

## Vern Hill

The power of babywearing workouts, p14

Everyone's talking about

## Rent

p40

## Tim Hollingsworth

The vision behind Sport England's new strategy, p46

## Marc Diaper

The Gymbox CEO on entering the hotel and home markets, p10

## COVID RECOVERY

Getting the nation back on its feet, p56

ON THE COVER

# Kevin Yates

👉 My goal from the outset was 1,000 TRIB3 stores in 36 countries by 2025 📍 p28

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## An economic argument

**In addition to championing the health benefits of activity, the sector must now start to emphasise its power to drive the economy if we are to gain the policy support we need**

Many of you will be aware that HCM has been driving a Parliamentary Petition with two demands – to get gyms open first after lockdown and for the government to fund a Work Out to Help Out scheme to get people back to fitness (if you've been supporting it, a huge thank you. The response has been tremendous).

And so my heart sank when UK prime minister Boris Johnson instead hinted at plans for the government to reduce taxation on beer, so people could get drunk more cheaply after lockdown.

If this kind of populism was accompanied by a commitment to rebooting the fitness of the nation, it would just about be bearable, but for the government to be considering pushing cheap beer, without there being sufficient focus on health and prevention, shows an appalling lack of leadership in the middle of a health crisis.

The mental and physical health impacts of lockdowns have been well documented – the increases in sedentary behaviour and obesity levels, reductions in fitness and escalation of mental health issues – but what lies behind these numbers is even more serious: a catastrophic rewiring of people's behaviour patterns and a bedding in of sedentary routines that will be challenging to reverse.

It will require a huge effort to overcome the inertia of successive lockdowns and getting the nation moving again will be like restarting an oil tanker. A Work Out to Help Out subsidy would accelerate this process, enabling the fitness industry to deliver results far more quickly.

Tactically, we've made a very strong case as a sector for the health benefits of activity, with a £4 gain to the NHS for every £1 invested, but we think it's now time to also start lobbying around the *economic value* of having a fit nation.

There are clearly vast economic challenges ahead as a result of the perfect storm of the pandemic and Brexit, meaning the health and vitality of the nation is critical to ensuring the workforce is ready and able to respond.

A sluggish workforce will not be able to compete effectively, so there's a strong argument for the health and fitness sector in the UK to have a portfolio link to the



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/BAZA PRODUCTION

**A fit workforce is needed to drive the economy**

**There's a strong argument for the sector to be connected to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in addition to the connection which already exists with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The hospitality sector has this two-ministry set-up and has achieved notable successes as a result of being thoroughly understood as a business sector. We should demand no less for the rapidly-expanding activity sector.

We provide mission-critical services which underpin the health of the nation, its happiness, vitality and economic prosperity and it's time this was properly recognised.

To accelerate this process, we must now also produce evidence of the economic value of activity to the nation.

**Liz Terry, editor**  
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# HCM CONTENTS

Uniting the world of fitness

28 FEBRUARY 2021 No 287



28 TRIB3's Kevin Yates on thinking big and working with the Fisher family

## 05 Editor's letter

The industry has the opportunity to head in bold new directions, says Liz Terry

## 10 HCM people Marc Diaper

The Gymbox CEO talks about partnering with hotel chain CitizenM

## 14 Vern Hill

Babywearing workouts help new mothers regain strength and confidence, says the founder of Carifit

## 18 Sarah Storey

The paralympic champion is backing Sheffield City Region's proposals to create safe, active travel routes

## 20 HCM news

Stay up to date with the latest news. This month, PHE publishes advice on tackling inequalities in physical activity

## 28 Interview Kevin Yates

The founder of boutique business TRIB3 talks COVID, kindness and the company's ambitious global plans

## 40 Ask An Expert Rent

When the government's rent moratorium comes to an end, operators could face problems. We ask the experts how to resolve rent issue and avoid an economic 'long COVID'

## 46 Tim Hollingsworth

*Uniting the Movement* is a 10-year vision to use sport and activity to transform lives. Sport England's CEO tells us what makes it so exciting

## 50 Craig Blain

Move Consulting's director on the challenges and opportunities for operators looking to appeal to a diverse membership

## 56 COVID-19 recovery

The physical activity sector can step up as an essential service by helping people during their recovery from COVID-19. HCM takes a look at some emerging initiatives





PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND

## 72 How aggregators are changing the fitness market



PHOTO: REUTERS

## 10 Gymbox's Mark Diaper on collaborating with CitizenM



PHOTO: SPORT ENGLAND

## 46 Tim Hollingsworth talks about the new Sport England strategy

## 64 Interview Tom Galvin

Despite the pandemic, BPL has pushed on with ambitious rebranding plans. We speak to its head of corporate fitness

## 72 The evolution of aggregators

HCM talks to suppliers and operators about how the aggregator market is changing in response to demand

## 84 Interview Morten Hellevang

Norwegian gym chain EVO fitness is performing well, despite the pandemic. Its CEO shares the company's strategies and growth plans

## 90 Supplier showcase Myzone

Myzone's Ben Hackney-Williams explains how its digital experience can help gyms and studios get back on track

## 92 Product innovation

Les Mills Content launches, Auster presents a new weighted vest, Huggle debuts its Membership Conversion Service and EXi teams up with Everyone Active

## 96 HCM directory

## 98 Research Diabetes and COVID-19

COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on young diabetics



PHOTO: CARIFT

## 14 Carifit's Vern Hill

## MEET THE TEAM



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# HCM people



*Before the first lockdown we'd just kicked off an international research project, so we absolutely see Gymbox going global*

**Marc Diaper**

CEO, Gymbox

***You've launched into the hotel and residential markets – what's the thinking?***

The pandemic has enabled us to take a step back and look at our future strategy. We decided that if our customers can't come to us, then we'll go to them.

***Your first deal is with Netherlands-based hotel operator, citizenM, for the delivery of in-room workouts. Can you tell us more?***

Guests at CitizenM's 21 hotels – located in 14 cities across three continents – will be able to access the service free via their in-room TVs.

The workouts will be filmed specifically for CitizenM and updated on a regular basis.

We're using our Out The Box digital platform – which we launched in 2020 amid the pandemic lockdowns – to deliver bespoke, pre-recorded classes across five categories: Strength, Sweat, Fight, Holistic and Rhythm.

The demand for fitness on-the-go is ever increasing and this deal means that citizenM guests can get that workout in before going off to explore the city they're staying in: hotels are in places as diverse as London, Paris, Zurich, New York, Boston and Kuala Lumpur.

***Will they need equipment?***

No equipment will be required for the workouts and all workouts have been adapted to ensure they can be completed within a hotel room.

CitizenM rooms are already creatively designed with lighting control via in room ipads or the award winning CitizenM app.

The app allows the guests' hotel stay to be completely contactless, as well as control the in-room experience, with climate control, in-room entertainment and bookings management. The app also includes transport tips and perks, as well as contactless check-in and check-out.

The Gymbox content will be uploaded directly onto the in-room entertainment system and be controlled via the citizenM app.

***Will Gymbox offer workouts outside the hotel room?***

The hotels don't have gyms, but if guests wish to use a physical Gymbox club that's nearby, these will also be available to them for both classes and gym use, under our agreement with citizenM.





PHOTO: REUTERS

Marc Diaper says Gymbox will roll its in-room hotel experience out with multiple partners

### ***How will the relationship with citizenM develop?***

The in-room experience is just the start of our partnership, which we expect to evolve over time. Group fitness classes and fitness and lifestyle events are examples of areas we'll be exploring.

### ***Is Gymbox open to working with other hotel chains?***

We feel citizenM is the perfect partner to launch our new offering, as it has a strong brand, great tone of voice and the team offers exceptional service.

We will, however, roll this service out with other partners and have already started receiving enquiries since the launch.

### ***Will citizenM sell Gymbox for people who enjoy the taster?***

All CitizenM guests will receive a discount code to be able to access the Out The Box service to continue their workouts once they've checked out of the hotel.

### ***Tell us about your home fitness launch***

The home fitness market has seen significant growth and there's an increased demand for top quality kit and home gyms.

People who've been deprived of inspiring gym spaces due to the lockdowns want their own, bespoke training spaces, so Gymbox is now offering them the opportunity to get their own Gymbox experience through a new service, called 'Home Sweat Home'.



*Consumers can take their at-home fitness solutions to the next level by owning their own space created by the Gymbox's project team*



Diaper says Gymbox is known for unique experiences

Consumers can take their at-home fitness solutions to the next level by owning their own space created by the Gymbox's project team, in line with our brand values.

While each space will be bespoke to the client's needs, each will have the feel of a Gymbox space – featuring our trademark combination of design, equipment, lighting and audio solutions.

The response to the launch has been strong, with 100 inquiries on the first day.

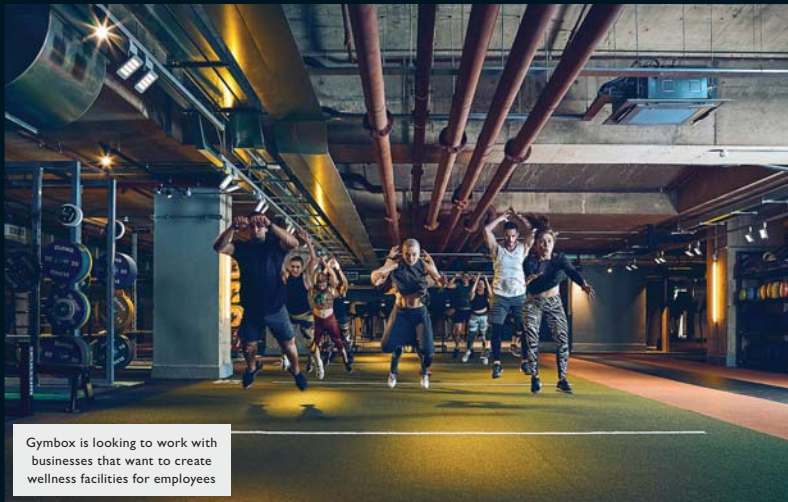
We have a reputation for building unique workout experiences, so our view is that if you can't always come to Gymbox for your physical and mental fitness needs, we'll bring Gymbox to you.

#### **What other plans do you have?**

We feel there are opportunities in the corporate and residential markets too and we're in conversation with some of London's largest property developers – those providing fitness facilities as part of residential projects.

We're also in talks with developers who might not have enough space for a full-service Gymbox, but would like us to act as consultants and take on the design and build of their gym facilities.

We're looking at a similar model with businesses that have space available for providing workplace wellness facilities.



Gymbox is looking to work with businesses that want to create wellness facilities for employees





In addition to its 11 London sites, Gymbox will focus on hotel, corporate, residential and commercial development markets

The plan there is to work in partnership with companies to create more inspiring spaces for employees to work out, with the aim of introducing non-gym users to the Gymbox experience at work.

### ***How do these moves fit tactically within the Gymbox business plan?***

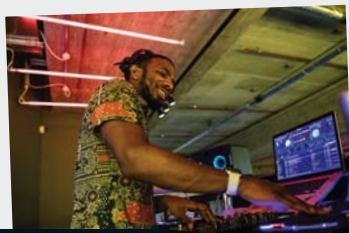
We feel the pandemic has enabled us to innovate and there are opportunities for us to expand our services.

The first lockdown enabled us to review our strategy and while we're confident – through surveys we've completed – that the bricks and mortar business will return [Gymbox operates 11 boutique gyms across London], we feel there are huge opportunities in the at-home market, as well as through unique partnerships in the hotel, corporate, residential and commercial development markets.

We've seen from both our market and other sectors that consumers are continuously looking for experiences and we feel our brand can deliver this in more than just our bricks and mortar offering.

### ***Is this the start of the globalisation of Gymbox?***

Yes, before the first lockdown we'd just kicked off an international research project, so we absolutely see Gymbox going global.



Gymbox is working on an international research project, and plans to take the brand global





*Our free online membership, Carifit 4 All, was designed to help mothers get back into fitness and is now listed in the Royal College of GP's Clinical Lifestyle Toolkit*

## Vern Hill

Founder, Carifit



Hill worked as a PT at his 'mum-focused gym' in London before launching Carifit

### **Tell us about Carifit**

It was the first babywearing workout. Mums get all the benefits of a real workout from qualified babywearing and postnatal experts that understand postnatal biomechanics and the physiological recovery of new mums.

We're proud that Carifit provides a powerful moment in time that can't be recreated elsewhere. Being able to work out with your baby is an incredibly special experience and really helps to create a stronger bond with your baby in the postpartum period.

The classes or workouts haven't been modified from another type of workout or class, they've been created, tailored and geared towards new mums.

What makes it special is the effort, care and attention to detail we put into creating the workouts, so every aspect is as special as it is achievable.

This ranges from us being qualified in babywearing, to the way we create music with an infant audiologist and interlace sensory sounds into our live classes, to the level of connection and interaction we create for new mothers.

### **Where did the idea come from?**

I've been a PT for 20 years and for the large majority of that time I've been pre- and post-natal focused.

I had a gym in Wandsworth that delivered pre- and post-natal fitness and a big part of that was that mums could bring their babies to the sessions. I ended up 'wearing' my clients' babies while demonstrating the exercises, which led to the nickname 'The Baby Man'.

We noticed the babies were much happier, more engaged, content and less inclined to interrupt





The sessions are designed together with physiotherapist Lucy Allen and a team of babywearing experts

their mum working out while I was wearing them and that the sessions were calmer, less interrupted, less stressful, and more productive!

This was my lightbulb moment and I decided to create Carifit babywearing workouts.

It took off and now over 20,000 women have transformed their confidence, energy, fitness and postnatal bodies.

### **How has it developed?**

I had to become acquainted with the world of babywearing. My wife and I had our first child by this point, but I wanted to go deeper into the knowledge – for example, establishing what makes a baby comfortable in a carrier, how to optimise the carrier for the baby and mum's comfort, the developmental benefits for the baby and the mental health benefits for mums.

We built out the team, brought in a babywearing consultant who we learned from and who helped create video modules and tutorials for every age and stage of babywearing.

Over the course of five years (prior to lockdown), we were delivering 120 live, in-person classes in and around London via a team of accredited trainers. We've also

developed a three-day course for teachers and trainers to develop their skills and become experts in postnatal fitness, babywearing and the Carifit methodology.

We provide an online offering which includes a postnatal care package with medical, physio, babywearing and mental health modules. The online platform was created so Carifit workouts could be accessible anywhere in the world and over the last year has seen a surge in members.

### **What are your goals?**

For every mum in the world to know about Carifit and have access to it, either through our paid-for membership or through our free online classes.

Our free online membership, Carifit 4 All, was designed to help new mothers get back into fitness and is now listed in the Royal College of GP's Clinical Lifestyle Toolkit, alongside schemes such as Park Run and Couch to 5K.

The goal now is to raise awareness of our free tools and resources through a network of GPs. And once we're back to teaching live, getting as many passionate, qualified, postnatal fitness professionals as possible to train up and teach Carifit.



*There was no such thing as a babywearing workout when we started Carifit and in truth, there is no one doing what we are doing, even to this day*

### **How did the Royal College of GPs link happen?**

After providing them with scientific research, which Carifit conducted independently with Dr Lucy Gore, on the scientific benefits of babywearing workouts on the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of new mothers, they listed Carifit within their directory.

Ever since, we've had a multitude of GP recommendations of the Carifit 4 All scheme, and at the moment, due to COVID-19 with GPs and new mums having to do their six-week checks remotely, they're leaning on Carifit and signposting it for new mums looking to start their postnatal fitness journey.

### **How can it be evolved?**

Our reliance on keeping the programming fresh is a lot less than most fitness programmes because our audience is always fresh.

We typically work with mums for around 6-12 months, so we don't constantly need to re-invent classes, because the biomechanics and process of restoring the postnatal body doesn't change.

We programme our workouts based on the physiological challenges of parenting a new baby, for example, will the workouts make life easier for a new mum? Will these workouts protect their body from the common aches and pains new mums experience?

We work with a wonderful physio, Lucy Allen, and a team of medics to make sure Carifit is medically underpinned.

### **What are the challenges?**

Understanding the postnatal population, the challenges they face and the directions they're being pulled in as new mums and supporting them so the outcome is beneficial to mum and baby's mental health, physical recovery, and emotional wellbeing.

Helping them understand the process their body has been through and the journey it's now on in order to get back to full strength and fitness.



The group currently has up to 5,000 mums using the paid online platform

We live in an age of comparison culture and new mums are faced with a bombardment of information, bodies and different people going through their own postnatal journeys. If we can free people from this by helping them to stop comparing themselves to others and start enjoying the process, their outcomes will always be better.

### **How do you ensure their anatomical and physiological wellbeing?**

We work around all the specific programming concerns you'd apply for any postnatal client – low impact, core activation, appropriate breathing, good posture and good alignment.

We also make sure the babywearing aspect is spot on, as learning how to use a baby carrier for fitness is just as important as learning the right technique for lifting a barbell.

### **How have you built the Carifit community?**

We didn't have social media when we started Carifit and built it through sheer hard work and founder-led learning.



Mums love to talk and share their experiences of parenting and we're fortunate that most people who encounter Carifit talk about it favourably.

These days we share a lot of user-generated content. It's all about the incredible mums we work with who are actually doing the workouts and we want to share their amazing achievements.

We provide a safe space where new mothers are treated with care, which is really important, as they're often in a more vulnerable state and it might be their first time back to a fitness class.

### **Do you see babywearing workouts as a growing trend?**

Babywearing workouts are here to stay. One of our great differentiators is that we've built a whole business around them. We're not a studio incorporating it into our schedule once a week. We live and breathe babywearing workouts and are continually collaborating with experts in the field.

There was no such thing as a babywearing workout when we started Carifit and in truth, there is no one doing what we are doing, even to this day.



The sessions have been evaluated by Dr Lucy Gore

### **Do you have evidence of efficacy?**

Following our independent evaluation with Dr Lucy Gore, Lucy Allen's study showed there was a statistically significant difference in the postnatal depression scores of new mums, in their pelvic floor recovery and in their bonding score with their baby.

### **How many active clients do you have at any one time?**

Prior to lockdown, we had around 1,000 women per month at live classes. We have up to 5,000 new mums working out through the paid online platform, which starts at £25/month and free Carifit 4 All membership.

Our live classes on YouTube have received 600,000 watch minutes since lockdown started.

### **Is there a retail operation?**

We partner with Ergobaby, the biggest babywearing brand in the world.

### **And a social dimension?**

Absolutely. Our online and Facebook community is wonderful for new mums. We offer meaningful and impactful support and guidance and it's a great way for new mums to form friendships.

When it comes to live classes, mums always stay and chat afterwards, forming really wonderful bonds with other mothers.

### **How has the pandemic hit this market?**

As we had an online offering, we've always been able to offer ongoing support. We also have a waiting list for live classes when they restart. Parenting has been massively challenging through lockdown and Carifit offers an online space for new mums to feel 'normal' when not much else feels so in the current climate. ●



*Connected and continuous  
infrastructure ensure journeys via  
active modes no longer have to suffer  
the usual delay and inconvenience*

## **Dame Sarah Storey**

Active Travel Commissioner, Sheffield City Region



The proposals include plans for improved infrastructure for cyclists, runners and pedestrians

JACOB LUND SHUTTERSTOCK



**A**n area north of Sheffield City Centre in the UK is to be designed as an Active Neighbourhood, with the view to creating an environment which promotes physical activity.

The proposals for the Kelham and Neepsend area include encouraging exercise, improving sustainable travel and creating safer and more attractive travel routes into and around the area – especially for walking, running and cycling.

Sarah Storey, multiple Paralympic champion and Sheffield City Region's active travel commissioner, said: "It's fantastic to see the plans for this ambitious scheme being shared. Sheffield City Council has done a brilliant job in developing connected routes from the trial scheme that was introduced at Kelham Island last year."

The area – once the heart of the city's vast and world-renowned steel industry – sank into decline in the 1970s, but has become the focus of urban regeneration investment in the last 25 years.

As well as segregated lanes for cycling, detailed plans feature Sheffield's first 'Dutch-style' roundabout and improvements for pedestrians that include a continuous footpath through large parts of the city, a move welcomed by Storey.

At the heart of the proposals is a reduction in traffic – some through road

closures – and encouraging people to adopt healthier, active travel habits.

The proposals are part of the Council's Connecting Sheffield scheme, which focuses on adapting the city's infrastructure for the future, to allow for walking, running, cycling and public transport to be the first choices of travel, from commuting to work to meeting friends.

Speaking about the new proposals, Storey said: "Connected and continuous infrastructure, with priority crossings for people walking and cycling, ensure that journeys via active modes no longer have to suffer the usual delay and inconvenience and are crucial to enabling people to leave their cars behind for short, everyday journeys."

The plans chime with Sport England's new 10-year strategy (see page 48) which identifies the creation of active environments as one of five "Big Issues" to get right, in order to encourage people to get more physically active.

Stopping unnecessary journeys through the area will help to establish it as a safer, healthier and more vibrant place to live, work and visit.

"Some of the proposed changes have already been in place through the last few months, as part of emergency social distancing and active travel measures, and we have seen a positive response to them so far," said Storey.

## Madrid, a city that 'gets it' calls for protection of gyms

Spanish capital Madrid has been hailed as an example of a city which understands the importance of gyms and other physical activity facilities in the face of the pandemic, following a speech by one of its political leaders.



COMUNIDAD DE MADRID



**Physical activity is something we want to utilise to keep taking care of and empowering the community of Madrid**

Ignacio Aguado

Ignacio Aguado – vice president of the Community of Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid) – outlined how it was “imperative” to continue supporting fitness facilities due to physical activity being “synonymous with health”.

He said having healthy citizens would help tackle obesity and sedentary lifestyles – which would in turn help manage key factors that make people more susceptible to the virus.

“Sport/physical activity is essential and a synonym to us of health,” Aguado said.

“It is something we want to utilise in order to keep taking care of – and empowering – the community of Madrid.

“We do not want to close gyms, we want the opposite – we want them to stay

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**Madrid is using gyms in the fight against COVID-19**

open, to keep operating as they have been until now, maintaining all the hygiene and safety measures, because they are demonstrating they are safe places.”

Aguado’s speech has been welcomed by fitness operators,

not just in Spain but across the continent, as an example of political leadership which “gets” the role that facilities can play in improving health and fighting COVID-19.

More: [http://lei.sr/A2T75\\_H](http://lei.sr/A2T75_H)

## ukactive publishes six policies that would “secure sector’s future”

Ukactive has published six ‘policy calls’, it says are crucial in order to help the physical activity sector survive and recover from the financial pressures caused by the pandemic.

The industry body has written an open letter to the government, detailing the measures required to support the sector.

The policy calls are:

- **Financial support** for operators for back-dated rent
- An extension of the current **business rate holiday** by a year
- An extension to the **public leisure relief fund**
- Support programmes that address **health inequalities**

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**ukactive wants sector-specific support**

- The **expansion of innovations** across the sector seen during COVID-19.
- A **VAT reduction** to 5 per cent in line with those offered to hospitality and attractions

businesses and backdated to the end of the last tax year.

Huw Edwards, ukactive CEO, said: “Our sector is vital, not solely for the economy, but also for our nation’s health.

“The ROI for the government when it comes to providing greater tailored support at this time is undeniable.”

More: [http://lei.sr/M5R7J\\_H](http://lei.sr/M5R7J_H)

UKACTIVE



**Our sector is vital, not just for the economy, but for our nation’s health**

Huw Edwards



## PHE publishes advice on tackling activity inequalities

**A** new guide looks to offer local level practitioners and commissioners – as well as those working in physical activity – help identify and break down barriers preventing people from taking part in exercise.

Called *Understanding and addressing inequalities in physical activity*, the document presents the findings of a review, analysis and research aimed at understanding the challenges and opportunities

for increasing physical activity across inequality groups.

Published by Public Health England, the guidance identifies three major themes for practitioners to consider, in order to help get the public more active.

These are to examine the enablers and barriers to activities, while identifying opportunities; community consultation, engagement, and partnership; and adopting a holistic approach for protected characteristics and intersectionality.

The document also includes recommendations for commissioners and practitioners to consider when designing services and interventions locally.



**Evidence suggests that many interventions exacerbate inequalities**

Jessica Jackson

SHUTTERSTOCK/GORDONHOFF



**The guidance includes recommendations for practitioners**

"There is a wide range of evidence-based interventions which aim to increase population based physical activity," said Jessica Jackson, one of the guidance's authors.

"But evidence suggests that many interventions exacerbate inequalities for communities with protected characteristics."

More: [http://lei.sr/e7y6q\\_H](http://lei.sr/e7y6q_H)

## English, Scottish reopening dates known – other nations await

**G**yms in England will reopen on 12 April, followed by facilities in Scotland on 26 April.

Group exercise classes in England, however, won't be allowed to restart until 17 May

at the earliest, when all indoor adult group sports and fitness classes are set to return.

Operators have welcomed gyms being among the first businesses to reopen.

"We plan to reopen our fitness and wellbeing centres in England on 12 April," said Steve Gray, CEO of Nuffield Health. Gyms and indoor leisure facilities are currently closed in Northern Ireland, with a review on lockdown plans scheduled for March 18.

In Wales, mixed messages from the government have infuriated the gym sector and led to widespread confusion.



NUFFIELD HEALTH



**We plan to reopen our fitness and wellbeing centres in England on 12 April**

Steve Gray, Nuffield

More: [http://lei.sr/A4n8Q\\_H](http://lei.sr/A4n8Q_H)

SHUTTERSTOCK/DAVID PEREIRA



**The fitness sector is preparing to reopen in most of the UK**

## Lockdown hitting women's health, widening gender activity gap

The physical and mental health of women in the UK has been put under unprecedented pressure by the pandemic, according to Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson.

The paralympic legend and chair of industry body, ukactive, said that women not only face an increased workload and less leisure

time – but the closure of gyms and leisure centres means that they also have had fewer opportunities to exercise.

"The closure of fitness and leisure facilities has had a profound effect on women," she said.

"They make up 54 per cent of gym members in the UK, with group workouts and swimming central to activity.

"A massive 76 per cent of attendees at group classes are women, with the three most popular workouts being indoor cycling (Spinning), aerobics, and yoga. Furthermore, the most popular activity across the leisure and fitness sector is swimming, accounting for 42 per cent of all visits, with women making up 53 per cent of swimming visits – and increasing with age.



54 per cent of all gym members in the UK are women

"Accordingly, the demand for group sessions and swimming has led to a disproportionate reduction in activity for women following the closure of the leisure sector during lockdown.

Baroness Grey-Thompson's comments follow a report

published by the Women and Equalities Committee – a committee of MPs – which said the government's response to COVID has "repeatedly been skewed towards men".

More: [http://lei.sr/F4D4v\\_X](http://lei.sr/F4D4v_X)



**76 per cent of attendees at group classes are women**

Tanni Grey-Thompson

## Body fat 'killing more people than smoking' in England and Scotland

Excess body fat and obesity are likely to have contributed to more deaths in England and Scotland than smoking since 2014, according to new research from the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow.

While anti-smoking campaigning has seen the percentage of deaths attributable to smoking fall from 23.1 per cent in 2003 to 19.4 per cent in 2017, deaths attributable to excess body fat and obesity have increased from 17.9 per cent to 23.1 per cent in the same time frame.

The figures come from a study called Changes over



Obesity/excess fat account for nearly a quarter of all deaths

15 years in the contribution of adiposity and smoking to deaths in England and Scotland, published in the journal BMC Public Health this month.

Professor Jill Pell, study author, said: "For several decades smoking has been a major target of public health interventions, as it is a leading cause of avoidable deaths.



**While the prevalence of smoking has fallen, the prevalence of obesity has increased**

Jill Pell

"As a result, the prevalence of smoking has fallen. At the same time the prevalence of obesity has increased."

More: [http://lei.sr/c5t6X\\_H](http://lei.sr/c5t6X_H)



## Very low association found between gyms and COVID-19

New data shows that for every 100,000 visits to UK gyms and leisure centres during 2020, only 1.7 people went on to test positive for COVID-19.

In addition to this being an exceptionally low figure, there is no evidence that transmission took place in gyms.

Released by industry body, ukactive, the data is based on more than 75 million facility visits across the UK, from the initial reopening of gyms in July 2020 to the end of December 2020, before the third national lockdown began in England at the start of January 2021.

The results show that while the case rate for the UK's general population

**Exercise guards against COVID-19 by encouraging the secretion of the protein EcsOD**

Liz Terry

rose consistently over the time period, the prevalence of the virus in people using gyms and leisure centres remained extremely low.

Liz Terry, editor of HCM, said: "Gym users report an exceptionally low prevalence of COVID-19 and it's vital to

SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LIND



Gym users reported exceptionally low levels of COVID-19

stress that even where gym users have contracted the virus, there is no evidence whatsoever that transmission occurred in the gym.

"Gyms and leisure centres are COVID-secure, supervised and regulated environments adhering to safety guidelines.

"In addition to being critical for mental and physical health, exercise guards against COVID-19 by promoting the secretion of the protein EcsOD, which coats the organs and protects against the virus."

More: [http://lei.sr/n7M5T\\_H](http://lei.sr/n7M5T_H)

## Sports Park part of Colchester council's vision for health

Construction work has been completed on the £29m Sports Park project in Colchester

The new facility is due to open on 26 April 2021 – dependent on

COVID-19 restrictions – and will be operated by Leisure World Colchester.

The facility houses a large fitness suite, equipped by Technogym, exercise and dance studios and an interactive indoor cycling studio.

The 76-acre sports and leisure facility also features an innovative, fully floodlit one-mile closed-cycle track, as well as two 3G's and seven natural grass sport pitches.

"The opening is part of our vision to give all residents opportunities to be healthy," said Mark Cory, leader of Colchester Borough Council.

More: [http://lei.sr/9U2A3\\_H](http://lei.sr/9U2A3_H)

YOUTUBE/NIS NORTH EAST ESSEX COG



**The opening is part of our vision to give all residents opportunities to be healthy**

Mark Cory

R & G CARTER/NORTHERN GATEWAY



The new facility houses a large fitness suite

## 3d Leisure mobilises staff to deliver virtual school PE

**C**ontract management operator, 3d Leisure has put the current lockdown to good use, by stepping in to help schools with their PE provision.

As its fitness instructors, aren't able to work at 3d Leisure-managed facilities, the operator has mobilised them to help keep kids

physically active, by delivering virtual group exercise classes in schools.

Paul Ramsay, MD at 3d Leisure, told HCM: "The importance of exercise for children can't be underestimated and it's been widely reported how children's activity levels have dropped off during the various lockdowns we've endured over the last 12 months.

"With a team of instructors currently unable to work on-site, we've used the opportunity to offer our services to local schools and provide free group exercise sessions for their kids."

Those offering their services include Debbie Jones from 3d Leisure's Hearts Club in Crosby, who's been providing virtual sessions for the

SHUTTERSTOCK/WANBEEK MEDIA



School activity is being delivered via video by 3d Leisure

children at the Mossps Lane Primary School in Liverpool.

"If you know a school that would benefit from some activity sessions, then drop us a message, we'd love

to help," Ramsay adds.

Established in 1991, 3d Leisure manages 100 gyms in the UK on a contract basis.

More: [http://lei.sr/5V3p3\\_H](http://lei.sr/5V3p3_H)



3D LEISURE



**We're providing free group exercise sessions for kids in school**

Paul Ramsay

## Gym closures – major implications for health and wellbeing

**W**hat are the effects on public health of gyms and leisure centres being shut during lockdowns? Could more people be suffering worse symptoms – or even death – from COVID-19 due to physical activity facilities being out of bounds?

As evidence mounts that being overweight or obese, and/or having low cardiorespiratory fitness are likely to worsen COVID-19 outcomes – and that the pandemic is bad for mental health, societies could yet rue the cost of closing gyms.

Studies show that preventing people from exercising has resulted in

SHUTTERSTOCK/FLAMINGO IMAGES



The UK has lost around 700m workouts during lockdowns

weight gain and falls in cardiorespiratory fitness levels – the two risk factors causing worse COVID-19 symptoms.

Among the surveys outlining how lockdowns

are resulting in weight gains in the UK population is one carried out by OnePoll for Cambridge WeightPlan. It found that nearly half (48 per cent) of women and

44 per cent of men put on weight during lockdowns.

Another, titled *Obesity, eating behavior and physical activity during COVID-19 lockdown: A study of UK adults*, shows that lockdown weight gains are a result of a combination of falling activity levels and an increase in unhealthy eating habits.

The findings are reflected by figures from Sport England, which show significant falls in activity levels.

Industry body uKactive estimates that the three lockdowns have cost the UK around 700m 'lost workouts'.

More: [http://lei.sr/7t9s\\_H](http://lei.sr/7t9s_H)

## FIBO 2021 moves to November Chinese hybrid event confirmed

The world's largest fitness trade fair, FIBO, has been rescheduled to November.

The event will take place at the Koelnmesse in Cologne, Germany, from 4-7 November, having initially been scheduled for 8-11 April and then 24-27 June.

"We want to bring the fitness industry together for a much-needed exchange – but not until all the conditions for safe participation are in place for exhibitors and visitors," said Benedikt Binder-Kriegelstein, CEO of organiser, Reed Exhibitions Deutschland.

The news comes as FIBO confirms that its Chinese event in March 2021 will be held as a hybrid event – which means it will be the first



©FIBO



**We will provide concrete answers for fitness studios trainers and the wider industry**

Silke Frank, FIBO

fitness trade show to have an on-site element since the pandemic began.

Taking place between 21-31 March, the FIBO China 2021 event will include 60,000sq m of exhibition space with more than 450 brands and providers displaying their services.



**FIBO 2021 will now take place from 4-7 November**

Silke Frank, event director of FIBO, said: "Together with our partners, we will provide concrete answers for not only fitness studios and trainers, but the entire industry can ensure its economic success in the long term after the COVID crisis has passed."

HCM is the global media partner of FIBO, which offers a high-quality programme covering management, training, nutrition, coaching, sports economics and corporate health management.

More: [http://lei.sr/W3R8R\\_H](http://lei.sr/W3R8R_H)

## £10m fund to open school sports facilities after hours

The UK government has pledged to invest more than £10m to open school sports and swimming facilities in England to the public in the evenings, at weekends and during holidays.

The funding, to be distributed through Sport England, has been designed to ensure children and young people have access to activity, even in areas with limited public facilities.

The announcement comes following the Daily Telegraph's "Keep Kids Active" campaign, which called for the policy to be introduced across the UK.

"This targeted investment will help schools open their facilities outside school hours, and encourage pupils to be more physically active," said the UK government's education secretary, Gavin Williamson.

More: [http://lei.sr/z5w5h\\_H](http://lei.sr/z5w5h_H)



HM GOVERNMENT



**This targeted investment will help schools open their facilities outside school hours**

Gavin Williamson



**Pools and sports facilities will open outside school times**

## Virgin Active investors preparing rescue deal for fitness chain

Virgin Active investors are understood to be preparing a £60m+ funding injection into the fitness operator, in a bid to secure its future.

As reported by HCM in December, Virgin Active has been actively looking to raise cash to buffer it from the impact of the latest lockdowns in Italy and the UK. Investors are believed to be considering providing the business with new capital, while also negotiating a deal with lenders and landlords, asking them to make a "meaningful financial contribution" to enable the company to continue trading.

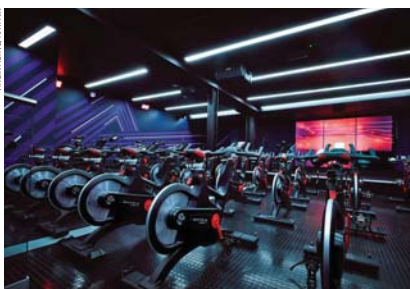
Lloyds Bank had been seeking to offload its exposure to Virgin, but it's understood that it has not found any takers.

Virgin Active is 80 per cent owned by Brait – the investment group of former billionaire, Christo Wiese – which bought its stake from Richard Branson's Virgin Group and investor CVC in April 2015, leaving Branson with 20 per cent and valuing the business at £1.3bn.

Filing its 2019 accounts on 24 December 2020, Virgin Active revealed how it has been coping with the pandemic so far.

In spite of actions taken to reduce the impact of the pandemic on the business – which included senior staff taking a 20 per cent pay cut – the company was forced to borrow £25m in June 2020, which was matched by a £20m capital contribution from shareholders and a £5m deferral of licence fees.

VIRGIN ACTIVE/PAWEL



Virgin Active had 243 sites globally at the end of 2019

The directors reported that all interest covenants up to 2021 were waived by lenders and that a new liquidity covenant was agreed from June 2020 to December 2021.

The accounts show that borrowings leapt

between 2018 and 2019, driving the business from a £4.67m profit in 2018 to a loss of £1.18m in 2019. Industry insiders report there is interest in the business.

More: [http://lei.sr/C7f9s\\_H](http://lei.sr/C7f9s_H)

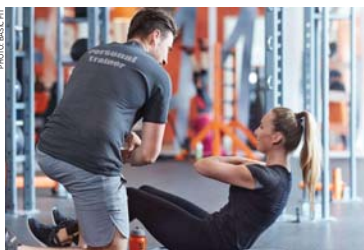
## Basic-Fit raises €150m additional financing to weather COVID

Europe's largest fitness chain, Basic-Fit, has secured a €150m bridge facility, which it says will provide it with the financial flexibility to weather the impact of the pandemic and to "recommence its growth strategy".

The group, which currently operates 905 clubs across the Continent, revealed in October 2020 that it plans to open a further 337 clubs by the end of 2022.

In a statement, Basic-Fit said that the pandemic had resulted in widespread closures across its European estate, but that it expects to resume its expansion

PHOTO: BASIC FIT



Basic-Fit currently operates 905 clubs across the Continent

programme once lockdown restrictions are lifted.

"As a result of the government measures, following the second COVID-19 wave, we had to

start closing clubs again at the end of September.

"By mid-December, all our clubs in the Netherlands, Belgium and France were closed.



**This will keep us well positioned post-COVID-19 to resume our growth path**  
Basic-Fit

"We ended 2020 with a total network of 905 clubs (up 121 clubs year on year) of which 851 clubs are still closed, and 54 clubs (Spain and Luxembourg) remain open.

"With the continued uncertainty, the additional facility is expected to keep us well positioned post-COVID-19 to resume our growth path."

More: [http://lei.sr/V5T8h\\_H](http://lei.sr/V5T8h_H)



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# Kevin Yates

**Global expansion, life after COVID  
and creating a culture of kindness.**

**The founder of boutique concept**

**TRIB3 talks to Kate Cracknell**



***We're  
working  
on our IP in  
preparation  
for a move  
into the US  
in 2022***

## **Can you describe TRIB3?**

I had a vision of creating a volume boutique business that wasn't specifically aimed at London, but that we could put into cities such as Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester.

Ours is a single-studio model with three distinct zones that shape our TRIB3 workouts: Treadmill, Resistance and Intensity. It's designed to be affordable: as an example, a 10-pack of classes will cost £100–140 depending on the location.

We developed a model based on 1,500–4,000sq ft of floorspace, where we could cater for 42–60 people at a time in the studio, and where we also had room for a Mixology protein bar, retail area and reception. Crucially, though, I wanted break-even to come at 30 per cent class occupancy; we've actually got it down to 27 per cent thanks to our low build and operating costs.

Of course, there are strategic areas and locations – as well as current property opportunities – that make London viable for our franchisees, even working within this 27 per cent framework; we do insist on this, as we want all our franchisees to be successful. However, we believe the bigger opportunities for growth of our model lie outside of the capital.



TRIB3 focuses on creating a purposeful journey for every member

### What makes TRIB3 special?

There are some fantastic boutiques out there, but what's great about TRIB3 – aside from our programme and our industrial luxe feel – is the fact there's a purposeful journey for every customer. From your very first workout, your photo goes on the wall and you work your way through the ranks. Do 50 workouts and you become a Warrior. Hit 1,000 and you're a Legend. Even after that, there's more to motivate you, with all sorts of events and challenges and back-to-back 'Beast' workouts.

We also acknowledge what TRIB3Rs do on a daily basis, awarding SWEAT Medals and starbursts through our app, for example, if they maximise their daily, effort-based SWEAT Points.

Our mission is to bring people together through next-level workout experiences and our community really is incredible. It's reflected in our Net Promoter Scores: we do an NPS survey every quarter and every store consistently scores over 65.

Underpinning all of this is hands-down the greatest team I've ever worked with in my 25 years in the fitness sector. Everyone is exceptional.

Even the tiniest negative point that comes out of the NPS, we will investigate. We have a thing in the business called 'everything matters'. It doesn't matter what it is – it can be where you buy the toilet roll from or what type of paper it is, it can be our zero-plastic policy, it can be where we buy our

building materials, where we get our apparel lines from. We investigate everything.

Speaking of apparel, retail is huge for us – alongside mixology it drives 17–18 per cent of each store's revenue. Every new collection we launch sells out almost immediately.

### **What did the early part of your journey look like?**

The first few years were seriously difficult, as it always is with a start-up. You have big visions, but finances are tight and you're building a business from the ground up.

We opened our first store in Sheffield in January 2016. It was just one amazing store, but off the back of it we got international interest and teamed up with partners in Finland and Russia. We also opened in Leeds before starting to look at Spain.

While I was in Spain, I met with Jonathan Fisher [CEO of Holmes Place] and sold him my dream: my goal from the outset

was 1,000 TRIB3 stores in 36 countries by 2025. At that point, we had two stores in the UK, two in Finland, one in Russia, one in China and one in Barcelona. We needed capital to grow and fulfil that vision.

Starting in 2018, we worked together with the Fisher family on two sites in Madrid to prove the model really worked. The full Series A investment came in 2019, with Jonathan taking his place as chair of the TRIB3 board.

### **Did the investment change things?**

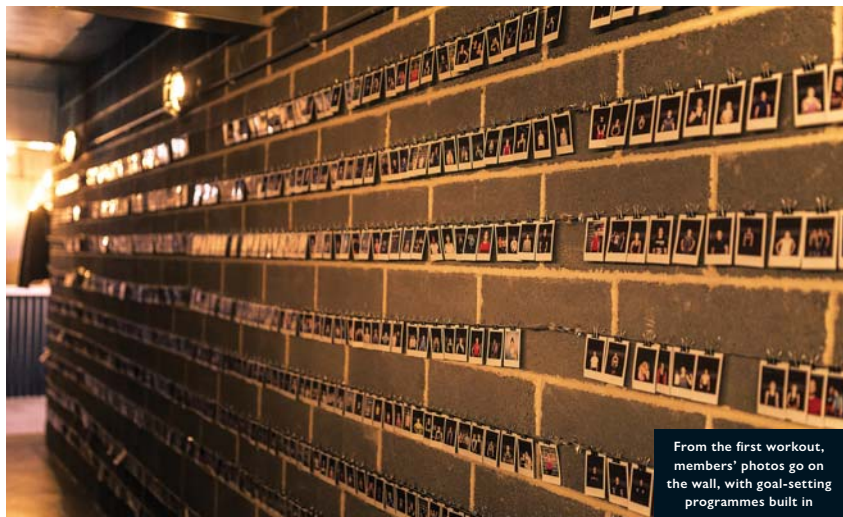
It transformed our business overnight, starting with the fact that we were able to recruit some incredible new people onto our executive board: Karl Dietrich as CDO, Kirsty Angove as CMO and Thomas Moran as CFO.

We then focused on becoming a superb franchise business; in the long run, we expect to own around 10 per cent of all TRIB3 stores, with the rest being owned and operated by our partners and franchisees.



TRIB3's mixology protein bars cement the clubs as social spaces





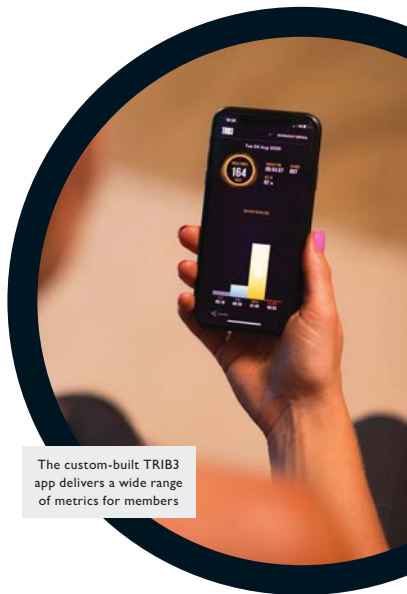
From the first workout, members' photos go on the wall, with goal-setting programmes built in



*From your very first workout, your photo goes on the wall and you work your way through the ranks. Do 50 workouts and you become a Warrior. Hit 1,000 and you're a Legend*

We're now working together to create a new, smaller footprint model for Spain, and potentially other European cities. The larger spaces simply aren't available in Spanish city centres, so we need to re-size if we're to scale quickly. The new model will start at 1,000sq ft and will accommodate 15 - 18 people – at least once social distancing has ended. To start with it may be more like 12 people, with dividers in place.

The value of the Fishers' involvement goes far beyond giving us the funds we need to grow, though. I'm fast, I'm noisy. I have an idea and want to shoot off and do it. Jonathan is centred. He'll encourage me to step back and consider. All of a sudden, I'm calm too. I can think better. Meanwhile, Allan Fisher [Jonathan's father and the founder of Holmes Place] is like



The custom-built TRIB3 app delivers a wide range of metrics for members

a godfather to whom I can turn for advice.

What we've ended up with – thanks to Allan, Jonathan and Xavier Gilabert – is a strategic business. They fully understand that it's a start-up, and that not everything will go to plan, but they've brought with them patience and an ability to keep us all motivated as we move together towards our goal.

Their influence has also led to a culture of kindness being instilled in the business. It's hard to put into words, but it was very evident during lockdown. We suspended all payments from our franchisees and supported our freelancers and employees throughout, not only financially but in terms of their mental health. Matteo Cerruti – who came onboard as CXO as part of the investment – ran weekly online 'campfires' for everyone. People would just chat and play games.

Last but not least, I have to give a nod

to Matteo and his work in refining our TRIB3 workout to make it more accessible, more achievable by more people. He's also been instrumental in developing our own telemetry system and heart rate belts.

#### How has COVID affected TRIB3?

Starting with the stores themselves, even when we were able to open, we were limited to about 50 per cent of our normal capacity due to social distancing. In fact, at some points we were giving customers a whole lane to themselves. But mostly we were capped at around 50 per cent.

Of that 50 per cent, we were operating between 92 and 97 per cent occupancy. Thanks to our break-even point – 27 per cent of normal capacity – every store was EBITDA positive for every month we were open.

In terms of growth, roll-out has obviously ▶

*Our mission is to bring people together through next-level workout experiences and our community really is incredible*



Three distinct zones shape TRIB3 workouts: Treadmill, Resistance and Intensity.

# The vision is a global brand with over 1,000 stores



Jonathan Fisher is chair of TRIB3

## Jonathan Fisher

### The Fisher Family – doing things in 3s

#### What is the role of the Fisher Family in TRIB3?

As controlling shareholders, we hold the position of chair and appoint the non-executive directors of the company. We look to add value in the areas of strategy, finance and cultural alignment with our business values, and believe our business experience can amplify the output of a very talented executive team.

#### Tell us about the investment

It was a Fisher Family investment, made together with some cherished associates. Fisher Family vehicle owns 75 per cent of TRIB3 International.

#### Why did you want to make this investment?

I'm learning to do things in 3s at TRIB3! So, reason #1, we identified a unique customer experience as evidenced by TRIB3's extraordinary NPS scores. Reason #2, we felt the magic of the experience was scalable and suited to franchising. And reason #3, we identified in Kevin Yates an unstoppable, visionary CEO whose belief and drive is infectious.

#### Have you invested in a third-party brand before?

EVO was our first experience of working with a third-party brand; to date, it has been very positive and in many respects paved the way for our transaction with TRIB3.

In the fitness sector, we're open to third-party brand investments provided we feel our skill set can add value and that we take a controlling stake. That said, my father sometimes quotes an old proverb which says "you can't dance at two weddings with one behind!" We identify a truly exciting growth opportunity with TRIB3 and feel bound, at this stage, to focus our resources on helping the team deliver on it.

#### How do you see TRIB3 evolving and growing?

TRIB3 is a franchise business, so growth will become exponential through franchisees, partnerships and international development. Kevin has been straightforward about this from day one: the vision is a global brand with over 1,000 stores. We believed him, bought the business and hope to directly and indirectly add value to our partners' success.



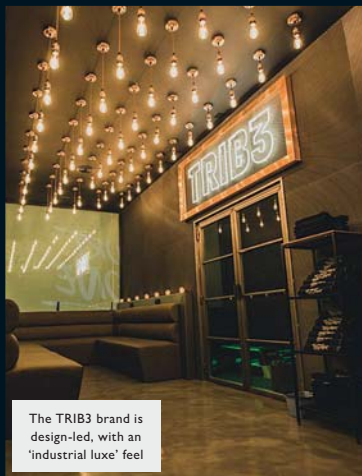
*We have a thing in the business called ‘everything matters’. It doesn’t matter what it is – it can be where you buy the toilet roll to our zero-plastic policy. We investigate everything*

► been slowed by COVID, but we’ve still managed to open three new stores during this period of on-off lockdown: Edinburgh, Bristol and a further location in Madrid, which was cash-positive by month two. Overall, there’ll be 30 operational stores across the group by the end of this year.

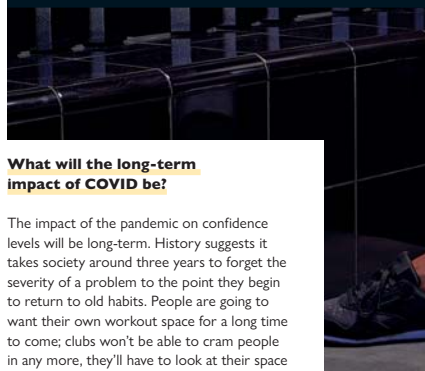
And then of course, as so many operators did, we launched live streaming – TRIB3 Live – during lockdown. We used Instagram and Facebook at first, but quickly decided it wasn’t good enough quality. It wasn’t who we were. We mobilised the team and within four weeks we’d built a TRIB3 Live studio and platform, with a full production team. We currently deliver eight TRIB3 Live workouts a day, getting around 200 new registrants a week.

Where the TRIB3 Live studio is a replica of our normal studios, we also built a second space – TRIB3 at Home – which is a bit like working out in your front room. It offers things such as meditation, stretching and less intense workouts – things we don’t normally do at TRIB3 and that don’t require so much equipment.

We currently offer seven days free and then charge £9.99 a month for our online offering. We’re still learning, but it’s something we’re going to continue to invest in: our new store in Manchester, which will sit on the same campus as our global HQ when it launches in Q2 of this year, will feature a full tech and media centre – almost 3,000sq ft of space – for live streaming and franchisee education.



The TRIB3 brand is design-led, with an ‘industrial luxe’ feel



### **What will the long-term impact of COVID be?**

The impact of the pandemic on confidence levels will be long-term. History suggests it takes society around three years to forget the severity of a problem to the point they begin to return to old habits. People are going to want their own workout space for a long time to come; clubs won’t be able to cram people in any more, they’ll have to look at their space and their flow. I think it’s also likely other countries will follow the Spanish example and bring in legislation around air circulation.

We’ve already remodelled our studios to provide a minimum of 1.5m spacing; studios that used to hold 60 people will now hold 42–45. Yes, it will impact profits, but this is a people decision. This is what people want and they’ll vote with their feet.

We’re probably better placed than many operators, in that TRIB3Rs already have class packages they’ve bought and want to come back to use: when we re-opened in the UK,



The company reports waitlists for people wanting to get a place in classes

we had massive waitlists of people hoping to get a place in class. But it's going to be tough nonetheless and even more so for our new stores which don't have a customer base yet.

I've been really impressed by how the sector has come together in this crisis – something I really hope continues in the long term – but we need government help too. At a very minimum, we need rates relief and a reduction in VAT.

#### **What are your plans in the short- and medium-term?**

In 2021, we'll be opening 19 new stores in the UK and another two in Barcelona – we've just signed an area development deal for

Scotland and are about to finalise deals for Ireland and the whole of the Netherlands.

We also have discussions underway with a potential partner in Oman and believe the Nordics will be a good opportunity. We'll be developing new territories around Spain, too.

We're also working on our IP in preparation for a move into the US in 2022. We'll start by doing a couple of our own sites there before we start to look for partners.

However, while we believe the future is bright for TRIB3 and we're excited about getting going again, we also understand the market's not likely to move again properly until 2022. Our key focus this year is to ensure the UK and Spain are operating well. ●



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**Technogym's Live and On-Demand solution is transformational for its clients**

**M**ywellness Live and On-Demand offers all health and fitness operators the flexibility to add value to existing customers and connect with their community anywhere, anytime.

The aim is to provide unparalleled training experiences and create a sustainable pathway for customers to engage, as a key benefit.

Here we reveal case studies from three operators who have adopted the solution during the lockdowns and examine how Live and On-Demand has supported their businesses.

#### About Live classes

Engage your community by connecting your customers and instructors through live classes and create a social environment before and after classes, to build loyalty and community. Deliver consistent class experiences in the facility and on the go.

#### About On-Demand classes

Provide your community with variety and flexibility: they can perform their favourite classes, with instructors they already know – anywhere. It's seamless: just drag and drop the videos created by your instructors and make them available in the Mywellness app.

#### The Technogym Training Library

Increase the training options available to your customers: in addition to your own classes, you have a library of ready-to-use, high-quality virtual classes at your fingertips.

Created by Technogym and its partners, there is content for the entire family, from Pilates to yoga, cardio to dance-based workouts and so much more.



## Top tips for adopting live and on-demand

### Target

Think about your target markets and audience profile to ensure all content and communication matches their needs

### Variety

Provide lots of choices and offerings to keep the interest high and attraction ongoing

### Marketing

Devise a communication plan to include social media and email comms to promote and engage members

### Promotion

Provide teaser sessions to customers to increase engagement, interest and up-take when charging a fee



***It's exciting to have a quick and compelling way to get our members back and engaged with us***

*Paula Sinfield, Stevenage Leisure Ltd*

#### CASE STUDY ONE

### Stevenage Leisure

#### LAUNCHING ACROSS 19 FACILITIES

"March 2020 was the month everything changed," says Paula Sinfield, corporate fitness manager at SLL.

"After the first lockdown, we realised we needed to develop our offering, so my task was to look for a platform that could support and engage members.

"Mywellness was the perfect choice, as it works seamlessly with our equipment. It runs our entire member journey, delivering effortless, effective communication with members – it ticks all the boxes.

"With the launch of Mywellness Live and On-Demand, it was exciting to have a solution that represents a quick and compelling way to get our members back engaged with us. The On-Demand content is fantastic and being readily available, we can connect with members across all our 19 sites.


"We're developing a Live offering; our members are enjoying this personalised content, which strengthens our brand by bringing people together virtually.

"We've built a strong relationship with the Technogym team in developing the member journey and been given training and marketing tools to use – we feel we have their full support."

### Monetise your class experiences

- Introduce new membership options
- Add value to existing ones
- Promote to new prospects and communities directly from the Mywellness app
- Use the app to sell the experiences that can be enjoyed at your facility and also on the go with Technogym's Live and On-Demand streaming

To discover more visit:  
[www.technogym.com/hcm2](http://www.technogym.com/hcm2)



PLM Health and Fitness has used Technogym Live and On-Demand to engage members

## CASE STUDY TWO

### PLM Health and Fitness

#### ADOPTING A HYBRID MODEL

PLM is a 24/7 health club and introduced a hybrid gym model by offering a digital online membership which started during the lockdown. The company will continue with the option when the facility reopens.

"Technogym Live and On-Demand has allowed us to create an online membership which has been invaluable through the lockdown," says owner, Phil Moss. "The solution is fantastic with excellent content, flexibility to add our workouts and best of all was quick to deploy."

A new online membership is priced at £5.99 and is payable through the Mywellness app. Online membership includes over 100+ Technogym On-Demand Workouts, as well as live classes created by PLM's in-house team.

"We've created a fantastic range of marketing and promotional assets around Mywellness," says Moss. "This, along with Live and On-Demand marketing materials, is demonstrating how we support our members."

"The feedback has been fantastic, with members keeping motivated to exercise and recommending the app to friends to help maintain fitness goals".

## CASE STUDY THREE

### Newcastle University

#### LAUNCHING A DIGITAL OFFERING

In 2020, Newcastle University saw the necessity to pivot to digital to keep its student population active as the pandemic changed the landscape for physical activity.

"Before lockdown, we had nothing in the way of digital, everything we offered was in-person training experiences centred around the gym," says Denis Murphy, participation and events manager at Newcastle University. "We'd always planned to incorporate a digital journey in the future and these plans were accelerated by launching a digital platform, offering an enhanced



***We've seen fantastic engagement, with 20% of our members downloading and using the Mywellness App. These figures are incredibly positive, as they reflects the percentage of members who attended our classes pre-lockdown***

***Denis Murphy, Newcastle University***

service to our students, with a channel to interact and exercise.

"As the landscape of fitness has changed in the past 12 months, we've learned that fitness demands more of a hybrid model. In the past, we thought by providing an on-demand service, we would be devaluing our gym membership, as students would no longer need to come to the gym. We've since realised this really isn't the case, and what people want now is a combination of experiences.

"The strategy and launch of Technogym Live and On-Demand have worked for us and we've seen fantastic engagement. Since we launched to members just before lockdown 2.0, we've already seen 20 per cent of our existing member base actively download and start using the Mywellness App. These figures are incredibly positive, as this reflects the percentage of members who attended our classes pre-lockdown."



# LIVE & ON-DEMAND CLASSES ALWAYS WITH YOU



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When the moratorium on evictions ends, it could close some fitness businesses

## Everyone's talking about Rent

Although extensions to the UK government's rent moratorium have continued so far, when the end comes, it will represent a cliff edge. Unless agreements can be struck with landlords, or the government intervenes, some operators could be liable for a year or more of back rent, which could be catastrophic, as Kath Hudson reports

With the end of the rent moratorium inevitable at some point – potentially as early as the end of March this year, the health and fitness sector is urgently calling on the government to intervene.

Without targeted support, we could see the end of some previously thriving fitness businesses, which will not be able to afford a lump-sum payment of one year's rent, when they've been forced to close for eight of the last 12 months.

Even operators who can afford the back rent payments are reporting that the cash hit will adversely affect their expansion plans going forward, which will ultimately impact the health of the nation.

Industry representatives are working hard to lobby government to give the sector the type of targeted support the hospitality industry has benefited from and asking for an extension to the rent moratorium, VAT breaks and rate relief.

The latest figures from ukactive show that 400 facilities have already closed permanently.

In the public sector, the District Councils Network estimates £411m has been lost during the pandemic by leisure centres run by district councils and says many won't survive the third lockdown without rescue funding.

This means unless the government intervenes, many leisure centre swimming pools and gyms could be lost forever.

What can be done to resolve the rent issue and ensure the industry doesn't suffer an economic 'Long COVID', so we can continue to support the health of the nation? We ask the experts.



Put simply, we think it's unreasonable that operators should have to pay full rent for periods when they have been forced to close

## Rebecca Passmore

**Pure Gym: UK  
managing director**

One of the most significant costs the sector faces is rent and without further targeted support from the Government to help share the burden more equally, the consequences will be dire for the industry. Put simply we think it's unreasonable that operators should have to pay full rent for periods when they have been forced to close and been unable to trade. Despite making this point to landlords very few of them have made meaningful concessions and instead are sticking to the letter of their contracts.


By the end of March 2021, when the current moratorium expires, PureGym will have approaching £40m of rent arrears relating to full rent for periods where we have had zero or significantly reduced revenues. While we are very grateful for the measures the Government has already put in place, it isn't nearly enough to cover

what it is costing our sector to stay closed. The furlough scheme and rates support cover less than 25 per cent of our running costs. A closed estate significantly erodes our capital base. Burning through capital will limit operators' ability to invest in sites and deliver on expansion plans.

We need support from the Government so that when gyms are given the green light to reopen, we are able to prioritise our investment on those that matter the most: our members and our teams.

The gym and fitness industry has demonstrated its resilience by springing back from two lockdowns and underlying demand for gyms remains strong; however, without targeted support for the worst-affected sectors which is proportional to the extent of lost revenue, we are deeply concerned about our industry.

We have already seen a number of larger operators face business failures or major restructurings and lots of smaller operators have closed their doors. These were strong and successful businesses and would be again with the right, targeted support. I hope the Government recognises the importance of gyms as a contributor to the economy, an important employer of around 500,000 people and a provider of an essential service to millions across the UK. This sector is facing the very real prospect of economic 'Long COVID' in the form of closed facilities, under-investment and lack of expansion.



When the current moratorium expires, PureGym will have nearly £40m of rent arrears



We have proven our sector's ability to work constructively with landlords, but now the Government must establish a permanent solution on rent arrears

## Huw Edwards

ukactive: CEO

We're calling on the Government to support our survival, recovery and development with measures which will – once lockdown ends – allow the sector to thrive again and repeat the 6 per cent year-on-year growth it demonstrated previously.

We've been in dialogue with the Government to stress the need for three key measures of support to urgently meet the cashflow crisis approaching on 1 April. Firstly, extending the business rates holiday beyond March 2021 by one year. Secondly, making changes to rent

legislation and arrears. Thirdly, providing the physical activity sector with the reduction in VAT already afforded to hospitality and tourism.

We've proven our sector's ability to work constructively with landlords on this issue, but now the Government must establish a permanent solution to tenant/landlord agreements on rent arrears. We want the Government to extend the moratorium for evictions on the basis of rent arrears beyond 31 March, by two quarters to 1 Oct 2021. If these issues are not addressed there is a serious risk that the subsequent action from landlords will result in closures.

In order to assist landlords and tenants to come to an equitable agreement on the treatment of rent during shutdown and the recovery period, we have proposed landlords grant tenants a rent-free amount, equal to 50 per cent of the rent payable during the shutdown period, with the remaining rent for the shutdown period to be deferred.

In addition, we need to see tenants granted a rent deferment equal to 50 per cent of the rent due during the recovery period, with the remaining 50 per cent paid on a monthly basis. And all deferred rent should be repaid on a monthly basis over a period of two years from 1 April 2020, or lease-end if sooner.

This is such a vital area of agreement. There have already been a number of high-profile business failures, and further closures, due to landlords pursuing tenants, will lead to an under-supply of facilities and services at precisely the moment the UK needs them for its health recovery.



ukactive is calling for the moratorium on evictions to be extended

A large proportion of landlords are still refusing to negotiate with Anytime Fitness franchisees

## Neil Randall

### Anytime Fitness UK: chief executive

**W**e need formal legislation around the Code of Practice for commercial property relationships and longer

term reform on the Landlord and Tenant Act. The most significant of our franchisees' arrears is in their rent payments, ranging between £45,000 and £100,000 depending on their property and location. We're approaching a year since our initial closure and still a large proportion of landlords refuse to enter any meaningful dialogue with our franchisees. We need legislation to guide a clear support process for both parties.

An effective example is the relief for commercial tenants in Australia, where landlords are mandated to provide a proportionate rent cut based on the reduction of the tenant's trade and turnover due to COVID-19. They then must provide 50 per cent of the rental reduction by way of a waiver and the remaining 50 per cent as a rent deferral to be paid by the tenant over the remaining term of the lease.



In addition, we believe the government needs to provide a 12-month extension of business rates relief, access to an additional grant of up to £25,000 with no cap on rateable value, a VAT rebate for the sector and a VAT reduction on gym memberships passed on to the consumer to stimulate growth on reopening.

Our clubs are losing income of anything between £30,000 and £100,000 a month during closure and by March, will have been able to trade for just over 100 days, and then only in a suppressed way with reduced capacities. Without any formal legislation or support, there will be widespread closure of facilities, loss of jobs and millions of people losing their community gyms. This would be of huge detriment to the nation's ability to prevent and manage chronic disease and improve immunity as we emerge from the pandemic.



In Australia, landlords are mandated to provide a proportionate rent cut based on the reduction of the tenant's trade and turnover due to COVID-19



I very much doubt the government anticipated this moratorium lasting a year, and the problem has now become too big for intervention



Kirton's advice for tenants and landlords is to try to reach an amicable agreement sooner rather than later

## Ross Kirton

**Colliers International:  
head of UK Leisure Agency**

**T**he rent moratorium has been a lifeline for occupiers across all leisure and hospitality businesses who have suffered the longest forced closure.

However, with the end quickly in sight and no guidance on how to support the businesses going forward, this is a slow motion car crash waiting to happen.

Working with both landlords and occupiers, I can see both sides of the coin. The tenant has no income as they have been forced to close and, understandably, are unwilling to part with their hard earned savings to pay their rent arrears in full. But the landlord sees occupiers having had additional government support measures to draw upon, which were not available to them. They have their own bills to pay, such as debt repayments for property lending and therefore need to receive some rent to pay this. Some landlords have behaved appallingly, but for some rent is as much a lifeline for them, as customer spend is for tenants.

Throughout the last year we have worked with both landlords and tenants to help find a solution. Many landlords are willing to find an amicable solution, where they absorb some of the impact of the pandemic, writing off part of rental arrears in exchange for the balance being paid now, or a least a payment

plan in place. Some have sought to hedge their bets by agreeing to write off all arrears in exchange for an additional rent review in 2022 when market conditions are expected to have recovered.

When the government announced this moratorium I very much doubt they anticipated it lasting a year and the problem has now become too big for government intervention. While it has said it intends to look into outdated property legislation, I strongly suspect this will focus on the upward only rent review provision in leases rather than the rent arrears conundrum.

The Australian model where the rental burden is shared 50/50 while the business is in a period of enforced closure and the tenants' repayments can be made in instalments looks like a good compromise, but we may have gone too far down the line now for the UK Government to consider a scheme like this.

In all likelihood, what will happen if the moratorium ends in March as expected is that landlords and tenants will be forced to have a proper dialogue. I predict that around half will be able to agree on something that each side can stomach. Around a quarter will end up doing some form of restructuring process – CVA or similar, which will ultimately deal with the arrears, and the rest will go to legal proceedings driven by landlords. My best advice for both sides would be to try to reach an amicable official agreement sooner rather than later. ●



15th  
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# HCM

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*I want the idea that your opportunity to get involved in sport and physical activity can depend on your background, gender, bank balance or postcode to be consigned to history*



*Uniting the Movement*  
has been written  
following consultation  
with the sector

# Uniting the Movement

**HCM asks Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England CEO, about  
Uniting the Movement, the 10-year vision to transform  
lives and communities through sport and physical activity**

IMAGES: SPORT ENGLAND

## **The new strategy talks a great deal about moving and movement – is this part of a new vocabulary for Sport England?**

Our overall aim of *Uniting the Movement* is to bring together the huge range of organisations and people operating across the sport and physical activity ecosystem. We want to work together to build a more equal and inclusive sector, and to champion the life changing impact of moving through being involved in sport, exercise, or physical activity.

Ultimately, our choice of language and vocabulary is driven by the findings of our consultation work, within which the term 'movement' showed itself to be a common phrase, so while our focus will always be on sport and physical activity, movement is the overall purpose that is driving our strategy. When we move we are stronger – whether as individuals, communities or society as a whole.

## **What do you anticipate will be the toughest aspects to deliver and what can be done about that?**

First and foremost we cannot ignore the huge challenges that the pandemic has created, not only for those who make sport, leisure and physical activity happen, but also in relation to the routines so many people have had to put on pause with the nation's health in mind.



These challenges are our focus in the short-term. We need to support the sector to recover from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinvent vibrant and relevant sport and physical activities that appeal and provide opportunities to everyone.

This recovery will require wide-ranging partnership and collaboration – with community groups and leisure centres who are closest to the people we want to reach; with health services which can influence and signpost people into activity; and with schools and colleges which need the expertise of providers to create great and positive experiences for children and young people.

We're aware that true collaboration is tough as it takes capacity, certain skills and capabilities. But this is where the real opportunities and rewards lie. We know we can't do it alone, but if we get this right, *Uniting the Movement* has the capacity to deliver a nation where people live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of sport and physical activity

*We know that the current 'offer' across grassroots sport and activity is not equal and the pandemic has made that inequality worse. So we recognise our approach must be disproportionately focused on those least well served*



**Which part of the new strategy are you personally most excited about?**

Of all the issues COVID-19 has highlighted, the one it has really cemented in my mind is just how important sport and physical activity is to the nation. This has been reflected in words from the prime minister, reports in the national and regional media almost daily and through the messages I and many others continue to receive reaffirming the role sport plays in people's lives.

Grassroots sport – whether we're talking about people playing, volunteering, coaching or otherwise – brings communities together and helps to improve people's health and wellbeing. Against the odds, clubs and organisations have done everything they can over these difficult months to keep their members and players engaged. Our continuing to support this not just to survive but thrive in the future excites me the most.

But this comes with a strong caveat. We know that the current 'offer' across grassroots sport and activity is not equal and the pandemic has made that inequality worse. Recognising that our approach must be disproportionately focused on those least well served currently and manifesting that in our ambition and investment is equally significant to me.

“ We want to be able to look back in a decade and chart a journey of real change ”



The strategy has a strong focus on ensuring that opportunities for sport are accessible for all

#### Who was responsible for writing the strategy?

While I had ultimate sign off and that followed formal board approval, there was a brilliant small team within Sport England who led its creation and drafting. But they would be the first to acknowledge too the spirit of collaboration that sits at its heart. *Uniting the Movement* is a product of the input of thousands of people from hundreds of organisations, all of whom shaped our thinking over 18 months of consultation. We cast the net wide to ensure the experiences and opinions of a diverse range of audiences helped shape the final document

#### What changes do you think it will lead to?

We want to be able to look back in a decade and chart a journey of real change when it comes both to increasing how we all think

about the nation's – and our own – health and wellbeing, and that everyone can have the opportunity to be active in a safe accessible enjoyable environment that makes sense and can fit in to their own lives.

That is the heart of *Uniting the Movement* – ensuring sport and physical activity is truly available for all. We have been very clear in identifying that tackling inequalities is crucial to this becoming a reality and this means providing in particular women, people from Asian and Black backgrounds, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions with improved choice and opportunities to be active.

In 10 years, I want the idea that your opportunity to get involved in sport and physical activity can depend on your background, gender, bank balance or postcode to be consigned to history. ●

# How can we ensure our sector remains part of the physical activity solution?

*Craig Blain outlines the challenges and opportunities facing operators who are aiming to appeal to a diverse membership*

**T**he pandemic has presented a huge challenge to our sector, but collectively we've shown great resolve and a collective response to be proud of.

We're proving that – with the support of key representative bodies, such as ukactive and CIMSPA and the collective voice of every individual operator and exercise professional – we're capable of getting our voice heard.

Yet, there is so much more for us to do in continuing to lead the way, positively and proactively.

As operators reopen and our members begin to re-engage with activity we must remain aware that people will be coming back with varying levels of confidence and competence.

The long-term health resilience of the nation is critical to so many facets of our society and we know the benefits of an active lifestyle are far reaching and support the management of many health conditions. Considering the stress and strain COVID-19 has placed on the NHS, being able to remain active and reap these benefits is one way everyone can help to give our health service space to breathe.

As our sector continues to show how it can operate in a COVID-secure way and be part of the solution to recovery, we want to raise the key discussion point in supporting people to re-engage with physical activity across the spaces and places within our sector.

The recent Public Health England report *Addressing Inequalities in Physical Activity* outlines some of the key challenges and enablers in tackling the inequalities that exist for some key groups when it comes to leading an active lifestyle.

## How can we ensure the equality and diversity agenda isn't lost in the rush to return?

Social restrictions used by the government to contain the spread of COVID-19 are increasing health and physical activity inequalities in the UK and as operators focus on business recovery, it's essential we don't lose sight of the importance of having diversity within our membership.

Activity Alliance, the organisation for inclusion





Many essential services, such as exercise referral, have been limited or stopped operating during the pandemic

and equality for disabled people in physical activity and sport is concerned that disabled people may become a forgotten audience, considering the potential loss of key staff who've been central to ensuring inclusive practice.

With the closure of leisure facilities, many essential services, such as exercise referral, have been limited or stopped operating.

There's no doubt that certain groups of people have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and are at greater risk of becoming inactive, with the conditions of lockdown reinforcing their sedentary habits.

Data from Sport England's *Active Lives Adult Survey* highlights that people with a number of disabilities, Black and Asian communities (excluding Chinese) and people from lower socioeconomic groups have seen some of the highest decrease in activity levels.

#### KEY CONTACTS

- [www.laterlifetraining.co.uk](http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk)
- [www.goodboost.org](http://www.goodboost.org)
- <https://4global.com>
- <https://moveconsulting.co.uk>

#### Where do we need to focus in order to ensure all of our membership hear our call to return?

Sport England's weekly surveys with ComRes, looking at the real-time impacts of COVID-19 in England, used the COM-B model to determine what was impacting changes in physical activity behaviour.

The COM-B model is used to identify what needs to change in order for behavioural interventions to work. It identifies three key factors needed for success: capability, opportunity and motivation.

Unsurprisingly, ComRes found it was the perceived lack of opportunity that most affected people.



It's vital to understand people's motivations for taking part

To remedy this situation, some operators have switched to offering services through online platforms, and other initiatives have filled the void where this hasn't been possible.

For example, the Make Movement your Mission programme from **Later Life Training**, delivered through Facebook, supports older people in remaining active during isolation, while social enterprise, **Good Boost**, has developed an app that uses AI to provide tailored exercise programmes for people with musculoskeletal conditions.

Discussions across our network suggest many population groups who've been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic will be the last to come back to leisure centres, although this is constantly changing as confidence grows, thanks to the availability of vaccines.

Published data on predictions on the return to centres is limited. 4Global has been one of the organisations leading the way, monitoring the return to the centres.

They've noted that 25-44 years olds are leading the membership return and have

expressed concerns that the local lockdown restrictions may have shaken consumer confidence – this is likely to adversely impact people who may not be confident about their capability to be active or are understandably risk-averse at the moment.

There has been a physical activity message from the UK Government throughout the pandemic to remain active, yet it's fair to say that this has been lost over time through the many media filters.

As the general population's levels of resilience were lowered during the first and second waves, a greater seasonal effect on activity levels has been seen this winter, as fewer people have 'seen' the opportunities they need to take in order to change.

Where activity has been promoted, we must recognise that for 12 months we've been hit with a national marketing campaign promoting outdoor physical activity opportunities. The government has been championing the benefits of physical activity in supporting mental health or boosting the immune system, against a



We must 'de-medicalise' the way we engage with and support those with long-term conditions.

*We need to recognise that people are more than just a bunch of medical conditions and ensure we understand the individual's motivation for taking part*

background message that we need to shut centres to prevent infection and this will have had some impact on public perception.

The worry is that restrictions used to manage the pandemic have reinforced sedentary behaviours. One survey found 78 per cent of UK adults have spent longer sitting during lockdown, with 15 per cent sitting for four hours extra per day.

Operators have worked hard to reassure members that facilities are COVID-secure and this must remain a constant message, even when people have returned. It's critical to not become complacent and assume just because a member is attending, they have fully made up their mind.

Relapse is always a factor and COVID-19 has added one big extra reason for that to happen – hygiene will be a huge priority now and forever.

We must also reconnect with members, as their needs may have changed during the closures.

### **How do we attract and retain the least active people?**

Move Consulting director, Elaine McNish previously worked at Swim England as head of health and wellbeing and her team developed the Water Wellbeing model that took a whole pool approach to supporting people with health conditions into the water.

While this was developed before COVID-19, there are key learnings from it that are even more important now as we work to attract back members to our facilities.

The barriers that prevent people using facilities are the same for those who do attend, it's just those who are not active are likely to give up at the first barrier they meet. We need to look at the whole customer journey to remove glitches that stop them getting through the front door.



## Key reassurances

In the first instance we need to understand that non-customers need to be reassured enough to see gyms, leisure centres and activity as being beneficial to their life. There has been some great work carried out by the charity sector to understand the needs of beneficiaries. In behaviour terms the 'intention-action gap' is there for us all. Many people want to be active, but they need an offer that's tailored for them and the reassurance that people supporting them will understand the challenges they face on a day to day basis.

If we look at a customer journey this reassurance needs to start even before they enter the centre:

### **Who's the person recommending the offer and do I trust them?**

Operators that have the greatest success are those who've thought hard about creating partnerships with organisations, who are trusted by the groups they're trying to reach and can signpost them to facilities.

### **Will I feel welcome?**

Will the receptionist understand my needs and know about my session? The **Activity Alliance** has great

online training on delivering excellent customer service, helping frontline staff understand how to better support people with additional needs. Training aside, understanding simple practices such as being at the front to greet new customers or better signposting to help navigation in the building can make a big difference.

### **Does the imagery used look like me or speak to me?**

There are some great examples of marketing where operators have thought carefully about the images they use and used quotes from participants about what they've gained from undertaking the activity – similar to messaging we've seen in *This Girl Can* and *We Are Undeatable*.

### **What will the experience be like and how will I know what to do?**

Virtual tours or picture stories can show people how to navigate the building, reassure on hygiene processes and how to use equipment.

### **Is the offer right for me?**

Operators need to ensure the opportunities they're providing, are tailored to target customers.

In the past we've seen the rise of symptom-based classes in the world of exercise referral or disability specific programmes. While there's no doubt these have their place, they may not always be sustainable and may limit choice and integration.

We need to recognise that people are more than just a bunch of medical conditions and ensure we understand the individual's motivation for taking part.

Our industry has traditionally prioritised giving the workforce the technical knowledge to support customers, over developing the skills and behaviours to first understand and connect with them as people.

Consider campaigns such as *We Are Undeatable*, which strives to support and encourage people with long-term health conditions in finding ways to be active that work with their individual condition, not against them. It's vital to see the person first.

I previously worked at UK Coaching as the policy and partnership manager for physical activity and health. I was involved in the development of many of the professional standards relating to engaging the least active people, and was also a link for Sport



Campaigns such as Sport England's This Girl Can and We are Undeatable, set the benchmark

England, driving how to support workforce messaging related to the We Are Undeatable campaign.

UK Coaching completes an annual survey called *Coaching in the UK*, which looks at things from a workforce and participant perspective. From this report and from subsequent consultations in the development of professional standards led by CIMSPA, it's apparent that there's an underlying demand from participants for the deliverer to be expert in more than the technical elements of their trade.

Key skills relating to behaviour change, including understanding client needs, action planning and keeping clients motivated – to name but a few – were consistently coming out as a priority.

Working to support the ongoing learning of the workforce in these key skills is essential to providing a safe and engaging environment – beyond the physical – which members can return to, feel comfortable exercising in and begin to thrive in. For the workforce, it's essential this

learning provides the opportunity for concepts to be presented and applied in a context that resonates with the learner.

#### Where does this leave us?

This has been a time of reflection. Many people have taken the pandemic as an opportunity to stop and reflect, some have used this time to invest inwardly and develop themselves. This is one of many positive behaviours we must continue through 2021 and beyond. We must ensure as a sector that we continue to lead the way in supporting people to develop a positive relationship with physical activity that can last a lifetime.

#### We encourage you to continue to:

- Understand your members better, exploring their thoughts, feelings, wants and needs.
- Co-create your offer with members, or at least ensure you use the insight you have to get it right.
- Engage with your communities using outreach programmes.

- Open up two-way communication pathways with your workforce and membership to listen to their challenges and needs.
- Invest in supporting your workforce in understanding how to support behaviour change.
- Work collaboratively with other community providers who engage the same audience.

If we can achieve this, we can have a lasting and positive impact on the wellbeing of our communities. We can increase the diversity of the members who return to us, and we can reduce the risk of relapse – beyond the idea of membership alone – but where the real risks lies, ie, in physical inactivity.

Now is the time to support members, when and where they need this support the most. ●

● *Craig Blain is a director of Move Consulting, a learning and development organisation with a specialist interest in physical activity-related behaviour change*

The physical activity sector has a vital role to play in immunity boosting and rehabilitation

# On the road to recovery

*The health and fitness sector knows the vital role it plays in boosting immunity in the face of COVID-19. Now there's another opportunity to be an essential service: helping people recover from the virus. Kate Cracknell reports*

One legacy of COVID-19 will be a long-term requirement to support those affected, by providing dedicated rehabilitation and support services. Exercise will play a key role in this and the current medical guidance is for people to get back to their previous level of activity as soon as possible – even aiming to be more active.

At the moment, however, there's limited guidance around how to do this and with COVID-19 leaving some people with everything from Long COVID to undiagnosed heart conditions (see HCM October 2020, p76), developing expertise in this area is vital.

The physical activity sector has the chance to step up as an essential service, but if we are to play this role, we must upskill, absorb knowledge as new understanding of the virus continues to emerge and appreciate that a bespoke approach will be required when dealing with these individuals.

We take a look at emerging initiatives from across the activity sector.





## We're taking a scientific approach to developing an exercise prescription model for COVID recovery

Professor Alfonso Jimenez

GO fit, Spain & Portugal

**W**e have academic collaborations around the world, but we wanted to go a bit deeper with the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC) in Sheffield, UK," says Steven Ward, chief transformation officer at GO fit. "One of our current R&D investments is the RICOVER project, which among other things is taking a scientific approach to developing an exercise prescription model for COVID recovery."

Professor Alfonso Jimenez – who splits his time between the GO fit LAB, the AWRC and EuropeActive's new research centre – Think Active – is leading on this project for GO fit.

"The work of the RICOVER unit, based at the AWRC, provides evidence of what works to support people recovering and rehabilitating from COVID-19," he explains. "We're particularly interested in supporting those with long COVID-19 symptoms, whose recovery journey is complex and non-linear."

"A further group of people living with long-term conditions, who have not contracted COVID-19, but whose physical and mental health may have deteriorated during lockdown, will also be supported through the research agenda of RICOVER."

"So, this is one facet of GO fit's investment. We're also working hard to support our members here and now."

"During lockdown, we introduced the GO fit Everywhere digital platform. It saw more than three million visits. That level of usage inspired gofit.tv, which launched last month. One of its key areas of content at the moment is COVID protection."

"Meanwhile, our app offers exercise programmes for members based on science, to be safe and effective."



Jimenez is chief research & innovation officer at GO fit LAB & Professor at AWRC Sheffield

"The four main programmes at the moment address health challenges in the aftermath of COVID-19. There's a programme for sarcopenia, to help address muscle loss. There's another for weight loss, there's one for mental health. And there's also a programme to reinforce immune function."

"Members can follow these programmes at home and in our clubs, where we've also identified group exercise classes that support this approach and optimised our studio schedules around them."

"We're going further in the shape of 'GO fit 2.0', which launched in our new Madrid club in September and which we'll roll out as quickly as possible."

"This new model is all about counselling members across seven key areas of health, with exercise prescriptions tailored to the individual with a view to improving their Happiness Score. Embedded in this approach are new families of programmes, one of which is Life Recovery – and this, as the name suggests, includes COVID recovery."

"All of this is complemented by high-quality educational materials that help members understand why they should do all of this – how exercise helps their immune function, for example. It helps people commit to change."



**Many COVID-19 patients are being discharged with no formal recovery plan. We believe this is likely to result in prolonged side-effects**

Dr Davina Deniszczyc

**Nuffield Health, UK**

**N**uffield Health has created a 12-week rehabilitation programme to support COVID-19 patients in their recovery.

Blending physical therapy – including exercise – with mental health support, the programme is being piloted in partnership with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, with the trust having referred all patients involved in the pilot.

Following an initial online triage, conducted by a specially trained Nuffield Health physiotherapist, the programme involves a recovery plan for every participant, as well as personalised advice from a rehab specialist.

The 12-week programme starts with six weeks of virtual, at-home exercise, followed by a further six weeks within a Nuffield Health fitness and wellbeing centre. Patients also receive access to on-demand workouts, weekly support calls and are part of a cohort of participants with whom to share their experiences.



Patients receive access to workouts

“We know that some patients who have contracted COVID-19 are going to need specialist support for their rehabilitation,” says Dr Davina Deniszczyc, charity and medical director at Nuffield Health.

“Evidence from previous epidemics, such as SARS and MERS, shows it can take years for some patients to recover. However, many COVID-19 patients are being discharged from hospital with no formal recovery plan. We believe this is likely to result in a longer recovery process and prolonged side-effects.

“Nuffield is in a unique position in the fitness sector to use its broad range of expertise across clinical, fitness and mental health to develop a programme to support the nation as it recovers from COVID-19.

“We’ll be capturing data throughout the pilot – specifically at weeks zero, six and 12 – to measure outcomes and evaluate the success of the programme. We’ll then use these learnings to build and develop a national programme, sharing the data with the NHS and other healthcare providers.”



The programme involves a recovery plan for each participant

The recovery groups have continued through lockdown with up to eight participants



## Support groups that have to be delivered in person can continue with up to 15 participants

Megan Potts

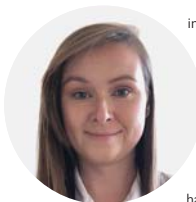
### Sport For Confidence, UK

Sport For Confidence – an organisation that places health professionals into leisure centres to support and deliver physical activity to anyone facing barriers to participation – has been successfully running COVID Recovery walking groups, even through lockdown.

“Support groups that have to be delivered in person – either formally organised to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support – can continue, with up to 15 participants allowed, provided they take place at a premises other than a private home,” explains Sport For Confidence occupational therapist and session leader Megan Potts.

“We have, however, chosen to reduce our numbers to eight per group, to make social distancing easier.”

The walking groups are taking place across Essex, with a total of five currently in operation. “The groups were launched to support marginalised



individuals recovering from the COVID-19 infection, or the wider effects of COVID-19, such as social isolation or deconditioning,” explains Potts. “Creating a regular opportunity to be active, while also enjoying the company of others, helps restore balance to people’s lives.”

Since September 2020, one group has further boosted engagement and motivation by adopting Street Tag, the gamified healthy lifestyle app that rewards participation.

“Street Tag adds interest to our walks, as groups can compete against other local teams,” says Potts. “It also rewards activity outside the walking group, which encourages individuals to be independently active.”

The walking group is part of the Prevention and Enablement Model (PEM), an initiative funded by Essex County Council Adult Social Care and Active Essex, to prevent the worsening of medical conditions and enable independence – in turn reducing the financial burden on local health and social care services.



Dr Colin Robertson  
is leading the  
CAWS programmes

## CAWS, UK

**F**ormulated in May 2020 by education company CAWS, Rebuild, Rebound and Fortitude are short courses that train people to deliver a range of interventions designed for a 'continuum of needs' from COVID-19 rehabilitation, to working with vulnerable individuals with chronic disease.

"The concepts and principles that a coach or trainer will learn through this process has significant real-life application and is a segue to managing all clients with chronic disease, either pre-existing or brought on by COVID-19," says CAWS MD, Mel Spooner.

Rebuild – which focuses on teaching trainers and coaches to rehabilitate individuals who previously contracted COVID-19, or who are suffering with Long COVID – has been gaining traction across the fitness sector.

Premier Global NASM provides access to Rebuild as part of its PT diplomas programme, with learners given access to the CAWS platform "to ensure graduates are ready and able to meet the new needs of the population," explains Premier MD, Dan Rees.

ukactive, EuropeActive, CIMSPA and EREPS are also all supporting the course. And although only live since November 2020, Rebuild is being used

## Our motivation was less a perceived opportunity and more a sense of obligation

Dr Colin  
Robertson

by a number of operators, from Places Leisure – with whom CAWS is working to develop healthy community pathways – to Village Hotels and 3d Leisure.

Programmes are led by CAWS education director, Dr Colin Robertson, an exercise physiologist and clinical researcher who specialises in managing disease through physical activity, exercise and nutrition. Robertson also works on cancer and diabetes interventions.

"Our motivation for creating Rebuild was less a perceived opportunity and more a sense of obligation," he explains. "We wanted to help the industry brace

and prepare for what could be seen coming over the horizon from the very outset of the crisis.

"A significant aspect of effective recovery from COVID-19 is managing the pace of rehabilitation and return to activity," says Spooner. "That's difficult for an individual to self-manage without understanding effective progress markers, exercise physiology and the pathology of COVID-19.

"The good news is that our sector is able to step in and handle this. As a profession, we have the club infrastructure and the workforce to deliver the complete rehabilitation of someone from COVID-19, following their acute phase and beyond.

## Life Leisure, UK

“Around July of last year, I was conscious that there were going to be a lot of people with post-COVID needs, so our exercise referral team began consulting with medical experts across Stockport – GPs, ICU doctors, respiratory consultants,” says Michelle Childs, health development manager at Life Leisure.

“The result was the creation of a COVID Recovery Pack – funded by Stockport Council as part of the Stockport Moving Together initiative – that was simple for instructors to deliver to patients, even in the case of a further lockdown.

Comprising a pedal exerciser, three levels of resistance band and some information on recovery, these packs were dropped off at the houses of those in need, with each recipient teamed up with a Life Leisure referral coach.

“Drawing on their experience of working with conditions such as COPD, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, as well as those recovering from heart attack, our coaches have been guiding people through exercise recommendations



## Helping people pace their recovery is an important part of what we do

Michelle Childs

either in-person in the park, or else via Zoom and WhatsApp,” says Childs.

“Since August last year, we’ve been working with 20 people – referred to us by ICU specialists, GPs and pulmonary physios – to help them along their very individual recovery paths. Rebuilding strength has been hugely important, as has the boost to mental wellbeing of making progress.

“Some people have relapsed, which is an important part of the learning; fatigue levels are sometimes too high for exercise to be the immediate answer.

“Helping people pace their recovery is an important part of what we do. Our role isn’t to get people running. It’s to help them day to day; being able to walk upstairs without becoming totally breathless, for example. You can’t do too much, too soon.”

## We aim to give teams the confidence to deal with those suffering from long COVID or the after-effects of COVID

Elaine Briggs

## Future Fit, UK

“In February 2020, we started working with GM Active on a skills academy for its entire workforce,” says Elaine Briggs, director of education at Future Fit. “Then along came COVID-19 and added another requirement to the mix; even just three days into the first lockdown, GM Active was already looking at what would be needed to upskill its staff to help those recovering from the virus.

“The clinical exercise R&D team at Future Fit, led by Anthony Crozier, got to work, in collaboration with the GM Active health promotion team, to develop a COVID-19 recovery programme that would prepare exercise professionals in this respect.



“The result is an educational programme – which we’ll continue to update as more studies come out in this area – which aims to give teams the confidence to deal with those suffering from Long COVID or the after-effects of COVID-19.”

The first unit of the course provides an introduction to COVID-19: its nature, effects and impact, prevalence and treatments.

The second focuses on rehab, including communication, recognising when it’s safe to exercise, monitoring breathlessness, behaviour change, exercise guidance and coping strategies. The third and final unit equips learners to apply their knowledge, covering health screening, exercise testing and prescription, fatigue management, and the services available for additional support if needed.

## For many people, the recovery period can be worse than the infection itself

Adam Hewitt

### TenClinical, UK

The clinical division of boutique fitness provider Ten Health and Fitness, TenClinical was set up in 2018 as a clinical exercise rehab facility.

With experience of supporting patients with cancer, cardiac conditions and diabetes, its in-house experts receive referrals from hospitals and clinical practices across London.

A recently launched Coronavirus Recovery programme has been designed for those still suffering the effects of the virus and the programme sets out to reduce the impact of Long COVID and help patients recover faster.

"For many people, the recovery period can be worse than the infection itself," says Adam Hewitt, Ten's head of clinical.

Long COVID symptoms and severity vary, but can include everything from diminished lung function,

heart problems and muscular and joint disorders to chronic fatigue. COVID-19 can also exacerbate underlying health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal and mental health conditions.

"There are many similarities between the symptoms of Long COVID and those experienced by patients with chronic lung conditions, COPD and chronic fatigue syndrome," explains Hewitt.

"Each Long COVID programme is designed around an individual client's symptoms, condition, health and exercise history. It's carefully prescribed, science-led and delivered and monitored on a one-to-one basis by qualified clinical exercise physiologists," he says.

Although the plan will vary significantly depending on the case, there are common elements that include an assessment of pulmonary, cardiovascular and muscular strength; a prescribed exercise plan, including resistance and aerobic exercise; continued management of respiratory and heart rate response to exercise; and frequent reassessments. ●










Adam Hewitt is head of clinical operations at Ten Health



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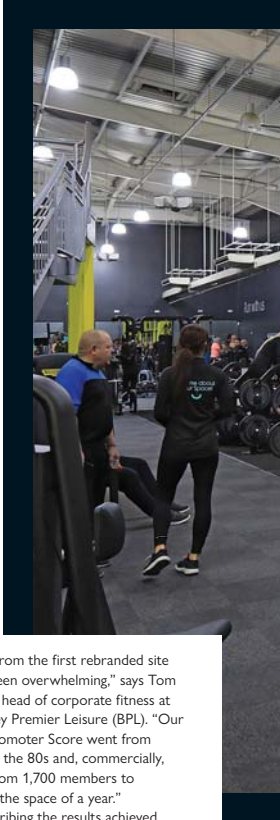
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# Tom Galvin

**Barnsley Premier Leisure has pushed on with a major rebrand, in spite of the pandemic. Tom Walker talks to its head of corporate fitness about the impact**



Tom Galvin says the introduction of the new 'Your Space' brand has transformed BPL's operations



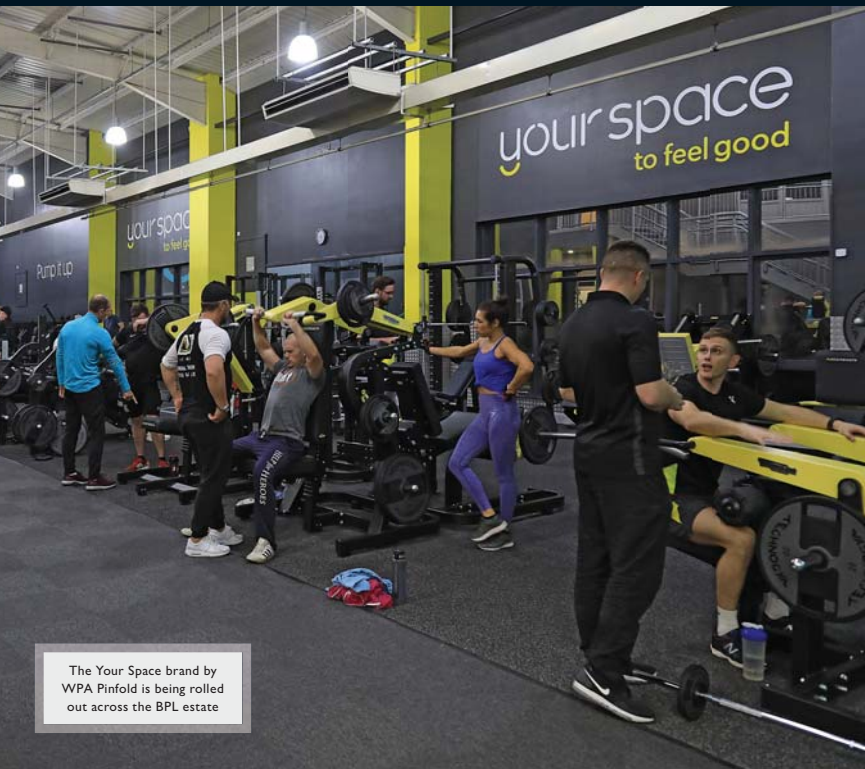
Results from the first rebranded site have been overwhelming," says Tom Galvin, head of corporate fitness at Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL). "Our Net Promoter Score went from 65 into the 80s and, commercially, the site went from 1,700 members to nearly 3,000 in the space of a year."

Galvin is describing the results achieved at Pontefract Leisure Centre, the first location to benefit from a rebranding exercise, which BPL embarked on in 2017.

The social enterprise, which operates 11 sites on behalf of local authorities, set out on the rebranding journey partly due to customer feedback, which suggested its 'Fitness Flex' brand was no longer hitting the spot. The early results it has achieved with its new brand – Your Space – have been transformational.

## Revitalise and reposition

Galvin says BPL began to sense in early 2017 that the Fitness Flex name didn't position its gym offer strongly enough in the market or portray BPL's core values around being a local operator. In addition, the brand image was generic and had connotations of being a bodybuilding gym.



The Your Space brand by WPA Pinfold is being rolled out across the BPL estate

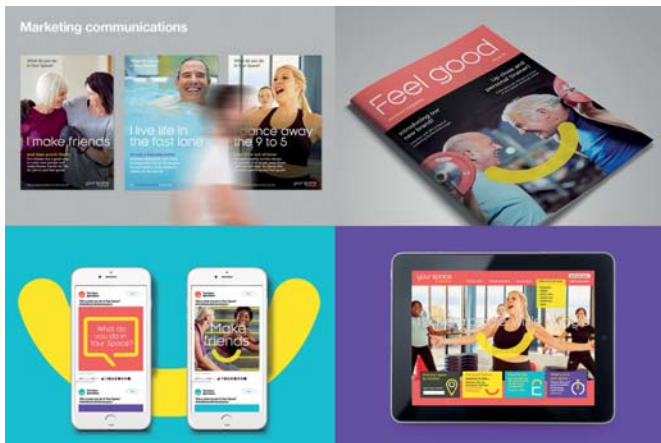
BPL decided revitalisation and repositioning was in order, with the plan being to move away from the value gym marketplace and focus on the trust's purpose – to enrich people's lives within their community, through fitness.

"Fitness Flex didn't resonate with our members in the local areas in which we operate," says Galvin. "And this was reflected in customer surveys."

The original brand had not really landed, says Galvin: "Our members are proud of their towns and instead of using Fitness Flex, people were still calling our sites by their 'old' names – such as Workshop Leisure Centre."

BPL brought in Leeds-based brand design agency WPA Pinfold, which took a holistic look at the brand and gym operations.

***We're actively looking at growth opportunities and feel confident we can parachute the Your Space brand into a new club or local authority contract and make a success of it***



"We defined the target audience and developed a new brand proposition and positioning," says creative director Richard Hurst. "We wanted to emphasise the focus on BPL's local communities, their members and their personal fitness goals, and their not-for-profit nature."

"From there, we created a 'big thought' at the centre of the brand, to guide creative thinking and give people a reason to believe in the brand's message. This thinking communicated the good that the not-for-profit operation does for the community, the good that it does for its

employees and, ultimately, the good that exercise and fitness does for your body and mind."

The brand guidelines have also helped reduce design time for BPL's internal studio, as they have clear templates and guidance. The guidelines have also delivered a clear scheme specification for future venue fit-outs, allowing BPL to procure and tender signage contracts, uniform and merchandise requirements. This has allowed them to get the best value on agreed specifications, quantities, and warranties.

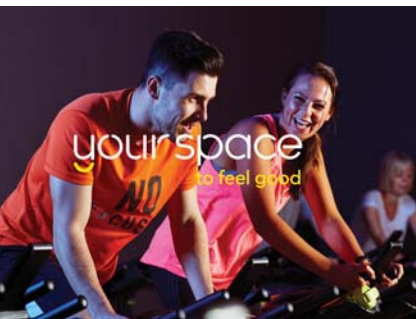
### Vibrant identity

The resulting Your Space brand has a more vibrant identity, designed to place members at the heart of the operation. The message is simple – making facilities "your space to do what you want, and your space to feel good".

The brand was unveiled in mid-2018 and BPL chose Fitness Flex in Pontefract to be the first to get a makeover. As well as a new brand identity, Pontefract was given a new gym floor layout, new equipment and a refreshed programme of classes.

"We went on-site at Pontefract in December 2018," says Galvin. "We held brand training days for the staff and replaced all the brand architecture to reflect the new name."

"Converting the site took 14 days – out of which the gym was closed for two, as





New Technogym equipment was installed as part of the rebrand and refurbishment

we wanted to have minimal impact on members. We communicated the process fully with customers, replaced posters with digital screens, launched gym challenges and came up with a rallying call of 'make someone feel good today,' says Galvin.

"The results were immediate," he says. "As well as a 30 per cent increase in members, the improvement in the value of the offer led to a boost in staff morale.

That isn't to say that everything went without teething problems, as Galvin explains: "Fitting a refurbishment into that timeframe will always bring complications.

"Also, there were some members of staff who didn't buy into the changes and didn't see the value in them. For us, that highlighted the members of the team who didn't see their future with us.

"On the flip side, once we revealed the new brand, all our other GMs wanted their site to be done! I'm not exaggerating when I say it created a bit of a frenzy."

In total, BPL invested around £140k to create the new-look Your Space Pontefract. In addition, more than £230k was spent on innovative, ultra-modern fitness equipment – which includes an extensive range of kit from equipment partner, Technogym, and a selection of IFI machines, tailored to support disabled members.



#### REBRANDING RESULTS

- Member usage up by 85% (target 50%)
- Attrition rate now sits at 3.2% (previously 4.5%)
- Secondary spend has seen a 55% increase
- Net Promoter Score since rebrand went from 58% to 82% (target was 69%)
- 100% increase in membership sales at Pontefract compared with previous year
- Annual sales target reached in first three months (net gain of 500 members for the first site)
- Increased employee engagement and understanding of core values
- Staff sickness has decreased from 3.8% to 1.6%
- Staff retention increased from 65% to c100%

***The results were immediate. As well as a 30% increase in members, the improvement in the value of the offer led to a boost in staff morale***


#### **Pandemic proportions**

Although the intention was all along to introduce the brand across the BPL estate, the success of Pontefract confirmed the project's importance and in 2019, detailed plans were laid to roll out the brand across the portfolio during 2020. But then the pandemic hit.

While COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns and closures have certainly had a huge effect on BPL, it has kept on-course with its rollout plans – even though it meant significant investment at a time when revenues are under unprecedented pressure.

"Once the pandemic hit, we decided to keep the original timeline we'd identified for sites to be refurbished," Galvin says. "Some sites received more investment than others and this was dictated by the level of return and yield predicted from each site."

"So far, we've refurbished and rebranded seven out of 10 of our sites. We'll finish the rest now we've got a better steer on reopening dates, which will enable us to forecast."



BPL has a strong community ethos, as a not-for-profit organisation



Your Space at Home was created by the BPL in-house team and launches in July 2020



## Digital assets

As well as ploughing on with its facility rollout plans, BPL utilised its new Your Space brand when launching a digital service during the pandemic.

Your Space at Home was launched in July 2020 and was designed entirely in-house – apart from a support help from a local website developer. The original purpose was to create a digital service which would both keep members engaged and introduce them to the new brand.

"During the lockdowns we've offered members the chance to use Your Space at Home for free, as we felt that if we could create some brand loyalty while we're shut, we'd reap the benefits in the medium- to long-term," Galvin reveals.

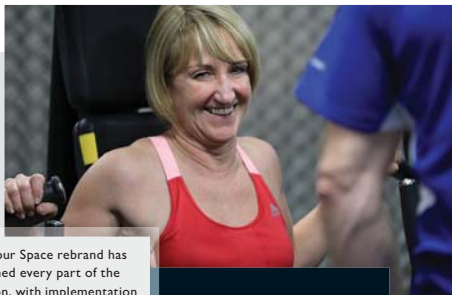
"During the three lockdowns, we've offered discounted codes for the two local authorities we work with (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Bassetlaw District Council), as well as other partners. In addition to the subsidised partnership approach, there's a commercial element – we actively market Your Space at Home to non-members too."

Your Space at Home offers a live streaming timetable of 30 live classes per week and has more than 80 hours of on-demand content. The selection of exercise options, presented by local instructors who have a personal touch, has proven hugely popular – Your Space at Home currently has 2,500 paying members.

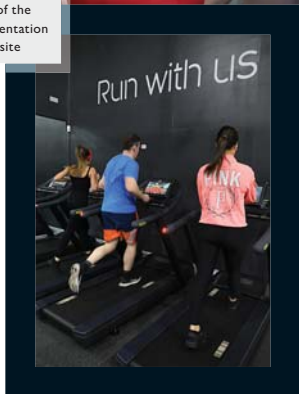
"The affinity the users have with our instructors resonates a lot better than if we'd use a generic platform – with instructors from the US or elsewhere," Galvin says. "A recent survey we sent out to 3,000 users of the system resulted in 250 returns and the average NPS score was 90."

Galvin adds that what started out as a way to introduce the brand to existing customers while facilities were shut, has now become a permanent fixture of BPL's offer. "Home working and at-home fitness is here to stay, so we feel this really has legs," he says, adding that plans are already underway to further develop the platform.

"We're looking at speaking to partners to create a legacy for this, working closely with Public Health England and the NHS to



The Your Space rebrand has touched every part of the operation, with implementation taking 14 days per site



potentially get into hard-to-reach communities," Galvin reveals. "We have already offered it for free to all NHS employees for 12 months.

"A customer survey also showed that the digital offer is something that our members want as part of their membership."

### Future plans

BPL is planning to complete the rebrand project across its entire estate by the end of 2021 and is aiming for the new identity to help it bounce back from the effects of the pandemic. Galvin says the brand – paired with the way it's utilised its digital platform to keep members engaged – will be crucial to the recovery.

"We've lost around 14 per cent of our members during lockdown, but we feel bullish that when consumer confidence begins to grow again these will return," he says.

He adds that the new 'hybrid model' will play a key role. "Embracing digital is something all operators need to do, or they risk being left behind."

"For us, there have been huge levels of improvement in the way we communicate with our members digitally. The perceived value of the brand – and us offering the digital platform for free for nearly six months – will help when it comes to reopening."

Galvin says that, as a result, BPL is hugely buoyant about not only its own prospects, but the sector's future as a whole. "We're firm believers that the future of fitness is going to be brighter than ever, once we're open and get back to business," he says.

"People have reassessed how much their own health means to them during this pandemic and the flexibility of a hybrid approach makes total sense for people's busy lifestyles."

That also means looking for further opportunities for the Your Space brand.

"We're now actively looking at growth opportunities," Galvin reveals. "We feel extremely confident to parachute this brand into a new club or local authority contract and make a success out of it." ●



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Collaboration with aggregators should be seen as just another strand of an operator's marketing solution, argues John Oxley



**We need to move away from emotional decision-making and start looking at evidence-based arguments – John Oxley**

# THE EVOLUTION OF AGGREGATORS

*The aggregator market is developing, diversifying and changing in response to market demand. We talk to suppliers and operators about their collaborations*

**T**he world is changing and the fitness industry must evolve to understand and meet the needs of consumers. Behaviour is altering; customers want more choice, expect more control and don't necessarily have the same degree of brand loyalty.

"A proportion of people want to exercise but don't want to belong to a single facility, so as operators, we've got to find a way of working collaboratively with aggregators," says industry stalwart, John Oxley, who worked with MoveGB, Incorpore and Huddle during his time at Active Nation and Places Leisure.

"Some operators view aggregators as a threat – they're concerned about a possible impact on margin and yield. While this may be true in some cases, it's important operators calculate the cost per acquisition of new customers through

existing channels, including the cost of discounts – which can be significant – and compare this to what can be achieved through aggregators. We need to move away from emotional decision-making and start looking at evidence-based arguments.

"Ultimately aggregators have the same objective as us all – they want more people in every community to be more active. They've also invested substantially in digital platforms to ensure customers can find them, something operators have traditionally found difficult to do on their own.

"It's taken us 30 years to appeal to just 15 per cent of the population, so embracing change and working together seems a sensible way to grow the market," says Oxley. "Collaboration with aggregators should be seen as just another strand of an operator's marketing or lead-generation solution."

## CASE STUDY ONE

*We represent 1,700 corporate clients, reaching six million employees and generating 300k gym memberships a year*

## THE SUPPLIER

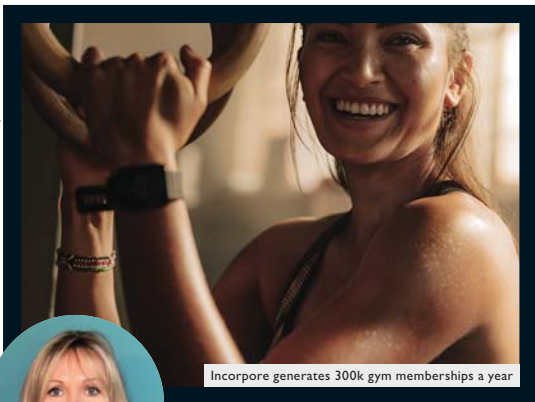
**Emma Vivo**  
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Incorpore generates 300k gym memberships a year



employees and clubs can maximise seasonal offers and promotions.

The biggest recent change for us is the alignment of health and wellbeing with fitness. When gym memberships were the front runner, 20 per cent take up was considered good. But evidence from wellbeing programmes enable employees to make more informed health decisions than the age old adage, 'exercise is good for you'. So we've created products under four pillars of wellbeing – personal fitness, physical health, mental wellbeing and active lifestyle, which see a 70-80 per cent engagement.

While we're now a wellness network, these pillars deliver more leads for our gyms than they have previously.

*Medicash recognises employees are more likely to work out regularly in the club they feel most comfortable at*



## THE OPERATOR

**James Dent**  
**David Lloyd Clubs**

Medicash has been using Incorpore for more than 10 years and has 140,000 employees with access to its network. Despite the impact of Coronavirus, we've recently received leads into 57 of our clubs from them.

Understandably, Medicash wants to make sure employees can choose the right gym for

them, based on location and price point, as they recognise employees are more likely to work out regularly in the club they feel most comfortable at.

The geographical solution David Lloyd clubs offer is complemented by Incorpore's great work in providing centralised messaging for Medicash. It's about working together to help as many people as possible achieve their fitness goals.



## CASE STUDY TWO

*We've helped more than 5,000 studios connect with our membership base around the world through their digital offerings*

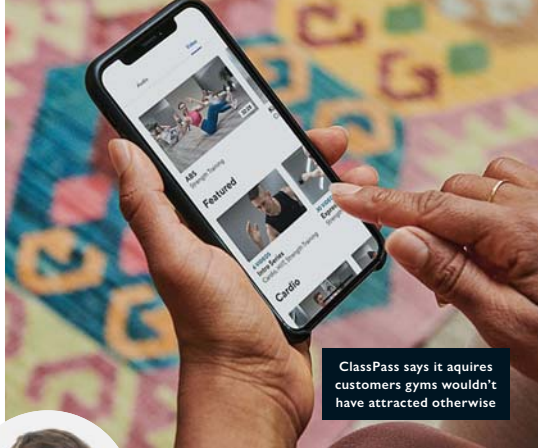
### THE SUPPLIER

**Zach Apter**

#### ClassPass

ClassPass has expanded the addressable market for studio fitness since its inception in 2013. We've acquired millions of customers over that time and more than 50 per cent self-identify as having never attended a studio fitness class prior to joining ClassPass.

Our value proposition to our partners is we help them sell inventory they wouldn't have otherwise sold, to customers they otherwise wouldn't have attracted, while completely protecting their direct business.



ClassPass says it acquires customers gyms wouldn't have attracted otherwise

Since the pandemic started, we've helped more than 5,000 studio partners connect with our membership base around the world through their digital offerings. We also waived our commission for five months, given the extremely difficult circumstances.

As we look to the light at the end of the tunnel, we're focused on the comeback story for our industry, including getting members re-energised to get back to classes and having revenue flowing to our partners again.

*For most studio owners it makes sense to work collaboratively with aggregators*

### THE OPERATOR

**Ed Stanbury**  
**BLOK**

Our relationship with aggregators has definitely changed over the years. When we started out we saw them as dangerous, a threat to our business. As time passed we realised that, if managed correctly, there can be useful synergies.

We now partner with ClassPass and have developed a great relationship, working with them digitally and across all our sites.

For me, the key is to have a strong underlying business that

attracts its own solid customer base. If you have that, opening up spots on ClassPass allows you to fill empty spaces. This incremental revenue can make a real difference to the profitability of a site, particularly in the early years before it reaches full maturity. Additionally, it can be useful for giving a new site a buzz in those early days while you build your customer base.

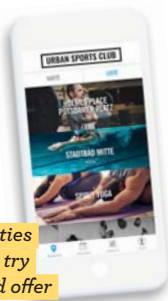
I definitely see it as a positive relationship; for most studio owners it makes sense to work collaboratively with aggregators.





## CASE STUDY THREE

*Digitalisation presents opportunities for studios to launch new courses, try new software and test out a hybrid offer*



## THE SUPPLIER

**Benjamin Roth**  
**Urban Sports Club**

Our platform was founded in 2012 to help corporate and private customers discover activities and live healthy, active lives.

We connect customers with more than 50 types of activity through 10,000+ partner locations across six European countries, enabling our partners to tap into new target groups not otherwise accessible to them, such as corporate clients, commuters or multi-sporters.

When our partners in Europe were put into lockdown in mid-March 2020, we set up a new online offer within two weeks. By introducing live online courses we were able to offer our partners

an alternative platform and a lockdown source of income.

Digitalisation presents opportunities for studios to launch new courses, try new software and test out a hybrid offer. Our co-operations are based on success, which means we pay out member visits without monthly fees.

Our goal is a win-win situation and a long-term partnership – we want to help studios increase visibility, find new customers and fill courses that aren't otherwise heavily attended.

As part of this vision for a strong European network, we've distributed a solidarity fund of €1.4 million since lockdown began; this involves keeping 20 per cent of our income and allocating the other 80 per cent to our partners.

*The collaboration has revitalised our gym and filled it with nice people, whom we treat like our own*

## THE OPERATOR

**Danijel Kupceric**  
**Kader 1, Cologne**

Our cooperation with Urban Sports Club has been very enriching. In the beginning we were sceptical – we didn't know if Urban Sports Club members would fit with us, our approach and our own members. But our concerns quickly dissipated; the collaboration is a perfect fit and has not only revitalised our gym, but also filled it with nice people, whom we treat like our own.

An important factor in our success has been the positive collaboration with the Urban Sports Club team, who understand our spirit, react quickly to requests and have contributed good ideas. Their words are always followed by actions, a quality rarely seen in the market, and we can feel that our success is close to their hearts.





#### CASE STUDY FOUR

*We've launched a Member Conversion Service, which proactively encourages users to directly join clubs*

##### THE SUPPLIER

**Jamie Owens**  
**Hussle**

Hussle was formed in 2009 based on two key principles; increasing participation in physical activity and generating revenue for operators.

We target three groups, all of which don't currently engage with traditional memberships: customers requiring multi-venue workouts that no single operator can provide and typically using at least two facilities around six times a month; occasional users who may also exercise outdoors or use digital platforms, but still represent a valuable share of a club's wallet and; 'try-before-they-buy' customers.

In the last 18 months we've turned more than 30,000 of these into direct club members. Data for this period also shows we've brought 66,000 disengaged ex-members back and 14,000 brand new customers to gyms.

Hussle attracts consumers through partnerships with big brand names such as Vodafone and Premier Inn, as well as via employer staff benefit schemes with companies including Facebook, CBRE and Decathlon.

We believe operators should maintain leverage over their marketing partners and never ask for exclusivity. To give our partner operators further confidence, we've launched a Member Conversion Service (MCS), which proactively encourages users to directly join clubs they're attending regularly.



*Working in partnership ensures us hassle-free income with no upfront costs*

##### THE OPERATOR

**Dan Glue**  
**3d Leisure**

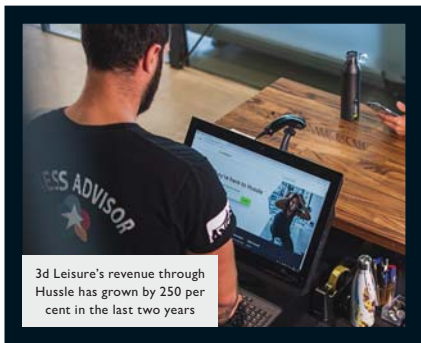
3d Leisure began working with Hussle 10 years ago to bring in additional revenue and membership leads at no extra cost.

The Hussle team assists us in setting up each new site and optimises our exposure on their platform, to ensure we get good market share of their clients. They've created a bespoke report so that, month-on-month, we have insight into the overall performance of our partnership. In the past two years our revenue through Hussle has grown by 250

per cent. An average club takes £6,000 more income through day pass users and we take another £10,000 per annum in Hussle-generated memberships.

Organically five per cent of Hussle day and monthly pass users convert to a club membership, so we're excited to see how the new MCS model – which will work to proactively drive member sales – will boost this further, post-lockdown.

What's crucial for us is Hussle doesn't tie us into an exclusive partnership. Working in partnership with them ensures us hassle-free income with no upfront costs.



3d Leisure's revenue through Hussle has grown by 250 per cent in the last two years

## CASE STUDY FIVE

*Customers using our technology are twice as active and stay active for twice as long as customers who use single venue options*

## THE SUPPLIER

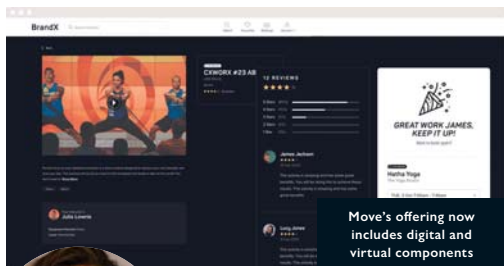
**Sheyde Bolton**

**Move**

Aggregation has always been about using technology to keep people active.

We knew from our own research that the convenience and variety inherent in our technology meant customers not only become more active, but stayed active for longer.

To find out more, we partnered with DataHub and ukactive this time last year to create the *ukactive Research Institute Member Choice Report*. This showed customers using Move's technology are twice as active and stay active for twice as long as customers who use single venue options.



Move's offering now includes digital and virtual components



Over the last two years, our offering has developed to include digital and virtual components; a trend the pandemic has accelerated. We now license and white-label the tech we've spent 10 years developing, for operators who need digital-virtual products with built-in mechanics that drive engagement and retention.

By integrating their platforms with Move, our partners can remotely re-engage members frozen out by COVID-19 and drive revenues by attracting new customers from all over the world. It's been a lifeline for our partners during the pandemic and also equips them for the hybrid future.

*It was especially important to take rapid action when the pandemic struck and closures were enforced*

## THE OPERATOR

**Mark Storie**

**Astley Sports Village**

Astley Sports Village worked with Move, Gladstone and Myzone to set up and deliver online classes during the lockdowns.

Our membership base is a highly active one: it boasts about 900 members, of which a significant number are Myzone users, so it was especially important to take rapid action when the pandemic struck and closures were enforced.

We've made 30 online classes available every week to livestream through Gladstone's MoveAnywhere platform (powered by Move), integrated with Myzone's MZ-Remote screen.

The integrated platform has been a lifesaver for our business during the pandemic – members have stayed active, loved the classes and it's kept additional revenues coming in.

**The results**

- More than 20 per cent of our membership base is engaged
- Over 200 new digital member sign-ups happened in the first six weeks
- We've had 1000+ attendances to date
- We logged three attendances per customer during the week commencing 9th Nov 2020 – a higher frequency attendance than in-club.



Gympass has a network of 2,200 partners in the UK



## CASE STUDY SIX

*Wellness apps were introduced last year – brought forward as a result of the pandemic*

### THE SUPPLIER

**Eamon Lloyd**

#### Gympass

Gympass is active in 12 countries including the UK, US, Spain and Brazil. Working with some of the UK's largest employers, including Tesco, Santander and Bupa, we offer partners' employees access to gyms and studios, live-stream classes, virtual personal training and wellness partner apps through one platform.

Our UK network of 2,200 partners includes Anytime Fitness, Everyone Active, Bannatyne,



Barry's, Frame and Rowbots and our collection of 30 wellness apps includes Calm, Yogaia and Syntuition.

Wellness apps were introduced last year – brought forward as a result of the pandemic – to support our users and fitness partners and allow operators to take bookings and stream sessions through the live classes module, as well as book virtual one-to-one PT, yoga, Pilates and wellness coaching appointments.

This 360-degree wellness solution provided an essential revenue stream for operators while gyms were closed or restricted.

Ultimately, employers are looking for more than just fitness from their corporate wellness partner and by delivering this, our results drive the best return for our fitness partners too.

## *We're seeing our clubs engage traditionally hard-to-reach corporate employees*

### THE OPERATOR

**Gabriella Macis**

#### Anytime Fitness

Since partnering with Gympass in 2020, we've been helping employees across the UK to get active through our network of over 170 clubs.

With people's working habits dramatically changing in the past year, our strong geographical spread has provided accessible training opportunities for a wide range of employees and we're seeing our clubs engage traditionally hard-to-reach corporate employees.

Anytime Fitness clubs pride themselves on their community feel. The Gympass partnership has attracted repeat visitors to clubs and established brand loyalty. Such is the extent of their positive experience that many Gympass users are referring friends to join Anytime Fitness.

With all Anytime Fitness clubs individually owned, the partnership has provided ancillary revenue opportunities for franchisees, as well as new member leads throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



## CASE STUDY SEVEN

*Aggregators are simply marketing channels: different ways to reach and engage customers*



## THE SUPPLIER

## Nishal Desai

## imin

The sector should stop using the blanket term 'aggregator'; it provides little value in decision making. Aggregators are simply marketing channels: different ways to reach and engage customers. Activity providers must evaluate each marketing channel on its own merit and not all will suit everyone.

What isn't immediately obvious in the aggregator space is the number and variety of marketing channels now available. This is due in part to the success of the sector's open data initiative – OpenActive – and our work on everything

from EMD's Classfinder to Decathlon's PLAY brand and initiatives such as Westminster City Council's ActiveWestminster platform.

Marketing channels range from these free-to-use examples, through to fee- or commission-based models. The imin platform helps activity providers navigate these options and connect their activities and offers to those that best complement their offering.

No longer is it simply a case of deciding whether or not to work with the 'big aggregators'. Through imin, operators can strengthen leisure contracts by directly supporting local authority initiatives and diversify their marketing reach by connecting with audiences from sports brands or startups to NGBs and beyond.

*This is potentially a blueprint for how local authorities could work with partners to increase access to physical activity*

## THE OPERATOR

## Eugene Minogue

## Westminster City Council

ActiveWestminster is a 'one-stop-shop' for residents to find local physical activity opportunities – a website and app where customers can find and book any activity, from leisure centre-delivered group exercise to community walking groups. It's one example of the many projects made possible by OpenActive.



ActiveWestminster's search and booking functionality is powered by the imin platform, which connects with the booking systems of local activity providers, including the council's leisure operator, Everyone Active, and outdoor provider Our Parks, to deliver live, up-to-date information about available opportunities.

This is potentially a blueprint for how local authorities could work with partners to deliver digital services and increase access to physical activity for residents. ●



# Gympass

Tap into the  
**80% of workers**  
who don't yet  
belong to a gym.



Get in touch with our team: [join@gympass.com](mailto:join@gympass.com)



# Gympass

## The 360 wellbeing platform

***Gympass has been busy innovating and forging powerful partnerships. We find out more***

In April 2020, corporate wellbeing platform, Gympass, launched a number of wellbeing resources including partnerships with mental health, nutrition, and financial wellness apps.

These wellbeing resources significantly enhanced the already stellar Gympass offering by giving access to a market-leading collection of wellbeing apps alongside its diverse choice of 'bricks and mortar' fitness facilities.

Carefully curated, Gympass brings together some of the largest fitness and wellbeing app brands, all housed in one place for the very first time.

Designed to nurture all-round healthy habits, Gympass now includes mental health apps, tailored nutrition plans, meditation and relaxation programmes alongside a diverse range of on-demand workouts.



**By combining relaxation, mindfulness, financial wellbeing and nutrition programmes with fitness options, we're delivering a true 360-degree wellbeing solution**

*Rodrigo Silveira,  
SVP new ventures, Gympass*

### **A solution for everyone**

The platform offers unrivalled access to over 30 different wellbeing apps equating to 13,000 on-demand classes, 2,000 hours of meditation, access to 1,000 healthy recipes and weekly 1:1 therapy sessions, so users can always find a wellbeing service to suit their needs, on any given day.

The product supports the trend that consumers are leaning toward omnichannel fitness experiences, where they can access variety in their wellbeing programmes, dipping in and out of different services and experiencing the very best on offer from multiple brands.

Rodrigo Silveira, SVP new ventures at Gympass said: "Bringing this diverse array of apps together on the Gympass platform is critical as we seek to make wellbeing universal. Our partners are what makes the platform truly special and we're

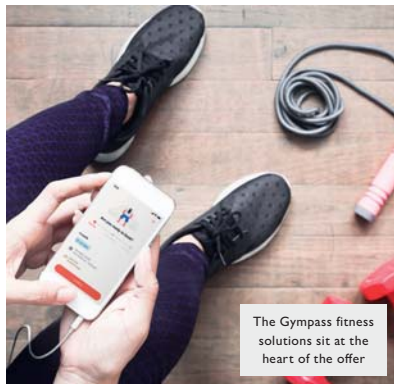
delighted to be working with such a great range. By combining relaxation, mindfulness, financial wellbeing and nutrition programmes with fitness options, we're delivering a true 360-degree wellbeing solution.

### **Fitness for all levels**

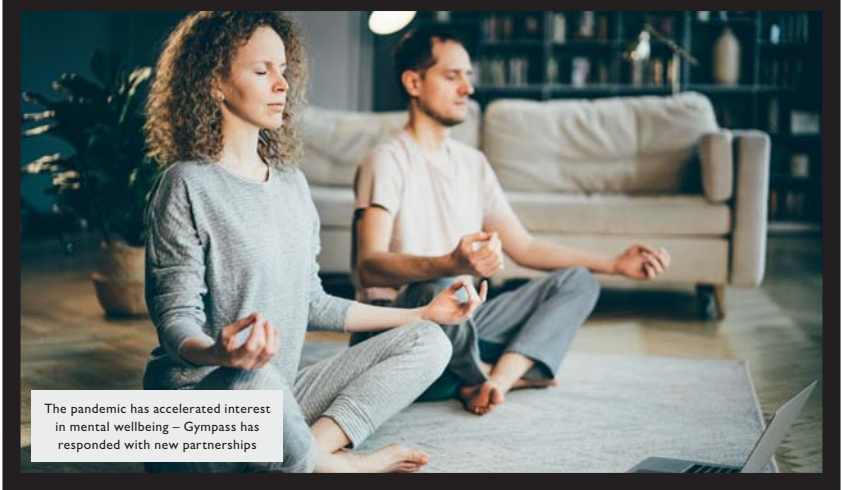
Gympass' partner apps are laid out by category with several leading fitness apps making up the 'Body' section. Neou, JetSweat and SworKit offer a host of on-demand sessions, while those wanting to explore martial arts-inspired workouts can assess Tapout Fitness.

For users looking for extra support and programming FizzUp and WKT offer fantastic workout plans with over 1,000 exercise combinations curated by personal trainers.

It's not all about intense workouts on Gympass Wellness. For yoga fans there's Yogaia - the only yoga app in the world that offers live and interactive



The Gympass fitness solutions sit at the heart of the offer

A man and a woman are sitting cross-legged on a light-colored rug in a living room, meditating. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and grey pants, with her eyes closed and hands in a mudra. The man is behind her, also in a similar pose, wearing a white t-shirt and grey pants. A laptop is open on the rug to the right. In the background, there is a light-colored sofa and a bookshelf.

The pandemic has accelerated interest in mental wellbeing – Gympass has responded with new partnerships

classes for all levels of yoga – a feature that's particularly relevant amid COVID-19 lockdown.

For users taking their very first steps on their fitness journey there's EXi which uses a special algorithm to analyse each user's health and current fitness level. It prescribes a personalised physical activity plan to help everyone get active regardless of their age or fitness level and takes into consideration up to 23 different chronic diseases (including Long Covid) to create a tailored exercise programme.

### More than fitness

Aside from fitness, Gympass offers a range of wellness apps with categories including: 'mind', 'health and nutrition', 'healthy habits' and 'financial health', enabling users to take a holistic 360-degree approach to their health and wellbeing.

In the mind section, apps include Calm and Synctuition, allowing users to not only concentrate on their physical health but to also look after their mental wellbeing.

Gympass users can let Calm guide them to sleep better, stress less and build resilience for a happier, healthier life. They can also enjoy Sleep Stories (bedtime stories for adults) narrated by many well-known voices including Harry Styles, Matthew McConaughey and Kelly Rowland.

Meanwhile, the Synctuition app, dubbed 'the world's first MindSpa' offers deep relaxation, stress-relief, better sleep, and many other benefits to support balanced mental health and wellbeing. The programme offers carefully constructed sound meditations — audio journeys that contain three-dimensional nature sounds, ASMR sounds, binaural beats and personalised voice frequencies.

2020 was a challenge not only to physical, but also

mental health. Both Gympass and Synctuition believe that, by joining forces, a positive difference can be made. Michael Burich, the co-founder of Synctuition, sees this as an unprecedented opportunity to extend a helping hand in the midst of adversity.

"We're delighted to be able to offer millions more people around the world access to our platform. As we tackle the global COVID-19 pandemic together we believe it is our responsibility to help alleviate the stress people are under. Just one Synctuition mindfulness journey a day can help users to decrease the negative effects of stress and improve self-esteem."

### One-to-one Guidance

Gympass users requiring a more personal level of support can access one-to-one counselling and therapy appointments through partners such as iFeel and Healing Clouds.

Through the health and nutrition section, people can access apps such as Nootric and Meal Prep Pro to support them. They can also find apps such as Kwit and Mindcotine to help them quit smoking in the healthy habits section. Both apps are routed in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, designed to help people quit smoking for good. Mindcotine also has a premium version with VR display to help users immerse themselves in real life situations to gain control over cravings.

Finally, importantly, Gympass offers people support to overcome any financial burdens and worries by partnering with two leading financial health support apps Mobills and Bippit. ●

**More: [Gympass.com](#)**

*While the pandemic has been disruptive, we see this period also as an opportunity*



# Morten Hellevang



*Norwegian gym chain EVO Fitness has created a strong set of operating policies for dealing with the business challenges of the pandemic, as its CEO explains to Tom Walker*

“We were given just two hours to close down our businesses,” says Morten Hellevang, describing the day in 2020, when the Norwegian government placed the country in COVID-19 lockdown. “A very long three months later, the fitness sector was the last industry to reopen,” he says, suggesting the lockdown provided gym operators with plenty of time to plan their return to business.

What Hellevang and his team did during lockdown has seen the company weather the COVID-19 storm well across all its trading markets – Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

“When we were forced to close, we quickly concluded that – as a nationwide chain – we wouldn’t get a lot of sympathy from our members,” says Hellevang. “Therefore, we decided that during the period of closure we wouldn’t charge customers anything – that we would carry the loss entirely.

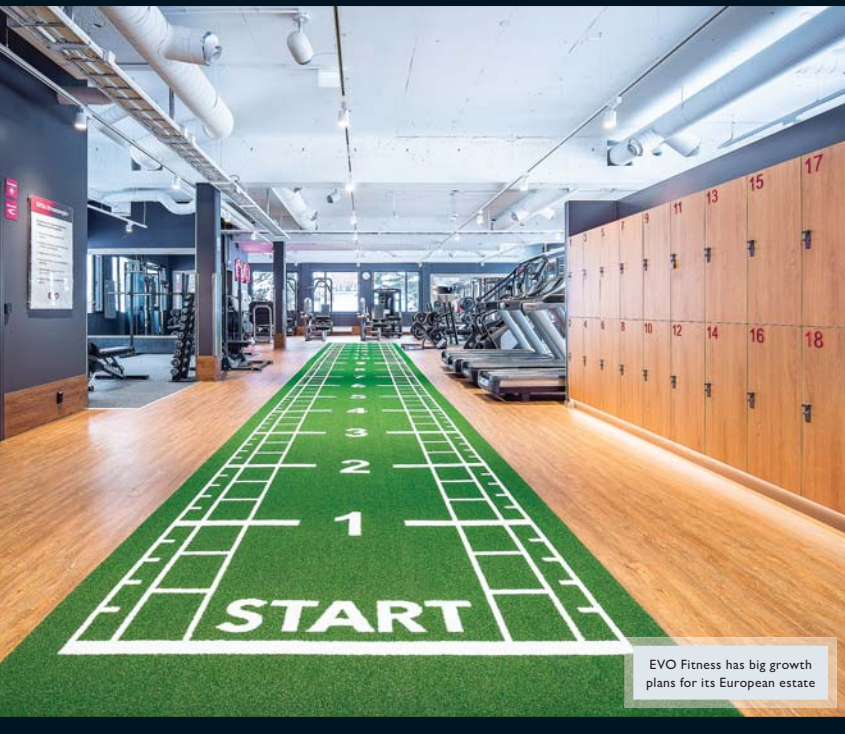
## COVID-19 LOSSES

“It was a decision that ended up costing us NOK40m (US\$4.3m, €3.8m, £3.4m) in revenue during the three months we were closed – a significant loss for us.

“However, it was a strategic decision. We identified that the most important thing for us was to have as many members as possible when we were allowed to reopen.

“Instead of trying to keep a little money coming in from members – or charging and converting them to some form of digital memberships – we decided to take the loss and keep members happy.”

The decision to not charge for memberships was accompanied by a drive to keep the membership – and the wider Norwegian public – engaged with the brand throughout lockdown. “We furloughed most of our staff, but kept on some



EVO Fitness has big growth plans for its European estate

of the roles we considered central," Hellevang says, adding that among those roles were marketing ones. "We felt marketing would be a key factor in the process to plan for reopening."

"Our strategy was to be very active across social media, pushing the message that 'we're still here'."

"That was supported by offering everyone, not just members, free exercise programmes."

"We also used the lockdown to refurbish and expand a couple of our clubs – so we promoted the gym development work we were doing on social media."

While activating itself on social media to keep the brand in people's minds, one thing EVO didn't do was spend a lot of time communicating directly with members. This too, was a strategic decision.

"We were very active on Facebook, Instagram and other platforms – but only sent our

members one direct email or text message during the entire period," Hellevang reveals.

"And that was to tell them, at the beginning of lockdown, that we were freezing memberships."

"The reason for this was that every time we sent an email out, we would lose a couple of hundred members. I think it's because when you send out a direct message, you're reminding people of something they are paying for – and something they might want to cut."

"When you speak to customer service or marketing people they normally say it's important to communicate with your members directly – especially during a period like we've just had," Hellevang explains.

"Well, we decided not to do that, because there is a real cost for doing it – and that cost should not be underestimated."

### SUCCESSFUL APPROACH

Keeping its marketing department operational throughout lockdown also helped EVO map out its plans and be 'reopen-ready'.

"At the point of reopening, we had all our 'return to gym' campaigns ready to go," Hellevang says. "Advertising space was booked and social media was all set – all we had to do was push the button and everything began rolling."

Hellevang says this allowed the company to bounce back quicker than many other operators.

"Thanks to our approach, we had a couple of tremendously good weeks – in terms of sales – after reopening," he says.

"Overall, across the Norwegian fitness market, the average loss of members due to lockdown has been around 13 per cent. For us, the figure is roughly 7 per cent.

"So while we too have lost members – according to the figures we have – we've lost less than most of the other operators. So I think the lockdown strategy we chose to follow has been very successful."

"Visits to gyms across our estate are now (at the time of the interview, three weeks after reopening) at 70 per cent of the number of visits compared to last year, which is a great start.

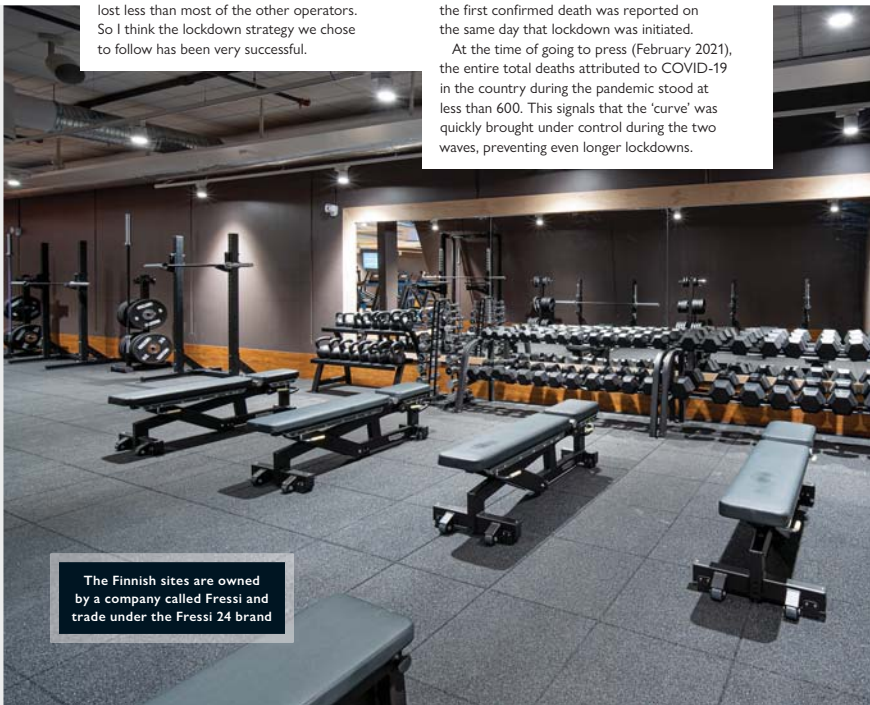
"What's more, while I can't give out the exact numbers, I can say that we're currently at an all-time high in terms of our membership base – so we didn't just get back the 7 per cent we lost during the three months, we've already managed to bring in more than that."

### GOVERNMENT HELP

While EVO's individual strategy for dealing with the lockdown has been at the heart of its successful reopening, Hellevang also credits the central government's handling of the crisis.

Norway was among the first countries to lock down businesses and it did so long before the cases of confirmed coronavirus infections had reached alarming levels. In fact, the first confirmed death was reported on the same day that lockdown was initiated.

At the time of going to press (February 2021), the entire total deaths attributed to COVID-19 in the country during the pandemic stood at less than 600. This signals that the 'curve' was quickly brought under control during the two waves, preventing even longer lockdowns.



The Finnish sites are owned by a company called Fressi and trade under the Fressi 24 brand





Businesses in Norway were well-compensated by the government for losses incurred due to closures



*We're planning five to six openings a year, but we could easily double that if we are able to find the locations. In the longer term, I think we could easily have 70 EVO clubs in Norway*

As well as commending the government for saving lives, Hellevang praises the economic measures it introduced to help businesses.

"If you were among the businesses forced to close, you got a good subsidy from the government for the entire period that you had to keep your doors shut," Hellevang says.

"The compensation was calculated and based on the revenue shortfall you experienced. So, if you had a 90 per cent shortfall, you would get 90 per cent of your unavoidable fixed costs paid by the government. 'Unavoidable fixed costs' is obviously not a recognised financial term, so there were some initial debates over what actually would be covered, but in the end, it turned out to be a very good solution and it was put in place very quickly.

"There's no doubt that this government intervention saved the businesses of fitness operators in Norway. So I think that was a very generous solution that they came up with."

#### UNUSUAL WORKFORCE

Business is now returning to normal and EVO has brought back all its employees. And speaking of workforces, EVO's is a rather unusual one.

For a chain that has a presence in five countries, the company has a remarkably small HQ team – just 13 employees. Adding to that, it has no frontline fitness staff working the gym floor.

The EVO clubs are open from 5.00am to midnight each day and are, in theory, unmanned. Rather than have regular staff and gym managers, EVO manages the gyms using its own, bespoke IT system called Credlock. The system enables automated membership contract and payment management, as well as the control of club access.

Each gym will always have people wearing EVO uniforms, however. Across its Norwegian portfolio alone, 180 personal trainers work the gym floor every day. "When you go into an EVO club, you wouldn't know that the people there

aren't employees," Hellevang says. "The way we've set it up is that we have a consultancy agreement with the PTs. They pay a small amount of rent every month for getting access to the clubs and our members. In return, we set their price-level based on their education and experience.

"While they can't set their own price, they do get to keep 100 per cent of what they make.

"They also do a lot of things for us – including inductions. For example, we offer a 14-day free trial, which includes one free PT session, so they give that for free. While they don't clean the clubs – that is done by a professional company – they do help us maintain the gym floor and equipment.

"We also schedule their presence to ensure we have people in the clubs between 9am and 9pm every day. We're very flexible with the PTs too – they are free to work at other gyms if they want.

"It's proven to be an extremely attractive model, partly because the PTs get to keep everything, instead of giving away 30-40 per cent of their turnover."

The flexible, non-staff model is another element which helped EVO get its clubs ready to open, once the government signalled the green light for gyms to emerge from lockdown.

"We opened every club at the same time and with full opening hours," Hellevang says. "On

the day we were allowed to reopen, we threw open our doors at 5.00am until midnight – and have done since, every day of the week."

"We've adopted all the new COVID-19 measures, such as routines for cleaning and disinfection. The social distancing rules are that, for intensive training (such as cardio work and indoor cycling), members need to keep two metres apart. For less intensive workouts – such as strength training – they need to keep a distance of one metre. The PTs are helping with the implementation of it all. They had been out of business for three months so they were very eager to return!"

## INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

As well as its 44 locations in Norway, EVO Fitness has 26 franchised gyms in Finland. The Finnish sites are owned by health club operator Fressi, which also owns and operates 16 full-service clubs in the country.

The Finnish EVO gyms, while operating exactly like their counterparts in Norway – including the centralised Credlock system – are branded as a Fressi sub-brand, called Fressi 24.

For the rest of Europe, EVO has signed a licensing agreement with Holmes Place, which has resulted in the EVO brand being rolled out across German-speaking countries.



EVO Fitness has 44 clubs in Norway, with plans to expand to up to 70

### EVO FITNESS

Founded: 2009

Turnover: NOK140m

CEO: Morten Hellevang

Ownership: Wholly-owned by private company Fitness Group Nordic AS (FGN). FGN's largest shareholder (with 32%) is Torkap AS, the family office of the Bertel O Steen group, a major industrial company in Norway. The rest is held by private owners and the current management (10%)

Number of clubs:

Norway = 44

(five more to open during 2021)

Finland = 26

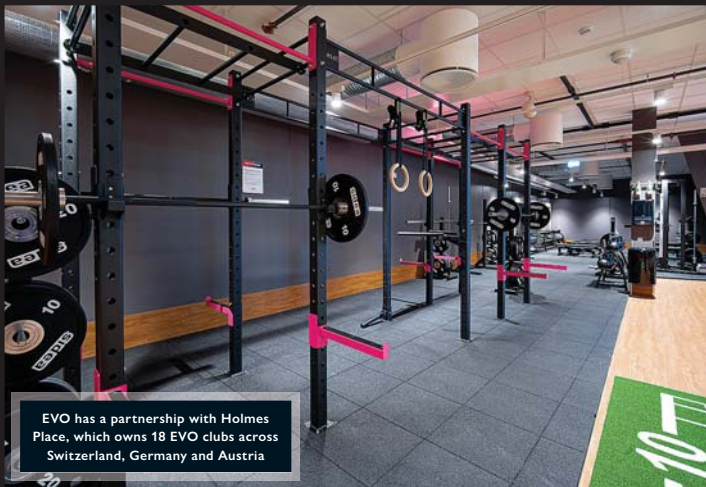
Switzerland = 11

Germany = 6

Austria = 2



*We still have capital to expand – partly thanks to the government's COVID-19 support, as it meant we didn't lose too much cash*



EVO has a partnership with Holmes Place, which owns 18 EVO clubs across Switzerland, Germany and Austria

There are currently 11 EVO sites in Switzerland, six in Germany and two in Austria and the agreement has allowed Holmes Place to build on the existing EVO model with its "own vision and philosophy" for the clubs.

"It's not a clear-cut franchise arrangement with Holmes Place, it's more of a cooperation," says Hellevang. "They have developed the EVO concept to be slightly different from what we have in Norway. It's still called EVO, but they have a slightly different logo and slightly different colour schedule. So unlike with Fressi 24, Holmes Place isn't positioning its EVO offer as a sub-brand, but rather as a standalone business."

#### **FUTURE PLANS**

EVO is looking to expand its foothold in the Norwegian health and fitness market with a strong development plan. There are still significant growth opportunities, as Norway's

market penetration for gyms currently hovers well below the 20 per cent mark.

"We opened four clubs in 2020 and have five signed for opening in 2021," Hellevang reveals.

"We intend to follow our new opening schedule – agreed before lockdown.

"While the pandemic has been disruptive, we see this period also as an opportunity, as the retail sector is struggling, so we will be able to gain access to better locations than we had a year ago.

"We still have capital to expand – partly thanks to the government's COVID-19 support, as it meant we didn't lose too much cash.

"The pre-sales for our 2020 openings were pretty good too, so the market is still there. People still want to train at gyms.

"We're planning five to six openings a year, but we could easily double that if we are able to find the locations. In the longer term, I think we could easily have 70 EVO clubs in Norway." ●

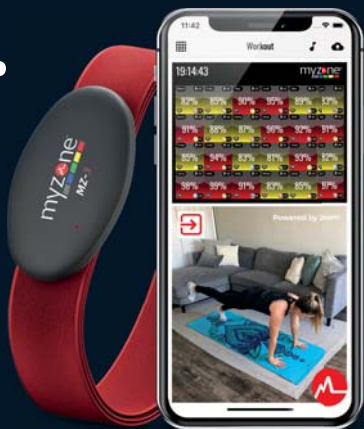
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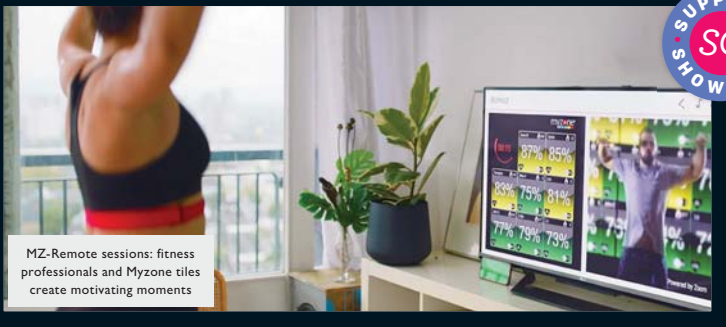
# Digital done right.

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[myzone.org/mz-remote](https://myzone.org/mz-remote)



Myzone Remote sessions: fitness professionals and Myzone tiles create motivating moments

## Run classes that grow communities anywhere

Get your group fitness offering back on track faster in the face of ongoing restrictions, courtesy of Myzone's tier-transcending digital experience

Gym openings are on the road map! However, as we face ongoing restrictions for group fitness and an increasing need for social connection, Myzone's MZ-Remote platform means gyms and studios can continue to provide more for the community.

This digital installation, embraced by hundreds of operators during lockdown, not only gave facilities and members complementary access to timetabled classes, but also continues to ensure trainers and instructors receive the coaching to implement their own live classes if they haven't already.

In addition to the member benefit, MZ-Remote offers the actionable opportunity to engage with more

people, grow your business and retain revenue over the course of this challenging period – benefits that many have already embraced during previous enforced closures.

"Myzone saved our business during lockdown," says Joe O'Connor of Nisus Fitness in County Kerry, Ireland. "While our competitors are fighting among themselves for Instagram live video space, we have a white label offering for our clients."

### Instant results

"Within 12 hours of hearing about MZ-Remote, we had 50 clients online doing a session," says O'Connor. "Now it runs across our 15-session online live schedule each week, with an average of 30 clients per session. MZ-Remote has allowed us to truly become a hybrid training club."

MZ-Remote means more people get the chance to keep moving and work out together as an added benefit to a gym's offering; not an alternative. Every cardio, strength, HIIT and yoga class offers real-time feedback with the option for participants to listen to their own music and create that studio buzz.

"The likes of Facebook and Instagram Live workouts are all welcome



**MZ-Remote combines Zoom optional two-way video for immediate feedback and shout-outs**

**Ben Hackney-Williams, Myzone**

in the fight against inactivity, but they've done digital fitness initiatives a disservice," says Ben Hackney-Williams, head of content at Myzone.

"For an engaging class experience, inclusivity is key. MZ-Remote combines Zoom optional two-way video for immediate feedback and shout-outs, the motivation of seeing everyone working towards the same goal with their Myzone tile on screen, and the importance of being instructed by a fitness professional.

"MZ-Remote is engaging, entertaining, educational and an essential part of physical activity."

**For more information visit [myzone.org/mz-remote](https://myzone.org/mz-remote)**



**Myzone saved our business during lockdown**

**Joe O'Connor, Nisus Fitness**

# Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

EXi helps Everyone Active deliver exercise as medicine, tells Carron Manning

EXi is working in partnership with Everyone Active to put its NHS-approved digital health prescriptions into the hands of its most vulnerable members during lockdown.

EXi has enabled the Everyone Active team to engage and train members and people referred by clinicians at home and in the gym by combining



*Everyone Active retains essential trust and a personal touch*

Carron Manning, EXi

and delivers activity and health outcome data directly to the fitness team, allowing them to clearly see where any extra help or guidance is needed.

"Everyone Active retains that essential trust and personal touch with its clients, while supporting them with medically approved protocols," says co-founder Carron Manning.

"Members are reassured their trusted trainer is looking out for them, as they can track and monitor progress."

local leisure services with the digital solution.

This enables operators to engage more people more often, while the automated process cuts out administration.

The software tracks people's physical activity



PHOTO: EXi

The software produces health outcome data

The Auster Power Vest is the most versatile and comfortable on the market, says Andrew Siu

The **Power Vest** is the latest development from bodyweight training equipment specialists Auster. The weighted vest

has been designed for functionality, versatility and an ability to resist or assist the most controlled and the most explosive of exercises.

Auster has utilised aerospace-grade aluminium carabiners and clips for maximum security and strength, and innovative material technology to ensure optimal comfort, security and ruggedness. The vest is slimline and designed to stay clamped to the body no matter the exercise.



*It's comfortable and doesn't restrict movement*

Andrew Siu

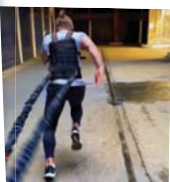


PHOTO: AUSTER

The Power Vest enables a wide range of exercises

Andrew Siu, Auster CEO says: "We wanted to produce the most versatile, functional weighted vest, one that was highly comfortable, but also slimline enough not to restrict any movement during exercise."

The Power Vest can be used on its own, or with Auster's current range of equipment, including the parallettes, rings, modular suspended trainer or battlestaff.

[fitness-kit.net/keyword/auster](https://fitness-kit.net/keyword/auster)





The new Physical Company catalogue: sure to inspire

Creating spaces where exercisers feel both safe and inspired to return to the gym is vital, says **James Anderson**

**F**itness provision has been turned upside-down by the events of recent months, yet looking forward, we collectively have a huge opportunity to contribute to the health of the nation.

That starts by creating spaces where exercisers feel safe and inspired, and this is Physical Company's specialism.

#### New catalogue

When it comes to inspiration, our new catalogue – with its 1,900+ products – takes some beating.

The styles of training that were already booming before COVID – free weights, group exercise, functional and small group training – are not only our heartland, they also remain styles of exercise that work well in a post-COVID world, with equipment that can be easily cleaned, safely spaced, and even cost-effectively replaced to give users even greater confidence.

Being clean isn't always enough. It's about member perceptions – making

people feel truly safe in the gym – and brand new kit offers immediate reassurance.

Operators might consider replacing small equipment to make a positive impression on members, and the Physical Company 2021 catalogue presents plenty of cost-effective options.

These include an ever-expanding, 'good value, high quality' Physical-branded range, with the latest additions being our Performance Yoga Mat, Performance PU dumbbells and Performance urethane kettlebells.

Of course, alongside our own product ranges, our catalogue boasts a growing line-up of partnerships with best-in-class manufacturers.

#### New lines for 2021

New this year is ZIVA, an exciting collaboration as it allows us to provide products – even items such as dumbbells and Olympic plates – to suit every budget, from a price-led offering, through our 'good value, high quality' Physical range, to a premium collection.

Our extensive range of mats and flooring – among our most popular solutions – have moved even more front-of-mind today. Our AIREX fitness, yoga, pilates and studio mats all use closed-cell technology,



*However large or small your space, and whatever your budget, we should be your first port of call*

James Anderson

for example, meaning they don't absorb sweat and are wipe-clean; clubs have been investing in these recently, replacing all their existing mats, so members immediately feel there's been a fresh start.

#### Fresh floors

Our expert flooring solutions are the go-to for any operator reconfiguring gym floor space, whether it's a temporary set-up or a permanent redesign; it's been interesting to hear from operators who will continue with individual workout spaces, even after social distancing restrictions are eased.

As always, every product in our new catalogue is supported with extensive training and best-in-class customer service.

These are just some of the reasons why we're 'First for Fitness Solutions'. Because however large or small your space, and whatever your budget, we should be your first port of call.

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





*Customers discover your gym through the Huddle platform, then the MCS adds another layer of support*

Jamie Owens



PHOTO: HUSSE

Huddle customers can be converted to direct members

## Huddle has launched a new Membership Conversion Service, reveals **Jamie Owens**

Fitness aggregator Huddle is launching a new service to help its partner operators improve membership conversion rates, grow their membership base and increase revenue.

The **Membership Conversion Service** (MCS) proactively targets Huddle users to directly

join a club they're attending regularly, offering up high value customers for upsell.

This service identifies customers that would be best served by a direct gym membership and so provides a new joiner channel for operators.

Jamie Owens, director of fitness partnerships at

Huddle, says: "Huddle's two key principles are increasing participation in physical activity and generating revenue for operators.

"We offer operators extended marketing reach nationally as well as access to additional revenue via people who don't currently engage with traditional

memberships. Customers discover your gym through the Huddle platform and then the new MCS adds another layer of support, by proactively targeting users to join clubs they attend regularly."

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

## New Hybrid solution – Les Mills Content – will help clubs launch in the 'golden quarter' of 2021, says **Martin Franklin**

Les Mills has launched a new digital content solution to support health and fitness operators in engaging their members outside the four walls of their clubs and studios.

**Les Mills Content** is in addition to the existing Les Mills On Demand solution and offers 100+ premium videos, to help clubs grow their digital presence, offering Les Mills workouts with and without equipment, technique tips and mindfulness videos.

Clubs will be able to build their own video-on-demand library of Les

Mills workouts, featuring their own instructors and with royalty-free music.

Les Mills is working with app providers, including Move and Netpulse, to ensure clubs can launch their own digital solutions.



*We're enabling clubs to launch right now*

Martin Franklin



PHOTO: LES MILLS

Les Mills Content powers member engagement

The partnership with Move will also mean that clubs can be provided with a turnkey platform to host Les Mills Content in their own branded ecosystem (web and app) which can then be seamlessly integrated into their existing membership system to enable ease of use.

"We've created adaptations of our most popular programmes in super quick time to give clubs the ability to launch right now – in the 'golden quarter' of 2021," said Martin Franklin, CEO of Les Mills Europe

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

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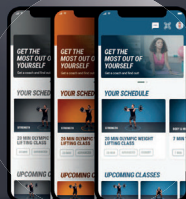


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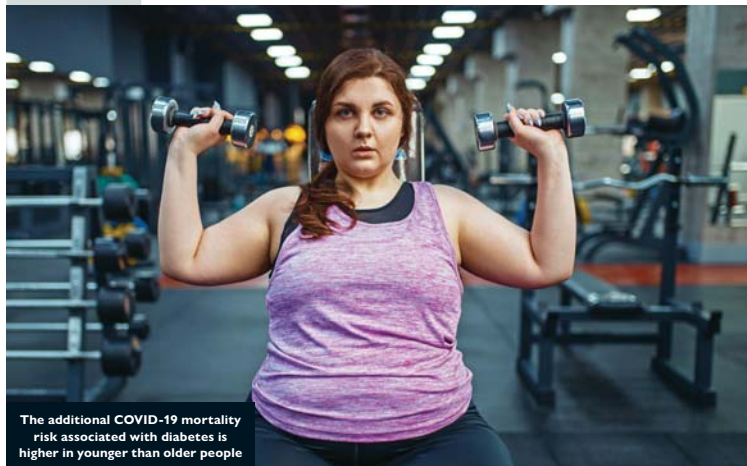


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ROMAN\_892

**The additional COVID-19 mortality risk associated with diabetes is higher in younger than older people**

## COVID hits diabetics harder

New research into Type 2 diabetes and COVID-19 is establishing the risks across different age groups, enabling policymakers to design interventions more effectively

**P**eople aged 40 with Type 2 diabetes face a “disproportionately increased risk of dying from COVID-19” – equivalent to the risk faced by a non-diabetic 20 years older.

The finding comes from a study led by researchers at the University of Exeter, which also shows that the risk of death from COVID-19 among those with Type 2 increases the younger they are, compared with people of a similar age without the condition.

Published in the journal *Diabetologia*, the study – *The disproportionate excess mortality risk of COVID-19 in younger people with diabetes* – is based on an analysis of three large-scale datasets and triangulates the evidence on heterogeneity of diabetes effect,

**“For a person aged 40 years with Type 2 diabetes, additional mortality risk is equivalent to that of a 60-year-old person without diabetes. For a person aged 70 years, the risk is equivalent to eight years**

by age, on COVID-19 mortality from large population-based and critical care-based studies.

### Challenging the young

“For a person aged 40 years with Type 2 diabetes, additional mortality risk is equivalent to around 20 years of chronological age, meaning that mortality risk is similar to that of a 60-year-old person without diabetes,” reads the study.

“For a person aged 70 years with diabetes, the additional mortality risk from diabetes is equivalent to an additional eight years of

chronological age, meaning that their ‘COVID-age’ is 78 years.”

Although not the only cause, obesity is believed to account for up to 80 per cent of the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, while research suggests that obese people are up to 80 times more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than those with a BMI of less than 22.

The UK has one of the highest levels of obesity in Europe, with more than 1 in 4 (28.1 per cent) adults obese and nearly two out of three (63.4 per cent) people overweight. More: [www.HCMmag.com/diabetes](http://www.HCMmag.com/diabetes)





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