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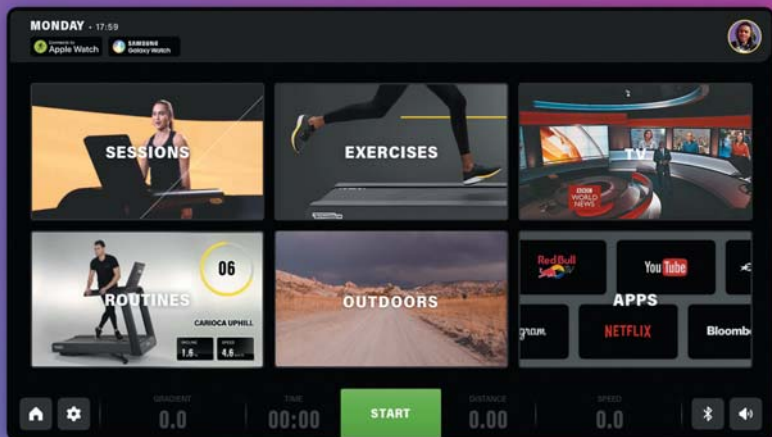




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Weight loss drugs

The arrival of weight loss drugs could remove a USP for some health club operators, but our wider purpose is evolving to be far more holistic and also prevention- and wellness-based

The UK government is exploring the use of weight loss drugs, such as Semaglutide – dispensed under the brand name Wegovy – in a large-scale £40m pilot designed to establish the optimum way to deliver them to the target population.

When prescribed alongside a healthy diet, physical activity and behavioural support, people with obesity can lose up to 15 per cent of their bodyweight in a year on Semaglutide, making it an attractive proposition for a health service grappling with a million obesity-related admissions a year, costing £6.5bn.

NICE originally concluded that Semaglutide should only be made available through specialist weight management services, which tend to be based in hospitals, but the scale of the obesity challenge means this approach wouldn't deliver the volume required, so other solutions are being investigated, leaving the door wide open for health clubs and leisure centres to become delivery partners.

Getting involved with the Wegovy pilots would be a powerful way to make our intentions and potential clear to the health service, with all the opportunities that would create for the sector to mature, raise standards, gain new income streams and deepen its levels of professionalism.

Writing on page 72, Andy King – chair of GM Active – makes the case for the physical activity sector stepping up and applying to take part in the pilots, saying we can deliver levels of wrap-around care, such as exercise interventions, that no other sector can match.

This opportunity comes at a time when disruptive questions are being asked about our wider purpose, with momentum increasingly behind a move from being a predominantly 'vanity-based' industry, to one which is focused on wellness, taking us closer to the health service.

Evidence shows many consumers' needs align with this, with a significant percentage now exercising as much for their mental as their physical health and with an increasing focus on their vitality and overall wellbeing.

We must hear this feedback and adjust our business models, so we tune into wellness and earn a reputation akin to that enjoyed by disciplines such as physiotherapy.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/INTOUR

Health clubs can deliver wrap-around obesity interventions

Do you see the wider availability of Wegovy as a threat or an opportunity? Share your thoughts for our letters page

At both the Elevate event and Evolve conference (see page 50), the mood in the room was very much that the sector needs to formulate a new vocabulary to describe what it can do – both for consumers and for government – and that this purpose must be centred around wellness, prevention and holistic lifestyle change.

We begin the debate about our wider role in delivering health interventions on page 68 and welcome your comments for our letters page. We're also interested to hear if you see the arrival of Wegovy as a threat or an opportunity. Email letters@HCMmag.com.

Liz Terry, editor

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PHOTO: JACOB VEEBUS



*I give women the tools
to experience how much
power their bodies have*

Anna Bogdanova

founder, the Anna Bogdanova Strength Method

Tell us about your work

The Anna Bogdanova Strength Method is all about strength and power training which takes hormones and the nervous system into account.

It strengthens joints and ligaments, as well as increasing the elasticity of skin and connective tissue.

A mix of kettlebell exercises, neuromuscular training and gentle movement which is designed to recalibrate the nervous system, it's completed in micro training sessions of just five minutes, (or more if the exerciser chooses). The programme is a move away from standard cardio-focused programmes which tend to overlook power.

Having worked with more than 16,000 Scandinavian women, I've witnessed huge improvements being made in strength, power and metabolic health by activating the nervous system and engaging dormant muscles.

What's your core purpose?

I give women the tools to experience how much power their bodies have and create an environment for them to build self confidence and self mastery.

Instead of thinking about how they look, I teach them to focus on what they can accomplish with their body.

By training interoception (a lesser-known sense that helps us understand and feel what's going on inside the body) with full body, cognitively challenging resistance training, isometrics and breathing exercises, it's possible to create a feeling of less overwhelm, more drive and capability and improve body image in just a few minutes each day.

What's your backstory?

I was an unsporty child who got obsessed with the gym in my later teenage years and ran into





Bogdanova's programme for women mixes kettlebells, neuromuscular training and gentle movement

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/PIZKE3

trouble trying to burn off more calories than I was eating, which led to me fainting after a class.

At that point I started eating more, got into lifting and bulking up. Although this made me feel strong and empowered, it coincided with a lot of stress in my life and I didn't realise the training load I was putting on my body was stressing my system.

After a couple of years I collapsed and had a period of not wanting to go anywhere or see anyone. I couldn't do my job and I couldn't train and if I picked up a weight, I would immediately bloat. I couldn't understand it.

After researching stress physiology, I discovered my body was responding to being overtrained. When our organism responds to something as if it's a threat it starts to shut down. My situation was a culmination of many factors in my life, but you can't always minimise



After the age of 50, for example, the brain tissue which activates fast twitch muscle fibres start to deteriorate

- the mental load you have with children, parents, jobs and other stress, so the training load has to fit into that.

How did you respond to having that knowledge?

I started to look at training as something which could be turned up and down in terms of volume, duration and intensity, so it could fit my recovery capacity.

My background is in change management and change processes behaviour design, so I applied that to my training.

What was the outcome?

Working with functional neurology, I researched how our nervous systems control our bodies and how we can use them to turn the power back on.

The gym where I was doing my rehabilitation was interested in my training methods and offered me a job as a personal trainer.

Soon I was attracting clients who also needed to find a new way to train. Most of my clients are women from their 30s onwards who start finding that what they've always done doesn't work anymore: they're getting more tired and are increasingly lacking in energy.

My sessions with them involved working with the nervous system: sensory exercises, working with eyes and inner eyes, stimulating the cranial nerve, jaw mobility, diaphragm stretch, tissue work in the abdominal area, as well as mobility and stability to get the body safe in movement. Then we progress to strength training.

What is the online offering?

I offer a range of programmes in Danish and – having just celebrated the 10th anniversary of my first digital programme – I'm now launching my signature Wingwoman programme in English.

About: Anna Bogdanova

Bogdanova has an academic background in psychology, exercise, physiology, exercise nutrition, behavioural design, modern pain theory and stress rehabilitation. She's also the author of several bestselling books about strength training, and works as deputy director of EuropeActive's Professional Standards Committee which sets standards for online training in Europe.

My programmes offer small exercises – from just five minutes a day – which is a doable target. When everything is chaos you should still be able to manage this. A regular routine creates a domino effect because you have more energy and more strength, so you can do more.

Why is strength training so key for women?

There's huge focus in the research community on sarcopenia – age-related muscle loss – being a problem for women, even younger women.

During the perimenopause, the brain's metabolism can go down by up to 30 per cent, leading to a higher risk



of cognitive disease and decreasing levels of oestrogen can lead to weight gain. Strength exercise helps by building muscle mass and increasing insulin sensitivity.

Research from Copenhagen University has found that after the age of 50, for example, the brain tissue which activates fast twitch muscle fibres start to deteriorate. Kettlebell training in different planes of motion can boost these fast twitch fibres.

If you could give one message to trainers working with women, what would it be?

Aim to focus more on strength training; fewer reps, longer pauses and get some

stimulation of fast twitch muscle fibres going, for insurance against the effects of ageing.

Also, eat more real food! Exercise isn't just about burning calories. Shift the perspective. Try to get people out of the diet mentality.

Many people resort to snacking, as they don't tend to eat enough variety in their main meals. Women also tend to undereat protein, but research is showing us that it's very important for our muscles, our brains, our bones and our overall longevity. If you eat more protein you'll find you should no longer crave snacks in the afternoon.

Also don't go low carb! Our most vital longevity resource is fast twitch muscle and to be able to get them to work you need carbs. When you feel full and energised you have more energy, feel stronger and want to work out. When you're physically active you're more likely to want foods which are good for you.

Women who are moderately active and weigh around 68kg typically need to consume about 2,200 calories a day, but most think they need to eat less. Energy deficit is a problem, you simply can't thrive on 1,500 calories per day.

I teach people not to worry about eating. When they eat well they have energy to exercise and when they exercise they make better food choices. ●

A regular routine creates a domino effect because you have more energy and more strength, so you can do more

Bogadanova is launching her Wingwoman programme in English





Once you try swimming outdoors, in the wild or the sea it's hard to go back

Duncan Anderson

CEO, South Downs Leisure



PHOTO: JONNA WELLMER

Tell us about Sea Lanes

Sea Lanes is the new swimming centre on the seafront in Brighton UK. It's been designed as a gateway between pool and open water swimming and we hope it will become a hub for the sport and recognised as the national open-water swimming centre.

The facility has a 50m, six-lane outdoor pool/lido sitting right next to the beach with beautiful sea views, as well as changing rooms and 34 business units housing additional facilities and support services.

The companies occupying these were picked carefully to ensure we can offer a complete package for people who wish to train and develop their swimming ability.

They include an indoor Endless Pool for technical coaching, nutrition services, the Sea Gym Brighton, Paddle People, Reach Physiotherapy, Luna Wave Yoga, a Pilates school as well as some hospitality brands – Bison Beer, Fika Café, Wood and Coal Food and many more. Swimming holidays with Swim Trek also has its base here.

Importantly, these organisations and companies also supported the project in its early stages.

Who owns the development?

There are four main shareholders, Ross Gilbert, MD of QED Properties, Joe McNulty, MD of Copse Mill Properties, Andy White, founder of Ocean Set and open water swimmer Simon Murie of Swim Trek. I've been involved for the past five years and South Downs Leisure is operating the pool on a 25-year lease.

What's the back-story?

Creating Sea Lanes has been a dream for the shareholders for the past eight years, since they won a council competition to develop this



*We hope Sea Lanes
will become the
national open-water
swimming centre and
a hub for the sport*



Sea Lanes has a gym, as well as yoga and Pilates in its business units

specific piece of land on Brighton beach that had formerly been the Peter Pan Leisure Park. It's just under a kilometre left of Brighton Pier.

Their plan was always to build a lido and as a result of building it as a 50m pool, they've been given a further 25 years extension on the land from the freeholder, Brighton and Hove City Council.

Are you tapping into the growth in wild swimming?

Yes we are, this market is huge and still growing strongly. The pandemic has helped to drive interest, as many people took to wild swimming when pools were closed and once you try swimming outdoors, in the wild or the sea it's hard to go back, as it's so exhilarating.

How much did Sea Lanes?

Around £5m. This breaks down as just over £2.7m for the pool and £2.2m for the 34 accompanying business units. The money came from a combination of the four main shareholders and the bank.

What are the trading arrangements?

South Downs Leisure pays an annual contract fee to operate the pool and once we've agreed a figure for reserves to maintain the pool to a high specification, we'll operate on a gain-share with Sea Lanes.

How's it been going since opening?

Business has been booming, with 1,550 people already signed up to pay a monthly membership. ▶



Our aim is for Sea Lanes to act as a catalyst in the regeneration of this area of Brighton

PHOTO: SOUTH DOWNS LEISURE



Sea Lanes costs
£7-11 per single visit,
or £50-55 per month

- ▶ We've had to close the membership because we're at capacity, although more may be released at some point.

The pay-and-play take-up has also been strong, with over 5,000 people making use of Sea Lanes in the first month by booking a session on our South Downs Leisure app.

How much does it cost to swim and are you hitting your financial targets?

Monthly memberships ranges from £50-£55 a month or £35 for students and for pay-and-play, it costs £11 to swim and £7 for various concessions.

The business plan for Sea Lanes was written in the middle of lockdown before the utility crisis, inflation, mortgage and cost of living crisis all kicked in. As a result of all those factors we needed to charge the correct price at Sea Lanes, to not only fit in with the value proposition of the brand, but also to make it sustainable for the future and to reflect the true cost of operating a pool. I can report that we're surpassing our targets.

How have you approached programming?

The pool is open from 6.00am to 9.00pm Monday-Friday and to 6.30pm at weekends. We have about a

dozen clubs and organisations currently making use of it, including Brighton swim club, local schools, Sea Birds, Swim Trek, Brighton Tri Club, In the swim, Out to swim, Team Dominica and Brighton Phoenix.

We also have showers and lockers on the outside of the building for use by sea swimmers and this set-up includes a mat that can be rolled out over the pebble beach to make the sea more accessible.

We plan to encourage more people to swim safely in the sea and are looking at starting a weekly free sea-swim event run by volunteers, along a similar line to Parkrun.

Will you trade through the winter?

Yes, the facility will only close on Christmas and New Years' day, or for major maintenance.

Who designed Sea Lanes?

Brighton-based Evolution Architects' director Bruce Warren was the principal architect for the project (www.evolutionarchitecture.co.uk). ▶



People will be
able to swim
all-year-round

► **Why did you build at 50m rather than 25m?**

We were restricted in where we could build. To the north we have the Volks Railway line, which is the oldest operational electric railway in the world – dating back to 1883 – and to the south we couldn't go beyond where other facilities have been built, such as Yellow Wave Beach Volleyball.

What advice do you have for others thinking of building for open water swimming?

The potential is there for others to develop these kinds of facilities, but you have to understand your market and the needs of the community. It wouldn't simply be a case of picking up Sea Lanes and dropping it somewhere else, there are many questions that need to be answered first.

Key to success is making it sustainable for the environment, as well as financially and understanding your market. If you try to be all things to all people it will cost more to build, cost more to operate and you'll end up upsetting more people. Understand what you can do well and maintain the focus.

All the above will create political challenges and you will have to disappoint some people.

How important is the location?

The wider location of the City of Brighton is perfect, with a population of over 600,000 and a well-established, sporty, outdoor culture.

While there are some great community pools in Brighton, the majority are beyond their sell by date and in need of refurbishment.

The location within Brighton is a very active beach zone with many national and local events taking



The pool is located next to the electric Volks Railway, the oldest in the world

place in the area and being situated next to Yellow Wave Beach Volleyball means there were already great synergies. Our aim is for Sea Lanes to act as a catalyst in the regeneration of this area of the city.

Tell us about Sea Lanes' eco credentials

Sustainability is and has always been at the forefront when it comes to decision-making and before we even started to lay the foundations, all the beach vegetation was carefully lifted and moved half a mile to the west.

Very early on we also made the decision about the temperature of the pool, as this needed to be right for the clientele and the business model.

We wanted to attract sea swimmers and introduce sea swimming to new people, so there was no point heating the pool to a temperature well beyond that of the sea nearby. As a result, the pool plant was designed to heat it to between 15c and 19c. We've reached as high as 24c in the recent heatwave, but this was purely through solar gain.



Sea Lanes taps into the huge growth in open water swimming



We plan to encourage more people to swim safely in the sea and are looking at starting sea-swim events along a similar line to Parkrun

The tank is 1.28m deep across the whole length of the pool, with no deep or shallow end, as this is more efficient to heat than deeper pools and we have solar panels on the changing room and plant roof that produced over 2000Kwh of energy in the first month. There's also a pool cover which is split into two parts that can insulate the whole of the 50m pool.

On a day-to-day basis, we're using cleaning products that are eco-friendly, with no lasting damage to the environment. These are alcohol- and phosphate-free, plant-based, vegan-friendly and supplied in 100 per cent recycled bottles.

The lockers and cubicles are constructed from upcycled plastic and the majority of staff uniforms will be also made from recycled plastic bottles.

We're enforcing a swim cap rule and encouraging all customers to shower before entry to minimise use of chemicals and reduce backwashing and the plant room has been made hydrogen-ready, should we have an opportunity to convert to green hydrogen in the

future. We also had talks with Shoreham Port during the design about taking excess hydrogen they produce for their haulage trucks and this conversation is ongoing.

We put a Perspex windbreak around the entire pool to reduce loss of water from wind – this can be one of the biggest costs when it comes to lidos, as you have to heat new water to get it up to temperature and also treat it.

We're installing kit to measure wind-speed, outside temperature and pool temperature throughout the year to make forecasting of operating costs more of an exact science.

We're also working with www.ecologi.com so for every new member at Sea Lanes we plant a tree in places such as Madagascar, Peru or Uganda, providing vital habitats, while supporting the lives of local people. ●

Read more about Sea Lanes in the current issue of *Swim* magazine, which is available at www.justswimmag.com or on Instagram at [@justswimmag](https://www.instagram.com/justswimmag)

Les Mills: Gen Z a “huge, untapped market”

Gen Z will have a bigger impact on the global fitness market than any generation before them, according to a new report from Les Mills.

Called *Gen Z Fitness: Cracking the code*, the research shows how the generation – described as people born between 1996 and 2010 – presents a “transformative opportunity for clubs to drive record growth”.

According to the report, more than a third (36 per cent) of Gen Z consumers are exercising

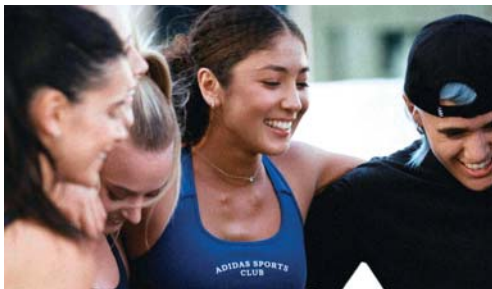


PHOTO: LES MILLS

More than a third of Gen Z consumers are exercising regularly



PHOTO: LES MILLS

The next phase of growth will be driven by operators' ability to appeal to Gen Z

Clive Ormerod

regularly, while 50 per cent want to start – representing a ‘huge, untapped market’.

According to Les Mills CEO, Clive Ormerod, Gen Z could transform the fortunes of the global fitness industry.

“The pandemic was defined by clubs’ use of technology to keep members moving – the next phase growth will

be driven by operators’ ability to appeal to Gen Z,” Ormerod said.

Gen Z Fitness: Cracking the code combines quantitative and qualitative insights from more than 4,000 young people aged 16 to 26 across North America, Europe and Asia.

More: http://lei.sr/p7v8V_H

Nike plans to hire 1,000 fitness trainers

Nike is ramping up its plans to grow market share in the health and fitness and wellness market with the launch of a new initiative called Nike Well Collective, which it says will “deliver innovation, expertise, services and experiences across body, mind and life”.

To drive this Collective, Nike will be on-boarding more than 1,000 new

fitness trainers ‘from Los Angeles to Paris to Shanghai to Seoul’, potentially putting it head to head collision course with organisation such as Les Mills, which recently inked a new global deal with Nike rival, Adidas.

“This worldwide network of trainers, coaches and experts will help advise and inspire Nike Well Collective, helping create holistic



PHOTO: NIKI / AMY MONTAGNE

The worldwide network of trainers will help advise and inspire Nike Well Collective

Amy Montagne

fitness content, programming and experiences across our ecosystem,” said Nike’s Amy Montagne.

The company also wants to extend its sphere of influence by engaging with experts across its holistic fitness pillars – movement, mindfulness, nutrition, rest and connection.

More: http://lei.sr/X2Z2a_H



PHOTO: NIKE

Nike’s Well Collective will widen the company’s remit into wellness

Anytime Fitness expands into French market

Self Esteem Brands (SEB) is taking Anytime Fitness to France, following the signing of a master franchisee deal.

New company, Anytime France SARL will oversee growth, with openings secured in six locations – Paris, Ile-de-France, Auvergne, Rhone-Alpes, Provence-Alpes and the Côte d'Azur.

Sander van den Born, executive VP of international at Self Esteem Brands, said: "With the recovery of the fitness market in France, the moment is right; we're well placed to bring the Anytime Fitness brand here as we accelerate our growth across Europe."

Anytime France is owned by Benoit Hanssen and Matt Burgess, who operate Anytime Fitness across Italy.

Burgess said: "Coupled with our learnings from Italy and the addition of



PHOTO: LINE&LUX
SANDER VAN DEN BORN

We're well placed to bring Anytime Fitness to France as we accelerate growth across Europe

Sander van den Born

French flavour to the US model, we're confident in our plans for growth."

Anytime Fitness is one of the world's largest fitness franchises, with nearly five million members at more than 5,100 clubs in more than 41 countries and territories.

More: http://lei.sr/e7H6P_H



PHOTO: SELF ESTEEM BRANDS

Anytime Fitness is targeting growth

Xponential contests damning Fuzzy Panda report

Xponential Fitness shares are recovering following a fightback by the directors after the publication of a damning report on its prospects and conduct from Fuzzy Panda Research in June.

Fuzzy Panda made a series of allegations about Xponential CEO Anthony Geisler and the general trading position of the business, including that in spite of claims by the company that it has "never closed" a location, 30 have been permanently closed.



PHOTO: XPERIENTIAL

Xponential has strongly refuted allegations made by Fuzzy Panda



PHOTO: SNAPDRAGON CAPITAL

I'm confident in the strength of Xponential's business

Mark Grabowski

It also said it had evidence that eight out of 10 Xponential brands are losing money, calling the business "an abusive franchisor that is a house of cards."

Shares in the company – the largest global franchisor of boutique fitness brands – fell 37 per cent on the day of publication, but a fast response from Xponential directors, who called the report 'misleading' saw them rebound.

Mark Grabowski, chair of Snapdragon Capital Partners – the company's largest investor – said: "I'm confident in the strength of Xponential's business and the company's continued execution and creation of long-term shareholder value."

More: http://lei.sr/2Y8y3_H

Dft has failed to deliver on active travel

The UK's Department for Transport (DfT) is likely to miss the targets it has set itself for boosting walking and cycling.

The finding comes from a damning National Audit Office (NAO) report, which looked into how the DfT has spent more than £2bn in efforts to develop England's active travel infrastructure since 2016.

As part of the investment, it established Active Travel England to address longstanding issues relating to the standard of infrastructure and to support improvements in the capability of local authorities.

However, according to the NAO, the £2bn investment will not meet DfT's own four objectives and targets. These objectives, set in 2016, are:

- Increasing the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled from 41 per cent in 2018-19 to 46 per cent in 2025
- Increasing walking activity to 365 stages per person per year in 2025



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/SHARALING_AJAZZ

The NAO says local authorities are failing to deliver active travel projects

- Doubling cycling from 0.8 billion stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion in 2025
- Increasing the percentage of children aged 5-10 walking to school from 49 per cent in 2014 to 55 per cent in 2025

In its report, NAO says: "Although active travel schemes have the potential to deliver important

benefits, in practice DfT has known too little about what has been achieved and has not been able to influence the local delivery of schemes consistently.

"This has led to patchy delivery of active travel schemes."

More: http://lei.sr/f2R5a_H

Pure Gym's launches competition for over 50s

Pure Gym has launched a fitness championships dedicated to the over-50s with a strong emphasis on athletic performance.

Anyone can enter the Pure Gym Over 50s Fitness Championships free of charge – existing, previous and non-members.

The move comes as operators are increasingly seeking to on-board older customers for their greater spending power and loyalty, which is seeing their lifetime value (LTV) typically exceeding those of younger members.

Entrants will have a choice of two events, competing against those in the same age and max weight lifting category. Age bands will follow those typically used for masters' championships – 50-59 years, 60-69 years, 70-79 years and 80+

Pure Gym will launch the over 50s championship in September this year



PHOTO: LINDSEY STEPHENSON

Providing an environment where anyone can achieve their goals is incredibly important to us

Stephen Rowe

Pure Gym's chief marketing officer, Stephen Rowe, said: "Providing an inclusive environment, where anyone – no matter their age – feels they can come and achieve their fitness goals is incredibly important to us as a company,"

More: http://lei.sr/U8w2n_H



PHOTO: PURE GYM

Prevention is key to reducing excess deaths

The UK Government needs to adopt a national health strategy based on prevention, if it wants to successfully tackle a cardiovascular disease emergency that has resulted in almost 100,000 excess deaths since the start of 2020.

Analysis of official government data, by the British Heart Foundation, suggests that more than 500 people a week die needlessly from heart conditions.

The figures were published just as Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, outlined his 15-year plan to 'build the health workforce of the future'. Sunak said his "Long Term Workforce Plan" would be the "biggest workforce training expansion" in the NHS' history.

Sunak's plan received mixed reviews from health and exercise professionals.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREY KOTENKO

A focus on prevention would quickly and significantly reduce the need for health and social care

Professor Sir Muir Gray

Sir Muir Gray questioned why the PM didn't mention prevention in his plan, which would "quickly and significantly reduce the need for health and social care".

"More of the same is not enough," Sir Muir said.

More: http://lei.sr/2Z6c5_H



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREY KOTENKO

The government needs to leverage the potential of the physical activity sector

Blok launches new art concept, Blokspace

Outique fitness operator, Blok, has launched a new studio concept which mixes curated fitness classes with the opportunity to explore the world of art and design.

Blokspace, located in Leyton, London, UK, has been designed to bring together resident artists, spatial design and Blok's signature classes to create an "immersive and transformative experience".

The studio's design has been developed in collaboration with



PHOTO: BLOK

The studio's design has been developed in collaboration with Anotherform



PHOTO: BLOK

Our customers will have the opportunity to appreciate and be inspired by the concept

Ed Stanbury

design studio, Anotherform and is based on providing a minimalist landscape that "stimulates both physical and mental wellbeing".

Blokspace will offer a selection of classes across strength, cardio, flexibility, barre, yoga and pilates, as part of a strategy to provide a diverse range of training options to suit all individual preferences and goals.

According to Ed Stanbury, CEO and founder of Blok, customers will have the opportunity to "appreciate and be inspired" by an ever-changing collection of art, "further enriching their experience within the space".

Blokspace is Blok's fourth studio in the UK and its third site in London.

More: http://lei.sr/B3Q7u_H

Future Fit buys iCareiMove to expand wellbeing offer

Fitness training company, Future Fit, has acquired iCareiMove, which provides health services to specialist populations.

The acquisition of iCareiMove – a specialist in delivering strength, balance and other support programmes to ageing populations – is part of Future Fit's plans to further expand its operations into the health and wellbeing sector.

According to Rob Johnson, CEO of Future Fit Group, the decision to buy iCareiMove stems from the



The iCareiMove team with director Helen Tite on the right



PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB JOHNSON

This strategic collaboration will allow Future Fit to drive positive transformations in health

Rob Johnson

“shared vision and commitment to improving the health of the nation”.

“This strategic collaboration will allow Future Fit to drive positive transformations in health and wellbeing, focusing on our ageing society in work; in life; and in health,” Johnson said. “Through the provision and delivery of services,

courses, programmes and business coaching and events, this exciting acquisition further solidifies Future Fit's position as a leading provider of innovative solutions. By joining forces, we will create even greater opportunities for individuals to thrive.”

More: http://lei.sr/T3W3K_H

Dan Rees launches new training company



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAN REES

Dan Rees – seeking to fill a gap in the market with THFI

Dan Rees, the former MD of Premier Global NASM – the training company which was closed by its US-based owner, Ascend Learning last year – has set up a new global fitness training company.

Rees was widely expected to come back to the market with a new business once the company ceased trading.

The Health and Fitness Institute (THFI) is aiming to fill a gap in the market and train those seeking to forge a career in the health and fitness industry as personal trainers, nutrition transformation coaches, strength and conditioning coaches and wellbeing coaches.

According to Rees, THFI's aim is to make “world-class education affordable and accessible for would-be students worldwide”.

THFI will base its programmes on a learning through digital technology approach, which provides learners dedicated 24/7 support and the ability to learn anywhere in the world. THFI will offer qualifications recognised by Ofqual, YMCA Awards, Transcend Awards, CIMSPA and Active IQ – which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

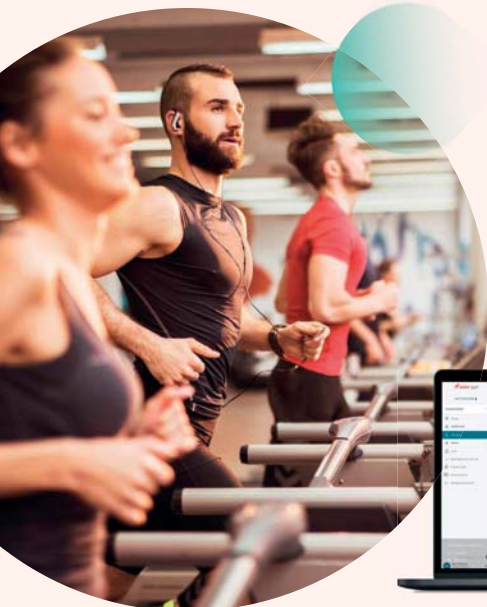
For those taking certified personal training qualifications, THFI guarantees to provide those completing its programmes with job interviews with operators such as Total Fitness, Ultimate Performance and Nuffield. There's also a business accelerator programme intended to help and support new entrants and PTs.

More: http://lei.sr/h6b8d_H



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"I appreciate how simple and effective Xplor Gym is – It's easy to learn, new staff members have completed the basic training in 10 minutes on their first shift. I'd recommend Xplor Gym to other gym operators because of how simple it is. It has everything you need without unnecessary complication."

Luke Tyler, Head of Health and Wellbeing Services, YMCA Black Country Group

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Myzone launches raft of anywhere features

Myzone has launched a premium suite of services, offering health club operators three elements which utilise its heart-rate tracking tech – MZ-Club, MZ-Together and MZ-On Demand.

The elements have been designed to enable operators to offer members access to the Myzone ecosystem and live heart rate tracking wherever they are – in the gym, outdoors or at home.

MZ-Club enables facilities to broadcast their own live and pre-recorded content using the Myzone booking diary.

MZ-Together offers access to Myzone live classes, hosted by Myzone master trainers.

The third element – MZ-On Demand – unlocks more than



PHOTO MYZONE

We're offering clubs the opportunity to scale their class experience

Dave Wright

1,300 classes that can be filtered by Myzone Effort Points (MEPs), duration, or required equipment.

Dave Wright, CEO of Myzone, said: "We're offering clubs the opportunity to scale their class experience and get more people moving."

More: http://lei.sr/8S3Z7_H

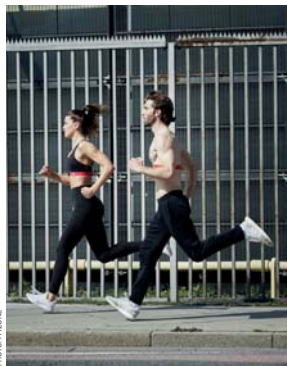


PHOTO MYZONE

The services will offer access to the Myzone ecosystem anywhere

Harry Kane invests in fit tech startup OxeFit

England football captain Harry Kane has invested in fitness tech startup, OxeFit.

OxeFit is a connected, artificial intelligence (AI)-based strength training platform, which uses data-driven insights to customise and plan individual workouts.

Its core technology integrates robotics, movement and performance tracking, advanced coaching and analytics.

It offers both consumer and elite athlete systems, while its on-demand content library features programming beyond strength training, from nutrition, health and mindfulness to overall wellness topics.

Established in early 2020 by Shanableh and Peter Neuhaus, Kane's investment in OxeFit was part of a Series A2, which raised US\$20m – bringing total funding to US\$45m.

Kane said: "I've always been focused on being the best player I can be and that means making solid gains in other

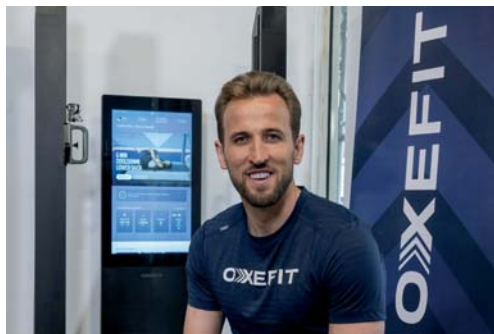


PHOTO OXEFIT

Kane's investment was part of a Series A2 round, which raised US\$20m of funding

aspects of my life beyond the pitch.

"For me, nutrition and fitness are two areas that don't have a one-size-fits-all playbook and this is something OxeFit understands. What impressed me most about OxeFit is not only the science behind the physical products,

but also the combination of robotics and content working together.

"This is why I invested and why I will serve as an ambassador for the brand. It's truly one-of-a-kind."

More: http://lei.sr/USU4Z_H

JOIN W3FIT in 2023

Premier hosted buyer event connecting owners and operators from Europe's top health, fitness, and leisure clubs and hotels with executives from global supplier companies innovating the fitness industry through pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings, education, and networking.



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Well organised and hosted event that will undoubtedly become a showpiece networking event for the fitness industry going forward. Excellent breadth of suppliers which will likely lead to exciting new partnerships for us.

Buyer: Adam Watson, Nuffield Health



As a supplier, getting quality time with industry buyers is key, and W3FIT certainly provided that. Three days packed full of meetings and networking opportunities with new and existing customers has left me with lots to follow up on. Would highly recommend it.

Supplier: Luke Januszek, Escape Fitness



: CONTACT US

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TOM EDWARDS

“

*We want Forest House
to be the place that
ticks all the boxes:
that isn't just another
health and fitness club*

JON WILLIAMS

Kate Cracknell talks to the entrepreneurs bringing the new Forest House health club brand to market

Tell us about the Forest House concept

For the last 10 years, we've had a number of brands running alongside each other: a premium health club experience at The Marlow Club, a premium yoga and pilates offering called PilaYoga and our functional fitness studios, The Fitness Experts.

With the launch of our new £3m Forest House club in Watford (June 2023), we're bringing everything together in what we jokingly call our 'greatest hits compilation'. We've taken the best of what we've done over the years and applied all our learnings to create something genuinely new and different in the market.

Funnily enough it's a site we've had on our radar for over 10 years, as it was going to be our first Fitness Experts location. It's part of the West Herts Sports Club, where – alongside the 18,000sq ft building we've taken on a 125-year lease – are 12 tennis courts, cricket, football and five-a-side football. Our members have access to all these facilities.

How did you approach the development?

We completely gutted the building – all we left were the walls – and started again from scratch, working with Jeffrey Jordan Architects and designer Sarah Mannerings to create a space that simultaneously makes you feel comfortable and has a wow factor. The feeling we've gone for is more Soho House members' club than health club, with distinct spaces where you can spend time – the restaurant, for example, which features lots of wood and hanging plants. ▶

COO Tom Edwards (l) and MD Jon Williams (r) of The Really Fine Leisure Company



Forest House is definitely a concept we want to roll out, not only in the UK, but potentially internationally. It will all be down to finding the right locations

- The notion of 'Forest' is drawn from the environment – the club itself is surrounded by fields – and we're making it as sustainable as possible, with solar panels on the roof coming in 2024, planting all around the club, everything sourced locally and five trees planted for every member who joins.

The 'House' part of the name is about making people feel at home in a community where they feel safe, with service levels that are out of this world. It doesn't feel like a club, it's a second home, with a maximum adult-only capacity of 2,000 members. Even people who've never found a club that 'fitted' them before will feel comfortable at Forest House.

What's on offer?

There's a strong emphasis on group exercise, with a yoga-Pilates-hot yoga studio (Flow), a reformer studio (Reform), a functional fitness studio and an indoor cycling studio (Ride). There's also an open gym floor, a lounge, multiple therapy rooms and two squash courts.

We're not ruling out a spa in the future – we have the space – but with energy prices as they are, we're pleased we decided not to launch with this.



Yoga, Pilates and hot-yoga join indoor cycling as part of the group exercise focus



PHOTO SOLUTIONS CREATIVE

PHOTO SOLUTIONS CREATIVE



The gym floor, with interior design by Sarah Mannerings

Our big USP is the way that we've packaged everything around time, energy and space.

Time is an interesting one, because it isn't just about the usual issue of being stressed and not having enough time. It's also about catering for those who might be retired and have plenty of time, or who work flexibly. We want to cater for all different needs and mindsets.

One of the ways we do this is by offering all our classes in four lengths: 20, 40, 60 and 80 minutes. Across 100+ weekly classes, our timetable is designed to accommodate different lengths at appropriate times of day. There's also an added option of virtual classes when studio spaces aren't in use for live classes.

Whether members want to pop in and do a 20-minute meditation, stack a couple of different classes or take their time in a 60-minute workout, it's all here for them.



The restaurant at Forest House features lots of wood to create a welcoming vibe

PHOTO: SOUTHWINGS CREATIVE

PHOTO: SOUTHWINGS CREATIVE



Our therapy rooms not only offer physiotherapy, nutrition consultations and beauty treatments, but also mental health support. We want members to be able to seek advice if they're feeling low

- **Energy** is about understanding that people are different – some of them might opt for mindfulness and relaxation classes, while others might opt for HIIT or bootcamp – and that the same person will usually have different energies at different times.

Across our timetable, every 20-, 40- and 60-minute class is labelled Revive, Thrive or Strive: gentle and restorative, moderate intensity or more challenging.

We don't have complicated class names: you pick your studio – Flow, Reform, Ride or Functional – and then decide whether within that concept, you want a Revive, Thrive or Strive class.

Every 80-minute class is labelled 'Meta', which means you get a bit of every energy level – Revive, Thrive and Strive – within the 80 minutes.

The final piece of the puzzle is **Space** and this is about recognising different mindsets: some will come for quiet, others to seek out a community.

At Forest House, if you want to put your headphones on to work out, then use the

Headspace app and quietly lie on the yoga studio floor on your own, we respect that. If you want to get involved in the social side, doing workshops and seminars and so on, we have plenty on offer.

The lounge is a hub that reflects the three – time, energy and space. If you're short on time, you can pre-order your protein shake, do a 20-minute class and you're in and out of the building in 21 minutes. Alternatively you can come in, do a class with a friend, sit and have a coffee afterwards and take your time. If you want to work from the club, that's fine too: we have work-focused spaces.

How holistic is the offering?

Even within our studios, there's a big focus on mindfulness, breathwork, meditation and so on. People need this now more than ever.

Complementing this, our therapy rooms not only offer physiotherapy, nutrition consultations, beauty treatments and so on, but also mental

PHOTO: SOUTHWORX CREATIVE



Members can work out, socialise, eat and work at the club





Class lengths vary to match members' energy levels

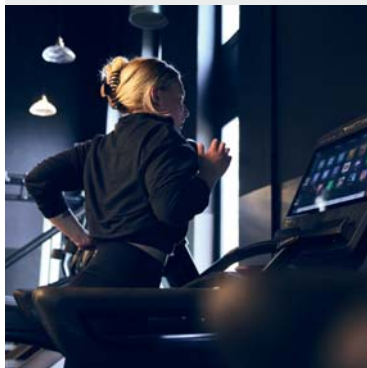
health support. If you're feeling low, we want you to be able to seek advice in a place where you feel comfortable. If your energy levels are down, we want you to know you can come to us and walk out of the door afterwards feeling revived.

What are your ambitions for Forest House?

We aim to be at capacity within 13 months of opening – ie by July 2024. That feels very achievable: membership costs £100 a month on a 12-month contract or £125 on a three-month contract, and within a few weeks of a very light-touch pre-sale we'd had 200 members pay a deposit and choose their membership category.

Beyond that, this is definitely a concept we'll want to roll out, not only in the UK but potentially internationally. It will all be down to finding the right locations – it needs green space – and we're not talking hundreds of clubs. Maybe 10 in total. But it's definitely a concept we can grow and we're already looking at a second UK site.

We want Forest House to bring something unique and special to the community. Health and fitness is our passion and we want this to be a club that sits at the forefront of our evolving sector. ▶



Forest House was designed as a 'compilation of greatest hits' say Edwards and Williams



Marlow Club classes are full to capacity with waiting lists

“

We're back to capacity, with 2,800 members at The Marlow Club, while yield is 17 per cent higher than before the pandemic. We've raised memberships to £110 a month and added value



PHOTO: JOURNALISM'S CREATIVE

Background briefing

The first time HCM talked to the Really Fine Leisure Company was 2010, at which point our interviewees were owner Steve Lewis and Jon Williams, then GM at The Marlow Club.

Fast-forward to 2023 and Lewis – now group exec chair – has stepped back from the day-to-day, handing the reins to Williams as group MD.

Williams is supported by group operations director, Tom Edwards, who has progressed through the company's ranks for more than 17 years, as everything from bar worker to lifeguard, gym instructor, PT and nutritionist.

The portfolio has evolved, too. The Marlow Club still sits at the heart of the business, and the Really Fine Leisure Company continues to operate The Thames Club on a management contract. But the two other sites that were active in 2010 – Mill Hill and Windsor – were taken back by their respective local authorities.

The company has launched three new brands since – The Fitness Experts (2011), PilaYoga (2019) and Forest House (2023), with plans to roll out the latter globally.

► Give us the background on your brands

Our flagship property, the Marlow Club, is a one-off – you'd need £10m to build another like it and that isn't realistic for an independent operation such as ours, so in 2011, we decided to test a new model: a smaller, boutique-style club offering group functional training classes.

We created a new brand – The Fitness Experts – and launched our first site in Basingstoke.

The concept came from a desire to get results for members without anyone having to pay extra for personal training. All classes are run by PTs and are focused on delivering results. Whatever people's initial fitness level, we design classes so everyone can do them.

We tested this model over three years, fine-tuning it to optimise finances, while still achieving results for members and settled on a maximum of 20 people in each class.

How's it going?

It works well. We run 10-12 classes a day and the workout is different every day: it might be strength, CV, core, individual or team challenges. The key is making it fun and effective, so people come back.

We then rolled the concept out, opening a 4,500sq ft club in High Wycombe in 2015

and a 5,000sq ft club in Harwell Campus near Didcot in 2019. We also outgrew our 3,500sq ft location in Basingstoke and moved to a 5,000sq ft site, with the launch scheduled for 23 March 2020. That turned out to be pretty bad timing! We didn't even have a chance to move members across before lockdown hit.

The business is performing well again now and we're thankful to the large number of members who showed their support by paying membership fees throughout the lockdowns.

You also launched PilaYoga Studios

Located on-site at The Marlow Club, we created PilaYoga because Marlow Club classes were full to capacity, with waiting lists particularly long for holistic classes.

PilaYoga Studios opened in 2019 and offers a reformer pilates studio, a hot yoga studio and a studio for normal yoga, mat Pilates and barre. In fact, it originally only offered more standard yoga classes, but after lockdown – when a lot of people had happily done yoga in their living rooms – we realised we needed to provide a more compelling reason to return to the studio. That's when we added hot yoga and it's made all the difference. The business is booming. ►



Members now use The Marlow Club differently. They meet here, work here and eat here. They also use the club as a social hub instead of going out

► What are the fees?

PilaYoga is sold as a separate offering from the Marlow Club, with unlimited membership priced at £200 a month for reformer Pilates and £125 a month for yoga, mat Pilates, barre and hot yoga.

Marlow Club members can add discounted bolt-ons and class packs – £40 a month for four yoga sessions, for example and £75 for four reformer Pilates classes a month.

It's pretty much full to capacity: 29 hot yoga classes a week, 33 reformer Pilates classes – with more being added all the time – as well as barre, standard yoga and Pilates classes. It's doing really well.

Will you build more?

We wouldn't roll this model out to standalone sites. We have complete confidence in PilaYoga as a brand, but at Marlow we have the benefit of an existing building that we've extended and own the freehold on: there's no additional rent to pay. Utility costs are shared. Our front of house staff look after the whole thing. Our operating costs are low. Meanwhile, nationally, we're seeing some standalone yoga and pilates studios struggling. As much as we'd love to roll out PilaYoga, that isn't realistic.

PilaYoga is based at
The Marlow Club





PHOTO: SOUTHWINGS CREATIVE

The Fitness Experts (above and below). All classes are delivered by trained PTs

Has the pandemic impacted the business?

COVID hit us hard, but just as with The Fitness Experts, Marlow Club members were incredibly supportive: 58 per cent paid membership throughout lockdown without asking for anything in return. They just wanted their club to survive.

And the reality is, if they hadn't done that, we wouldn't be here today. We'd invested £3.5m in the couple of years leading up to Q1 2019: we bought land over the road and built a multi-storey car park for our members, we purchased the freehold, we extended the club to 30,000sq ft to include PilaYoga and a Crossfit-style training box, we refurbished the entire club, and we'd been trading so well we'd been able to borrow around 60 per cent of that from the bank.

Our members knew that, they bought into what we were doing for the community and they supported us when we needed it.

What did you do for them?

Of course, although they didn't ask for anything in return, we were always going to support them through the lockdowns and as soon as the first media leaks suggested there might be an issue brewing, we started to prepare.

We were already working with a software company to develop bespoke software that makes membership more engaging and rewarding, with elements of gamification and a highly member-centric app. Working with this company, we had online classes, one-to-one nutrition consultations and so on ready to go even before we had to close our doors.



PHOTO: SOUTHWINGS CREATIVE

All this was provided to members free of charge. We also lent out all our equipment, other than our treadmills and heavy fixed resistance machines, and created on-demand workouts and classes based around the kit we knew our members had at home.

How has the recovery been to date?

We're back to capacity, with 2,800 members at The Marlow Club, while yield per member is 17 per cent higher than before the pandemic.

We've raised membership prices to £110 a month, but we continue to add value: we'll do more work in the gym this year, as well as refurbishing the pool.

It's also the case that members now use the club differently. They meet here, work here and eat here. They use the club as a social hub instead of going out. The 75 covers in our restaurant are always booked. Personal training is full. Secondary spend is high across the board, so it's changed our business in many positive ways. ●

A man with a beard and extensive black and grey tattoos on his arms and neck is looking upwards with his right hand raised. He is wearing a light grey t-shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows and other people's hands raised in the air.

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Everyone's talking about Gentle exercise

An uptick in the takeup of gentle exercise modalities suggests people are looking for more than just cardio and HIIT workouts.

Kath Hudson asks the experts if this trend is here to stay

Like many of us, I've had a bit of a year and one of my vital support strategies has been a weekly restorative yoga class. A couple of years ago I would have thought all that lying around was a bit of a waste of time and money and booked the Ashtanga class instead, now it's my favourite 75 minutes of the week.

The class makes me feel relaxed, nurtured and my nervous system gets a much needed break. And I'm not alone; feedback from operators suggests that many people are adding gentle exercise or relaxation classes to their weekly activity programme.

Added to this, research shows we don't have to beat ourselves to get

results. An ACE-sponsored study found the impact of a reduced intensity workout (REHIT) elicits comparable benefits to a traditional moderate intensity, longer workout. REHIT benefits accumulate through the day, meaning individuals burn more calories and see further training adaptations over time, with improved cardiometabolic health.



Les Mills Thrive helps older adults to improve walking ability



We're moving away from weight loss goals, towards using movement to simply do better at life



PHOTO: LES MILLS

Bryce Hastings

Head of research
Les Mills International

Our research shows that when exercise intensity is higher than anticipated it can create a negative experience, which reduces the likelihood of someone returning to the class, especially beginners.

Individuals who haven't established a fitness habit don't always find exercise positive and intensity is a key factor in this. While regular exercisers are used to feeling hot, sweaty, short of breath and uncomfortable, irregular exercisers may not distinguish these feelings from a stress response, so lowering intensity helps ease people into their journey and ensures each exercise session is positive.

The old approach of having to sweat and puff to gain benefits from training has changed. According to a number of recent consumer research publications, mental wellbeing has become the most common reason to exercise. Many operators are noticing an increase in attendance in the mind-body space, so are including more of these offerings on their timetables.

Our research indicates just a few mind-body sessions can significantly improve resilience,

feelings of positivity, life satisfaction and sleep quality, so it's not surprising these types of classes have surged in popularity.

The team at Les Mills are obsessed with creating engaging fitness experiences and constantly innovating to provide new workouts which meet people wherever they are on their fitness journey. Our new active ageing non-impact programme, Les Mills Thrive, can be performed with assistance, such as chair support, bodyweight or light resistance. It focuses on improving walking ability, which research has shown many older adults use to maintain their health. By targeting the key muscles involved in gait, we aim to improve functional strength and maintain walking ability, independence and ultimately longevity.

I expect the interest in lower intensity exercise to continue, driven by consumer demand and operators focusing on meeting the needs of their clients, which may involve giving psychological health priority over physical health, at least initially.

I'd love to see clubs focus on delivering movement experiences that leave people feeling replenished and rejuvenated. This could broaden our industry's appeal and bring the benefits of being active to everybody. We're moving away from weight loss goals, towards using movement to simply do better at life. ▶

Debbie Bellenger

Founder and CEO
Body By Definition

Many of our members are sick, tired, stressed out and suffering from economic anxiety, back pain and neck pain from sitting all day. They're also bombarded by negative messaging in the media, with no end in sight.

One in five Americans are now suffering burnout and by 2030, more than 50 per cent of Americans will have a BMI greater than 30. The isolation of working from home and the sedentary behaviour this leads to is driving poor mental health and musculoskeletal problems and the double whammy of the pandemic and cost of living crisis has left many dealing with anxiety and stress.

For individuals not feeling well, who can barely get through their daily life, we must offer classes which are not only low intensity, but also shorter in duration and which support mental health and wellbeing by allowing the mind to rest and cortisol levels to come down.

Research backs this up. Common trends in reports from ACSM,

AHA, Canfitpro, Club Solutions and McKinsey show the popularity of functional movement, fitness programmes for the older adult, mind-body programmes and recovery programmes. All of these are lower intensity options that promote moving well, ageing well and using exercise to feel better and improve mental health.

This doesn't mean eliminating anything, it simply means the sector must offer new and different choices to attract new members based on the current health profile and to retain our current members.

The future is about programming in the mental health and wellbeing space: shorter exercise sessions and teaching life-skills, such as meditation, nutrition basics, sleep hygiene, stress management and more.

As the incidence of conditions such as Parkinson's and osteoarthritis increases, at some point the industry must step up to design programming for these populations too.



For individuals who can barely get through their day, we must offer classes which are low intensity and shorter in duration

Lower intensity classes enable cortisol levels to come down





Low impact exercise has broad appeal and also provides a place for exercisers who are not naturally driven athletes to engage and feel successful

Joy Puleo

Director of education
Balanced Body

The 'no pain, no gain' ethos is ingrained in fitness culture. It implies that if you're not working hard, you're not working enough, you're not creating change and, therefore, you won't reach your goals. But actually, when we push too hard and fast, we reach breakpoint fairly quickly. This shows itself in energy depletion, muscle fatigue, strains and sprains. And most commonly, burnout and disengagement.

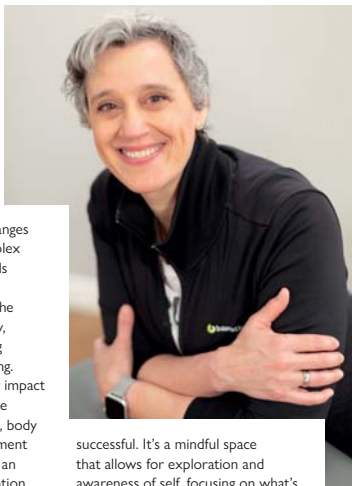
What has come out of the pandemic is an evolved mindset which believes in the quality over quantity of movement. It recognises the mind-body connection as critical to optimising physical possibility. Low impact exercise programmes

move the body through full ranges of joint movements and complex planes of motion. The adrenals respond to the exercises and the body willingly complies. The results are enhanced longevity, full-body condition and toning and a sense of overall wellbeing.

On a one-to-one basis, low impact exercises allow the focus to be placed on individual sensation, body awareness and optimal movement patterns, while also providing an ideal environment for exploration, challenge without judgement and client-to-trainer interaction.

In the group environment, low impact exercise brings positive, nurturing and proactive training opportunities to a wide variety of members with varied abilities.

Low impact exercise has broad appeal and also provides a place for exercisers who are not naturally driven athletes to engage and feel



successful. It's a mindful space that allows for exploration and awareness of self, focusing on what's possible, rather than what's lacking.

Connecting mind and body through exercise helps instil the value of an active lifestyle and hopefully produces lifelong participants in fitness, fuelling future generations of gym members

It helps those active in sport to do what they love for longer and if they're starting in midlife, mind-body exercise provides a foundation from which they can grow and age actively. ▶

Patrick Oancia

Founder

The Baseworks Method

In many high-intensity exercise modalities, not enough emphasis is put on the value of foundational technique, so I believe there would be value in creating form-oriented, low-intensity exercise programmes as a spin-off from high intensity programmes. Kind of what tai-chi is to kung-fu.

Currently, many low intensity exercise classes are simply high intensity programmes with the more challenging elements removed. I believe there's potential to explore other goals which could be addressed by them.

It's not just older people who would benefit – lower intensity programmes could be appealing to working people between 30 and 50 years who are juggling multiple responsibilities and have less vitality than they did in their 20s. These

programmes could be used to mitigate their stress levels and build resilience to higher levels of stress, as well as improved mental clarity.

For those who are used to, or expect, exercise to be exhilarating or calorie burning, there might need to be some education around the benefits of low intensity

exercise programmes. Fitness professionals would also need to gain an understanding of how lifestyle and stress impact the body. These classes might not be the right fit for a young, strong, healthy instructor; it would likely be more appropriate for them to be led by someone with more life experience.



PHOTO: BASWORKS



There would be value in creating form-oriented, low-intensity exercise programmes as a spin-off from high intensity programmes. Kind of what tai-chi is to kung-fu



Classes can be led by instructors with more life experience

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / JEFFREY KNOX



POWER YOURSELF WITH **#POSITIVE ENERGIE**

Maintaining muscle mass is critical to healthy ageing, says Hill

Rod Hill

President
Energie Fitness Iberia

“
The beauty of strength training and weightlifting is that it can be controlled and performed slowly and carefully

As strength training enjoys a shift in perception, the industry is naturally moving from its emphasis on high intensity cardio workouts to strength workouts which can be modified for every age group. I believe strength training is destined to be the strongest anti-ageing medicine of all and after 30 years in the industry it's amazing to see how attitudes towards it are changing.

For many years the industry tried to disassociate itself from the bodybuilder image and reinvented itself with a massive promotion of cardio. But times are changing and new gyms are lined wall-to-wall

with Olympic lifting platforms, with less traditional cardio machines.

For many people, maintaining muscle strength and flexibility will be the difference between a long active life or a long life with poor quality of life, as retaining muscle mass is shown to increase bone density, joint elasticity and tendon strength.

To encourage more senior people to begin strength training, Energie fitness Spain is offering free workouts to the over 70s at its flagship club. We're using the results of our 12-week programme to inform a national marketing campaign to encourage more over-50s to take up strength training.

The programme has been designed to be progressive over the 12 weeks and everyone is capable of making significant strength gains over this period. For the first six weeks we build core strength and slowly build up. In the second six weeks we encourage our participants to begin working on the big three: deadlift, squats and bench press. We generally work at around four to eight reps, with the last couple being challenging.

The beauty of weight training is that it can be controlled and performed slowly and carefully. Muscles lengthening under stress is a great way to build strength, and in older populations slow eccentric work can be very beneficial.

Older people are making significant strength gains



Partners in performance

The Formula 1 World Championship team Williams Racing has partnered with Life Fitness to create a world-class training facility, designed to drive performance on and off the track

When choosing a fitness equipment supplier, Williams Racing sought a partner that matched its key values: quality, performance, innovation, and results.

In partnering with Life Fitness, the Formula One team has created a fitness facility at its headquarters in the UK that supports wide-ranging training needs: from elite performance for drivers and pit crew, to encouraging healthy lifestyles for on-site staff.

"Within Williams Racing, we have an incredible gym that's kitted out with everything you could possibly imagine from Life Fitness," says James Vowles, team principal. "It has everything required to train every part of your body for what we need, both trackside and in the factory."

The 330sq m (3,550sq ft) gym supports 750 personnel, including drivers, pit crew, factory, and support staff. Within the gym is a full range of Life Fitness cardio equipment, including the Heat Performance Row, Insignia and Axiom Series selectorised strength equipment – including Axiom dual machines that offer two exercises in one – helping to maximise available floor space.

The Signature Series Multi-Jungle provides exercisers with extensive workout options, with cable-based strength training to build power, balance and stability. The Multi-Jungle is popular with the pit crew, helping to target specific physical requirements for their roles.

The gym is also home to Life Fitness and Hammer Strength functional training accessories and the HD Air Bike – part of Hammer Strength's new HD Performance Trainers' line.

Flexible space

Designed to deliver flexible use of space, the group exercise studio can be transformed into an indoor cycling studio, with ICG IC7s and ICG Connect system, which integrates digital data with gamification tech to create an interactive cycling studio.

"At Williams, we encourage a fit and healthy workforce and believe human performance is an important aspect of delivering world-class engineering," explains Nicola Salter, HR director at Williams Racing. "Having the gym on-site means our staff can focus both on their work and their health and wellbeing."

As the team's official equipment supplier, Life Fitness also supports Williams Racing when it's on the road.

All aspects of fitness are catered for





PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

The Williams Racing team trains with Life Fitness

PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS



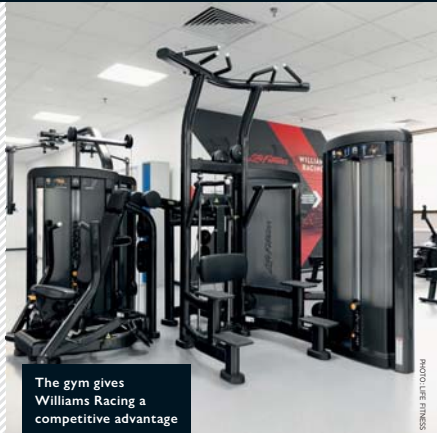
We have an incredible gym facility that's kitted out with everything you could possibly imagine from Life Fitness

James Vowles, team principal, Williams Racing

With the sport's demands ever increasing, Williams Racing sees fitness as one of the ways to gain a competitive edge, as James concludes: "Every day we're required to be pushed further to our limits and fitness is absolutely part of that journey. The fitter you are, the easier that journey becomes." ●

● Learn more about performance trainers at: www.HCMmag.com/LF623

FIND OUT MORE



The gym gives Williams Racing a competitive advantage

PHOTO: LIFE FITNESS

The shape of now

More members and record market value, Leisure DB's David Minton discusses this year's State of the UK Fitness Industry Report

The UK has slightly fewer gyms (0.9 per cent) in 2023 than in 2022, but member numbers are up 3.9 per cent and market value is the highest we've observed. These are some of the key findings from our *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report 2023*.

The increases in member numbers and market value were greater in the private sector than in the public sector, with budget chains, PureGym and The Gym Group, the two leading operators in terms of new gym openings in the 12 months to the end of March 2023.

The average price of a gym membership currently stands at £44.92 – but there are regional differences. The costliest memberships are in London at £69.81 per month (55 per cent above the UK average), and the most affordable in Yorkshire and Humber at £35.52 per month (21 per cent below the UK average).

The UK's top 10 public sector operators account for just under 30 per cent of all public gyms and almost 40 per cent of both public sector members and public sector market value, while the UK's top 10 private sector operators account for 30 per cent of all private clubs, but more than 60 per cent of private sector members and almost 60 per cent of private sector market value ▶



PHOTO: LEISURE DATABASE.CO

Higher costs have legitimised price rises, with increases in membership fees raising the value of the industry without impacting member numbers

The average price of a
UK gym membership
now stands at £44.92





We're seeing a new super premium category emerge, reaching into the booming field of wellness and focusing on improving holistic personal health

► This year marks the 15th edition of the report to be published for the UK's fitness sector since 2007 and the figures make for particularly fascinating reading, as a newly-honed fitness sector emerges from the pandemic, leaner yet arguably stronger and more resilient.

Although the devil's in the detail, I'd suggest that the pandemic, inflation and higher energy costs will – in the long term – be beneficial for the industry.

Positive impact of the pandemic

First, the pandemic removed so-called 'sleepers' – something I personally believe is a long-term embarrassment for the sector and an issue that has been a fly in the ointment of all we stand for. After all, how can people achieve results and improve their health if they never visit our facilities or benefit from our support?

Second, every indication is that 'health is the new wealth', and those who remain customers of our health clubs have been encouraged to place a greater value on our products and services and to use them more.

These are all positive signs of the sector's long-term resilience and they highlight a customer-centric opportunity to play a more proactive role in preventative healthcare.

Third, higher costs have legitimised monthly price rises. Over the 12 months to the end of March 2023, a cumulative increase in monthly fees raised the value of the UK industry to new heights – all without impacting member numbers. This is notable, as our sector has for many years been slow to keep up with inflation and price indices: in real terms, the cost of our products and services have fallen significantly over time. Now, buoyed by the dual forces of higher costs and higher perceived value, we're building back up to where we need to be.

At IHRSA San Diego in March, speaker after speaker talked about how they had been forced

2023 Headlines

3.9%

Increase in members

0.9%

Fall in number of clubs

11.5%

Increase in market value

15.1%

Penetration rate

Super-premium clubs
are commanding fees
of up to £600/month

to raise prices, only to discover it did not have an impact on member numbers. Have we been undervaluing our product? Have we not appreciated the scope to participate at different price points? Have we failed to understand the latent demand?

No wonder the arts received a £1.5bn pandemic recovery fund in the UK, compared to £100m for sports and fitness. The arts – more advanced on customer insight – could provide answers to the government's questions, drawing on data from over 800 organisations which between them represent around 220,000 jobs.

The sports and fitness sectors couldn't provide enough answers – cue far less support and a heavier administrative burden attached to the support that was provided.

This must change and next time the government asks questions, our industry must be ready to answer them.

Through events such as our annual Evolve conference and new Leisure DB Roundtables, we're working in collaboration with suppliers and operators across the industry to spearhead collaboration, communication and change within the industry.

Higher prices, added value

But I digress. Let's return to the price rises, for they're significant enough to be changing the face of the market. We're seeing low-cost brands move into the mid-market, mid-market brands into premium. It's a trend that's seen some brands move out of the low-cost bracket altogether, leading this market segment to shrink for the first time since it emerged in 2011. ▶

PureGym is one of the businesses leading the growth of the sector



PHOTO: PURE GYM



PureGym and The Gym Group were the two leading operators in terms of new gym openings in the 12 months to the end of March 2023

- We're also seeing a new category emerging that I call 'super-premium'. Commanding membership fees of upwards from £150 a month, in London the most expensive is £606 a month.

With these price increases come value-added extras from most brands; many are reaching into the booming field of wellness, focusing on understanding and improving holistic personal health. This increasingly individual and personalised approach will no doubt generate some compelling human interest stories, and we plan to weave these into future annual reports.

Of note, feedback we've been getting at events such as IHRSA and FIBO is that many health club brands across multiple countries have also raised their fees and increased overall market value through a similar cumulative effect to the UK. This is, however, difficult

to confirm without audit methodology comparable to the UK – something that doesn't yet exist.

A personal footnote

I have a dream where everyone working or involved in our sector understands the size and scale of the UK industry, so for this first year we're targeting 100,000 global downloads of our new free report summary – called *Spotlight*. I also hope it helps break down some of the isolation that exists across the sector.

Get your copy at www.leisuredb.com/publications.

The full *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report 2023* can be purchased at www.leisuredb.com/publications with 15 per cent off the purchase price for HCM readers using promo code HCM15 until 31 July.



At the heart of Evolve is the fundamental question: How do we evolve the human experience?

BACKGROUND



The sector needs to become a priority in the lives of its members

A movement for change

Evolve aims to inspire new thinking, encourage diversification and stimulate sector growth, says David Minton

As many HCM readers will be aware, the *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report 2023* was launched at the Evolve conference in London on 7 June.

Evolve was a movement I initiated in 2021, conceived not just as an annual conference but as a year-round movement, catalyst and platform for conversation, collaboration and change within the UK health and fitness industry.

Bringing together industry disruptors and thought leaders and leveraging Leisure DB's data and insights, Evolve aims to inspire new thinking, encourage diversification into untapped markets and stimulate sector growth.

It's a collaborative space where industry stakeholders can come together, share insights and collectively inspire change. Joining the Evolve movement means actively participating in shaping the future of the fitness and leisure sector. By addressing the 'state of the industry' together, we can explore innovative solutions and new opportunities to accelerate growth.

At the heart of Evolve is the fundamental question: How do we evolve the human experience? This overarching theme guides our discussions and actions as we seek to address the state of the industry and inspire collective change, with this year's conference exploring ways we can continue to meet

consumers' changing needs and expectations as we prepare to move into a post-pandemic world.

At this year's event, Andy King, CEO of MCR Active, shared his manifesto for change and spoke passionately about the need to align the sector with the Office of Health Inequality and Disparities (OHID) rather than the DCMS. Jenny Patrickson, MD of Active IQ, discussed the need to constantly update the training curriculum to successfully support and deliver more diversified offerings. Barclays' Mike Saul provided a holistic, helicopter view of the fitness sector post-trauma. I shared an overview of the *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report 2023* and Keith Smith advocated the evolution of the human experience on the gym floor, harnessing empathy and passion to build emotional significance and ensure we're a priority in people's lives.

A chance to catch up

Those unable to attend the conference in person or via the live stream can download a 12-page document – *Evolve 2023: The review* – which provides key takeaways from each of the day's speakers. Alternatively, the whole day was recorded and is now available to view online. We've made both of these resources available to everyone, with our compliments, via our website: www.leisuredb.com

My thanks also goes to David Turner, Leisure DB chair, who at the event expressed how everything we do at Leisure DB is 'for the industry, by the industry'. Our team may be small, but we have a combined 200 years in the sector, and our passion remains as strong as ever, championing the need to harness data to propel the sector into a new era of success. ●

Active community

Pulse Fitness has brought fitness back to the heart of the community with the relaunch of Killamarsh Active

In September 2021, Northeast Derbyshire District Council tasked Pulse Fitness and its leading arm Pulse Design and Build, with re-designing and developing the redundant Killamarsh Leisure Centre.

The Council was keen for the centre to be re-designed to create a contemporary facility that maximised the space on offer to provide multiple leisure services to the community, all under one roof.

Following previous successful projects such as Go Active! @ The Arc, Bolsover, the council had confidence that Pulse would deliver on its vision.

A challenging redesign

In the years leading up to the Council's ownership of the property, the Killamarsh Leisure Centre building had received little structural maintenance or development. In early 2020, during the Coronavirus pandemic, the centre sat closed and unattended, worsening existing areas of structural concern.

As a result, when the Pulse Design and Build team began the redevelopment, multiple issues with the building structure were discovered. The structural

support had been left in poor condition and was inconsistent with structural drawings, making it difficult to proceed with the planned work. Adding to the challenge, the Pulse team discovered that much of the building's structure was affected by asbestos, meaning the surrounding support of the reception, bar area and main entrance had to be removed to rectify the issue before any further development could go ahead.

A Pulse transformation

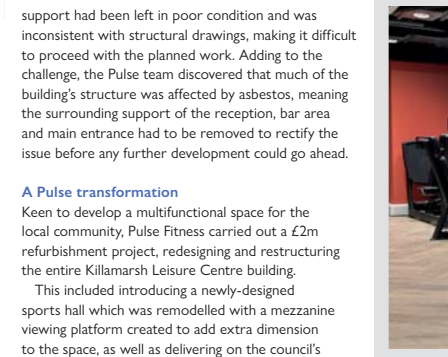
Keen to develop a multifunctional space for the local community, Pulse Fitness carried out a £2m refurbishment project, redesigning and restructuring the entire Killamarsh Leisure Centre building.

This included introducing a newly-designed sports hall which was remodelled with a mezzanine viewing platform created to add extra dimension to the space, as well as delivering on the council's vision of creating a community-focused space.

Pulse was responsible for fitting state-of-the-art facilities throughout, including the newly-designed 80-station gym which benefits from over £300,000 of equipment from Pulse Fitness. The two-storey gym was renovated from a tired, uninviting and demotivating space into a slick and modern facility



The aim was to create a community-focused space



The gym has 80 stations



The two-storey gym was renovated from a tired, uninviting and demotivating space into a slick and modern facility



The new gym ranges across two storeys



£300k was invested in Pulse equipment

overlooking the sports hall. Meanwhile, the installation of a three-storey soft play kingdom was one of the biggest transformations to come out of the renovation and ensures that local residents of all ages are able to enjoy the new centre.

The opening day

Led by Pulse Design and Build and supported by Pulse Fitness and Pulse Solutions, Killamarsh Active was officially opened to the community on the 1 October 2022.

"It's always a delight to work with the team at Pulse," said a representative of Northeast Derbyshire District Council.

"As a previous partner, we thoroughly trusted the redevelopment of Killamarsh Active when placed in



The aim is to support healthy lifestyles

the hands of the Pulse team. Their industry expertise has helped shape the entire project from initial design and planning to development and implementation and we're delighted with the final completion.

The re-opening of the leisure centre has created a real buzz in the local community, offering local residents of all ages and backgrounds a place to meet and to develop healthy and fun lifestyles from the vast array of different activities that we are able to now offer." ●

More: www.pulsefitness.com

Life
LessonsTara
Dillon

One of the sector's best known leaders, Dillon took CIMSPA from last chance saloon to being an award-winning organisation. She talks to Kath Hudson about the gruelling early years

The biggest challenge of my career was taking over CIMSPA. Although I'm so glad I did, I've never felt so isolated as I did in those early days, when I spent many nights in hotel rooms with my head in my hands.

Since it was only a short secondment initially, I had felt there was no risk, but once I got involved I realised the enormity of the challenge and felt that if I didn't make it work I would be a public failure.

The financial situation was precarious and there was an overwhelming amount of work, which we weren't well enough resourced to do. Initially I was beset with self doubt and imposter syndrome, I felt paranoid, exposed and watched.

Dillon says there was an 'overwhelming amount' of work to do when she took over at CIMSPA





*I was beset
with self doubt
and imposter
syndrome, I
felt paranoid,
exposed and
watched*

Within two years,
CIMSPA had increased
membership fivefold

Securing finances

The first challenge was to secure the financial position. Funding was difficult, even though the industry had said it wanted a body to showcase the profession and standardise training.

When I approached Sport England, I was told I had no operational evidence, no money and no people and was asked why the sector wasn't funding it. I argued the sector wasn't awash with money and that CIMSPA needed a partner to prove a point.

Eventually, with a plan, they did give us some funding. I then went back to the sector to ask employers to match it, although they didn't quite match it, we had enough support to get going. This was a pivotal moment; it showed willingness and collaboration from the sector.

Power of listening

I drew on my professional experience. Successful organisations listen, have a strong vision and recruit well, so I aimed to do just that. It helped that I had a healthy black book and felt solidarity from

the industry. The change came when I realised I wasn't having to check cashflow every single day.

When I took over we had less than 1,000 members, but after two years we had five times as many and the support of five or six important partners.

During this time I learned it's really important to listen to your customers, as well as your instincts, and to hold your nerve through periods of change. CIMSPA had to match the ask of the sector, which meant we had to stay true to our mission and not pivot for an easy win. There were many temptations where changing course, or entering a partnership, would have been financially beneficial but it would have impacted our integrity.

The position of CEO is a big jump up from MD and I initially found it a lonely place, however, when I learned to reach out to sector friends, I found myself well supported.

A mentor told me to stop being a victim and work it out, which was the jolt I needed



Focus on what's going well and build on that, says Dillon

Stop whinging

When I was battling for the Sport England funding I recall I did whinge a bit – moaning about other organisations which were funded – but a mentor told me to stop being a victim and work it out, which was the jolt I needed. I learned not to look for problems, but to focus on what's going well and build on that. Be clear on the goal and keep making small steps forward.

The tough times were definitely worth it. I'm proud of the empowering culture we've created at CIMSPA, which is built on the foundations of equality, respect and teamwork. I implemented the policy of treating people like grown-ups – for example offering

unlimited leave, having a realistic expenses policy and an open-minded approach to flexible working – and then handed the baton over to the employees.

This approach won us the Best Company award in *The Times* Top 100 Not for Profit category and I was voted in the top five CEOs. The organisation is making a difference, and we're constantly striving to be the best we can be for the sector.

If anyone reading this has anything to say, I'm always listening. ●

About CIMSPA

The Chartered Institute of the Management of Sport and Activity (CIMSPA) is the representative body for all those working in the physical activity sector.

CIMSPA is the industry's first chartered institute and was born out of the convergence of a number of organisations that blazed a trail, including the Association of Leisure Managers (ALM), ILAM (Institute of Leisure Management), The National Association of Sports Development (NASD), The Association of Baths and Recreation Management (ISRM) and CIMSPA's foundational organisations, the

Institute of Sport, Play and Leisure (ISPAL) and IMSPA – the Institute for Sport and Physical Activity.

CIMSPA's formation gained industry-wide support from organisations including UK Active, Sport England, Community Leisure UK, the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers' Association (CLOA) and the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA) – formerly the CCPR (Central Council for Recreation).

In addition to advocating, setting standards for qualifications and governance, CIMSPA also took over the functions of the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), the

body established 'by the industry for the industry' to regulate the registration of fitness professionals, validate their qualifications and raise standards in the sector.

The REPs merger happened in February 2020 following an agreement between CIMSPA and REPs' owner, UK Coaching, who combined REPs with the CIMSPA Exercise and Fitness Directory, creating a single directory for all exercise and fitness professionals.

The agreement made CIMSPA the only directory with the official recognition of the sector.

More: www.CIMSPA.co.uk

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The top 20 European fitness operators by revenue generated €4.9bn – growth of 52% compared to the previous year

EURO FILE

Despite challenging market conditions brick-and-mortar club operators are now back on track, says Karsten Hollasch from Deloitte

The 10th edition of the *European Health and Fitness Market* report was published in May 2023 by EuropeActive and Deloitte, detailing the latest market developments and trends in the fitness industry. It's widely regarded as the most comprehensive report on fitness and physical activity, owing to Deloitte and EuropeActive's market experience and the insights contributed by the organisation's growing network of club operators and industry experts.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the European fitness industry has faced exceptional obstacles in



Karsten Hollasch

recent years, which has caused many gym operators to close temporarily or even permanently. However, the year 2022 was subject to significant improvements, with many restrictions on health clubs, such as club closures and hygiene measures, gradually being lifted. This has allowed market players to resume regular operations and led to a robust rebound of the sector in 2022.

As well as covering market trends and developments, this year's report takes a closer look at the sustainability of health clubs and provides the first-ever market estimate for the intermediary sub-sector.





PHOTO: LIFEFIT GROUP

Fitness activities are viewed in the same category as essential daily needs

Total
revenues

€28bn

Total
members

63.1m

The intermediary segment has attracted increasing market attention in recent years, as evidenced by the expansion of partner location networks, numerous M&A transactions, funding rounds involving fitness intermediaries and significant membership growth, all of which highlight the upward trajectory of this comparatively new area of the fitness ecosystem.

In addition, EuropeActive and Deloitte conducted extensive consumer research for the second consecutive year to understand recent consumer trends and fitness behaviour. Among others, the research has shown that the number of surveyed participants who engage in

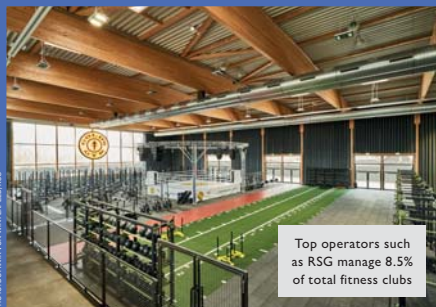
regular fitness activities significantly increased in 2022. Moreover, sport and fitness activities were found to be less affected by budget cuts associated with inflation, being viewed in the same category as essential daily needs.

European fitness market development

The European brick-and-mortar fitness market generated significant growth in 2022, as evidenced by positive performance measurements across key indicators. However, it's important to note that growth rates varied between countries, reflecting different market structures and the varying impact of COVID-19 in different regions. ►



Total revenue increased by 66 per cent to €28bn – close to the record revenue achieved in 2019



Top operators such as RSG manage 8.5% of total fitness clubs

Both total market revenue and total memberships experienced double-digit growth, while the number of fitness clubs increased moderately.

Total revenue increased by approximately 66 per cent year-on-year to a total of €28bn. This figure was close to the record revenue achieved in 2019, which is primarily a result of the fact that most fitness companies could operate again throughout 2022 without COVID-19-related club closures. Overall, a significant market recovery was observed across all European fitness markets, particularly in countries that had implemented strict COVID-19 prevention measures in 2021.

Membership numbers also experienced strong growth, rising from 56.2 to 63.1 million individuals (12.3 per cent), which reflects the return of existing members to health clubs, but also new members seeking fitness facilities for their physical activity needs. Consequently, the European

fitness market has shown a notable increase in the penetration of fitness memberships, rising from 7.0 per cent in 2021 to 7.9 per cent in 2022 – almost reaching pre-COVID level of 2019 (8.2 per cent). The number of European fitness clubs increased slightly by approximately 0.5 per cent to a total of 63,830 clubs.

In 2022, the top 20 European fitness operators – ranked by revenue – collectively generated €4.9bn of sales, indicating a substantial growth of 2 per cent compared to the previous year. Furthermore, the top 20 operators by membership experienced a significant rise in members of 2.6m (22 per cent), reaching a total of 14.8m. However, the top operators



Members of
other operators

48.3m

Increase in
members

12.3%

Members
of top 20
operators

14.8m

LifeFit Group, led by
CEO Martin Seibold and
MD Johannes Massen
helped drive M&A activity

manage approximately 8.5 per cent of the total number of fitness clubs in Europe by the end of 2022, illustrating the comparable high market fragmentation with a significant proportion of fitness facilities operated by companies outside the top 20 operators, including smaller fitness chains and single club operators.

Major industry transactions

In 2022, the European fitness market recorded a total of 13 M&A transactions, indicating a slightly

lower level of activity when compared to previous years (19 transactions in 2021 and an average of 17 transactions per year over the past decade). Leading European fitness chains such as LifeFit Group, Medicoover, Keep Cool, RSG Group, and SATS Group played a significant role on the buy-side of these deals, contributing to the ongoing consolidation of the European fitness market.

The largest deal by club number was Swiss Migros Group's divestment of ACISO and its 172 clubs (including franchises) in a deal comprising

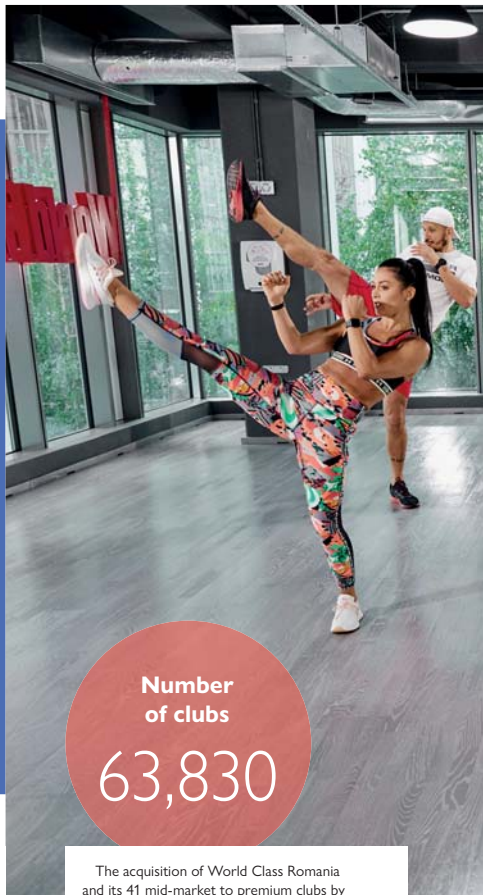
Key findings

Deloitte and EuropeActive study

- * Health club expenditure is less impacted by inflation-related budget cuts than other areas of consumer expenditure
- * There's been an increase in the number of people who are regularly active
- * Home, outdoor and in-club fitness continues to be used in a complementary way
- * Health club attendance outgrew home and outdoor
- * Health club users utilise digital workout planning tools to organise club visits
- * The use of non-paying offerings have driven increases in at-home workouts

the Injoy, FT-Club and Elements brands. Lafayette Mittelstand Capital, an investor with experience in the fitness industry through its investment in Elixia Group, became the new ACISO owner in early 2022. (Read about Migros in HCM's interview with René Kalt at www.hcmmag.com/ReneKalt)

Norwegian financial investor Credo Partners was part of the second largest transaction in 2022 by merging five national club operators (Nr1 Fitness, Sprek365, Toten Treningssenter, Trento, Trimhuset) to form the holding company Mova Group, with Credo Partners as the majority shareholder. Thus, the newly-formed fitness group became one of the leading fitness companies of the country.




Number
of clubs

63,830

The acquisition of World Class Romania and its 41 mid-market to premium clubs by Nigerian financial investor African Industries Group completed the three largest fitness transactions by number of clubs in 2022 and represented the African Industries Group's initial venture into the fitness industry.

Looking ahead

European fitness operators demonstrated their ability to adapt to changing conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic by diversifying their business activities and focusing on their customers' needs. They also respond to the currently challenging market environment, such as increased energy



African Industries
Group bought World
Class Romania – its first
investment in the sector

M&A
deals

13

Increase
in clubs

0.5%



*The acquisition of
World Class Romania
by African Industries
Group was one of
the largest fitness
transactions in 2022*

costs, by raising prices for consumers. Recently announced membership and revenue figures of major (stock-listed) European fitness chains including Basic-Fit and SATS Group further support European operators' predominantly positive perception of the business outlook. Also due to ambitious expansion plans of major European chains, the European health and fitness market is expected to continue its growth and thus, could reach EuropeActive's goal of 100 million members in Europe by 2030. ●

More: www.HCMmag.com/EHFR23
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Weight loss drugs are about to hit the mainstream, creating competition and opportunity for the sector, as Liz Terry reports

WEIGHING IN

The UK government has announced a £40m two-year pilot study to help people living with obesity access the newest and most effective weight loss drugs.

Earlier this year, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended the use of the drug Semaglutide (trading under the brand name Wegovy) for adults with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of at least 35 and one weight-related health condition, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Other drugs are currently under consideration in clinical trials.

When prescribed alongside diet, physical activity and behavioural support, there's evidence that people taking weight-reduction drugs can lose up to 15 per cent of their body weight in one year, with changes seen within the first month of treatment.

Obesity is one of the leading causes of severe health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer and the UK government reports it costs the National Health Service (NHS) £6.5bn a year. To illustrate the extent of the challenge, there were more than a million admissions to NHS hospitals in 2019/2020 where obesity was established as being a factor.

Using these new drug treatments to tackle obesity is expected to contribute to cutting waiting lists by reducing the number of people who are suffering from weight-related

illnesses, who often end up needing operations linked to their weight – such as gallstone removal or hip and knee replacements.

Opportunity for the industry

NICE originally advised that Wegovy should only be made available via specialist weight management services, which are largely hospital-based. However, following this course of action would have meant that only around 35,000 people would have had access to the drug.

Realising that tens of thousands more people could be eligible to get Wegovy if it could be dispensed more widely, the NHS

The UK government
is piloting the use of
weight loss drugs

66

Obesity contributed to more than a million hospital admissions in 2019/2020

has developed the new pilot to explore the expansion of specialist weight management services outside of hospital settings.

No final announcement has been made as to how this will be implemented, leaving the way open for health clubs to step forward to work with the NHS on delivery.

NHS England is leading on the design and development of the pilots, liaising with stakeholders to explore opportunities to make these drugs available to more eligible people once they're launched in the UK.

The UK's health and social care secretary, Steve Barclay, said: "Obesity costs the NHS

around £6.5bn a year and is the second biggest cause of cancer. This next generation of obesity drugs have the potential to help people lose significant amounts of weight, when prescribed with exercise, diet and behavioural support.

"Tackling obesity will help to reduce pressure on the NHS and cut waiting times. This pilot will also help people live longer, healthier lives," he said.

NHS medical director Professor Sir Stephen Powis said: "Pharmaceutical treatments offer a new way of helping people with obesity reach a healthier weight and this new pilot will help determine if these medicines can be used safely and effectively in non-hospital settings."



Liz Terry /
Editor, HCM

The arrival of weight loss drugs presents a complex set of opportunities and threats to the health and fitness sector.

Many people who come to us to help with weight control may now think all they need to do is take a pill, so we must be skilful in our messaging to ensure both the NHS and consumers understand that reductions in body fat alone will not lead to optimal health, and that being fit is also a vital part of the equation.

We can do this from a very positive perspective, being mindful of the rich body of research that has been done over many decades which shows fitness is the greatest determinant of health and longevity and also being aware of the mental health issues – including the triggering of eating disorders – that can occur if the subject of weight loss is not tackled skilfully and language around this used mindfully.

There are undoubtedly people who struggle to control their weight and suffer health issues as a result. Being overweight prevents some people from feeling they can participate in exercise, so if the sector is able to be involved with the delivery of this drug, and wrap around other exercise interventions – as the NHS programme

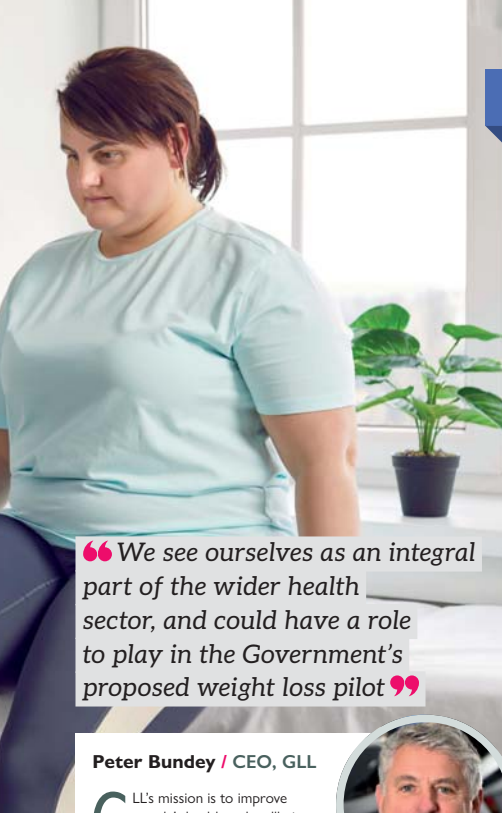


The sector wants to work in partnership with the health service

“NICE has said that exercise is a vital part of the success of the use of such drugs, making health clubs ideal partners for this £40m pilot”

requires, then it could be a great outcome for consumers, for the NHS and for the sector.

NICE has said that exercise is a vital part of the success of the use of such drugs, making health clubs ideal partners for this £40m pilot.



“We see ourselves as an integral part of the wider health sector, and could have a role to play in the Government’s proposed weight loss pilot”

Peter Bunday / CEO, GLL

GLL’s mission is to improve people’s health and wellbeing through helping them lead more active lives.

We see ourselves as an integral part of the wider health sector and could have a role to play in the Government’s proposed weight loss pilot – which, importantly, not only has the involvement of clinicians, but also involves the delivery of nutritional and lifestyle interventions. We would expect the lifestyle element to include increases in physical activity and that is where we could assist.

This is very similar to the Healthwise ‘exercise on prescription’ services we already run with the health sector, which are supporting people with chronic issues – from pain management and rehabilitation, to weight loss and cardiac disease – to make that important first step into living a more active and healthy life.



PHOTO: GLL

UK government action on obesity

- * Introducing calorie labelling on menus, which are expected to bring health benefits of £4.6bn and provide NHS savings of £430m
- * Restrictions on the location of unhealthy foods in shops, which are expected to bring health benefits of over £57bn and provide NHS savings of over £4bn over the next 25 years
- * Introducing the Soft Drinks Industry Levy which has seen the average sugar content of drinks decrease by 46 per cent between 2015 and 2020
- * Investment to boost school sport to help children and young people have an active start to life (www.hcmmag.com/schoolsport).
- * £20m investment in the Office of Life Science’s *Obesity Mission*. This is exploring innovative ways to best utilise promising medicines and digital technologies to help NHS patients achieve a healthy weight.
- * The Better Health: Rewards App is being piloted in Wolverhampton (www.hcmmag.com/Wolverhampton), offering incentives such as vouchers for shops, gym discounts and cinema tickets for people who eat healthily and exercise more.
- * The 2019 *Health Survey for England* estimated that over 12 million adults were living with obesity – 28 per cent of the population in England – while a further 16 million (36 per cent) were overweight. This means that around two-thirds of the adult population were above a healthy weight – defined as having a BMI of 25 or above.
- * The Department of Health and Social Care launched a call for evidence in May to inform the *Major Conditions Strategy* (www.hcmmag.com/MCS), including further work to tackle obesity.

“We can add value to many of the services GPs and pharmacies are paid to deliver, because we can wrap around packages of physical activity they simply can’t”

Andy King / Chair, GM Active

In Greater Manchester UK we have over 3,500 staff and around 100 facilities that activity body GM

Active wants to position as being part of the ‘army’ at the disposal of the NHS and Public Health colleagues across local authorities.

We have a strong desire to be part of the solution and contribute to people living healthier, happier, longer live (www.hcmmag.com/P4C).

It frustrates me immensely when I read numerous articles about how the NHS does not have the people-power to carry out many tasks that would – relatively easily – fit so well with our vision.

Whether this is helping to administer the new weight loss drugs that are coming to market, or carrying out health checks, we’re overlooked time and time again, even after being heavily involved in the vaccination programme very recently.

We can also add value to many of the services GP surgeries and pharmacies are paid to deliver because we can wrap around packages that they simply can’t. Using this approach people wouldn’t just get an NHS health check and be sent on their way – our highly qualified staff could offer a motivational interview and give advice on how to get more physically active, for example.

So why are we so obviously disregarded by the government and NHS? For me it’s all about credibility. We’re not viewed as being part of the ‘health system’ despite our best efforts to date.

I’ve recently argued that we need to reposition our sector, rebrand it to ‘Active Wellness’ and

see it being moved from the DCMS to the Department of Health and Social Care. Look at the priorities for the DCMS and also for the Office of Health, Inequalities and Disparities (a health department) and tell me where you think we should sit?

‘Leisure’ is synonymous with ‘pleasure’ and arguably evokes thoughts of pubs and bars – a pastime, not an essential element of people’s lives related to their health and quality of life.

As a result, that’s how we were treated during the lockdown stages of the pandemic.

As we only touch about 18 per cent of the population through our facilities then maybe that’s fair enough, and I find myself asking some hard questions: is our claim to currently being a big part of the population health agenda flawed? What is our combined vision and purpose going forward? Can we write a national *Population Health Wellbeing Plan* that speaks to the recent paper by Labour’s Kim Leadbetter *A New Approach to Health and Wellbeing Policy* (www.hcmmag.com/leadbetter) and be an integral part of the potential new Labour Government’s manifesto? Can we move away from being ‘facility-centric’ and agree that we need fewer but better facilities, combined with more outreach that will see us collaborating with the voluntary sector and health and social care teams, combining our efforts to be more relevant to communities? ●

GM Active has proven its ability to make a difference

PHOTOS: GM ACTIVE

ANNOUNCING



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FAN

SEAT
ADJUSTMENTS

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Constant motion

Indoor cycling has become a mainstay of health clubs and studios. Manufacturers tell Steph Eaves about the innovations keeping people pedalling

Uffe Asbjørn Olesen Body Bike International

We've made a commitment to lead the sustainability agenda in indoor cycling manufacture, and have just launched our second sustainable bike: Body Bike Smart+ Forest Green.

Manufactured using 25 per cent recycled ABS plastic, Forest Green is the sister bike to our highly popular Body Bike Smart+ OceanIX, launched in 2019 and manufactured using recycled plastic fishing nets.

In both cases, we've created sustainable bikes without any compromise in the ride experience or product quality and durability. Meanwhile, every Body Bike – across all our models – uses reclaimed, recycled iron for all cast iron parts: the crank shaft, pedal arms and flywheel. That's a total of 35kg of recycled iron per Body Bike.

Growing sustainability

Body Bike Smart+ OceanIX and Forest Green are just the beginning for us. Within the next two years, our goal is to bring all existing models of Body Bike in line with these sustainability standards, incorporating a minimum of 25 per cent recycled ABS in the manufacture of every model and every one of our 10 case colours.

Sustainable bikes cost more to manufacture, but we price them the same as our other bikes – we don't want to put any obstacles in the way of people making sustainable decisions



PHOTO: BODY BIKE INTERNATIONAL

– and we will keep going further in our search for sustainable materials that also support our quality standards. We're also enhancing our customisation options, including launching fully coloured Body Bikes to match gym colour schemes and an in-house design studio to create branding and designs for our customers' bikes.

Body Bike's biggest clients

BasicFit (pan-Europe), Fitness World (Denmark), SATS (Scandinavia), Nordic Wellness (Sweden), Evolution Wellness (APAC), World Gym (Australia), Fernwood (Australia), EasyGym (France), STC (Sweden) and Fitness X (Denmark).

More: www.body-bike.com



**“
We've created
sustainable
bikes without
compromising the
ride experience**

With our acquisition of Wexer, we can help our customers expand their class offerings to maximise utilisation of studio space

Travis Vaughan
Core Health & Fitness

We launched an all-new cycle platform in 2022 with the Schwinn X and Z Bikes. Since the launch we've stayed busy, expanding customer

experience options across the line by adding accessories such as dumbbell holders, magnetic bike numbering tags, add-on power metres and different types of display.

Our new Zone Console, available on the Z Bike, allows instructors and riders to adjust their coaching bike to match the experience they're trying to create. Rhythm riding, HR-based training and power-based training modes can all be accessed with a single button press. The full-colour display and capacitive touch buttons create a premium feel, no matter which mode you choose. Plus, it's the first group cycle display to offer tap-to-pair connectivity with Apple and Samsung watches.

In 2023 we're launching a new virtual bike platform. It marries the group cycle bike from Schwinn with a 21" touchscreen. We've partnered with Intelligent Cycling to create a variety of experiences we believe are deeper than anything we've seen in the commercial market so far.



PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS



Core is launching a new virtual bike platform this year

Creating solutions

Our OpenHub philosophy is to build tools that allow us to partner with experts to create world class solutions. Our ecosystem is built on an open platform that can connect with a variety of partner platforms. This allows our customers to create the precise experience they want.

Core's biggest clients

Schwinn bikes are utilised by every type of fitness facility globally. Every studio with Schwinn bikes is a valued member of our family.

More: www.corehandf.com

Becky Jalbert,
Matrix Fitness

We have three training cycles to accommodate different programming approaches and budgets. The CXC training cycle is a good fit for fitness-for-fun riders and more budget-conscious customers. The CXM training cycle allows facilities to bring core metrics into programming



LED colour wrap brings accountability to every ride

with an easy-to-read interface. The CXP target training cycle features a capacitive touchscreen which guides effort with an LED colour wrap. It lights up with three intuitive colours to express effort relative to personalised metrics. This brings accountability to every ride and enables instructors to tap into different motivations.

New connections

We've integrated protocols like ANT+ and BLE FTMS into our CXM and CXP training cycles, enabling users to broadcast data from our bikes and connect with popular training apps or leaderboards like Intelligent cycling, Zwift, MyZone and Spivi.

Matrix's biggest clients

YMCAs, Crunch Fitness, PureGym, The Gym Group, JD Sports and numerous other commercial facilities across the globe.

More: www.matrixfitness.com/uk/eng

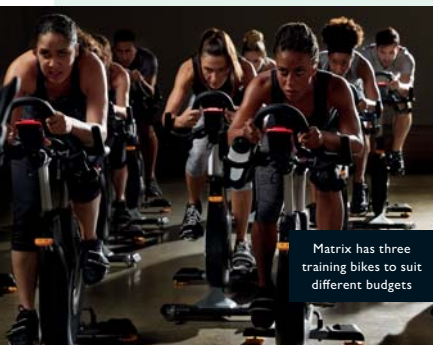


PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS

Matrix has three training bikes to suit different budgets



PHOTO: KEISER

Keiser has rolled out a new version of its app



We'll shortly be launching The Ride Studio: a virtual streaming platform

Hannah Lewin
Keiser UK



We've recently rolled out a new version of the Keiser M Series App, with updated features and tools based on direct feedback from our audience. The Keiser M Series app is a powerful tool for collecting data, allowing users to quickly connect to equipment and begin training. It features real-time graphs for power, cadence range dials, FTP zones, and W/Kg ratios.

Users can choose to free ride, perform an FTP test, or follow one of the guided sessions designed by Keiser master trainers. Riders can also see power zones during their rides, and save their ride data. It's free to use, and simple to connect and use.

Going virtual

We'll shortly be launching The Ride Studio: a virtual streaming platform designed for club owners and operators. It's a 24/7 indoor cycling studio solution, providing the best in virtual workouts so cycling studios don't have to sit idle.

The Ride Studio includes a variety of instructor-led classes including HIIT-designed Ride Rush, beat-based Ride Rhythm, metric-focused Ride Race and goal-based Ride Series. All classes are designed and taught by Keiser instructors to ensure that the quality of member experience remains high.

Keiser's biggest clients

We're proud to work with Everyone Active, and have recently partnered with Fiit as their exclusive bike supplier.

More: www.keiseruk.com



We've relaunched the brand to appeal to all walks of life

Daniel Sprung
Peloton



We recently announced our integration with Samsung Galaxy watches. The Galaxy Watch5 and Watch4 will be able to connect to the Peloton Bike, Bike+, Tread, Row and Guide, through the Peloton App, enabling members to see their heart rate on screen during workouts and have more control and visibility over their workout by tracking their fitness goals in real-time.

New beginnings

We've relaunched the Peloton brand to appeal to all ages, levels and walks of life. Our colour palette has changed to evoke the energy of a great workout, with powerful imagery of real members. The campaign will roll out in the UK later this year.

Peloton has also just launched its app tiering structure; five distinct membership tiers, including three new levels. Across all tiers, members have access to expert instruction and the ability to track workouts with the Just Work Out music library.

Peloton's biggest clients

Peloton has millions of members worldwide; at home, in clubs, leisure centres and university gyms, as well as multi-family residential settings. We also partner with hotels worldwide.

Newsflash: Precor and Stages

Peloton subsidiary, Precor, has announced a distribution deal with Stages Cycling. More at www.hcmmag.com/PS

More: www.onepeloton.co.uk



PHOTO: PELOTON

Peloton has launched a new app tiering structure

The Wattbike app tracks every bike workout a user has ever done

Tom Crampton Wattbike

Wattbike has launched Hub+, a premium subscription version of its app that promotes greater personalisation for a more customised workout experience, seamless integration with third-party apps and new, exclusive training content curated by leading athletes and sports scientists.

From a commercial perspective, Hub+ subscriptions can be packaged for operators, independent gyms, studios, coaches and personal trainers in order to provide members with bespoke club workouts, extra training content, challenges and individualised member sessions at just the touch of a button. It's designed to help clubs to personalise content effectively to meet differing goals and abilities.

The app tracks all historical performance; everything you've ever done on the Wattbike. In a commercial setting, using the app means you are always in control of your own data. You can get on any Wattbike, at home or in the gym, and by connecting your app you're getting training consistency.

Customisation

Hub+ introduces an industry-first functionality in its 'Workout Builder' feature, a powerful tool designed with a 'drag-and-drop' option in which users, coaches or PTs can configure workouts in seconds by selecting from a range of segment blocks in-app.

One of the most innovative features in Hub+ is the ability to share custom

workouts with other Hub+ users. Workouts can be shared via the user's preferred channel, allowing increased connectivity between users, coaches, personal trainers or members. A workout export feature then provides users the flexibility to complete their custom workouts via other third-party apps or a bike computer outdoors.

Open connectivity

In the latest update of Hub+, we've added a quick-start template to the Workout Builder start screen so that users can get riding even more quickly. They can also import workout files or structured sessions from other training apps, allowing them to ride their favourite workouts in-app without having to build them from scratch. We try to take a platform agnostic position; a policy to connect with as many third-party apps as possible.

Wattbike's biggest clients

Third Space, DLL, Virgin Active, Nuffield Health, Fitness First, Everyone Active, Bupa, British Army, UK Sport/EIS.

More: www.wattbike.com



“
Hub+ gives the ability to share custom workouts with other users

Wattbike's new Workout Builder has a drag and drop function to create personalised training





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PHOTO: GYMBOX

Get intimate with your assets

Orbit4's technology is generating significant savings and streamlining operations for premium operator Gymbox

An exciting partnership between fit-tech specialist Orbit4 and Gymbox, has created impressive results in the form of streamlined operations and substantial savings. It's also been optimising and simplifying the legal due diligence process.

CEO of Gymbox, Marc Diaper, said: "Before using Orbit4 we

believed we made good financial decisions. Now we know that using data should be part of the process when considering a refurbishment.

"Orbit4 technology is simple and highly effective and because managing operations and the sustainability of our business is paramount to our continued success, we take its functionality very seriously."

Optimising assets

"We now have full visibility of our assets, what they're currently worth and whether we've overspent on servicing costs," says Diaper. "In addition, we can utilise Orbit4 data to have a meaningful conversation with our suppliers so we're getting the best possible service standards. This is essential to maximising our customer experience and operational excellence."

Early in 2022, the Orbit4 team 'asset-registered' the entire Gymbox estate, onboarding every machine and piece of equipment into its system to record the manufacturer brand, make and

model, as well as uploading serial numbers, photos, service contract status and valuations.

The inclusion of the Orbit4 STM module (service ticket manager) instantly connects Gymbox to service providers digitally through a mobile app and online platform, meaning repairs and fixes are completed efficiently, and Gymbox can review real-time data versus agreed SLAs (service level agreements).

Marc Diaper said: "The team at Orbit4 have been superb to work with. The asset management, service ticketing solution and purchasing ecosystem is a game-changer for us and the industry."

"The connected ecosystem gives us access to the wider market for trade-outs and purchasing tailored service contracts and equipment. We were able to maximise the return on our old equipment recently and got a higher buy-back price than the predicted figure we saw in our Orbit4 Control Panel dashboard." ●

● More: www.orbit4.com



The Orbit4 asset management, service ticketing solution and purchasing ecosystem is a game-changer for us

Marc Diaper
CEO, Gymbox

PHOTO: GYMBOX



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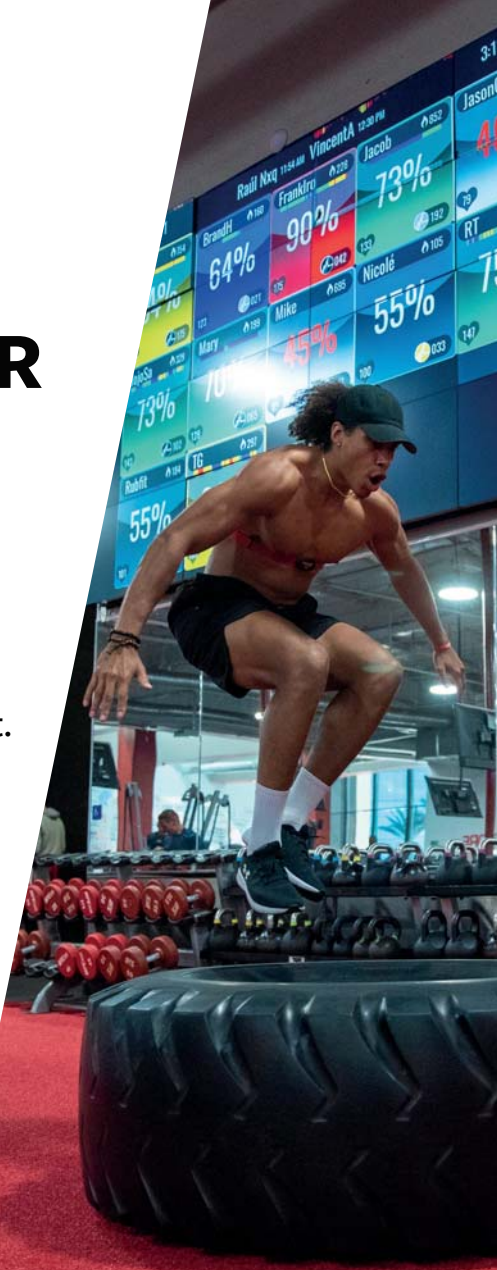




PHOTO: SNAP FITNESS

Myzone helps Snap Fitness create a sense of community

Loyal following

Snap Fitness has unlocked the secrets of community-building using Myzone to increase attendance and earn member loyalty

Creating an engaged community doesn't come easy, but the right partnerships and technology tools can pave the way to success through personalisation, process improvement and performance gains.

Head of fitness at Snap Fitness, Scott Walker, has seen the benefits that Myzone brings to his own training and now he's embracing this value-add opportunity through heart rate training for the Snap community.

"Myzone provides our staff with excellent talking points, allowing them to engage members in meaningful interactions," explains Scott. "The platform enables us to create groups

comprising like-minded individuals, fostering a sense of camaraderie and connection among our members.

"We're able to create inclusive fitness challenges that cater to diverse needs and preferences of our members, ensuring everyone feels involved and motivated to participate.

"The one standout for us is the app – it offers an incredibly engaging and interactive experience and we use it a lot to communicate with our Myzone community."

Tech that brings people together

Using technology that inspires physical activity in and out of the gym is what brings people together



PHOTO: SNAP FITNESS

With the implementation of Myzone, we've seen a notable increase in member attendance due to the sense of accountability

Scott Walker, head of fitness, Snap Fitness

and gets them moving with you, even away from your four walls.

"The emphasis on community is a fundamental aspect that sets our gym apart from others in our areas," Walker continues. "We recognise the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and connection amongst our members.

"By prioritising community building, we've created an environment where individuals feel supported, motivated and valued. This strong sense of community resonates throughout our gyms, creating a distinct and exceptional experience that sets us apart."

● More: www.myzone.org



Snap Fitness Ashton Gate has success with Myzone

PHOTO: SNAP FITNESS

MATRIX



JOIN THE PARTNERSHIP

— // —

The facilities we have at Robin Park are world-class.

The machinery is cutting edge and I know that the players are happy with how our relationship with matrix has progressed.

—

Adrian Lam,
Head Coach, Wigan Warriors.

—



f t i MatrixFitnessUK
matrixfitness.co.uk



The gym at Wigan Warriors featuring Matrix Fitness

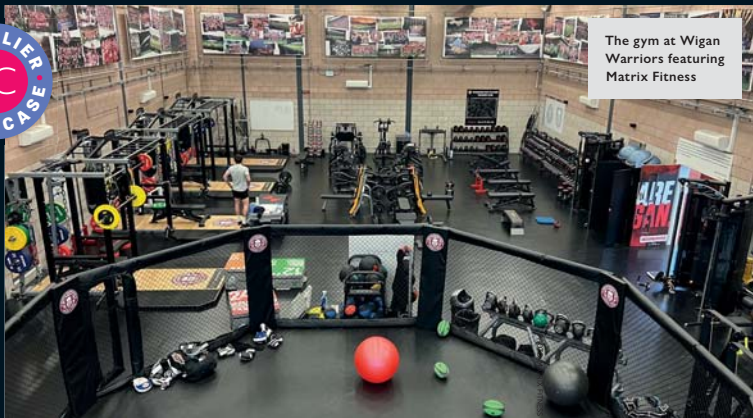


PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS

Matrix Fitness has been a proud partner of the Wigan Warriors Rugby League team for over five years, providing fitness equipment for the club's world-class training facility, which is proving essential for both performance and rehabilitation.

Never has Matrix Fitness equipment been more indispensable than in the rehabilitation of player, Liam Farrell, who suffered an MCL tear during a game at the end of last season.

Ian Bentley, head of performance, says: "Injuries are a stressful time for players. They feel isolated when unable to contribute to the team. "Often injured players are encouraged to avoid the gym, but not here, as – thanks to our varied equipment set-up from Matrix – the gym is a place where our injured players are still able to train around the rest of the squad."

Full recovery

Wigan Warriors has reduced rehabilitation time with the help of a Matrix Fitness gym transformation

The gym has an increased variety of fitness equipment, allowing coaches flexibility when planning sessions.

For strength and conditioning work there are four Magnum series mega racks, two Magnum half racks with cables and several Magnum posterior chain machines. There are also isolated Aura stack machines, free weights, treadmills and bikes from the 7xi range, S-drive, S-force and Matrix rowers.

Making a full recovery

On his recovery, Farrell says: "Having the best quality equipment from Matrix makes rehabilitation easier

and has given me the confidence to come back strong. Being able to still train around the rest of the team gives you motivation to become part of the playing group again."

Bentley adds: "Not only did the Matrix gym equipment help speed up Liam's recovery, but it also allowed us to build his strength, control and resilience to ensure he returned to fitness in as robust a state as possible. Not only to reduce the risk of him re-injuring his knee, but also to reduce his risk of sustaining secondary injuries that could be attributed to de-loading or under-training during his period of time out."

"The team at Matrix is always helpful and easy to work with," said Farrell. "At the end of each season we change the layout of the gym and this enables us to keep the space fresh for the players when they get back for pre-season training."

"Whenever we have a problem which needs solving, the Matrix team is always happy to help."

● www.matrixfitness.com/uk

Not only did the Matrix gym equipment help speed up Liam's recovery, it also allowed him to build strength, control and resilience

Ian Bentley, Wigan Warriors



Liam Farrell rehabilitated with Matrix

PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS

MAKING

Getting proven results in the gym is highly motivating. Are health assessment systems the ultimate retention solution asks Steph Eaves

PHOTO: SECA GMBH & CO



Including free measurement testing can be a convincing incentive for choosing a premium membership

Stephen Barton

Seca gmbh & Co

How does health assessment improve member retention?

The Seca TRU measures muscle and fat mass precisely and easily, so operators can accurately track changes within the body far beyond just weight, showing exercising has an impact when the scales shows no change.



PROGRESS



Health assessments
can be used to
create a premium
membership category

This enables operators to support members by tracking muscle growth and fat reduction, making it clear what they achieve and motivating them in the long term to keep it up.

The medical validation of the Seca TRU offers the opportunity to provide members with medically-proven results, and guide them to their training goals with regular follow-up measurements.

If someone isn't gaining muscle mass, for example, the operator can intervene and design new training plans together with them, while educating members or offering specific nutritional advice. This ensures enthusiastic and successful members will maintain a strong bond with the club and create word-of-mouth that inspires friends and colleagues to join up.

What advice would you give to operators?

You should offer health assessments both as an upsell and as a part of a premium membership, so you can reap all the rewards.

There are members who just want to work out at a gym without extras and would never opt for a premium membership, but if they understand the benefits of analysing their body composition, they'll take the opportunity and buy a single assessment every four to six weeks to track their progress.

Including free measurement testing can also be a convincing incentive for choosing a premium membership. To meet the needs of both upselling and high-value-memberships, our software allows you to activate a limited number of measurements for specific members or define monthly quotas.

The initial excitement of joining a gym can be rekindled at every scan



Francesca Cooper-Boden

InBody UK

What impact does health assessment have on members?

It means results can be understood before the benefits are seen or felt externally, and can be the visual motivation that provides the voice saying "keep going, it's working". That can be the simple driver many members need to continue to commit.

Being able to accurately measure body composition and frequently track progress is one of the best ways to see firsthand how the work people are doing in the gym is positively impacting their body. It also allows those with more specific goals to tailor and change their training and choices, as their body composition changes.

Scans are encouraged every four weeks, so the excitement and focus that was felt on joining can be rekindled at every scan. Investing in a body composition solution provides the correct starting point for the members, the motivation for them to keep going and the proof that they're improving at a healthy level. If implemented correctly, this can be the biggest retention tool an operator can have.

In an internal survey of 80 of our customers, 90 per cent agreed that InBody keeps their members motivated and directly impacts retention. Eighty seven per cent of these customers were also using InBody for their onboarding.



InBody's new model is the first to use the 3MHz frequency

What advice do you have for operators?

Health assessments can be sensitive and difficult for some people to face. We'd recommend thinking about the location and setting they're going to use, as well as the education and support members will need. Being clear with members on the type of scan that's being conducted and how it works in practice is also important.

We advise picking relevant products and services that work together to create a customer journey. They'll need to deliver something that's easy to understand for everyone and doesn't exclude users who get confused by data.

Also, don't forget to find out what support is available from the team you purchased from.

What's new at InBody?

The InBody 970 is the first to utilise 3MHz frequency and fingerprint recognition and provides an incredibly in-depth analysis with seven different result sheets.

The design has been created to suit and reach many more people, making it suitable for everyone from young children and athletes to the extremely overweight.

With aims to continuously develop the product range, we've added two new composition devices to our portfolio. We also have several new devices launching soon – more wearables, medical home products and a new strength testing line

Styku can predict metabolic syndrome with 92% accuracy

Tracy Morrell

React Fitness/Styku

Tell us about Styku

It uses AI to measure circumferences and produce DEXA-correlated body composition metrics, including visceral fat and bone mass – providing precise measurements, which are then easy to benchmark and observe.

The reports produced help customers not only understand their body better, but also identify areas of improvement in a highly accurate, visual way. The system's analytics and data can be used to outline and set goals for members, whether around weight loss, muscle gain or the tackling of health issues – and then provide solutions through giving exercise and nutritional advice.

A peer-reviewed study has shown that Styku can predict metabolic syndrome with 92 per cent accuracy. By offering something that would otherwise only be accessible through a blood test and a visit with a primary care physician, health clubs can become more than just gyms. They can build awareness and motivate members to make important lifestyle changes.

What advice do you have for operators?

Health assessments are a great way to provide a framework for a member's fitness journey, but the assessments need to be both simple to deliver and hassle-free for members.

Complicated processes involving third-party medical professionals or laboratories can quickly become a burden to complete. That's why 3D body scanners are an ideal starting point for



With health assessments, health clubs can become more than just gyms

Body composition analysis is a powerful wellness service to offer



those wanting to deliver health assessment services. The process is simple, non-invasive and only takes seconds – all the member has to do is stand still with their arms slightly raised and the technology does the rest.

What's new with you?

We have a customer-facing mobile app in development which should be released later this year, along with an updated and improved posture analysis tool and a brand new symmetry tool. We're also working on some incredibly exciting updates within the health risk analysis feature.

Simon Wilkinson

Tanita UK

What correlation do you see between health assessment and retention?

In that crucial first four week period, we know getting new members on-site and interacting with the facility increases the chance of them forming a habit. Giving an initial Tanita measurement and then booking in a follow-up two weeks later gives members definitive goals for that early period and gives operators meaningful ways to communicate.

They can utilise the technology to encourage all staff to regularly communicate with members. Checking if members have done a measurement recently, highlighting why they should do it and then booking them in and guiding them through the measurements helps engagement. Regular, relevant communication with members also has a very positive impact on retention.

What other advice do you have?

You need to have the tools and the knowledge to do it effectively. Without the right equipment or staff who have enough knowledge, you can't provide a high quality service. Members need relevant and accurate data which is interpreted for them, along with interventions and goals they can work towards.

Developing a business strategy around health assessments is highly recommended. The

PHOTO: TANITA UK

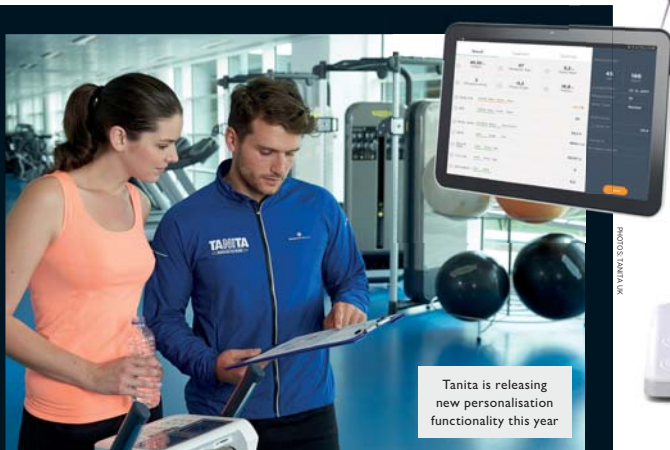


Developing a business strategy around health assessments is highly recommended

more structure you have, the more easily both you and your staff can work towards making them successful and ultimately impactful.

What's new at Tanita?

We have new software features and upgrades coming later this year that will allow for a greater level of functionality and personalisation for operators. We're always looking to work with partners to provide the best range of solutions available, there should never be a one-size-fits-all approach.



Tanita is releasing new personalisation functionality this year

PHOTO: TANITA UK





Start collecting data right at the start, says Stillman

PHOTO: BODITRAX TECHNOLOGIES

Tom Stillman

Boditrax Technologies

What adoption of health assessment have you seen?

The same three benchmarking questions are asked by health club members the world over: 'Where am I, where should I be and where is everyone else?' Some people want to track their body – and everyone else's too. Members scan, review, set goals and repeat.

We have several large operators whose members record more than a million scans a year – and this has been consistent for almost 10 years for our early adopters. We have a licence renewal churn of less than two per cent,

What advice do you have for operators?

My advice is to start – now! We have clients in their 10th year of gathering data and constantly



You must know where your members are at and who may be at risk of leaving

hear members say if only they had their stats from when they first started going to the gym it would prove how far they've come.

We track member change; operators should too. You must know where your members are, what their goals are, how they're doing and importantly, who may be at risk of leaving.

What new features are you working on?

This year we launched Boditrax B2.0. It's new software, available in 65 languages, with 70 inclusive gender and race avatars, AI and machine learning, new hosting architecture and a new interface.

Going forward we'll also be enabling sector-specific features, such as collaborations and challenges, invites and friend features, leaderboards and more social options for those who wish to share.

Raphael Wempner

Scaneca GmbH

What's your view on testing?

Our system offers members a view from a new perspective and motivates them to take advantage of training programmes offered by the gym. Members get a whole report, including a video of their own 3D-avatar.

At physiotherapy practice Fit-log, in Germany, Scaneca is part of a client's first appointment.

Due to its health-related parameters and visual representation of the body, the system is used as an interface between therapy and training to increase conversion to the self-payment area and encourage engagement in exercise.

What advice do you have for operators?

A comprehensive check-up is the basis for successful training. Even the smallest success should be measurable.

What's new with you?

Our next update will include a top-view-analysis and an elevation profile – tools that visualise rotational deviations and other imbalances.

The next Scaneca update will visualise rotational deviations



PHOTO ANDREAS GRIEHL / SCANECA



PHOTO SCANECA

The system is used as an interface between therapy and training

Philip Middleton

Derwent Healthcare

What advice would you give operators?

They need to view an analyser as an investment in the business, not an additional expense. They then need to plan how they're going to integrate the service into the customer journey.

The analyser can be a fantastic outreach tool to attract new members and when used at the induction stage, gives the information needed to create a fitness programme tailored to members' needs.

How does it improve the member experience?

The Accuniq analyser from Derwent Healthcare has a code-protected



PHOTO DERWENT HEALTHCARE

Plan how you're going to integrate health assessment into the customer journey

internal database that can store up to 100,000 results, so trainers can review client results, reprint copies, review results and track progress.

The Accuniq app also allows clients to track their progress, while information from each measurement is taken to form a user's journey.

We supply analysers across the whole fitness industry. Most operators provide a free assessment at induction and charge for subsequent analyses, increasing both revenue and retention.

What's new at Accuniq?

We'll soon be introducing the all new Accuniq Connect. This will have a new app, will display results more comprehensively and allow managers and trainers to review client results in a variety of different formats.

A close-up portrait of a woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, smiling slightly, occupies the right half of the image. On the left, a Seca TRU body composition scale is visible, featuring a vertical column with a height measurement arm and a platform at the base.

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keep it fresh

With small group PT more popular than ever, suppliers talk to Steph Eaves about keeping things fresh and making the most of your space

Kit storage needs to be incorporated into the live training environment

Matthew Januszek

Escape Fitness

1 We're sensing a shift in behaviours on the gym floor and emerging operator needs are driving us to evolve our small group PT offer. The industry is telling us two things.

Firstly, a growth in the popularity of strength training – especially among women – is increasing traffic in free weight areas and creating more of a demand for limited equipment such as squat racks and plate loaded stations. Secondly, operators are struggling to retain experienced trainers and coaches. This is driving a need to introduce more simple programming that doesn't compromise performance results.

2 In response to the rise in demand for strength training and powerlifting equipment, we're developing new octagon frames and

PHOTO: ESCAPE FITNESS



attachments that integrate this equipment into the functional training space, creating opportunities for people to train in a way that they prefer, but in a small group PT environment.

This can relieve the pressure on the free weight zones and encourage people to train together, promoting peer-to-peer support and strengthening the gym floor community.

3 Kit needs to be easily accessible, promoting quick turnaround between exercises. For this reason, kit storage needs to be incorporated into the live training environment, so equipment is easily accessible to keep up exercise intensity.

Creative circuits
are ideal for
small group PT



What's on offer from Escape Fitness?

Our octagon frames integrate storage solutions that ensure immediate accessibility while occupying minimal floor space.

If additional storage is required, we also provide a range of freestanding racks and cages, each designed to optimise storage capacity in the smallest possible footprint.

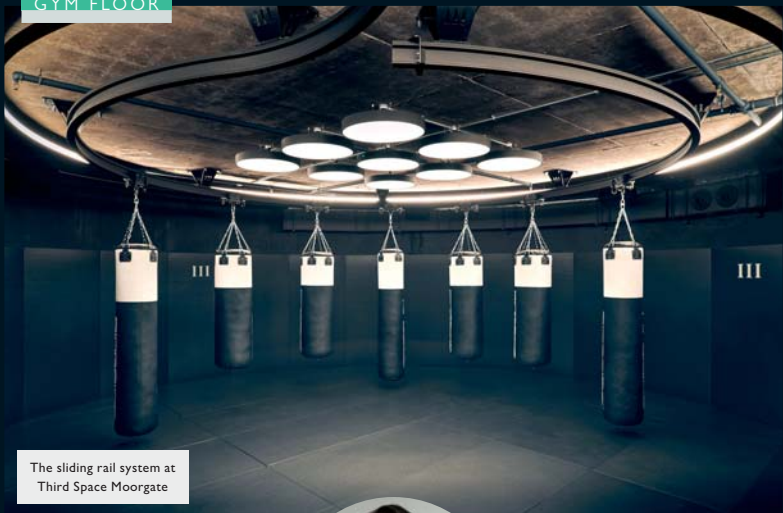
Our Strongbox Bench also offers storage capacity for up to six pairs of dumbbells, two kettlebells, medballs and resistance bands – creating a multi-purpose workout station for small group PT sessions, especially where kit sharing is not desirable.

MORE: www.escapefitness.com



More women are now strength training

PHOTO: ESCAPE FITNESS



The sliding rail system at Third Space Moorgate

PHOTO: INDIGO FITNESS/THIRD SPACE

Ross Manester

Indigo Fitness

1 Functional fitness, HIIT and combat are the hot topics in fitness, with people searching for variety to keep themselves motivated.

The efficiency of HIIT classes means clients can get in, get a hard workout and get back to everyday life in a short period and with this in mind, operators should look to design studios that are multi-purpose and which allow them to provide a variety of class types for their clients.

2 A small kit approach can be advantageous. This kind of equipment doesn't require much time to set up, and the smaller the kit, the more variety of equipment operators are able to store.

Typically, functional fitness classes will be focused around light- to medium-weight dumbbells, plyo boxes, skipping ropes and medicine balls. For HIIT cardio it's ski ergs, rowers and bikes or air bikes. Combat equipment, when integrated into clever storage solutions, only requires small footprints, such as bags, gloves and/or mitts.

With clever product integration, all these can be seamlessly housed in a studio or gym floor without taking up open space.

PHOTO: INDIGO FITNESS



People are searching for variety to keep themselves motivated

What's on offer from Indigo Fitness?

Operators can freshen things up with the inclusion of pieces such as sliding rail systems or rigs. Sliding rail systems allow operators to simply slide out carriages that lock into place within the studio and house a variety of types of apparatus, such as TRX, rings, ropes and boxing bags.

These can be used to change the type of training stimulus from week to week, while allowing operators to seamlessly slide them away when the next class type is to take place.

Custom rigs can be used to offer a vast range of attachments, pull up options and clever integrations. Operators can use rigs for all types of training, such as compound lifting, callisthenics/bodyweight, accessory work and/or classes and PT sessions. Rigs can be a great way to provide a variety of training and classes.

MORE: www.indigofitness.com

The Matrix Connexus range creates a functional gym floor

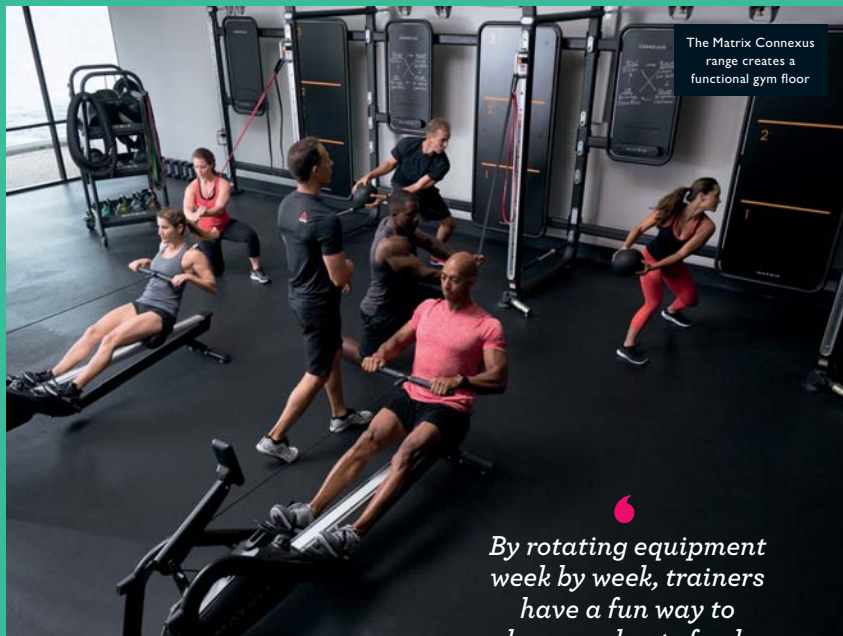


PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS

Matt Gleed

Matrix Fitness

1 By rotating equipment week by week, trainers have a fun way to keep workouts fresh and challenging for members, which is essential for small groups in a circuit-style set up. However, if the aim of the session is to improve on strength and ability, or for more focused users, I'd stick to some key exercises the group can become confident in doing well and build on.

Seeing improvement will boost motivation and allow the trainer to be more focused on the personalisation of each exercise, rather than becoming just a timekeeper on a stopwatch.

2 Bars, bands and straps are consistently popular within small group personal training environments because they're effective training tools and are incredibly versatile.

You can challenge or change intensity quickly depending on the individual. Minimal setup and adjustment is required, making them an efficient training tool to help maintain intensity throughout the workout.

By rotating equipment week by week, trainers have a fun way to keep workouts fresh and challenging



PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS

What's on offer from Matrix Fitness?

For functional training offerings, we have a range called Connexus, giving studio floor spaces or small areas organisation with the adaptability to adjust the heights of anchor points and to create an excellent functional training environment. This means the trainer can adapt quickly between different modalities while keeping the group close together, helping to create an encouraging atmosphere.

MORE: www.matrixfitness.com/uk

There's been a lot of talk about mindfulness and we're seeing an upswing in the provision of reformer-based small group training

John Halls

Physical

1 Three main themes are emerging: boxing fitness; mind-body; and 'strength and conditioning meets functional HIIT training'.

There's been a lot of talk about the growing interest in mindfulness and from our experience this is real: we're seeing an upswing in the provision of reformer-based small group PT, as well as mat-based Pilates and yoga.

Meanwhile, boxing is surging ahead, with mainstream gyms as well as boutiques putting it front and centre of fitness floors. We've worked with a number of operators to launch signature boxing concepts using our new boxing and combat range. Finally there's hybrid strength and conditioning/HIIT functional programming – best described as a less gritty CrossFit.

2 Keeping things fresh is less about rotating equipment – although of course, the more varied the kit, the more diversity the team will be able to build into programmes – the delivery of fresh, engaging small group PT is actually about programming.

To engage members, operators need to create and continually evolve these for different user groups and training goals; it's this that drives variety in equipment use.

What's on offer from Physical?

Physical's Apex programmes are available through our app and are free to use for any operator. They span seven categories – agility, core, active (older adults), strength, fusion (mind-body), explode (HIIT) and release (stretching and recovery) – and within each category is a year's worth of programming.

For each 30-minute programme, we explain what kit is needed, the room layout and timings. We also break workouts down, exercise by exercise. Each also has an instructor training video that includes progressions.

Many of our customers are successfully using Apex in their clubs – GLL has even incorporated the content into its own app.

MORE: www.physicalcompany.co.uk



PHOTO: PHYSICAL

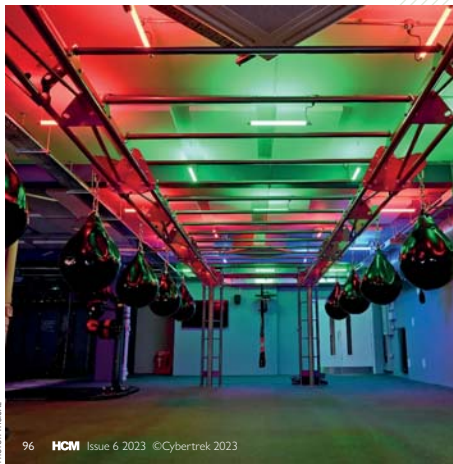



PHOTO: PHYSICAL

Physical is creating signature boxing concepts

Training spaces must be multi-use to meet growing demands



Training spaces need to be multi-functional, fit to host a sweat class and then transform into a brand activation space for a photoshoot

Miles Canning

BLK BOX

1 Training pods are still a highly popular and effective use of space within any small group personal training environment.

Last year, we launched the BLK BOX Nexus range which took the traditional training pod to a new level with the inclusion of two 125kg adjustable cable stacks built into the compact footprint of a traditional squat rack.

When combined with storage or linked together to create multiple training pods, the Nexus range can be configured and adapted to suit any training environment.

2 One of the main themes we're seeing is more demand for versatility. Training spaces now need to be multi-use and multi-functional, so they're fit to host a sweat class of 30 people and then transform into a brand activation space for a photoshoot, before transforming back into a high functioning small group PT environment.

The new Marchon LDN location in Stratford is an excellent example of this level of flexibility – recently voted one of the world's best gyms

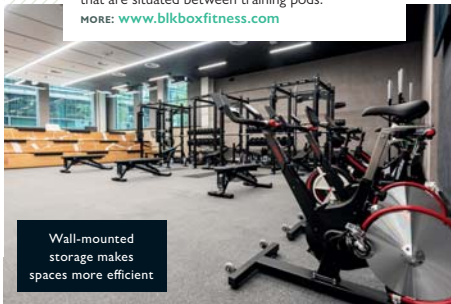


PHOTO: BLK BOX

by Men's Health, Marchon LDN includes eight of our stainless-steel Nexus training pods, integrated storage solutions and our seamless fusion flooring, which is easily cleaned and built to withstand anything from Olympic lifting to Hyrox classes.

3 A solid wall can be your best friend in any small group facility. We provide a wide range of wall-mounted storage solutions for anything from barbells to dip stations and resistance bands. If a solid wall isn't available, the next best solution to preserve space and keep things close to hand is either in-built or connecting storage solutions that are situated between training pods.

MORE: www.blkboxfitness.com



Wall-mounted storage makes spaces more efficient

PHOTO: BLK BOX

PHOTO: BLK BOX

the enjoyment gap

Sport England has been researching why more men than women enjoy physical activity in a bid to close the gap, as Kate Dale explains



Kate Dale

Tell us about your new insight

Our research shows 2.4 million more men than women 'strongly agree' that they enjoy physical activity and sport – we call this the enjoyment gap.

Three-quarters of women say they want to do more sport or exercise, but research shows they are consistently less active than men. We already know enjoyment is the biggest driver in engaging people in activity, so it's so important we work towards making activity more enjoyable for women.

When we talk about enjoyment we don't just mean making physical activity 'fun', we mean enjoyment in its broadest sense – not having to worry about intimidation, catching up with friends at the same time, feeling accepted for who you are and feeling a sense of mastery, for example.

We strongly believe the enjoyment gap is not inevitable and is fixable by challenging the practical and structural obstacles that make physical activity feel less welcoming for women.

Who did the research?

A mixed-methodology approach – including a survey of more than 900 women – was deployed by Walnut Unlimited (www.walnutunlimited.com) for UK Active and Sport England's This Girl Can campaign.

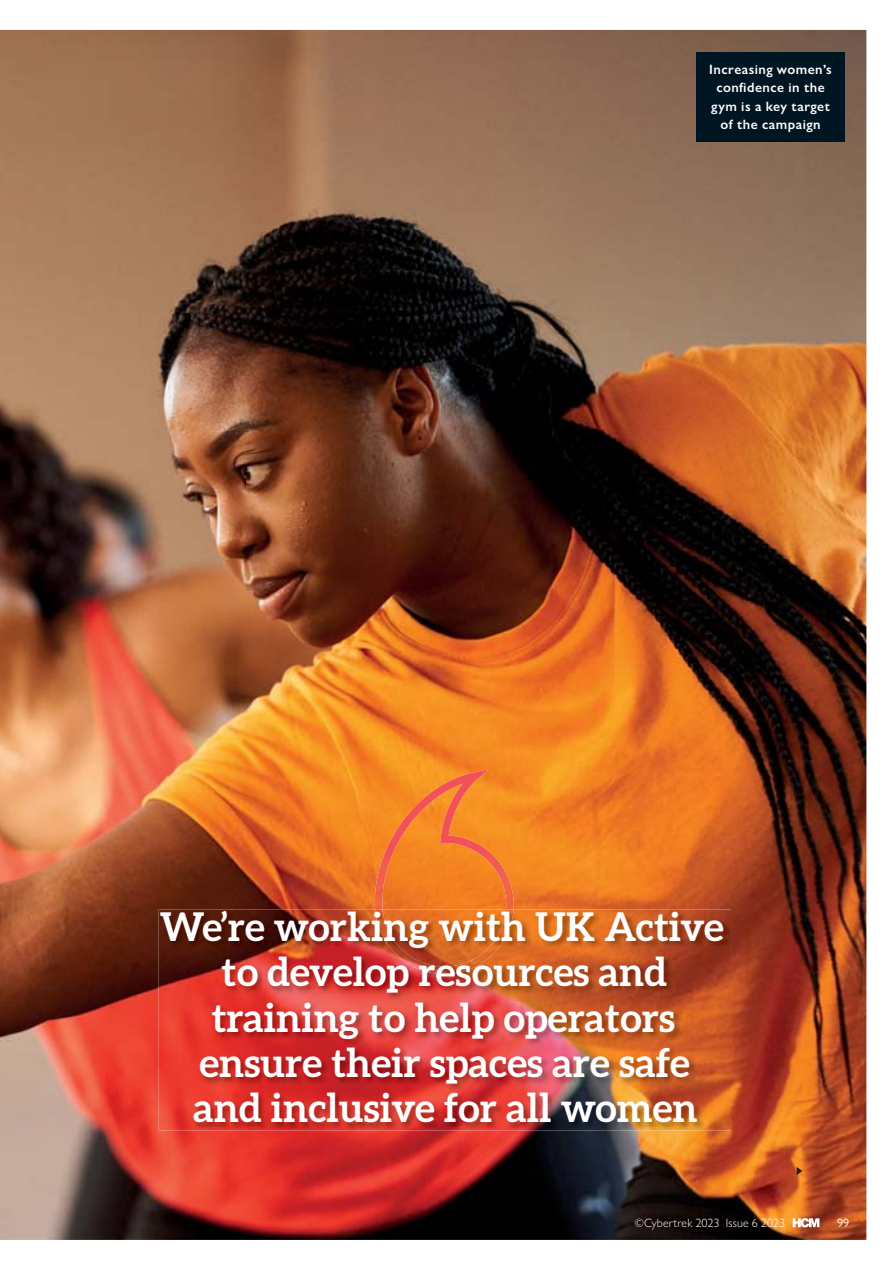
It provides the basis of new guidance, focusing on women's experience of sexual harassment and intimidation in fitness and leisure facilities and is informing our work.

How can health club operators help?

From our research, we've identified four action areas where operators can focus their efforts to help shrink the enjoyment gap.

1. Social

Having a support network or feeling part of a bigger community is integral to making activity enjoyable whether consumers are exercising alone or with others.



Increasing women's
confidence in the
gym is a key target
of the campaign

**We're working with UK Active
to develop resources and
training to help operators
ensure their spaces are safe
and inclusive for all women**



Sport England has funded the UK's national governing body for group exercise to create classes that operators can offer within their facilities



► 2. Safety

Creating spaces where women feel emotionally and physically safe, free from harassment and intimidation is vital, because when they're free from worry, they're free to enjoy physical activity.

3. Self-affirmation

Establishing an environment where members feel confident and comfortable in their own skin regardless of shape, size or ability.

4. Suitability

Designing your offering to cater to your communities' specific needs, considering their cultural and practical requirements, as well as ensuring timings are considerate of their competing priorities.

As part of the campaign launch we created a series of short films showcasing each of these four action areas by highlighting an organisation that's already delivering against them, with the aim of inspiring other organisations to do the same.



Social, Safety, Self-Affirmation and Suitability are campaign themes



What support is Sport England offering operators?

The newly re-launched This Girl Can Campaign Hub (www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/campaign-hub), offers a range of resources to support partners in the sector to understand how to implement changes to make their spaces more inclusive and welcoming for women.

These resources range from advice on how to promote activities to women, offering access to our latest insight, as well as a rights-free image library which organisations can use to promote their activities using more diverse and realistic portrayals of women exercising.

In November 2021 we worked with UK Active to co-release new guidance to specifically help the gym and leisure sector support more women to get active in safe environments. Called *How to improve your services for Women & Girls: As Told by the 51%*, (www.hcmmag.com/51percent), the guide includes practical guidance and checklists to help improve the engagement, experience and confidence of women and girls when using gyms and leisure facilities.

Launched last month, the guidance has taken the views of women and girls surveyed on their safety concerns to produce guidance for fitness and leisure centres to make their spaces safer for women.

How important are health clubs and leisure centres?

Sport England's most recent *Active Lives Survey* shows they play an essential role in supporting women to be active, finding that more than seven

A rights-free image library gives clubs access to more inclusive images of women

million women had taken part in facility-based activities, such as using exercise machines or indoor swimming, at least twice in the past 28 days.

However, the survey also found that, overall, women's activity levels remain lower than men's, growing by only 1 percentage point last year compared to 2.5 percentage points for men.

What's the answer to this challenge?

Building on this guidance, we're continuing to work with UK Active to develop resources and training to help leisure and fitness facilities ensure their spaces are safe and inclusive for all women.

By improving feelings of safety and inclusion, This Girl Can and Sport England's partner bodies hope to increase the participation of women in leisure settings, while contributing to closing the gender activity gap.

Sport England has also funded EMD UK, the national governing body for group exercise, to create This Girl Can Classes that operators can offer within their facilities. These are bespoke class concepts that have been created specifically

Health club harassment

5%

Female health club users who report feeling 'unsafe'

42%

Women of all ages who've experienced harassment or intimidation

39%

Incidents experienced in the weights area

83%

Those aged 16 to 24 who've been harassed

76%

Those who've changed their behaviour as a result

45%

Women who said it wasn't clear how to report harassment

25%

Women who reported harassment

71%

Women of all ages who've experienced sexual harassment in a public space

Women who start classes turn into long-term members, so making women feel more comfortable in these settings can lead to increased participation and membership

► to ensure they meet the needs of women who don't feel comfortable joining a mainstream class.

EMD UK offers training to individual instructors or health club operator groups that includes information on the barriers the target audience may be facing and how to help them overcome these, as well as full class choreography, music and marketing materials to help get their classes up and running.

Also, our new This Girl Can website (www.thisgirlcan.co.uk) now has a huge amount of content designed to support operators when it comes to implementing these changes.

What evidence is there to show that such changes would have the desired impact?

All our interventions are essentially based on insight. We listen carefully to the thoughts and concerns of women and girls to find ways in which we are able to boost their activity levels and ability to be physically active.

Since its launch, This Girl Can has inspired nearly 2.9 million women to engage with getting active in their own way and the campaign now



**Women face the barriers
of fear of harassment
and fear of judgement**

has over 700,000 supporters in its community.

The impact and difference it has made is enormous, but Sport England isn't solely responsible for making the societal changes needed to help all women get active. That task is ultimately up to all of us.

What increases do you anticipate?

This Girl Can's mission is to build women and girls' confidence to be active, regardless of their shape, size and ability. We've seen through our insight that there are significant barriers that women face when it comes to getting active, such as the fear of judgment while exercising, the rising cost of living and the fear of harassment.

We hope the impact of the campaign can shine a light on these issues to change the way people

think, inspire operators to make changes, which in turn encourage more women and girls to be active.

We've also seen – through our evaluation of the This Girl Can Classes programme – that lots of women who start the classes turn into long-term members for the operator. We can see that making women feel more comfortable in these settings can lead to increased participation and increased membership numbers.

What does the enjoyment gap look like at different life stages?

As a part of our insight-led approach to the campaign, women of all ages were consulted. No two women will have the same experience when it comes to getting physically active, which is why there are multiple action areas we need to target. ▶

This Girl Can has so far inspired almost three million women to get more active

HCM's 'Guide to the guides'

How to make your spaces safer for women: A call to action from the 51% (2023) aims to address safety concerns experienced by women while getting active (www.hcmmag.com/51percent).

This report builds on the work set out in the previous guide, *How to improve your services for women and girls: as told by the 51%, (2021)* (www.hcmmag.com/engaging), providing practical steps for facilities to help create an environment where women and girls can feel safer and more confident being active.

The guidance covers a range of practical advice, including the following areas for health clubs and leisure centres to help women feel safer and more confident:

- * Checklists showing what a code of conduct should include.
- * Advice on how to communicate existing policies, codes of conduct and reporting procedures to members and customers about sexual harassment.
- * Details on what reporting processes should include and how to make them accessible, so members and customers know how to report harassment and what to expect from the process.

- Safety, for example, is an issue which fluctuates depending on the age of those responding to our surveys. We found 22 per cent of women worry about risk or threat of sexual harassment in relation to doing sport and physical activity, with levels higher among women aged 16-30 (16-20 year olds were 38 per cent and 21-30 year olds were 35 per cent)

A significant proportion of women reported safety concerns in relation to exercising in well-lit streets or public spaces alone after dark (65 per cent), non-supervised facilities (53 per cent), and supervised facilities (19 per cent). This in turn contributes to the overall trend of women reportedly enjoying exercise less than men.

How have you been publicising this work?

We've launched 'This Girl Can With You', a call-to-arms to sport and activity providers to dismantle the barriers that contribute to the enjoyment gap.

This work is an example of how we're working with the sector to help tackle barriers that prevent women enjoying being active.

Women deserve to get active as much as men – that's why this guidance has the power to play an important role in helping health clubs and leisure centres tackle unacceptable behaviour. ●

Kate Dale is director of marketing at Sport England

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Menopause can carry a social stigma in the West, but in other parts of the world such women are revered



There's an opportunity for gyms to become a supportive space for women at every life stage

Support system

Women go through many physiological changes during their lifetime, all of which can be helped by exercise. Kath Hudson reports from the ACE Summit on Coaching and Training Women

Many female life stages are misunderstood and underestimated by everyone – including women themselves, who very often become the butt of jokes and feel obliged to laugh at themselves.

But matters to do with hormones – for females and males of any age – should not be seen as an opportunity for eye rolling. Hormones cause challenges which need to be validated.

These days, with the support of knowledgeable fitness professionals, there's an opportunity for gyms to become a supportive space for women at every life stage, according to experts presenting at the recent ACE summit, called Coaching and Training Women

Puberty

Delegates heard that physiological changes start early. The average age at which menstruation starts



Farel Hruska

in the US is 12, but hormone fluctuations begin a few years earlier, meaning that from the age of eight girls are changing.

This is likely to cause anxiety as they feel different but don't understand why and this feeling can sometimes accelerate through puberty as the body

changes, with breast development, wider hips and greater height. Girls also have to get used to moving their rapidly changing body.

For some it's confusing to find themselves in possession of an adult body while they feel like a child and they may reject their new body as a result, leading to dysmorphia. They may also question their identity or become clumsy. Often they feel embarrassed and try to make themselves smaller, leading to problems with posture. Once periods begin there's a new monthly hassle to negotiate. Will I leak? Can I exercise?

Keynote speaker and global fitness director of Fit4Mom, Farel Hruska, says promoting body. ▶



Emotions are superpowers. Many adolescent girls see their bodies in a dysmorphic way. Teach them to harness emotions to step into and own their space

► confidence is key, making girls feel strong and empowered: "If she's feeling 'out of body' the main rule about programming in puberty is promoting strength within the body and practicing movements which help her feel grounded, she explains.

"It's extremely unfortunate that so many adolescent girls start to see their bodies in a dysmorphic way, so if you have the honour of coaching a girl, create a profound space where you can coach her for the strength she has, but has been told she hasn't. Teach her to harness emotions like anxiety and empower her to step into and own her space. Emotions are superpowers," she said.

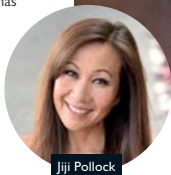
PMS

Menstruation can bring a number of unpleasant side effects, such as irritability, mood swings, insomnia, bloating, breast tenderness and stomach cramps. Jiji Pollock, director of science at Institute of Motion, says that although Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) get joked about, there are physiological reasons for the feelings that can accompany it and they should be validated. "Individual symptoms can be varied," she says. "Have empathy and meet them where they are."

Exercises which can help to alleviate symptoms of PMS include yoga moves such as cat/cow and hugging the knees to the chest while lying on the back for reps of 10 to 15 seconds.

Gently circling the knees while lying down can release lower back pain and a seated butterfly stretch boosts circulation in the hip area. Five minutes of deep breathing and meditation first

thing in the morning can also be effective in controlling symptoms of PMS.



Jiji Pollock

Pre-natal

The next physiological change to come along for many women is pregnancy, which brings profound physical changes. The hormone relaxin flows through the body, loosening joints and ligaments in readiness for birth, but the laxity it creates can lead to hypermobility and joint instability.

"Gravity naturally pulls us forward, so add to that a growing baby and you start to see shoulders pulled forward, the pelvis tilting, hip flexors shortening and tightening," says Hruska. "It's important to use exercises which strengthen the posterior muscular chain to counterbalance this."

"Focus on changing these imbalances, stretch out the chest and work the upper back muscles.



Menstruation can bring several unpleasant side effects, so be empathetic with clients

Also work on gluteal and lower body strength and hip flexor stretches, as well as three dimensional core engagement," she said.

Exercise is recommended on most days of the week during pregnancy, so coaches should start working this into the pre-natal conversation.

"With a healthy pregnancy nothing is high risk. It's a state of health and not a disability, so treat women as the athletes they are," says Hruska.

It's also important to start moving in multiple planes of motion to get pregnant women used to the movement patterns their new role as a mother will bring: "Start combining exercises which increase a dynamic asymmetric load," says Hruska.

"Try using a resistance band from one side and then the other, to mimick how she'll move with a baby on her hip and strengthen this movement to avoid imbalances."

Stages of a woman's life



Pre-menopause

The (re)productive years. Side effects can include irritability, stomach cramps, back pain, nausea, mood swings and insomnia.



Pre and postnatal

Women who grow a baby and give birth will experience loosened joints and ligaments and changes in balance and posture. They can also experience fatigue, mood changes and feel overwhelmed.



Perimenopause

The time before the menopause which can be characterised by erratic periods and heavy bleeding, hot flushes, night sweats, weight gain, loss of libido and anxiety.



Menopause

The transition time the perimenopause and postmenopause, when ovulation stops. Women may experience anxiety or depression, vaginal dryness and an increased risk of certain cancers.



Post-menopause

Starts 12 months from the last period. Usually between the ages of 50 and 52. During this time women are at greater risk of heart disease, urinary tract infections and osteoporosis.

Post-natal

After giving birth physical changes can be even more profound and for many, the body is in postural dysfunction. "As women try to heal they are also caring for their baby and the day-in-day-out movement is a fitness event in and of itself: pushing a buggy, putting the baby in the cot, bending and twisting, putting the baby in a ridiculously heavy car seat and then putting that in the centre of the back seat. All this needs a consistent emphasis on core strength in multiple planes of motion," said Hruska.

These physical challenges, on little sleep, coincide with what for some can be a real identity crisis for first time mums in terms of how to handle the

General training considerations from PT and health coach, Keli Roberts



Keli Roberts

- * Women have more slow twitch than fast twitch muscle fibres (giving endurance vs power and explosive movements).
- * Women demonstrate higher fatigue resistance compared to males. They respond to higher reps, additional sets, higher volume and time under tension and relatively lower loads.
- * Do a few assessments to get a full picture of what's happening, looking at the way she moves, her posture, as well as her lifestyle and what daily activities and sports she needs to perform.
- * Get a good balance between the front and back of the body.
- * Make sure the fitness programmes combine a mix of balance, flexibility and mobility.



Women respond to higher reps, additional sets and show a higher resistance to fatigue

massive responsibility of keeping a baby alive. "It's an interesting and conflicting space for a lot of women," says Hruska, "and can spark a range of emotions – excitement, joy, fear, anxiety, depression. As a trainer you can validate women's feelings and reassure them there's nothing wrong with being emotional – it's a natural part of this stage."

During this time the focus needs to be on the rehabilitation of core musculature, alongside the continued focus on movements for motherhood. Some clients might want to come back fast, but it's important to start and progress slowly, creating strength and connection between the brain and body.

Exercise recommendations including lying supine, knees bent, creating core engagement. With one hand on the belly, lift the head and shoulders off the

ground and focus on breathing while the hands feel the core engaging. Movement, such as heel slides, can then be added one at a time while engaging the core.

Since post-natal is an intense phase in women's lives, Hruska recommends having musculoskeletal and mental health experts to refer on to if a client presents with symptoms beyond the scope of the fitness professionals' skills and experience.

Perimenopause

The perimenopause can start anytime from the mid-30s to the mid-50s when oestrogen levels start to drop. It can herald its arrival with erratic periods and heavy bleeding. With this can come a feeling of doom about the arrival of the final chapter, along with brain fog, hot flushes/flushes, weight gain, insomnia, fatigue and reduced libido.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / JACOBILIANO

When working with women at this stage, bear in mind it's a tough time of life and they're likely to be shouldering a lot of heavy burdens. Ask them about this, then validate and celebrate their experience.

Annually, 50 million women enter perimenopause. In the West this phase can have a social stigma, while in Asia women of this age are revered. "It's important to start being the voice that reveres change and experience," says Hruska. "This phase should be celebrated rather than feared. As a trainer, encourage your women clients to own their power and take up space, not believe they are 'less than'. Treat the client as the strong woman they are."

For those women who are new to exercise start at a low level so they immediately have a success story and then build it up. Include balance challenges, weight bearing and resistance training



Lower oestrogen levels post-menopause speed up stomach emptying which creates hunger pangs and can lead to weight gain



For women who are new to exercise start at a low level so they immediately have a success story and then build up. Include balance challenges and work on bone density and muscle mass

- ▶ to work on bone density and build muscle mass, which reduces after the age of 50. Upper back strength and chest stretches are important as well, as continued core focus in all planes of motion.

"Find out her desires in her own journey, says Hruska. "Use open questions to build a connection and trust, then respond in a way which leads to more questions and a deeper understanding.

"Use your active listening skills, you'll find there's always more under the surface," she says. "I tell them: I have belief in you, so borrow my belief until you have your own. I already know you're amazing. Lean on that."


Post-menopause

The post-menopause stage is reached is when one year has elapsed clear of a menstrual cycle. By 2030, 1.2bn women worldwide will be post-menopause and this phase can come with weight gain and heart and osteoporosis risk.

Many women struggle to maintain their weight during this time for many physiological reasons.

Firstly, the rate of both resting and non-resting energy expenditure slows down, while appetite is stimulated. Weight gain – especially around the trunk – creates leptin resistance, which leads to more hunger. On top of this, a little known fact is that lower oestrogen levels speed up stomach emptying which creates hunger pangs.

"When female clients are struggling to maintain their weight don't let them blame themselves for lack of willpower or motivation and remember there are roadblocks in place," says menopause specialist, Jan Schroeder, professor at the Department of Kinesiology, Long Beach State University.



Moving up from 150 to 300 minutes of exercise a week brings dramatic benefits

She takeaways

- * Exercise helps women of all ages, is safe during a healthy pregnancy and very important during the perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause.
- * Women go through many physiological transitions in a lifetime which are each accompanied by mental and emotional shifts. Validate these shifts to help them step into their new identity and work on keeping the mind-body connection so dysmorphia doesn't set in.
- * From puberty, females often feel awkward and try to make themselves smaller, empower them through exercise to take up space.
- * Train the core, train balance, train the postural muscles.



Train the core, balance and postural muscles

- * Resistance training is crucial after 50 when muscle mass starts to decline.
- * Know who to refer on to if necessary, such as mental health experts or physiotherapists.
- * Yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi support sleep and mood, although there is currently no research to show the impact they have on weight management.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / ASYNTONIC

"The good news is that exercise helps the body regulate hormones and improves insulin sensitivity, which assists with appetite regulation, says Schroeder. "It also improves melatonin levels, helping women sleep better."

"Improved sleep in turn reduces fatigue and means more energy to exercise, which helps protect the heart and also guards against osteoporosis."

Schroeder says research shows that active females are at an advantage over those who were previously inactive, showing a lower BMI, greater lean muscle mass and lower central adiposity.

If they're able to maintain activity level these women tend to maintain their weight, waist circumference and abdominal fat levels.

Women who have always been active but aren't as active as they were before menopause, are still better off than previously inactive women, but will see some changes in body composition.

For those who have historically been inactive, exercise still helps.

Schroeder says the first step is to use trackers, step counters, or fitness logs to understand women's activity levels and where they've become inactive. If, for example, they tend

to sit down all afternoon, build some activity into the middle of the afternoon, even if it's only walking up and down stairs. She also recommends working with the client to create a behavioural contract which gives them ownership of what they've agreed to do and then checking-in with them regularly.

"Any exercise is better than nothing," says Schroeder. "While 150 minutes of low to moderate intensity each week is the ideal, it's okay to start with as little as 20 minutes and build up slowly."

"At the higher end, research shows dramatic benefits in moving up from 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week and upping the intensity levels," she says. "An eight-week study into high intensity cycling showed a 5 per cent decline in fat mass."

The final speaker at the ACE conference, Pilates specialist Mychele Sims, emphasised the point that one size does not fit all and every woman should be empowered on their own journey: "Embrace diversity, respect boundaries, don't push your female clients beyond what they're comfortable with," she said. "Listen actively, giving them your full attention and be prepared to provide feedback when appropriate." ●



Mychele Sims



Jan Schroeder

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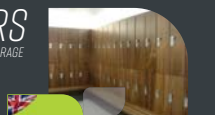
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YOCAS Yoga has been found to reduce cancer relapse



Surviving cancer

New research from the University of Rochester Medical Centre in the US has found that restorative YOCAS yoga can help prevent the recurrence of cancers by reducing inflammation

Cancer patients who practise YOCAS yoga can benefit from reduced levels of inflammation – helping their road to recovery and preventing cancer from returning.

The finding comes from research led by the University of Rochester Medical Centre in the US.

Eligible participants were cancer survivors with insomnia. For the study, more than 500 people – with an average age of 56 – took part in a randomised control trial. All participants had received cancer treatment between two months and five years earlier.

They were allocated to do either the Yoga for Cancer Survivors programme (YOCAS), which includes gentle Hatha and restorative yoga, or a placebo programme which is part of the Cancer Treatment and Survivorship Care Plans initiative and involves recommendation-based health education.

About the study

Both groups took part in two 75-minute sessions each week for a month and each was monitored using a series of blood tests throughout the four-week period and checked for levels of inflammation.

Inflammation, both acute and chronic, is associated with primary and secondary cancer development

Clinicians should consider prescribing YOCAS yoga for cancer survivors with inflammation which may lead to increased risk of progression and recurrence

and progression, as well as a number of toxicities that negatively affect cancer treatment adherence and survival.

Those who took up the YOCAS yoga had “significantly lower levels of pro-inflammatory markers,” when compared with the group attending education classes.

Researchers said: “Clinicians should consider prescribing YOCAS yoga for survivors with inflammation, which may lead to a high chronic toxicity burden and increased risk of progression, recurrence and second cancers.”

A previous study, *Effect of YOCAS yoga on sleep, fatigue, and quality of life* found YOCAS yoga significantly improves sleep quality and quality of life, while also reducing fatigue and sleep medication use among survivors.

It's likely the improvements in the health of the cancer survivors as a result of the recent YOCAS interventions can in part be attributed to having helped their insomnia, with all the accompanying health benefits this delivers.

● More: www.hcmmag.com/YOCAS



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