley, Cable Cross, Single Adjustable Pulley, Lat Pull Down, and Low Row stations, which can be used alone or as building blocks for customised multi-station configurations.

Our Cable System is truly modular and can adapt to facilities' ever-evolving needs. We've taken a new approach to building multi-station cable solutions so customers aren't constrained by a base foundation and can freely design units and training spaces that align with their preferences.

This eliminates limitations often associated with traditional multi-station solutions.

Custom colours are available so a facility can match its unique identity.

Safety measures include fully-protected weight stacks and gliding pulley mechanisms that mitigate pinch points, reduce injury risk and comply with ISO safety standards.

#### What need does this meet?

The expansion into cables is a natural progression for Eleiko; from our roots in lifting and free weights to functional cable training, we aim to empower individuals to improve their performance in sports and life with meticulously engineered, precision-crafted strength equipment.



*“Expansion into cable machines is a natural progression for Eleiko”*



A gliding pulley mechanism reduces injury risk



## Matthew Januszek

### Escape Fitness

#### What's your latest strength launch?

The Mars Strength Station is a self-contained training pod that fuses one-to-one digital coaching with quality equipment. This creates a fully-supported, freestanding training aid with a small footprint that can be positioned anywhere from a gym floor or studio to a hotel guest room or home. The integrated touchscreen is pre-loaded with dumbbell-driven exercises and workouts, creating an always-available safe and effective support service. Every exercise is brought to life by a video demonstration and training tips to help users optimise each and every rep.

We've coupled this with Escape's space-saving XRack, which houses 10 pairs of Nucleus Dumbbells, to provide a completely self-sufficient, training solution.

The 'always-on' digital coaching element supports everyone from seasoned athletes to beginners who may lack the confidence they need to train in a dedicated free weights area. The freestanding pod can be positioned anywhere with a power supply and internet access. Operators may choose to place the Mars Strength Station away from the free weights area, helping redirect traffic in an increasingly busy area. Removing it from this area may also extend the appeal and accessibility of resistance training to those who lack the confidence to train in a dedicated 'weights' zone.



STANLEY JAKUBCZYK/GETTY IMAGES

*"The Mars Strength Station is a self-contained, fully equipped and coached training solution"*

#### What need does this meet?

The Mars Strength Station has been specifically designed in response to the growing popularity of strength training. With its small footprint, the MARS Strength Station offers space-challenged operators with limited trainer availability a means of providing a self-contained, fully-equipped and coached training solution.

The pod's touchscreen is preloaded with dumbbell exercises

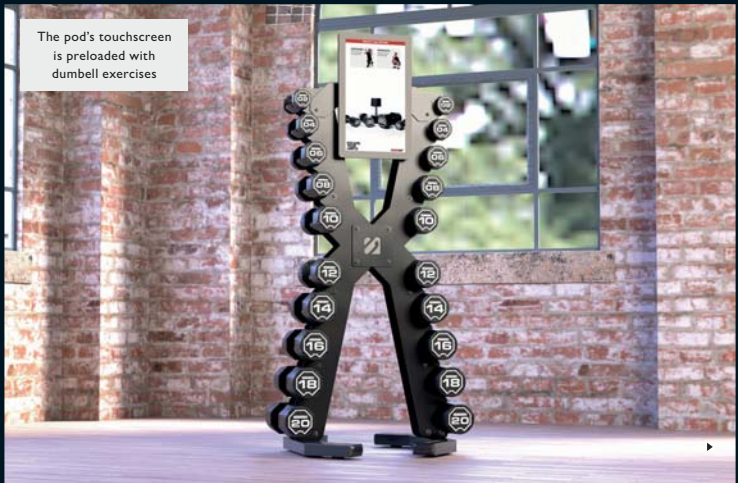


PHOTO: ESCAPE FITNESS



The oversized backpad can be set at nine different angles

## Adam Hubbard

**Precor**

### Tell HCM readers about your latest strength launch

The Glute Bridge Bench is the latest product in our Discovery strength benches and racks product line. It enables exercisers to perform over 50 different exercises targeting the glutes, legs and core.

The Glute Bridge Bench features a dedicated lifting platform with non-slip footplate and a supportive, oversized back pad which can be adjusted to nine different angles providing comfort, stability and versatility.

Eight pairs of numbered pegs on the outside of the barbell tracks allow for a variety of resistance band exercises. For added security, the tracks are protected by guard rails and stoppers at either end, making sure a barbell won't roll off and into other areas of the gym. This also means that when preparing to



PHOTO: PRECOR

perform exercises such as a hip thrust or glute bridge, the starting barbell position is on the tracks and not the exercisers' hips, ensuring the exerciser starts and rests in an unobstructed position.

The Glute Bridge Bench has built-in storage, so exercisers have easy access to weight horns for Olympic and bumper plates, as well as additional vertical barbell storage.

### What need does this meet?

Glute training continues to rise in popularity, however, one of the challenges we discovered when speaking to operators is that there's often no dedicated space or equipment to facilitate all the glute training requirements that exercisers now seek. More specifically, exercisers are performing these exercises anywhere they can find space on the gym floor and taking up space with equipment that's intended for other purposes, such as flat benches and power racks.

Another challenge is that exercisers are not placing themselves in the most comfortable or secure position by leaning against a bench to perform glute-specific exercises, as these benches are prone to move or slip.

The design of the Discovery Glute Bridge Bench solves these problems and offers an incredible selection of training options for these parts of the body a growing number of exercisers want to focus on.

*“Our Glute Bridge Bench enables users to perform over 50 different exercises targeting the glutes, legs and core”*

## Edoardo Panatta

### Panatta

#### Tell us about your latest strength launch

Our latest innovations are significant additions to biceps, triceps, and leg training circuits.

The Three Angles Biceps Machine is designed to isolate the elbow flexor, focusing on the biceps. What sets it apart is the ability to adjust the working surface at three inclinations (from a nearly neutral position through a 45-degree shoulder angle to 90 degrees), allowing for various training configurations.

The Standing Total Arms machine is a dual-function and designed to provide a complete arm workout. It effectively replicates the curling motion of the biceps and the push-down motion of the triceps, all while standing.

For lower body training with a particular focus on the quadriceps, we've designed the Super Pendulum Squat. This machine incorporates a guided trajectory that creates a hybrid movement between a squat and a 45 degree leg press. The design emphasises the quadriceps, offering a comprehensive solution for lower body strength training.

The Super Horizontal Leg Press Dual System is designed for lower body training, replicating the pushing motion from a seated position along a horizontal plane. This machine effectively targets the muscles of the front and back of the thigh and hip, providing a complete lower body workout.



PHOTO: PANATTA

*“We have responded to the push towards increasingly specific and targeted equipment”*

#### What needs does this equipment meet?

In recent years, we've noticed a growing interest in isotonic strength training, especially among the younger generation. Gen Z, which is highly active on social media, has placed a strong emphasis on healthy lifestyles and physical training, but they no longer settle for just being fit – they now seek muscular definition and strength development. Consequently, the market has seen a push towards increasingly specific and targeted equipment, and our company has responded with innovation. ▶



PHOTO: PANATTA

There is a trend towards increasingly targeted equipment

*“Nexus ensures clients can easily accommodate facility growth and reconfiguration”*



PHOTO: JESSE / SHUTTERSTOCK / JESSE WIFE / GETTY IMAGES

## Gregory Bradley

### BLK BOX

#### Tell us about your latest strength launch

Our newest range is BLK BOX Nexus, which blends cable-based strength with free-weight functionality for a space-efficient solution. Each unit features two 120kg cable stacks, along with squat racks and pull-up stations.

The Nexus range is targeted towards facilities and clients specialising in small group personal training (SGPT). The design is tailored to accommodate this group size, catering to a range of abilities and progression levels.

The range has gained traction in physiotherapy and rehab settings, as it offers the flexibility to create adaptable training programmes across the recovery spectrum. We're also getting interest from commercial operators, particularly those seeking to expand their offerings with versatile training spaces.

Nexus can be fully customised and also reconfigured to accommodate growth, while the range integrates with existing BLK BOX racks and storage.

#### What need does this meet?

With strength training now at the forefront, the Nexus range enables athletes and coaches to unlock a new repertoire of movements and exercises to further enhance their training.

From an operator's perspective, space is at a premium and space-saving design enables users to combine compound and accessory movements within a single station. For class-based or SGPT environments, the system allows for multiple users to be stationed simultaneously, maximising space efficiency.



Nexus enables a new repertoire of movements

PHOTO: BLK BOX

The plate-loaded element supports heavy lifters and first timers



PHOTO: PRIMAL

## Steven Rinaldi

### PRIMAL

#### Are you launching new strength products?

We've just launched the new Performance Series plate-loaded range which has been designed in conjunction with Ryan Terry, the winner of Mr Olympia Men's Physique 2023.

Built for all body types and sizes, the range includes: standing chest press, calf raise and Viking press, iso hack squat, linear shoulder press, adjustable incline chest press, standing hamstring curl, swivel handle row, bicep curl and vertical leg press.

These machines carry high specification detailing, from Kevlar belts to provide constant tension throughout the movement, to smooth bearings and each is calibrated for correctly targeted muscle engagement. The flexibility of the plate-loaded element allows for use by both heavy lifters and first timers, and

PHOTO: PRIMAL



*“Each machine is calibrated for correctly targeted muscle engagement”*

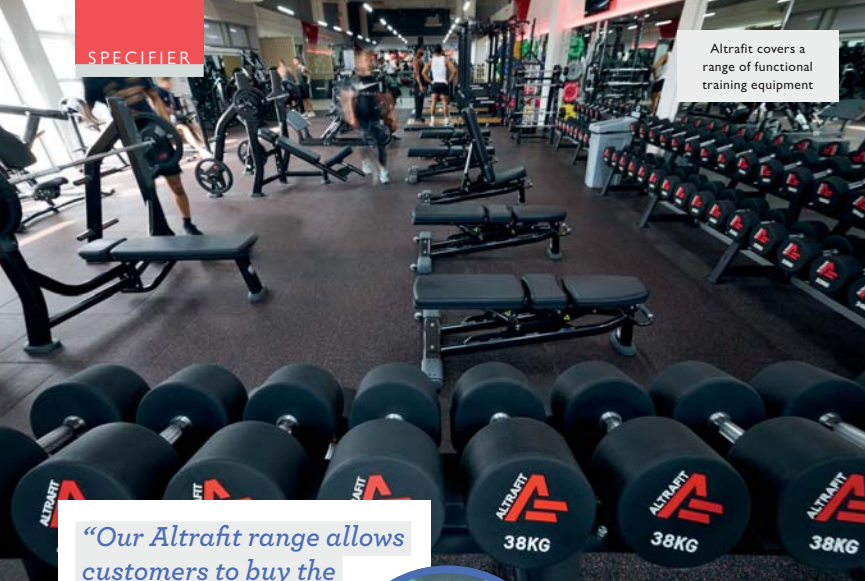
each machine comes with an adjustable range of motion and a start position to fit every body.

#### What need does this meet?

As people get more serious about training, gyms are seeing greater expectations for the weights section. We saw demand increase for our Pro series, so decided it was time to upscale the range.

Ryan Terry approached us with a vision for a super gym. He understood the need for best-in-class equipment that would also be a talking point. So we set to work designing these pieces to debut in his gym, and are now rolling out a limited number of pieces to other gyms.





*“Our Altrafit range allows customers to buy the same equipment at a lower cost”*

PHOTO: D2F FITNESS



## John Lofting

### D2F Fitness

#### What's your latest strength launch?

We recently launched Altrafit, a new range we design and manufacture ourselves, drawing on our experience of supplying equipment to the industry for over a decade.

The Altrafit range covers a range of functional training equipment, including dumbbells, barbells, Olympic bars and plates, kettlebells, power bags, slam balls, med balls, plyometric boxes, battle ropes and more, with the wider range also covering studio equipment, flooring, turf tracks and equipment racks.

#### What need does this meet?

We've been supplying equipment for years; sourcing, installing and servicing from end to end and we saw the opportunity to deliver the same quality equipment direct. We're passing on the reduced cost to our customers, meaning they're buying the same equipment as before, just at a lower cost. This also enabled us to launch our own products and listen directly to our customers' needs.



The reduced cost of direct supply is passed on to customers



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*Brawn is the digital platform that drives revenues from personal training*

# The heart of the club

**Operators, prepare to revolutionise the way members connect with personal trainers in your club, with the ground-breaking Brawn platform.**

**B**rawn is a digital community for strength training that makes PT more accessible to members through an Uber-style digital tracking and payment system.

Although the company's roots lie in powerlifting and working with elite strength athletes, Brawn has evolved to offer a comprehensive solution that helps gyms to also connect with previously hard-to-reach audiences, by offering scalable small group training.

The platform delivers a multitude of commercial advantages – one key feature is the ability to provide a digital subscription and an incremental revenue stream for trainers, meaning that with Brawn, PTs can increase their income, secure their future in an unpredictable market, earn more per hour, cultivate a strong lead pipeline and ultimately reduce churn by offering a more engaging and personalised training experience.

## Tackling gymtimidation

Brawn also helps resolve issues of gymtimidation by empowering gym-goers of all levels to achieve success. This approach helps health club operators reduce their dependence on gym floor PT sales, allowing



**Sohail Rashid**

them to focus on delivering exceptional training experiences to their members.

Brawn bridges the gap between group fitness enthusiasts looking for tangible progress and individuals seeking a more personalised training experience – offering a versatile and inclusive solution for all.

Moreover, Brawn's appeal extends to a diverse demographic. With a split of 60 per cent female users and over 50 per cent of users being over the age of 40, commercial gym owners have a unique opportunity to attract and cater to a broader range of clients.

## Supporting the recruitment of personal trainers

In the ever-evolving fitness industry, a persistent challenge faced by gym operators lies in the recruitment and retention of personal trainers, primarily due to financial viability concerns. This struggle is further exacerbated by the current economic climate, as decreasing consumer confidence and rising cost of living create an additional burden on both PTs and operators.

Amid this challenging landscape, Brawn gives operators a unique opportunity to rise above their competitors

The Brawn app supports PTs in driving revenue



*Brawn gives operators a unique opportunity to rise above their competitors by leading the way in providing unwavering support to their PTs*

by providing unwavering support to PTs. By doing so, they can ensure a steady stream of trainers operating within their premises. This not only leads to increased revenue, but also drives retention, as members value the availability of high-quality personal training.

In setting themselves apart from competitors that don't prioritise the success of their personal trainers, operators can establish themselves as market leaders.

Just as Uber expanded the market size for taxis and Deliveroo boosted revenue for restaurants, so Brawn's digitalisation of personal training is poised to have a similarly transformative effect.

By making personal training more affordable and accessible, Brawn is set to increase the overall market size. This growth not only benefits health clubs and fitness professionals by opening up new streams of revenue, but it also allows a wider audience to access the benefits of personalised fitness guidance.

We invite you to embrace the future of fitness with Brawn and be at the forefront of the industry's evolution – setting new standards and redefining the boundaries of what's possible, for your business, your members and your PT community.

● More: [www.brawn.co.uk](http://www.brawn.co.uk)



*The prioritisation of prevention over repair fits with our mission*

# Growth tactics

Egym has announced deals designed to position it for growth acceleration, as Kath Hudson reports

**E**gym, which raised £207 million in funding last year, has announced a number of executive hires and company acquisitions as it reveals its growth strategy after years flying under the radar.

The company equips health clubs and clinics with smart gym equipment and digital solutions that offer an AI-driven workout experience for people of all skill levels. It has been bolstering its senior team, most recently by appointing Steve Barton, former MD at Technogym UK to drive growth, while the company also recently hired the former CEOs of Life Fitness – Chris Clawson – and Precor – Rob Barker

– to power up its top management team in what is an increasingly substantial and competitive sector.

Barker, who will work with Barton to develop the UK market, said: “Egym has big plans for the UK and Steve’s leadership is key. Many operators have put COVID behind them and are growing their service offering and digital integrations”.

Barton said, “By partnering with Egym, health club operators have the opportunity to be leading players in the transformation of the world’s largest market of all – healthcare – from repair to prevention.”

Approximately 16,000 clubs worldwide use Egym products and services.

## Egym buys Huddle

Egym has also signaled its intention to become a force in the corporate wellness sector with the acquisition of UK-based aggregator, Huddle.

The integration gives the company access to a network of around 1,500 gyms, pools, and spas in the UK to expand its corporate wellness product, Wellpass, which is already available in Germany, Austria, Belgium and France.

Egym Wellpass offers employers subscription-based corporate health and wellness solutions, allowing them to offer employees access to sports and health facilities and Egym training programmes.



Steve Barton





The Huddle/Egym team: L-R, Patrick Meininger, Nicholas Stadtmeyer, Neil Harmsworth, Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer and Jamie Ward

The partnership with Huddle allows Egym to gain a footing in the UK's corporate wellness market at the right time, as – with absenteeism causing an economic drag – creating a more healthy workforce must be a priority for the next UK government.

Huddle was formed in 2011 by Neil Harmsworth and Jamie Ward. Through partnerships with companies such as AXA Health, Bupa and IWG it provides customers to its network of 1,500 UK gyms and health clubs.

### Coming through a challenge

Huddle went through a pre-pack administration during the pandemic, being bought by shareholders Harm Tegelaars and Maxim Chmyshuk. It has been rebuilding since and seeing dynamic growth in the corporate market, with sales reportedly up 250 per cent in 2023 and still rising in 2024.

Harmsworth – Huddle COO – said: "The deal links Egym's gymtech with the corporate benefits space that Huddle enables for our fitness operator partners.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to combine our corporate customer proposition with Egym's tech so our fitness operator partners can benefit from both new customers and the equipment and software."

Egym Wellpass MD, Nicolas Stadtmeyer, said: "Our mission is to foster health and wellbeing in every workplace. With more than 32 million employees and

a £2.15 billion corporate wellness market, stepping into the UK was a logical and strategic move. Following our entry into France (where Egym acquired Gymlib in 2022), we now have a presence in the three largest European economies. The future is very exciting for us."

Egym CEO, Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer, said: "The NHS's prioritisation of prevention over repair fits well with our mission and we're excited to begin this journey with Huddle."

The UK corporate wellness market is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 4.72 per cent, reaching a market size of £3 billion in the next five years. Industry experts anticipate a global average annual growth rate of 7 per cent in the corporate wellness market until 2029, projecting it to exceed £63 billion.

When companies sign up to Wellpass or Huddle and determine the personal contribution their employees pay for participation, they gain access to 14,500 exercise facilities in Germany – where Egym bought Qualitrain in 2018 – Austria, the UK, France, and Belgium and a growing range of online courses. This is also a route to reach people who were not previously active. ●

SPONSORED

# COMPLETE RIDE EXPERIENCE

The New Keiser M3i Studio Bike brings ride data to life to engage and delight members



PHOTO: KEISER

Users can switch between modes during a ride with the new Keiser M3i



The Keiser M3i Studio Display is set to redefine the way ride data is tracked for health club members, surpassing anything previously seen in the fitness industry.

Building on the revolutionary Keiser M3i, this brand-new bike takes indoor cycling to new heights with its advanced features and capabilities.

#### Ride By Colour: monitoring intensity made easy

The Studio Display's Ride By Colour feature enables riders to easily track intensity levels in real-time. By inputting their Functional Threshold Power (FTP) and maximum heart rate (HRmax), the display colour-codes their FTP and heart rate zones, providing instant visual feedback.

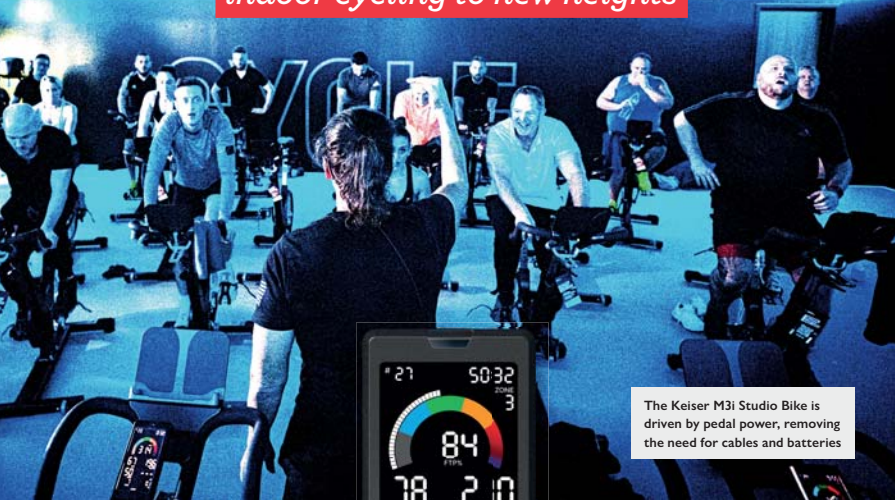
#### Track intensity four ways: choose a preferred mode

The Studio Display offers the flexibility to track intensity using the method that suits workout goals. Users can switch between different modes during the ride for a complete three-dimensional ride experience.

PHOTO: KEISER



## *This brand-new bike takes indoor cycling to new heights*



The Keiser M3i Studio Bike is driven by pedal power, removing the need for cables and batteries

### **72 gears: fine-tune ride resistance**

Finding the perfect resistance level is essential for achieving fitness goals. The Studio Display's 72 gears allow for smaller increments in resistance adjustments, making it easier for members to fine-tune and find the right intensity.

### **No cords, no batteries: pedal-powered convenience**

Say goodbye to cords and batteries with the Keiser M3i Studio Bike's unique pedal-powered generator. Located in the hub of the bike, it charges a super capacitor that provides a lifetime of power.

### **86% larger screen: enhanced visibility and readability**

The Studio Display features an 86% larger screen than Keiser's previous M Connect Display and with the larger screen area, users can easily view and read their ride data, ensuring they can stay focused and informed throughout the workout.



PHOTO: KEISER

*“Users can easily view and read their ride data, ensuring they can stay focused and informed”*

### **Latest wireless fitness technology: future-proof compatibility**

The Keiser M3i Studio Bike is designed to be compatible with the latest wireless fitness technology standards. It supports ANT+ and Bluetooth CSCS, CPS, and FTMS standards, ensuring you can connect the bike with new apps and devices for years to come.

### **Connectivity made easy with the latest technology**

The Studio Display can also send cadence, speed, power, and heart rate data to health and fitness apps, syncing with a wide range of devices, ensuring compatibility and easy integration. ●

● Learn more at: [www.keiser.com](http://www.keiser.com)

# COOL SYSTEMS

As health club operators move to incorporate recovery into their offerings to meet growing consumer demand, Steph Eaves takes a look at what cryotherapy and ice bathing can add to the equation

Starpool's recovery formats are designed for health clubs of all sizes

*“The key to keeping attendance rates high is adding a recovery phase with a cryotherapy product”*

## Riccardo Turri

### Starpool

It's important to educate clients about recovery and how it's an essential component of a training programme, and to motivate them by setting mid-term goals. This will make them feel better supported and happier with their results.

The key to generating value and keeping attendance rates high is to guarantee the effectiveness of workouts by adding a recovery phase with a cryotherapy product.

Our dry-float Zerobody Cryo is characterised by low energy consumption, which makes it highly effective in terms of sustainability. When Zerobody Cryo is installed and connected to the power supply, the provided cooling system brings the water functioning temperature down to 4-6 °C. The dry unit ensures a gradual exposure to the cold. It also requires minimum support from the operator, which makes it an extremely easy product to use and for staff to be trained in.

We also have two new concepts for the world of fitness: Recovery Class and Recovery Station. These two formats developed to integrate

recovery and preventive health in the offer of your gym. The Recovery Class format is for large fitness centres that have a lot of space available and a large flow of clients with diverse requirements. It complements the offering with an exclusive area dedicated to recovery and complete, customised programmes for preventive health.

Recovery Station was conceived to allow fitness and performance training studios to enhance their offer with recovery technologies and effective programmes, in less than 30 square metres.

All can be used while clothed.

Cryotherapy can improve the effectiveness of workouts, says Turri

Zerobody Cryo offers low energy consumption







PHOTO: CTN GROUP

## Janet Martins

### CTN Group

Our cryotherapy cabins are designed with energy efficiency in mind. We recommend offering membership packages or bundled sessions to encourage repeat usage, ensuring a steady stream of revenue. Additionally, highlighting the health benefits of cryotherapy can attract a wider customer base.

Our systems are designed for low maintenance and high efficiency and have been engineered to minimise energy consumption while maximising output, making them cost-effective solutions for health clubs. We offer comprehensive training and support to ensure operators can maximise the lifespan and efficiency of their equipment. Additionally, our technology ensures that the cost-per-session is competitive, allowing operators to offer cryotherapy at a price point that's attractive to consumers while still maintaining healthy profit margins.

There's growing demand for wellness and recovery services. Cryotherapy stands out as a cutting-edge solution that can attract a diverse clientele, from athletes seeking faster recovery, to

PHOTO: CTN GROUP

*"We recommend offering membership packages or bundled sessions"*

individuals looking for wellness and beauty benefits. Investing in cryotherapy now can set your facility apart, offering a unique service that can drive new memberships and retain existing ones.

● **Footnote:** CTN's products include cryotherapy, muscle stimulation therapy, hyperbaric oxygen therapy and red light therapy equipment.

## Colin Edgar

### CET CryoSpas

**H**aving worked in the sector for over 20 years, I understand the pressures that rising energy prices are causing for health club owners. It's a tough balancing act, but with the correct approach, the CryoSpa ice bath can be a revenue generator, rather than simply another cost.

Many of our clients use the CryoSpa offering to get more people through the door, either on a pay-per-use basis, or as new gym members. Most of our clients that operate on a pay-per-use basis see a return on investment within the first year and many within six to nine months. Other clubs thrive by offering cryotherapy as part of a premium package or membership tier.

Energy consumption is another important consideration. While most ice baths cool by conduction alone, CryoSpa ice baths use a combination of conduction and convection, which is much more efficient. The 20 jets provide a powerful cooling modality that means water at 8°C will feel colder than still water at 1°C.



*"A CryoSpa  
ice bath can  
generate £50 to  
£100 per hour"*

With healthcare and wellness leaning more toward recovery and self-care, even the NHS is introducing social prescribing, where gym memberships and swimming sessions are prescribed as drug-free alternatives. Ice baths are part of this movement, going from the preserve of elite athletes to something members of the public are eager to embrace and by adding an ice bath to your facility, you tap into this growing market.

With daily operating costs in the region of £2 or £3 and income from a single user of £10 for a 5-to-10-minute session, an ice bath can generate £50 to £100 per hour. Some of our clients, such as Bodyscape Gym in Belfast, offer one hour slots to sports teams for £75 a session. ▶





The Art of Cryo Vaultz is one of a range of recovery products

PHOTO: ART OF CRYO / ALAN SCOTT SOMMERS

## Rainer Bolsinger

### Art of Cryo

**T**he Art of Cryo Vaultz unit has an excellent ratio of energy consumption to performance.

The Multi Cryo-Hacking System consumes very little energy and the Flow System also works with a normal socket. Critical cost factors during operation are rent and staff cost; electricity – even with increased rates – is a minor cost driver, provided the operator sells enough treatments.

Heat recovery is an ideal solution for operators with pools in health clubs, the hotel industry and luxury homes, as thanks to WRG ventilation, almost all of the energy used to create the cold temperatures in the cryotherapy unit can be used to support the warming of pool or other water.

A single Vaultz can be turned off in the evenings and re-started the next morning, to save energy during times the systems are not in use.



© ART OF CRYO / ALAN SCOTT SOMMERS

*“Even with increased rates, electricity is a minor cost-driver provided the operator sells enough treatments”*



PHOTO: ART OF CRYO / ALAN SCOTT SOMMERS

# ELEVATE RECOVERY WITH CTN



*CTN*

Discover the worlds leading advanced recovery solutions with CTN. As pioneers in innovative recovery technologies, CTN is dedicated to optimizing performance and well-being for athletes, professionals, and wellness enthusiasts.

Our range of cutting-edge devices include cryotherapy, muscle stimulation, red light therapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Join us at FIBO, stand **8E37** and experience the future of recovery firsthand. Learn more about CTN and our innovative solutions at [www.ctn.fi](http://www.ctn.fi).



**CTN.FI**

RECOVERY STUDIOS BY CTN

## “Health clubs are seeing an immediate boost in upgrades after offering cryotherapy”

### Kevin Conaway

#### WellnessSpace Brands

**W**e’re designing cryotherapy solutions for recovery and wellness that maximise ROI to clubs and have minimal ongoing costs.

The two factors that can drive up cost for cryotherapy are monthly gas or electricity costs, and labour expenses, if the cryotherapy solution requires a full-time attendant. That’s why we developed the CryoLounge+, an advanced recovery chair with complementary cold and heat zones. The bed is easily accessible, fits in any 3m x 2m space and doesn’t require

a changing room or attendant. With only a standard electrical outlet required, the chair allows clubs to provide cold and heat to their members at a fraction of the cost they might otherwise face.

Any solution for clubs needs to be practical and accessible for a large number of members. With the unattended CryoLounge+, users can access the units immediately after a workout for a recovery session. They can remain fully clothed, unlike with traditional ice baths and cryotherapy, making it easier to incorporate into their regular routines.

By offering cryotherapy, operators can realise a significant increase in revenue through upgrades to premium memberships. With members looking for holistic and recovery amenities, clubs are seeing an immediate boost in upgrades after offering cryotherapy. These solutions are becoming standard as clubs build out ‘wellness spaces’ for their members. Cryotherapy perfectly complements other wellness and recovery-focused programmes. Our data indicates the best strategy is to provide at least two CryoLounge+ beds to maximise member usage. ●



PHOTO: SHANE SUTTERMAN / GETTY IMAGES

Members can remain fully clothed while using CryoLounge+







## Bottom line, successful club operators need WellnessSpaces

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# Well at work

**Epassi, a provider of workplace wellness benefits, is creating a fitter and more productive workforce, one membership at a time**

**T**he pandemic has inspired many employers to re-examine the wellbeing support they give their people, with many taking steps to improve their offering as a result.

This hot topic is now at the forefront of many company's plans and in the ACSM 2024 *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends*, worksite health promotion was voted second top priority, which confirms this increased awareness of the benefits of supporting the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

We're witnessing huge changes when it comes to consumer priorities, with 69 per cent saying they'd choose one job over another if it offered better benefits and 83 per cent of employers in the UK having seen a rise in wellbeing benefit requests from their employees.

Despite squeezes on disposable income, people are continuing to invest in their wellbeing and are increasingly relying on their employers to help with this – people view their physical wellbeing as their third most important priority after pay and holiday and this presents huge opportunities for health club operators to get involved in the fast-growing corporate wellbeing market.

## Epassi network benefits for operators

Health club operators can join the Epassi network free of charge, with the company offering a simple business model with powerful benefits

### \* Increases in memberships

96 per cent of health club operators on the Epassi network get new members from the service

### \* Increases in revenue

The average Epassi GymFlex member spends £585 on an annual gym membership

### \* Increased brand visibility

Epassi promotes health clubs to millions of employees every year

Health club operators can get paying members for free by signing up to Epassi



## Big opportunities for health and fitness operators

Discounted gym memberships are a popular benefit, with demand from employees growing by 32 per cent in the last year. Data from Epassi UK shows a 58 per cent increase in companies launching an Epassi scheme between 2022 and 2023, leading to a 178 per cent increase in employees becoming physically active over the last three years.

Even though the demand is there, with diversity in the workforce and everyone's preferences being different, it's challenging for employers to deliver an offer that meets everyone's needs. This is where Epassi UK can help.

For the last 22 years the company has been on a mission to create a fitter, happier and more productive workforce by increasing the take-up of health and wellbeing schemes across the UK and Ireland.

Since the launch of its fitness network back in 2001, the team behind Epassi has helped millions of



*We saw a 58 per cent growth in companies launching one of our schemes from 2022 to 2023, which demonstrates prioritisation of employee health and wellbeing*

*Emma Vivo, Director, Epassi UK*

employees from thousands of companies improve their wellbeing by becoming more active, becoming the UK's largest health and fitness network.

### Supporting the working population

Epassi works with over 2,000 companies and leading benefit providers across the UK and Ireland to offer employees discounts on gym memberships through two fitness schemes, MyGymDiscounts and GymFlex.

Currently working with 90 per cent of the leading club operators in the UK and Ireland, Epassi delivers 12-month, company funded memberships and hot leads to over 3,800 clubs that have already joined its network. ●

● More: [www.epassi.com](http://www.epassi.com)

PLAY  
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### About Epassi

In 2023, Incorpore Ltd took an exciting step and became a part of the Epassi family.

Epassi is a market leader in employee benefits within the Nordics and is Europe's leading digital solution for employee benefits.

A trailblazing fintech business, Epassi was recognised as one of the fastest growing companies in Europe in 2022, 2023 and 2024 by the *Financial Times*.

Following the acquisition, Emma Vivo, director of Epassi UK, said, "This collaboration will help accelerate our growth, propelling us into a new era of innovation, while opening the door to opportunities for our fitness partners."



*Analysts have been excited by The Gym Group's plans to open 50 sites with an ROI of 30 per cent, up from the current 20 per cent*

# Set for growth

Will Orr, has been talking to *HCM* about the company's new strategy for 2024, as Kath Hudson reports

**W**ill Orr, CEO of The Gym Group, revealed the company's results for 2023 recently, along with a trading update and a new strategy, called Next Chapter, which will involve strengthening the core business to increase returns from the estate, accelerating rollouts and establishing new revenue streams.

## 1. Strengthening core business

"There's a significant opportunity to improve member retention, which will drive yield and volume," Orr told *HCM*. "The highest churn occurs in the first 45 days of a membership, before a habit has formed. We'll be focusing on helping new members build lasting habits – whether that's via our expert teams in the gyms, or through digital channels, such as our app."

A number of growth-drivers have been identified to deliver increased returns: yield and revenue management; member acquisition and improving retention, with Orr's experience with recurring subscription models at *The Times* a key reason for his recent appointment.

"Our analysis shows that within the catchment of our existing 233 sites, there are a further circa five million people, who are either members of another gym or considering joining a gym," said Orr.

## 2. Accelerating rollout

The company opened six sites in 2023 and is planning 10-12 this year, 16-18 in 2025 and 20 in 2026 to make a total of 50 as growth ramps up.

Analysts have been excited by the company's plans to open these with an ROI of 30 per cent, against the current 20 per cent. Orr did not divulge how this will be achieved, although Pure Gym and Basic-Fit have been reducing build-costs over the last year, so it's likely The Gym Group will follow suit as one part of the strategy.

## Low-cost gym market potential

As yet unpublished research into the low-cost health club market from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), found the potential for a further 600 to 850 locations in the UK, with two-thirds at the current size and the other third delivered in smaller formats to fit less densely populated areas.

PwC says there's 10-15 years' growth potential in the UK market at the current rate of development.



Will Orr, CEO of  
The Gym Group

The company has laid out a strategy to drive growth over the next three years

## NEWSFLASH:

Will Orr will be speaking at the HCM Summit on 24 October in London. Find out more at [www.HCMmag.com/summit](http://www.HCMmag.com/summit)

## 2023 RESULTS REPORT

### The Gym Group

Revenues across the business were up 18 per cent year-on-year from £172.9 million to £204.0 million.

2023 closed with membership at 850k, reaching 909k at March 2024. Membership increases were driven by new site openings, not by growth in existing clubs, which remained stable.

Average revenue per member per month was up 9 per cent. The 'Ultimate' membership was chosen by 31.7 per cent of members, while off-peak – launched in 2023 and starting at £13.99 – is drawing in new members who are older and have greater time flexibility.

Average visits-per-member were up 10 per cent and 92 per cent of members rated The Gym Group either 4/5 or 5/5 for overall satisfaction.

Group Adjusted EBITDA Less Normalised Rent was up 1 per cent from £38.0 million to £38.5 million and there was a bottom line improvement of 57 per cent on statutory loss after tax, from (-£19.3 million) to (-£8.4 million) through cost control.

Non-property net debt dropped 13 per cent from (-£76 million) to (-£66.4 million) and cashflow was up 62 per cent from £16.7 million to £27.0 million.



*There's another 10-15 years of growth potential in the UK market at the current rate*

### 3. Broadening growth – new revenue streams

Broadened growth options are being strategically assessed, but might include further developments to the existing proposition; format innovation; investigating new channels to market; and introducing adjacent revenue streams, such as corporate wellness programmes.

Given the commercially sensitivity of these moves, details were not given, although it's noteworthy that operators such as Everyone Active are adding access to medical advice to their packages through partnerships with companies such as Health Hero. ● More: [www.hcmmag.com/TGG14/2/24](http://www.hcmmag.com/TGG14/2/24)





*We want D2F to become synonymous with high-quality craftsmanship at a reasonable price*

# Take a fresh look

D2F had updated its brand styling to keep pace with business growth. MD, John Lofting and operations director, Matt Aynsley, explain the rationale

## Why the new look?

**JL:** We've got heritage in the fitness industry, having delivered functional fitness products, gym design and installation for over 20 years. However, we're growing and developing as a business, so the time feels right to update our image and make clear the full range of services D2F has to offer.

**MA:** Most people associate D2F with providing

commercial fitness equipment and flooring, but we want to elevate the brand to show off the fact we can do everything from gym design, delivery and installation, to custom merchandise and clothing.

We feel the new look combines our heritage with the innovation we want to be known for.

## What's the difference between the D2F divisions?

**JL:** D2F has three divisions under its umbrella:

### 1. D2F Fitness

We take pride in providing unparalleled fitness experiences with durable, top quality fitness products and accessories at sensible prices. With our market-leading warranty of five years on our main products, we offer peace of mind that lasts.

We've taken great care in choosing manufacturing partners we believe in, to ensure our quality is globally recognised and independently controlled.

In addition to our in-house brand, Altrafit, we also carry a number of premium and affordable options, while also being able to make custom-branded fitness equipment when required.



John Lofting

Recent work includes a gym refurb for a number of Everyone Active sites and a full range of merchandise for the Oxford vs Cambridge Boat Race



D2F has rebranded to reflect the company's wide range of services

## 2. D2F Equipped

From top-of-the-line gym equipment and installation, to non-fitness environments, we offer end-to-end solutions. Our in-house experts excel in design, installation, method statements, risk assessments and project management. We source the best solutions and equipment for every project and vision, while considering budget and need.

## 3. D2F Bespoke

Our Bespoke division is dedicated to creating high quality custom apparel and accessories. We're suppliers to some of the biggest sporting and cultural events and bodies, including the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, and England Football, among others.

Our diverse apparel range spans the full spectrum of outerwear from jackets and hoodies to sweats and polo shirts. We're also able to create soft, hard and plush accessories that include caps, scarves, mugs and specialty plushies.

We pride ourselves on our strict code of ethical and eco-conscious sourcing and hold ourselves to the



Matt Aynsley

highest standard, as we want huge brands to feel completely safe working with us.

### What plans do you have going forward?

MA: We're only beginning to scratch the surface for D2F and want to become synonymous with high-quality craftsmanship at a reasonable price, while also being able to deliver almost anything someone in the fitness space might need for their business.

This can already be seen in work we've done recently, including a top-to-bottom gym refurb for a number of Everyone Active sites and developing a full range of merchandise for the Oxford vs Cambridge Boat Race.

We're continuing to grow and secure bigger partnerships, but no project is too big or small for us; whether it's a huge global event, a multi-million-pound fitness center or an owner-operated personal site, we'll continue to deliver with the same unwavering dedication. ●

● Learn more at: [www.d2ffitness.com](http://www.d2ffitness.com)



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# Jon Williams

The group MD of Forest House offers a glimpse into how Safe Space Lockers helped turn concept into reality

At Forest House, we take pride in creating exceptional experiences for our members and when it came to outfitting our changing rooms, we wanted nothing but the best. That's why we entrusted Safe Space Lockers with the task, with the confidence they would deliver on the founders' vision of a retreat-style health club in the heart of Watford, UK. We couldn't be happier with the results.

It was clear from the outset that we were dealing with a company that prioritises professionalism and efficiency – the ordering process was smooth and hassle-free and a team of experts guided us through every step.

They listened to our needs and provided solutions tailored to our unique requirements to ensure our vision for the changing rooms was realised.

The team understood the importance of design in creating a welcoming and functional changing room environment. They worked closely with our interior designers to create locker solutions that seamlessly blended with the overall aesthetic of Forest House. The attention to detail, flexibility in design options, and commitment to meeting our brand's requirements were truly impressive.

The installation phase was executed with precision and



PHOTO: FOREST HOUSE

*"When it came to outfitting our changing rooms, we wanted nothing but the best. That's why we turned to Safe Space Lockers and we couldn't be happier with the results"*

Jon Williams

professionalism. Every locker was installed securely and efficiently, adhering to our strict timeline and the process was seamless, with minimal disruption to our club's operations, allowing us to open our doors to members on schedule.

Our changing rooms have become more than just a place to store belongings; they are an extension of the Forest House experience.

Safe Space Lockers' dedication to exceptional service and product quality aligns perfectly with our values. The company has played an integral role in bringing our vision to life, enhancing our member experience and ensuring every visit to Forest House is nothing short of exceptional. ●  
More: [safespacelockers.co.uk](https://safespacelockers.co.uk)

Safe Space Lockers  
at Forest House

PHOTO: SAFE SPACE LOCKERS

# Product innovation

Steph Eaves rounds up the latest health, fitness and wellness kit



## Symbio is the ultimate multi-sensory workout experience, says Daniel Wille

Life Fitness has unveiled the Symbio product line, which consists of the Symbio Runner, Incline Elliptical, SwitchCycle, and Recumbent Cycle.

Daniel Wille, chief product officer at Life Fitness, says: "Our biomechanics team engaged in countless hours of research on

how the body interacts with our new technologies and the result is the ultimate multi-sensory workout experience, which is as unique as the individual exerciser."

The Symbio Runner features Adaptive Flex Deck technology, which enables the user to select surface firmness, so they can fine-tune the feel of their workout and train their body to respond to different surfaces and simulated real-world terrains.

The Symbio Incline Elliptical features an interactive Muscle Map that allows users to choose the muscle groups they want to target.

Symbio SwitchCycle is a two-in-one upright bicycle with out-of-saddle riding, 100 levels



PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

● Symbio from Life Fitness adapts to the user

of resistance, and sensor-guided positioning for comfort.

The Symbio Recumbent Cycle features a console that delivers on-demand workouts and immersive terrains.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
Life Fitness



PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

*"Our biomechanics team engaged in countless hours of research"*

Daniel Wille

## Keiser A400 resistance will empower fitness enthusiasts, says Robin Gand

Keiser has released a new line of resistance equipment designed to give real-time feedback and data analytics. The Keiser A400 offers a range of performance metrics including velocity, power and range of motion, which the

company hopes will help users to reach their goals faster.

Real-time velocity and power can be tracked by rep, allowing users to fine-tune their movements as they work out. The A400's range-of-motion-tracking feature

*"The A400 line shows our dedication to delivering an unparalleled user experience"*

Robin Gand



KEISER

ensures the user is performing each rep with the right form. Visual indicators allow them to see if they've reached the desired range of motion in both the concentric and eccentric phases.

Keiser's API means data can be integrated with analytics platforms, allowing users to track progress.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
Keiser



PHOTO: KEISER

● Real-time velocity and power can be tracked



For more insight, or to get in touch with the companies featured, visit [www.fitness-kit.net](http://www.fitness-kit.net) and type in their keyword

## MZ-Open will reduce barriers to entry, says David Stalker

Myzone has announced the launch of MZ-Open, an access function that enables gym users to experience the benefits of Myzone's heart rate training system through their Apple or Android smart watch.

"By integrating with smart watches, we reduce barriers to entry, helping gym operators encourage even more members to join the Myzone community," explained Myzone's group CEO, David Stalker.

"Our research proves that gym goers who are engaged with Myzone remain members for 24 per cent longer than those who aren't, driving significant additional revenue for operators while also creating healthy, active, long-term habits for individuals.



PHOTO: MYZONE

**"We're helping gym operators encourage more members to join the Myzone community"**

David Stalker

"Until now, our own-brand wearable devices have provided the only access route into our community, but that's changed," he said. "Now all gym members with a smart watch, working out in a Myzone-powered training environment, will be able to reap the benefits of our community."

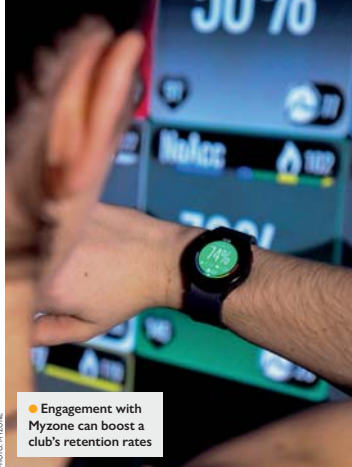


PHOTO: MYZONE

● Engagement with Myzone can boost a club's retention rates

All existing Myzone powered training zones in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are able to activate MZ-Open.

[fitness-kit.net](http://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
MyZone

## Skillcourt launches in the UK with VIP event, reports Paul Morris

Skillcourt, a training and diagnostic tool for motor and cognitive development, has officially launched in the UK at a VIP launch event in London.

The two-day event was attended by industry leaders and influencers and showcased the features and capabilities of Skillcourt, which is targeted at rehabilitation

patients, athletes and children, among others. The brain training system is designed to get people moving by having them solve cognitive, visual and motor tasks in an engaged way using tech and gamification. The launch event provided an immersive experience, allowing attendees to try the product out for themselves.



PHOTO: SKILLCOURT

**"The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive"**

Paul Morris

Paul Morris, Skillcourt UK commercial director said: "It was great to see people's reaction to Skillcourt. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from guests representing a broad spectrum of sectors, from the military and professional athletes to local authorities and leisure trusts, who are all looking to support their varied client bases."

[fitness-kit.net](http://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
Skillcourt

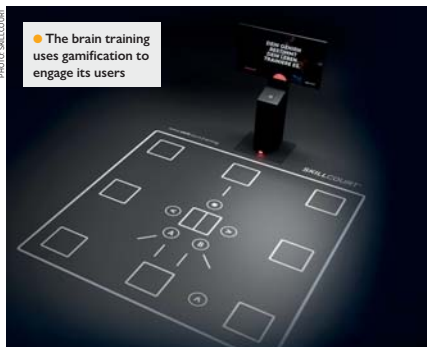


PHOTO: SKILLCOURT

● The brain training uses gamification to engage its users

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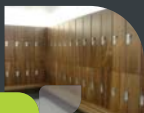
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Children have been classified as obese when they are in fact simply more muscular



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FRANZES

## False readings

New research has found BMI to be a highly inaccurate measure of childhood obesity, leading current thinking and policy based on it into question

**W**aist circumference-to-height ratio is a more reliable measure of obesity in children and adolescents than BMI, according to a new study, published in the journal *Pediatric Research*.

For nearly a generation, weight-to-height ratio charts and BMI for age and sex have been used to diagnose children with obesity, but they have been proven to be an inaccurate measure since they don't distinguish fat mass from muscle mass, with many children being classified as obese, when they are in fact muscular.

These diagnoses – with the accompanying confusion and distress for parents – have the potential to lead to the development of eating disorders and body dysmorphia, while also calling into question the accuracy of current published numbers about childhood obesity which may now be found to be flawed, given they've been based on BMI.

### International collaboration

The new study – conducted at the University of Exeter, in collaboration with the University of Bristol and University of Eastern Finland – has discovered waist circumference-to-height ratio is a more accurate measure of obesity, which is currently impacting almost one in four children according to the BMI measure.

Dr Andrew Agbaje of the Children's Health and Research Centre at the University of Exeter says: "Unlike BMI, the average waist circumference-

**BMI has been proven to be an inaccurate measure since it doesn't distinguish fat mass from muscle mass**

to-height ratio in childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood does not vary with age or among individuals, which is why it might be preferable to BMI assessment for use in child and adolescent clinics as an inexpensive tool for detecting excess body fat.

"It also means parents can easily and quickly confirm whether any increase that occurs in their child's BMI or weight is due to excess fat or increases in muscle mass, by examining their child's waist circumference-to-height ratio."

### Meta study underpins results

This study is the largest and the longest follow-up DEXA-measured fat mass and muscle mass study undertaken in the world, using the University of Bristol's 'Children of the 90s' data.

The study followed 7,237 children, 51-per cent of whom were female, from aged nine to the age of 24. Their BMI and waist circumference-to-height ratio were measured at ages nine, 11, 15, 17, and 24 to establish the accuracy of the waist circumference-to-height ratio measure. ●

● Read the study, *Waist-circumference-to-height-ratio had better longitudinal agreement with DEXA-measured fat mass than BMI in 7,237 children* at [www.HCMmag.com/BMIflaw](http://www.HCMmag.com/BMIflaw)



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