

# health club management

APRIL 2010



## MONEY SPINNERS

driving secondary spend  
from group exercise

## the strictly effect

tapping into the nation's  
passion for dance

### INTERVIEW

## NIKI KEENE

curves' international wellness  
director on partnering with  
the healthcare industry



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## Yes you can

Both existing and new initiatives have been gathered together to create a new government strategy called Be Active, Be Healthy, launched in February and aiming to get the nation more active.

According to the Department of Health, the plan aims to "put physical activity at the heart of communities and the centre of local authorities' efforts to tackle obesity, which is responsible for thousands of premature deaths each year in England".

The scheme has been designed to motivate the 27 million adults in England who currently don't get enough exercise and the 14 million who don't complete 30 minutes' activity each week.

In launching the new strategy, Public Health Minister, Dawn Primarolo said: "We have to remove the 'no, you can't' messages across communities to create a 'yes, you can' culture – with more support, more encouragement and more opportunities across communities to get people active." She went on to say: "The Change4Life campaign is helping families to eat well, move more and live longer and has called for a lifestyle revolution – the Be Active, Be Healthy initiative is set to form a vital part of this revolution."

The campaign is all part of the government's pledge to get two million people more active by the time of the 2012 Olympics.

The scheme includes initiatives such as increased collaboration with the Physical Activity Alliance, to "pool the resources of the voluntary, public and private sectors" and additional funding of up to £4m for County Sports Partnerships to help bring together councils, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and grassroots providers, to "deliver physical activities alongside sports."

Very significantly, Be Active, Be Healthy

will ensure that GPs are instructed to give "brief advice on getting fit" to their patients, so that doctors "prescribe physical activities just as readily as drugs". This amazing plan – if it comes to pass – could revolutionise the way exercise is viewed by the public and also how it is delivered. We must get behind this policy as an industry to ensure that this plan does indeed see the light of day.

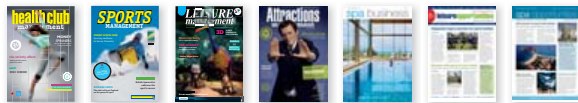
Other elements of Be Active, Be Healthy include a new learn to swim programme for adults, which will be delivered as part of the government's Free Swimming scheme, in partnership with the Amateur Swimming Association and Sport England, and a working group to explore ways in which people can be encouraged to become more active through dance (see our feature on page 46).

Primarolo also announced two new walking initiatives. One – the expansion of the Walking the Way to Health scheme – will support 500 local health walk schemes and the other – the creation of 2,012 new Active Challenge walking routes across England in partnership with Walk England – will celebrate the 2012 Olympic Games. Increased access to Britain's coastlines has also been highlighted as a priority.

The government has revealed for the first time that PCTs, spend an average of £5m each year at local level treating illness caused by inactivity. It's also estimated that 9,000 premature deaths each year are caused by obesity, making this work vital at every level, so it's good to see the government continuing to support our industry in spite of the pressure of the looming election.

**Liz Terry, editor**

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# welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



In-depth look at the Curves business p26



What's new in the franchise market? p57

## contents

### 06 letters

The industry needs a radical change in its approach to working with older people, says Norman Smith of HUR UK

### 08 news round-up

£31m Hillingdon Centre opens, DLL starts work on £11m Exeter club, plus the latest independent operator, supplier and training news

### 14 international news

FITLane to open fourth club, and the Ben Dunne Group introduces a new 'high value' health club concept

### 16 fia update

An in-depth look at the TwentyTen Commission, plus feedback from last month's Let's Dance with Change4Life weekend

### 20 people news

YMCAfit appoints a new executive director, plus we talk to the UK's first blind fitness instructor



Exercise and ageing p42



Nutritional products to boost revenue p64

### 22 competitive edge

Charity events including the Grand Canyon Ultra Marathon and the Mount Everest Base Camp Trek

### 23 diary dates

SIBEC UK takes place next month

### 24 everyone's talking about... the grey market

What's the key to tapping into the older people's fitness market?

### 26 interview niki keene

Curves' international wellness director talks to Kate Cracknell about teaching the fitness and healthcare sectors to speak the same language

### 30 the fitness future

Research by Mintel and Les Mills signals a transformation of the fitness industry as we know it. We report

### 35 money makers

We ask the experts for their suggestions on using group exercise to drive secondary revenue

### 38 village life

Rhianon Howells pays a visit to the new Richmond Village Letcombe Regis retirement home, where a gym and spa facilities are central to enhancing people's physical and mental health

### 42 gym'll fix it

With better health in later years now seen as a key priority for the government, we look at the role of the health and fitness industry in driving this agenda

### 46 the strictly effect

The success of the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* has led to a boom in dance-based exercise. Kate Cracknell reports



What's the future of fitness? p30



A boom in dance-based exercise p46



Piloxing – the new craze p75

**52 result!**

What results can operators expect from installing retention software? Our panel of operators give their verdict on the systems used in their facilities and offer suggestions for future product enhancements

**57 a franchise fit for everyone**

Julie Fisher takes a look at what's new in the fitness franchise market

**62 market value**

An Australian study has assessed a range of interventions to determine the most effective way to promote exercise among adults, in terms of health benefits and financial cost

**64 business booster**

Kath Hudson talks to operators who've bolstered their business throughout the recession by driving secondary revenue from sales of nutritional products

**66 fitness-kit special drinks**

Drinks to complement your members' fitness efforts, including Lucozade Lite, Ultrabody's Daily Wellness Range and Red Bull Shots

**68 show preview bodypower expo**

Next month's BodyPower Expo focuses on disciplines such as bodybuilding and martial arts

**70 show preview fibo**

The 25th annual FIBO event takes place this month in Essen, Germany, with more than 530 exhibitors expected from 38 countries

**75 lightweights**

Taking photos of every meal can help people lose weight, while Piloxing – a combination of pilates and boxing – is guaranteed to wow your members



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**buyers' guide:**

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p71



# write to reply



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry? If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



The UK's elderly population should be treated in a more sympathetic way

## mind, body and spirit – the need for a joined-up approach

I agree with the comments in the recent article on the role of exercise in tackling dementia (*HCM* Feb, p28). As an industry we appreciate the benefits of exercise, but it was encouraging to see others' recognition of its positive effects. There's an obvious correlation: when using your body you have to use your mind.

Anyone who saw Gerry Robinson's documentary on care homes would have been shocked at the soulless treatment some operate as standard practice. The majority of our work internationally is in the senior and rehab sectors, and we see other countries managing the care of their elderly in a more sympathetic way.

The UK system needs a radical change with a joined-up approach between all parties involved. I believe the fitness industry is well placed to

play a meaningful role in this, working alongside PCTs, care home managers, social workers, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. But it will require more than lengthy initial discussions: it needs positive action, and soon. Let's hope dementia care will have improved significantly before any of us need it.

Meanwhile, we continue our research projects and our work with practitioners to develop relevant products, including our Falls Prevention Programme. Other organisations in the industry are doing the same. Naturally this benefits our businesses but it also impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, and society as a whole, by cutting resources required by, and costs to, the healthcare system.

**norman smith**  
managing director, hur (uk) ltd

## inductions must be more tailored to individuals

Whether in the independent, private or public sectors, we all need to rethink the way we're approaching our clients' inductions and ongoing programming. We need to be thinking and delivering much more than simple 1-2-3 induction processes which are basically the same everywhere – just with different names!

Whether they're delivered to individuals or groups, we as an industry need to tailor inductions much more closely to the specific needs of each person, as well as to the particular health and social care issues that affect their community. That might, for example, mean diet and nutrition advice and an increased focus on behavioural change through a healthy lifestyle. It should also be about linking inductions and programming to a wider health agenda, including diabetes programmes, cardiac programmes, GP referral and disability programmes.

Health and fitness is much more than a 1-2-3 programme. We need to be educating and guiding our clients to make sensible choices when it comes to their wellness.

**kevin yates**  
head of commercial development,  
leisure connection



Clients need to be educated to make sensible wellness decisions

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## update

## news

### £31m hilligdon centre opens

The new £31m Hilligdon Sports and Leisure Complex has opened in Uxbridge, west London.

The centre, which was unveiled by Hilligdon Council to local residents at the end of February and which was officially opened by London mayor Boris Johnson on 23 March, offers the first Olympic-sized swimming pool to open in London for 40 years.

Facilities at the centre include a 400sq m (4,306sq ft) CV and static weights area, a 52sq m (560sq ft) group cycling studio and a 162sq m (1,744sq ft) dance studio, as well as a 105sq m (1,130sq ft) free weights area. Equipment has been supplied by Matrix.

A multi-use sports hall, shallow pools and a sauna and steamroom are also among the centre's facilities, in addition to classrooms for training, a café and a crèche. The site's 1930s open-air swimming pool, grandstands, cascades and entrance building have also undergone a full refurbishment as part of the development.

Hilligdon Council has contributed £26m towards the new complex, in addition to more than £2m from the London Development Agency and £1.5m from Sport England. The Heritage Lottery Fund also provided £1m towards the refurbishment of the Grade II-listed open-air pool.

Ray Puddifoot, leader of Hilligdon Council, says: "We recognise that quality of life is important to our residents and this complex provides top class facilities that people of all ages and abilities will be able to enjoy."

"Along with the new Botwell Green Sports Centre that will be opening in Hayes in a few months' time, we really will have some of the best sports provision around and a legacy for future generations."

Non-residents will be able to sign up for membership of the centre.



The new centre includes London's first Olympic-sized pool in 40 years

### scotland unveils active nation



The scheme will target all age groups

The Scottish government has launched a major new public health initiative, designed to encourage people across the country to increase their physical activity levels and, with it, improve the nation's health record.

Active Nation forms part of efforts to create a legacy from the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and will be delivered by a range of public, private and third sector partners through branded events and activities.

A new website will offer ideas to get people more active ahead of the 2014 Games, setting out Personal Activity Goals to help people incorporate exercise into their daily lives.

Shona Robison, Scottish minister for public health and sport, says: "Active Nation is about getting active, having fun and feeling good."



edited by tom walker. email: tomwalker@leisuremedia.com



The £1.89m investment included new equipment from Precor and Trixter

## new gym for bishop's stortford

Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, has re-opened following the completion of a £1.89m renovation funded by East Herts District Council (EHDC).

Work on the refurbishment programme at the Everyone Active centre, which is operated by SLM on behalf of the council, started in May 2009 to provide a new 85-station fitness suite and group exercise studio.

The centre's gym, which has been enlarged from a 26-station facility, also provides a new studio space for dance classes, as well as offering pilates, yoga

and Body Pump courses. Precor, Power Plate and Trixter have supplied the equipment for the new suite.

Designs for the new-look gym were drawn up by HCD Architects on behalf of SLM, while contractor Phoenix carried out the renovation work.

EHDC's refurbishment of Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, which also offers a swimming pool, forms part of a leisure contract with Everyone Active which was signed in January 2009.

Centre manager Alison Norman says: "Our mission is to help people achieve 30 minutes of activity five times a week."

## supplier news

### £2.5m boost for gravesham facilities

More than £2.5m is set to be invested in Gravesham's leisure facilities after the local authority agreed a new 10-year contract with operator Gravesham Community Leisure.

Gravesham Borough Council has approved funding for both Cygnet Leisure Centre and Cascades Leisure Centre to help secure the long-term future of the venues. Cascades Leisure Centre in Gravesend, Kent, will benefit from a new 720sq m (7,750sq ft) fitness suite offering 144 stations of Pulse Fitness equipment.

### refurbishment for flintshire fitness facilities

Flintshire County Council has announced that four local fitness facilities will be temporarily closed to allow renovation work to be carried out.

Bridges Fitness Suite at Holywell Leisure Centre has already benefited from improvements, and work has now started at Flint Leisure Centre. Facilities at Mold and Deeside centres are also set to be revamped. Each of the four fitness facilities will be equipped with new Technogym kit.

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## in brief...

**new equipment for barnet outdoor gym**

Four new pieces of Wicksteed all-weather equipment have been installed as part of a free, outdoor gym facility at Oak Hill Park in East Barnet, north London.

Barnet Council initially provided three stations – a surfer, a leg press and a space walker – at the £6,000 gym, designed for use by people of all ages and abilities, which opened in February 2009.

However, the Friends of Oak Hill Park was successful in its bid for funding from the Milly Apthorp Trust to install a further three exercise stations, with the council financing the fourth.

**go-ahead for bootle leisure centre**

Sefton Council has given the go-ahead for the redevelopment of Netherton Activity Centre in Bootle, Merseyside.

The site currently houses a library, arts centre and leisure complex, with the leisure element including a sports hall, all-weather floodlit synthetic turf pitch, activity studio, function and meeting rooms, and both junior and adult grass pitches. An 'Active Sefton' fitness suite offers a range of CV and resistance kit.

The redevelopment plan will include the construction of a new two-storey building, with the ground floor housing a library, café and crèche and the first floor offering a health and fitness club.

## oswestry plans back on track



An artist's impression showing the exterior of the £7.6m leisure centre

Shropshire Council has said that it expects work on the construction of a new £7.6m leisure centre in Oswestry to restart in June, after the firm originally behind the scheme ceased trading.

Frank Galliers, the Shrewsbury-based construction company, was placed into administration last month, nearly a year after starting work on the Oswald Park Lifestyle Centre. The council is now seeking to appoint a new contractor to restart the development, which will

replace the town's existing College Road facilities and which will include a 25m swimming pool, learner pool, a sports hall and a fitness suite.

Shropshire Council's director of resources, Laura Rowley, says: "It's essential that work can start again as soon as possible. We're determined to get the centre finished."

A function hall and crèche are also planned, as are football pitches, a multi-use games area and a BMX park.

## work starts on cox green

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) has confirmed the start of construction work at the new £1.3m Cox Green Leisure Centre in Maidenhead, Berkshire.

Work on the new facility, which is situated adjacent to Cox Green School on Highfield Lane, is expected to be completed by September and will be funded by a Football Foundation grant and developers' contributions.

The centre's facilities will include a new 42-station Bodyzone fitness

suite equipped by Precor, a first-floor multi-purpose dance studio and four changing rooms. There will also be changing rooms for people with disabilities, and for officials and referees using nearby football pitches.

Swindon-based construction company EW Beard is delivering the venue, which has been designed by Datchet-based architects Edgington, Spink and Hyne. Existing facilities include a small Bodyzone gym, badminton courts and a climbing wall.

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Facilities at the £11m Exeter club will include three indoor tennis courts

## dll to start work on exeter club

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has confirmed that work will be getting underway on the construction of the chain's latest club – a new £11m facility in Exeter, Devon.

The 5,635sq m (60,650sq ft) facility will incorporate a 25 x 12m indoor swimming pool and a 20 x 8m outdoor pool, three indoor tennis courts and five outdoor tennis courts, as well as an extensive 1,198sq m (12,900sq ft) gym floor.

DLL plans to run a range of specialist tennis and swimming programmes for members at the Exeter club, which is set to create at least 80 new jobs and which

will take the operator's portfolio to 89 sites across Europe.

Paul Guyer, property director at David Lloyd Leisure, says: "The opening of the Exeter club will be David Lloyd Leisure's first in nearly three years and marks the beginning of our next stage of growth."

The new club will be located adjacent to Exeter Chiefs rugby club and is set to open its doors to the public by the end of the year.

DLL recently completed a redevelopment programme across its portfolio which resulted in the upgrade of facilities at 14 of its UK sites.

## revamp for ilkeston centre

The Victoria Park Leisure Centre in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, is in line for nearly £3m-worth of improvements after proposals to improve the site were given the backing of Erewash Borough Council.

The work will include a new gym and disabled facilities, plus improvements to the centre's pools, changing rooms, car park, lighting, reception area and roof.

Erewash Borough Council would provide funding of at least £2.39m for the scheme, with the remainder being dependent on a Sport England grant.

## fitbug issues trading update

Fitbug Holdings has issued an update on its activities since the re-organisation of the company at the end of 2009. It has focused on developing the UK and international sales of fitbug.com, its online fitness portal. Meanwhile Fitbug Body, its weight management service which was launched to the public sector last year, is now being introduced to the private sector with pilot programmes in conjunction with Bupa.

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## the factory expands gym space



The revamp included relocating the club's dance studio to a new space

The Factory Gym and Dance Club in Holloway, north London, is expanding its facilities and adding more classes over the Easter period.

The centre, owned and operated by Julian Aston, will add a range of equipment supplied by Star Trac to its existing kit. The additions include a 3D Max Rack, eSpinners and additional pulleys and leg presses.

The club's selection of group and dance classes will also be widened. Aston told *Health Club Management* that the club will begin hosting Zumba aerobics, cheerleading and Bollywood dancing due to increased demand.

## bond fitness studio opens in hertfordshire

Bond Fitness, a 168sq m (1,800sq ft) health club, has opened at the Hertford Rugby Club in Hertfordshire.

Although located within the rugby club's premises, the gym is open to the general public and aims to offer members a workout previously only available to professional sportsmen.

Facilities include a fitness suite, vibration suite with six VibroGym trainers and treatment rooms. (See also *HCM* March, p51)



The club is based at Hertford RFC

## seven new sites for pure gym

Budget gym operator Pure Gym is to open its fifth UK site in Sheffield, after agreeing to a leasehold deal on a property in the city's Sheaf Gardens industrial estate.

The company has secured a former Dixons car showroom site and has started work to convert the space into a health club. The new facility will be the

first of seven sites that Pure Gym will open during 2010. The company plans to have 20 gyms operating across the UK by the end of 2011 and has agreed terms for properties in Smethwick, Birmingham; Glasgow; and Southend-on-Sea. Negotiations are also at an advanced stage for further sites in Aberdeen, Belfast and Derby.

The expansion will be funded by a £6m loan facility provided by a consortium of investors led by Magenta Partners. Pure Gym has previously raised £3.5m from its management and private investors.

Peter Roberts, chief executive of Pure Gym, says: "Our existing sites are in Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh and Wolverhampton and we are actively looking for further sites throughout the UK where there is access to strong population demographics."



All Pure Gym sites are open 24/7. Memberships start at £12.99 a month

## new website for qualifications

SkillsActive has called on employers in the active leisure, learning and wellbeing sector to shape the future of vocational qualifications.

The Sector Skills Council has urged employers to visit a new website, which has been created to raise awareness of a large-scale overhaul of sector-based qualifications and ensure that businesses are at the heart of the changes.

Vocational qualifications in the active leisure, learning and wellbeing sector are undergoing a radical change, with the number of qualifications



**SkillsActive has launched a new website to raise awareness of a large-scale overhaul of qualifications**



**Employers must be involved to ensure qualifications are relevant**

available being reduced from close to 1,000 to around 300.

Stephen Studd, CEO of SkillsActive, says: "Our employers are involved in the development of these new qualifications, ensuring that they're the qualifications they need their workforce to have."

He continues: "The new structure is starting to reflect what it means to be qualified in the sector. It's vital for employers to have fewer qualifications and clearer options. Through the reform programme, this is what we've started to achieve."

The changes come amid wider reform of vocational qualifications across all skills sectors.

## supplier news

### ultrabody secures énergie detox deal

The franchisee of the énergie Fitness for Women club in Belfast, Northern Ireland, has introduced a new revenue stream by launching a detox programme (see p65).

The club's owner, Saima Akram, says around 50 members have taken up the programme since it launched in January, equating to 20 per cent of the club's 250 members.

The 30-day programme uses products from supplier Ultrabody, with 30 sachets retailing for £16.95. Containing a blend of detoxifying herbs, the sachets are simply combined with water and consumed on a daily basis.

### life fitness and serco renew deal

Fitness equipment supplier Life Fitness and leisure management company Serco have extended their partnership contract for another five years.

The new agreement has a projected spend of £3m over the next three years.

The partnership will see Life Fitness supplying its equipment to more than 20 leisure centres managed by Serco for, and on behalf of, local authorities.

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## in brief...

**optimal goes antipodean**

OLF Education, the education and training wing of the Optimal Life Fitness Group, is launching its CPD education in South Africa after signing a distribution deal with Trans Fitness SA.

Courses will begin this month, starting with the Extreme Kettlebell Instructor Course and Performance Boxing. These will be followed by a new Advanced Suspension Training Course and Olympic Weightlifting for Fitness Professionals. Trans Fitness SA will also distribute OLF's range of Extreme Kettlebells.

Meanwhile, OLF has signed a deal with PT Academy Australia to distribute its Effective Movement Training Course (EMT) – an advanced personal training course that develops a PT's programme design skills and understanding of the body's kinetic chain. EMT has already proved popular in Australia: Fitness First, Virgin Active and Genesis have all taken it on board to develop their personal trainers. EMT will be available in the UK later this month.

**shokk's middle-east deals**

SHOKK has appointed three new partners in the Middle East to roll out the licence concept across the region. Based in Abu Dhabi, One2One Sports Management will handle the UAE territories of Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. Saudi Arabia will be exclusively handled by Delta Marketing Company. The third engagement will be handled by the AGT Alatawi Company in Bahrain.

**vivafit results and plans**

Women-only franchise Vivafit opened 18 new clubs in 2009 and increased its turnover by 16 per cent, to €18.6m – a €2.5m increase on 2008. The largest gym chain in Portugal with 108 locations, this year Vivafit plans to open 17 new clubs in Portugal and Spain, where it already has two gyms. By 2014, it aims to have of 250 locations in Portugal and Spain, as well as five master franchises in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

## fun fitness for slovenian workers

Workers in the business district of Ljubljana, Slovenia, will once again have a convenient way to stay in shape with the re-opening of the only fitness facility in the city centre.

The 300sq m facility, which re-opened in January following a €238,000

investment, was acquired in 2008 by former athlete Damijan Zajec. Zajec instigated the renovation project, which included a revamp of the interior, the installation of Star Trac equipment, extending group exercise across three exercise studios, and a rebrand of the facility to Fit & Fun.

"Business people and office workers spend long hours sitting in front of their computers and can lack the incentive to exercise," says fitness manager Mitja Novak. "Star Trac's innovative kit helps provide the motivation they need."

Fit & Fun Leisure Centre currently has around 700 active members. It offers flexible membership prices for fitness, Spinning® and aerobic memberships. The club also opens its doors to non-members for a fee of €10.



**The revamp cost €238,000 and includes new Star Trac equipment**

## fitlane to open fourth club

FITLane, the operator of health clubs in the south of France, recently signed up a site in Nice for its fourth and largest club in the Riviera.

The club, which is currently under construction, will measure 2,400sq m and offer more than 500 pieces of cardio and resistance kit. There will also be an extensive group exercise timetable.

A soft opening is expected for July 2010, with a pre-sale target of 1,500 members; expectations are for around 5,000 members to join within the first two years of operation.

FITLane currently has a total of 11,400 members across its other three clubs in Cannes, Mandelieu and Sophia Antipolis.



**French Riviera: FITLane's four clubs are located in the south of France**

## new sports academy for san diego county

The new Gonzalez Sports Academy opened in Chula Vista, southern California, last month.

A family-owned and operated business – launched by professional baseball players Edgar Gonzalez of the Yomiuri Giants and Adrian Gonzalez of the San Diego Padres – the facility was established to "educate and empower coaches, athletes and fitness enthusiasts of all levels to achieve their sports performance and conditioning goals". Catering for everyone from beginners

to 'weekend warriors' and serious athletes, the 2,700sq m facility offers equipment that supports training across multiple sports – baseball, club volleyball and cycling, for example – as well as speed/agility and strength training.

As part of its cycling training provision, the club has installed RealRyder bikes. "Cycling is very popular and RealRyder bikes are high performance, state-of-the-art equipment that no-one else in our area has," says Bob Foley, director of strength & conditioning.





The gym is kitted out with gym80 International and Technogym equipment

## ben dunne 'high value' club

The Ben Dunne Group has expanded its health and fitness offering by opening a fourth club – its first 'high value' site.

The new facility in Lucan, West Dublin, offers a 1,500sq m gym with strength kit from gym80 International – including a 500sq m free weights area – and CV equipment from Technogym.

The 'high standards/low prices' vision at Ben Dunne Gym is similar to the company's other sites, but the new club offers no pool or wet features and membership is priced at just €175 a year.

"The aim of Ben Dunne Gym is to offer world-class fitness facilities at an affordable price," says director Mark Dunne. "The gym industry is full of

companies charging outrageous prices; sooner or later members will refuse to pay them, particularly in these challenging economic times."

However, Dunne prefers not to use the term 'low cost' or 'budget' to describe the new club. "This has connotations of comparing us with low-cost airlines, where customers can feel they've received a less than satisfactory service or product in return for paying a low price," he says.

"Ben Dunne Gym offers facilities to rival premium gyms, but also real value thanks to an incredibly affordable price and no hidden charges.

"We're delighted with the response and now plan to roll out the concept."

## berlin's shokk-ing new facility

SHOKK has created its first youth activity centre in Germany, in the capital city of Berlin.

Officially opening this month, the standalone gym is located in a three-storey glass building in a popular shopping area. Following an investment of €200,000, the facility – which will occupy a 400sq m space in the building – will house the full SHOKK concept comprising IGNITION, X-certain and FLT ranges, which encompass cardiovascular, interactive and resistance products designed to make fitness fun.

Michael Kniefel, owner and GM of the gym, says: "There's a definite call to action in Germany to motivate physical activity outside of school hours, and SHOKK definitely meets one of our key objectives: to improve health and wellbeing in the local community. It also makes physical activity 'cool' with the provision of the latest equipment and modern training techniques."

Matt Mozley, SHOKK's international sales manager, adds: "This is another exciting opening for us in Europe – the first of many in our new fiscal year."

escape 

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## from the board



## collective approach

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It's not unusual for an industry to work together to promote itself. It's not unusual for an industry to lobby the government to promote and/or prevent legislation being passed that will impact its business.

What is unusual is that a group of competitors, from both the public and private sector, have set aside the natural urge to compete and have sat together to decide what their collective priorities should be, and what strategies they should develop. Yet that is precisely the role of the TwentyTen Commission.

If we implement the strategies being discussed, we will not only grow our collective market share but will also have a profound impact on the health and wealth of the nation, for the two are inextricably linked. A fit and healthy nation is a less sick nation, and a less sick nation is a more productive nation.

So far, only 60-odd people have had their say (see p17). Now it's your turn – you, the remaining 199,940 fitness industry employees who have yet to voice your opinion. In a few weeks, the initial recommendations will be launched for industry consultation. You must read them and feed back your thoughts.

The consultation process is like a democracy: a wonderful expression of individual freedom and collective strength. Please do take the time to get involved because, at the end of the day, we are talking about our collective and personal futures.

## let's dance! events a success

On the first weekend in March, the FIA – with the help of around 600 of its members – got the nation dancing its way to good health through the latest wave of the Department of Health's Change4Life campaign: Let's Dance with Change4Life.

The participating clubs and leisure centres offered their local communities almost 2,000 dance-related classes over the weekend of 6–7 March. People aged between five and 75 came out to strut their stuff, trying everything from ballroom to tap to salsa.

Participating sites enjoyed a busy weekend as their local communities – including many non-members – danced their way through their doors. Three facilities that really got into the swing of things were Yarborough Leisure Centre in Lincoln, Curves in Gravesend, and Nirvana Spa in Wokingham.

Yarborough Leisure Centre entertained almost 200 people – 75 per cent of whom were non-members. Participants tried everything from salsa, line dancing, modern jazz and hip-hop to dance aerobics and the cha cha cha.

Nirvana Spa, meanwhile, offered six hours of dancing over the weekend and had almost 150 people taking part in the classes it laid on, over a fifth of whom were non-members.

And Curves' Gravesend club incorporated dancing into its regular circuit training programme. Instead of rest stations between each machine,

participants were invited to do Body Beat dancing moves before moving on to the next piece of kit. The club later cleared the equipment and offered a street dance class. The result: double their regular Saturday attendance.

However, it doesn't have to stop with the weekend, as anyone bitten by the dancing bug can pitch their new skills against others and post a video of their dancing prowess on a dedicated Let's Dance with Change4Life YouTube page. If they've voted the best act, they will win the chance to dance live on stage with Britain's Got Talent stars Diversity.



**Public Health Minister Gillian Merron takes part in Let's Dance**

## integrate, educate, celebrate – fia conference

The 2010 FIA Flame Conference, to be held in Cheltenham on 14 July, will focus on 'growing your business and connecting with your consumers'.

In a recession-gripped economy, the focus must now be on brand building and brand marketing, as well as how we improve and deepen our relationships with consumers.

Headline speakers include Derek Barton, former senior vice president of marketing for Gold's Gym International; Claire Ramwell, head of Healthy Living & Sport, Blackburn; and Paralympic medalist John Harris.

David Stalker, FIA executive director, says: "If we want to not just survive, but increase our market share

in perhaps one of the worst economic climates in living memory, then we have to learn new tricks, develop new strategies and find new depths within ourselves to draw upon.

"The conference is all about challenging our existing business models, consumer engagement strategies and perhaps even our own inner steel and resolve. It's about what we can learn from experts and what we can learn from each other."

If you'd like to take advantage of the early bird rate, simply book your place at the FIA FLAME Conference before 30 April – places can be booked by visiting our website at [www.fia.org.uk](http://www.fia.org.uk) or by emailing [flame@fia.org.uk](mailto:flame@fia.org.uk)

## fitness directory upgraded

The FIA Fitness Directory, now co-branded with the Register of Exercise Professionals, has been upgraded for swifter access and use.

This 'window to the industry' provides a web-based platform for operators to increase brand awareness and enhance consumer interaction.

Designed to help consumers find their nearest health club, leisure centre or REPs-registered instructor, the FIA Fitness Directory also provides members with another channel to promote themselves – be it via news of their latest developments, blogs and/or social media accounts.

FIA executive director David Stalker says: "Time-starved consumers now use the net to search for services, compare competitors, check out special offers and deals – frankly do their research before they try or buy – and that's why we've invested in creating



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**The directory acts as a shop window**

a Fitness Directory to act as a shop window for our members.

"The days of relying on handing out leaflets on street corners or posting ads locally to generate footfall are long gone; an internet presence for an internet generation is vital."

## the twentyten commission

After 250 hours of debate, involving more than 60 of the industry's leading innovators, the TwentyTen Commission Report has started to take shape prior its launch to the industry.

Speaking at the TwentyTen workshop held earlier this month, David Stalker, FIA executive director, said: "In the 20 years the FIA has been in existence, we have never undertaken anything as ambitious as this Commission.

"We've never asked strategic questions about our future and we've

never attempted to identify what our future needs will be. If we know these, then we can start to develop the strategies required to address them.

"This Commission is about our industry being masters of its own fate. It's about identifying the key potential areas of growth and assessing what we need to do to get from where are to where we want to be."

Five focus groups were held, led by Graeme Hinde (Leisure Connection), Robin Johnson (Total Fitness), Harry Macmillan (MEND), Steve Philpott (DC Leisure) and Dr John Searle (the FIA's CMO). The focus groups' conclusions are currently being compiled into a consultation document which will be launched to the industry next month.

"We want everyone to read the Commission Report and comment on it," adds Stalker. "If our industry is to prosper in the next 20 years, we must agree on a common view of where we want to go."



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**The TwentyTen Commission is asking for your views and comments**



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# data and research: 2010

David Stalker, the FIA's executive director, reports on the FIA TwentyTen Commission



**T**he FIA TwentyTen Commission was established by the FIA board to highlight areas in which the FIA should focus its energies in the coming years. One such area is data and research, which is being seen as a growing area of importance for the fitness industry.

It is a topic, however, that fails to raise the pulse of many people in the sector – that is, until a debate is sparked about the precise number of fitness facilities in the UK, the total number of members, the number of casual users, the health outcomes achieved or a host of other matters that can only be resolved if we have the facts. Critically, without a systematic, industry-wide data and research strategy, it becomes impossible for external parties – be it government, investors or key partners – to make judgements on the value of working with our sector. Whether it's about securing investment or proving social outcomes, research on the industry as a whole is crucial to making the progress that we each need within our organisations.

## using what you've got

An industry-wide strategy for data and research is a broad agenda; it covers data about facilities and services provided across the country, information about the people working in our sector, data captured on the outcomes of our programmes, insight into what drives consumers into our clubs (and keeps them there for longer) and the use of data to inform business performance.

Often it's about making better use of what's already there. The proliferation of technologies such as FitLinux and the Technogym Wellness System, as well as the standard operation of many



PICTURE: WWW.STOCK.COM/KEVIN

**FIA members will be entitled to a report profiling exactly who their members are**

membership management systems, means there's more information out there than one might think. In addition, agencies such as The Leisure Database Company, Leisure-net Solutions and Oxygen Consulting have been producing valuable research for many years.

The FIA will be making a concerted move into these areas in 2010, in anticipation of the findings of the Twenty Ten Commission which will clearly suggest that it does even more from 2011 onwards. This will not mean that the FIA will be carrying out research in its own right. It will simply be working with other parties already active in the field to make sure that the knowledge we gather is spread as widely as possible, and that lessons are being learned about the best way forward.

## consumer insight

One of the key areas that's been identified as a priority is consumer insight. In comparison with sectors such as retail and hospitality, there's an awful lot for us to learn when it comes to understanding the motivations of our users.

The FIA *National Fitness Audit* will see the FIA working with The Leisure Database Company to help its members better understand their customers via the Mosaic profiling system. Each FIA member will be entitled to a free

membership profile report to help inform their own strategy. This will help them ensure that they have the right marketing tools in place.

It will also help members show they're meeting their wider social agenda by proving that fitness is a service consumed by a broad range of social groups. The evidence from these individual profiling exercises will be collated to provide an overall picture of our sector's consumers, which will help inform the FIA's development strategy moving forward, as well as alerting government and other bodies to the reach of our industry.

In addition, the FIA is working with Leisure-net Solutions on the *Price and Promotions Comparison Report*. This allows members to compare their promotions with the rest of the market, as well as allowing us to track the trends in marketing activity across the sector.

Finally, we will be working with the support of Precor and Ray Algar on the first ever detailed industry study into the trends affecting the growth of the budget club industry. Is this something to fear or embrace? This report will look at the dynamics within this segment of the industry and chart a way forward for the years ahead.

This is just the start of our activities in this area. It's time we all got a bit more interested in data and research.

**leisureopportunities** is the official recruitment magazine of the fia

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**New sales manager for Poland**

## pole position for brennan

Trevor Brennan has been appointed the new regional sales manager for Holmes Place's Polish operations.

Brennan secured a permanent position after a temporary spell in the role. He took up the full-time position at the beginning of this month.

Brennan joins the company from IT solutions company Metaforce, where he was sales director. His previous roles include stints as national sales manager for Leisure Connection, as well as senior roles at Fitness First and Next Generation.

He will be tasked with driving the expansion of Holmes Place's member base in Poland and will report directly to Neil Burton, the company's chief operating officer for central and eastern Europe.

## in brief...

### carveth joins concord

Concord Sports Centre has appointed Lynsey Carveth to the role of senior sales consultant for its Fitness Unlimited health club. Carveth joins Concord from Don Valley Stadium, where she worked as a sports coach.

Previously, Carveth has coached Sheffield Hallam University women's water polo and rowing teams.

She says: "Having already worked at two other facilities operated by Sheffield International Venues, I'm delighted to be taking on this full-time role at Concord. I'm hoping my passion for sport is contagious!"

## runyon joins the ihrsa board

Anytime Fitness chief executive and co-founder Chuck Runyon has been appointed to the board of directors of the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA).

Commenting on his new role, Runyon says he will aim to make the promotion of exercise as preventative medicine a central focus at IHRSA during his tenure.

"I believe we ought to work with public officials, business leaders and representatives of the insurance and medical communities to change the way many people think about exercise," he explains.

"It is not something to be dreaded.

Exercise is medicine, and we need to help more people to understand that if we truly expect them to change."

Founded in 2002, Anytime Fitness is a franchise business which currently has 1,200 clubs across 48 states in the US.



**Runyon believes exercise is medicine**

From the inception of Anytime Fitness, Runyon has been involved in virtually every facet of the business – including strategic planning, operations, training and franchise development, as well as marketing.

## new ymcafit executive director

YMCA has announced the appointment of Denise Page as the new executive director of its training division, YMCA Fitness Industry Training (YMCAfit).

Page takes up her role this month and succeeds Robin Gargrave, who will be taking on the new post of director of innovation and development for Central YMCA.

Rosi Prescott, Central YMCA's chief executive, says: "Denise is without doubt one of the most significant contributors to the growth and impact

of YMCAfit, and has been working successfully with Robin over many years.

"Her positive influence is felt throughout the organisation and her careful nurturing and guidance of all areas of our programme, and consequently the charity's effectiveness, has been inspirational."

Page adds: "I'm looking forward to developing our current online provision and our new range of training products, which incorporate the latest technologies."

### horizon appoints chris austin

Fitness equipment manufacturer Horizon Fitness, part of Johnson Health Tech, has created a new role after experiencing a 14 per cent rise in year-on-year sales.

Taking up the new position of head of retail sales will be Chris Austin, who will oversee the company's expansion plans in the sector. He will report directly to the managing director of Johnson Health Tech, Jon Johnston.

Austin says: "This is an exciting environment; new product development and technological advancement are rapid."

### dll trainer going strong

John Williams, a campus trainer at David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) in Stevenage, is preparing to take part in the Ironman event in Hawaii, US.

The Ironman, one of the world's most gruelling one-day endurance events, involves a 2.4 mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a marathon run – all to be completed within 17 hours.

Williams says his day-to-day role at DLL – which includes advising personal trainers – has benefitted his own regime, allowing him to devote 20 hours a week to ensuring he stays in optimum condition.



## PEOPLE PROFILE



### james o'driscoll

O'Driscoll lost his sight suddenly at the age of 26. Following a period of depression, he decided to turn his life around and is now a fitness instructor at Virgin Active in London

#### What made you think of becoming a fitness instructor?

One day I decided enough was enough! I was sitting indoors being unhappy – smoking, eating takeaways and drinking beer. I decided to quit smoking and drinking and bought a rowing machine with the money I saved, which I used every afternoon. That's when I realised I could turn my life around. As I got more confident, my self-esteem grew and I joined a gym. One day my nephew, who I trained with, suggested that I should be an instructor as I was good at training him, not only on what exercises he needed to do but also with the right amount of patience and motivation to help him. I decided to look into it.

#### How did you go about qualifying as an instructor?

It wasn't easy by any stretch of the imagination. I was put in contact with Coachability, which funds sports and physical activity training projects in London. They were great – really behind me all the way.

#### Where did you get the motivation to train as an instructor?

Once I set my mind to something, I make sure I see it through – I guess my stubbornness pushes me through.



O'Driscoll hopes to become a PT

#### How hard was it for you to gain the qualifications?

First of all I had to prove I was capable of doing the course. However, once I'd had a visit from someone at CYQ, progress came much quicker. I had more people assessing me during my practical than the other students on the course did – but, having passed, I think it's fair to say that I gave a perfect performance!

#### How long did it take to qualify?

Three weeks.

#### What's your day-to-day role?

A bit of everything, from helping members with their technique to teaching fast classes like abs, keeping members motivated and making sure things are clean and tidy. It's always varied, which I enjoy, and I'm now aiming to become a personal trainer.

#### Do you work alone or do you have somebody helping you?

I have an access worker who's there to mirror my moves and who acts as my eyes. I'm constantly asking him questions to gain visual feedback, such as "are their backs straight?" or "are they using the correct grip?" My access worker isn't paid by Virgin; they're paid by a government programme called Access to Work.

#### What's the number one weakness in the fitness sector?

Some people can be narrow-minded and quick to stereotype others. My goal is to prove them wrong, not just about me but about disabled people in general. I have to say that, so far while working for Virgin, everyone has been very supportive and interested in my advice and progress.

#### What's your favourite motto?

Always live life as an exclamation, not an explanation!

See it.  
Experience IT.



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**23 OCTOBER 10**

## beachy head marathon

Target TB is calling for people to take part in one of the biggest off-road marathons in the UK. Formerly the Seven Sisters Marathon, this challenging route has over 3,500ft of ascent – steps, stiles and gates – but also takes in stunning scenery across the South Downs. There are three categories: walker, jogger or runner. A minimum of £1,000 must be raised, with proceeds going to help to prevent tuberculosis: a disease that kills 1.7 million people worldwide each year.

Details: [www.targettb.org.uk](http://www.targettb.org.uk)



The challenging route includes more than 3,500ft of ascent



Trip starts with a visit to the Taj Mahal

**13-22 NOVEMBER 10**

## cycle india

This 480km cycle ride, which has been set up on behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), takes place in Rajasthan and offers visitors an experience of India at its most exotic and colourful best. The journey starts with a visit to the Taj Mahal and finishes in Pushkar while the annual, world famous camel festival is taking place. Registration costs £250 and the minimum sponsorship is £2,500

Details: [www.ndcschallenges.org.uk](http://www.ndcschallenges.org.uk)

Beautiful views await trekkers



**19-26 SEPTEMBER 10**

## grand canyon ultra marathon

This new race gives participants 24 hours to run 126km – three marathons – across the vast, wild, remote plateau of the Grand Canyon North Rim. Runners will need to carry their own food and survival equipment, although there'll be water and medical stations at regular intervals. The route reaches up to 9,000ft above sea level and offers views of towering pine trees punctuated by large open valleys of grass and streams – and of course views over the canyon itself. Afterwards there'll be a celebratory meal and prize giving in Las Vegas. Details: [www.acrossthedivide.com](http://www.acrossthedivide.com)



The race goes 9,000ft above sea level

**26 MAR-13 APR 11**

## everest base camp trek

Meeting the villagers on this Nepalese trek will be a highlight, as will encountering the Sherpa capital of Namche Bazaar. Pass through beautiful valleys and dense forests, past glacial rivers until you reach the renowned viewpoint of Kalapatar on the approach to Everest Base Camp. Those who wish to trek to Everest Base Camp itself may do so. Participants will also have time to explore the colourful and frenetic capital of Kathmandu. Details: [www.discoveradventure.com](http://www.discoveradventure.com)

## APRIL

**7-10 | ACSM Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition****Venue** Austin, Texas**Summary**

The 14th annual ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) summit. Presentation topics will include managing heart disease risk in the new era, social and cultural barriers to exercise, benefits and concerns of youth strength training, and new strategies to burn calories and boost metabolism. An exhibition of the latest equipment, technology and information, plus workouts and training demonstrations, will run alongside the summit.

Tel +1 317 637 9200

Web [www.acsm.org/summit](http://www.acsm.org/summit)**22-25 | FIBO 2010****Venue** Essen, Germany**Summary**

The 25th anniversary of this fitness convention. Occupying 74,000sq m across 12 halls, the show will see more than 500 companies from 35 countries showcasing products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and leisure industries. Please turn to page 68 for a full show preview.

Tel +49 (0)211 90 191 131

Web [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)**30 april - 2 may | Australian Fitness & Health Expo****Venue** Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Australia**Summary**

Exhibition, seminars and training for the Australasian fitness industry.

Tel +61 3 9261 4500

Web [www.fitnessexpo.com.au](http://www.fitnessexpo.com.au)

**SIBEC UK will consist of two days of forums and one-to-one meetings**



**The Club Industry East event will be held in New York City, US**

## MAY

**5-7 | Club Industry East****Venue** The Javits Centre, New York, US**Summary**

Conference sessions for club owners, fitness management executives and PTs.

Tel +1 203 358 9900

Web <http://east.clubindustryshow.com>**12-13 | SIBEC UK****Venue** Forest of Arden Marriott Hotel, Birmingham, UK**Summary**

Two days of meetings and forums involving 120 of the key suppliers and buyers from the UK's leisure, health and fitness industry – local authority, trust and education sectors.

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everyone's talking about . . .



# the grey market

What opportunities are there for operators who want to target older adults, and what's the key to tapping into this market? We ask the experts

**T**he world's population is growing older. Fact. This trend is most notable in developed countries, where the overall median age rose from 29.0 in 1950 to 37.3 in 2000. This is expected to increase to 45.5 by 2050. In addition, the age of retirement is predicted to sail above today's benchmark of 65 in years to come.

We all expect to live and work for longer. However, as we increase in age, our health declines: we become less flexible and find it harder to perform general day-to-day activities, our bones don't heal as well, our cognitive abilities decline and we're at greater risk from

conditions such as heart disease and cancer. This is something that health club operators can help with, however, as keeping physically active and fit can help ward off these ailments and diseases.

What's more, this ageing population has money to spend. Analysing figures published in the recent *Family Spending* report from the Office of National Statistics, charities Age Concern and Help the Aged calculated that the spending of over-65s reached an estimated £97bn in the UK in 2008 – around 15 per cent of the overall household expenditure. The charities suggest that this figure is now likely to have passed the £100bn milestone.

Broadening the age band to those aged 50 and above, they calculate that the figure soared to £276bn in 2008, making up around 44 per cent of the total family spending in the UK.

The market, money and opportunity is there. So how can health club operators tap into this potentially highly lucrative market? Is there a particularly effective marketing method? What kind of facilities and fitness programmes might appeal specifically to older adults? Are there any examples of best practice we can learn from? Is there anything we're currently doing wrong? We ask the experts for their advice.

HOW CAN WE ATTRACT MORE OLDER ADULTS? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## john searle

chief medical officer • the fitness industry association



**“W**hile the ageing process cannot be reversed, it can be very successfully counteracted by exercise. But the question is, how much exercise should older people do? The answer is 'quite a lot' – the recommended levels are 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of high intensity exercise a week. This can be

done in short sessions, but these should always be longer than 10 minutes each. Also necessary are two strength training sessions a week which use all the major muscle groups. Regular core strength and stability training is also essential, as are balance and co-ordination exercises.

There are more than nine million people in the UK over the age of 65 and this number is rising steadily, so there's a big market out there. My own personal training practice has a high proportion of older clients. They're fun to work with, very committed and appreciate the benefits which exercise brings them. However, are our clubs always older person friendly? No. In fact they can be quite intimidating and this needs to be addressed. It would also be an enormous help if we could attract older people into the industry to qualify as fitness instructors.”

## colin milner

ceo • international council on active ageing



**“O**lder adults are a huge market, but the real opportunity is that there are so few operators truly catering to older adults that it's an open market. 'Older' isn't a matter of age: it's a matter of functional ability and attitude. Too often, operators have a few seniors' classes and give senior discounts at odd times in the middle of the day.

Typically, locations that benefit from a large, active membership of older adults have intentionally (or accidentally) hired a staff member who's passionate about the market. That person becomes educated on facility design and age-friendly equipment, convinces the owner to make changes, hires well and develops a diverse programme that caters for a variety of functional abilities.

Successful programmes have a very strong social component and are intellectually challenging. Sometimes that's dedicated brain fitness activities, and often it's an instructor who's adept at integrating stimulating mental activities into a workout. It's moving from exercise-only to a wellness model that looks at broader areas of life. An example is Nifty After Fifty, a club that's blended together rehab and fitness, added in brain fitness and worked within that wellness model (see *HCM* March 08, p35).”



PICTURE: WWW.CLARETORIS.COM

**Older people might participate in exercise for health reasons, but most of all they attend for fun and social interaction**

### marco narici

professor • institute for biomedical research into human movement and health, manchester metropolitan university



“A major obstacle is getting older people to health clubs and I’d advise working with local councils to organise facilities and transport, such as a minibus directly to and from the gym.

Once there, the key to motivation is social inclusion and staff interaction. We conducted a year-long study on people

aged 75-plus and found that their main reason for exercising was not because they wanted to be bigger or stronger – although being able to get on with daily activities was important – but because they wanted a break from isolation. They wanted to get out of the house and interact with people.

We recommend a dedicated group exercise class held in a separate room so they’re not intimidated by younger members. However, many clubs just offer resistance training, because they don’t want to hire a class instructor. While resistance training on machines is important, it’s only part of a holistic approach. Other elements should include moderate intensity aerobic exercise, flexibility/stretching and postural exercises such as t’ai chi. Participants would need to train at least three times a week for a minimum of 20 minutes, but optimally for 30–40 minutes.”

### karl knopf

professor of adaptive and older adult fitness • foothill college, los atlas hills, california



“I would start off with five minutes of physical activity a day and add on a minute to each session every week. This may sound crazy, but all too often exercise specialists, who love fitness and find it easy thanks to their young bodies, say you need to do 20 minutes – and then older adults injure themselves and don’t go back.

When working with the elderly, it’s critical to have a considered approach to fitness. I run an Adaptive Fitness Therapy course at Foothill that trains professionals to bridge the gap from therapy to fitness, and over the past 10 years enrollments have doubled.

Twice a week, I also lead a ‘Sit and Be Fit’ class for about 50 people who range from 68 to 93 years old, where we perform various exercises on and around a chair. We’ve now worked up to 90-minute sessions. Initially I thought people were coming to get fit, but now I know they’re coming for fun and social interaction.

People repeat things they find enjoyable and I don’t think there’s anything more pleasurable than using a person’s name – people, older adults especially, want recognition. If you translate this to the gym, they want a warm welcome. Above that, however, they want respect.”

# NIKI KEENE



“I won’t be intimidated by the old boys’ network,” says Niki Keene, one of the recent additions to the FIA board. “I don’t have a background in the industry, I don’t know the big players, and I’m not daunted by how many millions some of them have made or what company they’ve been head of. I intend to play devil’s advocate. Why have they always done things the way they have? If we want the health sector to entertain our industry as a partner, might there be alternative approaches worth considering?”

Keene certainly speaks from a position of authority when it comes to understanding the expectations

The international wellness director for Curves talks to Kate Cracknell about caring for people, setting standards, and teaching the fitness and healthcare sectors to speak the same language

of the healthcare sector: she trained as a nurse in the mid-1980s, working across all clinical disciplines. Subsequent promotions took her into fields such as cardiology and general medicine before moving into senior management in 1994, spanning both the NHS and the independent health sector.

“But I think the thing that gives me an edge is the 10 years I spent as a regulator,” she says. “I’d become very interested in standards of care and how you measure and audit that, so I moved into regulation – still using all my clinical background, but looking at raising standards in treatment. And that’s my passion: to make sure we all get the care and treatment we deserve. It doesn’t matter what sector you’re in: if you’re providing a service, the quality of that service should be good, and there’s no reason why anybody – in any sector, any industry – should fail to deliver that. However, it’s often hampered by management, or the company structure, or a lack of training.”

## quality assurance

Keene’s regulatory role focused predominantly on auditing hospitals, and she was involved in bringing together the auditing of NHS and private provision within the same framework.

“Interestingly, that’s where I think we are with the fitness industry at the moment,” she says. “We have two sets of languages, born of different commercial views, to join together: for the most part the independent sector is for profit, while the NHS clearly isn’t for profit. Being able to measure and look at quality of service across two industries that have two very different sets of outcome requirements is an interesting challenge.”

“It comes down to quality and provider assurance. The healthcare sector wants to know that third-party providers will be able to deliver high standards of service and good outcomes to its patients, and we have to look at what

The coach at the centre of the circuit ensures kit is being used correctly





# Curves



Curves is designed to provide a welcoming, supportive, non-intimidating environment for women

assurance we can provide them. In the fitness industry, I believe our evidence is the FIA Code of Practice.

"One of my core skills is managing different people from different sectors to work towards a common goal. In my new role on the FIA board, I want to engage with the healthcare sector, giving them a point of reference and assuring them of the service they'll get if they enter into a partnership with our industry."

## first-hand experience

So how did Keene come to be involved in the fitness industry? "I'd moved away from feeling I was having an impact," she explains. "I was writing lots of policies but I missed being able to influence quality of services myself. That's my passion and I really wanted to get back out there."

"But my journey with Curves began on a more personal level. I joined as a member four years ago following a trip to the States with my ex-husband, for his cousin's surprise 50th birthday. She'd joined a Curves club near where she lived and was really enthusiastic about it."

"At that time I was at my heaviest – almost 20 stone – and I was incredibly uncomfortable on the plane home. I struggled to get the seatbelt on and was actually offered the extender belt

without even asking for it. You don't necessarily have an image of yourself as being large, but when other people see it, the penny starts to drop. And it was really spooky because, a week later, a leaflet from my local Curves came through the door – something I'd specifically been recommended by someone I trusted. It was at that moment I knew I needed to do something."

"From the moment I walked into Curves, I felt cared for. It was very non-threatening and there was no judgement – just an acceptance of the fact that I wanted to take a step towards doing something about it, with all the help and support I needed."

"For a large woman to allow herself to be weighed and measured... I think it's phenomenal for a fitness professional to be able to put you sufficiently at ease that you'd allow her to do that. But then the training of Curves has a very, very clear message: it's about guest service, service with a purpose, the fact that each woman has given herself to you and it's your



**Curves Smart is a personal coach system that ensures members work to their maximum capacity by setting them targets and tracking results**

- responsibility to look after her. That's the passion and the devotion that's instilled in our staff."

### results-driven

"I still go to my club three or four times a week and I've lost almost eight stone – and kept it off – so I knew as a member that the model was successful. However, given my nursing background, I needed to understand how and why."

"Curves has a partnership with Texas A&M University in the US and our diet and exercise programme is very well researched. Gary [Heavin, co-founder of Curves with his wife Diane] is passionate about keeping it live – about always being able to support, with hard evidence, our claims that the Curves approach works."

So how does it work? "Our resistance-based approach is the key," says Keene – the 12-station circuit includes no CV-specific stations. "The equipment creates resistance in both directions and you burn up to 500 calories in our 30-minute workout. You're constantly overloading the muscles, then resting. It's not dissimilar to interval training and that's what gives our workout its fat- and calorie-burning properties."

The circuit, a series of hydraulic resistance machines manufactured in the US specifically for Curves, ensures members work out safely and within the limits of their own physical ability. They spend 30 seconds on each machine, with resting stations in between where they

might do anything from walking on the spot to hip rolls and salsa dancing. There's also six minutes of stretching at the end.

"Although we give our franchisees the flexibility to tailor the detail of their clubs around local needs and nuances, the basic model – the circuit itself – must remain intact, because that's the aspect around which all our research is conducted," stresses Keene. "The machines must always be used in the correct way and there must be a coach in the centre of the circuit at all times. Members are never left unsupervised which, from a medical perspective, I believe is vital."

"Also, although there's no personal training, if a member's struggling or feels they're not getting the results they want, they can ask for a coach to go round the circuit with them on a one-to-one basis. And all new members have a coach with them on their first visit." It's a personalised level of attention that's particularly refreshing given the monthly

membership fees at Curves clubs which, although they vary by region, are all at the lower end of the scale.

Keene continues: "Our members love feedback so they can see how well they're working, and we've developed a personal coach system called Curves Smart. It's a little electronic tag that fits on the machines and sets you targets for each station, to ensure you work to your maximum capacity. Not only that, but its intelligent technology means it amalgamates your results and progresses you – or makes the workout easier if you need, if you struggled last time."

"You can download your results at the end, including calorie burn, which is very popular because women feel they can have a latte on the way home! Our approach focuses on weight loss, but we're realistic: we have to fit into people's everyday lives. It's not about yo-yo dieting."

"Indeed, our new weight management programme really isn't a diet so much as a healthy eating plan. We offer free weight management classes to both members and non-members and our coaches work individually with people as well, looking at their dietary requirements, their eating habits, helping them make behavioural changes, offering suggested meal plans. But we don't dictate."

### rapid growth

If the Curves model works at the level of member results, its corporate results demonstrate success at a business level too: it's the world's largest women-only operation, including around 5,000 clubs in the US, and is the UK's largest chain full stop. In addition to the long list of countries under the remit of Curves HQ, the company has also signed master franchise agreements for markets – such as China and the UAE – where, for both



## COMPANY FACTS

**Date established** Set up by Gary and Diane Heavin in 1992. Gary's mother died early of heart disease and, says Keene: "It was a personal mission of his to find a programme of exercise for women that would work."

**Clubs worldwide** Around 9,000

**Markets covered** 70

**Members worldwide** Four million women

**Date of UK launch** 2002

**UK clubs** 246, with more in the pipeline

**Average length of membership** Three years

**Average club** 93–140sq m (1,000–1,500sq ft), located in residential areas and local shopping parades for convenience, with 250–300 members.

**Facilities** Typically one circuit, with no added extras – coffee bars or spa areas, for example. As Keene explains: "Although we encourage other exercise outside of our clubs, Curves needs to stick to its simple, half-hour format. If you start building other things into it, your members will stop coming because visits start taking up too much time."

# Curves



Keene (centre) weighed almost 20 stone when she joined Curves. She has lost, and kept off, almost eight stone

cultural and a legislative reasons, slight variations in the model might be required and local knowledge is therefore an advantage.

So is there any such thing as growing too fast? "There's a risk of diluting the brand and the quality," agrees Keene. "In the early days of Curves in the US the growth rate was phenomenal, but that brought with it its own challenges in terms of managing the expansion. We learnt what worked well and what to avoid, and some of those clubs have since closed. Nowadays we have a different approach to potential franchisees: they all come from different backgrounds, but they all have the same objectives, the same passion, the same understanding.

"It doesn't matter if they don't have much business experience, though, because we have a great franchisee support structure, all of which is included in the fee they pay us. We offer ongoing training but, for example, we also have mentors – particularly successful club owners – who, if a particular site is struggling, can go in to help them for a few days. And we have opening specialists who go to new sites and make sure the opening goes as smoothly as possible, with everyone revved up and all the relevant marketing material in place."

## a common language

Keene, who joined Curves in January 2009, is responsible for all markets outside the US where no master franchise licence is in place. However, her main focus is the UK and Australia – and specifically developing partnerships and programmes, similar to the

## "THE PROBLEM AT THE MOMENT IS THAT THE FITNESS INDUSTRY DOESN'T SPEAK THE RIGHT LANGUAGE"

co-operative approaches with health insurance companies one sees in the US, that might result in more women having access to Curves. "There are discussions going on in the UK, but the big companies haven't moved into reimbursement-type programmes on a broad scale here yet," she explains.

"However, my biggest challenge – and my strategic direction – is looking at referral and at exercise as medicine. The cost saving to the NHS for somebody getting fitter and healthier is huge, but at the moment the NHS isn't willing to pay for it: they still invest heavily in treatment. We need to push the role of prevention, encouraging the NHS to reach out to commercial organisations that can help deliver that agenda.

"The problem at the moment is that the fitness industry doesn't speak the right language. We have to have shared outcomes. We have to build the language of measurement and clinical indicators and outcomes into the fitness industry. We have to know what measurements are of value to ensure we can demonstrate value for money."

The industry also needs to appeal to a broader base, she says: "With my FIA hat on, we need to make fitness accessible to everybody, and I think that's where the industry has struggled

so far. There are some fantastic clubs and leisure centres out there, but the sort of people we attract to Curves for example – the ladies from ethnic minority groups, obese ladies, perhaps ladies with mental health issues – simply won't go to a traditional gym.

"I've been into Curves clubs where ladies who've just come back from chemotherapy are comfortable enough to take their wigs off while they're working out. You just wouldn't see that anywhere else and it's encapsulated in our current campaign, 'Stronger Together'. The campaign is all about making as many women as mentally and physically strong as we can, with women looking after and supporting other women.

"And I feel I'm part of that because, with this job, I feel I've come full circle. I went into nursing because I wanted to look after people, to make sure they were comforted, had a good service and got better. I'm not doing that in a hands-on way now but, both by giving women access to Curves clubs and by working at an industry level, I'm giving them the opportunity to feel better, making sure people who come into our sector are well looked after."



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# THE FITNESS FUTURE

The fitness industry may be transformed in our lifetimes – that's the conclusion of an independent study commissioned and published by Les Mills International. But what will the transformation mean for health clubs? Nikitin Sallee reports



Could gym workouts become a thing of the past, as people increasingly turn to 'exergaming'?

ALL PHOTOS ON THESE PAGES © STOCKPHOTO.COM

**G**et closer to your members and to other health-related businesses in your community. Those are two steps health clubs can take now to prepare for rapid change in the years ahead, according to *The Future of Fitness* – a new white paper based on worldwide Nielsen research, interviews and focus groups among experts and consumers within and beyond the fitness industry.

*The Future of Fitness* foresees change so profound that tomorrow's teenagers may laugh when we recall how we used to 'go to the gym'. Health clubs are already seeing some of the trends that will create the transformation, and the authors of the paper suggest that "tweaks to existing models are unlikely to match the pace of transformational change".

## is your club an island?

One of the key trends is 'permanent connection', with the internet changing how people do almost everything – including, potentially, how they manage their fitness. More and more people will be permanently online, including a growing proportion of 'digital natives' who never knew life without the internet.

Exergaming choices, providing amusement and entertainment alongside fitness, are already here. Technology is making these options increasingly interactive, thereby challenging current fitness models. You might soon be able to get your exercise while appearing in a virtual game show with your friends, for example, or maybe you'll go walking in the park and experience it as a virtual science-fiction battle.

Consumers of this type of 'entertainment fitness' may not be content with a health club that's isolated from the outside world. For them, a

I find health clubs mind-numbingly boring. I just look at the time and I think 'am I done yet?' – and I've only burned 18 calories. That's not even half a cracker.  
**a 'fitness struggler' in a uk focus group**



**Upmarket fitness gaming centres could become commonplace in the future**

place where they can't interact virtually will be a deadly bore.

"I can imagine the development of upmarket fitness gaming centres where you work out by playing games with other people – running races together, or perhaps two people playing on a virtual football team – all without needing to bring any equipment," says New Zealand-based expert Linden Dale Gander.

Yet other members may prefer a health club that's a haven, where interaction with real people is an antidote to the frenetic, hi-tech outside world. Phillip Mills, CEO of Les Mills International, foresees a successful breed of health clubs that become "the corner pub of the 21st century" as people crave a sense of community.

So, are your customers online digital networkers and gamers, or are they the more face-to-face sort? Which group of consumers will provide a big enough niche to sustain your club's success in the long run? Will it be possible for you to appeal somehow to both sets of consumers in the future? What kind of club are you more comfortable running?

### it's all about me

Personalisation of products and services is increasingly demanded by discerning consumers. Our industry has already latched on to this – for example, personal trainers already provide fitness experiences that are customised to each client's age, gender, location, spending power and personal preferences.

But increasingly we're seeing technology that can create alternatives, offering the personal touch without relying on today's health club model – for example, online gyms offering a virtual personal trainer who can lead your workout while you're at home alone.



**There are suggestions that health clubs could become community hubs for socialising**

"When consumers can raise their heart rate in their living rooms or offices with an engaging, energetic and sociable online experience, 'fitness' will less often be defined by travelling to the gym to pump iron," say the authors of the paper.

### coming together

Meanwhile 'convergence, blurring and blending' are breaking down categories of products and services.

Just as a health club's juice bar, spa, clothing boutique and beauty salon enhance the fitness experience, so new foods, medical advances and even nanotechnology will offer new health and fitness options; in the future, for example, medicines and other therapies might be based on your personal DNA.

These trends will create opportunities for health clubs and their professionals.

In five years' time I might be annoyed if my shoes don't contact my chiropractor to say I need to be adjusted because my gait is clearly off.

**che tamahori, in an interview with the nielsen company**

Tomorrow's personal trainer might, for example, actively share data with the physiotherapist and family doctor as they update, in real time, a client's progress and rehab schedule. Health clubs and leisure centres could even earn extra revenue from government subsidies or health insurance companies by guiding their clients towards better health and fitness outcomes. ▶



## ► the customer rules, ok?

"I read this paper and think only positively," writes Rob Gregory, a UK-based fitness consultant, in an online *Future of Fitness* discussion. "We have an exciting, ever-expanding industry. It will be realised by individuals, companies and governments all pushing, pulling and prodding in one general direction: diversification."

"The key to the 'future of fitness' is to properly engage and listen to our customers – the good, the bad, warts and all. They will tell us most of what we need to know."

Meanwhile, even if we look no further than the present, a stronger focus on members as customers will help most clubs, according to US-based consultant Michael Scott Scudder.

"Holding on to a member is much easier and more cost-effective than replacing members," he says in the same online discussion forum. "If we as an industry looked at them as customers (people we have to satisfy every time and who might not stay with us if we do not pay attention to them) rather than members (people we take for granted because they're on some kind of monthly dues obligated-contract), everybody would be far better off."

## the future

Undoubtedly new health club models will evolve. These might include:

- "Entertainment" clubs that more closely resemble theme parks than gyms with free weights and treadmills
- More specialised centres – or spaces within health clubs – that cater to niches like active ageing, teens, cyclists, asthma, sexual health, menopause or family time
- Simpler clubs that revert to low-tech experiences akin to the 'village square'

The word 'fitness' needs to be re-assessed. 'Fitness' feels dry and like hard work. Increasingly people want to 'bump into the fun' in their town. They want to 'bump into getting fit'. The idea of going to the gym three times a week for a workout will fade out. Let's wrap an experience around fitness – make it compelling, connected to a bigger purpose, linked to creativity and the mind.

**charles landry,  
uk-based urban innovator**

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There should be a focus on members as customers who need to be kept satisfied

– providing the heart of the community and with a focus on wellness and giving greater meaning to people

- Hi-tech health clubs offering body mapping and body feedback technologies, both for interactive gaming and to enhance performance and technique
- Technology and communications that transform home and work into online fitness venues

Consumers seem almost certain to seek experts with ever-higher levels of fitness training and professionalism. Fitness professionals seem most likely to prosper when they understand, and help consumers integrate with, new ways of delivering health, entertainment and sociability – not just exercise.

For example, the personal trainer might become a central hub in the health information flow, feeding health monitoring information and insights to healthcare providers. Managing these relationships and technology may be a new speciality for the fitness professionals of the future.

Also in demand will be those who can deliver multiple experiences and take a holistic view of individual consumers. Today's life coach might become an all-in-one counsellor, personal trainer and nutritionist.

Both for businesses and for individuals working in the industry, the three key challenges and opportunities appear to be:

- Staying relevant among the current crop of 'converted' consumers who already commit time and effort to fitness
- Improving our offer to those who enjoy fitness, but not going to the gym
- Keeping the industry competitive in the face of changing demographics, technology and competition

Which kind of club might yours evolve into? What kind of partnerships might you be able to develop with businesses and community groups, healthcare providers, insurance companies and government agencies?

At your club, what new specialities could you develop to cater for niches based on age, gender, family group or personal preferences? Will your club be a risk-taker and leader or a more cautious follower of the trends?

At a more personal level, what kind of fitness professional will you be? Will you stick strictly to the physical or will you help your clients with a broader wellness routine? And does 'wellness' include the spirit, career, romance and finances as well as the body?

## join the discussion

You can help shape the future of the global fitness industry. Many of the sector's best thinkers have joined an online discussion of the white paper at [www.futureoffitnesswhitepaper.com](http://www.futureoffitnesswhitepaper.com), which is designed to further develop the themes and, hopefully, find some answers.

In the meantime, some final thoughts from Rob Gregory: "Each week I chat with new players diving into niches: medical, older, younger, wetter, virtual, theatrical, etc. Our industry has been well and truly sown, fertilised and watered. It's expanding/contracting, focusing/generalising, consolidating/fragmenting, improving/declining, all at the same time. There's no need to dwell on dated modes. Let the consumer determine the future."



**nikitin sallee**  
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# MONEY MAKERS



Luke Tuchscherer looks at ways in which group exercise can be used to drive secondary spend

**M**aximising revenue per member is key to a club's profitability, and operators are always looking for ways to develop secondary revenue streams – personal training, food and beverage, retail, spa treatments, sometimes even classes that incur an additional fee. But are there other ways, besides charging extra for premium classes, that group exercise can be used to drive secondary revenue? We ask the experts

**milon industries uk**  
**holm hofmann,**  
**business development**  
**manager**



**I**ncreasing your secondary spend involves one crucial activity: selling. Only businesses that offer a high level of customer service will be able to sell to their clients and subsequently increase the yield from their members.

In addition to training their staff in customer service and sales, clubs that want to increase their secondary revenue stream should invest in the right training and exercise systems. Our circuit training system can be used to create 'a club within a club'. The circuit, which functions as a continuous class, accommodates 40 people an hour, each getting a 35-minute workout. However, it takes up less than 42sq m (450sq ft) of floorspace.

Thanks to the excellent training experience and subsequent results, members are happy to pay a premium on top of their standard membership fee. In many cases, they also have to commit to a 12- to 24-month contract extension in order to join milon. This is the primary revenue stream. For example, The Marlow Club in Buckinghamshire has now upgraded 500 of its 2,400 members to milon, and this is providing the club with more than £3,000 a month in additional revenue.

We also provide an array of secondary revenue streams and cross-selling opportunities. It's much easier to sell add-on products if they provide a direct benefit to someone's training, especially if these items are understood by the customer to be essential. For example, all milon equipment is heart rate monitor-compatible, which makes



**Short circuit** The 35-minute milon circuit accommodates 40 people an hour and takes up less than 42sq m of floorspace

it possible to do heart rate-optimised precision training, and some milon clubs are selling heart rate monitors to up to 50 per cent of their members.

In addition, since milon training consists of a combination of CV and strength endurance, working out until muscle fatigue is reached, members are advised to have a recovery drink such as a protein shake within 40 minutes of finishing their workout. It's not unusual for some 1,400-member milon clubs to sell 2,500 protein shakes a month.

Additional secondary spend opportunities include flat-rate sports drink sales, drink bottles, sweat towels and nutritional and weight loss classes. ▶



Time for fitness  
Suunto is launching  
a new range  
of heart rate  
monitor watches

► **suunto**  
steve newell, business  
development manager  
fitness & wellness



Many clubs are looking for new and innovative ways to increase secondary revenue and, just as importantly, to add value to their members' experience, particularly within group exercise classes.

Members' willingness to purchase additional services will largely depend on what pricing model the club is operating and the quality of its classes.

However, in the UK – as in many European countries – we're starting to see a rise in the number of clubs offering an 'a la carte' membership, where members only pay for the services they use. Group exercise definitely falls into this category, with the addition of more personalised group exercise classes such as triathlon, cycling-specific programmes and outdoor group activities.

When coupled with the latest technology, the member experience is even further enhanced – all of which



**Positive feedback** Suunto's system allows clubs to provide personalised feedback during group exercise classes

offers clubs the opportunity to charge for premium services.

Many of Suunto's customers are adopting this approach, offering real-time heart rate monitoring and personalised feedback reports during group exercise classes. As well as

being associated with secondary sales such as cycling shoes and clothing, this approach also has a knock-on effect on clubs' retail sales of personal heart rate monitors: once members have been sold on the benefits of heart rate training, they're more willing to invest in a personal monitor for use in their everyday training. To maximise this secondary revenue potential, Suunto will be launching a brand new range of heart rate monitors in early summer this year. Designed specifically for the health club market and with a focus on general fitness and health, the watches will have built-in guidance and recommended recovery periods based on fitness industry guidelines.

Other more tailored group exercise classes and courses – such as weight loss, pre and post-natal exercise and golf conditioning – can also help to generate secondary sales of both retail items and personal training/fitness testing, which is continuing to grow in clubs. Meanwhile, outdoor group exercise is a great way to supplement the timetable, relieve pressure on the gym floor and increase secondary spend. Heart rate-based boot camps, running clubs and bicycle hire are increasingly being seen in clubs during the summer months.

Clubs that dare to be different, embracing new innovations and technology, will not only benefit from increased secondary revenue but also from improved retention levels.

“Clubs that dare to be different will benefit from increased secondary revenue and retention levels”



Fun fitness ZigZag dance mats have been used for events such as hen parties

**zigzag**  
marina saunders,  
director of sales



Dance mats provide an ideal way to drive secondary spend, particularly for leisure centres which generally charge an additional fee for dance mat classes within their programme. But even private health clubs, where classes may form part of the standard membership offering, can use the dance mat system to help cover the cost of the initial investment.

Revenue-building ideas include children's parties and hen parties, where the ladies may also have booked in for beauty or spa treatments, as well as corporate events, such as meeting break-out sessions or work Christmas parties. Because the dance system is so

portable, clubs and centres can also take it into the community to attract new members, as well as charging external venues to hire the mats. We've worked with a major supermarket chain at outdoor events for example, and our dance mats have even been used to add a twist to weddings and black tie events.

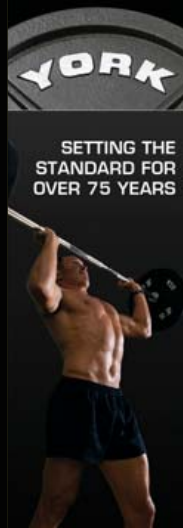
These programmes are designed to be fun-based rather than exercise-orientated, so your customers don't have to get sweaty or even wear workout gear to take part.

Depending on the audience they can be run in any number of ways, from a purely social aspect to problem solving exercises where the dancers have to aim for certain scores.

I ran a Christmas party for 25 representatives from Newham Borough Council last December, as a break-out session during their annual meeting. We ran a competition for the 'top score', 'fastest improver' and 'best groover'. The concept was completely foreign to them, but it worked as a great team-building experience. They saw each other's vulnerabilities, encouraged each other and, even though a few were hesitant at first, by the end of the session they'd become so competitive that they were pushing each other out of the way to take a turn on the mats. The group didn't stop laughing for an hour and half.



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# VILLAGE LIFE

A retirement home may not be the obvious location for a luxury wellness centre, but that hasn't deterred the developers of Richmond Village Letcombe Regis. Rhianon Howells pays a visit

**W**alking around the property, you'd be mistaken for thinking you were in a stylish five-star resort, albeit a rather traditional one. Here's a reception area as elegant as that of any hotel, fitted out with fine furniture, sumptuous fabrics and floral arrangements. Here's a comfy meeting room and a fine-dining restaurant. And, of course, here's the other facility that no self-respecting high-end resort can be without: a luxury spa and gym.

There are just a few clues – handrails running along the corridors, a portable hoist in the pool, people who look suspiciously like medical staff wandering about – that betray the true function of the place. Far from being a hotel,

Richmond Village Letcombe Regis in Oxfordshire is the fifth and largest 'retirement village' to be opened by Richmond Villages, a subsidiary of the leading care home operator Barchester Healthcare. Located on the edge of the picture-postcard village of Letcombe Regis, this lakeside property is also the second site in the portfolio to have a high-end wellness centre at its heart.

## zest for life

With 34 'independent living' apartments, 23 'assisted living' apartments and a 51-bed care home, this £60m development is catering for the whole gamut of retired people, from those who want to maintain their independence, with the safety net of knowing help is at hand, to those who require round-the-clock nursing care. What they all have in common is independent wealth: this is a high-spec facility and the property prices and fees reflect this (see information box, p40). The apartments and public areas officially opened in March, with 60 per cent of the properties sold or reserved, while the care home opens this month. A second phase of the development will see a further 38 independent living apartments and 30 assisted living apartments added over time.

According to marketing manager David Reaves, most residents are aged between their early 70s and late 90s; the lower age limit is 55. Yet far from being places where old-timers go to end their days, the ethos is one of helping people maintain their 'zest for life' for as long as possible. "The challenge is overcoming the misconceptions of what we are," says Reaves. "People start off thinking of us as a place for old fogies, but when we get them through the door, that changes to 'wow, this isn't what I was expecting, I'd like to live here!'"

It was to reinforce this philosophy of encouraging residents to enjoy life, as well as fitting in nicely with its high-end remit, that the company decided to



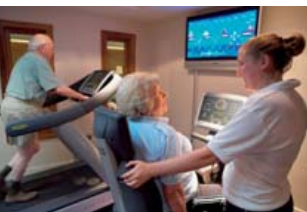
include a wellness spa at its fourth site, Richmond Village Painswick, when it opened in Gloucestershire in 2007.

But while the concept might have started life as a clever marketing idea, it quickly grew into something more profound. Brought on board to oversee the launch, spa manager Bev Boyce – a qualified nurse and former fitness manager with Esporta – was determined that the full potential of the facility to benefit people's physical and mental health should be realised.

More than two and a half years after opening, the spa at Painswick is used by 90 per cent of residents, as well as catering for 85–90 members from the local community. Given these figures, the decision to open a second facility at Letcombe Regis was a no-brainer.

## personalised service

Designed by Bev Bayes of London-based SparcStudio, with finishing touches by



The gym, which is equipped by Technogym, includes an upright bike, reclining bike, a rower and a treadmill





As at Painswick, the pool at Letcombe will be used for aqua classes and physiotherapy sessions, as well as for swimming

interior designers AFBM, the £1.75m wellness spa at Letcombe Regis manages to be luxurious yet unimposing. At 560sq m (6,000sq ft), it's larger than the Painswick facility and, unlike Painswick, it has its own front door to cater for external members. Otherwise, says Boyce, there are only minor differences between the two sites.

The facilities at Letcombe include a spacious reception area, male and female changing rooms, and a studio where classes will range from the usual circuits and 'legs, bums and tums' to falls prevention training. There will also be seated classes for the less mobile; at Painswick, a seated session called 'Balls of Energy' is the most popular class, says Boyce. A gym, equipped by Technogym, includes an upright bike, reclining bike, rower and treadmill, as well as its full range of Easy Line resistance kit.

Elsewhere, there's a 16x4m pool – to be used for aqua classes and



Facilities seem more in keeping with a top-end hotel than with a retirement home ▶



► physiotherapy as well as swimming – and a large whirlpool, sauna and steamroom, all supplied by Buckingham Pools.

Rounding off the offer is a beauty salon providing hairdressing, manicures and pedicures, a relaxation area and two treatment rooms.

The company is currently looking for a spa manager for the site, with Boyce on loan from Painswick until the position is filled. A full-time fitness instructor has already been recruited (more will be brought on board as needed) while freelance staff members include a hairdresser, spa therapist and an array of visiting specialists, from chiropodists and physiotherapists to yoga and pilates teachers. It's an impressive set-up, but it's not only the range of facilities and services that make the offering special.

As at Painswick, the Letcombe spa aims to deliver a very personalised service, says Boyce. Although use

of the facility (with the exception of hairdressing, spa treatments and physio) is free to residents, many older people are unfamiliar with the concept of a spa or gym and feel it's 'not for them'.

In an effort to overcome this, Boyce and/or the new spa manager will meet with every single new resident to allay their concerns and talk them through the benefits.

"If someone's coming to live with us [at Painswick], I go and have a coffee with them and get some background on their health," says Boyce. "A lot of these people have been doing their own cooking, cleaning and gardening, then they come here and they stop, so their mobility decreases if we're not careful. I explain how important it is to keep them moving. It's about independence. If someone can only walk with a frame, I say: 'Let's keep you fit so you can continue walking with that frame.'"

"In the beginning, we might go and do exercises with someone in their room – for example, some core stability work to help them with getting in and out of their chair. But once they're more confident, we encourage them to come down to the spa."

#### multiple markets

As well as serving residents, both the Painswick and Letcombe spas welcome local members aged over 50, who pay a monthly fee of £70.

"In the early days, there were some concerns about the impact this might have on residents, but it's actually been extremely positive," says Boyce. "Our members often get involved in other activities in the village and it creates a real sense of community."

According to Reaves, marketing of memberships is done largely through targeted leaflet drops – for example, at other retirement homes – and talks to local groups, from the Women's Institute to Rotary.

The final group the spa caters for are people who come to the village for respite care or convalescence – for example, following hip or knee replacement surgery. This market is largely dependent on networking within the local medical community, says Reaves, and the spa's rehabilitation programming is a big draw.

For all users, the first step once they arrive in the spa is a consultation to establish what they want to achieve, and a 'health MOT' comprising height, weight, BMI, body fat and blood

#### RICHMOND VILLAGE LETCOMBE REGIS: BY NUMBERS

- Independent living at Letcombe Regis starts at £295,000 for a one-bed apartment to £595,000 for the largest two-bed property. All units have their own front door, a generous lounge/diner, a fully-equipped kitchen and two bathrooms (one ensuite)
- Assisted living starts at £240,000 for a one-bed unit. There's also a weekly fee of £375 for a single person or £575 for couples, which covers utilities, daily maid service, laundry service and

all meals. Residents can also pay for domiciliary care – for example, if they need help getting washed and dressed

- All independent and assisted living residents pay a weekly service charge of £115 per property, which covers the maintenance of all communal areas and facilities
- Care home fees start at £850 a week, depending on needs
- Once complete, the village will have around 200 residents and 100 staff



Unlike an ordinary gym, classes must be adaptable to meet the needs and limitations of individuals

pressure checks. Goals are then set and a programme designed to help the client achieve them, with staff gently encouraging, coaching and monitoring them on a regular basis. "There's a lot of one-to-one work and a lot of educating," says Boyce. "We even offer nutritional advice if needed."

#### a team effort

But inevitably there are challenges when working with this population group. "When teaching a class in an ordinary gym, you go in with a very set idea of what you're going to do," explains Boyce. "Here, your class comes in, and there'll be Mrs Smith, who can't step up and down, or Mr Brown, who hasn't got the mobility in his shoulder to do that exercise, so you have to be adaptable. You need a memory bank of alternative exercises that are safe for them to do."

"Communication can be another challenge, as some people are very hard of hearing; with one lady, we use a small whiteboard so we can write her notes. Other clients have problems with their sight, and therefore need help using the equipment in the gym."

In order to better meet the needs of users, there are regular in-house training sessions and 'case study' meetings, often in conjunction with other medical staff such as the on-site GP, the nurses from the care home or the physiotherapist.

"If there's someone we're struggling to help, we'll get together as a team to discuss what we can do. For example, we had a lady with Parkinson's who was

#### RICHMOND VILLAGE LETCOMBE REGIS: FACILITIES

In addition to the spa, facilities at Letcombe Regis include a restaurant and private dining area, meeting rooms, an arts and crafts room, IT area, library and bowling green. In a charming thatched gatehouse at the entrance to the village there will also be a café and a village shop, which will be open to the public.

The pièce de resistance, however, is the 30-acre nature reserve, which is managed by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. With guided trails, permissive pathways and benches, the reserve will also be open to the public, fitting in with the company ethos of creating 'a community within a community'.

also in a wheelchair, so there were two issues there we needed to address."

#### mental wellbeing

Due to the free-to-residents policy, neither spa is (or is expected to be) independently profitable, although memberships help cover costs. But as a marketing tool they're invaluable, says Reaves, while the very real benefits they deliver speak volumes about the integrity of the Richmond Village brand.

"We've seen great improvements in mobility," says Boyce. "We've had people come in who've had to use a mobility scooter to get around. After doing some core and balance work with them, we've got them to the stage where they can walk around with a stick, then eventually to the point where they can manage without it. We also do a lot of work on falls prevention and I'm convinced that, if we could measure it, we'd see a significant reduction in falls among our users."

One area where the Letcombe spa will be pioneering new ground is

in dementia care, as the Letcombe village has a specialist dementia care unit. Working closely with carers and activities organisers, the spa will hold weekly classes for this group; given the growing body of evidence showing that regular exercise can significantly delay cognitive decline, it will be interesting to see the results.

Although Painswick does not cater for dementia patients, Boyce believes that the spa has just as positive an influence on its elderly users' mental wellbeing as it does on their physical health.

"We've got one old boy called Fred who comes down every morning; I could set my clock by him," she says. "He goes on the treadmill, then afterwards we sit and have a chat with him, and when he walks out he always says: 'Thanks very much, you've made my day'. The thing is, I know it's true, and I think: 'If nothing else happens today, I've done something for somebody.'"



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# gym'll fix it

Can the fitness industry  
help reduce the state's financial  
burden of social care for an ageing  
population? Susie Srivastava investigates



**Clinical trials have demonstrated that the BalanceMaster can help increase lower limb strength, power, balance and confidence**

**T**he UK's society is ageing. Current trends indicate that, by 2035, the number of people over the age of 65 will rise by 60 per cent, by which time 4 per cent of the population will be aged over 85. In 2007, for the first time ever, there were more people over state pension age than there were under-16s.

However, statistics also reveal that, although we're living longer lives, they're not necessarily healthier: on average, men and women will live 6.8 and 9.1 years of their lives respectively with a limiting long-term illness, which will often result in decreased mobility and independence. In fact, it's suggested that 60 per cent of those aged over 65 will develop a chronic illness, and the cost of care to the state is steadily increasing: strokes

and falls alone are estimated to account for £3.8bn annually.

Peter Hope, of mobility product manufacturer BalanceMaster, comments: "From our 30s, our bodies are in a state of physiological decline. This affects our strength, power, flexibility and balance and, as functional capacity is reduced, will ultimately affect our ability to perform everyday tasks and maintain an independent life."

The evidence for active ageing is compelling. Dr Dawn Skelton, an expert in ageing and health at Glasgow Caledonian University, has highlighted epidemiological evidence<sup>1</sup> suggesting that, compared to a sedentary lifestyle, more than three hours' targeted exercise each week can halve the risk of osteoporosis, falls-related injuries and hip fractures. Regular moderate physical activity has

also been shown to reduce the risk of developing major chronic diseases by up to 50 per cent, and reduce the risk of premature death by between 20 and 30 per cent<sup>2</sup>. However, just 17 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women in the 65–74 age bracket currently achieve recommended levels of physical activity.

## government focus

Given the financial and social costs associated with inactivity among older people, it's not surprising that the government has concluded that prevention is better than cure. Indeed Phil Hope, minister for social care, spoke recently of the need for a "lifestyle revolution", with a firm focus on stopping people getting sick in the first place.

'Be Active, Be Healthy – A Plan for Getting the Nation Moving' is a government strategy designed to have at least two million more people physically active by the 2012 Olympics. This represents a timely call to action that builds on the success of recent initiatives such as Change4Life and the free

**Regular moderate physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of developing major chronic disease by up to 50 per cent**



<sup>1</sup> Gregg EW, Pereria MA, Caspersen CJ. Physical activity, falls and fractures among older adults: a review of the epidemiological evidence. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2000; 48:883–93.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ida.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=9410646>

The industry is not taking advantage of the market opportunities presented

swimming scheme. 'Be Active, Be Healthy' includes a clear commitment to active ageing, acknowledging that exercise can result in physical, mental and social benefits that can help reduce the risk of injury while simultaneously increasing independence among older people. The plan is intended to facilitate co-operation between councils and Primary Care Trusts, encouraging them to work together to encourage local people to become more physically active.

Better health in later years is now seen as a key priority for the government, which also recently published *Building a Society for all Ages*. This "brings forward a series of proposals to help instill a major cultural shift and help Britain prepare for demographic change which is seeing people live longer lives".

Included in the document is a call to arms for our industry, with the observation that: "Physical activity decreases with age, and at the moment the fitness industry is not taking full advantage of the market opportunities demographic change represents." The FIA is, however, currently reviewing its strategy for older people. In its report, *Active Ageing and the Fitness Industry*, it reaffirms support for the government's agenda, commenting: "We are fully committed to driving this agenda and welcome the opportunity to support governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to get more older adults to be more active, more often."

The industry is also taking steps to address reservations that older people may have about using a gym. Findings referenced in 'Be Active, Be Healthy' have identified that older adults, who make up 28 per cent of the population, represent only 13.7 per cent of gym members. Meanwhile, only 5 per cent of retired people have a gym membership, whereas total population penetration averages out at 12-13 per cent.



As BalanceMaster's Hope explains: "The older population represents an enormous potential market for our industry. However, a greater understanding of their abilities, needs and aspirations is necessary to ensure operators offer relevant and appropriate exercise opportunities."

Sarah Watts, MD of Alliance Leisure, which works with local authorities and trusts, comments: "The older generation can be intimidated by a gym full of young people, so it's our job to provide them with equipment and an arena in which to keep fit and healthy that they feel comfortable with."

There are, Watts adds, a range of concepts designed to attract new user groups, such as Alliance's Feel Good Factory initiative with Shapemaster. "The power-assisted equipment is an alternative for this target market and provides all the benefits of a regular exercise programme, covering all the major muscle groups," she explains. "We will continue to investigate diverse

**Keiser's pneumatic equipment provides an effective method of increasing stability and mobility thanks to its consistent resistance**

ways that operators can attract new users and target specific groups, in line with government recommendations such as 'Active at 60'."

#### current projects

The aforementioned Active at 60 package is currently at the consultation stage, but is intended to provide older people with information and advice detailing activities in their area to help them stay active and healthy.

The package – which is likely to be delivered by the Pensions Service – will seek to draw together information from national and local government and their partners to highlight the importance of maintaining good health in later life and to encourage higher levels of participation in physical activity. ▶



Expresso bikes were used during Knowsley Borough Council's well attended Older People's Fun O'lympics

► Meanwhile, many local authorities are actively seeking their own solutions to encourage older residents to keep fit. Westminster Council recently announced that it will build a seniors' playground in Hyde Park – a free-to-use, £40,000 outdoor facility offering six pieces of equipment specifically selected to provide gentle and accessible exercise opportunities for the over-60s.

Knowsley Borough Council, meanwhile, is gearing up for its third Older People's Fun O'lympics. More than 160 over-50s took part in the 2009 games, attending weekly training sessions throughout the year – using ZigZag's dance mats, Sportwalls and interactive Expresso bikes, as well as playing badminton, bowls, table tennis and even welly-throwing – to build up their fitness levels for the one-day event.

### meeting needs

In addition to the barriers of intimidation and cost, some older people may simply not be able to travel to a gym. With this in mind, Technogym is looking at how its equipment can be used in locations outside of traditional fitness settings. It has turned its attention to care and dementia homes, with a focus on providing equipment that can be used by people with reduced physical capacity (see Talkback, *HCM* Feb 10, p28).

Redholme Memory Care home in Liverpool installed the Easyline range – Technogym's nine-station hydraulic circuit – 18 months ago. The equipment is generally used in half-hour sessions, twice a week. Since its introduction, falls are down 20 per cent and there have been no broken bones during the past 12 months. Home owner Anne McCann comments: "The Easyline range has proved invaluable. If residents are restless, a walk to the gym area and a session using the

equipment helps relieve that agitation, with the result that residents are often more compliant with interventions."

Meanwhile, balance exercises are increasingly prescribed for older people as part of GP referral schemes and hospital rehabilitation programmes following falls or accidents, after a stroke, or with conditions such as Parkinson's and MS. The BalanceMaster machine, for example, provides a safe, effective and progressive means of challenging balance; clinical trials have shown increased lower limb strength, power, balance and balance confidence following regular usage by older people.

Keiser is so committed to serving the older adult population it has developed the Keiser Institute on Ageing to promote the dissemination of information on exercise and ageing (see *HCM* March 08, p34). Keiser's mission is to teach older adults how proper exercise can slow their ageing process and improve their quality of life as they get older (see also *HCM* July 09, p42).

Furthermore, with its pneumatic equipment, Keiser has pioneered the use of compressed air to provide resistance. This is an effective way

to increase strength and power and improve stability and mobility, as it uses air pressure to provide a consistent, controllable resistance, preventing shock loading to connective tissues and joints. It also allows users to train at an appropriate speed for their requirements; older individuals need to be able to adapt quickly to slips, trips and falls, and this technology allows the user to gain knowledge of where their body is in space and how they can quickly adjust it to achieve a safe and balanced position to avoid a fall.

### everything to gain

Huge steps have been made to take active ageing from concept to reality, but the last word must go to Andy Burnham MP, secretary of state for health, who recently commented: "Increasing active lifestyles is a simple answer to many of the challenges facing our country today: rising obesity, ageing society and sustainable public spending."

There's clearly work to be done if we're to bring about a true sea change in exercise habits among the older population. However, given the obvious benefits to the individual, state and society, as well as to the fitness industry's bottom line, there's little to lose and everything to gain in doing everything we can to encourage greater levels of physical activity among this segment of the population.



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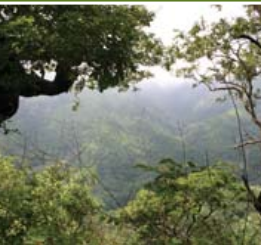


Increasing active lifestyles is  
a simple answer to an ageing society  
and sustainable public spending



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# the strictly effect

Kate Cracknell investigates the boom in dance-based exercise, and looks at the different business models for health clubs and leisure centres wanting to tap into this trend

One, two, cha cha cha. The impact of *Strictly Come Dancing* has been felt across the country and throughout all walks of life, leading to a whole string of highly popular dance-based TV programmes and a massive uplift in the number of people wanting to give dance a go.

"What *Strictly Come Dancing* has done is make dancing more socially acceptable," says Greg Gillespie, principal of The London Academy of Dance. "In our grandparents' generation, ballroom was their clubbing. Now people are going back to that sort of dancing for fun – salsa clubs for social nights out, for example."

## coming full circle

But this isn't the first time we've seen such a boom. Sylvia Caplin, who danced with the Festival Ballet from the age of just 14 before later moving into choreography and dance teaching, was invited by founder Debbie Moore to join Pineapple – the dance studio brand which, in the 1980s, was synonymous with dance itself – as the company was starting out.

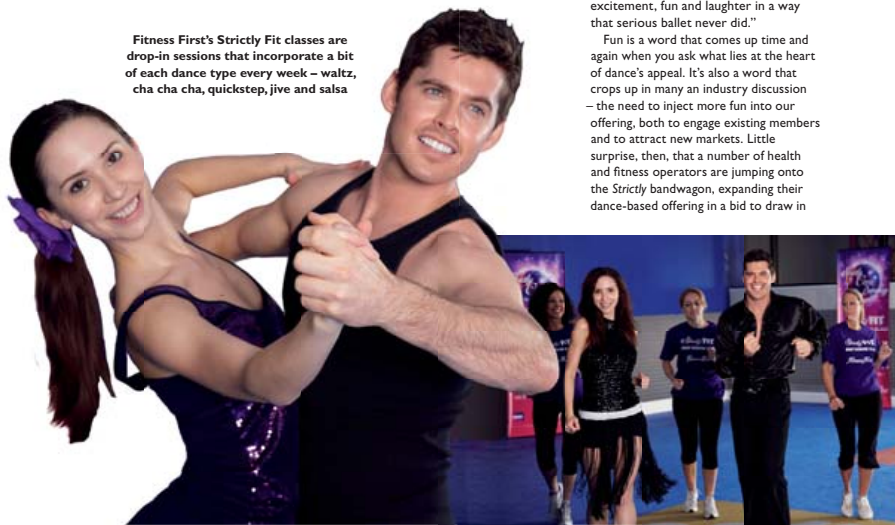
While rooted in the core benefits of ballet, the Pineapple offering was packaged up in a safe and attractive way to appeal to non-elite dancers, drawing on the feelgood factor of dance. It was, of course, very well-marketed; I used to dance myself – my enthusiasm no doubt fuelled even further by *Fame*, the

TV dance phenomenon of the time – and remember how vital it was, as a teenager, to have Pineapple-branded gear. But essentially, as Caplin explains: "It was all just great fun and it took off in a way that really appealed to people."

She continues: "Over the last few generations, as physical activity levels have dropped, there's been a huge, natural energy reserve among the population that's simply lain dormant. Thankfully we're now coming full circle, and *Strictly* and the other dance programmes have played a huge part in that. They've brought back something that's been missing for such a long time – the simple joy that all generations can get from dance. *Strictly* has brought excitement, fun and laughter in a way that serious ballet never did."

Fun is a word that comes up time and again when you ask what lies at the heart of dance's appeal. It's also a word that crops up in many an industry discussion – the need to inject more fun into our offering, both to engage existing members and to attract new markets. Little surprise, then, that a number of health and fitness operators are jumping onto the *Strictly* bandwagon, expanding their dance-based offering in a bid to draw in

**Fitness First's Strictly Fit classes are drop-in sessions that incorporate a bit of each dance type every week – waltz, cha cha cha, quickstep, jive and salsa**





Programmes such as *Strictly Come Dancing* have, says Sylvia Caplin, re-introduced people to the simple joy that all generations can get from dance

those who might otherwise be non-gym goers. But is it really that simple?

"Anything that promotes the benefits of dance is a good thing," says Gillespie – NHS research shows that ballroom dancing can burn up to 300 calories an hour; it's low-impact, so there's less stress on the joints and less risk of injury; and it improves balance, posture, flexibility and co-ordination. Older people participating in ballroom dancing have even been found to have less risk of dementia, while a number of studies have looked into the use of dance as therapy.

"However, it has to be taught properly," Gillespie continues; his academy, which operates as an independent business renting studio space at London's Reebok Sports Club, employs only professional, qualified dancers as instructors. "That's not elitist. If you were going for driving lessons, you'd want your instructor to be accredited by a recognised professional body. Dance is no different."

Michelle Bletso, group exercise co-ordinator for SLM, agrees: "We have dance fitness in some of our clubs, and that's one thing. But when it comes to ballroom, where you really need technique and progression so people feel they're achieving something, you need

If you go for driving lessons, you want your instructor to be accredited by a recognised professional body. Dance is no different

specialist instructors. It's not our area of expertise and would be a bit like asking normal instructors to go and teach yoga – it would lead to a very different workout."

Gillespie continues: "In theory, all health clubs can offer dance. However, it's important to stick with what you know rather than stepping into a world that isn't yours. Health clubs' expertise is fitness. If you can bring dance into that via dance-themed workouts – nothing too technical, but introducing people to the benefits and fun of dancing – that's great. Fitness First's *Strictly Fit* classes, for example, have the potential to be fantastic if they do it right. But if clubs try to teach proper ballroom – which is actually much more technical than you see on *Strictly* – it won't work."

#### no guarantees

So what of Fitness First's *Strictly Fit* programme – a licensing deal struck with the BBC, for an undisclosed sum, to run *Strictly*-themed classes across the chain's UK estate?

"Over recent years, some of the creativity in group exercise has been lost," says David Langridge, head of group marketing for Fitness First. "Strictly Fit really brings the instructor's personality back into the equation: we provide them with guidelines on how to run the class but give them the flexibility to work within this. In Asia, instructors are known as 'superstars'. We want to bring an element of that to our offering."

Although the instructors teaching *Strictly Fit* tend to have a dance background, their qualification is in group exercise – but then it's unashamedly dance-based fitness, thereby falling to the right side of the fine line drawn by Gillespie on the topic of accreditation.

The format is a drop-in class for members (included in the membership) and non-members (£10 a class, or £25 for five classes) – no need to commit to a course or come every week. Each session incorporates a bit of each of the dances: waltz, cha cha cha, quickstep, jive ▶



Half of the 1,000 members at Factory Fitness and Dance Centre are dance members...

PICTURE LAURIN ALLE



► and salsa. "It's all taught very simply and participants should be able to pick up the steps within a class," says Langridge.

So far, so full of potential, and indeed reports are of an average 23 participants per *Strictly* Fit class compared with 14–16 participants as an average across the board of the Fitness First group ex timetable. Many clubs are said to be launching extra classes to meet demand, and Fitness First in Germany, Italy and Australia are now interested in launching the programme. "It's group exercise in the truest sense of the word, meeting a social as well as a physical need and appealing to everyone from late teens to 70-year-olds. We're also seeing more men attending than we expected," says Langridge – a sentiment echoed by all of those offering dance, who attest to its universal appeal (see information box, right).

However, I went along to my local Fitness First in Clapham Junction, south-west London, to try out the class for myself – only to find it had been

removed from the timetable due to lack of interest. Are there any learnings from this for other operators thinking about setting up a similar offering?

"We believe a busy class is always to do with class time, its suitability for the club's membership, and the instructor," says Langridge. "In this case, we may have got the timing wrong: 8.30pm may be too late for *Strictly* in this club. With its young professional member base, people want to work out when they leave the office, before they go out to socialise."

Julian Aston, owner of north London-based independent club Factory Fitness and Dance Centre, adds: "You never know for sure what will take off. We've tried Friday night jive, for example, as well as rock 'n' roll. You'd have thought those would be popular but they never really took off in that time slot."

"The biggest risk, particularly for independents, is that you commit to an instructor for a class and then members don't come. The ballet class we've just launched has proved so popular we've introduced a second session, but the instructor agreed to a trial period where she was only paid if people attended."

Langridge continues: "Around two-thirds of our sites are still generating fantastic numbers, with the most successful clubs being those that took a calculated risk, shuffling their timetable to provide a peak slot for *Strictly*. Overall it's exceeded expectations, particularly when the show finished in December."

### a long-term trend?

But if the peak in interest came as the show finished, how enduring is the *Strictly* effect, and should clubs consider a possible 'sell-by date' on dance's appeal before rushing into offering more classes?

"If *Strictly* wasn't on this year, I personally don't think the demand for dance classes would be as strong. I think its popularity relies on media coverage," says Bletso. However, Gillespie insists that: "Dance schools have always been sustainable if they're run properly, even before *Strictly* came along." And Elaine Coulthard, national fitness manager for DW Sports Fitness, considers class success to be independent of TV schedules. "We haven't seen a growth in dance following *Strictly*, and it would just be a gimmick if we were to introduce more classes off the back of it," she says. "But then we had lots of very popular dance classes already – salsa, ballroom, line dancing, Latin and so on."

"If anything, the only shift has been that people are a bit more knowledgeable about dance. Rather than coming in and asking if it'll give them a good CV workout, they come in saying: 'I want to have a go at mambo'. But ultimately, we wouldn't want to dictate the schedule at a national level, because dance preferences vary greatly by area."

Referring to Fitness First's *Strictly* Fit and LA Fitness' much-publicised deal with Alesha Dixon, Coulthard insists: "I personally don't think you need to spend ►

Most gyms have small catchment areas; our courses are destination activities that people will travel for





... with access to around 15 drop-in classes a week...



... as well as courses and progressive workshops for an additional fee

## engaging new markets

### community links

Independent operator Hi-Energy, owned by Julie Cardus-Anderson, runs two successful businesses in Keighly, West Yorkshire: a dance academy and a health club, located less than a mile apart. But outreach work is her main focus, including dance and fitness workshops run at youth clubs and community centres and a range of after-school activities for local schools, which report an increase in activity among so-called 'disaffected' 12- to 16-year-old girls. "My commitment to schools is predominantly non-commercial," says Cardus-Anderson. "However, I'm now seeing clients access my club at an earlier age and, more importantly, realise that health and fitness is for life, which improves retention."

In certain SLM centres, the local community comes in to use the facilities off-peak – Fareham opens its doors to a group of older local residents for a regular tea dance, for example, while the Watford centre hosts a tap-dancing club. "Most of these are deals we've inherited, although our sites are now becoming much more proactive in terms of going out into their local communities to identify these opportunities," says Michelle Bletso, group exercise co-ordinator. "However, I think there's

even more we could be doing, as it's a great way of bringing new groups of the population through our doors."

Jubilee Hall Trust offers a wide range of dance courses and timetabled classes including disciplines as varied as flamenco and burlesque. It also delivers free exercise classes for the over-50s in community locations across Westminster, funded by the city council – and dance has proved one of the most popular activities. "Dance is a particularly accessible and social form of exercise," says CEO Phil Rumbelow. "The majority of participants are women, but ballroom dance seems to appeal to a range of ages – from 50 to over 80 years old – and 40 per cent of participants are from ethnic minorities."

### young and old

"There are only a handful of programmes that truly engage older customers and offer activities they enjoy," says Kevin Yates, head of commercial development for Leisure Connection. "We're launching a fantastic new programme this year, Forever Young. It's aimed at over-60s who are young at heart and includes a range of activities, but the main one is dance; not every 60-year-old wants to play short mat bowls! We're trialling it in a number of sites and hope to roll it out later this year."

"We're also seeing more interest from a younger audience in street dance and other more contemporary styles, thanks to groups like Diversity and programmes such as *Got to Dance* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. We're looking at ways to offer these styles across the board."

### male appeal

Club Med, the chain of clubs in Paris, is known for diversity and innovation in its group exercise timetable. It offers a wide range of dance classes taught by dance professionals – from hip hop to rock, through African and Oriental dance, to salsa and 'sensual move' – in addition to pre-choreographed sessions such as Zumba, Nike Dance Workout and Body Jam, which are run by fitness instructors.

Over the last couple of years, Club Med has seen a dramatic rise in the number of men participating in its dance classes – from a maximum of one or two per session to a fairly consistent five to 10. This is particularly the case with classes that offer either dance skills that may prove useful in a social environment – such as salsa and ballroom dance – or the opportunity to develop flexibility and muscle tone in a functional way, without the use of heavy weights.

► big money on licensing and celebrity-orientated deals. We already have an average attendance of 35 participants per class across the board, and I think our reputation in group exercise is strong enough to ensure interest in anything new we introduce." Interestingly, though, LA Fitness' marketing director Tony Orme explains that the majority of Dixon's earnings are based on the growth of LA, meaning "it's in her interest to make the relationship work".

### business models

But for clubs that do want to introduce more dance to their schedule, what's the best way of going about it? Dance is ultimately a specialist discipline, even if it's just offered for fitness, and the more research I did for this feature, the more a pattern seemed to emerge. In line with Gillespie's comment about 'sticking with what you know', a dance-specific reputation emerges as a clear theme across most health clubs successfully offering more than pre-choreographed classes. Case studies seem to fall into three broad categories: clubs where dance is the core focus; separate, dance-specific venues running alongside the main facility; and operators deferring to experts to run their in-house dance offering. The latter ranges from employing dance professionals as instructors – as at SLM and David Lloyd Leisure, which will launch a professionally-run dance academy at its Hampton club this month and aims to roll out the concept later this year – to outsourcing all non-timetabled dance sessions, as at The Reebok Sports Club.

Although an independent business, The London Academy of Dance operates exclusively out of The Reebok Sports Club. It rents studio space for a fixed number of hours each month and has the freedom to run whatever



FIA's Let's Dance with Change4Life: 600 fitness venues participated in the event (see p16)

sessions it wants within them; Reebok members, who account for only around 30–40 per cent of attendances, receive a discount on all sessions. In addition, although the Reebok club runs its own timetabled dance-based sessions, the academy takes responsibility for anything requiring specialist external instructors – for example, pole-dancing, belly-dancing, Bollywood and, coming soon, flamenco – with Gillespie and his team vetting these instructors to ensure standards are maintained.

However, in a brand new venture, the academy is now launching dance-related fitness classes – a similar concept to Fitness First's Strictly Fit, but run by dance professionals – which will form part of the Reebok club's group exercise timetable. "The sessions will be fitness-orientated but with the influence of dance, getting people moving and having fun rather than focusing on technique," explains Gillespie. "We'll take one dance each month and there'll be no progression – it'll be beginners' level each week."

"Alongside this, if the feedback from those taster sessions has been good, we'll launch paid-for courses for those who want to progress, as this really lies at the heart of what we do. But the timetabled sessions will still be there for those who just want to dance for fitness."

Rochester Health Club, an independent site owned by Terry Moore, is a good example of the second model: a club offering a separate dance studio. Established around 18 months ago and located alongside the main club, Dance Junction runs a wide range of classes and courses which maximise the social aspect

of dance: freestyle sessions and even party nights are tagged on to the end of classes so participants can try out what they've just learnt. There are free taster sessions, but other than that all classes and courses are charged for, providing an additional revenue stream for the club. Going back to the *Strictly* effect, instructor Sam Moore explains that the starting dates for ballroom courses are actually planned around the TV schedule.

Meanwhile, although it does offer a traditional gym, Factory Fitness and Dance Centre has a very clear focus on dance. "Gyms can become boring, and many people are looking for a different way to keep fit," says Aston. Half of the club's 1,000 members are dance members, giving them access to around 15 drop-in dance classes a week. On top of this are courses and progressive workshops, for an additional fee, which attract people from as far away as Essex. "Most gyms have a fairly small catchment area," explains Aston, "but courses like ours are destination activities. We have a good reputation and high quality facilities – professional dancers use us as a rehearsal space during the day – and people are willing to travel quite a distance to come to us."

The options are certainly there for clubs wanting to tap into the dance boom, and the rewards are clear both in terms of capturing a new, traditionally non-gym going market and adding a bit of spice for existing members. But know your audience, play to your strengths, be aware of perceptions of your brand's expertise and, if need be, bring in professional support to ensure you don't trip as you venture onto the dance floor.

**When Factory Fitness and Dance Centre introduced ballet, the instructor agreed to be paid only if members attended**

 **kate cracknell**  
healthclub@leisuremedia.com



PICTURE: BOB DOLA



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# result!

Kate Cracknell asks a selection of operators for their verdict on the retention software systems installed in their facilities

declan ryan  
owner, active4less  
software: clubwise



My club is a 1,400sq m (15,000sq ft) dry facility in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, offering a gym, three studios, squash courts, sauna, steam and massage rooms. For eight years the club operated as a mid-market facility. It was moderately successful but, over recent years, had competed against newer multi-site operators. Two years ago, after much research and deliberation, I converted it to a budget operation charging monthly fees of only £12.95.

I started using Clubwise software five years ago – it's an integrated solution that can support almost all key areas of health club administration. It offers a fully configurable active customer relationship module (ActiveCRM), which we use to remain in contact with members and promote retention. This saves time by automating all standard communication with our members, from welcome emails to messages at key stages in a member's lifecycle.

## favourite software feature

What really differentiates Clubwise is its commitment to developing fully integrated online systems for joining, booking and member communication.

## results achieved

Two years ago, we had almost 800 members on a mix of monthly rates, varying from £33 down to promotional rates as low as £10. Two years on, our membership has grown exponentially while our operational and staffing costs have been cut. We no longer have a membership contract, yet our retention has improved over the last two years: in 2008, our annual attrition was 64.3 per cent, or 5.35 per cent a month; in 2009, this had reduced to 62.1 per cent annually or 5.18 per cent monthly.

We all acknowledge that the industry is not very good at sharing information, but I believe these figures hover around the industry average. I'm also confident



Active4Less no longer has contracts, yet retention has improved over two years

they will improve with further focus on retention over the next 12 months.

Clubwise software directly improves retention via the Active CRM. However, it also indirectly improves retention by dramatically reducing administrative tasks, freeing staff up to spend more time with members and deliver health and fitness services; although we're a low-cost operator, we still offer more than 100 group classes every week, largely run by our fitness staff and personal trainers and all included in the monthly fee, as I believe this promotes retention.

For a low-cost operator, this freeing up of staff time is critical to long-term profitability. But software can't do everything: motivated and enthusiastic staff remain a critical element of our member retention strategy and we invest heavily in staff training. If low-cost operators reduce costs by cutting qualified fitness staff and replacing them with security staff or even going to an unstaffed model, I fear only very self-motivated members will be retained.

## if I could change one thing...

As I mentioned earlier, I strongly believe that member retention is

heavily dependent on regular positive interactions with staff. I'm therefore looking to change the way I pay my staff, moving from a fixed annual wage to an income consisting of fixed pay rates for set tasks carried out within the club.

It's easy to envisage how one could reward staff for common activities such as cleaning, equipment maintenance, classes or giving a seminar talk. But a large proportion of their time will – and should – still be spent on the gym floor, as this will undoubtedly improve member retention. Based on the improved retention figures, I would expect increased revenues, meaning I could pay more and retain good staff.

However, to pay staff based on achieving agreed targets for interactions and effectiveness of those interactions would, at present, require two separate packages to link with each other: there are standalone packages on the market that track interactions between staff and high-risk members, while Clubwise has the ability to automate timesheets for staff based on logging in and out. Bringing the two together would provide a means of automating the management of my proposed new type of pay structure.



## mark jennings

fitness manager, stevenage  
leisure ltd (sll)  
software: technogym  
contact manager



Built in 1982, North Herts Leisure Centre – managed since 2005 by SLL in partnership with North Herts District Council – has undergone various refurbishments, the most recent and largest being a £1.5m project in the summer of 2006, which saw membership increase from 400 to 1,500 members. SLL introduced Technogym's Wellness System to the centre in October 2006, and Contact Manager in 2009.

SLL has also joined Technogym's North Thames Business Club, which meets on a regular basis to discuss operational issues, share best practice and benchmark reports from the Wellness System against other operators in the region and across the UK.

### favourite software feature

The 'who's in' page. This displays a list of who's currently in the gym, their drop-out risk, duration of membership, and any tasks for staff to perform linked to those members' usage patterns and training programmes. This helps staff prioritise their interactions and interventions, ensuring new members are given the support they need, lower usage members are encouraged to continue using the facilities and increase their visit frequency, and those highlighted as at risk of leaving are motivated and interacted with at the earliest opportunity.

### results achieved

Monthly membership attrition has dropped by 3.35 per cent since the Wellness System was introduced – a 2 per cent drop in the first two years, and a further 1.35 per cent in 2009 by using



**SLL has seen low-usage members increase their visit frequency by 16.5 per cent**

the Contact Manager module to effectively contact members.

The 12-month retention figures have shown an increase of 8.5 per cent over the same period, generating an increased annual income of £21,000 or more. The centre does not run any membership contracts but the average length of membership now exceeds 17 months.

Contact Manager reports in 2010 show that members contacted as a result of 'low usage' triggers have increased their weekly visit frequency by 16.5 per cent.

Meanwhile, the surveys section of the Wellness System also allows us to get feedback from members on a range of issues – member confidence, customer satisfaction, goals and success rates and so on – which helps us to further improve service levels and highlight members needing extra help in achieving their objectives.

### if i could change one thing...

We've trialled the most recent addition to the Wellness Solution – the dashboard – which enables us to easily monitor KPIs throughout the month, as well as via end of month reports.



**The 'who's in' page provides a list of members currently in the gym**

Possible progressions with this feature could enable staff to delve deeper into these instant reports, saving time by automatically compiling lists of members' contact details – staff currently have to generate these lists themselves. ▶



Measuring the impact  
of better interactions  
on member  
behaviour is vital



neil king  
commercial director, slm  
software: the  
retention people



#### results achieved

I'd love to say that attrition has halved and length of stay doubled, but it's too early to say. However, as a group, we've made more than 150,000 'high-risk' interactions in the last five months.

interactions but, critically, the quality as well: does the interaction make any difference to the customer's behaviour, do they come more frequently over the course of the next seven days and so on. Measuring all this is absolutely vital.

The TRP system has provided focus and direction to the work of the fitness team and there have certainly been improvements in member retention. We're just trying to filter out December/January seasonal variations to see if this improvement is solely down to using TRP software.

#### if I could change one thing...

Our understanding is that TRP's software is continually evolving, with new features being planned and added. I'd like to see developments that allow us to interact with members we miss on the gym floor – an automated email or text service, for example, to let them know we're sorry we missed them today and look forward to them visiting us again in the future. Ideally it

would allow for a microchip to be inserted into every new member, giving us the ability to press a button to schedule the number of member visits for the following week!

SLM is one of the UK's most established leisure management contractors. Under the brand name of Everyone Active, it manages 63 leisure centres with a customer base of more than 730,000 people. Following a successful 18-month trial, in August 2009 we rolled out The Retention People's (TRP) system across all sites with more than 750 members; the retention software is now installed in 40 sites.

#### favourite feature

First and foremost is its simplicity and ease of use, but the key feature without a doubt is the ability to identify high-risk members and act immediately by delivering a high-quality interaction. This process, which identifies a person by name and photo, adds more urgency to the interaction and keeps colleagues alert to the fact that there are people in the gym who could be on their last visit.

There is a lot you can do to **improve the member experience...**

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Meanwhile, what we call our 'fitness motivators' – our gym instructors – are far more focused on customer needs and are measuring their performance not only in terms of the quantity of their



Barceló has seen a "huge improvement" in attrition rates since it installed Retention Management

ian charlton

leisure cluster club manager,  
barcelo uk  
software: retention  
management



Barceló UK is a Spanish-owned hotel group with 21 four-star hotels across the UK. Its 13 spas are complemented by 18 health and leisure facilities including squash and tennis courts, indoor and outdoor pools, studio fitness classes and golf facilities.

#### favourite software feature

The most useful aspect of Retention Management is its flexibility – we're able to tailor the contents of any email to include our own message. For example, if we were running an open weekend, we could ensure this was referenced in all emails sent out during the previous week. It's very quick and easy to set this up using a simple dashboard.

#### results achieved

The results have exceeded our expectations. Feedback has been very positive, with members actually waiting to receive their weekly advice and contact direct from the club manager.

We have one site in particular where we've seen a huge improvement in attrition rates. During the first half of 2009, the site averaged an attrition rate of 4.5 per cent each month. However,



Barceló's 21 UK hotels include 13 spas and 18 health and leisure facilities

six months after implementing the Retention Management system, the average monthly attrition rate is now 2.9 per cent – and still falling.

#### if I could change one thing...

I can't ask for much more from the system. It allows us to create site-specific communications and reports back so we know which members are at risk.



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# A FRANCHISE FIT FOR EVERYONE

Julie Fisher takes a look at what's new in the UK fitness franchise market



**F**itness franchises are in abundance, ranging from low-cost clubs that offer 24-hour opening to pilates, personal training and programming to get kids active. As Tom Endean, marketing manager for the British Franchise Association, says: "The ability to operate as a local business with

understanding and commitment to the area and local people, combined with the national support systems and brand, has allowed many fitness franchises to remain secure and successful businesses, even in tougher economic times."

We take a look at the new kids on the block and ask how existing franchisors are evolving to respond to the competition.

**Erak Simsson (centre), founder of Coach Me Slim and Trim, has launched a new women's kettlebell concept**

## NEW TO THE UK

Originally part of the ADDleisure group before being bought out by MD Ben Margolis, Movers & Shapers combines fast-track, Power Plate-based resistance training with convenient cardiovascular exercise – conducted outside the club and measured using a Fitbug accelerometer – and nutrition tracking.

Movers & Shapers offers clients an intimate setting and a high level of service: studios measure around 85sq m (900sq ft) with only 200 active clients per location, mainly 30- to 45-year-old females, and no annual contracts.

Small groups of up to five clients are taken through a 30-minute workout twice a week. Located on the high street, the clubs provide the perfect opportunity to pop in during lunch or at the end of the day.

Movers & Shapers previously operated only company-owned sites, of which there are still six. However, it sold its first franchise – in Stratford



Shapemaster has joined forces with Alliance Leisure to roll out ladies-only Feel Good Factory sites

# HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 2010



The 6th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook, published in association with the Fitness Industry Association (FIA), is being distributed in January 2010. The handbook is a comprehensive guide and reference tool distributed to industry suppliers and operators, FIA members and to industry buyers at events such as LIW, SIBEC and IHRSA..

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ONLINE

► upon Avon – in late 2009, to the then club manager Veronica Winter. A second franchised location is imminent, with the company hoping to recruit a further four franchisees this year. It believes, in the long-term, that the potential is there to open around 100 Movers & Shapers sites in the UK.

Your Body Active offers a mix of pilates, vibration training, diet and personal training. The sessions, starting at just £12, consist of no more than four clients at a time and target women aged 40-plus who have little time to spare. Clients only pay for the blocks of sessions they use and have access to experienced personal trainers to

ensure they reach their goals. There is currently one owned club in Richmond, south-west London, and one franchise in Godalming, Surrey, with a deal recently confirmed to run programmes within the Soma Health Club in Kensington, London. Managing director Simon Bateman aims to open an additional seven sites in 2010. Bateman set up the company from scratch and understands how lonely starting a franchise can be. His aim is therefore to provide support and guidance, with regular operational and sales courses for franchisees.

Relatively new to franchise, Shapemaster has doubled its Feel Good Factory-branded sites over the last year



Your Body Active targets women aged 40-plus, for no more than four clients at a time

## FRANCHISE UPDATE

### CELEBRITY LIFESTYLE

Another company bringing a celebrity approach to the fitness industry is RESULTS4U, which has teamed up with TV fitness presenter and personal trainer Danni Levy to form the Danni Levy PT franchise. Levy, who currently receives more requests for personal training than she is able to deliver herself, will pass clients on to the selected franchisees to offer well-heeled customers the 'ultimate in personal training'.

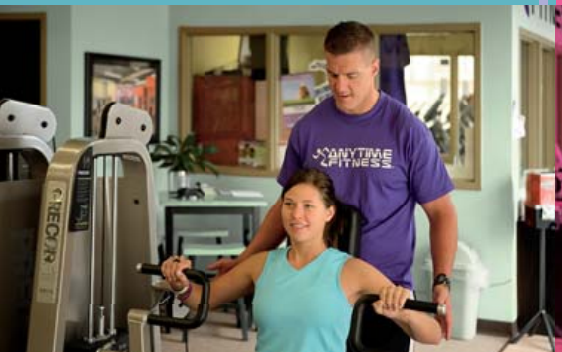
Potential franchisees will be offered operational and business training as well as branded materials, along with assistance in finding premises. As well as having a flow of new clients from Levy, franchisees will also have access to her training systems.

### DIVERSIFICATION

With more than 80 per cent of those who join a gym doing so to lose weight, Ladies Workout Express director Chris Donaldson has launched a goal-setting, weight-loss programme called Diet Express. Based on the GI diet, there are weekly, personalised weight-loss sessions where journals are reviewed, as well as small consultation Diet Clinics, Lifestyle classes, Pocket PC online support for those who don't have time to travel to a consultant, and a Family Fitness programme to teach parents how to educate their children/family to make healthier food choices.

Meanwhile, Rosemary Conley continues to diversify; along with the sustained success of the brand's magazine, the brand has recently

# HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 2010



Anytime Fitness, the world's largest unisex health club chain, is coming to the UK

and now has eight in the UK. Having joined forces with multi-faceted leisure company Alliance Leisure, Shapemaster is rolling out a network of the ladies-only facilities, the most recent being at Blackbrook Pavilion in Taunton. The sites use power-assisted equipment and are aimed at the inch- and weight-loss markets, but also attract clients who have mobility and stability issues, as well as those recovering from injury.

## EXPANDING THE OFFER

Coach Me Slim and Trim founder Erak Simsson has launched a new programme, the Women's Kettlebell Gym, which is designed to bring the benefits of kettlebell training – the exercising of core muscles as well as

specific areas of the body, thanks to the explosive movements involved – to a new, female-only market.

Simsson's new mobile fitness concept means one licensee can deliver classes in a number of different locations. Classes are currently available at various locations around the Salisbury area, but Simsson's aim is ultimately to allow licensees to set up in their local area, having one licensee per county who will oversee a number of locations.

Sessions tend to be held in local community centres and potential licensees are likely to be fitness instructors looking to expand their offering, earning a living that fits in with their lifestyle, especially as start-up costs are relatively low.

launched an internet channel, [www.rosemaryconley.tv](http://www.rosemaryconley.tv). Available 24 hours a day, the channel has many health and fitness features to keep members motivated. Other recent Conley initiatives include the Kids 2 programme, designed to help tackle child obesity, and GP referral schemes with local PCTs.

Curves has incorporated Curves Smart, a personal coaching system, into its 30-minute circuit workout. Every piece of equipment in the circuit will be programmed with the individual member's personal data to provide moment-by-moment feedback. Currently around 45 per cent of UK sites have Curves Smart available. The company also appointed Niki Keene as international wellness director in 2009 to develop programmes and

partnerships, and is looking to work more closely with the NHS (see interview, p26).

## NEW OPENINGS

SHOKK énergie is set to open a 230sq m (2,500sq ft) SHOKK Youth Activity Centre, targeting five- to 18-year-olds, within the existing énergie club in Wilmslow. SHOKK énergie plans to have nine venues and 15 new franchises open by the end of 2010, building on the two franchise sites already open.

Meanwhile, the fourth Fit4less site – the budget fitness brand from énergie, which offers fees of just £16.99 a month – opened in Canterbury last month. Through its franchise scheme, énergie plans to introduce Fit4less clubs to locations across the UK.



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World Gym, founded by Joe Gold in 1976, is about to launch in the UK and has plans to become the world's number one fitness destination



► Active Kids is a licensed programme that's offered to health clubs and sports centres – the brainchild of Greg Dryer, who worked in physical education for almost 20 years and felt strongly that every child should experience sport. The aim of the programme is to equip children with the core skills needed to enjoy an active lifestyle: it's based on more than 30 fundamental physical and mental competencies, such as 'run fast', 'see space' and 'respond quickly'.

Over the last six years, Active Kids has expanded from its initial offering of short holiday courses and now provides a network of franchise centres. Up until now, only these franchise centres have had access to the Active Kids programmes, but the latest development – the launch of an e-resource, scheduled for Easter 2010 – means any organisation that works with children

can buy a licence to the Active Kids programmes, from schools to sports centres and health clubs. Training will also be available, with flexible pricing available so multi-user purchasers such as health club chains can roll out the programme across a number of clubs.

#### COMING SOON...

Anytime Fitness, the world's largest unisex chain of health clubs, is expected to enter the UK market by mid-2010, and anticipates three locations by the end of the year. With 24-hour access available, facilities are located near to where people live and work. Members, spanning a wide age range but typically aged 30–35, can also attend any of the 1,300 clubs around the world.

John Kersh, vice president of international development, comments: "Our best franchisees are passionate

about helping people and this is something we cannot teach them.

"However, franchising a fitness business has little to do with fitness and everything to do with franchising; understanding the key elements of franchising is essential before taking on a franchise as a business." (see also HCM March 10, p32)

However, Jim Teatum, president of Global Business Systems and one of the experts bringing World Gym to the UK, disagrees. "We want to move away from franchising as merely a business transaction. Everyone on the World Gym team has in-depth experience and understanding of the fitness industry and will be hands-on to help our members achieve their goals. We understand the challenges operators will face, the marketing they require and the consumers they're trying to reach to achieve a healthy bottom line."

Recently purchased by the Cammilleri family, Los Angeles-based World Gym is due to launch imminently in the UK. Founded in 1976 by Joe Gold, one of the original Muscle Beach ringleaders, and with links to the glamorous Hollywood jetset, it focuses on 18- to 34-year-olds with targeted six-week programmes based on the 'West Coast California' theme, offering achievable results. The company has more than 200 locations worldwide, but the Cammilleris have a 50-year vision to become the world's number one fitness destination and an iconic fitness brand across the globe.



Active Kids has just launched a new e-resource



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# research round-up

An Australian study has looked at the most effective ways of promoting exercise in adults, both in terms of health benefits and financial cost

## market value

**D**espite being perceived as a sporting nation, Australia still has problems with physical inactivity. That's why Linda Cobiac and colleagues at the University of Queensland undertook a study to find out which of the country's physical activity interventions were the most effective in terms of health benefits and financial cost.

The researchers identified six national intervention programmes that promoted physical activity and public transport use in adults. These included:

- TravelSmart, a car-use reduction initiative which gave households information on walking paths, bus timetables and incentives to use a car less
- GP prescription of physical activity
- GP referral to an exercise physiologist
- Internet advice on physical activity
- The promotion of pedometers in the community
- A mass-media campaign designed to promote physical activity

The health outcomes of each intervention were calculated in disability/ability life years (DALYs) – the number of healthy years lost due to premature death or illness. These calculations were based on already published data of the effects of physical activity on diseases such as breast and colon cancer, heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes.



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**Pedometers were found to be the most cost-effective intervention programme**

The financial cost was calculated by offsetting the cost associated with the five diseases listed above against the expense of running the interventions.

### the results

The results, which were published in the journal *PLoS Medicine*, found that two interventions stood out as being the

most cost-effective: the pedometer programme – which ties in with previous studies we've seen (see information box, left) – and the mass-media marketing campaign. Referral to an exercise physiologist was the least cost-effective.

The researchers stress, however, that if the six interventions were combined, the effects would be much greater. While the overall delivery investment would come in at about AUS\$940m, it would reduce the cost of treating diseases by AUS\$1.4bn. Cobiac says: "It is likely that the package of interventions would not only be cost-effective but actually cost-saving to the health sector."

It's suggested that a standardised approach to assess cost-effectiveness of physical activity programmes could act as a model to guide policy-makers worldwide, identifying which approaches might be used to reduce the burden of diseases brought on by sedentary lifestyles.

### walk this way

**C**obiac's study isn't the first to identify the health benefits of using pedometers.

Back in 2007, researchers from Stanford University found that overweight volunteers who were given pedometers increased their number of steps by more than 2,000 a day – the equivalent of an extra mile. Most

people also lost weight and found that their blood pressure dropped.

Lead author Dena Bravata says: "Just over 2,100 steps might not sound much, but it equated to a 27 per cent increase in physical activity, which is astounding." The findings were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Source: *PLoS Medicine*, 14 July 2009. The cost-effectiveness of interventions to promote physical activity: a modelling study. Cobiac et al



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# business booster

Kath Hudson talks to some savvy operators who've bolstered their business throughout the recession by driving secondary revenue from nutritional product sales

Independent operator Jason Matthews, owner of Ultimate Physiques gym in Castleford, Yorkshire, has a reputation in his local area for the way he's expanded his sideline in nutritional products and supplements – it pushes his annual turnover up, he says, by a six-figure sum. “This secondary source of income has allowed me to keep the gym membership low but still invest in the club,” Matthews explains. Indeed, it has enabled him to grow his club during the recession: he's taken out a lease on the adjacent building, extending the gym and adding new activities such as martial arts and running training.

Matthews stocks a wide range of products including flapjacks, protein bars, rehydration drinks, carbohydrate drinks, protein drinks, meal replacements, cartons and numerous supplements from CNP, PhD, Richard Gaspari, Lonsdale and Viromax. “The club looks like a shop,” he says. “I truly believe that, if gyms got it right, there would be no need for supplement sales via retail outlets or the internet.”

The business has been driven by customer demand, stocking products

requested by members. Matthews then discovered greater margins could be made if he went directly to the manufacturers, so asked other local gyms if they were interested and started supplying them too, allowing him to bulk buy. “My advice to gyms is not to mess about with the middle man, because people will go elsewhere if it's a pound cheaper,” says Matthews, who uses price promises, special offers and deals of the week to keep people interested.

## supply and demand

Trying the products yourself and having a good knowledge base is key. “You need to know the products. I only sell those I believe in and which taste nice,” says Matthews. “There's also a degree of trial and error. I often get £500-worth of a product which I sell at a promotional price and ask the members if they want me to stock it or not.

“I don't push the products – I let members come to me and then give them a consultation about what will best suit them and their lifestyle.”

According to Hertfordshire-based independent operator Michael Kershaw, who runs Fitness Connection in Hitchin, secondary spend on nutritional products has been a lifeline during the economic downturn. He explains: “We've been really surprised that, although the recession put pressure on membership, the volume of secondary spend has gone through the roof. It now accounts for around one-sixth of our turnover.”

Fitness Connection made the decision to move away from



Recovery aids are proving popular, particularly with men, at the independent Fitness Connection gym in Hitchin, Hertfordshire

confectionery and chocolate to sell healthier food and drinks. It stocks a range of drinks, nutrition bars and flapjacks from Multipower, as well as Lucozade products and supplements from Garnell and Maximuscle.

Flapjacks have proved to be immensely popular, as has Multipower's Fitshake, but bottled water is also a big seller and allows a mark-up of six times – much more than other products.

“We're not pushy promoters, but we've become more conscious about how important nutrition is, so we took some risks and held more stock, which has led to more sales,” says Kershaw.



energie in Belfast currently stocks Ultrabody Detox, and plans to add the Inch Loss Shakes and Total Nutrition products



Knowing your membership, and matching the right products to them, is essential if you wish to make this area of your business work

Working out what members want is also crucial to the success of building this income stream. "We're a fitness gym, not a 'cappuccino gym' as I call them," he says. "Our female members tend to be in and out quickly and are only really interested in buying bottled water." Kershaw has found that, at his club, nutritional products are most popular with men who want a recovery aid.

### choosing right

One club that does target women for its choice of products is *énergie Fitness* for Women in Belfast. The club currently stocks *Ultrabody Detox* and *The Buzz* energy bars, but is planning to expand the range to include *Ultrabody's* *Inch Loss Shakes* and *Total Nutrition*, which are all targeted at a weight-conscious female membership.

Owner of the Belfast franchise, Saima Akram, says she would only ever stock products that she would be willing to use herself and has found the *Detox* product to be easy to take, with a good flavour, and doesn't require members to do anything different in terms of their diet.

"Nutritional products are important in terms of secondary spend," she says. "However, I also feel it's important that we stock them in order to give members a one-stop shop for all their healthy lifestyle needs."



**The sale of nutritional products has proved to be relatively recession-proof, despite pressure on membership**

Akram estimates that sales of nutritional products generate around 3 to 4 per cent of the monthly turnover – a level she says is easy to achieve.

"The most successful method is definitely having taster sessions in the club. We always notice an increase in interest and sales of products around these times," she says.

LA Fitness in Sydenham – near Crystal Palace, London – also stocks *Detox*, and general manager Clare Ewens says it's become an essential contributor to gym revenue: 44 packages were sold in January, which translates to £657 profit – just for one product. "Despite the recession, it hasn't been difficult to sell. Our fitness team are always upselling it, and a lot of them have tried it themselves so can vouch for the fact that it works," she says.

### business driver

There are compelling reasons to work this area of the business harder: not only does the sale of nutritional products seem to be relatively recession-proof, but it also provides a service for members which they obviously like and provides a talking point for staff to connect with them.

It may involve a few risks in terms of investment in stock – which is why it's important to look closely at the profile of club members to match the right product to them, as well as making sure that all club staff know the products – but the rewards certainly seem to be there for those willing to invest the time and energy into getting this area of their offering right.



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### Lucozade Sport Lite low calorie exercise drink

A new low calorie sports drink – Lucozade Sport Lite – has been unveiled by GlaxoSmithKline. The 500ml drink is available in two flavours – lemon and lime and summer berries. Lucozade Sport Lite is formulated to deliver electrolytes as well as energy-releasing B vitamins, and contains 70 per cent less sugar than regular sports drinks. Five free Lucozade packs are up for grabs – please email your details to: [HCMcompetition@circle.com](mailto:HCMcompetition@circle.com)

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Wherever you are in the world, find the right products and services 24/7 by logging on to Health Club Management's free search engine [www.fitness-kit.net](http://www.fitness-kit.net)

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### Orbana helps Izzard's marathon achievement

The Orbana energy drink, recently launched in the UK, was used by comedian Eddie Izzard during his Sport Relief challenge, which saw him run an incredible 43 marathons in 51 days. A mixture of vitamins, minerals, amino acids and electrolytes, the drink is purchased in powder form so key ingredients don't dilute over time while sitting in a liquid solution. The drink is claimed to delay fatigue by up to two hours without the 'spike' or 'crash' sensations that can be experienced with other energy drinks. Orbana is available in four-packs and 24-bottle cases – with powder already in the bottles (just add water) – or an 800g tub.



fitness-kit.net keyword  
orbana



fitness-kit.net keywords  
cnp professional

### British Cycling and CNP Professional

The Team GB Cycling team has joined up with the UK-based sports nutrition company CNP Professional to develop a new energy-boosting gel called Pro Energy Max. The cola-flavoured gel is available in a 45g single portion sachet and is designed to be taken during exercise or competition. The gel's formula includes caffeine, guarana, carbohydrates and electrolytes and is intended to help maintain energy levels and heighten mental alertness. Pro Energy Max will be used by both Team GB Cycling and the Sky Pro Cycling team participating in the Tour de France, which takes place in July.



## Ultrabody launches new Daily Wellness Range

New from wellness and sports nutrition specialist Ultrabody is the Daily Wellness Range, which consists of five products: Inch Loss, Total Nutrition, Detox, Supa Fruit and Antioxidant. Launched in January, the Detox product – already stocked by operators and retailers including LA Fitness and énergie – targets undigested waste weight. Launching this month are the next two products from the range. The Inch Loss shake, available in three flavours, is a daily meal replacement. Meanwhile, Total Nutrition will be marketed as a 'complete spectrum supplement'. Available in liquid form, it provides a daily blend of vitamins, minerals, fruit and antioxidants. Completing the range are Supa Fruit, which combines



fruit extracts and minerals to help improve children's daily diet, and supplement Antioxidant, which is said to help reduce harmful free radical toxins. Both are due to be introduced by June.

fitness-kit.net keyword  
ultrabody

## Sales opportunities for Red Bull's new product



Following a successful launch in the US, Red Bull is making its Energy Shots drink available in the UK. Containing the same amount of energy as the existing 250ml can, Red Bull Energy Shots are non-carbonated and come packaged in a 60ml 'shot', in both standard and sugar-free varieties. Red Bull has a range of display solutions to ensure that the Energy Shots are merchandised effectively and advises retailers that the shot should be stocked in impulse locations to add incremental value. As a new drinks category, Red Bull believes that energy shots represent a great sales opportunity. The Red Bull Energy Shot doesn't have to be chilled before use and can be used to provide an energy boost before a gym session or a sporting event.

fitness-kit.net keywords  
red bull



## Lean Body Shake from Labrada Nutrition

Labrada Nutrition has launched the Lean Body shake. This ready-to-drink 40g protein shake has zero sugar, is trans-fat and lactose free, and is fortified with 22 vitamins and minerals. Distributed by Tropicana Health and Fitness, the shake offers both fast- and slow-release proteins for a sustained flow of amino acids. Lean Body aids faster muscle growth. It comes in a range of ice cream flavours including strawberries and cream, choco and vanilla.

fitness-kit.net keywords  
tropicana health



## UK energy drink launch

Newly launched is a two-calorie 'energy shot' health drink. Manufactured by Medichem International, the berry-flavoured drink consists of a blend of B vitamins, amino acids and antioxidants, and is distributed exclusively by Voltz Distribution UK. It's said to be free from sugar, caffeine and carbohydrates in a bid to stop users 'crashing' later. The drink comes in a 60ml bottle format and can be sold either as a solo item or in packs.

fitness-kit.net keyword  
voltz

## show preview

## bodypower expo 2010

Head to the Birmingham NEC for this show, which focuses on bodybuilding, strongman, mixed martial arts, boxing, wrestling and powerlifting

**T**he BodyPower Expo is back for another action-packed weekend next month. Taking place at the Birmingham NEC on 22–23 May, this year the health, fitness and nutrition expo is expected to attract more than 15,000 visitors – fitness enthusiasts, from a range of sporting backgrounds, who want to network, learn, and get the products and services they need to improve personal or business goals and objectives.

BodyPower is built around 10 feature areas, which are based on six sports: bodybuilding, strongman, MMA (mixed martial arts), boxing, wrestling and powerlifting. In each of these areas, visitors are able to watch demonstrations and competitions taking place throughout the weekend.

There will also be appearances from international sporting superstars (see below), as well as interactive workshops and educational seminars from leading industry experts from around the world.

## expert advice

BodyPower showcases the latest fitness trends and practices, with the functional training workout area a particular focus at this year's event. Some of the world's leading trainers will be on hand in this functional training zone to offer advice over the course of the weekend –



The event will offer seminars throughout the two days



The organisers expect this year's BodyPower Expo to attract 15,000 visitors

trainers such as Steve Cotter, a kettlebell legend and current president of the IKFF (International Kettlebell & Fitness Federation). Cotter will present interactive workshops and seminars, along with other international trainers, based on the latest training methods.

The BodyPower organisers have also worked closely with fitness industry partner FitPro to ensure further developments on topical issues. A 'BodyinBalance' area of the expo, dedicated to group fitness, will feature demonstrations by the Les Mills team, as well as sessions hosted by Delvin Clarke on the Vibe cycles and a host of other international presenters.

## meet the stars

One of the most popular elements of BodyPower is its guaranteed array of sporting superstars. Lined up for this year's show are world-leading names from all six of the feature sports present

at the event, including current Mr Olympia Jay Cutler, MMA and world strongman Mariusz Pudzianowski, UFC superstar Dan Hardy, and boxing WBC super middleweight world champion Carl Froch. For a full list of appearances, please visit [www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)

The high octane action is complemented by a world class exhibition that will ensure you get the best prices on sports nutrition, home fitness products, new and refurbished commercial gym equipment, training aids, clothing and apparel.

## DETAILS

**Venue:** NEC, Birmingham

**Dates:** 22–23 May

**Tickets:** Call +44 (0)871 230 5594

**For more information:**

[www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)

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## show preview

## fibo 2010

FIBO celebrates its 25th anniversary this month with a fitness, health and wellbeing show that's set to be bigger than ever

**M**ore space, more exhibitors and an even wider range of products and innovations: FIBO, the leading international trade show for fitness, wellness and health, is set to celebrate its 25th anniversary in style.

Due to take place in Essen, Germany, on 22–25 April, FIBO is this year expecting more than 530 exhibitors from 38 countries and more than 50,000 visitors from 60 countries. Spread across 12 halls and occupying a total space of around 74,000sq m, the exhibition will showcase a wide variety of equipment and services for the fitness sector, with stage shows hosting action-packed demonstrations, as well as a range of conventions and conference sessions.

As at last year's show, health will be a focal theme, including everything from diagnostic equipment and functional therapy methods right through to professional health consulting.

#### easier, cheaper, quicker

The launch of a new online ticket system makes registration and buying your show pass much more straightforward this year, both in advance and on-site.

What's more, visitors obtain real cash savings by registering online and buying their tickets in advance. For further information, please visit [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)

Another innovation for national and international visitors arriving by air is a shuttle service from Düsseldorf airport to the exhibition centre and back.

#### conventions and competitions

FIBOactive will once more offer everything from the fields of 'Fashion, Music, Fun & Action'. New and established exhibitors will present a comprehensive range of products supplemented by a large number of action programmes and stage shows, including a multitude of events in which delegates can participate. In Hall 5, the emphasis will be on the international



Stage shows at FIBO play host to action-packed live demonstrations

DFAV Convention, with a huge demonstration area featuring a live DJ.

Registrations have already come in from across Europe, with delegates all wishing to learn the latest choreographies – such as Latin-based Zumba – from top presenters.

Meanwhile, the Les Mills Convention takes place for the second time in Hall 8. After the successful premiere in 2009, the world's biggest group fitness specialist will this year allow delegates to try out its new programming, due to be launched in July, for the first time.

The Fit for Fun Cycling Festival will include a look at the latest trend in group fitness – KRANKing – with delegates able to have a go at this upper body strength and CV workout.

FIBO POWER, running alongside FIBO, is the top meeting place for the bodybuilding and weight training community in Europe. It includes

the FIBO Strongman Classics, the FIBO Powerlifting Challenge and the competition Miss FIBO POWER Beauty.

The FIBO innovation award will also be awarded at the show. Former winners include Power Plate (2002) and Technogym's Cardio Wave (2007). The prize is awarded annually by FIBO, TÜV Rheinland Product Safety GmbH and Fit for Fun magazine.

#### DETAILS

**Date:** 22 – 25 April 2010

**Venue:** Exhibition Centre (Messe) Essen, Germany

**Opening hours:** 09:00–18:00 daily

**For further information:**

Please visit [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)

Updates from FIBO are also available on Facebook and twitter

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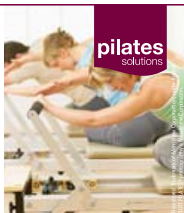
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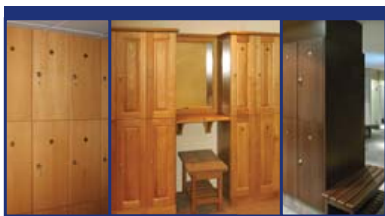
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# lightweights

## BRAGGING POWER TIMES FOUR

Triathlons arguably rank among the toughest challenges for fitness fans, but for those who want something they can really brag about, there's the Artemis Great Kindrochit Quadrathlon.

The quadrathlon – which is held on 10 July and raises money for international aid charity Mercy Corps – is hailed as the hardest charity event.

The Scottish Highlands provide a spectacular location for the challenge, which starts with a 1.5km (0.8 mile) swim around Loch Tay and a 24km (15-mile) run/walk up seven mountains encompassing the Lawers and Ptarmigan ridges which reach up to 1,214m (3,982ft). Next, back to Loch Tay for a 11km (seven-mile) kayak and 54km (34-mile) cycle. The clock doesn't stop until finalists slice a watermelon in half with a sword.

For those who don't want to do go it alone, there's a team option for up to eight people.



## DIZZY HEIGHTS FOR RUNNING PROGRAMMES

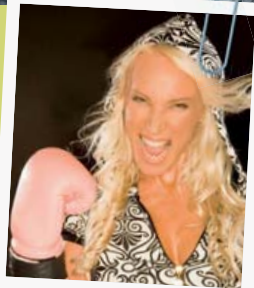
In the last issue (*HCM* March, p83) we wrote about the benefits of mountain air, which helps to burn fat.

Now, according to researchers in Japan, there's another reason to factor in hills into your training.

A study by the country's Institute of Sports Science has found that running short, 10-second bursts up a steep incline, followed by a walk or slow jog back down, is one of the best ways to tone the lower body and tax the cardiovascular system.

Elsewhere, it's been shown that uphill running can improve the elasticity of muscles and tendons – meaning legs don't tire so quickly.

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## NEW TREND THAT'S PACKING A PUNCH

With New Year's resolutions starting to fade, now might be the time to introduce a new fitness class to keep up member interest.

Piloxing is a new concept that combines the power, speed and agility of boxing with the sculpting and flexibility of pilates. Typical sessions, which incorporate weighted boxing gloves, include sequences of jabs, crosses, hooks and uppercuts mixed with static poses, kicks and leg swings to engage core muscles.

Piloxing was the brainchild of Viveca Jensen (pictured), a Swedish dancer and Hollywood celebrity trainer. Instructor training classes are held in the US, but UK participants are welcome. Details: [www.piloxing.com](http://www.piloxing.com)

## happy snapping, less snacking

Keeping a food diary helps many people lose weight. Yet taking pictures of the food you eat has been found to be a more accurate way of recording intake, as well as having the added benefit of making people really stop and think about what they're consuming.

These were the findings of a study carried out at the University of Wisconsin, where 43 people recorded what they ate for one week in both

words and pictures. When participants were questioned, the photo diaries were reportedly the most effective.

Taking snapshots of each meal was also quicker and less laborious than writing everything down and provided powerful images of binge eating.

What's more, the photos provided thought-provoking images just at the right time: immediately before people were going to eat meals.



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