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## The health agenda

**Groundbreaking research from around the world is proving the many ways exercise can support health and creating opportunities for the sector to be more valued and useful**

**N**ews that NICE has recommended the prescription of exercise instead of drugs to treat chronic pain (see page 48) is a game-changer for the industry, opening up opportunities for increasingly meaningful contributions to the health agenda at a time when medics are under pressure and need support.

On page 50, we discuss ways the activity sector in the UK can deepen partnerships with the health service and – importantly – continue to upskill staff to deliver health services. The aim being to build on great work already being done in prevention and treatment, in areas such as Long-COVID recovery and cancer prehab and rehab.

Huge funding is going into COVID-19 research globally, creating a stream of new evidence which proves the connection between physical and mental health, resilience and exercise. A study from the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in California, for example, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, found being inactive more than doubles the risk of dying from COVID-19 (see page 100).

We've been seeking this kind of evidence for decades, as it gives us an irrefutable case with which to lobby to 'join the team' in delivering health interventions.

This lobbying is vital, given we're still not recognised as having this capacity – the recent launch of Fit Miles by the UK government completely bypassed the activity sector, for example, and we debate this omission on page 42.

Part of our lobbying must focus on social inequality – a factor that's deepening the impact of the pandemic and highlighting fundamental issues that must be addressed.

A new report, *Levelling Up Health*, from the UK's All Party-Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Longevity, found there would have been 40,000 fewer deaths in the UK [to March 2020] if the COVID-19 mortality rate had been as low nationally as in the least deprived areas.

In launching the report [see page 23], Damian Green, chair of the APPG, said "We need to confront ideologies on the left who argue the state must be responsible for health and the private sector has 'no place' and on the right who oppose public health measures as an infringement of liberty."



SHUTTERSTOCK/ROBERT KNESEKE

**Exercise will be prescribed for chronic pain**

**Many assume this work will fall largely to the public sector, however the private sector will also want to be involved**

This point is well made – many assume this work will largely fall to the public sector, however, many in the private sector will also want to be involved. Only last month, The Gym Group published independent research showing it has generated £1.8bn in social value since 2016 – the first private sector operator to publish this calculation.

Many operators have a challenge ahead to rebuild membership numbers and so supporting the health agenda will be a win-win, opening up new markets and new sources of customers, while also contributing to people's wellbeing and the COVID-19 recovery.

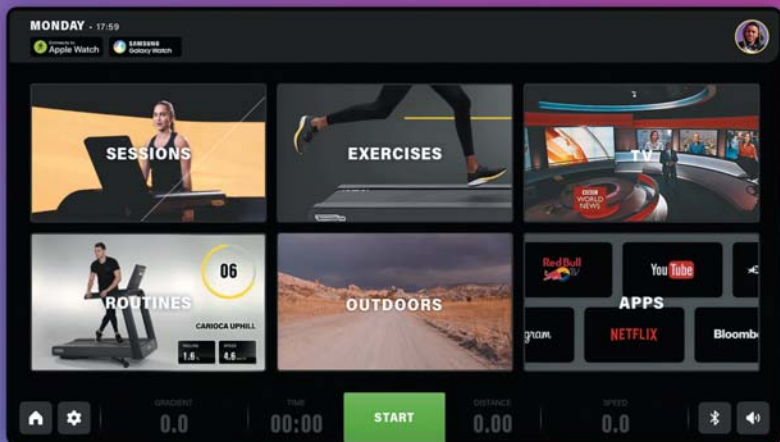
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PHOTO: BANNATYNE GROUP



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PHOTO: HELENA FIELD

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# Write to reply

*Prescribing exercise will always be preferential to prescribing painkillers, given the risks associated with their long-term use*

**Sir Muir Gray** Chief knowledge officer, EXi

I'm very pleased to see that NICE has acknowledged the power of exercise in managing pain (see page 48). The evidence is clear and strong that activity is beneficial in almost every long-term condition, many of which have accompanying chronic pain.

Encouragement is vital as well, so whether that's online, through apps or in person through social prescribing, combining exercise with reassurance is the way forward.

This is quite a change of tack for NICE as, traditionally, painkilling drugs have been the first things to be prescribed.

I welcome seeing exercise on prescription being recommended in this way. It's a great step forward in the industry's push to have exercise prescribed routinely for all long-term conditions.

## Strong evidence

Both the evidence summarised in the 2015 Report of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, called *Exercise, the Miracle Cure*, and the evidence base since 2015 have been reviewed by the team here at EXi, along with the 963 systematic reviews on pain and exercise published in the last five years.

We found that while the NICE guidelines are encouraging, more research needs to be done in this promising field.

The EXi app includes fibromyalgia and chronic pain as two specific conditions for which prescribed exercise can help, based on 24 systematic reviews. The app takes people through a very specific and slow graduation at a low intensity, with the programme designed to guide them in regular exercise, even when they're away from the gym.

Chronic pain by definition is ongoing, so prescribing exercise that can be done for a prolonged period of time will always be preferential to prescribing painkillers, given the risks associated with their long-term use.



Fibromyalgia and chronic pain are two specific conditions which prescribed exercise can help



*The CAWS training prompted me to look more deeply into breathing methods, especially those linked with anxiety and relieving stress stimuli*

Diaphragmatic breathing and controlled exhalation help with acute onset symptoms of stress and anxiety



### James Swinnerton PT, Your Personal Trainers

The Waterside Hotel and Leisure Club has invested in upskilling PTs and instructors, in partnership with Your Personal Training, to create a long-COVID rehab hub for Greater Manchester. With the North-West hard hit by the pandemic, people in this part of the UK are disproportionately likely to be classed as 'extremely clinically vulnerable'.

Along with 11 others, I was put through the CAWS UK training, which focuses on the rehabilitation of people with long-COVID who need a more bespoke approach.

I have one client who still experiences breathing difficulties five months after infection and the CAWS training prompted me to look more deeply into breathing methods, especially those linked with anxiety and relieving stress stimuli.

#### Technical breathwork

I started using parasympathetic breathing with my client, including diaphragmatic breathing and controlled exhalation. This helped with the acute onset symptoms of stress and anxiety around breathing.



Secondly, I added some pursed lip breathing, concentrating on deep inhalation, to expand my client's lung capacity and to increase oxygen proliferation through their alveoli. This will help with the chronic fatigue many COVID-19 sufferers have sustained. Finally, we focused on the role CO<sub>2</sub> plays. I applied this mainly with breath-hold work and nasal breathing. This produces nitric oxide and slows the rate of breath during exercise, allowing the body to feed oxygen more efficiently, which again decreases stress and fatigue.

The goal here is holistic, so although I'd tracked each session with a pulse oximeter and followed a slow progression, the breathing exercises are built on feedback from the client. These breathing methods, incorporated with the other CAWS modalities, have seen her able to work up to a point where she can do full one-to-one sessions again, allowing her more rapid, whole-body recovery.

#### Creating more hubs

Your Personal Training is reviewing demand from the Manchester pilot and looking to work with operators to upskill more PTs to create further COVID hubs in other parts of the UK.

Customers will need to be eased back from COVID-19, and a vast range of specific health issues need to be addressed by trained experts, including fatigue, dizziness, cardiovascular and muscle deterioration.

A six-week GP referral is not necessarily going to be appropriate or long enough for some long-COVID sufferers to recover. In these situations, personal training is a long-term solution to a long-term health problem.

# HCM people



*When women train on  
half-truths and crap science  
it's painfully limiting*

**Dr Emma Ross,  
Baz Moffat &  
Dr Bella Smith**

**Founders, The Well**

## **Tell us about The Well**

We help active women and those who support them gain knowledge and know-how so they can thrive in health, in sport and in life.

Even today, health data doesn't adequately represent women. Knowledge is stuck and taboos remain.

When women train on half-truths and crap science it's painfully limiting. The Well is here to change that. This is health and training through the female filter.

We're the three founders and we come from the worlds of academia, sport and medicine. We're physiologist, Dr Emma Ross, GB rower, Baz Moffat and GP, Dr Bella Smith and we're able to support women throughout their life stages with an evidence-based approach that is usable in everyday situations.

## **What's your purpose?**

We established The Well, because we knew enough to start talking about solutions. We identified three main gaps in this space, the gender data gap (not enough research being carried out exclusively on females), the gender knowledge gap (not enough knowledge about being a female) and the gender communication gap (a lack of confidence on how

to start talking about/to females about being female). We knew from our day-to-day work that we could help create a solution to these issues.

The three of us wanted to create content and communities that provided girls, women, coaches, teachers and trainers with the knowledge they needed but also the confidence and guidance to use it in an appropriate way. When we put this information in the hands of many, the change will start to happen which is what we want to be a part of.

## **What are your goals?**

To educate girls and women and those that support them about being female and give them the confidence to use this knowledge. We're doing this through our content and also through our work with exerciser providers, National Governing Bodies and the media.

## **What changes are needed in the activity sector to enable women to achieve their potential?**

We need to start educating everyone about being female, not just those that want to specialise. At the moment there's nothing in teacher training,







Dr Emma Ross, Baz Moffat and Dr Bella Smith are the team behind The Well (L-R). Dr Ross is working with Jessica Ennis-Hill to develop health tech for women (see page 17)

PHOTO: THE WELL

PT training or coach education around training females and when we've gone out to talk with the top coaches in the country they agree that education is what will make the biggest difference.

We genuinely feel it's possible for everyone to know the basics, so that if you work with teenage girls you know what normal puberty is and how to make sure that girls have everything they need during this time, if you're training midlife women that you understand what perimenopause and menopause is, if you're training 20-year-olds you have an understanding of how to optimise strength training around their cycle – this is all very, very accessible information, but it's just not being integrated into training now.

### ***What issues have you identified that need to be resolved?***

The main issues are around participation rates in women – and research shows that from the age of five, girls are doing less sport than boys and this trend continues throughout life. Many have accepted these statistics as opposed to working out ways to address this challenge.

The other main issue for us is that many of the barriers for women becoming active are around women's health – painful periods, leaking urine, having sore breasts, and no physical activity campaigns are addressing these barriers. If we created environments and cultures where these





## Many of the barriers for women becoming active are around women's health

issues were not taboo and women felt that they did not need to hide 'their' issues then it's our belief that more women would show up and stay.

Lastly – there are just not enough women in sport and exercise. There are some absolutely pioneering women doing great things, but this shouldn't be news! But it is news when a woman coaches a men's team, or umpires a men's game, or coaches an Olympic Team, it's all news. We don't need more women in sport and exercise so that there can be more 'period' talk! We need more women to add different perspectives, life experiences and knowledge.

### ***How long have you known each other and what's the story of your collaboration?***

We haven't known each other long, but it feels as though we've worked together for years.

Baz and Bella started working together in 2019 and Baz read about Dr Emma Ross in The Telegraph and started to work together soon after.

We're all totally different in terms of our areas of expertise, but we share an unwavering belief that women need to be educated and empowered to make the right choices for them.

### ***What are your different areas of expertise?***

We have a scientist, a coach and a doctor and between us, 60 years of working with women and athletes.

Dr Emma Ross is sports physiologist and has worked with Olympic and Paralympic teams for 10 years, doing pioneering work in the area of female athlete health [she's currently working with Jessica Ennis-Hill, developing health tech for women], Baz Moffat was on the GB rowing team for four years and is now a women's health coach, with a specific interest in the pelvic floor and Dr Bella Smith is an NHS GP partner in Suffolk specialising in women's health.

Collectively we have it all covered from periods to hormonal contraception, to breast health, female specific sports nutrition, pelvic health and mindset and we love to make sure that even though everything we do is evidence based that everyone gets what we're talking about!

We are also supported by Propel Teams and their network, which has really helped us to shape our passion into a viable business. They provide us with the business experience we just don't have, the confidence to dream big and the contacts to make it all happen. ●

● [www.thewell-hq.com](http://www.thewell-hq.com)



The trio are committed to championing the cause of women in sport and improving opportunities for women

PHOTO: THE WELLS



## Jessica Ennis-Hill launches Cyclemapping app

“  
As women, we  
can work with the  
biological rhythm  
of our body to  
unlock the best in  
ourselves every day

Jessica Ennis-Hill is growing a portfolio of tech products to support women's health via her company, Jennis

**F**it tech company, Jennis, the brainchild of Olympic gold medalist Jessica Ennis-Hill, has launched a new app called Cyclemapping in conjunction with The Well's Dr Emma Ross, who is Jennis's resident physiologist.

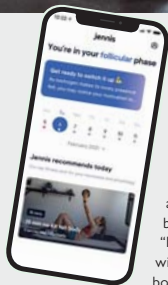
CycleMapping helps women match their fitness sessions to the four phases of their menstrual cycle to optimise their hormone levels. The app joins the company's growing portfolio of training, pregnancy and postnatal tech.

"Every woman's experience of her period is different," Ross told Vogue. "The commitment from the Jennis team to making sure every user is given a bespoke plan is what sets it apart."

App users are recommended a different selection of workouts each day, including HIIT, strength, yoga, LISS, audio HIIT runs and recovery session, all between five and 35 minutes long.

"A number of important hormonal changes take place across the different phases of the cycle," says Ennis-Hill. "These affect motivation to train, the way muscles adapt and the type of fuel the body needs."

"By understanding what's happening hormonally, we can help women do what's best for their body at the right time in their cycle."



"It's possible to build more lean muscle by focusing strength training in the follicular phase, for example – the first half of the period cycle – when high oestrogen levels can lead to strength gains increasing by 15 per cent more than at other times," she explains.

"I never really researched my period cycle and the effects having a baby had on my body until I had issues," Ennis-Hill told Vogue. "I had tightness in my muscles and an issue with my Achilles as a result of having a baby – both of which I'd had no idea could happen."

"What I want to achieve is to see women using the app long term," she said. "For me, success for Jennis Cyclemapping would be hearing about women whose monthly symptoms have changed and are building a great relationship with exercise. It's about comparing how you feel and are performing to the previous month, rather than the constant weekly pressure."

"When you cycle-map, you become more body literate," said Ross. "As women, we can work with the biological rhythm of our body to unlock the best in ourselves every day. Most women have their period cycle happen to them, but this is about taking back the power and mastering skills to ultimately become healthier and happier." ●



*We're going after health club and spa management contracts for hotels and independent gyms and also planning to launch a You Fit franchise*

## Justin Andrews

You Fit



Justin Andrews is leading the launch of You Fit's contract management division

### **Tell us the key facts about your business**

You Fit is a leisure and hotel management company, which was launched in 2018 by Kew Green Hotels.

We've got a portfolio of 22 clubs across the UK and 15,000 members. Each site has a gym, wetside facilities and group exercise studios, while selected locations also have spas.

### **Talk to us about the launch of your health club management contracting service**

Up until now the development of You Fit has been completely dependent on us growing the wider hotel portfolio of Kew Green through the acquisition of hotels with health club and spa facilities.

We've realised there's an opportunity for other hotels to benefit from the operational and commercial set-up of becoming part of a larger branded group such as ours. We also see opportunities in the independent health club sector.

As a result, we plan to grow the number of You Fit clubs beyond what we could achieve with the expansion of our own company, by branching out to work with investors, owners and operators who can benefit from adopting the You Fit brand and processes.

We're also aware health club, leisure and spa operations are often secondary to the core business of hotels and outside the scope of some hoteliers. Our plan is to take the strain of running a health club and spa business, while providing a service that complements the hotel operation.

PHOTO: KEW GREEN HOTELS GROUP



PHOTO: KEW GREEN HOTEL GROUP

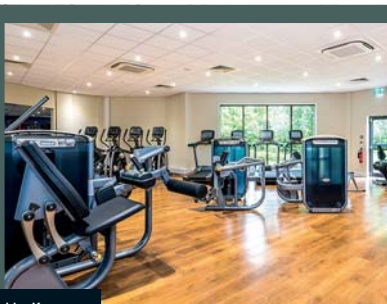


PHOTO: KEW GREEN HOTEL GROUP

**You Fit, owned by Kew Green Hotels, currently manages 22 properties and is looking at global expansion**

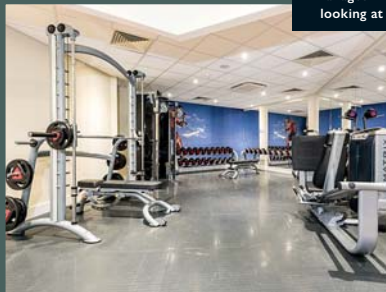


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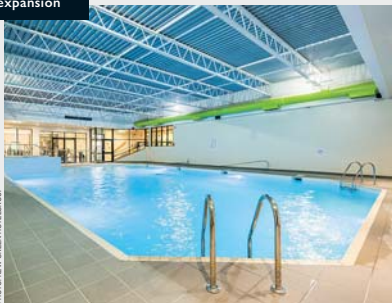


PHOTO: KEW GREEN HOTEL GROUP

### ***What's the scope of your ambition?***

While we're initially looking for hotel contracts, our central team has a breadth of experience in private and public health clubs, gyms and spa operations, both in the UK and internationally, so the plan is to move towards working globally with hotels and independent club operators. We're also planning to launch a You Fit franchise.

### ***Why now?***

Expansion is something we've been planning for some time. We feel we're well placed to support and manage the recovery of any business through this post-lockdown period, to enable companies to get the most out of their business.

With the hotel sector fully re-opening, understandably the focus of hoteliers will be the commercial recovery of their properties. With this in mind, we can step in and focus on the leisure business for them by supporting and ensuring the financial recovery of the leisure offering, so they're able to focus on the core hotel business.

### ***The hotel market has a well established 'op co/prop co' model. Why has the health and fitness industry failed to develop in the same way?***

There's no doubt the hotel industry has changed significantly. Once upon a time, if you stayed in a branded hotel, it was owned by the company whose name was over the door. Today, hotels are often a collaborative business partnership between a brand or franchise, an operator and a separate business that owns the physical asset.

The hotel industry is very well established and by comparison the health club industry has only begun to mature in the same way in recent years.

I have no doubt similar multi-faceted business partnerships and ownership arrangements will emerge in the years to come.

Ours is an exciting, evolving industry and we will see the growth of franchise and licenced brands, management companies and venture capitalists working collaboratively as our industry continues to mature and expand.



66

*We feel there's a clear opportunity for a national health, fitness and wellness brand to compete and emerge in hotels*

You Fit is branching out from only running its own facilities and launching into contracting

PHOTO: MARK GERRARD/ISTOCK

### **How will you balance being an operator in your own right with being a contract operator. Do you see any conflicts of interest?**

While the majority of our You Fit portfolio represents owned properties, we've held management contracts within our existing estate for many years.

To the leadership teams, there is no discernible difference in the way in which we operate, manage and focus on delivering commercial performance when compared to that of our owned clubs.

Managed and franchised You Fit clubs benefit from being supported in much the same way as our owned estate, including operational elements of our culture, centralised marketing and member retention, administration and collections functions. Each also has a dedicated account manager and performance coach.

### **What's the business model?**

We have many bespoke management options and will work with each client to come up with the best solution to meet their needs and requirements.

Each management contract client will benefit from a service including an external bi-annual health and safety audit, sales and marketing support, professional fees and licencing and a central admin support team.

### **Will you work with investors?**

Initially, our franchise offering will be aimed predominantly at independent club operators who are in need of recovery support and would benefit most from operating with a branded solution.

### **What are your points of differentiation with existing contract operators?**

Branded and franchise businesses repeatedly outperform independent businesses. We see this across restaurants, fast-food, pubs, hotels, retail and fitness.

While hotel guests are typically travelling from outside the area, hotel health club and spa members are local residents. To this end, hotel-based clubs are competing with a multitude of well-known national brands.

We feel that there's a clear opportunity for a strong national brand to compete and emerge in hotels.

For owners and operators, partnering delivers a clear brand identity with expansive demographic appeal, giving employees and members a sense of belonging and trust, while offering owners confidence in a proven model and commercial systems.

For small independent club operators it's an affordable opportunity to join a larger brand and gain from operational and commercial systems.

### **What do you see coming down the track?**

The last big shake up in the health, fitness and wellness industry came after the recession of 2008/9, which led to the emergence of budget gyms.

This led to long standing, well-known mid-market club brands disappearing from our high streets, but it also made health club memberships more broadly attainable and delivered year-on-year growth for the sector.

We've seen new fitness trends emerge over the past year which will bring with them further longer term changes that will continue to provide variety, points of differentiation and opportunities for our industry.



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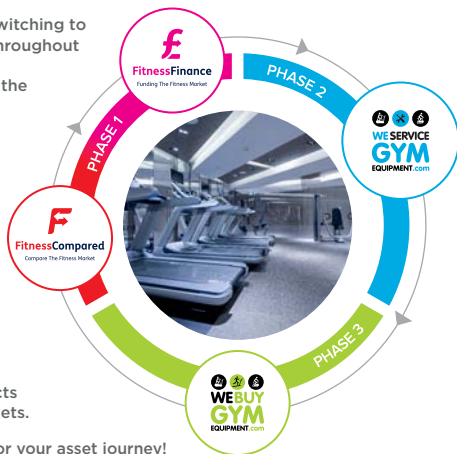
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*The idea was to weave a wellness culture into the fabric of village life by incorporating movement, rest and relaxation, nutrition, connectedness, purpose and environment*

**Helena Field**

**Wellbeing by Rangeford Villages**

***Tell us about your work on Wellbeing by Rangeford Villages***

I was asked to establish a fully integrated, holistic fitness and wellbeing concept for Rangeford Villages, the later living specialists. The idea was to weave a wellness culture into the fabric of village life by incorporating movement, rest and relaxation, nutrition, connectedness, purpose and environment.

I worked with the executive team to develop four foundations of wellbeing to form the basis of the new concept. Wellbeing is defined as being happy, healthy and comfortable and we believe that every resident should have their emotional, physical and mental needs supported while living at the village.

The Four Foundations have been carefully selected to provide an all-encompassing approach to living a happy, healthy and thriving life and they are: *purpose* – how residents choose to fill their days; *health* – how they stay physically and mentally well; *community* – how residents stay connected; *environment* – how they feel a sense of security.

To support these foundations, we developed a wellbeing consultation for residents to participate in if they choose and incorporated the concept into every aspect of the village to holistically link all areas of the facilities, including the spa, gym, fitness classes, gardens, lawn games, hair salon, treatments, lounges, restaurant and bar, coffee shop and hobby spaces.

***What facilities and programmes are on offer?***

One example, Wadswick Green's social hub – known as The Pavilion – is home to the residents' spa with treatment rooms, a gym, swimming pool including sauna and steamroom and hair salon. Residents also have access to a personal trainer, with many free classes available for them to join and the team can provide access to the best local practitioners in their field, such as sleep therapists, nutritionists, chiropodists, osteopaths, and physiotherapists if required.





Rangeford Villages offers residents access to a wide range of health and fitness and wellness facilities, coaching and interventions



PHOTO: RANGEFORD VILLAGES

There's also an array of activities, including walking clubs, a prayer group, knitting circle, golf, Zumba, arts and crafts, scrabble, bridge and book clubs.

Residents can choose to be as relaxed or as active as they please and are encouraged to set up and lead their own social groups and clubs.

### ***Is there evidence that living in these types of communities improves quality of life?***

The Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO) surveyed 799 current residents from 81 different retirement communities in the UK and found that the majority (55 per cent) said their quality of life was higher than it had been a year previously – four times more than for people from the same age group who didn't live as part of retirement community.

The survey found that residents also remained healthier for longer, were more active, felt a greater sense of security, and reported less loneliness. Residents also appeared 2-5 times more likely than non-residents to be participating in an array of activities such as social events, trying new activities, getting together with friends, eating with other people and exercising.

### ***Are any of the health benefits of the wellbeing programme monitored?***

There are huge health benefits for residents when it comes to getting involved with the wellbeing programme. The NHS found strong evidence that older people who are active have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression and dementia, even if it is as little as 150 minutes of moderate activity every week.

Through our wellbeing programme, we aim to gently encourage residents to get active by offering them all the activities and support they need, right from their doorstep. We'll be monitoring their progress along the way, so they can choose to see how beneficial it is to them.

### ***Does having improved wellbeing facilities increase the value of the real estate?***

Interestingly, buying a home in a retirement development with on-site facilities does improve their value. In 2017, an analysis was undertaken by JLL into the housing with care market, managed by members of ARCO over the past 22 years.

Housing with care refers to communities where support facilities are available on-site 24 hours a day, with a variety of facilities to help encourage an active and independent lifestyle. It was reported that 80 per cent of re-sales in this market increase in value, with an annual average price growth of 6 per cent per annum.

### ***What other projects are you working on that involve wellness?***

Having worked in the Wellbeing Sector for 20 years, I help companies weave wellbeing into their culture for employees and/or customers.

I have a passion for helping people have happy, healthy work lives by taking ownership of their own wellbeing and provide bespoke support to companies seeking to enhance their wellbeing offering. I also work as a wellbeing coach and consultant and am developing courses to support employees in the workplace with their wellbeing.

## Global initiative to engage politicians in exercise

The need to engage politicians in exercise has inspired the launch of a new global physical activity initiative.

Kicking off in the US, the new Congressional Physical Activity Challenge will aim to highlight the importance of making exercise more accessible and inclusive.



US HOUSE OFFICE OF PHOTOGRAPHY



**Even during a pandemic, it's critical that we work to encourage physical activity**

Ron Kind

The competition, instigated by The Physical Activity Alliance (PAA), is initially open to all members of the US Congress, their DC congressional staff and interns, with the inaugural Congressional challenge taking place from April 26 to May 26 this year.

Each participant will be given an MZ-Switch heart rate monitor – supplied by fit tech firm Myzone – to use during the event.

The challenge was announced at a recent Physical Activity Congressional Briefing, where the PAA introduced its priorities and discussed the importance of federal efforts to increase physical activity in the US and its wider ambition to raise the profile of exercise with politicians around the world.

SHUTTERSTOCK/AL IMAGES



**The challenge will start in the US and aims to go global**

Congressman Ron Kind, representing Wisconsin, said: "Being physically active is one of the most important lifestyle behaviours we can engage in to maintain our physical and mental health. It's been said that one of the best

antidepressants ever invented is good old-fashioned sweat.

"Even during a pandemic, it is critical that we work to encourage physical activity as we recover from the virus."

More: [http://lei.sr/5k5N5\\_H](http://lei.sr/5k5N5_H)

## New Active Recovery Hub to help get children active

SPORT ENGLAND has teamed up with the Youth Sport Trust to develop a new online resource designed to help more children become physically active.

Called the Active Recovery Hub, the initiative will provide schools, local authorities and families access to free resources, designed to encourage children to reach the Chief Medical Officer's target of taking part in 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

The new platform allows schools and parents to search for activities by age and the time of day they want to get active.

SPORT ENGLAND



**The new platform allows schools search for activities by age**

Ali Oliver, chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust, said the platform will make it easy for schools to access age-appropriate content so children can be helped to

be active and recover their wellbeing after the pandemic.

"Teachers have told us they recognise the importance of physical activity and the outdoors in children's recovery,

but they have so much on their plate at the moment, we want to make it simple for them," Oliver said.

More: [http://lei.sr/2e4r5\\_H](http://lei.sr/2e4r5_H)



YOUTH SPORT TRUST



**Teachers have told us they recognise the importance of physical activity**

Ali Oliver



## £3bn needed to 'build back better health' in UK

A parliamentary report is calling for a £3bn intervention fund to build back better health in the UK as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report, called *Levelling Up Health*, has been produced by the All Party-Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Longevity after extensive consultation and recommends a new approach to improve the nation's health, identifying five key elements as part of a 10-year plan.

The pandemic has exposed huge health inequalities in society in the UK, with 90 per cent of those who've died with COVID-19 having significant prior poor health.

The most deprived places have had much higher

HM GOVERNMENT



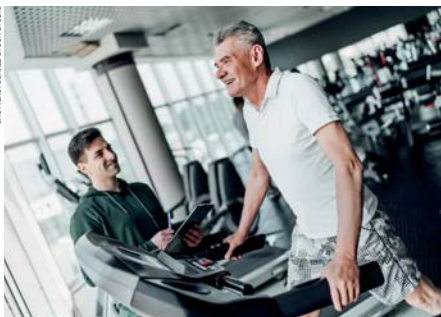
**We need to confront ideologues on both sides of the political divide**

Damian Green

mortality rates. Blackburn with Darwen, for example, has had 345 per 100,000 people die, five times more than South Cambridgeshire with 68 per 100,000.

Shockingly, the report shows there would have been 40,000 fewer deaths

SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCK STUDIO



**Social inequality has led to 40,000 additional deaths**

in the UK to date if the national COVID mortality rate had been as low as the least deprived places.

Damian Green, chair of the APPG on Longevity, said: "We need to confront ideologues on both sides – those on the left who argue that the state

must be responsible for all health matters and that the private sector has 'no place in health', but also those on the right who oppose public health measures as an infringement of liberty."

More: [http://lei.sr/Q3x6g\\_H](http://lei.sr/Q3x6g_H)

## EuropeActive joins 'All Policies for a Healthy Europe'

EuropeActive has joined the All Policies for a Healthy Europe (APHE) initiative, as part of its strategy to engage with EU policymaking.

Launched in 2018, APHE is an initiative that brings together a diverse group of NGOs, think tanks, associations, companies and individuals.

Its mission is to position the health and wellbeing

of citizens at the heart of EU policymaking.

APHE's main two policy calls are for the European Commission to establish an 'EU Charter on Wellbeing' and for it to create an 'Observatory of Wellbeing'.

In a statement, EuropeActive said: "We look forward to working with the other knowledge partners of the APHE initiative to make sure that policy and decision makers in Brussels fully recognise physical activity promotion as an essential part of the EU's disease prevention and health promotion policies."

More: [http://lei.sr/h7u7F\\_H](http://lei.sr/h7u7F_H)



**We want to ensure decision makers recognise exercise as an essential part of disease prevention**

EuropeActive

SHUTTERSTOCK/DORNA



**APHE wants wellbeing to be placed at heart of policy making**

## McKinsey: consumers focus spend on fitness

**F**itness and health are priority areas of expenditure for consumers in six key nations around the world, according to a new report by McKinsey.

*The Future of Wellness Survey* questioned 7,500 consumers in Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, the US and the UK during August 2020 to establish their spending priorities and found fitness and health

represent nearly two-thirds of their spending on wellness.

The report divides wellness spending into six areas – fitness, health, sleep, mindfulness, nutrition and appearance.

While the way consumers report spending their money differs significantly between countries, the report shows that fitness and health remain priority areas for all.

Out of the six nations studied, McKinsey says Germans spend the most on fitness (27.8 per cent), followed by the Chinese (17.9 per cent), the Brits (16 per cent), the Americans (13.8 per cent) and the Japanese (10.6 per cent).

The report also found that 37 per cent of consumers plan to spend more on wellness services during the



SHUTTERSTOCK/STILL & RANDO CARM

**Brazilians intend to spend the most on fitness and health**

next 12 months, saying: "In overall spending, consumers expect to increase their purchases of both wellness products and services over the next year, with services expected to increase the most at around 30 per cent.

"We expect a greater shift toward services, especially those such as personal training, nutritionists, and counselling that emphasise physical and mental health," said McKinsey.

More: [http://lei.sr/u6h9E\\_H](http://lei.sr/u6h9E_H)



**We expect a greater shift toward services, especially those such as personal training, nutritionists, and counselling that emphasise physical and mental health**

McKinsey

## PureGym celebrates reopening with 10 new clubs

**A**s health clubs and fitness studios in England reopened on Monday 12 April, PureGym revealed it had launched 10 brand new health clubs alongside its existing 230 sites.

The 10 new clubs were launched at various stages during "reopening week" and are linked to long-term lease commitments made by PureGym before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The expansion comes at a time when some leisure and retail businesses are shrinking their estates, especially on the high street.

According to PureGym MD, Rebecca Passmore, the



**The 10 clubs join PureGym's existing portfolio of 230 gyms**

company is bucking this trend and has ambitions to further increase its estate across the UK.

She added that PureGym will have "an important

role to play in sustaining vibrant high streets" as they adapt to new uses.

"We re-opened with 10 brand new gyms, our biggest ever weekly expansion,



PUREGYM



**We reopened with 10 brand new gyms, our biggest ever weekly expansion**

Rebecca Passmore

at locations across the country," Passmore said.

"We know there is a huge appetite to return to the gym."

More: [http://lei.sr/n2s4j\\_H](http://lei.sr/n2s4j_H)

## New health and fitness alliance for the US

A major new initiative will look to strengthen and unite the fitness industry's voice in influencing policy and policymakers in the US.

The National Health & Fitness Alliance (NHFA) aims to consolidate and centralise the advocacy, public affairs, stakeholder engagement, fundraising and lobbying efforts of the health and fitness industry – and to represent and protect its interests.

NHFA has been created by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) and will look to drive successful health and fitness lobbying in Washington, DC, including

FITNESS FORMULA CLUBS



“We look to unite the advocacy and lobbying efforts of the entire fitness industry

Gale Landers

legislation to provide the industry with relief from the economic harm caused by mandated COVID-19 protocols.

Other core objectives include protecting the industry from harmful state legislation and uniting industry voices to “loudly proclaim and



NHFA will look to unite US fitness industry voices

demonstrate” the essential role the fitness industry plays in addressing the epidemics of obesity, physical inactivity, and preventable chronic disease; and improving mental health.

Gale Landers, interim chair, said: “We look to unite the advocacy, public policy, and

lobbying efforts of the entire fitness industry in Washington, DC, by collaborating with and incorporating the work of the newly-created state alliances, while supporting club companies.”

More: [http://lei.sr/jBA7c\\_H](http://lei.sr/jBA7c_H)

## Empowered Brands announces European expansion

Empowered Brands, the franchise investment business that acquired franchise business énergie Fitness out of a CVA in June 2020, has announced plans to accelerate the roll-out of its four key brands in Europe.

ENERGIE FITNESS



“We’re leveraging the size and scale of our central franchise operation

Jan Spaticchia

The company also aims to expand, with the acquisition of new businesses.

In addition to énergie, the portfolio includes boutique operator, Victus Soul, HIIT concept, Thé Yard and an upcoming launch called Raw – a ‘digitally-enabled’ studio.

Jan Spaticchia, chair of Empowered Brands, said the company’s aim is to become the ‘most dominant fitness franchise business in Europe’.

“We’re leveraging the size of our central franchise operation and combining this with the power of entrepreneurship,” he said.

More: [http://lei.sr/t5H7c\\_H](http://lei.sr/t5H7c_H)

EMPOWERED BRANDS



The business acquired énergie Fitness out of a CVA in 2020

## Independent clubs 'recovering members better'

**N**et member movement among independent health clubs in the UK was generally positive during the pandemic – but negative for the wider sector.

The finding comes from a new study, titled *Independent Fitness Clubs Benchmarking Report*, by 4global, ukactive and GGFit, which outlines

the impact of COVID-19 on independent fitness clubs in the country.

Among the key findings is that the recovery of membership levels has been significantly stronger at independent clubs, both in terms of visit throughput and active member percentage.

The report is based on a study from July to December 2020, using data from 627 independent clubs, representing a total of 289,000 members, 3.9 million visits, and revenue of £32m.

It shows that the percentage of active members at independent clubs was clearly lower in July and November 2020 – when compared to 2019 levels – due to clubs being in lockdown for most of the time during these months.

SHUTTERSTOCK/JANSON SPONELLER



The report is based on data from 627 independent clubs

By December 2020, however, the level of active members recovered to within 1 per cent of 2019 numbers, showing a healthy appetite for returning to facilities.

Interestingly, independent clubs achieved much higher joiner rates during the

six months – sometimes by a factor of three.

Utku Toprakseven, Partner at 4global, said: "This report is the first collaborative dive into the independent gyms' collective data."

More: [http://lei.sr/Y3S8z\\_H](http://lei.sr/Y3S8z_H)



4GLOBAL



**This report is the first collaborative dive into the independent gyms' collective data**

Utku Toprakseven

## Everyone Active and WW sign diet partnership deal

**L**eisure centre operator Everyone Active has formed a partnership with WW (formerly called Weight Watchers), which will see the two combining their exercise and dietary services.

The deal will result in both WW and Everyone Active members being offered "substantial savings" on the use of the myWW+ app and membership rates at all Everyone Active leisure centres.

The myWW+ app allows users to manage their weight, monitor their hydration and sleep and offers tips on mental health and nutrition.

Members will be offered special discounts on a

WW (WEIGHT WATCHERS) REMANAGED



The partnership will combine the services of both businesses

number of other activities and services too, such as personalised nutrition plans, 24/7 live coaching, access to the Headspace meditation app and to

the Everyone On Demand online fitness platform.

Duncan Jefford, regional director at Everyone Active, said: "The myWW+ and Everyone Active partnership

is important because it closes the loop between diet, fitness and mental health. It is a complete solution."

More: [http://lei.sr/E9v4j\\_H](http://lei.sr/E9v4j_H)



EVERYONE ACTIVE



**This partnership closes the loop between diet, fitness and mental health.**

Duncan Jefford

## Kempinski reveals new fitness-focused rooms

International luxury hotel group Kempinski has launched a new room category, which it will market as a "new wellness solution for travellers" around the world.

The Kempinski Fit Room will provide guests with in-room training solutions and on-demand fitness services and are in addition to each hotel's wellness centres.

Each Kempinski Fit Room will be equipped with a Technogym Bike and Case and will offer guests training options catering to their individual preferences.

Users can choose their favourite classes from Technogym's on-demand library, based on their

LINDEA/MARC FELLER



**With the new room category, we are meeting the need of our guests to stay fit on the go**

Marc Feller

preferred trainer, type of workout, language and music.

The Technogym Case offers guests a range of fitness tools – including a foam roller, massage ball, exercise mat and loop bands – and a library of training video content to instruct in their use.

TECHNOGYM



Each room will be equipped with a Technogym Bike and Case

With a QR Code, guests can also enjoy a guided workout with a brand new virtual trainer on their phone.

The first properties to offer the Kempinski Fit Room are in Germany, Dubai and China.

Marc Feller, Kempinski Hotels' senior director

of customer experience, said: "The trend towards wellness will certainly intensify in the future."

"With the new rooms, we are meeting the need of our guests to stay fit on the go."

More: [http://lei.sr/d4X4M\\_H](http://lei.sr/d4X4M_H)

## United Fitness Brands acquires Barrecore

United Fitness Brands (UFB), the 'supergroup' of boutique fitness brands, has acquired Barrecore, the barre studio operator.

Barrecore will become the third brand in UFB's

portfolio – joining Boom Cycle and KOBBOX – and adds 12 sites to the group's estate.

The acquisition will extend the UFB portfolio to more than 20 sites and – thanks to Barrecore's studios in Alderley Edge, Hale and Bristol – will establish it as a national operator.

Founded in 2011, Barrecore is currently in the process of opening its 13th location in Leeds.

Hilary Rowland, co-founder of Boom Cycle and one of the driving forces behind UFB, said: "We're on the lookout for brands to join the group."

More: [http://lei.sr/U9E7z\\_H](http://lei.sr/U9E7z_H)

BOOM CYCLE/UFB



**We're on the lookout for brands that mean more than just a workout to join the group**

Hilary Rowland

BARRECORE/UFB



Read more about United Fitness Brands in HCM here  
[www.HCMmag.com/UFB](http://www.HCMmag.com/UFB)

Barrecore has 12 sites and will now be owned by UFB

## Antihistamines can block the benefits of exercise

Taking antihistamines prior to a workout can prevent the body getting the full benefit of exercise.

A new study found antihistamines reduce normal increases in blood flow to the muscles by 35 per cent during exercise.

Conducted by Ghent University and the University

of Copenhagen and published in the *Science Advances* journal, the study also found that antihistamines decreased aerobic capacity, blocked the improvements that exercise has on circulation and the body's ability to tolerate glucose.

Antihistamines are a common drug used by hay fever sufferers and many take some before exercising outdoors.

Senior author on the study, sport scientist Professor Dr Wim Derave, told *HCM*: "Exercise training induces health-promoting adaptations to multiple organ systems, orchestrated by an interplay between various exercise factors and signalling events."

"In the present study, we show that histamine H1/H2 signaling is an essential



Many take antihistamines prior to exercising outdoors

transducer of the adaptive exercise training response, with broad clinical relevance: aerobic capacity, glycemic control, and vascular function.

"These detrimental effects of H1/H2 blockade on functional outcomes were caused by impaired

adaptations in key regulatory proteins.

"One potential functional cause of the blunted training adaptations is a substantially reduced post-exercise muscle perfusion."

More: [http://lei.sr/A7h4g\\_H](http://lei.sr/A7h4g_H)



GHENT UNIVERSITY



**One cause of the blunted training adaptations is a reduced post-exercise muscle perfusion**

Dr Wim Derave

## Swimming pool water kills COVID virus in 30 seconds

A study by virologists at Imperial College London, which is awaiting peer-review, suggests the risk of COVID-19 transmission in swimming pool water is "incredibly low".

The study looked at the effects of swimming pool water on SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19, to assess the amount of time and contact needed to inactivate the virus in varying chlorine and pH levels.

The research established that 1.5mg per litre of free chlorine, coupled with a pH between 7-7.2 reduced the infectivity of the virus 1,000-fold within 30 seconds.



SHUTTERSTOCK/WALLBROCK

The study looked at the effects of pool water on SARS-CoV-2

Additional testing of different free chlorine and pH ranges confirmed that chlorine in swimming pool water was more effective with a lower pH. This is in line

with current guidance for swimming pool operation.

The research study was undertaken by virologist and expert in respiratory viruses, Professor Wendy Barclay.



IMPERIAL COLLEGE



**By mixing the virus with swimming pool water, we could show that the virus does not survive**

Wendy Barclay

"By mixing the virus with swimming pool water, we could show the virus doesn't survive," she told *HCM*.

More: [http://lei.sr/S5t7k\\_H](http://lei.sr/S5t7k_H)



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**CONFIDENCE INSIDE**





*Our strategy is to position ourselves as a wellness provider. We have all the elements needed – gyms, physiotherapy, F&B and spas*



Campling says Bannatyne has saved £3m by negotiating rent deals with landlords



# Ken Campling

*Amid reports of a bid to buy the business, HCM was keen to get an update on the state of play at the Bannatyne Group.*

*We sent Kate Cracknell to (virtually) speak to the FD*

**O**n 10 April, it was reported a US operator had made an unsolicited offer of £250m to buy Bannatyne – an approach Duncan Bannatyne, founder and CEO, says he rejected. His observation was:

“It’s quite surprising that someone’s made an offer, given the current circumstances.”

It seems the door is not closed, though, as in the same news reports, Bannatyne indicated he would leave the business if he accepted an offer, saying: “The ball’s in their court. I would need to feel it’s going to a good home and that I’m getting good value for it.”

When it comes to valuation, in spite of Bannatyne having injected £10m into the business, the group is carrying debt into 2021 as a result of lockdown, so it will be interesting to see what – if any – further offers are made.

While the company has made it clear it will give no further statement on the subject, we felt now would be a good time to speak to Ken Campling – de facto CEO – for an overview of the business in the aftermath of a year of disruption.

Campling joined Bannatyne following an £8m fraud case against the previous FD who received

a prison sentence for the crime. He has been charged with steadying the ship and works closely with Duncan Bannatyne on a “daily basis”.

## **Tell us about the impact of COVID-19**

As with most companies in the leisure industry, we suffered greatly through the three lockdowns.

In terms of financial performance, in our last year pre-COVID – ending December 2019 – we made a pre-tax profit in the region of £12.5m. For the year ending December 2020, we’re likely to report a pre-tax loss in the region of £20–21m.

Each month we were closed in the UK’s latest lockdown cost us roughly £2.5m and from the first quarter of this year, we have pre-tax losses of around £7.5m to start clawing back now we’re open again.

## **How are membership numbers looking?**

As a group-wide figure we’re talking in the region of 34–35 per cent total attrition over the year of on-off COVID lockdown – March 2020 to March 2021. That equates to around 70,000 members.

The majority were lost as we came out of the first lockdown: even though people were



allowed to freeze their membership, we dropped to around 78 per cent of pre-COVID levels quite quickly. We started to grow again over the summer of 2020, although it was difficult to assess a consistent trend due to different lockdowns in different regions coming at different times.

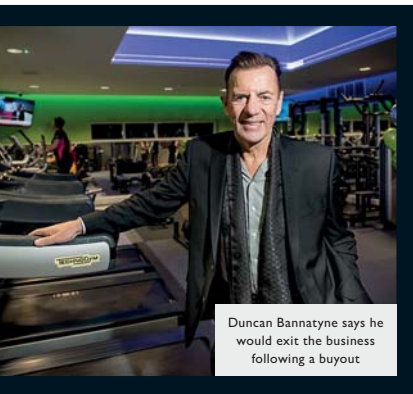
By September, however, and even with a reduced membership, gate swipes were getting back to being not far off normal for that time of year, and we started to see more of our members returning too.

But with the subsequent lockdowns, we dropped again – to 75 per cent of previous member numbers by the second lockdown, and 65 per cent by the end of the third.

Attrition rates vary from club to club, of course, with city centres faring worse than more rural, less commuter-based sites. At one of our London and one of our Birmingham clubs, for example, you're talking nearly 50 per cent

*I'd need to feel the company is going to a good home and that I'm getting good value for it*

**Duncan Bannatyne**



Duncan Bannatyne says he would exit the business following a buyout

PHOTO: BANNATYNE



The average lifetime value of Bannatyne members is three years

attrition. In places like Broadstairs, where we have a long-established, slightly older member base, attrition has been as low as 20 per cent.

#### So age has played a role in attrition?

More important than the age of the member has been the regularity of their visits, especially in the early days after each re-opening.

We have a lot of members who usually come to the club four to six times a week, and these are the members who've stayed and who were straight back each time their club reopened. I could recognise most of the faces in my local club yesterday, because they're the members you see every time you're in. Some members have been with us ever since our first club opened in Ingleby Barwick 21 years ago.

Our members generally are very engaged – pre-COVID, our lifetime membership average was running at around three years.

#### How did the lockdowns impact your team?

We have 2,500+ staff, so it's been tough. We made regular staff welfare calls to retain a sense of community, and of course the government's furlough scheme has been essential to job preservation, particularly for our part-timers and the 1,000 staff in our demand-driven spas.

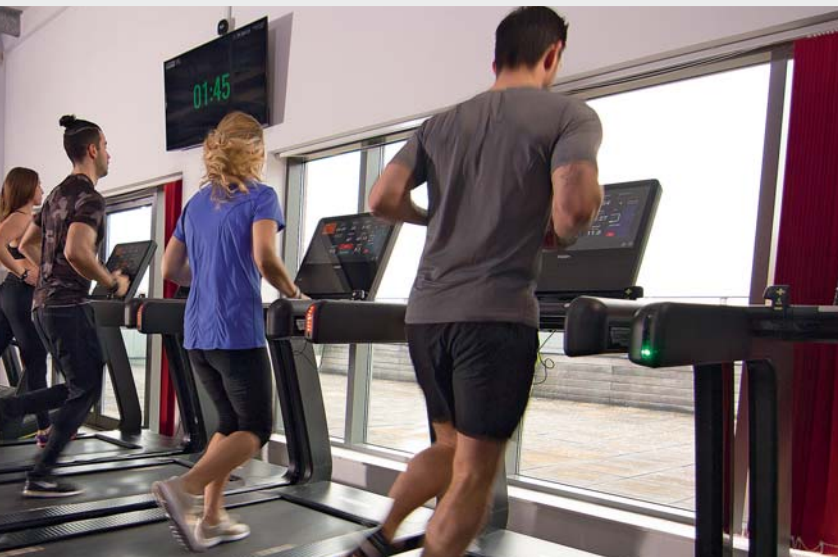


PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

We've permanently closed two clubs – Birmingham Priory and London's Russell Square – which brings our estate to 71. Both were coming toward the end of their leases and, with small footprints and no spa, neither was our typical Bannatyne model.

In total, we lost 149 jobs through the lockdowns. However, we've protected 2,560 jobs and we've been bringing people back from furlough as clubs have re-opened.

#### **How did you navigate the crisis?**

We took action very quickly with our landlords, approaching them to try and work with them. We have 39 very long leases with M&G, who we refinanced with back in 2014 and we agreed a strong payment plan with them early in the first lockdown.

Of our 24 other landlords, only one hasn't given us rent waivers, payment plans or re-gearing where we have leases with less than 10 years to run.

In total, we've mitigated over £3m of rent, which in many locations is equivalent to up to six months' rent waived by co-operative landlords.

We also had the rates-free period and we've taken advantage of the CLBILS (Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme) facility. Working with our core bankers,

NatWest, we now have £24m of CLBILS loans on-board, which we're budgeting to pay back over two-and-a-half years.

All directors took a 12.5 per cent pay cut and in the last lockdown were furloughed down to two days a week. These pay cuts will remain in place until loans are paid back, as will the freeze on dividend payments to Duncan Bannatyne.

Operationally, over the waves of lockdown we've become more familiar with how to mothball an entire estate of clubs and bring them quickly back up-to-speed – both things we'd never had to do before. The vast majority of our new COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures were introduced first time around – meaning staff and members are also more used to them now – but we're still learning all the time, finding ways to do things better. Even with things such as sanitising the studio, on each re-opening we've found better ways to do it, slightly different techniques, different products that enable us to turn the studios around quicker.

#### **Will you review your product offering?**

We introduced online fitness during the first lockdown and have had 864,449 visits to our YouTube channels, where our instructors live-streamed classes from wherever they

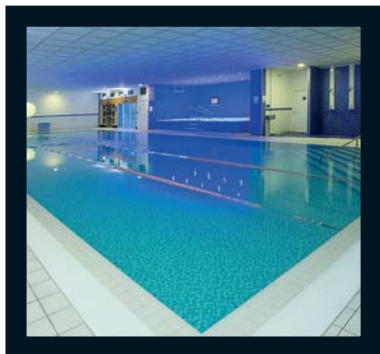


PHOTO BANNATYNE

Campling says the Bannatyne estate, which combines spa with health and fitness, is ideally placed to develop a full wellness offering

are. We also offered Les Mills On Demand to members for free for 60 days, and around half-price thereafter. At its peak, we had over 12,000 LMOD subscribers.

We're now launching a digital membership in the next couple of weeks, aimed at people who perhaps aren't ready to come back to the gym. Priced at £9.99 a month, it will be a bit of a revenue generator for us, but it's designed primarily to entice people back rather than keep them working out at home.

I imagine we'll have a digital form of membership from now on – why wouldn't we? – but looking after customers in our own premises is what we do best, and will always be our priority.

As we re-open, we're also tweaking our Start Smart programme to create a new Recover Smart programme. All returning members can use our In-Body scales, which will establish exactly where they're at physiologically, and we can then tailor a 12-week programme to their needs, checking in every three weeks.

Particularly for those who've had COVID-19, it will be a great support – albeit a light touch as COVID interventions go. We're not going to pretend, to ourselves or anyone else, that we're a medically-based business.



PHOTO BANNATYNE



*Each month we were closed in the latest lockdown cost us roughly £2.5m and from the first quarter of this year, we have pre-tax losses of around £7.5m to start clawing back now we're open again*

PHOTO: BARNABY



#### **What's the big picture strategy as you rebuild?**

The main strategy will be positioning ourselves as a wellness provider, which I believe can be a USP for us.

It's very easy to pitch yourself as a gym or health club or spa, but we have all the elements needed to look after people's wellness. This facility mix is why – although people try and pigeonhole us as a mid-market provider due to our price tag – I don't think we are.

We have gyms, but we also have physiotherapy on every site, café bar areas for a social element and spas at 48 of our clubs. We want to integrate the offering around these and get that holistic message across.

It suits our member profile, too. We're never going to be a hard-edged, purely workout-based product. We're never going to have 26,000sq ft clubs catering for 6,000–7,000 members. Our members will always have space to relax, space to experience the spa, space to enjoy the café bars. That's what we're all about, and it's why we'll be adding more of our facilities to more of our older clubs – spas, for example, where these don't currently exist.

We've perhaps been guilty in the past of not looking at our business as one entity, but rather as separate departments – a gym here, a spa there, a physio there. We need a change in mentality, and this is what I'm trying to instil in the whole team, from the top down.

We need to train our staff so they know more about each part of the business, and we need to be more persuasive with our members. I want them to understand it isn't

just about fitness, but about feeling better as a person – physically and mentally – and that taking advantage of more of our complementary services will help them achieve this.

It's early days, but the long-term intention will certainly be to create wellness programming that brings together the different aspects of what we do.

#### **Would you ever build standalone spas?**

Our spa product is currently more akin to a retail product than a subscription model and while we do sell spa access and treatments to aggregators, I don't see it as a standalone product.

Our spas and gyms are joined at the hip. The spa benefits from there already being a pool, steam and sauna on-site, plus even the gym floor and yoga classes. Meanwhile, gyms with a spa are more profitable than gyms without: on average they add 20–25 per cent to the profitability of a location.

So spa is a great complementary product, and will hopefully become even more so as we reposition along wellness lines, encouraging more members to take advantage of even better prices than we give to aggregators.

#### **What are your recovery and growth projections?**

We haven't been overly ambitious in our recovery plan, but – provided there are no further restrictions or a significant increase in infection rate – I expect us to be profitable at EBITDA level and cash-generative as a business as we come out of the summer.

**Campling says Bannatyne is looking to acquire new sites by the end of 2021**

PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

Early sales have been very encouraging and while I know the trend will drop off slightly, I believe we'll be profitable again, month by month, by the end of 2021.

One of the things that's been most difficult for all businesses throughout the pandemic has been the lack of certainty. Having a roadmap is massively important in terms of planning, as well as getting the confidence back in our members, staff and key business partners.

I'm hopeful there could even be a 'January' this September, for example, once people are back from their UK staycations – perhaps even foreign holidays – and are thinking: 'I've got to get back to the health club now'.

Of course, there have been a lot of job losses throughout the country, and that's going to take a few months to settle down. But if we keep working carefully and effectively – and as long as we can keep the pandemic under control – I don't see why we shouldn't return to where we were.

We're also back on the expansion trail, looking to acquire new sites by the end of this year.

As an independently owned and funded business, it will be a considered, careful growth pattern, but there's certainly opportunity as we come out of the pandemic.

#### **How long will the sector stay in crisis mode?**

Speaking just for Bannatyne, I don't think we ever felt we were in crisis mode. We've taken a very careful, structured approach to

how we've managed ourselves through the pandemic, and I think we will stick to exactly the same management style as we come out of it. We'll consider and take appropriate action in response to whatever the world throws at us.

There's a euphoria in the sector at the moment around re-opening, but that will wear off quite soon and then it will be back to the fact that the better-run businesses will do better. That's always been the case and I don't think it will ever change.

I do think all businesses in our sector will need to look at making themselves more resilient, more able to withstand further stormy weather if it comes along. But equally, we've seen some great things over the past year – everything from Joe Wicks to workouts in the park. People have tried to keep fit, healthy and active and new people have come to the sector because they've had time on their hands to engage.

We also have a sector that's now better distributed to drive penetration – from budget operators that can encourage people in at a low start rate to premium operators offering a more extensive service.

All of this makes me very optimistic for the future. If we can get as many facilities back open as we can, as quickly as we can, and stay in control of our own destinies, I'm very confident we'll succeed again. ●

*Editor's note: This interview took place on Tuesday 13 April, the day after clubs in England were allowed to re-open for indoor workouts.*



# CARDIO

## ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES



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*Technogym's support & innovative products have brought my dream to life*

Louis Hamilton



# Honour bound

Hamilton's Honour is Leicester's newest fitness studio opening, with the latest innovation from Technogym. But this studio has a unique story, too. Owner Louis Hamilton tells us why he was determined to create such a special place

I've seen the fitness and sports sectors from a lot of angles," explains Hamilton. "I was a full-time football player until I was released due to injury, then entered the fitness industry and worked in a council gym for six years. From there I went self-employed and worked out of my converted garage for five years. I always knew I wanted to open a studio, and used those years to save up every penny."

The gym's name hints at the driving force behind Louis's hard work. Hamilton lost his father, much-loved football player Neville Hamilton, shortly before his 18th birthday. An annual sporting award dedicated to him is given for community events or remarkable achievements in sport.

Hamilton's Honour was created to continue the Hamilton family's dedication to community fitness.

"It's been hard work with lots of challenges," says Hamilton. "But I never stopped working towards

the dream, and Technogym has been amazingly helpful throughout the entire journey."

"My vision for Hamilton's Honour goes beyond being a fitness business," says Hamilton. "I want to support the local community, give a lot back, and raise funds for charity through our activities."

Giving back is a big theme for Hamilton and his team. Even before the studio had officially opened, he had leveraged the gym's social media to raise over £1,400 for British Heart Foundation in memory of his father.

## Home-feel

Hamilton's Honour offers the highest standard of service and facilities in a welcoming, home-feel studio. This new fitness facility, now equipped with the latest Technogym innovations, has opened its doors and welcomed members to experience the Excite Live cardio range.

"I set out to create a quiet, spacious, private environment where people could feel as though they were training in a home gym – if a home gym could have stunning décor and state of the art equipment!" says Hamilton. "I took my inspiration from top locations in the hospitality sector, working with a designer and with Technogym to create the look and feel I wanted."

"Our membership is capped at 400 which means members will always have the space and attention they deserve."

Hamilton's Honour is completely kitted out with Technogym equipment and the partnership has brought the vision to life. There's an Olympic lifting area, a cardio zone (with Excite Live Run), a HIIT and functional area



Hamilton's Honour is Leicester's newest studio





PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

The new studio is fully kitted out with Technogym equipment, including the Excite Live range and Mywellness



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM



PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

Hamilton has aimed to create a home feel, with facilities to suit people at every stage of their fitness journey

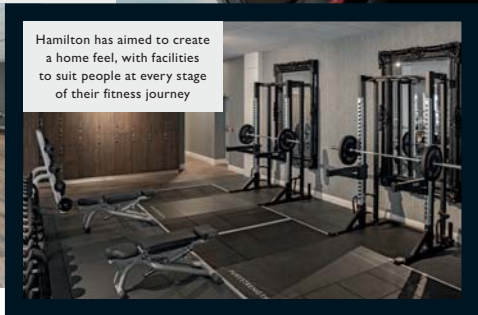


PHOTO: TECHNOGYM

(featuring Skill Line products), and an Omnia functional training rig with attachments accompanying a half-size boxing ring, tucked away behind a design wall.

"My aim was always to create a beautiful space with premium products," says Hamilton. "I looked at other equipment companies but none came close to Technogym. Their equipment looks beautiful and ties in with my theme, and offers the latest technology."

"Partnering with Technogym means I will always be at the forefront of innovation. Technogym is a true partner – they helped me design the space, install the equipment, train my staff on the technology, and put together the best package of content for my members."

"Hamilton's Honour's membership runs from beginners through to elite athletes, and Technogym offers something for everyone."

### Advanced Innovation

"Excite Live is the most advanced and innovative product out there," says Hamilton. "It's perfect for members of any level, because Technogym Live works with the user to

guide them through a pre-set programme. Beginners can join in with live routines, and advanced athletes can push themselves with the fast track controls, changing speed and incline on the fly. Excite Live is amazing, and feedback has been incredible. People have never used anything like it."

Hamilton also chose to feature the Mywellness app, which is helping him create the all-important community feel at Hamilton's Honour.

"We want our members to have all their fitness information in one place, and that's what Mywellness does," he explains. "All of the Technogym equipment links to their Mywellness, and they can track data outside the gym too. It all links to our leader board, and we can set challenges and prizes. I want to give back as much as I can to people using the gym."

"Technogym's support and innovative products have brought my dream to life. They've been a phone call away the whole time and I am grateful to have them as a partner."

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

# Fit Miles

The health and fitness industry felt as though it wasn't invited to its own party when news of the government's Fit Miles programme broke. But what does it actually mean and is it good or bad news for the sector? Kath Hudson investigates

As part of the obesity strategy published in July 2020, the Department of Health and Social Care is administering a programme which will make £100m available to support people achieve and maintain a healthier weight.

Led by Sir Keith Mills of Nectar points and Airmiles fame, it will use incentives and rewards to encourage healthy behaviours.

More than £70m will be invested in weight management services, made available through the NHS and councils. Up to 700,000 adults will gain access to support to help them lose weight, including digital apps, weight management groups, coaches and specialist clinical support.

Part of the funding from the £30m pot will go towards upskilling healthcare professionals to support those working with children, with interventions and enhanced training packages. It will be aimed at those in most need, including in the most deprived areas of the country.

Many people in the industry felt indignant the government had launched a weight loss initiative without getting us on board or even mentioning to the sector that the scheme was launching. Surely the health and fitness sector is a natural partner, so why do we keep getting overlooked? Or is this actually good news? Is it a sign that at long last the NHS will be moving towards a prevention model? Will there be opportunities for the sector further down the road? And how do we make sure we're ready to grab them? We explore the issues.



The UK government's new Fit Miles programme will invest millions in apps, weight management groups and other services

PHOTO: NICK WHITCOMBE

***It seems underwhelming that the government's plan is to spend £100 million to tackle a £30bn problem***

**Nick Whitcombe**

**Industry campaigner**

Any endorsement of health and fitness on a national scale is positive, and if this is what gets our foot in the door to begin a wider conversation around bettering the nation's health and truly protecting our NHS then it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Government has allocated £100m to tackle obesity with a plan that, according to the prime minister, will aid 700,000 people. This represents just 1 per cent of the population, when 50 per cent are overweight and 30 per cent are obese.

The NHS is hemorrhaging £9bn a year managing obesity and Type 2 diabetes, with a further cost to wider society of £30bn per year. So it seems underwhelming that the government's plan is to spend £100 million to tackle a £30bn problem. Aiding 1 per cent when more than 50 per cent need support.

Encouraging additional activity is a good move for mental health, although it will be near impossible to assess the success of the scheme in terms of increased steps, as there is no baseline to measure against. An hour's extra walking per day equates



► to all of 250 kcs on average, this will do very little to tackle the obesity crisis. We're essentially hoping to heal a gunshot wound with a plaster and a lollipop.

What is needed is a Work Out to Help Out scheme, to subsidise gym memberships for three months by 50 per cent. We are campaigning for £500m and have set a conservative goal of a 50 per cent increase in service users during this time. Putting this into perspective, the hospitality industry's Eat Out to Help Out resulted in a 214 per cent increase in service users. As our sector already saves the country about £24bn a year, Work Out to Help Out could save an additional £3bn in 12 weeks. Therefore making a profit of £2.5bn.

This could protect our NHS, reduce public spending, increase the quality of national health, all of which is achievable if government opens communication channels with our sector when planning the scheme.

## ***Are we missing a trick by not having a clear proposition for the NHS?***

**Andy King**

**Link4Life**

As a sector are we guilty of talking ourselves out of believing we can help address the obesity problem in this country? Are we missing a trick by not having a clear proposition for the NHS and failing our public by not doing all we can to address obesity?

We need to address the confidence issues we seem to have and agree we can offer a service at least as good, if not better, than anyone else.



PHOTO: LINK4LIFE

A 'whole systems' approach to the issue is required. The new Sport England Strategy and the chance we now have to rethink ourselves as a sector gives us a fantastic opportunity to reposition ourselves as wellbeing centres for the community. We need a national plan which places public sector leisure at the heart of a new wellbeing approach and we need Sport England to work with the NHS to agree how our sector can offer it exceptional value by providing weight management and other services, utilising our assets in order to signpost the sector.

Our sector is facing a fundamental, existential crisis, yet the population has never needed more support to address a multitude of long-term conditions. Can we help people towards a healthy attitude to life by utilising our qualified staff and facilities? Or shall we continue leaving this complex issue to others who are happy to be commissioned to deliver where we feel we are not able?

We need to collaborate and agree on some national solutions – what's working out there now that we could scale? How can we co-design programmes with health, as we have in Greater Manchester with the GM Cancer Team? If we get our act together no one will be able to match our sector. As my late dad used to say: "if not you, then who?"

PHOTO: HYZONE



PHOTO: MYZONE

**To tie in with the Fit Miles agenda, the sector needs to genuinely embrace change on a huge scale**

**Dave Wright**

**Myzone: CEO**

Anything that gets more people moving and inspires a behavioural shift to create positive lifestyle changes is a good idea. Especially now, as never before have so many people been aware of the need for physical activity both for the body and mind.

Fitness professionals weren't consulted for Fit Miles because we're still widely perceived to be all about six packs, marathons and heavy lifts. Despite all the good work done in the last year to reach out to communities, as an industry we still need to do more to impart the message that we're not all about high intensity and hitting the red zone.

To tie in with the Fit Miles agenda, the sector needs an innovation in approach and to genuinely embrace change on a huge scale. We need the empathy to meet people where they want to work out, whether that's in the gym, at home or outside. Remote classes are here to stay, and so are brick and mortar gyms. Offering both options is the only way to engage communities of the future. ▶



Our sector needs to evolve, as the profile of gym goers is likely to change, says Lynn Almond

- We feel that Myzone Effort Points could offer the government a proven turnkey solution to monitor physical activity as part of the Fit Miles scheme: 1300 MEPs each month equates to the WHO guidelines for physical activity. MEPs have already been used to good effect partnering with the NHS on prehab programmes.

***This is a refreshing move and the chance to work collaboratively with the NHS***

**Lynn Almond**

**GLL: regional health intervention manager**

As a leisure employee, my kneejerk reaction to this news was to feel the health and fitness sector had been overlooked, but after looking deeper into it from a wider public health perspective, I see this as good news. Conversations are changing and this is the most open and accessible opportunity that I've seen in a long time.

When you look at research studies into the outcomes of Nectar and Air Miles you can see why the government has chosen this route, it's all about incentivising people to change behaviour by making small changes. This initiative has the potential to reach the whole population, providing vital insight into individual behaviours, which will open up a multitude of opportunities for our sector.

Going forward, the sector needs to evolve, as the profile of gym goers is likely to change. If we're going to survive, we need to refocus both our purpose and the customers we're trying to attract. COVID has shone



a light on the health inequalities and emphasised that more people need to get active. Also some of the super motivated – a cohort the sector relies on for memberships – have found other ways to exercise.

Membership models may change as membership could start to come through referrals from NHS pathways. Operators need to ask themselves questions: what is our purpose in terms of contribution to reducing health inequalities and which groups are a priority in the places we serve?

This is a refreshing move and the chance to work collaboratively with the NHS. It's a sign that prevention is now being considered: something which I am witnessing in my role working with NHS integrated care systems.

This is just the start and there will be a raft of opportunities. As the sector starts afresh after the lockdowns, this is the time to refocus, link in with the prevention agenda, be a support system for the NHS and refocus on the customers we're trying to attract. ●



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The  
Health  
Agenda

# Beyond Pain

Prescribe exercise, not painkillers,  
to chronic pain sufferers, says the UK's  
National Institute for Health and Care  
Excellence, as Tom Walker reports

Adults suffering from chronic pain should be advised to take exercise, rather than be prescribed painkillers, according to new guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the UK.

In a groundbreaking move, NICE says that patients looking to manage their pain should be advised to engage in physical activity to alleviate the condition – as well as remain physically active for longer-term general health benefits.

## Chronic pain management

The new guidance outlines the recommended care plans for patients suffering from pain that can't be tracked to any underlying condition – also known as chronic primary pain.

The new NICE guidance says that medical practitioners should "offer a supervised group exercise programme to

The medical profession has advised that people take exercise for chronic pain, rather than painkillers



people aged 16 years and over to manage chronic primary pain," but add that they should "take people's specific needs, preferences and abilities into account".

It also advises against resorting to commonly used pain killers, including paracetamol, as there is "little or no evidence that they make any difference to people's quality of life, pain or psychological distress, but they can cause harm, including possible addiction".

#### New direction

The guidance marks a major change in the UK's pain treatment policy and is seen as a win for the physical activity sector, which has long made the case for exercise as an essential service and a form of preventative healthcare.

Dr Paul Chrisp, director of the Centre for Guidelines at NICE, said: "We want this guideline to make a positive difference to people with chronic



***We want this guideline to make a positive difference to people with chronic pain, and their families and carers***

*Dr Paul Chrisp,  
director of the Centre  
for Guidelines at NICE*

pain, and their families and carers.

"It highlights that achieving an understanding of how pain is affecting a person's life and those around them and knowing what's important to the person is the first step in developing an effective care and support plan that recognises and treats a person's pain as valid and unique to them."

The guideline emphasises the need for shared decision-making, putting patients at the centre of their care, and fostering a collaborative, supportive relationship between patients and healthcare professionals.

It highlights the importance of healthcare professionals gaining an understanding of how a person's life affects their pain and how pain affects their life, including their work and leisure time, relationships with family and friends, and sleep. ●

● Read the NICE guidance in full at [www.HCMmag.com/pain](http://www.HCMmag.com/pain)

# Everyone's talking about Healthy collaboration

For years the health and fitness sector has aspired to be taken seriously by the health sector. Is now the time? asks Kath Hudson

In the UK, the pandemic has exacerbated serious health inequalities which already existed in society and proved that across the population people need to start taking more responsibility for their health and wellbeing.

They need to be inspired to move more and to be aware of the importance of nurturing good mental health and maintaining a healthy weight.

Without lockdowns, health services in the UK would have stopped functioning and this fact has finally convinced the government that prevention is better than cure – just as our industry has been saying for years.

So are we emerging out of lockdowns into a dramatically changing landscape? Will there be more opportunities for the health club sector to work with the health service?

If so, how can health and fitness operators in the public and trusts sector access these opportunities? We ask the experts

The fitness sector has long been advocating the use of exercise for prevention







It will take three to five years to clear current waiting lists for medical treatment, so it will be important for National Health Service teams to redesign patient pathways to increase their capacity

## Lynn Almond

**GLL: regional health intervention manager**

**A**s a result of the pandemic, there are certainly more opportunities than before for health and fitness operators to work with the health service, for example, in the provision of weight management programmes and via support for COVID recovery.

It's anticipated it will take three to five years to clear current waiting lists for medical treatment which have built up over the last year. Therefore, it will be important for National Health Service (NHS) teams to redesign patient pathways to increase their capacity.

One idea has been to free up more space in hospitals by moving out non-acute outpatient services. Leisure centres are a natural choice of location for these kinds of services: allowing qualified leisure teams to support less acute patients while the health service focuses on those who need enhanced support.

GLL is working with both the NHS Trusts in Cumbria to co-locate their musculoskeletal physiotherapy services into leisure settings as part of the transformation, for example.



In order for the sector to raise its profile, networking is key and takes time. It's all about relationship building and proving what we can do – which is often a lot more than the healthcare sector realises.

Firstly, establish what your local health system has outlined as a priority for the community. Consider how your services could support this and, using available research, build a case for how your offering could support these priorities. Network hard, making contact with NHS service leads and articulate what you can offer in terms of long-term benefits and savings. Be confident in what you're talking about, do your research and create a good business case and then prepare to be persistent. ▶



ROBERT NICHOLSON/ISTOCK.COM

PHOTO: GLL



One of my proudest moments was when the Prehab4cancer programme was launched and our instructors were referred to by a medical colleague as “fellow health professionals”

## Andy King

**Link4Life: chief executive**



PHOTO: LINK4LIFE

**G**M Active has had some notable successes working with the health service. The Prehab4Cancer programme has treated more than 2,000 cancer patients across Greater Manchester, to make them more robust for their cancer treatment.

The results have been outstanding in terms of improved recovery times and shorter stays in hospital. Going forward, the vision is to replicate this service for other conditions, including for those at risk of amputations due to poor lifestyle habits.

Running these types of programmes isn't easy. Collaboration is crucial – we've had the benefit of some heavyweight allies in the health world and work closely with our Active Partnership (Greater Sport) which presents GM Active as a collection of community focused professionals and not operators simply chasing the money.

It's this system-wide approach that builds trust and credibility and is often sadly lacking between leisure operators and the health world.

It's not enough to simply train your staff to various level 3 and 4 qualifications. You need to train your leaders to be part of the system more generally.



Only when we're considered part of the wider ecosystem, with values aligning with the NHS, will we be treated as we desire – as part of the solution for so many treatable and preventable conditions.

Unfortunately this training doesn't currently exist, so GM Active is working to create a leadership programme which builds on our learnings and system leadership theories. This will enable us to build on the success of Prehab4cancer and transform our workforce and proposition, so we can finally take our rightful place at the Allied Health Professionals' table ([www.HCMmag.com/AlliedHealthProfessionals](http://www.HCMmag.com/AlliedHealthProfessionals)).

One of the proudest moments in my career was when the Prehab4cancer programme was launched at East Manchester Leisure Centre and our instructors were referred to by a medical colleague as “fellow health professionals”, alongside cancer physiotherapists, nutritionists and psychologists. It can be done!



The vision is to have health and fitness and medical specialists working side by side as peers



We must go to the healthcare sector with a very clear case, so it's easy for them to look at it and say yes

## Kirsty Cumming

**Community Leisure  
UK: chief executive**



PHOTO: CLUK

**H**ealth and wellbeing has never been higher on people's agenda, so there's an opportunity to harness some of the rhetoric around being physically active.

At government level there are also opportunities – for example the Office for Health Promotion will be a good fit with our sector and the £100m obesity fund crosses over with work which is already happening in health and fitness.

Although there are opportunities on the horizon, the question is how we can seize those opportunities and make the links. As everything currently happens at a local level, it still comes down to a postcode lottery. Ideally, we need a national strategy which can be delivered locally.

This is a high priority area for CLUK. We're strengthening the links between our sector and healthcare, as well as sharing best practice among members.

We've just produced a draft document for members in Scotland, highlighting what is going on and how they contribute and now we're looking to do the same for England and Wales. This will break down barriers and shine a spotlight on what's working.

We're optimistic about the opportunities. The tools are there – the new Sport England strategy, as well as awareness and public appetite for better health – so it's a matter of how we bring those elements together, at a time when all operators are busy just trying to get back to normal.

Our sector will have to be proactive. We must go to the healthcare sector with a very clear case, so it's easy for them to look at it and say yes, this is an opportunity for us to work together. The good news is that through the monitoring evaluation of the Leisure Recovery Fund we will have consistent data which we've never had before.



## John Oxley

**Brand Oxley:  
centre forward**

**T**he physical activity sector has found it challenging to truly connect with health agencies. Aside from some pockets of great practice, physical activity as a mainstay of a nationally-driven preventative health agenda has not gained traction.

Sir Michael Marmot's review at the end of 2020 confirmed that health inequality across the UK has worsened over the last ten years. Despite a greater number of facilities, enhanced quality and access to more affordable options, our sector has played its part in contributing to deepening health inequality.

Only 15 per cent of the population are members of gyms and leisure centres, and across all communities, participation is over-represented by the most affluent, while being under-represented among the most deprived. We're perfectly formed to serve the people we get: we have outstanding marketing, programming and pricing strategies which appeal to just 20 per cent of the population at any one time.

So, what's the opportunity? There should be a subtle shift in our language. We need to talk



We need to talk about health rather  
than fitness and communities  
rather than markets

about health rather than fitness, and communities rather than markets. We need to see ourselves as part of a wider system that may include health, education and social care.

Most importantly, we need to understand the implications of the new Health White Paper – this insists on collaboration between local authorities and health agencies and has preventative health as a foundation principle.

We must also navigate our way around the emerging Integrated Care Services (ICS). Part of the new ICSs are Primary Care Networks, so we need to find out about those in our areas too.

Everything starts with a conversation, and it's through developing those relationships that our sector will become part of this emerging collaborative approach to population health. This will take local – not national – initiative and will require us to show humility,

as we build rapport with new partners. I urge us not to barge in with an 'oven-ready solution', but to enquire and explore opportunities to become an established part of a health care system.

There are fine examples across the UK of facilities playing a part within social prescribing, delivering cardiac rehab, cancer prehab and weight management interventions, and there are examples of long-COVID recovery programmes. These can become a more permanent and significant part of our proposition.

It requires us only to have a desire to think more broadly, to get a grasp of a new language and to expose ourselves to building new relationships in unfamiliar environments. This will not necessarily be easy, but the worthwhile things in life – those that make positive and lasting improvements to society – often aren't. ●



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# A risk-free route to new members

PHOTO: HUSSE



Hussle says its business model has been developed to protect the interests of gym operators

**More than 30,000 Hussle users have been turned into direct members in the last 18 months. Find out how Hussle can help your business bounce back**

Rebuilding memberships is a priority as the industry comes out of lockdown

Operators lost 30-40 per cent of members during a year where the pandemic saw our industry forced to close three times. With estimates suggesting UK gyms have lost in the region of £2.3 billion in revenue it stands to reason that this year's primary focus is going to be rebuilding memberships to recoup lost revenue and drive new income streams.

Naturally this will involve re-engaging old members and anecdotal feedback suggests operators are expecting a post-COVID 'bounce' on reopening, caused by significant pent-up demand. But once that wears off and the tougher summer months kick in, a more important consideration will be how to attract the 85 per cent of the population who don't currently interact with our industry at all. This cohort is exactly the customers that fitness marketplace Hussle can help operators target.

### **A wider appeal**

Hussle appeals to very specific customer wants – choice, freedom and flexibility.

There are customers who need more than one venue to fit their lifestyle – with access to facilities in several locations – so wouldn't join a single gym. Then there are customers who are keen to try venues before joining directly and who try-before-they-buy via Hussle.

"This is where our Membership Conversion Service (MCS) comes into its own, generating new direct members with no marketing costs," says Jamie Owens, director of fitness partnerships at Hussle. "We proactively

“

*Our audience is aged 20-35 – the next generation of gym members – offering yet another opportunity to get new people engaged*

**Jamie Owens, Hussle**



encourage users to join clubs they attend regularly. On average, 26 per cent of Hussle customers go on to become direct members – more than 30,000 users have been turned into exclusive members in the last 18 months alone.

"With MCS we present a unique offer to gyms. We make joining a seamless journey for the customer and, in doing so, convert more high-value direct members.

"What makes Hussle unique in the market is that a member converted is just that, an actual member. Most marketing partners provide operators with revenue, but the customers will never become their own. Hussle isn't trying to own the customer, just enabling them to make an informed choice – and if one gym offers the right fit, we actively encourage them to join."



Hussle also attracts hybrid customers. "This is the area we've seen grow hugely during the pandemic," says Owens. "These are the customers who get fit in numerous ways, who spend on other fitness services, but still want occasional gym access."

Hussle invests in marketing to consumers via big-brand partnerships and corporate health

### Keep them engaged by being flexible

Peloton saw its quarterly workouts more than quadruple during 2020 – from 19m in Q1 to 77m in Q4, while ClubIntel reports that 72 per cent of global operators now offer on-demand and livestream workouts – up from just 25 per cent in 2019. With tech giants like Apple and Google getting involved, this member cohort is only set to grow.

These services could represent a threat to operators' wallet share, but an October 2020 IHRSA report found 95 per cent of members miss at least one aspect of the gym; evidence that a flexible offering will be the way to ensure these modern members, who don't want a one-size-fits-all gym, continue to use bricks and mortar facilities at least on some basis.

*"When I was working across the UK, Hussle's flexibility allowed me to explore some great gyms that I wouldn't have known about otherwise."*

*"When I'm based in one place, I use Hussle to test out the best gym for me in the area and then purchase a direct membership. I always keep an eye on Hussle for new gyms, so that I can try them out when I'm travelling in different areas"*

Jordan, 36-year-old engineer, Cardiff

### Increase footfall

By offering two types of pass to access venues, Hussle enables operators to create an even broader appeal. Members who need more than one venue can opt for the Multi-Club Pass – priced at a premium to protect operators' own direct membership.

Try-before-they-buy members, alongside those wanting occasional gym access, can opt for the Day Pass, based on operators' own prices.

Either way Hussle gets footfall through the door, risk free. "We appeal to customers by investing in two main marketing channels – direct to the consumer through big-brand partnerships with companies such as American Express and Vodafone, as well as via big-name employers providing fitness-as-a-benefit, such as Travelodge, Facebook, Channel 4, and multiple NHS trusts," explains Owens. "And finally, our key audience is aged 20-35 – the next generation of gym members, who are typically younger than most operators' core 40-plus audience, offering yet another opportunity to get new people engaged."

● To find out more about Hussle or to become a partner visit [www.hussle.com/list-my-gym](http://www.hussle.com/list-my-gym). It's free to list a gym on the platform and we're always keen to discuss building a recovery partnership with operators.

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# China intel

A new report, conducted by Deloitte, analyses the growth of the Chinese fitness industry and the outlook ahead, as Kristen Walsh reports

**I** HRSA recently partnered with ChinaFit to commission an evaluation of the Chinese fitness industry as a benchmark for post-pandemic analysis.

The comprehensive study – *The 2019-*

*2020 China Health and Fitness Market White Paper* – focuses on market size data from the top 18 cities in China, including Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Shenyang, Tianjin, Jinan, Qingdao, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Nanjing, Chongqing, Chengdu, Wuhan, Changsha, Xi'an, Zhengzhou and Kunming.

Overall, these cities had a total of 8.8 million members and 27,600 health and fitness clubs in 2019, generating US\$4.9 billion in revenue (33.7 billion RMB).

Only about 3.8 per cent of these gyms were managed by one of the top ten industry brands, according to the report, showing that the industry has a low concentration ratio, and has yet to establish strong leading brands in the region.

China's member penetration rate in the 18 cities studied reached between 3-6 per cent in 2019. The gap with developed Asian markets (~10 per cent penetration rate in Japan and



***China's fitness market is becoming more and more attractive to investors both home and abroad***

Korea) is gradually narrowing, and there is still considerable room for improvement compared with penetration rates of 10-20 per cent in Europe and North America, according to Deloitte.

"The report is a valuable resource for industry stakeholders across the globe," says Melissa Rodriguez, senior research manager at IHRSA. "The in-depth analysis of the unique fitness landscape in China provides club operators, suppliers, and investors with the intel needed to evaluate development and expansion opportunities."



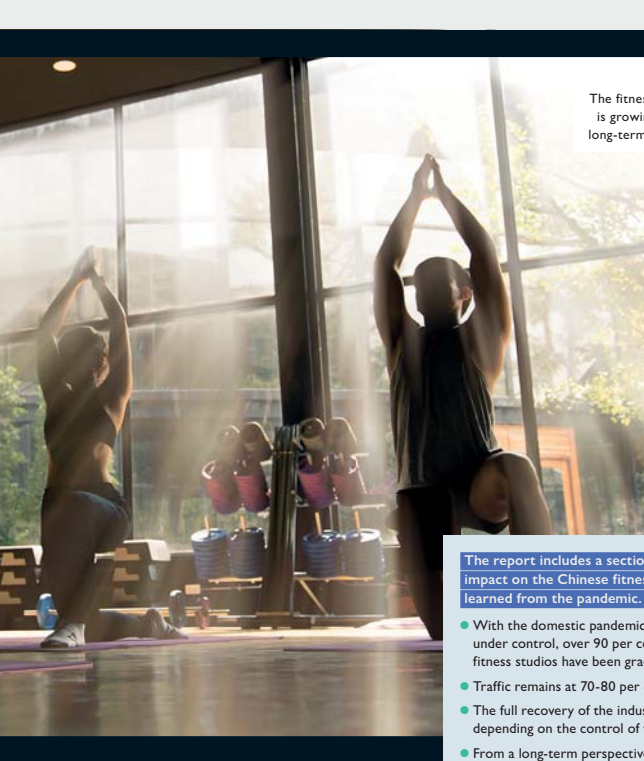


PHOTO: JR SCHULTERBROCK

The fitness industry in China is growing rapidly, and the long-term outlook is positive

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The report includes a section detailing COVID-19's impact on the Chinese fitness industry and lessons learned from the pandemic. Key takeaways include:

- With the domestic pandemic being brought under control, over 90 per cent of gyms and fitness studios have been gradually reopened.
- Traffic remains at 70-80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.
- The full recovery of the industry remains uncertain, depending on the control of further outbreaks.
- From a long-term perspective, the pandemic has increased people's awareness of health and fitness on a national scale.
- The fitness industry, as a core sector of the health industry, will continue to grow and diversify – the long-term outlook is positive.
- The pandemic has accelerated the digitisation of the fitness industry and as gym operators roll out online content and services to maintain and expand customer relationships, consumers are becoming more familiar with home fitness and online fitness.
- In recent years, the industry standardisation level has continuously improved as the market adjusts itself. The Matthew effect has gradually emerged, and the decentralised market is transforming to a relatively concentrated market. COVID-19 has accelerated industry reshuffling.
- After the epidemic, fitness brands will focus on improving in these five areas: business model, store expansion, product and service offerings, maintaining members, and online operation.

Overall, the report shows an industry that is rapidly growing and, despite the pandemic, a positive long-term outlook.

"China's fitness market is becoming more and more attractive to investors both at home and abroad," said Alan MacCharles, Deloitte China commercial strategy and research partner. "In order to deep dive into the Chinese fitness industry and understand the market dynamics and future trends, we are honoured to be commissioned to conduct research and analysis on the Chinese fitness industry and to author this report."

Kirsten Walsh is associate publisher at IHRSA  
Download the report: [www.ihrsa.org/publications](http://www.ihrsa.org/publications)  
Key contact: Adrian Xu, Deloitte China  
email: [adxu@deloitte.com.cn](mailto:adxu@deloitte.com.cn)



*What if fun was at the centre of our strategy? Would making the city more playful support people to play more?*

Lance Vervoort, Hamilton City Council NZ

PHOTO: CITY OF HAMILTON



Hamilton Council plans to reclaim its parks, underpasses, footpaths and streets for physical activity



# Play full city



Over time, town planning has led to the creation of obesogenic environments, but Hamilton in New Zealand is taking a fresh approach to mobilising its population, by turning the city into a playground, as Kath Hudson reports

Underpasses becoming climbing walls, community access to school facilities, better integrated cycling and walking infrastructure and a mobile play trailer are all being considered by Hamilton City Council as ways of giving the city an injection of fun and encouraging people to travel by bike or on foot.

The city, in the Waikato region of the North Island – famous as the location of Middle Earth and The Shire, in *The Lord of the Rings* – is blessed with beautiful natural resources and an active population, but is still grappling with increases in obesity levels.

The New Zealand Health Survey 2019/20 found that one in three adults aged 15 and over were obese (30.9 per cent), with the prevalence of obesity differing with ethnicity: being 63.4 per cent in Pacific Islanders, 47.9 per cent in Maoris, 29.3 per cent in European/other and 15.9 per cent in Asians.

National activity guidelines in New Zealand are for adults to do 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise throughout the week, but to double this for extra health benefits.

Having spent time living in New Zealand during the early noughties, it was great to see how much time people spent being active outdoors. This was thanks largely to the magnificent natural environment and the energetic Kiwi mindset, but government encouragement played a part too. The jingle from a public health advert still sticks in my mind, reminding me to “push play for 30 minutes a day.”

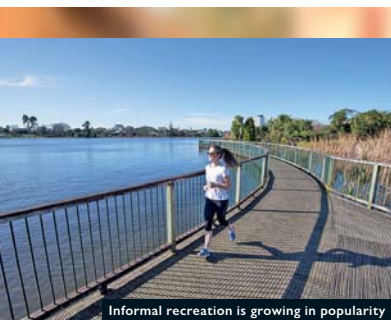


Public areas such as parks and playgrounds are the most popular places to be active





Research found that 52% of people will only do physical activity if it's fun



Informal recreation is growing in popularity

*Initiatives under the Play Strategy will create more opportunities for Hamiltonians to be active in spontaneous and informal ways*



This belief in play being good for you has now been put at the heart of a sports and recreation strategy devised by Hamilton City Council, in consultation with the public, local sports clubs and other stakeholders, including Sport Waikato, which promotes play, active recreation and sport throughout the Waikato region.

The Play Strategy aims to boost physical activity levels by providing playful opportunities around the city for everyone and in so doing, transforming Hamilton into New Zealand's most playable city.

Three different types of play are defined under the strategy: spontaneous play, organised sport and informal recreation.

### Exercise should be fun

A review of Hamilton's sports and recreation strategy, carried out in 2018, revealed two key findings: firstly that participation in organised sport – both in the city and nationally – was declining and although people understood the health benefits of physical activity, this wasn't always translating into action; secondly, while participation in organised sport was declining, it was actually increasing in informal recreation.

The research also showed that 52 per cent of participants will only do physical activity if it's fun – rising to 62 per cent among those aged five to 17 and that council assets, such as roads, walkways, public parks, fields and playgrounds, were the most common places for people to be physically active.

"This begged the question: what if we focus on play and fun for all ages?" says Hamilton City Council general manager community, Lance Vervoort. "What if fun was at the centre of our strategy and achieving the physical activity



Connecting bike paths and walkways to key places of employment and education can increase activity

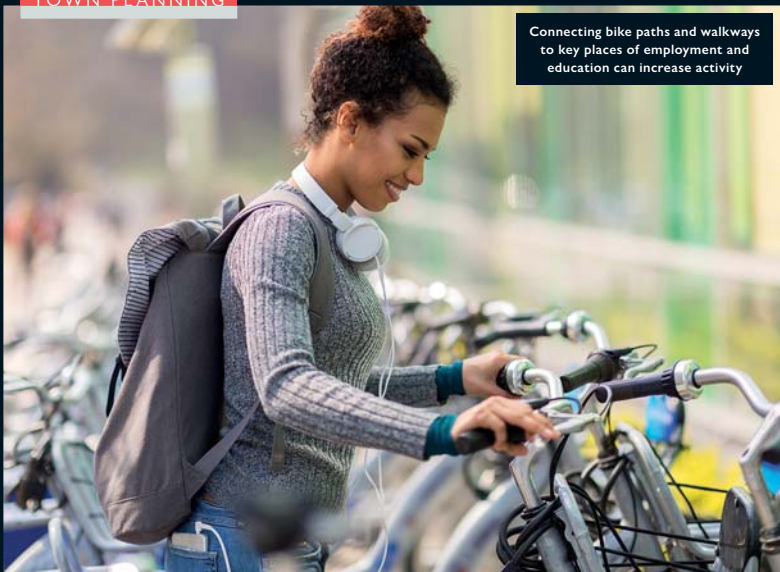


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANSELSTOCK

## HOW ACTIVE?

*Sport Waikato research into adults in Hamilton found:*

**58%** of adults do more than 150 minutes of physical activity a week

**72%** of adults see physical activity as an essential part of their life

**89%** recognise being active is good for their mental health and wellbeing

**89%** walk

**48%** garden

**43%** do individual workouts

**42%** jog

**35%** play games

**22%** belong to a gym or fitness centre

**24%** of those had not visited in the last week

*The main barriers to physical activity:*

**58%** other commitments

**25%** lack of energy

**23%** lack of motivation

**22%** prefer other interests

**18%** got out of the habit

## THE VISION

- Put Hamilton on the map as a place of joy, fun, adventure, exploration and competition
- Create safe, accessible walkways, cycleways and sports grounds, well-connected to key destinations

- Target investment at infrastructure to encourage all demographics to play
- Communicate with the community, so they understand play isn't just about playgrounds but about having physical fun and adventure wherever they are
- Offer a wide range of opportunities for elite sportspeople, club level

- participants and young people to engage easily in organised sport
- For sports clubs to contribute to this
- For Hamiltonians to increase their participation in physical activity
- For the barriers to participation to reduce and the disparity between population groups decrease



**“The organisation’s big hairy audacious goal is for 75% of people in the region to meet the national physical activity guidelines**

**Matthew Cooper, Sport Waikato**

- guidelines was a by product of fun? Would making the city more playful support people to play more?

“These questions provided a change in mindset, which enabled staff to focus on play for everyone and to reframe council assets such as walkways, street trees, open spaces, gullies, sports parks, aquatic facilities, footpaths and streets as play infrastructure where people can engage in physical movement and fun.”

Hamilton council manages a range of infrastructure, including more than 1100 hectares of open space, two aquatic facilities and more than 1000k of off-road cycle and walkways, suburban streets and footpaths, which will be used to deliver new playful environments.

### Reclaim the streets

Implementation is happening primarily through the council’s long-term plan process, which is developed every three years, with a 10-year horizon, and since the strategy was adopted, in 2019, it has informed a number of potential projects and programmes.

“Initiatives under the Play Strategy will create more opportunities for Hamiltonians to be active in spontaneous and informal ways and help to support similar work occurring in councils across the region and the rest of the country,”

says Sport Waikato CEO, Matthew Cooper.

“The organisation’s big hairy audacious goal is for 75 per cent of people in the region to meet the national physical activity guidelines.”

One of the main challenges is behaviour change within the organisation and also to reimagine spaces which have not traditionally contributed towards play outcomes, such as the streets.

“Streets used to be places to play and for social connection but presently the focus on streets is almost purely as a network for moving cars,” says Vervoort. “We’d like to see a return of suburban streets to being the realm of children and grown-ups engaging in play.”

### Reimagining the city

According to Vervoort, the strategy has already captured the hearts and minds of the public, as well as council staff responsible for developing parks and open spaces: “The focus on play seems to prompt people to connect with their childhoods and remember how they played, which enables innovative thinking about how we might reimagine Hamilton city.”

Going forward, Cooper believes tackling the environment of cities will be vital in order to increase activity and deal with a variety of health challenges. “Cities can either build-in inactivity, through car-based development and a lack of walking and cycling infrastructure, or make it easy to be active every day, which we know has a range of physical, social, emotional and mental benefits,” he says.

“The built form in a city has a very real impact on our bodies. Decisions councils make around parks, open spaces and alternative transport options will contribute to people’s choices about walking, biking or driving a car. Connecting walkways and cycleways and open spaces to key places of employment, education and recreation makes a real difference to the health of a community.” ●



The focus on play prompts people to reconnect with their childhoods



# Make the SWITCH

*We talk to Dave Wright, CEO of Myzone, about the world's first interchangeable heart rate monitor that provides real-time feedback – and the impact of COVID-19*

## **Dave, tell us about MZ-Switch**

MZ-Switch is the world's first interchangeable heart rate monitor that can be worn on the wrist, chest and arm. It gives users feedback on their heart rate in real-time and converts this into clear and simple colour-based zones based on the intensity of effort they're putting into their activity.

Wearing the monitor on the wrist and arm provides 95 per cent PPG accuracy (photoplethysmography), for non-gripping activities such as walking, running and swimming (wrist only), while the chest-based application provides 99.4 per cent EKG accuracy (Electrocardiogram) for more intense activity such as functional or gym training.

## **Why are you launching it now?**

All over the world, gyms and fitness centres have been forced to close as part of regional and national lockdowns in an attempt to halt the spread of COVID-19. As a result, people have been increasingly exercising outdoors and activities such as walking, running and cycling have become even more popular.

In development for more than a year, MZ-Switch is perfect for these kinds of activities. Users simply strap the device onto their chest, wrist or arm to track their activity and get an accurate reading of how hard they're working during exercise, wherever they're working out.

We believe that its ease of use, combined with unrivalled versatility will bring the benefits of heart rate tracking to a variety of new markets. MZ-Switch makes it incredibly easy for gym members to experience Myzone during group exercise, for the corporate sector to encourage employees to become more active during the working day and for schools to utilise heart-rate technology during PE classes.

## **How does it work?**

MZ-Switch uses our unique point system, known as Myzone Effort Points (MEPs), to help people commit to regular exercise and enjoy the journey. Users earn MEPs when they exercise in their target heart rate zone.

Myzone's five coloured zones are based on a user's maximum heart rate and each zone awards a different number of MEPs, so the more effort someone puts into their workout, the more points they earn. Now, thanks to MZ-Switch, users have endless opportunities to earn MEPs and keep active.

## **How will it benefit facility owners?**

MZ-Switch is accurate, versatile and easy to use. It connects with gym equipment, in-club display screens and the Myzone app, so users can share their workouts.

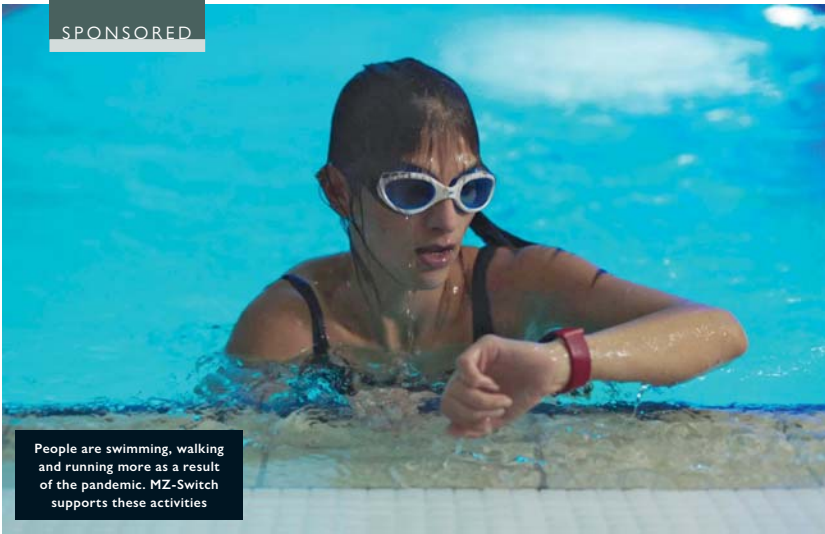
The MZ-Switch can be worn on the chest, arm or wrist



*The hybrid offering  
is here to stay,  
but it means that  
operators need an  
effective digital  
solution to stay  
connected with  
their members*

”

Wright says the MZ-Switch will bring the benefits of heart rate tracking to a variety of new audiences



People are swimming, walking and running more as a result of the pandemic. MZ-Switch supports these activities

With so many people being forced to exercise outside the club and away from gym buddies, the club community is more important than ever. With MZ-Switch, members can still experience that sense of belonging, wherever they are working out.

It also connects with other devices, such as the Apple Watch and Garmin, as well as third party apps, including MapMyRun, MyFitnessPal and Strava.

### How have your customers adapted during the pandemic?

More forward-thinking operators have adopted a hybrid approach to their operations, offering both digital and in-club services to survive the crisis. It's been a challenging experience for some, with many owners and operators forced to venture beyond their comfort zone to get to grips with new technology to transform their businesses.

The hybrid offering is here to stay, but it means that operators need an effective digital solution to stay connected with their members, whether they choose to train in the gym, outside the four walls of the club or to work out at home.

When the industry fully reopens, the social distancing requirements imposed by government will mean that most clubs won't be able to host the usual number of customers in a group class for some time.

Our new MZ-Remote+ platform combines recorded classes with live programming where instructors see the real-time effort of everyone in a session, even when they're working out at home. This allows clubs to engage with their members working in and out of the club and also to reach new users. Launched in May 2020, MZ-Remote has proved a critical tool for operators, with some claiming it has saved their business.

### What has the pandemic taught us?

We've learned so many things during this crisis, not least the importance of having a strong balance sheet. The pandemic has shown the need for reasonable lease agreements and the importance of the relationships that we have with our landlords. It has also highlighted the need for deep connections with our members, quality engagement with our teams and staff who add value.

There's no doubt that the importance of exercise has been brought to the forefront of public debate throughout the pandemic. But the crisis has also shown that we need stronger political influence to ensure a greater understanding of the value that our industry offers for people's mental and physical wellbeing.

We know that regular exercise can improve immunity and bolster people's defence against COVID-19. We also know, from data around the world, that our facilities offer safe spaces to exercise.

But we need to change the message that we are sending to the world, so governments understand that our sector is about health, not just fitness. There are too many stereotypes associated with the term fitness. It's not as sexy as sport and we still haven't managed to really explain the term physical activity.

We also need a more unified approach to media communications. Each country seems to have a fractious approach to their communication – if our communications were more united and cohesive then our message about the vital role that physical activity plays both in society and public health would be more easily understood.

● Find out more: [www.myzone.org](http://www.myzone.org)



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# Hotel fitness goes up a gear

Fitness, wellness and recovery are driving new investments in the hotel and resorts market, with Kerzner the latest to enter this space, as Megan Whitby reports

**K**erzner International, the owner of One&Only Resorts and Atlantis Resort & Residences, has developed a new immersive lifestyle hospitality concept called Siro, inspired by fitness and wellbeing.

The new offering will invite guests to aspire to live at their fullest potential through a specialised blend of hospitality, fitness and wellness.

The immersive lifestyle destinations will be 'places of connection', creating welcoming social spaces and "bringing together a global community through sports, mindfulness, nutrition, education, fitness, recovery, achievement and holistic health", says Philippe Zuber, Kerzner CEO: "We recognise that holistic health is more important than ever, and Siro's primary focus will be an exceptional fitness and wellness offering to support a modern and balanced global lifestyle, delivered in a

The gym at the Siro Boka Palace – the central element of the wellness offering



PHOTO: KERZNER INTERNATIONAL

PHOTO: KERZNER INTERNATIONAL

transformative and nurturing urban environment.

"We look forward to Siro becoming part of key cities around the world," Zuber told HCM.

It's a model being pursued by several other operators, including Equinox, but Zuber told Bloomberg he does not see this as a competitive threat, saying: "Equinox will be our competitor to a certain extent, but they are a gym that has tried to go into hospitality. We're a bulletproof hospitality company with so much success over the years."

### Facility mix

A cutting-edge fitness club will be at the heart of each Siro hotel, offering a spacious gym, dedicated space for yoga and meditation, dynamic activity classes, a pool and use of local sports venues.

In addition, guests will be offered a variety of performance fitness activities reflective of each destination, such as cycling, sailing, hiking, boxing, climbing, kite surfing, parkour, and skiing.

To aid recovery and healing, Siro will also offer a Recovery Lab delivering a selection of health spa services including specialised massage therapies, cryotherapy, infrared saunas, meditation classes and sports rehabilitation, for mindful regeneration. ▶



***Equinox will be our competitor to a certain extent, but they are a gym company that has tried to go into hospitality, we're a bulletproof hospitality company***

*Philippe Zuber, CEO, Kerzner*

Olympian Adam Peaty is the first ambassador for the Siro brand



PHOTO: JORDAN KERNER



*Siro is an exciting new experience that seems to be missing in the hotel space*

*Adam Peaty, brand ambassador, Siro*

► Health and nutrition will be central to the Siro concept, with culinary teams working with local farms and artisans to serve seasonal and organic food.

Specialists will also provide nutritional advice and seminars to supplement guests' lifestyle.

### Launching in 2023

The first Siro hotel – called Siro Boka Place – will launch in Porto, Montenegro in 2023, while Kerzner has outlined plans to expand with more urban destinations. SIRO properties will be digitally integrated to deliver a smooth guest journey.

Siro will also be building 'Team Siro', a group of top athlete ambassadors from around the world who'll each play an advisory role as Siro develops the fitness and wellness elements at the heart of its 'immersive lifestyle experience'.

The first ambassador to be appointed is swimmer Adam Peaty, an Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth champion, and favourite to win Olympic gold at the Tokyo Olympics.

"Our partnership with Adam Peaty is a first for us," said Zuber. "The primary focus of Siro will be exceptional fitness and wellness and he will bring his experience, insight and understanding of all aspects of high-performance lifestyle, holistic health, and wellbeing to this new role. "Adam personifies everything we're looking to achieve

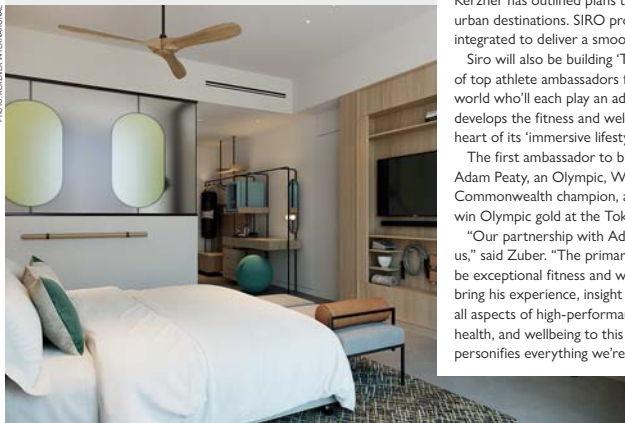


PHOTO: KERZNER INTERNATIONAL



The pool at what will become the Siro Montenegro – opening in 2023

with the new brand – he's the embodiment of living to your fullest potential, and we're excited to bring him on board at the very start of our Siro journey," he says.

Peaty told *HCM*, "Siro is an exciting new experience that seems to be missing in the hotel space.

"As an elite athlete who strives for perfection in everything I do, I know just how important the tiny details are with an environment such as this. From the tranquillity of the bedrooms to the best-in-class nutritional advice, to the state-of-the-art fitness facilities and recovery lab, Siro is aiming to revolutionise the guest experience."

## Community spaces

Siro will provide "thoughtful environments" for both local residents and guests, aiming to become a meaningful part of the community.

A social bar for guests and the community will be the "heartbeat" of the hotel, says Zuber. Public spaces will be "fully immersive and social" and will offer

**Siro (pronounced sigh-row) represents the four pillars of the brand: strength, inclusivity, reflection and originality:**

### **Strength**

*to always be resilient and committed to become the best version of yourself*

### **Inclusivity**

*to always celebrate the diversity of people and their passions*

### **Reflection**

*to always nurture harmony, balance, and wellbeing*

### **Originality**

*to always challenge convention and elevate experiences*

an opportunity to "celebrate the triumphs of the day," says Zuber. "They will create an experience for all the senses and will focus on exploration and play, coming to life through sight, touch, and sound, being spaces where guests will want to linger, blurring the lines between virtual and reality."

Guest rooms will be designed as sanctuaries – places of calm, where people can recharge. They'll be styled to have restorative properties such as air filtration and circadian lighting to provide an

optimal sleeping environment, while in-room spa and steam showers will aid rejuvenation and recovery.

Wellbeing will go beyond the physical and mental, employing smart technology and using sustainable materials to enhance the space and building and offering a private refuge for rest and recovery.

The concept will expand beyond the hotel and include streaming classes, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events to connect the Siro community and integrate with people's day to day fitness routines. ●



# Full of LIFE

**Craig Cocking was appointed Life Fitness UK's country manager in December, following over 13 years with the business. He reflects on the impact of the past 12 months and shares his views on the future of the industry**



Craig Cocking has been with Life Fitness for over 13 years

## **The past 12 months have been tough for the industry. How did Life Fitness respond to the challenge?**

Like all businesses we had to adapt – and do so fast – to ensure we could continue to help and support our customers. Our teams were quickly mobilised to work remotely and we focused on maintaining our company culture, maximising opportunities to engage with one another and do all we could to keep morale up and wellbeing a priority.

The pandemic brought the business together on a new level. We were able to utilise our global reach to inform each business unit – and the customers within each territory – with insight and best practice, pooling our experience and resources and taking learnings from across the business to best support our customers.


Behind the scenes it was important that things didn't stop. Our product development team continued to work on innovations and as a result we were able to launch two major product lines in 2020, with the introduction of the new Heat Rowers and Axiom Series selectorised strength range, while also setting ourselves up for some exciting innovations to come in 2021.

## **What are you most proud of in terms of Life Fitness's response?**

It has to be the team – the commitment and dedication shown by everyone at Life Fitness has been incredible. From the start of the pandemic our strategy has been driven by helping, advising, and supporting our customers, whatever their challenges may be.

“  
Our product development team continued to work on innovations throughout 2020 and as a result we were able to launch two major product lines last year





The Axiom Series selectorised strength range was developed and launched in 2020

While everyone was battling against the same cause, the impact and requirements for support varied; from facility redesign, equipment maintenance and service contracts, to member engagement strategies and staff training. Our approach was to put the customer at the centre and provide solutions, despite the internal challenges we faced with furlough and a reduced team.

**You started your new position in December. What excites you about the role?**

There's no doubt that the past year has been one of the toughest. But there are real positives to build on, and I'm excited to be a part of a truly global team and share best practice and learnings from the UK across the business.

The UK remains a key market for Life Fitness, and I'm proud to be leading such a talented and dedicated team; the willingness to go above and beyond has never been more vital. It's also the strength of these relationships that will drive our business forwards; internally, our culture is one of collaboration, so it's important we act on this beyond our teams, by listening to our customers and being recognised as a true partner.

**What can we expect over the next 12 months?**

Our customer-first focus won't change. While reopening is hugely positive, we know that recovery will take time, and so the approach we've adopted throughout the pandemic will continue, and we'll evolve and adapt our support in-line with our customers' needs.

We also have an extensive product road map in place, with innovations lined up to share with the industry when the time is right. While this alone is exciting, how we combine this with new experiences for our customers and their members – delivered through digital content and education, is the really energising part – so watch this space for what's to come!

We'll also continue to maximise our partnerships, extending our relationships with key partners, including Williams Racing and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), to drive best practice and strengthen our position within our target sectors.

**What do you think the future looks like for the fitness industry?**

It's one of positivity and real opportunity. The pandemic has put health and wellbeing at the forefront, and it's forced individuals, businesses and policymakers to recognise the importance of not just fitness, but also physical and mental health. Something our industry has believed in for a long time.

The communities we serve through our customers are increasingly diverse, and we must work together to learn and understand what experiences we can create to help and inspire people to live healthier lives. It's important this translates across all markets, beyond the traditional club environment, and our role is to help our customers do this by delivering unique, engaging experiences that encourage people to make fitness a part of their everyday life. ●

**More: [lifefitness.co.uk](https://www.lifefitness.co.uk)**



# Tech Enabled

*As we adapt to a new way of living, software developers have been supporting the fitness sector with new systems and strategies. We asked operators and developers to share successes*

**We're aiming to remove the typical barriers you'd see in a boxing gym**

**Operator:** Spartan's Boxing Club  
**Developer:** Glofox  
**Where:** Singapore  
 ● [www.glofox.com](http://www.glofox.com)

## Russ Harrison Spartan's Boxing Club

Spartan's Boxing Club is a community-focused boxing franchise currently based in Singapore. My business partner Naz Musa and I are building an inclusive boxing empire with multi-location insights and user-friendly features from Glofox.

Being able to access everything you need from a phone – anywhere – is crucial when you're running a franchise. It's about having everything you need easily accessible and in one place.

With the functionality from the system to support our business's marketing strategy, Spartan's bookings increased by 80 per cent between July and September 2020. The approach combines digital spend with a

transactional sales cycle: a lead will see a paid ad and click through to book their free trial.

Through the dashboard, the moment a new member walks into the gym, the coach knows who they are and can provide a welcoming, personalised service right from the start. This supports the club's focus on inclusivity – we're aiming to remove the typical barriers you'd see in a boxing gym and make it really inclusive and community-based.

Automating this process has helped us to convert leads into full-time members. We've automated the system from the point someone signs up, encouraging them to get into the gym for the trial. Then if they don't sign up after a trial class, they're automatically prompted to view our membership options.



The Lensbury gained 250 virtual members



## What started as a membership engagement tool is now driving the long-term retention strategy

**Developer:** Legend Club Management  
**Client:** The Lensbury Club  
**Location:** UK  
 ● [www.xplortechologies.com](http://www.xplortechologies.com)

### Camilla Sumner

#### Legend Club Management/Xplor

Retaining members and enhancing its community was harder to achieve remotely during lockdown, so The Lensbury worked with Legend Club Management Systems to create a virtual workout app to engage members and to function as a long-term retention tool.

The app shares content generated by the club's instructors, enabling members to see familiar faces and begin to replicate the experience they'd grown accustomed to in the club.

Initially delivered at no extra cost, high demand and support from members prompted the club to

charge £40/month for use, giving members access to constant fresh content and enabling them to mirror their in-club timetables at home.

Since launch, the club has gained over 250 virtual members, with classes available live and on-demand. This exceeds the initial target of 150 virtual members and has enabled the club to generate revenue and strengthen member loyalty.

What started as a tool to engage members and reestablish the lost community feeling, has become the hub of a long-term retention strategy to complement The Lensbury's previous £1million investment in the club itself.

● **Legend Club Management Systems is an Xplor Technologies company**

**Developer:** Funxtion  
**Client:** NonStop Gym  
**Where:** Switzerland  
 ● [www.funxtion.com](http://www.funxtion.com)



## The NonStop Gym app is available in German, French and English

### Ernst De Neef

#### Funxtion

Funxtion has partnered with NonStop Gym, a chain of 24/7 clubs in Switzerland, to create NSG Training, a custom-branded member app that extends brand influence beyond the walls of its facilities and enables members to access pre-loaded workouts and training plans anytime, anywhere.

Like many operators, during lockdown, NonStop Gym needed to find a way to maintain engagement with members. They were not looking for a quick fix, but wanted to invest in a sustainable

solution that would answer an immediate need while enhancing their in-club experience once facilities re-opened.

We created a custom-branded app that immediately supported the ongoing training needs of members and offered access to challenges, which promoted community engagement.

Our pre-recorded library of exercises and workouts provided members with access to a huge array of options, from HIIT to yoga, abdominal blasts to mindfulness sessions.

The app – available in German, French and English, went live in February and is available to both iOS and Android users.



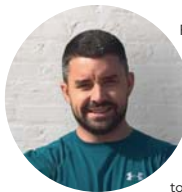
## The Uptivo platform is very helpful in addressing social distancing rules

### Enrico Paleari

#### EP Home-Delivery Coach

Our fitness studio in Italy, called EP Home-Delivery Coach, helps people of all ages and fitness levels reach their full potential, with attention to their individual needs and goals.

My co-founder Allegra Ravera and I offer a variety of services, ranging from at-home



**Operator:** EP Home-Delivery Coach  
**Developer:** UPTIVO  
**Location:** Italy  
 ● <https://uptivo.fit>

PT and small group sessions, to indoor and outdoor classes, both on-site and online.

In 2020, we adopted the Uptivo heart-rate monitoring platform to add more quality and attention-to-detail to our services and to be able to track members' workouts in real-time.

Monitoring training intensity allows us to step in at the appropriate time to push members or to slow them down when they're

trying too hard. We pride ourselves on educating clients on the correct quantity and intensity of physical activity, and Uptivo has a precious role to play in that.

Heart rate monitors are included in our premium packages – PT and small group – and offered optionally for classes. The response has been extremely good. The platform proved helpful during lockdowns and in addressing social distancing, thanks to its outdoor group training monitoring option and because of functionality, that allows us to add heart-rate-based telemetry to online live sessions with up to 25 members.

We use Uptivo management features to schedule activities, manage bookings and waiting lists and let members purchase credit packages and subscriptions via the Uptivo app for iPhone and Android phones.



Uptivo monitors outdoor group training

PHOTO: UPTIVO

## Leisure United realised the downsides of running separate platforms

### Sean Lucas

#### First Sports

We were already Leisure United's software partner for the football side, and as the gym and fitness facilities came online at Sheffield Westfield, they realised the downsides of running separate platforms and approached us for an all-encompassing software solution to support every aspect of the multi-faceted sports and fitness centre.

We recognised their requirements could largely be met by our existing

**Developer:** First Sports  
**Client:** Leisure United, Sheffield Westfield  
**Where:** UK  
 ● [www.first-sports.com](http://www.first-sports.com)

software with its member management, access control, payment processing, course management and event booking modules. From there, we worked with the management team to "fill the gaps".

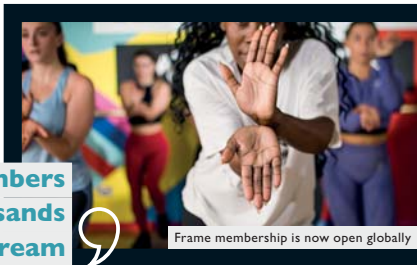
We focused on operational functionality and reporting, investigating everything from joining online, to managing and tracking access, and, following installation, the system now supports 20,000 registered users.

Our partnership with Leisure United has grown to support all ten of their existing hubs throughout England.



PHOTO: FIRSTSPORTS

**Developer:** Fisikal  
**Client:** Frame Fitness Studios  
**Where:** UK  
● [www.fisikal.com](http://www.fisikal.com)



Frame membership is now open globally

## Frame has 6,000 members using on-demand and thousands more booking into livestream

### Rob Lander

#### Fisikal

Fisikal partnered with Frame to create a new digital studio in order to keep servicing 'Framers' through lockdown restrictions and to improve business efficiencies.

Over the years, the studio software had evolved into a 'filo pastry' of layers, which needed to be simplified and restructured. The integration extended Frame's high-energy in-club experience to an online offering, digitising the business with a website to cater for studio, on-demand and live-stream classes.

We integrated business operations into one system, allowing Frame to provide a more efficient and personalised

customer journey, while streamlining business payments and bookings, saving the team thousands in software fees.

Through the online studio, Frame has 6,000 members using on-demand subscriptions and thousands more booking into livestream classes.

We also developed bespoke functionalities for Frame, including dynamic pricing, an interactive option for members to tag classes by their mood, and a 'waterfall' filter system so specific classes can be easily found through Frame filters.

Digitalisation has contributed to future-proofing the business. The online studio is essentially an entirely new studio, without property costs and with the ability to engage members across the globe.

PHOTO FISIKAL



**Developer:** Perfect Gym  
**Client:** Club Towers  
**Location:** UK  
● [www.perfectgym.com](http://www.perfectgym.com)

## Reports track, identify and engage members at risk of churn



### Lewis Stowe

#### Perfect Gym

Owners of Club Towers, a health and racquet club in the UK, understand the club's operating software is a key part of the member experience.

As membership increased, its needs outgrew the previous provider and then came COVID-19, bringing with it new challenges, such as the provision of greater levels of access control and the need to engage members who couldn't come to the facility, meaning Club Towers needed a new, unified system.

Perfect Gym worked to unify its three zones under one system, a process that has previously required manual harmonising. In addition, the company helped



the club implement a new family membership, where individuals on one account could have different levels of facility access.

It was important for the club to be able to notify individual members about things such as cancellations and the system's individual messaging and automation functionality has been deployed to ensure communications are relevant to the members who receive them.

Member management is now unified under one system, tracking customer engagement and communications while making customisable memberships easy. Since implementation, Perfect Gym is at the heart of the Club Towers system, user portal and white label app, enabling the club to continue to tailor its interface to improve its full club experience.

PHOTO PERFECT GYM

**Developer:** Virtuagym  
**Client:** Holmes Place  
**Where:** Europe  
 ● [www.virtuagym.com](http://www.virtuagym.com)

## An online community was created to increase engagement and provide online classes

### Simon Aurik

#### Virtuagym

Holmes Place operations in Spain were hit especially hard in the first wave of the pandemic and the company identified the need for solutions that would localise and enhance membership engagement, reduce admin costs and safely control gym capacity. Virtuagym's class booking, online community and access control software was deployed, helping transcend operational barriers.

The technology updated booking and scheduling, with digitisation reducing the amount of time spent on admin and allowing members to organise their own plans. An online community was created to increase engagement, marketing and promotions, as well as providing online classes – with live streams and a library of online workout videos accessible.

#### Virtuagym and FitnessKPI join forces

*Virtuagym has partnered with FitnessKPI, the creator of the first scorecard on the market specialised in the management of sports and fitness facilities.*

*The new solution will enable gym owners, PTs and fitness entrepreneurs to make strategic and operational decisions based on 24/7 business data analysis, improving performance and competitiveness.*

COVID-proof features, such as scheduling and capacity control systems, assisted compliance with club reopening protocols and safety guidelines were implemented.

All this was integrated in a personalised mobile app with key resources and information to boost engagement in a secure digital environment.

## McFit needed to control the number of people in their facility and the time they spend training

### Maike Kumstel

#### Magieline

We knew we needed to enable gyms to offer outdoor training, while meeting all COVID-19 regulations, so Sport Alliance collaborated with McFIT to set up an outdoor training area for their members using Magieline's Click-and-Train feature.

In order to meet the regulations, McFit needed to be able to control the number of people in their facility and the time they spend training. The Click-and-Train feature meets these needs.

Gym owners now can define how many people can train in their studio and for how

**Developer:** Sport Alliance Magieline  
**Client:** McFIT  
**Location:** Germany  
 ● [www.sportalliance.com](http://www.sportalliance.com)

long. Members can book free time slots online or via the app and are only granted access to the outdoor gym with a valid booking. They can check-in completely contact-free with a QR code using their app.

This helps gyms to keep control of the number of members in their studio, while simplifying COVID-19 tracking, enabling operators to deliver outdoor gym training during the pandemic.





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## User training and member experience was at the forefront of the delivery requirements



Mosaic is making software savings

### Matt White

#### Hedgehog Concept

The Mosaic Group runs 19 health clubs and spas across England, which include the Imagine Spas brand. As an expanding group looking to take on more sites, Mosaic needed software that would deliver a business-wide view of the operation.

Hedgehog Concept's leisure management software, Elan, was selected, with integration being implemented between Elan and the Bottom Line collections bureau.

User training and member experience was at the forefront of the delivery requirements and the pandemic meant training had to be delivered remotely. Attendees used their in-club devices to simulate real-life scenarios in their own environment, with the trainer demonstrating new concepts for trainees to test their understanding and consolidate their learning.

**Developer:** Hedgehog Concept

**Client:** The Mosaic Group

**Location:** UK

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

Mosaic will make software savings by expanding Elan across the estate and consolidating legacy CRM, leisure management and appointment booking software. Further savings will be made across the group through the simplification of business processes, a reduction on cross-system training, automation of previous manual tasks and clearer reporting.

The partnership between Mosaic and Hedgehog continues to grow, with Elan being expanded to also replace legacy spa management systems.

**Developer:** Xn Leisure  
**Client:** Ipswich Fit  
**Location:** UK  
● [www.xnleisure.com](http://www.xnleisure.com)

## Customers responded positively to only having to log in once to access membership and booking

### Jason Watts

#### Xn Leisure

Ipswich Borough Council Sport and its sports arm, Ipswich Fit, already had online memberships and online bookings and payments in place. However, they wanted to improve the end user experience and so needed a unified system that only required one log-in for several different membership management modules.

Leisure Hub from Xn Leisure was chosen, as it allowed Ipswich Fit to combine the two areas into one stand-alone portal for bookings, payments and memberships.



Ipswich Fit already had Xn Pay in place as their payment portal which helped ensure the installation was straightforward.

The Xn team then gave three virtual training days, answering queries, gave advice, and dealt with requirements surrounding gym re-openings.

After the launch in December 2020, Ipswich Fit had over 500 members registered by the end of Day 2 and over 750 by the end of the first week.

Customers responded positively to only having to log in once to access their membership services, which freed staff up from dealing with high levels of customer queries.



## Two-way interactive live streaming service from **venueserve fitness**

Venueserve's **white label** fitness platform launches **live two-way interactive streaming** for one-to-one or one-to-many training sessions - perfect for today's blended gym memberships, online group workouts and personal training.

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- ▶ Maintain and grow relationships and customer engagement
- ▶ A secure platform gives customers and instructors peace of mind
- ▶ A live streamed alternative when classes are full

#### **CONTACT**

▶ +44 (0) 207 112 8078 ▶ [sales@venueserve.com](mailto:sales@venueserve.com) ▶ <http://fitness.venueserve.com>

**Developer:** Quoox  
**Client:** Barrie Mark Personal Training Centre  
**Location:** UK  
[www.quoox.com](http://www.quoox.com)

## BMPT found it was outgrowing its previous management software



### Ben Brand

#### Quoox

The Barrie Mark Personal Training Centre (BMPT) in Carlisle is a small group and 1-to-1 gym.

Having been in the fitness industry 14 years, BMPT found it was outgrowing its previous management software, paying different subscriptions for bookings and payments, newsletters, marketing, nutrition and online training.

BMPT founder Barrie Mark Scougal approached Quoox in April 2020 with a view to migrating to an integrated system to cover all these functions,

with the option to extend into new areas of tech, such as member apps and staff management and to get access to functionality such as retention tools.

Quoox's suite of functions include using XRcize and FitFix for video and workouts on-demand and FitnessHub as a member portal, while the system has over 200 other features, enabling BMPT to launch new online and on-demand services, for example.

Quoox's integration with Myzone has streamlined BMPT's delivery of MZ-Remote sessions and their day-to-day processes, while reporting, KPIs and metrics enable Scougal to manage his business proactively and identify opportunities for growth.



PHOTO: QUOOX

**Developer:** Myzone/Wellonomics  
**Client:** Acushnet Europe  
**Location:** UK  
[www.myzone.org](http://www.myzone.org)

## Employees have had the opportunity to benefit by enrolling in the company Myzone scheme



### Ben Hackney-Williams

#### Myzone

Wellonomics is on a mission to improve business and employee performance through its personalised wellbeing platform. The Wellonomics assessment tool identifies areas of life that require support from time-to-time to keep clients performing consistently with the help of a team of qualified experts.

The heart rate tracking, physical activity measurement and long-term culture shift from this assessment and performance measurement comes from Myzone software and its ongoing engagement within any community.

In recent months, Wellonomics has been providing health and wellness solutions to golf retailer Acushnet Europe Ltd through its health experts at the Training Shed. Pre-pandemic, this included the design and delivery of a new physical training facility, face-to-face workshops and one-on-one sessions. Myzone was available in the training facility for classes but was not integrated into a 'take-home' solution, an issue the team remedied.

During lockdowns and the shift to remote working, employees have had the opportunity to benefit from health club insights by enrolling in the company

Myzone scheme to encourage physical activity and a company culture synonymous with group activity and health promotion. This has been achieved with the use of company Myzone challenges and leaderboards. It has resulted in over 6,000 moves, 10,761 hours of activity, 3.7 million calories being burned and a total of 863,000 MEPs (Myzone Effort Points) achieved.



PHOTO: MYZONE



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**Developer:** Technogym  
**Client:** Tees Active  
**Location:** UK  
 ● [www.technogym.com](http://www.technogym.com)

## Technogym will support Tees Active's on-demand health offer, rolling out specialist content



Technogym partners with Tees Active

PHOTO: TECHNODY



### Martin Perry

#### Technogym

Tees Active is a not-for-profit community trust in the UK that works in partnership with organisations such as the NHS, Sport England, ukactive, and Public Health England to connect with hard-to-reach groups, as well as more active members of the community.

Technogym Mywellness has been in use by Tees Active for many years and since the start of the pandemic, has been deployed to add live and on-demand content to the mix for members.

Tees Active wanted one solution for all its member activity. With the infrastructure of Mywellness already embedded into the customer journey, adding live and on-demand was the next step.

With a diverse membership ranging from general fitness to specialisms such as cardiac rehabilitation, weight management,

and neurological interventions, a platform was needed that gave every member the service they wanted. Streaming being an effective way of connecting with more vulnerable people.

Mywellness content was delivered via a multi-stage approach to offer members the chance to engage with activity during lockdown and beyond. Now facilities are open again, streaming services are helping Tees Active add value to memberships and extend their reach beyond the local area.

The platform offers a flexible way for Tees Active to use its own content and reach specialist demographics with the right support. For example, weight management programmes have continued via the app.

Over 1,000 members have already signed up. Of these, 500 are regular members who enjoy the opportunity to connect with their favourite class instructor and see a familiar studio setting in the background.

**Developer:** Mindbody  
**Client:** Heartcore  
**Location:** UK  
 ● [www.mindbodyonline.com](http://www.mindbodyonline.com)

## At Heartcore, a group of 2,500 members continue to use the live stream



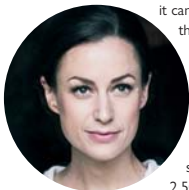
### Heather Garrick

#### Mindbody

Mindbody customer Heartcore, founded over 12 years ago, prides itself on being one of the founders of London's fitness and wellness scene with one simple goal in mind – to touch lives.

Although the business was used to seeing its in-studio classes packed with loyal clients, the pandemic forced Heartcore to explore digital options to keep clients moving and healthy.

When Heartcore switched over to live streaming, they were worried clients would be confused when



it came to booking and signing up. Realising that consistency is key to helping their community transition to a digital platform, Heartcore's turned to the Mindbody app to make the process seamless.

The studio has now been able to resume in-studio sessions for personal and group bubble training, but the digital offerings still play a big role, with a group of around 2,500 clients continuing to use the live stream.

The Mindbody app has been designed to help fitness businesses increase brand exposure, stay connected with clients, and provide real-time scheduling and payments. ●



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

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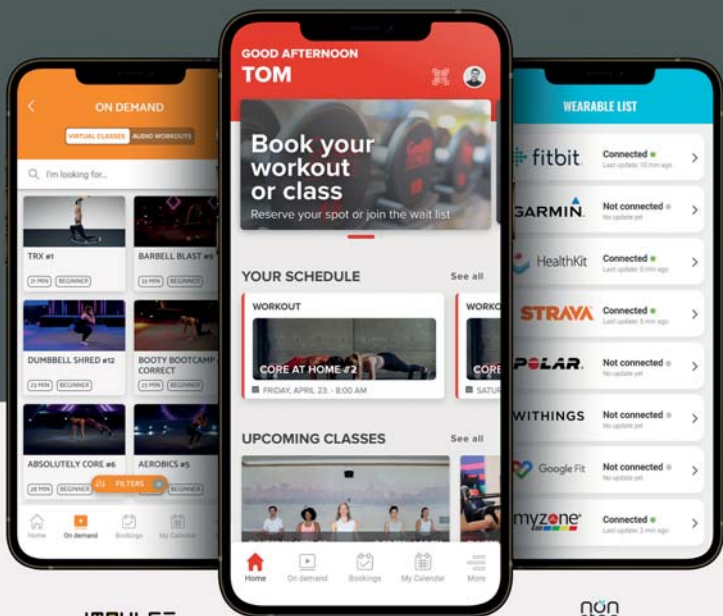
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SANDER VAN DEN BORN, CMO GOODLIFE FITNESS

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PHOTO: FUNXTION

*Investment in wraparound provision is no longer a nice to have, it's now the base level expectation of gym members*

Ernst De Neef, CEO FunXtion



PHOTO: FUNXTION

## NonStop workouts

Switzerland's no frills chain, NonStop Gym, has appointed Funxton to create its member training app, as CEO Ernst De Neef explains

Funxton has partnered with NonStop Gym, a chain of 24/7 clubs in Switzerland, to create NSG Training, a custom-branded member app that extends brand influence beyond the walls of its facilities and enables members to access pre-loaded workouts and training plans anytime, anywhere.

Like so many operators, during extended periods of lockdown, NonStop Gym needed to find a quick, effective and professional means

of maintaining engagement with members. However, they weren't looking for a quick fix. They wanted to invest in a sustainable solution that would answer an immediate need, but would also enhance their in-club experience once facilities re-opened. This is what we created.

### Custom branded app

We were able to launch a custom branded app that immediately supported the ongoing training needs of members and offered access to

challenges which promoted and enhanced community engagement.

Our extensive pre-recorded library of beautifully shot exercises and workouts provided members of all abilities with fingertip access to a huge array of options, from HIIT to Yoga and from abdominal blasts to mindfulness sessions.

The app, which is available in German, French and English, went live in February 2021 and is available to both iOS and Android users.

Today's members expect their gym to offer a digital solution. This is not going to end with the pandemic. For people to commit to a training plan long-term, exercise needs to be seamlessly integrated into their daily routine. For this to happen, there needs to be a high degree of flexibility in terms of access to professional, trusted, fitness content.

Investment in wraparound provision is no longer a nice to have, it's now the base level expectation of gym members. ●

- [www.funxton.com](http://www.funxton.com)
- [www.nonstopgym.com](http://www.nonstopgym.com)



NonStop Gym is using tech by Funxton to deliver digital

# Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

Technogym's new Biocircuit programme is a complete, effective and personalised workout, says **Nerio Alessandri**

Technogym has recently released Biocircuit, a circuit training method offering a personalised workout to help users achieve their goals in a short time. Users log in once, then work out by following the circuit, which comprises equipment that adapts to them.

The programme requires no adjustments or wait time, since exercises, workload, work/rest ratio and pace have been defined and integrated into personalised programmes.

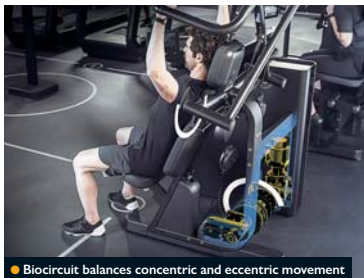
Patented Biodrive technology means Biocircuit is safe, guided and effective, balancing concentric and



*"After the first login, every piece of Biocircuit equipment automatically adjusts to each user's height, range of movement and exercise routine"*

Nerio Alessandri

eccentric movement so resistance and pace are optimised for effectiveness and safety based on needs and objectives.



● Biocircuit balances concentric and eccentric movement

PHOTO: TECHNOCYMA

New Biocircuit Free strength stations give more experienced users the freedom to treat every piece of equipment as standalone and fine-tune its parameters to create a tailored workout.

Nerio Alessandri, Technogym CEO and

founder said: "We're living in times of growing demand for medical fitness and prevention. Technogym continues to innovate in this space, which is why we've developed Biocircuit."

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD**  
Technogym



PHOTO: EGYM

*"In introducing Fitness Hub, with its contactless set-up, performance assessments and feedback, we're driven by the vision that the gym works for everyone"*

Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer

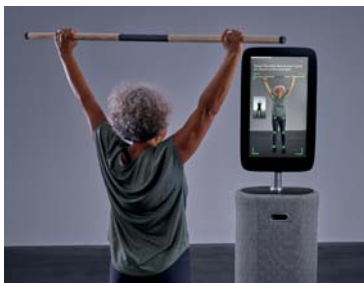
Egym's Fitness Hub is a game changer for connected gym floor training, explains **Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer**

Egym's Fitness Hub is a gym centrepiece that delivers self-serve onboarding and performance tracking using Microsoft's 3D cameras and machine learning.

A body scan creates a profile to automate set-up for Egym's Smart Strength and Smart Flex Series, while assessments can also be accessed, enabling improvement tracking.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD**

Egym



● Strength, cardio, metabolism and mobility are measured

PHOTO: EGYM



Matrix Fitness is launching a new three-tiered cardio range to provide total versatility, explains **Matt Pengelly**

**M**atrix Fitness is launching a three-tiered cardio offering to make it easier for customers to find fitness solutions specific to their needs.

The line is compatible with five of the company's consoles, enabling the creation of combinations of performance and technology that can accommodate virtually any fitness facility's budget, space and members.

"We believe choice makes all the difference," says Matt Pengelly, MD of Matrix Fitness UK. "With our new cardio series and consoles, we provide versatile options, so facilities can choose the best fit, placing the end user at the centre of their decision. We're excited to see how these new choices help our partners achieve their goals."

The **Performance Series** provides a portfolio of cardio platforms designed for heavy use, with rugged components tested against the highest international standards to withstand hard, continuous use for years.



**We believe choice makes the difference**

Matt Pengelly, MD,  
Matrix Fitness UK



PHOTO: MATRIX

● The combination of consoles and cardio lines gives a huge range of options

Ergonomic touchpoints are positioned to make even long, hard workouts comfortable and easy to navigate and this range of advanced features simplify and reduce service needs to minimise downtime and maximise member satisfaction.

The range includes a treadmill, climbmill, ascent trainer, suspension elliptical, hybrid cycle, upright cycle and recumbent cycle.

The **Endurance Series** was created for heavy use in professional fitness facilities where space is at a premium and budgets need to stretch further.

Streamlined designs simplify the exercise experience, while still providing performance that can challenge cardio enthusiasts.

This series is designed and tested to stand up to tough environments and heavy use and offers the most choices in regards to features, functions and pricing.

The Endurance Series includes a treadmill, climbmill, stepper, suspension elliptical, upright cycle and recumbent cycle.

The **Lifestyle Series** is ideal for light commercial use and features value-conscious design, reliable performance and a unified aesthetic that makes the exercise experience less intimidating.

Simplified operation makes it easy for virtually anyone to start

a workout – even users who are unfamiliar with exercise equipment.

This range includes a treadmill, climbmill, suspension elliptical, upright cycle and recumbent cycle.

#### Console options

Five new consoles range from basic LED designs to touchscreen interfaces that mimic popular operating systems and are all compatible with the new cardio series.

All consoles give users control of the data they collect, the content that keeps them engaged and the way they reach their goals. With the new Group Training LED Console, every class member can be kept in sync via the console, meeting the specific needs of group exercise.

With wifi-enabled consoles, staff can also access the digital solutions of the Matrix Connected Solutions portfolio, including the most popular digital offerings, such as the Personal Trainer Portal, Workout Tracking Network and Asset Management.

"The right technology is more than just the finishing touch," adds Pengelly. "It really dictates what kind of experience the user is going to have, and it can change the way facilities manage their machines and interact with their members."

[fitness-kit.net](http://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD**  
Matrix

## A partnership between Nuffield Health and Gympass will inspire more people to become fitter and healthier, says Eamon Lloyd

Nuffield Health has signed a deal which will see its connected health services made available to consumer and corporate markets via the Gympass platform.

All Nuffield Health's 112 fitness and wellness

centres will be listed during phase one of the partnership, while Nuffield will become the preferred corporate healthcare partner of Gympass.

Phase two will bring a collaboration in the

corporate healthcare sector as Nuffield Health's on-site and networked clinical services – which include primary care, emotional wellbeing, physiotherapy and health assessments – will be offered to more employees across the UK via Gympass.

In addition to this, the new Nuffield Health 24/7 app, which offers over 200 fitness and emotional wellbeing classes, will be integrated into Gympass Wellness, a collection of fitness and wellbeing apps which is housed on the Gympass platform.

Eamon Lloyd, head of partnerships at Gympass says: "We know from our corporate client relationships that employers are looking



PHOTO: GYMPASS

**"Nuffield Health is a fantastic partner for Gympass"**

Eamon Lloyd

to support their workforce with complete wellbeing solutions – adding Nuffield Health to the Gympass platform significantly enhances our existing 2,500-strong network of facilities, offering greater choice to all the employees of our corporate customers."

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD**  
Gympass



PHOTO: NUFFIELD

● All 112 Nuffield Health clubs will be listed on Gympass

## Orbit4 is a digital ecosystem for trading fitness equipment in the UK, explains Daniel Jones

The Orbit4 digital ecosystem enables operators to manage the process of purchasing and financing gym equipment and selling or disposing of unwanted assets, to save time, money and the planet.

Orbit4 is the umbrella for four brands, FitnessFinance, WeServiceGymEquipment, WeBuyGymEquipment and FitnessCompared.

All four platforms are free to join and aim to ensure best value for gym operators, fitness equipment manufacturers, service providers and used fitness equipment traders.

The business has recently drawn down £300k of debt

**"The funding will be used to further develop and strengthen the hard-hat health and fitness industry"**

Daniel Jones

finance supplied by The FSE Group and Orbit4 CEO, Daniel Jones, said: "This will be used to develop and strengthen the hard-hat health and fitness industry

with the creation of 10 new roles. It will allow us to expand our global presence and our product offering.

"We're aiming to help the industry become more streamlined when it comes to purchasing commercial

fitness products and more efficient in finding the best price and partners for extended service contracts and residual values," he said.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORD**  
Orbit4



PHOTO: ORBIT4



● The four platforms are integrated

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**Consistently meeting physical activity guidelines was strongly associated with reduced risk**

SHUTTERSTOCK/OLIVER VIEL

## De-risking COVID-19

**Lack of exercise is a major cause of death from COVID-19, according to new research, with only advanced age and organ transplant leading to greater risk**

**L**ack of exercise creates greater levels of risk than smoking, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

A large US study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* suggests being physically inactive could more than double the risk of dying from the coronavirus.

The study found patients with COVID-19 who were consistently inactive during the two years preceding the pandemic were more likely to be admitted to hospital, to require intensive care and more likely to die than patients who had consistently met physical activity guidelines.

As a risk factor for severe complications from COVID-19, physical inactivity was exceeded only by advanced age and a history of organ transplant.

To explore its potential impact on the severity of the infection, researchers at the Kaiser Permanente

**Patients with COVID-19 who were consistently inactive were more than twice as likely to be admitted to hospital as patients who exercised**

Medical Center in California, US, compared outcomes in 48,440 adults with confirmed COVID-19 infection between January and October 2020.

The patients' average age was 47 and nearly two-thirds were women (62 per cent). Around half had no underlying conditions, which included diabetes, COPD, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and cancer; nearly 1 in 5 (18 per cent) had only one; and almost a third (32 per cent) had two or more.

### Meeting guidelines

The study found that consistently meeting physical activity guidelines was strongly associated with a reduced risk of serious outcomes.

After taking account of potentially influential factors – such as age and underlying conditions – patients with

COVID-19 who were consistently physically inactive were more than twice as likely to be admitted to hospital as patients who clocked up more than 150 minutes of physical activity every week.

### Impact of inactivity

Those who were inactive were 73 per cent more likely to require intensive care, and 2.5 times more likely to die of the infection.

Patients who were consistently inactive were also 20 per cent more likely to be admitted to hospital, 10 per cent more likely to require intensive care, and 32 per cent more likely to die than were patients who were doing some physical activity regularly.

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





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