

Fitness United set up to support sector

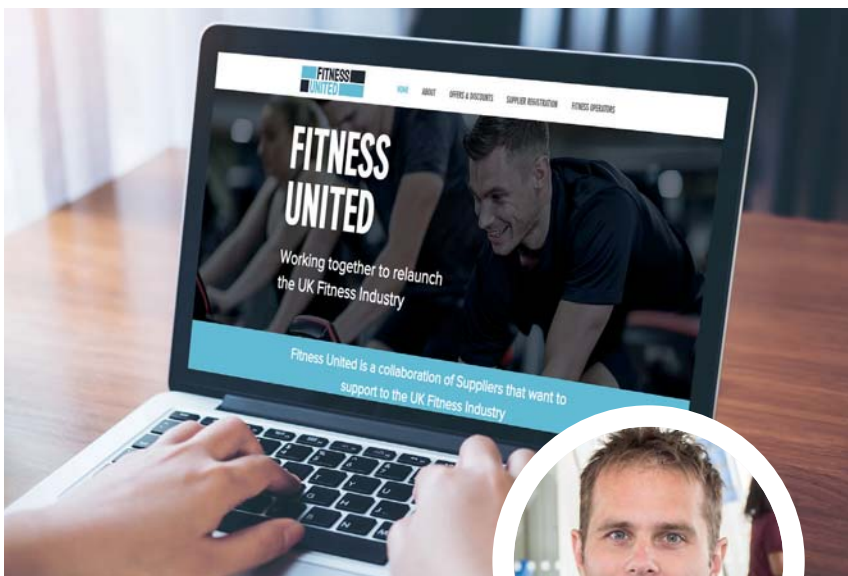
A group of leading suppliers to the fitness industry have joined forces to launch Fitness United – a campaign to support fitness facility operators through the COVID-19 crisis and into the post-lockdown period.

The Fitness United mission is to create a collaboration of suppliers that are committed to doing whatever they can to support fitness facility operators, with support, offers and new services.

The initiative will be open to all reputable suppliers and founder members include Hussle, Technogym, HCM, Wexer, Love Recruitment, Core Health & Fitness and Learn Direct.

Participating suppliers will display the Fitness United official supporter logo on their website and marketing collateral, while their offers and support will be communicated to interested operators via the Fitness United campaign website and through an opt-in newsletter.

The campaign will initially run until the end of 2020.



■ The initiative will run until the end of 2020

Neil Harmsworth, co-founder of Hussle, said: "Fitness United will provide suppliers with a platform to show their solidarity and support for fitness facility operators during a period of unprecedented disruption and change.

"Fitness United will provide real and tangible services, offers and content."

[More: http://lei.sr/U8x6P_0](http://lei.sr/U8x6P_0)



Fitness United will provide real and tangible services, offers and content

Neil Harmsworth



BUDGET CHAINS

Exclusive: Xercise4Less put up for sale

Budget fitness chain being sold off by current owners

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REOPENINGS

ukactive disappointed at government's 'lack of clarity'

Decision to class gyms as 'higher risk' draws questions

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MAJOR PROJECT

Approval given for £150m subterranean wellness club

Reef Group behind plans for huge London site

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CIMSPA chief executive **Tara Dillon**: allowing limited personal training will bring 'some relief' to fitness sector

Allowing limited personal training to resume in outdoor settings in England will offer "some relief" to those in the physical activity sector, according to Tara Dillon, CEO of The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).

Dillon welcomed news that, from Wednesday 13 May, outdoor personal training has been allowed on a one-to-one basis, provided that social distancing guidelines are observed (but not in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

"The reopening of gyms and leisure centres is still some way off, but we are



■ Dillon is pleased that some outdoor personal training can resume

"We urge all personal trainers to ensure they adhere strictly to the government's social distancing and hygiene guidelines"

pleased that some outdoor personal training can resume," she said. "This will give some relief to

many in our sector who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and will provide a valuable

service to their customers. We would, however, urge all personal trainers to ensure they adhere strictly to the government's social distancing and hygiene guidelines and keep the safety of themselves and their customers as their number one priority."

While outdoor training can now recommence, the use of outdoor gyms will not be permitted.

The use of equipment should be kept to a minimum and only used in tandem with stringent hygiene practices – meaning the thorough cleaning of all equipment before and after use.

[More: http://lei.sr/C7k6C_0](http://lei.sr/C7k6C_0)

New revenue streams: **Keith Burnet** shares learnings from fitness operators in China



■ Operators that seem to be winning have moved through the change curve quickly with a positive mindset, said Burnet

In a new webinar, Keith Burnet, CEO of global markets at Les Mills, has given insights into how health and fitness operators in China are responding to the coronavirus lockdown.

A global business, Les Mills has been working with operators around the world as the lockdown has rolled from East to West and the Les Mills top team is sharing learnings.

Burnet said some operators had managed to retain the majority of their revenues, in spite of being

"Identifying solutions will only come when you and your team are in 'moving forward' mode"

closed, and stressed the importance of adopting a 'business as usual' attitude.

"Your physical real estate may be closed," he said, "but if your mindset is that you're open and you have a job to do to continue to provide services, then the way you tackle the challenge will be completely different. Identifying solutions and finding a way through this will

only come when you and your team are in 'moving forward' mode – moving to acceptance and making a plan."

Burnet gave examples of Chinese operators who had used the shutdown to upskill their teams, host online education, strengthen their teams through recruiting great people from their competitors and unlock online efficiencies.

[More: http://lei.sr/T9e6D_0](http://lei.sr/T9e6D_0)



■ The chancellor received a letter signed by nearly 100 MPs

"The tourism and hospitality sectors play a significant role in the economy, providing 3.1m and 3.2m supported jobs respectively"

MPs write to **Rishi Sunak**, asking for tourism support

Nearly 100 members of parliament (MP) have written a letter to chancellor Rishi Sunak, asking the government to "do more" to protect the UK tourism and hospitality industry.

The letter, sent in by 85 MPs, outlines a number of additional support measures, in order to protect the more than six million jobs across the industry.

"The tourism and hospitality sectors play a significant role in the UK economy, providing 3.1m and 3.2m supported jobs respectively, as well as contributing billions of pounds to our local and national economies," the letter reads.

"These were the first sectors to be significantly adversely impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown and they are likely to be the last sectors to reopen.

"We welcome the measures already in place to support these industries. That said, further support will be needed to ensure that these sectors are able to survive."

In the letter, the MPs set out a number of temporary measures, which they say would further safeguard the sectors.

These include extending the business rate relief threshold from £50,000 to £150,000 and reducing the VAT rate on tourism to 5 per cent.

[More: http://lei.sr/g4N9g_0](http://lei.sr/g4N9g_0)

leisure opps

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Oliver Dowden: government 'stepping up plans' for the return of sport

The UK government has begun stepping up its plans for the return of sport, according to culture secretary Oliver Dowden.

Dowden revealed that the DCMS held the "first of many" virtual meetings with medical experts from professional and elite sports organisations and Public Health England.

The meeting was attended by representatives of football, cricket, horseracing, rugby union and UK Sport – representing Olympic and Paralympic sports – as

"We held an initial, constructive meeting with medical representatives from a number of sports"

well as the Sports Ground Safety Authority.

Among those attending the meeting – which was held behind closed doors – were the deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan Van-Tam and UK Sport CEO Sally Munday.

"We held an initial, constructive meeting with medical representatives from a number of

professional and elite sports bodies, government and PHE," he said.

"This was to step up planning on what needs to be done so athletes can return to training, when it's deemed safe. The training will be ahead of any return to top-level sport, which can only happen when medical experts advise so."

[More: http://lei.sr/Y3C8w_0](http://lei.sr/Y3C8w_0)

■ Dowden said top-level sport would only return when medical and scientific advice would allow it

Noel Asmar addresses the "culture shock" of wearing face masks in spas

Provider of uniforms for the health and wellness industry, Noel Asmar Uniforms, is tackling the culture shock of face masks in high-touch spa environments.

Company founder Noel Asmar believes that in order for the spa industry to bounce back when spas reopen, it will be crucial to restore confidence in both guests and therapists. In her opinion, masks will play a crucial role in facilitating this as they will help make guests comfortable accepting close-contact treatment and assist therapists' confidence.

Asmar said: "Safety wear is a cultural shock for many of us and it's contrary



■ Asmar (left) has produced two types of non-medical face masks



"Safety wear is a cultural shock for many of us and it's contrary to the high-touch nature of spa and wellness"

to the high-touch nature of spa and wellness.

"In 2002, I saw spa therapists wearing ill-fitting

medical smocks and thought this doesn't feel right. As spas have an air of hospitality and wellness; why are they

wearing medical smocks? That's what drove me to design spa uniforms. Now, 18 years later, we're faced with a similar challenge: most masks don't feel right."

In response, Asmar has recently launched two types of non-medical face masks – called Modern and Inspire – designed to fit into wellness settings, comfort clients and empower therapists.

The new masks are reusable, feature an adjustable wrap-around head strap, offer a customised fit and can be tailored to match spa uniforms, as well as having a pocket for equipping medical-grade filters.

[More: http://lei.sr/g8u4t_0](http://lei.sr/g8u4t_0)

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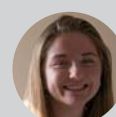
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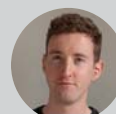
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■ Earlam has led the David Lloyd Leisure business since 2015

Glenn Earlam says David Lloyd will begin reopening its clubs for tennis

Glenn Earlam, CEO of David Lloyd Leisure (DLL), says the operator is reopening 26 of its UK clubs for tennis, following the government's announcement that courts can reopen.

No charge will be made for members with packages that allow access to racquets facilities and their memberships will remain frozen. DLL says "measures will be in place to ensure that the safety of both members and team members is not compromised."

Speaking to the *Guardian*, Earlam said he is also lobbying

for consent to run outdoor exercise classes and to reopen DLL's outdoor swimming pools, saying: "I'm struggling to see how opening the outdoor areas of a David Lloyd isn't safer than going into an indoor shopping centre."

Indoor gyms in the UK have not yet been told when they will be allowed to open, with the government indicating they will be among the last type of public facility to get the green light. The industry is lobbying through trade body, ukactive, to achieve optimal timing.

[More: http://lei.sr/j5s6j_0](http://lei.sr/j5s6j_0)

"I'm struggling to see how opening the outdoor areas of a David Lloyd isn't safer than going into an indoor shopping centre"

BUDGET OPERATORS

Exclusive: Xercise4Less put up for sale

Budget fitness chain, Xercise4Less, is being sold off by its investors, directors and shareholders, which include the BGF investment fund and Proventus Capital Partners, *Leisure Opportunities* can reveal.

The chain, which operates 51 gyms across the UK, has been hit by the COVID-19 lockdown and the owners brought in restructuring specialist Alan Fort recently to review its position.

Speaking to *Leisure Opportunities*, an official spokesperson said: "The directors and owners have reviewed the financial resources of the company and assessed the projected reopening date of our clubs

– along with the time needed to rebuild the membership base of the business.

"The decision has been taken to seek additional funds, with the best way of achieving this being to begin a sale process.

"This will enable us to come out of the COVID-19 crisis in a stronger position."

In May 2018, Xercise4Less secured growth investment of £42m from Proventus, a debt provider to the company. BGF is understood to have a £21.7m stake, while Jon Wright continues to have an interest in the business.

Founded in 2009 by Wright, the chain has around 250,000 members.

[More: http://lei.sr/6x5d9_0](http://lei.sr/6x5d9_0)



■ The chain has 51 gyms nationally and around 250,000 members



The decision has been taken to seek additional funds, with the best way of achieving this being to begin a sale process

Xercise4Less spokesperson

PUBLIC FACILITIES

LGA: UK's public leisure centres facing a 'crisis point'



If we do not act now, it will cost us much more in the long-term

Gerald Vernon-Jackson

Leisure centre operators are facing crisis point without access to emergency government funding or support, the Local Government Association (LGA) has warned.

The LGA has written to culture secretary Oliver Dowden, urging the government to ensure leisure trusts are given access to the new £750m grant-based package earmarked for the charity and social enterprise sector.

LGA says councils are already supporting providers through emergency measures – but that, in some cases, the support at local level isn't enough.



■ A third of the UK's pools are publicly-owned

"Councils are deeply concerned about the future of leisure trusts," said Gerald Vernon-Jackson, chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board.

"If we do not act to save these vital community resources, it will cost us much more in the long-term."

[More: http://lei.sr/X9T7j_0](http://lei.sr/X9T7j_0)

REOPENING FITNESS

ukactive questions government's 'lack of clarity'



In its current form, the strategy doesn't provide the clarity we seek

Huw Edwards

ukactive has questioned the UK government's apparent decision to class gyms and leisure centres among a group of "higher risk" industry sectors, which means that there is no definite or potential date for the reopening of facilities.

In response to the government's 50-page *Our plan to rebuild: the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy* document, Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive, said: "The government's COVID-19 recovery strategy in its current form regrettably does not provide the clarity we are seeking



■ The government has classed gyms as 'higher risk'

– omitting both a clear window for reopening our facilities and the guarantee of continued financial support essential for the viability of the sector.

"We question, in good faith, the categorisation of our sector as higher risk in comparison to other sectors which are listed earlier for reopening."

[More: http://lei.sr/s2E7a_0](http://lei.sr/s2E7a_0)

GUIDANCE

Europe Active publishes COVID standards

Representative body, EuropeActive, has published new standards for gym operators advising them on operating gyms and health clubs under COVID-19.

Called *Summary of current recommended practices for operating under COVID-19 restrictions*, the document is designed to be used in conjunction with local laws and guidelines.

EuropeActive says: "This is general guidance only for consideration by operators when re-opening their facility...national conditions may apply and alter this guidance."



■ Members will be asked to bring their own water



This is general guidance only for consideration by operators when re-opening their facility...national conditions may apply and alter this guidance

EuropeActive

The standards assume that a number of areas of clubs will not be open or operating, including swimming pools, saunas, spa areas and outside activities and that cafés and changing rooms will also be closed.

Guidelines include that operators should use a booking system to control access to the club to ensure there is no over-crowding or queuing.

[More: http://lei.sr/3V3c9_0](http://lei.sr/3V3c9_0)

Sector mourns death of Water Babies CEO, Steve Franks

The physical activity sector has been left in shock by news that Steve Franks, the long-serving chief executive of Water Babies, has died following a short illness.

Tributes and condolences have flooded in on social media for Franks, an industry veteran who spent six years as operations director at the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA), before being appointed CEO at Water Babies in 2009.

Franks had been involved in the UK sport and leisure industry in a senior management capacity for more than 25 years.

[More: http://lei.sr/T5n6X_0](http://lei.sr/T5n6X_0)

RESEARCH

What will gym customers need post-crisis?

How will customers engage with gyms and health clubs after lockdown? What will their new spending patterns be? How regularly will they attend?

In a bid to find the answer to these questions, Leisure-net Solutions, Max Associates and 4Global's Datahub have announced the launch of a customer attitude survey to help operators understand customers' exercise habits as they emerge from lockdown, as well as how they feel about using gyms and leisure facilities.

"We want to help operators understand what has worked during lockdown, how customers are planning to

respond when lockdown is reversed and what types of actions they expect from operators to keep them safe, from cleanliness to social distancing," says Dave Monkhouse, director of Leisure-net Solutions

The survey will also gauge the value customers place on regular exercise and what they will consider value for money in the future.

The results will be benchmarked against all operators taking part, as well as regionally depending on volume. Overall results will be shared with the sector.

"It's vital the sector understands customers' needs," Monkhouse added.

[More: http://lei.sr/Y5g4b_0](http://lei.sr/Y5g4b_0)



■ The study is by Leisure-net, Max Associates and 4Global



We want to help operators see what has worked during lockdown

Dave Monkhouse

MAJOR PROJECT

London: approval given for £150m subterranean club



We'll invest more than £150m in developing a vibrant, sustainable and sensitively designed place with a core focus on health and wellbeing

Stewart Deering

Westminster City Council has approved developer Reef Group's plans to invest over £150m (US\$185.3m, €171.4m) in Cavendish Square, transforming the space into a subterranean mixed-use destination, with a focus on healthcare and wellbeing.

Claimed to be London's first subterranean health and wellbeing destination, the 280,000sq ft (26,000sq m) destination will deliver specialist facilities for London's private healthcare sector.

Although no tenants have yet been announced, renderings envisage clinical,



■ The project is led by developer Reef Group

spa, fitness and bathing facilities, as well as restaurants, bars and retail space.

Stewart Deering, joint CEO of Reef Group said: "We'll invest £150m in developing a vibrant, sustainable and sensitively designed place with a core focus on health and wellbeing."

[More: http://lei.sr/a4e4B_0](http://lei.sr/a4e4B_0)

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REOPENING STRATEGIES

Sector collaborates on reopening framework

ukactive has published an operational framework for use by gyms, leisure centres and the wider UK fitness industry when reopening – once they're permitted to do so by the government.

The framework has been reviewed by independent medical experts and ukactive's Scientific Advisory Board, to ensure gym and health club owners base their operational decisions on scientific evidence and guidance.

The document has also been informed by best practice from international markets and is endorsed by the UK's leading operators.

ukactive will use the framework to inform

ongoing discussions with the government on the proposed reopening of the sector, providing the government with insight and expertise from the sector.

The framework has been designed to provide the basis for individual operators to develop their own technical operating guidance for customers, staff and supply chains.

"The framework has been designed to offer crucial support to our members as they plan their emergence from lockdown by putting the safety of members and staff first," said Huw Edwards, chief executive of ukactive.

[More: http://lei.sr/h2C4P_0](http://lei.sr/h2C4P_0)



■ The framework has been endorsed by the UK's leading operators



This framework will offer crucial support to our members

Huw Edwards

SPA REOPENINGS

UKSA to lobby government for clearer reopening advice



We need the correct knowledge of how we can reopen businesses

Helena Grzesk

The UK Spa Association (UKSA) is conducting an industry survey to gather information to lobby the UK government for clear reopening guidance after COVID-19.

Named the 'What's next for Wellness?' survey, the questionnaire covers a range of topics asking participants questions such as how COVID-19 has impacted their businesses' financially, how operating procedures may be adapted during the reopening phase, whether the company has applied for furlough assistance and how training has been approached during lockdown.



■ The survey will result in an industry lobbying group

The results will be published in May and used soon after in conjunction with a joint wellness industry lobbying group for presentation to the government.

Helena Grzesk, GM of UKSA, said: "We need the correct knowledge and understanding of how we can reopen our businesses and our industry as a whole

[More: http://lei.sr/J2w3R_0](http://lei.sr/J2w3R_0)

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- Chat Interface:** A 'CHATS' section with messages from Karen Leussen and Coen Paulo.
- Main Dashboard:** A 'GOOD MORNING ALEX' screen with a 'GET THE MOST OUT OF YOURSELF' banner, a 'LET'S GET STARTED!' button, and 'TOP PICKS FOR YOU' including 'Beginner 7 BARBELL MINUTES', 'Intermediate TAKE 10', and 'Beginner OUT OF THE BOX'.
- Workout Demonstrations:** Two small video thumbnails showing exercises with a kettlebell and a barbell.

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- **Harvard Business Review**



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NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Pure Gym reveals global franchise plans

Budget operator, Pure Gym, has revealed it's trialling a franchise offering to grow the brand globally.

Speaking at the Fit Summit in Singapore on 5 May, Pure's chief strategy officer, Francine Davis, said the company is looking for master franchise partners in countries such as China, India, and Japan. She said Pure was testing the model and the first couple of deals had already been agreed.

Davis explained the move is part of Pure's expansion strategy, saying: "We could see many areas across the world that are under-served by good quality, low-cost fitness with no contract models. We think Pure Gym

has a successful model we can transport into other areas of the world and this has led us to create this franchise offering."

She said Pure had considered expanding with direct development, but ruled this out as too high risk and was looking at the option of going down the franchising route instead, as these opportunities are areas the company has no experience: "We may know the environments," she explained, "But we don't know the infrastructure and don't have people on the ground."

"We want to work with master franchises rather than individuals," said Davis.

[More: http://lei.sr/G8v3N_0](http://lei.sr/G8v3N_0)



■ Pure Gym is trialling a global franchise offering



We want to work with master franchisees, rather than individuals

Francine Davis

GOVERNMENT

Government 'engaging with gyms via Sport England'



We've worked closely with Sport England to promote fitness

Nigel Huddleston

Sports minister Nigel Huddleston has said the DCMS is working closely with Sport England to promote health and fitness during the current lockdown – and that it's using the sports body to in turn engage with the fitness industry.

Huddleston made the comments in response to a written question from Luke Evans, the Conservative MP for Bosworth – who is also a GP.

Evans asked the Secretary of State for DCMS to outline the steps the department had taken to "involve (a) gyms and (b) personal trainers in promoting fitness during the lockdown".



■ Exercise during lockdown was described as 'crucial'

The question was answered by Huddleston, who began by saying that physical activity was "crucial to the health and wellbeing of the nation", adding that "we have been working closely with our national sports council Sport England to continue to promote health and fitness during lockdown".

[More: http://lei.sr/Q7K4F_0](http://lei.sr/Q7K4F_0)



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NEW REVENUE STREAMS

GLL pivots to create food delivery system

Leisure trust GLL has partnered with foodservice company Brakes to offer a home delivery service to its members – and to create an alternative revenue stream during the lockdown.

Brakes normally supplies the 80 cafés situated within GLL-operated leisure facilities across the UK.

With the centres now closed, however – and supermarkets still struggling to meet the increase in demand for home deliveries generated by the COVID-19 lockdown – the two have launched a joint venture.

The service can be accessed via GLL's 'Better' app and members using the app will be able to order

from a range of 6,000 food products, including dairy, bread, desserts, drinks, store cupboard items, meat and poultry, fresh and frozen vegetables, ready meals and more.

According to Marco Coppola, GLL's group health and fitness manager, the service is an industry first – and shows how digital assets can be harnessed for a number of uses.

"This is a totally new venture for us, but we have an established relationship with Brakes and – as a social enterprise – we are committed to helping the local communities whenever we can," he said.

[More: http://lei.sr/s5m3F_0](http://lei.sr/s5m3F_0)



■ The framework has been endorsed by the UK's leading operators



This shows how digital assets can be harnessed for a number of uses

Marco Coppola

GLOBAL BRANDS

Gold's Gym files for bankruptcy protection



This will enable us to emerge stronger and ready to grow

Adam Zeitsiff

Franchised fitness giant Gold's Gym has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, as it struggles with the impact of coronavirus lockdowns.

In a statement, CEO Adam Zeitsiff said that the move was part of a restructuring process which would see at least 30 company-owned gyms close permanently.

He added, however, that the action would not mean the end of the business, saying that the company was "absolutely not going anywhere" and that it planned to emerge from bankruptcy protection within three months.



■ Gold's Gym was founded by Joe Gold in 1965

"This pre-negotiated filing will enable us to emerge stronger and ready to grow, and it is our intent to be on the other side of Chapter 11 by 1 August 2020, if not sooner," Zeitsiff said.

"This action will maintain the strength and growth of the potential of the brand."

[More: http://lei.sr/U7a5R_0](http://lei.sr/U7a5R_0)

Setting ambitious goals for our people

We're in the business of people. From the sector's 189,000-strong workforce to the 10 million members we engage with, people are at the centre of everything the physical activity sector stands for.

The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the importance we already place on people. Leaders have had to step up to a level that they may never have imagined they'd be required to achieve in their careers, and our frontline workforce has – in a lot of cases – had to adapt to life on furlough.

Despite the challenges, many have responded in an agile way, moving services to digital and helping customers remain active. This demonstrates our sector's incredible level of professionalism and leadership.

Ambitious sector

The physical activity sector workforce has a huge thirst for learning and development. From PTs looking to develop their knowledge of a specific client population so that they can help more people become active, to people working their way up the career ladder by developing leadership capabilities, our sector is eager to learn and progress. Now is a great time for our sector to pause, reflect, and learn.

A number of ukactive members are leading the way in creating opportunities for learning and development; Premier Global NASM opened up access to its CPD courses on mental toughness and Active iQ has offered access to a library of online courses via its Skills Hub.

We've also seen great innovation from the likes of Future Fit Training, which has reworked its ProZone to create a MemberZone, which allows clubs and



In a post-lockdown world, our role in renewing the wellbeing of the nation will be front and centre like never before

leisure centres to remain connected with their members and customers and promote positive mental and physical wellbeing to members and staff alike while they are away from their facilities.

As the sector turns its attention to reopening, training providers are working hard to ensure we don't see a skills gap open up. Online learning is now the norm – approximately 80 per cent of training providers are expecting online delivery to further assist with training in the future, according to CIMSPA's *COVID-19 Sector Impact Phase 1* report.

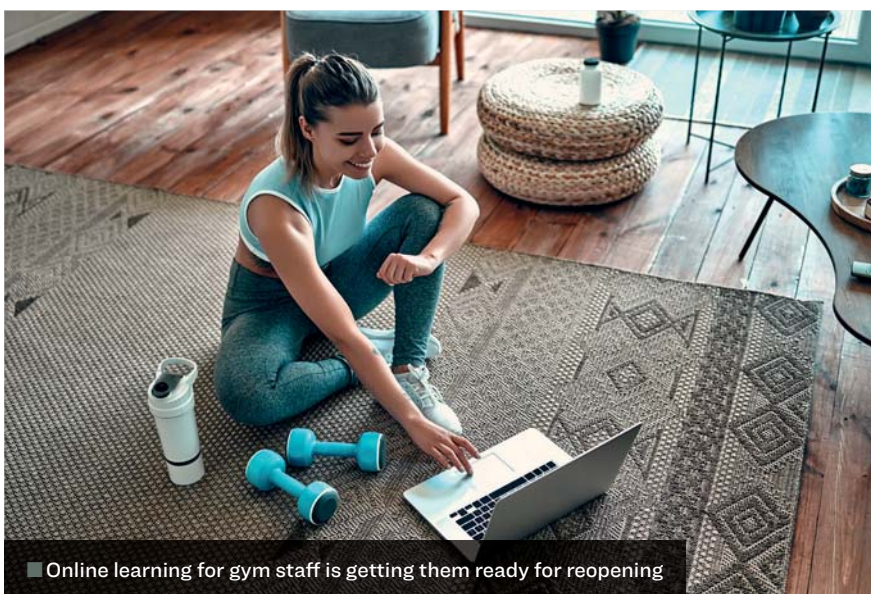


■ Chris Foster, head of learning and development, ukactive

But in a people-centred industry, our fitness professionals will need the support of operators to guarantee that they can complete their qualifications with a final practical assessment.

ukactive will continue to work closely with CIMSPA and members to find practical ways that work for all concerned.

Our role in renewing the wellbeing of the nation is going to be front and centre and our amazing people will be the most important factor for a successful return to business. Supporting the workforce during lockdown, therefore, is essential. ●



■ Online learning for gym staff is getting them ready for reopening



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DIGITAL FITNESS

Sport England and ukactive launch This Mum Moves



We hope that this resource will help more pregnant women

Rachel Lawson

Sport England and ukactive have teamed up to launch a series of online workouts to help pregnant women and new mums be physically active at home.

The new This Mum Moves resource is part of a collaboration between ukactive's This Mum Moves programme and Sport England's Join the Movement campaign and includes a new website showcasing online workouts specifically created for antenatal and postnatal women.

Featuring a wide range of activities – from yoga and Pilates to circuit training and CV exercises – the videos focus on general fitness.



■ Exercises offered range from yoga to CV training

Each exercise session has been reviewed by a panel of experts.

Rachel Lawson, project manager at ukactive, said: "We hope that this bespoke resource will help more pregnant women and new mums to feel comfortable and confident about trying these activities at home."

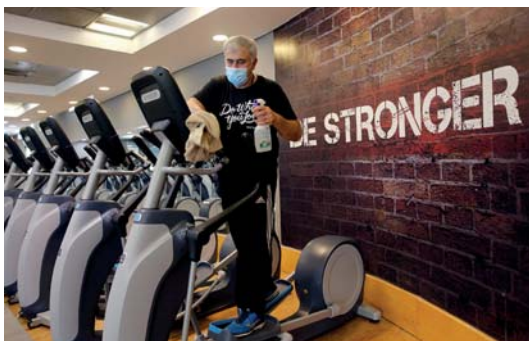
[More: http://lei.sr/X3d5V_0](http://lei.sr/X3d5V_0)

GUIDANCE

'Return to work' guidance published for exercise professionals

A new safety guide, aimed at exercise professionals returning to work at fitness facilities after COVID-19 shutdowns, has been published by the US-based Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals (CREP).

The guide incorporates health and safety research from the World Health Organization (WHO), the US Centers for Disease Control, the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.



■ The guide recommends setting up cleaning schedules



Determine areas and equipment that users can access and which will remain off-limits

The CREP guide

Key recommendations in the guide include:

- Assess spaces to support social distancing
- Determine areas and kit that users can access and which will remain off-limits
- Set rules for PPE use
- Prepare an operating plan and train staff on procedures
- Establish cleaning and sanitization practices
- Modify classes and training schedules.

[More: http://lei.sr/B9E6B_0](http://lei.sr/B9E6B_0)

Major sports facing £700m loss from pandemic

Leaders of three major English sports have told MPs that they are set to lose more than £700m between them over the next 12 months.

Appearing in front of the DCMS select committee, Rick Parry, chair of English Football League, said clubs in the three divisions of the league were heading towards "a financial hole of £200m".

Separately, the MPs heard that losing the entire cricket season would result in more than £380m of lost income, while the RFU is set to lose £122m in 2020 due to no games in Twickenham.

[More: http://lei.sr/E8e7W_0](http://lei.sr/E8e7W_0)

NEW RESOURCE

We Work Well launches digital event

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, a plethora of industry events and conferences have been cancelled and rescheduled to avoid risking the spread of the virus.

In response, buyer event company, We Work Well, is pivoting its annual event into a digital offering and has announced the launch of We Work Well Virtual, a web-based meeting platform.

The platform takes the We Work Well concept online, connecting spa and wellness suppliers with decision-makers from luxury spas, through scheduled one-on-one meetings, education, and networking.

As COVID-19 continues to change the events landscape,

company founders Monica Helmstetter and Lucy Hugo have been collaborating with their software team to develop a virtual meeting solution that most effectively translates their events into an online format.

Helmstetter said: "We're using the challenges presented by the pandemic to further expand our platform and create a healthy event alternative. We're thrilled that We Work Well Virtual can continue our mission of connecting suppliers and decision-makers, even in the absence of in-person events."

"We see it as a way to broaden our reach and create new opportunities."

[More: http://lei.sr/V3B2y_0](http://lei.sr/V3B2y_0)



■ The inaugural We Work Well event was held in 2019



We're using the challenges to further expand our platform

Monica Helmstetter

EVENTS

ISPA Conference and Expo rescheduled to May 2021



We're pausing and re-imagining everything around the conference

Lynne McNeese

The International Spa Association (ISPA) has announced it has rescheduled and relocated the 30th annual ISPA Conference and Expo.

The event has been moved to 10-12 May 2021 and will take place at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

ISPA made the decision to allow the spa and wellness community to focus on preparing their businesses for reopening and welcoming back guests. The organisation is also working to reangle the event to offer relevant content and support following the COVID-19 crisis.



■ The event will take place 10-12 May 2021

Lynne McNeese, ISPA president, said "We're taking this opportunity to pause and re-imagine everything around the conference in order to ensure we provide the industry with what it truly needs."

The organisation has recently produced a COVID-19 Reopening Toolkit to control and assist spa reopening planning.

[More: http://lei.sr/q8w2D_0](http://lei.sr/q8w2D_0)

Pandemic – three things I’ve learned



■ Kurt Janson is director of the Tourism Alliance

The UK tourism industry is still in the eye of the storm when it comes to the Coronavirus outbreak and the main emphasis at the moment is simply on providing as much support for businesses as possible and trying to make sure that as many as possible are able to survive the storm and come out the other side.

When things are back to some semblance of normal – or the “new normal” – there will be plenty of time to draw breath, look back at what happened, and learn the lessons of what worked in terms of tourism support and what didn’t.

However, in the meantime, here are three things that I’ve learned so far.

We need a better way of communicating with small businesses

This crisis has highlighted the fact that most tourism businesses are microbusinesses that are not properly plugged into information networks like trade associations, destination management organisations or local chambers of commerce. Getting the information that these businesses need on what the rules are for operating, how to gain support from Government or what they need to do to protect customers has proven extremely difficult. If there was ever a case for why we need registration schemes, this is it.

We need proper funding for DMOs

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are there to support small local tourism businesses. However, this outbreak has shown that they simply don’t have the resources to do this in

crisis situations, because they don’t have a sustainable funding mechanism. As most DMOs are funded by councils, and councils do not have a statutory responsibility to fund tourism, their resources have been continually cut to the point that they struggle when hit with a crisis like this and are poorly placed to be able to fully support efforts to rebuild the industry when we reopen.

We need to value domestic tourism

The view of government is that inbound tourism generates income and wealth for the country while domestic tourism simply distributes money between destinations – and, therefore, doesn’t warrant support. Yet that’s precisely why government should support domestic tourism – it redistributes wealth within the economy, largely from wealthy urban areas to less wealthy communities. Around £35bn a year flows from urban to rural and seaside destinations, supporting local economies and providing employment. Tourism should be a key component of the Government’s levelling up agendas. ●



This crisis has highlighted the fact that most tourism businesses are microbusinesses that are not properly plugged into information networks



■ Domestic tourism should be supported, as it generates and redistributes wealth

A man with a beard and extensive tattoos on his arms and neck is shown from the chest up, wearing a light grey tank top. He is raising his right arm, which is covered in various tattoos including a large rose, a skull, and a banner that says "HARD ROCK". His left arm is also tattooed. In the background, other people's arms are visible, also raised, suggesting a group activity or class. The setting appears to be a bright, modern studio with large windows.

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An active travel revolution

The UK government's £2bn investment in active travel has been hailed as a "once in a generation opportunity"



The UK government's pledge to invest £2bn in improving the nation's cycling and walking infrastructure has been described as a "once in a generation opportunity" to create a sustainable active travel network. The largest-ever single boost for cyclists and pedestrians, the funding aims to create a "new era for cycling and walking" and to encourage widespread active travel, relieving the pressure on public transport.

Within weeks, the investment will see pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle-only corridors being created across England, as part of a £250m emergency active travel fund – the first stage of the £2bn investment.

The government will work with local authorities to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around. These include investment in existing plans, such as the ones by Greater Manchester (to create 150 miles of protected cycle track, *read more here:* <http://lei.sr/q9q3H>) and Transport for London (a "bike Tube" network above Underground lines).

Fast-tracked statutory guidance, effective immediately, has also told councils to reallocate road space for significantly-increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians.

We recognise this moment for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change



■ The £2bn investment could lead to the UK adopting Copenhagen-style city-centre planning, with cycling at its heart

If ever there was a good time to get on your bike, it's now – you'll be helping take pressure off public transport

In towns and cities, some streets will become bike and bus-only, while others remain available for motorists. More side streets will be closed to through-traffic, creating low-traffic neighbourhoods and reduce "rat-running", while maintaining access for vehicles.

Vouchers will be issued for cycle repairs, to encourage people to get their old bikes back on the road, and plans are being developed for greater provision of bike fixing facilities. There will also be a campaign to encourage more people to look at alternative ways to travel, to walk or get on a bike for their commute instead of public transport.

Announcing the measures, transport secretary Grant Shapps said: "During the COVID-19 crisis, millions of people have discovered cycling – whether for exercise or as a means of safe, socially-distanced transport. While there is no change to the 'stay at home' message for now, when the country does get back to work we need those people to stay on their bikes and be joined by many more.

"Otherwise, with public transport's capacity severely restricted at this time, our trains and buses could become overcrowded and our roads gridlocked – holding up emergency services, critical workers and vital supplies."

The measures have been hailed as "unprecedented" and a number of famous faces from the world of cycling have celebrated the plans.

"If ever there was a good time to get on your bike, it's now – you'll be helping take pressure off public transport," said Sir Dave Brailsford, former performance director of British Cycling and Team SKY.

Chris Boardman, the former Olympian and current Cycling and Walking Commissioner for Greater Manchester, said that the government's measures were "the real deal", adding that "we have never seen anything like this before".

"We recognise this moment for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities," Boardman said. ●



■ Chris Boardman said the government's pledge was "the real deal"



Our analysis shows that the impact might be as high as cutting the mortality rate in half

Vadim Backman, Northwestern University



Vitamin D, the secret weapon?

A new study suggests that having adequate levels of vitamin D in the body can dramatically improve COVID-19 outcomes



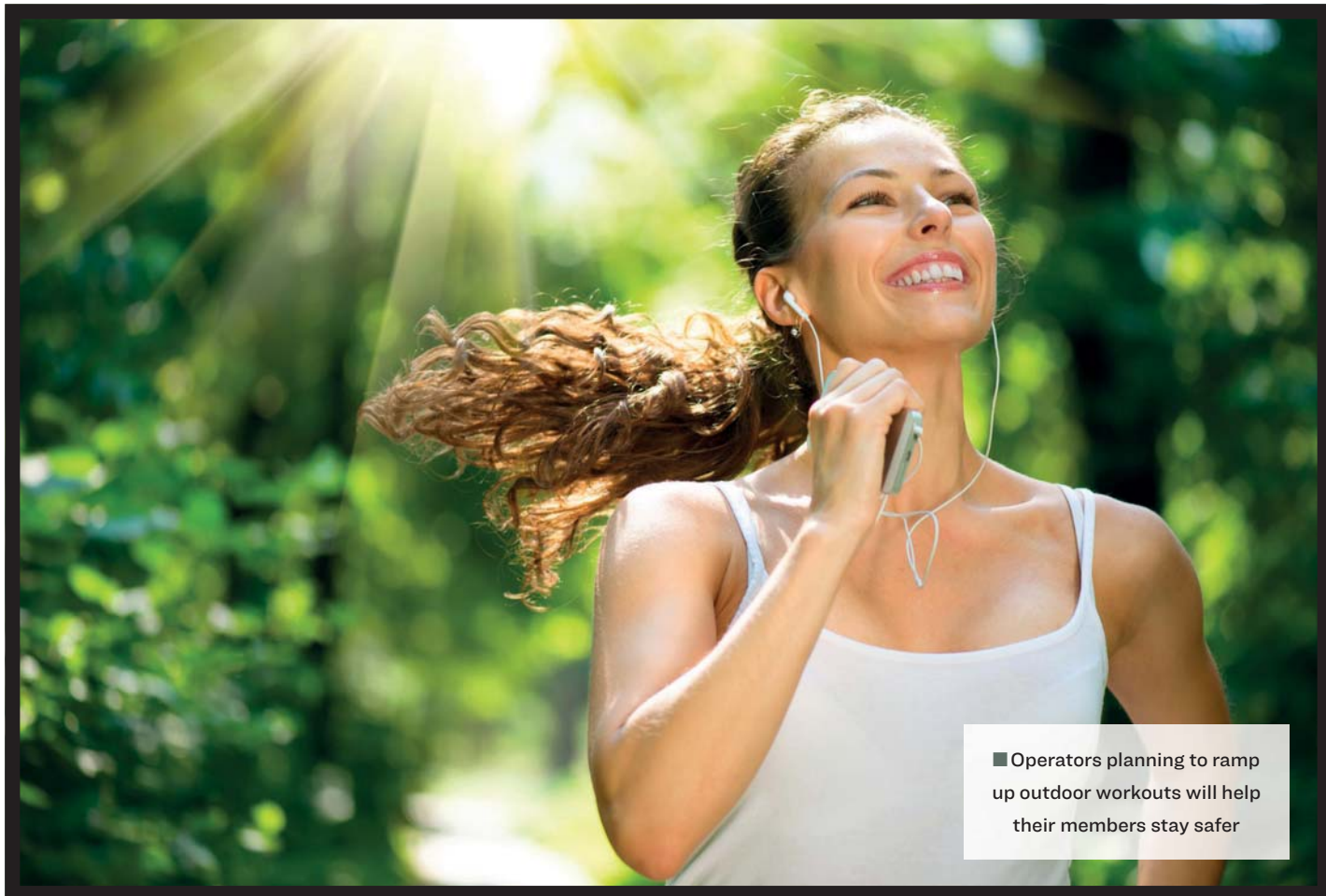
■ The body synthesises vitamin D in sunlight – it can also be acquired from dietary sources

People who have a severe vitamin D deficiency are twice as likely to experience severe complications – including death – if they contract coronavirus.

That's the headline finding of a study conducted at Northwestern University in the US, which undertook a statistical analysis of data from hospitals and clinics across China, France, Germany, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

After studying the global data relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team – led by professor of biomedical engineering, Vadim Backman – discovered a strong correlation between severe vitamin D deficiency and mortality rates.

Patients from countries with high COVID-19 mortality rates, such as Italy, Spain and the UK, had lower levels of



■ Operators planning to ramp up outdoor workouts will help their members stay safer



Vitamin D will not prevent a patient from contracting the virus, but it may reduce complications and prevent death



vitamin D, compared to patients in countries that were not as severely affected. By analysing the publicly available patient data, the study discovered a strong correlation between vitamin D levels and cytokine storm — a hyperinflammatory condition caused by an over-active immune system — as well as a correlation between vitamin D deficiency and mortality.

Cytokine storm can severely damage lungs and lead to acute respiratory distress syndrome and death in patients — and seems to be what is killing a majority of COVID-19 patients.

This is exactly where Backman believes vitamin D plays a major role. Not only does vitamin D strengthen our immune systems, but it also prevents them from becoming dangerously over-active. This means having healthy levels of vitamin D could protect

patients against severe complications, including death, from COVID-19.

"Our analysis shows that the impact might be as high as cutting the mortality rate in half," Backman said.

"It will not prevent a patient from contracting the virus, but it may reduce complications and prevent death in those who are infected."

Backman added that the correlation might help explain the many mysteries surrounding COVID-19, such as why children are less likely to die.

Children do not yet have a fully developed "acquired" immune system, which is the immune system's second line of defence and more likely to overreact.

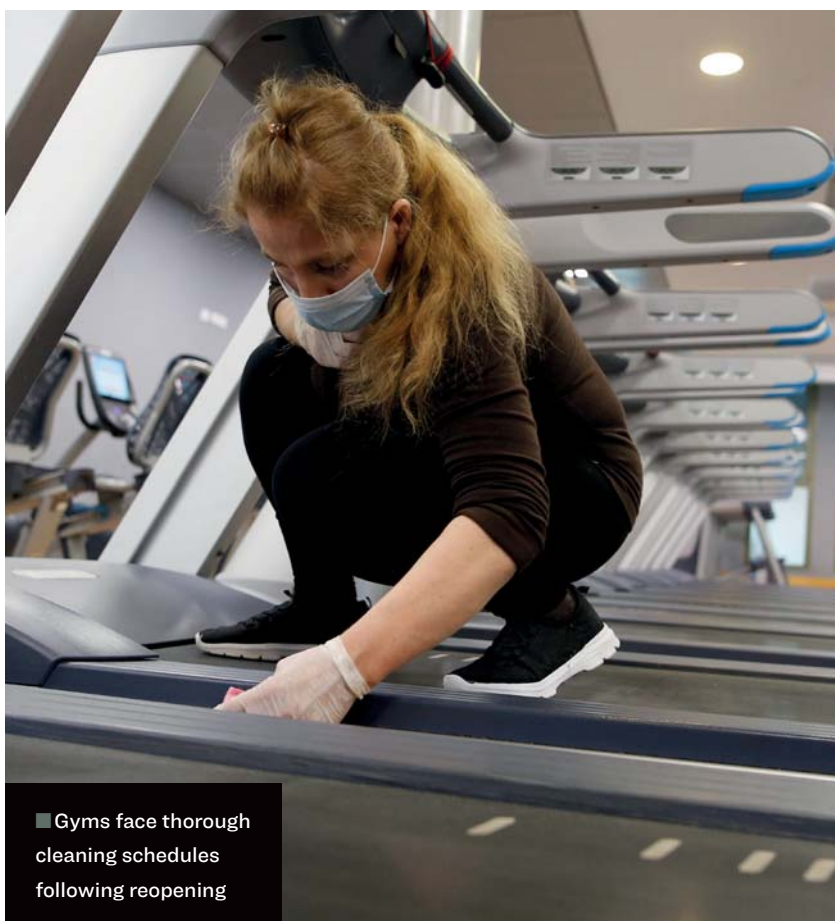
"Children primarily rely on their innate immune system," Backman said. "This may explain why their mortality rate is lower." ●



■ The study found that those with vitamin D deficiencies were in danger of having complications if they fell ill with COVID-19

Back to work(out)

After a long standstill, the global fitness market is starting to relaunch – we look at who's reopening and when



■ Gyms face thorough cleaning schedules following reopening

Governments have begun easing their COVID-19 lockdown measures, resulting in the reopening of health clubs, gyms and fitness facilities.

In Australia, where the number of new cases of infections has remained below 100 a day since 11 April – gyms will be permitted to begin trading during "Step Two" of a three-stage reopening framework, released by Prime Minister Scott Morrison on 8 May.

While each Australian state and territory is at a different stage of easing measures, all are expected to be at Step Two by July. Once opened, gyms and health clubs will need to adhere to a number of restriction, including social distancing and pre-booked training slots.

In New Zealand, where the government introduced some of the tightest restrictions in the world to stop the spread of coronavirus, gyms were allowed to open on 14 May, as the country gradually eased itself to "Level Two" of a four-tiered alert system.

In the US, each individual state has the authority to lift lockdown measures. Some – including Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee and Oklahoma – have already made the decision to allow fitness facilities to reopen. In the UK, industry body, ukactive, has produced

In the US, each state has the authority to lift lockdown measures – and some have made the decision to reopen gyms



■ Some operators are recommending that members wear masks during workouts

In China, operators are reporting attendances have already built to be 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels

a reopening roadmap for government and is lobbying to be part of the solution in light of evidence that fitness levels can determine COVID-19 outcomes.

In spite of this, no date has yet been given (as of 19 May 2020), for gym reopenings in the UK.

In Europe, the continent hardest hit by COVID-19, the Czech Republic was among the first countries to reopen its gyms and clubs, in late April.

In Switzerland, facilities opened on 11 May, followed by Latvia on 12 May.

Germany is instigating a partial reopening programme of sports facilities – which includes gyms – between 11 and 18 May.

Lithuania has announced reopening plans for fitness facilities for the end of May, while Poland is expected to allow gyms to open on 1 June.

Norway is expected to reopen its fitness sector in mid-June. There is no confirmation on when clubs will open in Denmark, but the government has suggested that this will not happen

until 1 August “at the earliest”. The two other Nordic countries – Finland and Sweden – have allowed gyms and clubs to stay open throughout the outbreak, with restrictions in place. Some of the larger operators, however, decided to close their doors regardless.

In France, some outdoor sports – such as golf and singles tennis – are now allowed, but swimming pools and gyms will remain closed.

Other countries with no definite dates for the reopening of their fitness sectors include the Netherlands, Portugal and Bulgaria, with Portugal allowing individual outdoor sports, but not indoor gyms.

Meanwhile, China – the likely source of the pandemic – has instigated a gradual reopening of its fitness and sports facilities, with some operators reporting attendances have already built to be 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. ●

Our thanks to Hans Muench for providing some of the key information for this story



■ Sweden and Finland have kept their gyms and health clubs open during the pandemic

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