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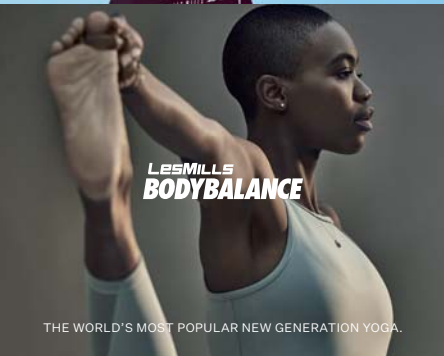
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Build back fairer

The industry can be the catalyst for recovery from the pandemic, as well as addressing many of the underlying issues which enabled COVID-19 to wreak such havoc

As the industry steps up to the task of rebuilding and adapting to post-lockdown realities, many are asking how we can learn, re-set and work towards a better future than the one we were originally destined for – in the days before anyone had even heard of COVID-19.

Significant parts of the sector are off and flying, with consumers flocking back to gyms, studios and health clubs and new investment coming into the market, which is fantastic news, however, the pandemic has exacerbated levels of social inequality and so it's clear these benefits are not being universally enjoyed.

Too many people are still barred from staying active and new research by healthcare charity and health club operator, Nuffield Health – *The Nuffield Health Healthier Nation Index* – found people in lower-income groups face higher barriers to exercise.

Although cost was a factor, they were also more likely to say they were embarrassed, didn't know where to start when it came to getting active, struggled with motivation, or didn't have time.

People in the lowest income groups also scored at the bottom of the scale when reporting the status of their health, with 20 per cent on the bottom score compared with 11.5 per cent in higher-income groups.

Enabling opportunity for the less well off has traditionally fallen to the public sector rather than the private, but this clear-cut divide is increasingly blurry and today it's just as likely that public sector offerings will be beyond the pocket of people in less well off social groups, while low-cost commercial offerings or those provided by voluntary organisations may actually be more accessible.

In this issue we've invited thought leader Martyn Allison (page 78), to share his views on how the public and trusts sectors can respond to the call for better and fairer access to both facilities and opportunities.

He highlights the fact that in 2019, 'cost-recovery' for the UK's leisure centres stood at 107 per cent – up from 91 per cent in 2014 – meaning 62 per cent of facilities had moved to a position of making a 'surplus'.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALFONSO

We have the opportunity to 'build back fairer'

New research by Nuffield Health found people in lower income groups face higher barriers to exercise

The flipside, however, was that use by people in the bottom two socio-economic groups fell from 62 per cent in 2014 to only 39 per cent in 2019. Effectively, austerity and changing models of provision have shut down options for many of those who need them most and made them more vulnerable to COVID-19 as a result.

So as we rebuild, there's an opportunity for everyone working in the sector to find ways to welcome people from across our communities into our facilities – in a way that works for them – so the new world we build as we recover from the pandemic is more equal and we not only build back better, we 'build back fairer' as well.

Liz Terry, editor
lizterry@leisuremedia.com



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ISSUE 5 2021 No 290



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Editor
Liz Terry

+44 (0)1462 431385



Publisher
Jan Williams

+44 (0)1462 471909



Managing editor
Steph Eaves

+44 (0)1462 471934



Head of news
Tom Walker

+44 (0)1462 431385



Editor at large
Magali Robathan

+44 (0)1462 431385



Assistant editor
Megan Whitby

+44 (0)1462 471906

Email us:

fullname@leisuremedia.com

Customer service

+44 (0)1462 471901

Advertising

+44 (0)1462 431385

Subscriptions

+44 (0)1462 471910

Circulation

+44 (0)1462 471932

Finance

+44 (0)1462 471930

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Going down the restructuring route like Virgin is not without hazards

Matthew Padian Stevens & Bolton



Virgin Active argued that without the restructuring plan it would fall into administration within days

Likened to a 'CVA on steroids', Virgin Active's approved restructuring plan, devised under the government's new *Part 26A* of the *Companies' Act 2006*, raises the stakes in the ongoing landlord vs tenant unpaid rent battle. However, concerns around the threat of future restructuring plans should not be overestimated.

Deals such as this can only be attempted by companies that have encountered, or are likely to encounter, financial difficulties affecting their ability to carry on business.

Admittedly, this is a low bar, but as we emerge from the pandemic, greater attention will be focused on whether companies resorting to restructuring plans such as this are doing so for the right reasons.

While Virgin Active's plan could encourage others to follow suit, the number of restructures to deploy *Part 26A* to date remains low. Launching such a plan is a heavily court-focused process – unlike a CVA – making it expensive and time-consuming, so this route is better suited to larger companies with secured creditors.

Going down the restructuring route is also not without hazards. For example, companies considering a Virgin Active-style approach must be rigorous in avoiding any suggestion of procedural impropriety or that the voting classes have been incorrectly constituted. They also need to consider entering administration or seeking a freestanding moratorium to get a hold on creditor action while plans make their way through the courts.

Landlords entering into new leases may want to ensure forfeiture clauses come into effect in the event that tenants propose restructures and also that rent concessions fall away if restructuring plans are launched.

● Under the new *Part 26A* of the *Companies Act 2006*, High Court Judge Richard Snowden has given Virgin Active the green light to erase millions in rent arrears it had accrued during pandemic lockdowns.

The company's landlords argued there were other options available, such as selling the company.
 More: www.HCMmag.com/rent



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/SIMANLI



As a sector, we must continue to campaign for the same VAT relief enjoyed by the hospitality sector



Neil Randall Anytime Fitness

April was the busiest month for new memberships at Anytime Fitness since we began trading in the UK, with tens of thousands joining, following unprecedented demand.

It would seem that more people than ever are seeing the importance of their own personal health, having come through such a challenging year.

As independent business owners, our franchisees have shared those challenges but have shown initiative in attracting so many new members.

While these figures make fantastic reading, our sector still requires more government support to secure the future of facilities.



PHOTO: ANYTIME FITNESS UK
Randall says tens of thousands of new members have joined

Our clubs have made great early inroads in rebuilding their membership bases, but many have had more than eight months with no income in the past year, with no deferrals on sizeable payments, such as rent.

The moratorium preventing commercial evictions has now been lifted, presenting a significant challenge to the industry.

As a sector, we must continue to campaign for the same VAT relief enjoyed by the hospitality sector, as well as legislative support around landlord and tenant relationships.

More: www.HCMmag.com/randall

The opportunity exists to create a new model for health

Gareth Presch World Health Innovation Summit

During the Global Solutions Summit in Berlin recently, I moderated an expert panel with James Sanderson, CEO of the National Academy of Social Prescribing; Roland Schatz, CEO, UNGSII and Päivi Sillanaukee, Finnish ambassador for health and wellbeing.

The group discussed pandemic recovery in relation to improving health and wellbeing and strengthening health

systems, while implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030 – specifically SDG 3 which focuses on health and wellbeing.

COVID-19 has dramatically unveiled health inequalities that exist in societies across the world, as well as the fragile state of the world's health.

We discussed how healthcare costs have been rising rapidly, creating unsustainable demand and how current healthcare systems tend to be based on a sick-care model. We also looked at challenges with global staff shortages – predicted to be 18m by 2030 (BMJ).

It was agreed a one-size-fits-all approach to health isn't working and consumer preference for convenience and affordability and demand for more efficient, personalised delivery models is growing.

The opportunity exists to create a new model for health and wellbeing, based on prevention, early intervention and the use of different resources, such as social prescribing.

The World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) has a model that demonstrates that £1 invested creates £36 of societal value, for example.

The aim is to enable people and communities to thrive and improve their health and wellbeing, to support existing health services and create new and meaningful jobs while implementing the UN's 17 sustainable development goals.

A Global Social Prescribing Alliance playbook (link below) has also been created to support this work.

More: www.gspalliance.com and <https://whis.uk>

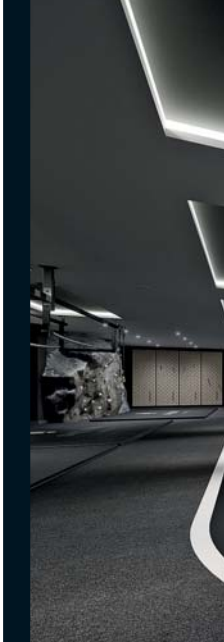
HCM people



*Once we grow beyond
Manchester we'll go head to head
with Equinox and Third Space*

Andy McGlynn

Founder, GSquared



Tell HCM readers what's been happening

Having set out with the intention of building a gym to rival the most advanced in the world, we've absorbed all sorts of challenges, from Grade II listed building obstacles, through to the issues the pandemic brought.

Having discovered a site for the first gym location – a 12,000sq ft space in my beloved home of Manchester – we're now three years further down the line and only weeks away from opening.

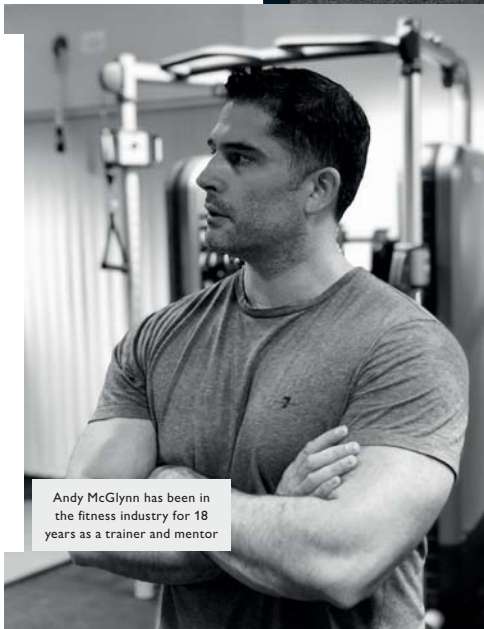
On reflection, I'm grateful for this time, as it's allowed us to enhance the product far beyond what I'd originally planned and I've also taken the time to increase my certifications – something I've invested in across 18 years of being a personal trainer and mentoring other PTs.

This has taken me to new levels of knowledge that's being percolated into the membership service.

How have you been coping with the stress?

Stress happens when the body is in a sympathetic state. Learning how to keep switching out of this and into a parasympathetic state helps mitigate it.

There's a lot of adrenal support you can administer to yourself and our gym members have the same needs, which is why GSquared Clubs



Andy McGlynn has been in the fitness industry for 18 years as a trainer and mentor



GSquared has been designed for the premium end of the market, with its first location in Manchester, UK

PHOTO: GOSWAMI

will be offering adrenal testing and blood panel work as one of the secondary spend options.

One of the most challenging aspects of this journey has been the challenge of becoming accustomed to uncertainty – keeping the faith and the focus, especially when others felt the project was dead in the water or futile.

However, even though the demands on each of us are incredibly high right now, I, for one, just don't feel fatigued at all. I'm doing this while embarking on my fourth degree and continuing to fit in time to train.

I suppose when you're working towards your life's purpose, fatigue just doesn't appear.

I'm driven by a sense of guilt that as an industry we could have done so much more for our members and when I think of the eye-watering attrition rates in some parts of the industry, it drives me to want to give more.

GSquared is without question the most advanced gym in the UK. I'm certainly not setting out to upset or clash with other gym chains, but there's no disputing that we've put the time, money, research and painstaking design time in to create a new standard and a new level.

What's your vision for GSquared?

I was planning on moving on from the fitness industry after years working with major (and some smaller) chains – LA Fitness, Fitness First and DW Fitness, to name a few – but had a strong sense of unfinished business.

I feel strongly that gyms have held back for too long and members have lost out as a result.

For more than 30 years, since gyms became multi-site, most have focused on the physical and neglected the emotional, mental and spiritual.





People train for one of two reasons – they love their body or they hate their body

GSquared incorporates all of these elements of conditioning, empowering members to achieve their full potential by incorporating protocols, assessments and information to help with mental, emotional and spiritual conditioning. We'll never get optimal long-term physical benefits until we address these other three aspects of wellbeing.

As a nation, we've fallen behind with our health; something very wrong has occurred in the last 20-25 years, with obesity increasing from 15 per cent in 1993 to 27 per cent in 2020.

We have more stress than ever before, 75 per cent of the nation have some form of pre-diabetic or insulin management issue, 64 per cent have some form of sleep disruption and most recently *The Economist* reported that male sperm counts have dropped by 54 per cent since 1974 which is in line with the continued drop in male testosterone in the last 30 years by 30 per cent.

This all links back to GSquared's core values and purpose – it goes beyond the physical, and it's time the industry understood this.

Our strapline is 'extraordinary as standard' and we've gone to great lengths in every area of the business to deliver on that promise.

The jewel in the GSquared crown is the seven-step member journey we've affectionately called 'You Squared'. This involves members going through seven in-depth assessments that take the standard gym induction and turn it into something incredibly valuable.

We've also committed to giving every member four meaningful contacts every year on top of the engagement they have with staff in the gym on a day-to-day basis.

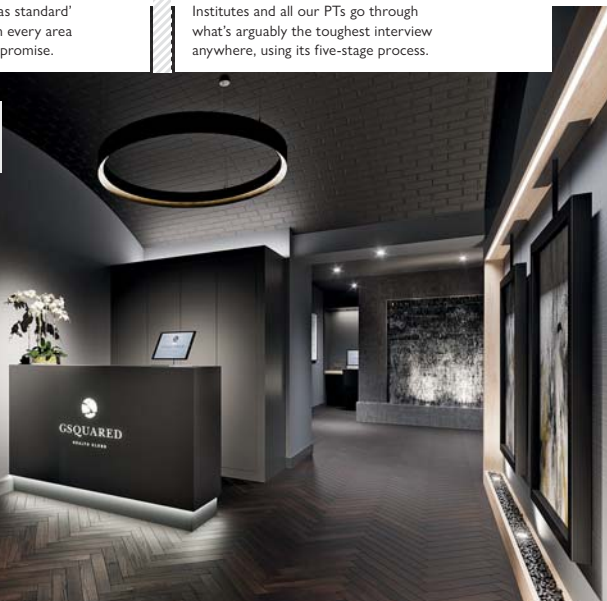
What else will make GSquared stand apart?

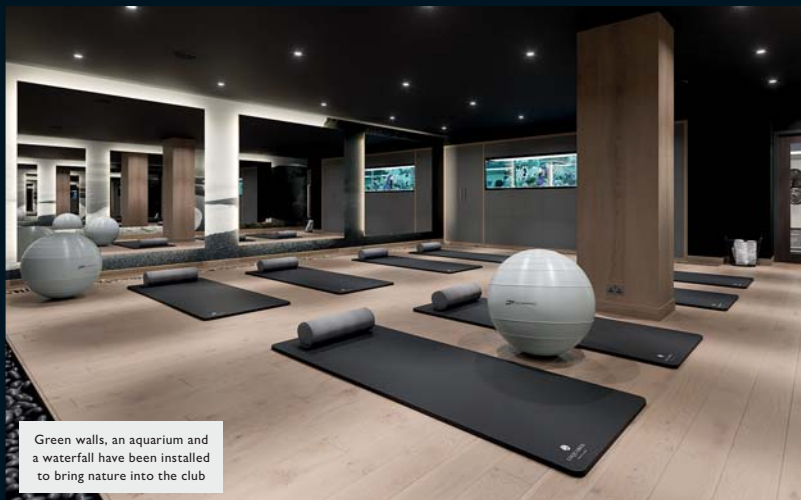
Some things we're keeping under our hat for now, but I can share that we're the first commercial gym or PT studio in the UK to house a Bod Pod – the gold standard for body composition analysis – and we're giving this service to our members as a standard feature.

Inside the gym, you'll find quirks such as the assault course, climbing wall and running track. We've also infused as much nature into the place as possible, with an aquarium, waterfall and cv 'garden'.

We're affiliated to the CHEK and Poliquin Institutes and all our PTs go through what's arguably the toughest interview anywhere, using its five-stage process.

The club will have a front of house operation, as well as relationship managers and a chauffeur service





Green walls, an aquarium and a waterfall have been installed to bring nature into the club

The design of the club will blow members' minds and as part of this we're bringing back a full Front of House operation, which is something members appreciate.

The space could accommodate 3,000, but we've created a member-to-floor ratio that will keep numbers between 800 and 1,000.

We've ramped up cleaning to ensure the changing rooms are immaculate and that's where you'll find our infra-red saunas – the benefits of which exceed standard saunas.

In total, there are also 15 high-quality and very relevant secondary spend lines available, such as supplements, making GSquared one of the most profitable gym models around.

Finally, I personally train the staff myself to really help them develop and ensure the culture and core values of GSquared are fully absorbed.

What's the full extent of the offering?

If members invest in our top membership tier (Platinum+ £225/m), they get a very full package, which includes guaranteed class access, full use of the facility, an appointed relationship manager, permanent locker, laundry service three times a week, a chauffeur service if they need to be collected or dropped off at the office – basically anything they request, whether it's a pre- or post-workout drink or a fresh shirt.

They're also entitled to the You Squared journey – a 12-week online transformation programme, as well

as the full class timetable and access to the single-sex saunas which are inclusive of all membership tiers.

GSquared also has a members' privilege card, with discounts from our partners, including names such as Selfridges, Harvey Nichols, Stock Exchange Hotel, Sweaty Betty, Hotel Kimpton and more.

In addition to Platinum+, other packages are Platinum at £150/month and Executive at £95/month.

How many members are you targeting?

We'll open with 400 – approximately half capacity and we're on course to achieve this. We'll cap it at 800 to 1,000 and then look to develop a second location.

Our pitch to prospective members is that a cheaper membership could actually cost them more, given everything we provide and the high-end nature of GSquared has been incredibly well received in Manchester.

How much have you invested?

The current figure is £1.8m, which allows for reworks and unanticipated structural challenges.

I've personally contributed a third of that from personal finances and the rest has been relatively easy to find, if I'm honest.

The interest and attention at an investment level have been encouraging and I'm now in final discussions for the next round of funding that will help us scale quickly after the doors open for this first site.



We're certainly looking at the international market. The US is looking most appealing at this point

As much as this first development has been protracted due to the pandemic, it's been a blessing in disguise, as it's given us the chance to review and make changes and additions that make it a spectacular space.

What equipment have you specified?

We went with Watson Gym Equipment for free weights and resistance and Freemotion for cables. Ian Thorpe of Fitness Systems has also been involved.

Why Manchester?

I was born and raised in the city, so it made sense – especially given the number of personal and corporate contacts I have here.

This provides me with an unfair advantage over out-of-town fitness brands hitting the city. I feel a bit sorry for them, as we've cornered the high-end market.

How many locations are you planning?

We're aiming to have the first three open in the next year to 18 months. The second site, which will be connected to a residential development, is currently at the legal stage.

The longer-term picture is to roll out into every city and financial district, with potential growth into residential locations alongside the commercial.

Will you go international or franchise?

We're not looking at franchising – I feel too purist in what I'm doing – but we're looking at international markets.

Having consulted for gym chains in Europe, I'd intended to hit European cities first, but contacts and friends in the US are pushing me to go there first, so the US is looking more appealing at this point.

What's your plan for delivering on digital?

We've pretty much got it covered with the 12-week online transformation, which is free to our members and available at a small charge for non-members.

Once we're settled into the first site, GSquared streaming will be made available in people's homes.

I believe the streaming service will be well received by those who see GSquared as a lifestyle brand that's committed to utilising cutting edge research and information.

PHOTO: GSQUARED



McGlynn says GSquared will be far in advance of other gyms in Manchester in terms of the overall offering

The climbing wall and assault course have been installed to bring variety and natural movement to workouts

Who are your competitors?

In Manchester, honestly? Nobody. The product and service are so far ahead nothing comes remotely near. We're engaging higher earners who are looking for something more exclusive, luxurious and personalised.

Once we grow beyond Manchester we'll go head to head with Equinox and Third Space.

I love competition – it's what drives me. By stretching ourselves and each other, we raise the game. A rising tide raises all boats, as they say.

With the resources behind me and a polished offering in GSquared, I'd say a few business owners out there need to start looking over their shoulders.

This is how it should always have been and perhaps if this had been so, leaders in the industry could have learned from each other, raised the standard together and given members true benefits and tangible results and really influenced the health of the nation.

What's your take on the market?

I believe the only people wanting low-cost gyms in years to come will be bodybuilders, powerlifters and those wanting a cost-effective space to lift weights.

From being the nemesis of brands such as LA Fitness, Fitness First and other middle market operators, there are now people who want more.

The achilles heel of budget facilities is their attrition rates and the stigma of being 'low cost' – as people become more discerning, they're treating

their gym membership like anything else in their life that they want to stretch themselves with.

What have you learned about yourself?

Firstly, there's always something productive you can be doing; secondly, if you want something badly enough, you'll make it work and thirdly, to step back and use time effectively. I've found that even if that means doing something else for a while, it will serve you well in the longer term.

Did you make changes due to the pandemic?

We're sharing more about gut health to give the best information about natural defences against COVID-19.

With the gut underpinning our immune strength and with so many people having compromised gut health, it's a consideration when it comes to understanding why we've had such a horrific time of it.

It's not a case of 'vaccinate or nothing' – there are many factors that impact inflammation in the body and a range of naturopathic protocols that can be deployed to give the best chance of survival, it's sad this knowledge hasn't been more widely shared.

Final thoughts?

Most people train for one of two reasons – they love their body or they hate their body. That is the starting point for gyms. The more owners understand and respond to this, the more success they'll have. ●



We see a world where every major city has access to Solo 60

Ben Alderton

Founder, Solo 60

Tell us about the venture

Solo 60 is a unique alternative to the conventional gym. We lease small, unused offices and retail units and transform them into high-end private micro-gyms that can be booked to work out solo or with friends or for PTs to train clients, with slots starting from 60 minutes.

We have three brands – Solo 60 Sessions, which are pre-booked workouts, Solo 60 Studio for group exercise and Solo 60 Stream, our virtual offering.

All bookings run end-to-end via technology so the first step is to download and register an account on our mobile app, which guides the user to find a space, select a time, duration and group size before confirming the booking.

We send instructions and a PIN code so people can access the gym and enjoy it exclusively.

How did you come up with the idea?

I was running a PT business from April 2015 until selling it to pursue Solo 60 in November 2019, so effectively, I was my own customer.

The business had eight trainers and 350 clients and I was looking to expand out of the gym we were using so I could test new locations, scale and find new clients, but I faced constant rejections from gyms that wanted me to sign up to pay monthly fees and/or bring my whole team of trainers and clients to that gym.

I was looking for flexibility and so were my clients, who were being forced to sign up to the gym to train with me. The lightbulb went off in my mind and I started to develop the concept for Solo 60.

How many sites do you have and what are your expansion plans?

We currently have two sites in London – Shoreditch and Tower Bridge – but our expansion plans are huge. We aim to grow 10 times over in the next year and then set our sights on entering the rest of the UK and then Europe.

We see a world where every major city has access to Solo 60.

Who's advising on investment?

When it comes to investment, I've done it all myself and learned a lot about raising finance through angel investors and venture capitalists.

We're currently closing a US\$1m seed round which has been another huge learning curve.

Alderton has plans to roll out Solo 60 locations in the UK and globally





The first Solo 60 location in Shoreditch will be followed this month by a second location near Tower Bridge

PHOTO: SOLO 60

How has the Solo 60 concept developed since launch?

Our Standard Place location in Shoreditch has been extremely successful, with close to 3,000 Solo 60 Sessions completed, while Brewery Square near Tower Bridge, which will open this month (June 2021), will see the launch of Solo 60 Studio for those who love group exercise.

Solo 60 Studio will be limited to six people at one time and cover six unique concepts. Group exercise will be offered in all future locations and will sit alongside the original Solo 60 Session offering.

The group exercise content will also go out via our third product, Solo 60 Stream.

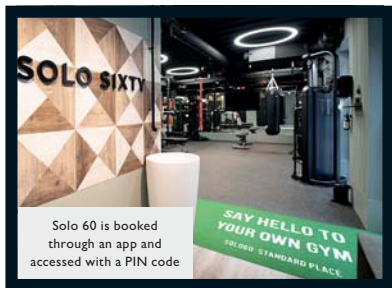
What kind of vibe are you aiming for?

An international award-winning interior designer called Bergman Interiors designed our first site and created a concept to roll out to future sites. We took this and bent it to suit each site's quirks. We're going for a high-end feel with bespoke touches in each – for the gram, of course.

Will you own and operate or also franchise?

We've had a huge amount of interest and requests for franchising the model and the technology but at the moment we have no plans to do so.

We're extremely protective about the experience Solo 60 provides and our plans for the future are to own and operate all sites to maintain these standards.



Solo 60 is booked through an app and accessed with a PIN code

SAY HELLO TO YOUR OWN GYM
STANDARD PLACE

PHOTO: SOLO 60

What improvements will you make with your next site?

We have ambitions to incorporate the technology from our digital products into the physical space. This is a huge mission in relation to how customers will experience our spaces going forward.

How much does it cost to use Solo 60?

Prices vary depending on time, location and method of payment – for example, using pay-as-you-go and credit packs.

Our pay-as-you-go pricing is dependent on the time of day and – using surge pricing – on the demand for slots at that time.





There needs to be a strong residential or office population locally, while our choices are helped by our amazing community, who are very vocal about where we should open next

Our credit pack option provides the best perks, such as a fixed-price booking (even at peak times), the option to book 14 days in advance (rather than the seven days offered for pay-as-you-go) and reduced cancellation (four hours, instead of eight). These prices start at £17.

Overall, sessions start from £15, average £20 and are £25 at peak times while using pay-as-you-go. Customers can share this cost by inviting friends through the app.

Personal trainers are allowed to train small groups at no additional charge.

There are no contracts and users are free to cancel, upgrade or downgrade their credit packs at any point without penalty.

PTs can use Solo 60 for one-to-one and group bookings

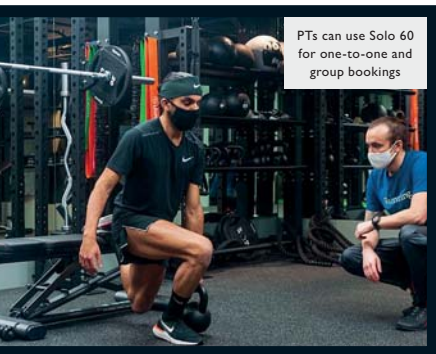


PHOTO: SOLO60

PHOTO: SOLO60



The Solo 60 gym has been designed to support a wide range of workout types

Do people return?

Absolutely! People have quit their gym memberships and personal training contracts at well-known gyms to come to Solo 60 full-time. The number of sessions they book depends on whether they're gym-goers or personal trainers but in both cases people reuse Solo 60 regularly and return often.

As an example, we've taken 80 bookings this week from 25 unique customers. This is an average of three times per week per person. Clearly though, some use it once, some use it 5-10 times.

We've had 300 unique paying customers so far from the 1,500 users on our app. Most of the inactive or low usage is due to location and will become active as we grow our network.

What's your staffing set-up?

We're a two-man team with a couple of teammates helping part-time and an army of amazing suppliers and contractors. We aim to grow this to 10 people in the next 12 months.

Due to technology, we're able to keep staff and staffing costs low and aim to just hire the strongest and most talented individuals.



PHOTO: SOLO 60

What are your criteria for locations?

We select sites using data we accumulate to ensure local demographics match ours. There needs to be a strong residential or commercial office population locally and demand for (or from) personal trainers. We also look at the uptake of local gyms in the area.

Our choices are also helped by our amazing community who are vocal about which areas to go to next – they answer our polls to allow us to gain insight into where the interest is most focused.

This was one of the reasons for choosing our SE1 London location – this area had been mentioned more than 50 times on our feedback forms.

If customers shout loud enough and the data supports their requests, we'll open up!

Who's advising on property acquisition?

Solo 60 uses a well-known London commercial property acquirer that understands our business and is extremely experienced in finding suitable properties.

We're also approached by agents outside our network who see what we're doing, if they feel they may have suitable sites, which is really helpful.

ABOUT BEN

Tell us about your first business

I started a PT business in 2015 when I was 19 years old and sold it in 2019 to two fantastic new owners. This allowed me to pursue Solo 60 while knowing my clients and trainers would be looked after.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

It comes from a mentor who told me that I should sell my business and go "all in" with Solo 60.

I wasn't sure at the time, as the previous business was going so well, but after this conversation, I took the leap.

What advice do you have for other PTs looking to launch their own ventures?

Be brave, you're already an entrepreneur!

Being a PT isn't easy – you wear many hats; the front-end product, the back-end admin, the marketing machine and the customer service 'team'. Take these skills, create a really great product or service and build a team around you to help you focus on the areas you're good at.

I took too long to do this and could have grown faster if I'd listened to my own advice!



Who do you most admire in the industry?

Recently I've come to really admire Gymshark founder, Ben Francis.

He's an example of what's achievable, regardless of age, education or previous experience. He followed his passion for the fitness industry and is a huge British success story. I'd love to do the same.

What have you learned about yourself in launching Solo 60?

That I can deal with a lot more than I ever thought was possible.

Running a start-up isn't easy or glamorous, but my stubbornness and never-give-up attitude have served me well.

You get knocked back hundreds of times and as a founder and leader, you need a serious amount of grit to keep pulling the business, your staff and those around you forward.

I've also learned how important family, friends and support networks are, as they'll always be there, in the good times and the bad.

A bespoke steel rig sits at the heart of the Solo 60 offering

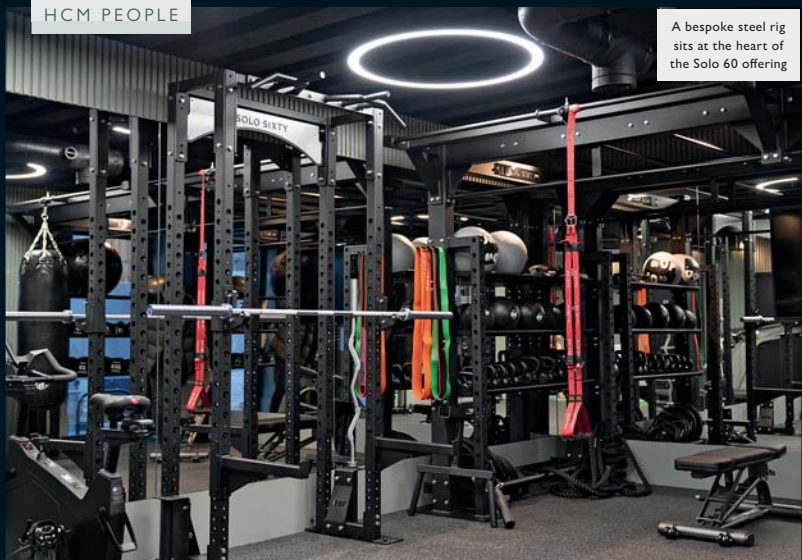


PHOTO: SOLO 60

Solo 60 is very COVID-19 friendly. I wish I could predict the future, but having started in 2019, I have to admit it's just coincidental timing

Was it easy to get insurance?

Insurance was tricky because I had to literally explain the concept to insurers and most struggled to wrap their heads around it. That said, we were lucky to talk to a couple of forward-thinking insurance companies and went with one of them.

They now have the business for our two sites and we're hoping to stick with them now on an ongoing basis.

Solo 60 seems a very COVID-19 friendly format – is this just a coincidence?

Solo 60 is very COVID-19 friendly and I wish I could predict the future, but having started out in 2019, I have to admit it's just coincidental timing.

My original plan was to create a gym offering for people and PTs who wished they had their own gym that gave them privacy, freedom and flexibility, but it quickly became apparent it also had a great fit in the wider market for those who were conscious of COVID-19 and desired a safe space to train.

How do you deliver COVID-secure cleaning?

Our sites get deep cleaned every morning with a special cleaning spray solution and topped up with the best cleaning products for users to clean before and after their own sessions.

On days with particularly heavy-usage, we also deep clean an additional time.

What kit is on offer?

Each site has a bespoke steel rig at its heart, with a variety of equipment that anyone would need in a traditional gym.

This includes cardio equipment ranging from treadmills to bikes and/or rowers. We also offer half racks, cable machines, 2.5kg-40kg dumbbells, a huge array of kettlebells, balls, suspension trainers, boxing bags and much more.

Customers can find a list of equipment inside each gym on our app, along with site photos and a description. ●

REFINED STROKES

Octane
Ro™



Fueled by Octane's innovation and expertise, the new Octane Ro™ boasts thoughtful features designed to deliver a superior experience. Combined fan and magnetic brake resistance provide a broad range of resistance, the patent-pending quick-release foot strap simplifies getting into and out of the machine, and the MultiGrip handlebar offers greater variety. Plus, the backlit LCD console drives motivation with a calorie meter and performance metrics.

Octane
FITNESS

sales@octanefitness.com | 888-OCTANE4 | OCTANEFITNESS.COM

IHRSA partners with MedFit to intensify healthcare relationship

IHRSA has signed a partnership deal with MedFit, a professional membership organisation for fitness and allied healthcare professionals.

The collaboration is part of plans to intensify the relationship between fitness and healthcare globally – and will see IHRSA work together with the

MedFit Education Foundation and MedFit Network.

The partnership will provide medically-based fitness education training, as well as access to medical fitness specialist courses and a number of other projects which look to bring fitness and healthcare closer together.

Among the first initiatives will be a programme of medically-based fitness education training being provided at the IHRSA International Convention & Trade Show (IHRSA 2021) in Dallas, US, later this year.

IHRSA interim president and CEO, Brent Darden, said: "MedFit's lead positioning in the emerging medical fitness space has been very impressive.

"Our mutual organisations embrace the transformation of fitness and wellness



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCK STUDIO

The partnership provides medical-based fitness education

for leading the world to a healthier lifestyle.

"This is an opportunity for the fitness industry to up-level its education and services to be on the front line of healthcare and position the sector as essential."

MedFit founder Lisa Dougherty said: "Chronic illnesses and the behaviours that cause them account for the majority of healthcare costs today worldwide."

More: http://lei.sr/j8x5k_H



PHOTO: IHRSA



Our mutual organisations embrace the transformation of fitness and wellness

Brent Darden, IHRSA

TRIB3 and Urban Gym Group sign 20-site deal for Benelux

TRIB3 has secured a franchise deal which will see it open 20 studios across Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

The boutique provider has signed the area development deal with Dutch entrepreneur and investor, Jordy Kool, who has been given exclusive territory rights to the Benelux region.

Kool is the co-CEO of Urban Gym Group (UGG) and the TRIB3 sites will be managed within the portfolio of UGG.

The franchise agreement follows Kool becoming an investor in TRIB3 in early 2021, through his investment group, Iron Asset Management.



PHOTO: TRIB3

The first UGG TRIB3 site will open in Amsterdam in 2021

The plan is to roll the 20 sites out across five years, with six to open in the first two years of the agreement.

According to TRIB3 CEO, Kevin Yates, the first TRIB3

store in Benelux will open later this year, in Amsterdam.

"Our property team is already in advanced discussions, along with UGG, on several locations," Yates said.



PHOTO: TRIB3



Our property team is already in advanced discussions on several other locations

Kevin Yates, TRIB3

"Jordy and I share a lot of the same values and both see massive opportunities for growth in the industry."

More: http://lei.sr/d4x7X_H

WHO steps up policymaking for physical activity sector

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a webinar series to explore the future of physical activity and sport in a world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consisting of eight webinars, the programme involves industry leaders discussing the practical actions needed during COVID-19 recovery under the title reINVENT & reBUILD: Working together for a stronger, fairer and more inclusive physical activity and sport system for all.

Recommendations arising from the webinar series will inform WHO and stakeholders' future policy and practice.

During the talks, which are running until September

PHOTO: FROM BULL/WHO



The webinars will explore different dimensions of what it will take to build back better

Professor Fiona Bull

2021, four emerging and interconnected challenges will be explored to identify practical actions: innovation, accountability, partnership, use of evidence and investment.

The first webinar took place on Thursday 27 May and was titled 'Build forward

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/LIGHTFIELD



Recommendations from the webinars will inform WHO policy

stronger: opportunities for exercise, fitness and health'.

Led by moderator Amanda Harding (Convene) and chair Fiona Bull (WHO), the panels discussed how the sector can best engage more people to be more active and the opportunities to

build better links between health and fitness sectors.

Fiona Bull said: "The webinar series will explore different dimensions of what it will take to build back better from the pandemic."

More: http://lei.sr/G8Q3n_H

US GYMs Act would provide sector with US\$30bn in grants

The US fitness industry is mobilising to support the Gym Mitigation and Survival (GYMs) Act, which could provide up to US\$30bn in grants to health clubs and studios at risk of closure.

US SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH



This will help gyms have the resources they need to get to the other side of the pandemic

Senator Tammy Duckworth

The GYMs Act was tabled in the US Senate on 13 May by senators Tammy Duckworth (Democrat, Illinois) and Jerry Moran (Republican, Kansas).

If passed, the GYMs Act would enable businesses to claim grants of up to US\$25m. It is the second time that US lawmakers have looked to pass legislation that would provide financial help to the hard-hit US health and fitness industry.

US Senator Tammy Duckworth said: "This bipartisan bill will help gyms have the resources they need to get to the other side of this pandemic."

More: http://lei.sr/D9r8j_H

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/CRISP PINK



The GYMs Act would help businesses under threat of closure

The Gym Group posts stunning results in return to trading

The Gym Group reported it outperformed all its own expectations in the six weeks of operations following the reopening its 180+ clubs.

The group said there had been "strong demand for the return to gyms" since lockdown restrictions on gyms were eased across the UK – starting

with England on 12 April 2021 – resulting in total membership increasing from 547,000 at the end of February 2021 to 729,000 by 24 May 2021.

Members' keenness to get back on the gym floor is also reflected in gym visit data being "extremely strong". The average number of visits per member per week since reopening stands at 1.5 – compared with 1.1 for the comparative period in 2019.

All of the Gym Group's sites are back trading and all of its members are now paying, with the free freeze option having been removed on re-opening.

Encouragingly, member satisfaction scores are significantly higher than pre-COVID-19 levels, reflecting positive feedback from members on safety and



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP
The company has opened four new gyms since 12 April 2021

cleanliness protocols. The Gym Group has opened four new gyms since 12 April – in Chichester, York, Cambridge and London Sydenham, taking the total estate to 187.

Richard Darwin, CEO, said all four new gyms are

performing "extremely well" and have grown strong levels of membership.

"Visits per member and new joiner sign-up rates are at record levels," he said.

More: http://lei.sr/S2x3G_H



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP



Visits per member and new joiner sign-up rates are at record levels

Richard Darwin, The Gym Group

Swimming teachers given new resources to develop mindfulness

The Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) has partnered with a psychologist to provide new mindfulness and wellness resources for its members.

The new wellbeing and mindfulness activity guidance has been designed to help swimming teachers care for and support young learners' wellbeing and mindfulness during lessons, at a time when the effects of the pandemic are still being felt.

Developed in partnership with Dr Alexandra Barnett, a chartered counselling psychologist, the 17-page guidance note contains 30 different mindfulness



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JOEY BUSINESS

The resources will help swimming teachers support learners

activities and comes with a separate parent guide and a digital marketing pack containing posters, social media banners and a logo for swim schools to display.

Zoe Cooper, STA's commercial director, said: "Swimming has been hit hard by the pandemic.

"Millions of children have lost out on the opportunity



PHOTO: STA



Millions of children have lost out on the opportunity to access their lessons

Zoe Cooper, STA

to access their lessons during lockdowns and for many, this will have affected their confidence and competence."

More: http://lei.sr/e9f2E_H

Cancer patients prescribed exercise as part of new approach

A new pioneering approach looks to help cancer patients prepare for and respond to treatment by offering them a combination of exercise, nutrition and psychological support.

Launched by Sheffield Hallam University's Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC) and funded by Yorkshire Cancer Research, the new programme will provide tailored support and guidance for each individual who takes part.

Designed to optimise cancer treatment, minimise the length of time spent in hospital and reduce the likelihood of complications from surgery, AWRC expects the method to improve recovery rates and



PHOTO: SHEFFIELD HALLAM

Exercise, changes to diet and psychological support can help reduce negative side effects

Robert Copeland, AWRC

save lives by reducing the likelihood of cancer returning following treatment.

To begin with, patients with cancer of the lungs, colon, oesophagus, stomach and small intestine will be part of an initial pilot, before the programme is widened



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ROBERT KNECHTKE

The programme is designed to optimise cancer treatment

out to include patients with other forms of cancer.

The pilot is expected to start in the autumn.

Professor Robert Copeland, director of Sheffield Hallam's AWRC, said: "We want to help improve the way we support people with cancer

to prepare for and recover from their treatment.

"Evidence suggests a programme of exercise, changes to diet and psychological support can help reduce negative side effects."

More: http://lei.sr/j4H9M_H

Alan Leach reveals West Wood Club's new outdoor studios

ish health club chain West Wood Club is launching a new outdoor exercise concept.

CEO Alan Leach said the spaces "will include big screens, lighting and stages



LINKEDIN/ALAN LEACH

Some of our clubs are big enough to add outdoor studios up to 10,000sq ft in size

Alan Leach

– and have been made possible as many of the group's six health clubs are big enough to add outdoor studios up to 10,000sq ft in size".

The company has invested €300,000 in the new group exercise brand, Outfit.

"We're looking forward to launching our new group fitness studio brand," said Leach, who was elected chair of the board of IHRSA on 30 March. He assumes this position on 30 June.

The new Outfit studios will allow classes will take place in purpose-built, open-air – but covered – exercise areas.

More: http://lei.sr/g5R7Y_H



WEST WOOD CLUB FACEBOOK

The covered, open-air spaces will enable group exercise

Nuffield research: 8.8m Brits have done no exercise in past year

Nearly four in five (73 per cent) Britons are failing to meet NHS recommendations on exercise as a result of successive lockdowns leading to the formation of unhealthy habits.

In addition, there's evidence of a growing mental health crisis, as 41 per cent of Brits

say their mental health has become worse in the past year.

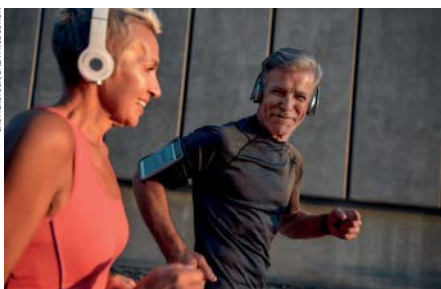
The figures come from the *Nuffield Health Healthier Nation Index*, launched by the healthcare charity, which is based on a comprehensive survey of more than 8,000 Britons. Nuffield says the study offers one of the most detailed looks at the nation's health since the start of the pandemic.

The Index reveals that, on average, a third of Britons (33 per cent) agree their physical health is worse now (as of April 2021) than it was a year ago, with older age groups reporting the worst decline.

Only 10 per cent of those aged 55 and over said their physical health has improved.

Reflecting on the findings, Judy Murray OBE, ambassador

SHUTTERSTOCK/RAZA PRODUCTION



A quarter of people over 55 have done no exercise at all

for the *Healthier Nation Index*, said: "This research shows the pandemic has had a significant impact on the nation's mental health and on our ability to exercise.

"The focus must now be on helping people get active

to make sure we don't store up problems for the future.

"It is deeply worrying that 1 in 4 people over the age of 55 haven't exercised at all in the last year."

More: http://lei.sr/U9m4G_H



PHOTO: JON ANDREW CAMPBELL/ICOMPHOTOS



We must help people get active to make sure we don't store up problems for the future

Judy Murray

Retrain to Retain scheme to help 25,000 fitness professionals

A new job retention scheme, backed by National Lottery funding, has been launched to support fitness and sports professionals in England.

Retrain to Retain is designed to support up to 25,000 fitness and sports coaches who have had to find work outside the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and will prioritise those working in areas of economic deprivation or supporting under-represented groups.

Sport England is investing £5m in the scheme, which is providing training, resources, and tools to help fitness professionals return to work.

PHOTO: SPORT ENGLAND



The scheme will be administered by CIMSPA and partners

It will also offer support to up to 5,000 self-employed people or micro-businesses and more than 500 employers to reopen their businesses, by reducing the cost of

operation and addressing skills shortages by funding the costs of essential training.

Retrain to Retain will be administered by CIMSPA and a consortium of partners.



PHOTO: CIMSPA



Retrain to Retain will be a major boost to the sport and physical activity workforce

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA CEO, said: "Retrain to Retain will be a major boost to the sport and physical activity workforce."

More: http://lei.sr/S2x2p_H

'Breakthrough moment' for exercise referral programmes

Ukactive has published new data from the National ReferAll Database (NRD) – the UK's first open-access database for exercise referral schemes.

The data shows that since its launch in 2019, the NRD – which records outcome data for patients participating in the schemes – has grown to represent 40,000 unique persons who were referred to one of 123 exercise referral schemes across the UK, between 2012 and 2021.

The sample has been taken from more than 600,000 exercise referral scheme records captured within ReferAll's database.

Until now, data available concerning exercise referral



PHOTO: UKACTIVE

“This database is integral to the success of exercise referral schemes in the future

Matthew Wade, ukactive

schemes have not been able to provide conclusive evidence of their effectiveness, due to their variability and the data representing only a small proportion of schemes.

According to Dr Matthew Wade, head of research and development at ukactive, the



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AR VEMO

The NRD records outcome data for patients on referrals

NRD holds the key to unlocking best practice and transforming how referrals are delivered.

Wade said: "This database is integral to the success of exercise referral schemes in the future, ultimately providing the guiding evidence for the improvement

of schemes, so we can increase the efficacy and consistency of our services."

The NRD was developed by ukactive, the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine and ReferAll.

More: http://lei.sr/E64u_H

A million hospital admissions linked to obesity in 2019-20

There were more than one million admissions made to NHS hospitals during 2019-20, where obesity was a factor.

The figure comes from *NHS Digital and its statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet; England, 2021* – an annual compendium of data on obesity, including hospital admissions, prescription items and obesity prevalence

among adults and children. It shows that, in total, there were 1.02 million Finished Admission Episodes (or FAEs – the first period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider) with obesity as a primary or secondary diagnosis. This marks a significant increase of 17 per cent on 2018-19.

Women accounted for two-thirds (64 per cent) of admissions where obesity was a factor.

In total, around two thirds of UK adults are now overweight or obese.

More: http://lei.sr/M5H8W_H

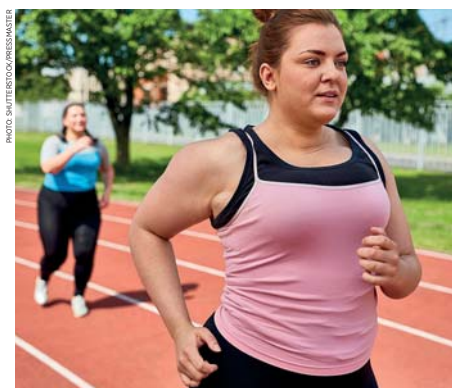


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/RESSMASTER

Two thirds of admissions linked to obesity were women



Around two thirds of UK adults are now overweight or obese

NHS Digital

54 per cent of public sector facilities are at risk of closure

Thousands of UK public sector health clubs and leisure centres are under threat of permanent closure, unless the government provides increased financial support for the sector.

That is the warning issued by ukactive chair Tanni Grey-Thompson in a letter written to PM Boris Johnson.



PHOTO UKACTIVE



We need to ensure that thousands of gyms and leisure centres are able to stay open

Tanni Grey-Thompson

Her strongly-worded letter outlines how more than 400 gyms, pools and community centres have already shut since the start of the pandemic.

She also highlights that the impact had been particularly severe for small and medium-sized organisations and said failure to provide tailored support "will contribute to a worsening of our health inequalities, with inactivity levels continuing to climb".

In the letter, Grey-Thompson urges the PM to deliver on the priorities set out in the Queen's Speech, which included a pledge to "deliver a national recovery from the pandemic that makes the UK stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before".

In her letter, Baroness Grey-Thompson writes: "I'm writing



PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK/PLANNING IMAGES

More than 400 community facilities have already closed

to request your support, and for you to personally intervene, to ensure that thousands of gyms and leisure centres are able to stay open."

The letter follows a new survey by ukactive, which has found that more

than half (54 per cent) of England's leisure centres that are operated by trusts or under Leisure Management Contracts (LMCs) are at risk of closure within six months.

More: http://lei.sr/r6Z9G_H

Parkrun study: low risk of COVID-19 transmission at outdoor events

A report commissioned by Parkrun has estimated that allowing mass-participation outdoor events carries an "exceptionally low risk" of COVID-19 transmission.

The study, by Professor Clive Beggs at Queen Mary University of London, utilised data published by the Office for National Statistics from March 2021, looking at the prevalence of the virus, alongside antibody levels within the population.

The study found that, on average, if Parkruns had been open in March this year (2020), there would not have been an infectious person present at 30 per cent of events. Importantly,

PHOTO PARKRUN



The study predicted the prevalence of the virus at races

at events where an infectious person did participate, there would have been an average R value of only 0.057.

Professor Clive Beggs said: "Our analysis used COVID-19

prevalence levels for March 2021 and the results revealed that Parkrun events are likely to be very safe.

"This finding appears to be supported by evidence from




Our analysis was undertaken using COVID-19 prevalence levels for March 2021, and the results revealed that Parkrun events are likely to be very safe

Clive Beggs, Queen Mary University

the road races held during the pandemic, which have been characterised by a noticeable lack of infectious outbreaks."

More: http://lei.sr/k3F5v_H



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We've developed a property portfolio with a value in excess of £500m, as well as establishing award-winning management platforms across the student, hotel, gym and living sectors

Pete Prickett

The co-founder of Pure Group is now growing the Bricks Group, a new business based on student wellness accommodation, fitness, and hospitality, with a new gym chain currently launching in the UK and Europe, as he explains to Liz Terry

What's your background?

After growing up in the countryside of Devon, I headed off to Hong Kong via a few student years in Liverpool, starting out as a tennis coach.

The company I worked for had great people and a leisure arm which invested in the first mainstream fitness brand in Asia, and I was fortunate to be involved at a junior level from the outset with a team of eight starting the journey.

Growth was rapid and I grew with the company – fast forward 10 years with lots of fun and learning, and I co-founded the Pure Group in Asia after joining as an equity partner following the opening of two initial Pure yoga studios.

We built a great team and became the most successful fitness and leisure brand in Asia (that's my opinion anyway!) with more than 20 locations and thousands of members. We learned the power of the brand we'd created in what was seen as an already well-established market.

I then founded Bricks Group while still based in Hong Kong and left Pure Group to pursue my passion with Bricks full-time, becoming based in the UK around eight years ago.

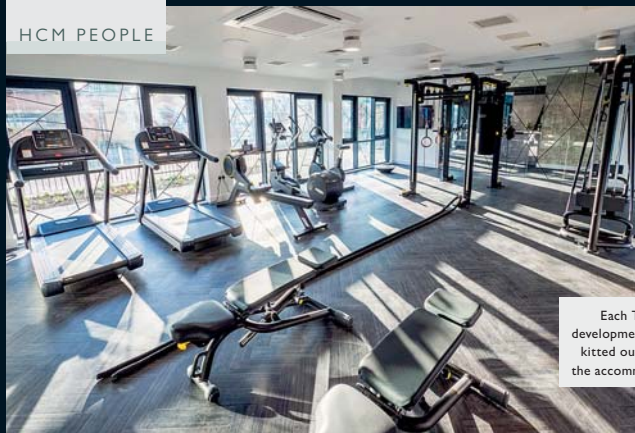
Bricks has developed a property portfolio with a value in excess of £500m, as well as establishing award-winning management platforms across the student, hotel, gym and living sectors.



PHOTO: BRICKS GROUP

Prickett is leading the rollout of the Bricks Group brands in fitness, hospitality and residential markets





Each True Student development includes a fully kitted out gym as part of the accommodation offering

The brands and teams within each vertical are what makes this fun and possible. Teamwork and an appreciation for individuals at all times is the key to long-term success. A great, positive mindset, passion and persistence are essential and that's always a lot easier with the right people around us each day.

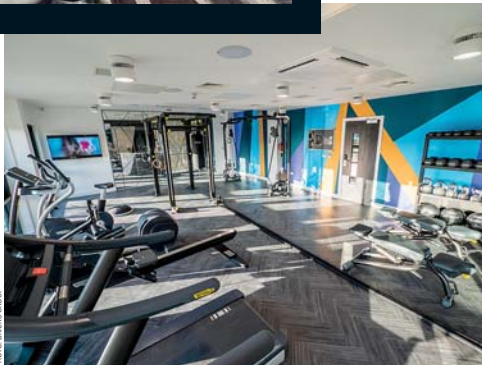
Every day is different and exciting to us; we love to enjoy what we do, and we're always looking at how we can work with great people.

What's your vision for your True Student brand?

Much of my passion comes from my experience in the health club business, an environment in which you're genuinely working for positive change in your clients' lives.

When we entered the student accommodation sector in 2015, most operators seemed to view their guests as a commodity, engagement with them was seen as transactional rather than transformational and we knew we could make a significant difference in a large market that we believed was being poorly served.

As parents, we collectively have good insight into this opinionated and well-informed student demographic and we knew that building the brand before the business was critical to success. The True brand vision is that it's not what we do, but how we make our guests feel; that to fully experience life as a student, you must experience 'True', and it's this principle that has allowed us to disrupt the market while becoming one of the leading student accommodation brands in the UK.



Tell us about True's focus on wellness

Many of our team members come from the leisure and hospitality sectors, so they know how to put our guests at the heart of the experience and deliver it through our True Life platform, with the wellbeing of our students at the heart of everything we do.

We haven't just ticked the box for our gym, rather we've purposely designed our training spaces for the student sector, with leading brands such as Escape and Technogym, who share our passion for wellness and providing students with world-class facilities.

As part of the True Life experience we provide personal training, nutrition talks, classes and seminars – anything fitness-related that provides that educational service.

In breaking news, Prickett has announced Bricks Group is bringing its U Time brand to Europe

NEW
LAUNCH

What's the state of play with the development of the U Time gym chain?

Currently our clubs are in Hong Kong and Thailand, with deals done in the UK and a number of South East Asian countries for more sites.

Our European launch is an exciting opportunity for us to tie U Time in with our True Student accommodation offering.

We're bringing best in class wellness solutions for all students and outside this we'll be looking to set up franchise partnerships and full-owned gyms.

Why bring a new gym chain to market at this time?

Never has health and fitness been more at the forefront – what an amazing time to bring a new and energetic brand to the market.

What gap do you see?

There's always a gap for brands that offer great experiences. We're looking to bring our exciting brand to new places and areas, giving the community more great choices.

Who will run U Time?

U Time started in Asia and we've now hired an amazing team, lead by Ray Bolivar to develop the brand.

Ray has experience operating, expanding and innovating within the world's top fitness brands from New York City to most major capital cities in Asia.

He brings three decades of experience in the health and wellness

U Time goes global

Bricks Group has announced it will launch its U Time gym brand into the UK, with the first site earmarked for Swansea

industry to build, restructure and grow club operations in a scalable format with sustainable results.

We're also on the lookout for great people to help us expand across Europe.

What will the philosophy of the U Time brand be?

It's not just a beautiful box of equipment – U Time extends beyond the four walls of a gym, enabling guests to train anywhere, offering innovative solutions that keep them on track to achieving their wellness goals – we recognise health, sleep, mindfulness and nutrition are important to wellness, so we make sure we offer a balanced view of these.

Who will fund this initiative?

We are self-funded, U Time is a really exciting addition to the Bricks portfolio of brands.

How do you personally feel about the venture?

Excited and optimistic.

What floor area will you favour?

With clever design we can look at anything as low as 2,000sq ft and upwards.

What elements will the clubs include?

Strength, cardio and functional training with the offer of group classes and personal training.

How will you use tech?

We want people exercising whether it's in our space or out of it. There's a huge focus on tech to give our community the tools to help train, eat, rest and recover smarter.

We also have an online training app that guides the training journey wherever members are, manages their memberships and enables the booking of PT sessions and gym classes.

What age groups and demographics will be targeted?

14 and upwards. We take an inclusive approach, so we don't focus on age, we focus on how we make our members feel, you can't put an age on that!



U Time gyms will be owner-operated and franchised

PHOTO: BROOKS GROUP

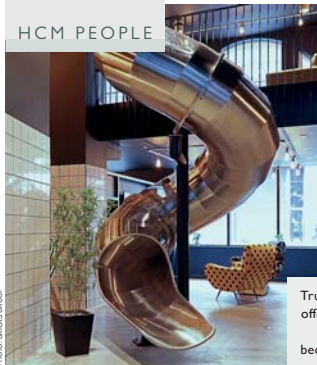


PHOTO: BROOKS GROUP



True Student accommodation offers games rooms, cinemas, social spaces and study bedroom suites with kitchens

In addition to physical wellbeing, student mental health has always been important, but now even more so, which is why we're the only student accommodation provider to have an in-house professional advisor.

Dominique Thompson, an award-winning and widely-published student mental health expert, with more than 20 years' clinical experience caring for students, develops our unique strategies to identify concerns and provide direction, care and support to both our students and our staff.

Will you add more wellness elements?

We're tirelessly working to stay up to date with trends and believe what we currently have is a comprehensive package. However, we're always listening, looking and learning – trying to find new services to offer our student guests and are looking to talk to people who have interesting ideas.

The bigger picture for us is to look beyond our own business and champion wellness for the whole student sector, encouraging the industry and partners to come together, to have a collective mindset when it comes to innovative products, services and experiences; we believe this is the best way of supporting students in the longer term.

What's the commercial rationale behind the wellness integration?

It was less of a commercial decision and more of an essential component – it was a must-have of the brand.

True provides the very best experience for our student guests and by making this a core part of the True Life experience, we translate this into commercial gain by way of higher occupancy and rates. To be the leading brand for students is a commercial objective and wellness is an essential part of this.

PHOTO: BROOKS GROUP



How is True different from other student offerings?

Importantly, our number one focus is not just on being different.

Recognising we're in the 'hospitality' sector, and relentlessly focusing on guest experience has enabled True to establish itself as a premium brand in a fairly vanilla marketplace.

It's apparent from our winning the 2018 Property Week "Best Student Halls of Residence in the UK" award – for a development in Glasgow's West End – that we bring something exceptional to the marketplace. Subsequent awards for guest experience and staff commitment demonstrate this further.

We're proud to be leading the student accommodation sector in areas such as quality of accommodation, guest experience, investment in wellbeing and specifically, student mental health support.



Bricks Group is on-site with new developments across the UK in the student accommodation, residential and gym markets. Shown here, the site in Swansea

We're targeting an additional 30,000 beds over the next five years, through a mix of the group's own developments and third party projects

The True brand is as important internally as it is for our guests and gives our teams a strong sense of purpose.

Ultimately, we want our guests to have a fun and rewarding experience while they're with True and we wish them well going forward.

How many True developments are you planning?

True is an integral part of the Bricks Group, and the group's development division has delivered around 2,700 beds so far, with another 1,000+ in the pipeline on secured sites.

In addition to managing the group's student assets, True has now launched its own 'asset-light' platform and manages developments for third party owners and developers.

We've just secured a 1,000-bed development in Liverpool, where the brand will provide the award-winning experience to student guests,

as well as full asset management, development management and operational management.

We're targeting an additional 30,000 beds over the next five years, through a mix of the group's own developments and third party projects.

What generational changes do you expect to see in student populations over the next 10 years?

We're always conscious of striking the right balance between focusing on the here and now and looking at the future. Trends come and go, but there are big themes that remain consistent; the clear and well-established link between great wellbeing – both physical and psychological – and great academic performance, the need to support students with a 'home away from home' feeling and helping students to feel connected, while recognising and respecting that they're all individuals.



We're about to launch Thrive, a class-leading co-living platform and we'll continue our growth by developing world-class branded hotels. We love to explore anything that has a roof



The goal is to ensure students are the most supported people in the True Student business, says Prickett

Our goal is always to ensure students are the most supported people in our business, it's why wellness for us is not just about looking fit, it's a whole spectrum. It's about feeling the best you've ever felt in mind and body and it comes back to the True brand mantra: "It's not just what we do, it's how we make you feel". It's this that we see standing the test of time today and over the next 10 years and beyond.

Within that period, there will certainly be lots of processes and technologies that will influence all generations. Our challenge as a business is bringing them down to a human level so we preserve that human connection and feeling that we uniquely provide to our students.

How are your developments funded?

Bricks Group is a 100 per cent privately-owned business and to date we've invested more than £200m in the True developments themselves, together with several millions of pounds in creating the brand and platform and assembling our brilliant management team.

How has the pandemic changed your plans and direction?

Hardly at all! We recognise and have experienced the obvious challenges in these unfortunate times. This year every student operator and hospitality owner is experiencing what we hope to be short-term challenges, but we welcome rising to these.

In fact, we're in the process of securing two new additional development sites and will continue our expansion as planned. We still recognise the long-term appeal of the sector and the need to provide students with world-class living facilities during their time at university.



PHOTO: BRICKS GROUP

Is True competing with local gyms by taking the £20/month they would allocate to a gym membership into their rent for True?

This isn't intended to take away market share or disadvantage local businesses, but is aimed squarely at our student guests being able to take advantage of the convenience, choice, privacy and cost-saving benefits of having a gym as part of our True Life experience.

I'm in no doubt that we have student guests that also have memberships at other gyms, and part of the wider Bricks Group strategy being discussed is the launch of a stand-alone fitness brand in the UK.

Which is most profitable – student accommodation, hotel or co-living space and how do these relate to each other in the portfolio?

We don't just look at the individual assets alone, but in operating across all three sectors; we identify where the needs are and develop growth plans from there. We operate a particularly buoyant business, but what is more profitable today, is not always more profitable tomorrow. The skill is in anticipating the trends. For example, if you look at the student sector over the last 3-5 years, we see record growth in asset transactions of more than £5bn last year

and we only see the sector growing further and faster, and in particular, with great brands.

What's the longer-term plan?

We're expanding the True brand services to include asset management, development management and operational management to third party developers and owners, and we're looking to scale it across the UK as well as overseas. We are soon to launch Thrive, which will be a class-leading co-living platform and we'll continue our growth by developing world-class branded hotels.

We love to explore anything that has a roof and offers an exceptional experience, so we're exploring various other sectors that include 'built-to-rent' and a new gym chain, as well as any other ideas that people may have. We are always on the look-out for opportunities where we can add value with like-minded, creative and authentic partners.

Tell us about the Bricks team

We never forget that at the heart of our business is the people with whom we work and the relationships we form, both within the company and outside of our teams. We work very hard to nurture these and we've got a great team at Bricks Group that makes all of this happen, dedicated to creating amazing guest experiences and sector-leading brands. ●



COME JOIN THE PARTY

Excite Live



Welcome to the world of creative fitness, where exercise and fun merge to change the way we train. The way people train is changing as the demand for content and experience has exploded and this will shape the next evolution of training. Technogym is leading the way with exciting new training experiences through its innovative cardio range, Excite Live.

A seven-piece range, Excite Live has revolutionised training, thanks to the Technogym Live platform which uses artificial intelligence technology and immersive content to give training an advanced level of personalisation.

Excite Live is designed around four key pillars – tailored training variety, connectivity, 'space-savvy' and sustainability – to offer a meaningful, engaging, and personal training experience.

Tailored training – personalise the experience

The advanced digital user interface, Technogym Live, inspires people to embrace exercise and make it a part of their daily lives to achieve results.

Using AI technology, members have access to all their favourite apps, training stats and preferences all in one place providing a personalised experience as unique as them.

Not forgetting the universal wireless smartphone charging – a much-needed feature for on-the-go members.

Mobile connectivity – your world with you

Members can go about their daily life while exercising, by logging into the Mywellness app via their Apple or Samsung smartwatch. This will open their favourite social media apps, offer suggested workouts and present them with their training stats.

Here we explore two operators adopting Excite Live



Ignite Fitness aims to be fun, dynamic and welcoming

Ignite Fitness

Ignite Fitness has taken inspiration from around the world to create a club with stunning décor and unforgettable experiences.

"We believe a gym should have a personality, with an atmosphere that gets people going," says owner Andrew Charalambous. "We were clear about the experience we wanted to create – a gym space that is fun, dynamic and always welcoming."

"Technogym completely understood what we needed as a brand and helped us to design and bring my vision to life," he says. "The functionality and connectivity of the Excite Live equipment is incredible, it looks amazing and is so easy for people to use. The equipment even gave us back some floor space, because the new design has a smaller footprint."



OUTDOORS

Train anywhere in the world

Explore breathtaking scenic locations that will inspire you to go the extra mile. Let natural and urban landscapes captivate you while working out



TECHNOGYM ROUTINES

Challenge yourself

Step out your comfort zone with advanced HIIT workouts, enjoy a variety of movements and exercises where the intensity is automatically set up



TECHNOGYM SESSIONS

Train with a pro

Enjoy a personalised training experience designed around your personal training goals. The virtual trainer will guide you through one-on-one sessions

Welcome to the world of creative fitness, where exercise and fun merge to change the way we train

Space-savvy – rethinking design

Excite line offers the best ratio of floor footprint to user training space, giving members more room to move freely and achieve their full potential.

Excite Run has a ground-breaking new design that provides everything members love about running, while taking up 30 per cent less space and providing 13 per cent more space for running and exercising.

Energy savvy – friends with the planet

The new Excite line represents the next generation of sustainable equipment. The fully-connected Human Powered is the first generation of smart equipment that doesn't require electricity or batteries to run the 10" LCD touchscreen, complete with wi-fi, Bluetooth and onboard innovative content.

DISCOVER MORE www.technogym.com/hcm



Excite Live creates memorable experiences at Club Nova

Club Nova

The goal for Club Nova, part of Denbighshire Leisure, was to provide high-quality, accessible leisure opportunities, while creating memorable fitness experiences.

"Excite Live is truly cutting-edge, we've always been early adopters and the product allows us to fully utilise Technogym's astounding functionality and software, adding immense value to our customer experience," says MD Jamie Groves. "With a varied membership base, the Excite Live range helps us give everyone a memorable experience with so much added value, whatever their training background or goal."



Everyone's talking about Weight loss

Consumer research has shown a population-wide surge in interest in reducing lockdown weight gain and getting fitter. Is the industry ready and willing to put its hand up to help people with weight loss? Kath Hudson reports

After the challenges of the last year, there's never been a better time to recruit members, but now clubs are fully open, lockdown life is hopefully behind us and there's a strong appetite for getting healthy, is the industry willing to commit to offering obesity management and weight control services?

This isn't about the aesthetics of a beautiful body, it's about health and taking the strain off the NHS.

The obesity epidemic had been running out of control and the pandemic is preying on those carrying the most weight. Research from WW (Weight Watchers) found that 41 per cent of Brits admitted to gaining weight during the restrictions and 65 per cent put on half a stone or more.

Historically the industry has been reluctant to make big claims in this area, but is now the time to get properly skilled up and make a splash by launching weight management programmes? We get insights from the experts.

Kelly-Anne Stead

Mytime Active


This is the perfect time for the industry to support people into healthier lifestyles through weight management programmes. We're seeing a real recognition of the health benefits of being a healthy weight, with customers saying they want to lose weight to be in better shape to fight any illness, not just COVID-19.

Since 2012, Mytime Active has been running programmes commissioned by local authorities to help them target communities where lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and cancer were a big issue.

In the light of COVID-19, we're adapting this to provide a fun, non-threatening product which will appeal to the deconditioned market, or people with a BMI over 30.

Our proprietary programme, *Theory of Change*, has four pathways to wellbeing: BeActive – moving more; EatWell – a balanced diet; BePositive – develop good self esteem and the confidence to make the changes you want and BeTogether – buddies to support you and confirm you matter to your community.

We don't make false promises about shedding the pounds and inches as quickly as possible, but we do guarantee customers will feel better in themselves and be in better shape by the end.

A portrait of Kelly-Anne Stead, a woman with dark hair tied back, smiling. She is wearing a light-colored jacket. The photo is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping the text area.

Mytime Active is supporting people with its *Theory of Change* programme

In our programme in the Midlands, of more than 3,200 completers of a 16 week course, an average of 60 per cent achieved 5 per cent weight loss or more. Plus they had long-term improvements in self-confidence and overall wellbeing.

For operators wanting to move into this area, the digital shift during lockdown has to be applied to this product too, so you need to offer a hybrid programme. Secondly, it's all about the aftercare: the support over the following six or 12 months is critical to getting customers to do regular exercise, build activity and good eating habits into their lives.



It's all about the aftercare: the support over the following six or 12 months is critical



I've had 360 patients who have each lost an average of 10.5 kilos and 98 patients whose Type 2 diabetes has gone into remission

Dr David Unwin

GP, diet expert, author and speaker

For 25 years, I nagged my patients to lose weight and used to despair when they didn't, but once I understood physiology and nutrition, I became much more effective in helping them.

I've since had 360 patients who have each lost an average of 10.5 kilos and 98 patients whose Type 2 diabetes has gone into remission and they've been able to come off their medication.

I see obesity not as a calorie problem, but as a hormonal issue: you need to stop the body from storing sugar as fat and teach it to burn its fat stores. The secret to this is insulin regulation, which in my opinion can be best achieved with a low carb diet.

Insulin is the hormone produced by the pancreas to get rid of sugar in the blood. When we eat too much sugar it gets pushed by insulin into the belly and the liver, where the sugar is converted into fat, causing weight gain. Eventually this can cause disease – most commonly Type 2 diabetes.

If you have a few biscuits then your blood sugar goes up. Insulin then does its job and brings the blood sugar back down, but then you feel hungry and often crave sugar,

so you have another snack and the cycle starts again. Meanwhile a lot of that sugar may be turned into fat.

Insulin also shuts off our ability to burn fat to access energy reserves and it stimulates appetite, so in our modern junk food environment when we're always snacking, it's easy to get caught in a vicious circle of being constantly hungry.

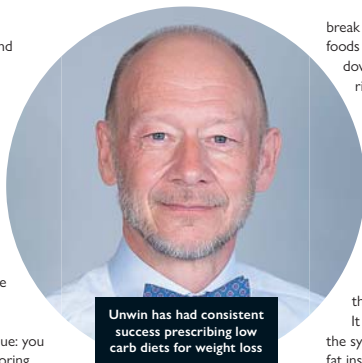
If you try to lose weight by cutting calories, but continue to eat sugar and high carb food, weight loss is hard work: you will always feel hungry and willpower alone won't be enough to sustain it. What you need to do is

break the cycle, by not eating sugary foods or the starchy foods that break down into sugar, such as porridge, rice, cereals and potatoes.

In our GP practice the key to weight loss is to reduce hunger by eating low carb and satiating foods, so the body adjusts to burning the fat reserves. The little bits of fat which break down and go into the blood to fuel cells as an alternative to sugar are called ketones, leading to the origin of the 'keto' diet.

It takes a couple of weeks for the system to adjust to burning fat instead of sugar and during this time it's important to drink more fluids and eat a little more salt to avoid "keto flu." Anyone on diabetic medication needs to be under the guidance of their doctor when following a diet which changes their blood sugars.

I've discovered both with so many of my patients and myself that if you eat a low carb or keto diet then you lose weight more easily and may keep it off for years. Partly because of less hunger I find we get results which are easier to sustain. Other advantages are mental clarity, improved energy and speaking personally I need 90 minutes less sleep a night!



Unwin has had consistent success prescribing low carb diets for weight loss

Duncan Jefford

Everyone Active

People have now realised health is wealth and are respecting the need to be active and healthy.

To respond to the expected increased demand for weight management advice, Everyone Active has collaborated with WW (Weight Watchers Reimagined) to offer a 360-degree solution to mental and physical wellness.

The partnership will give both WW and Everyone Active members a substantial annual saving on memberships at our leisure centres as well as the myWW+ app, while WW will also be hosting weekly workshops at many centres, with attendees able to take advantage of special activity sessions.

Those embarking on the programme will receive personalised nutrition plans, workshops (virtual and live) to sustain motivation and track progress, 24/7 live coaching to address challenges, recipes and workout plans, a gym membership, goal and activity tracker, access to Everyone On Demand, sleep and hydration tracking and access

to the Headspace app (via WW) and Mindshine app (via Everyone Active), as mental health is crucial to starting any wellness journey.

Now centres are open again, we're expecting to see a cross-customer uptake of 10 per cent, as well as attracting new customers to both brands to benefit from the dual offer and from having the ultimate support package.

Jefford anticipates a 10 per cent takeup of the weight management programme by members



Everyone Active has collaborated with WW to offer a 360-degree solution to mental and physical wellness



There's no doubt the leisure and fitness sector should play a central role in the prevention and treatment of obesity

Professor Greg Whyte

uk active scientific advisory board

Obesity and being overweight is a complex bio-psycho-socio-cultural disease which requires a multifaceted approach to its prevention and treatment. There is no one single or simple solution to addressing this challenge. The belief that changing a single possible cause in isolation is misguided and doomed to failure.

While there is a highly vocal movement laying the blame solely at the door of diet, this blinkered approach fails to recognise the complex nature of obesity and, as a result, is unlikely to be successful in situations where people want to control weight gain in the long-term.

Physical activity in isolation is also unlikely to provide a sustainable solution. We must take a comprehensive, multi-sector approach, addressing the range of bio-psycho-socio-cultural factors, if we are to be successful in addressing one of the most pressing public health problems facing society.

Accordingly, the leisure and fitness sector must look to provide a service which encompasses all aspects of this complex issue through collaboration, education and training.

The promotion of physical activity goes well beyond weight management and is linked to a reduction in all-cause mortality and improved quality of life, however, understanding the complex nature of obesity and the parallel service required to deliver success, is important in

the delivery of services which will support, rather than alienate, clients.

The COVID-19 pandemic and recent data published by NHS England have highlighted the urgent need to address this issue.

There's no doubt the sector should play a central role in the prevention and treatment of obesity and to make this a reality, operators must target the provision of appropriate facilities, specialist classes, skilled staff and a multi-agency, collaborative approach.



PHOTO: GREG WHITE

Whyte says this is a complex challenge requiring a sophisticated multi-agency approach



We've partnered with the American Council on Exercise to extend the reach of our coaching methodology and create a new generation of coaches

Jason Crowe

Precision Nutrition

Everyone knows they should eat healthily and exercise, but many well-intentioned people fail to follow through on this.

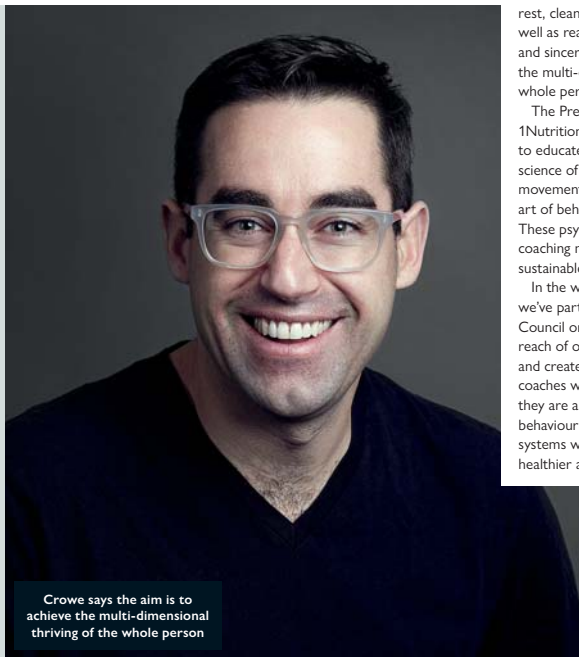
We teach coaches to find out the problem behind the problem. Where does the individual need most help? What are they already doing well that can be built on?

These answers help us decide where coaches should focus. It could be nutrition or exercise, but it could also be sleep quality, stress levels or mindset. Each one can improve the others and multiply the ability to make progress.

Achieving good health comes from a balanced diet of fresh, whole foods, sufficient exercise, genuine rest, clean air and clean water, as well as real human connection and sincere emotional expression: the multi-dimensional thriving of a whole person in their whole life.

The Precision Nutrition Level 1 Nutrition Certification is designed to educate students not only on the science of nutrition, sleep, stress, movement and recovery, but also the art of behaviour change coaching. These psychology concepts and coaching methodologies help create sustainable change for clients.

In the wake of the pandemic, we've partnered with the American Council on Exercise to extend the reach of our coaching methodology and create a new generation of coaches who will meet clients where they are and help them change their behaviour and establish personal systems which support a new healthier and sustainable lifestyle.



Crowe says the aim is to achieve the multi-dimensional thriving of the whole person

PHOTO: PRECISION NUTRITION

Building back will take different tactics depending on location and business type

GROW STRONGER



As the industry enters a phase of regrowth following the loss of members during lockdown, it's crucial to understand customer acquisition cost versus the lifetime value of each customer, as Paul Bedford and Jamie Owens explain

Despite losing between 20-50 per cent of members during multiple lockdowns, most operators have the same or less to spend on marketing than pre-COVID, so the industry needs to run leaner while still creating growth.

Every gym in the UK is effectively a scale-up business at present, meaning operators need to grow without throwing money at the challenge.

It's vital to think about what information is important to a growth business – it's not necessarily about more data, it's about having access to the data that's relevant to the challenges and opportunities your operation faces right now.

Imagine you're on *Dragons' Den* assessing a business – what data points would matter most? The good news is you wouldn't need to guess because there's a standard set of metrics many investors use, called Unit Economics, that helps you understand a number of key things, such as how much it costs to win a new customer, how much you generate from that customer and how quickly your investment pays back.



Research with a mid-market chain showed that after seven months members were spending up to an additional 50% of their monthly fee on secondary spend within the club

Unit Economics uses three data points:

● **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)**

How much money you spend – on average – getting a single new customer. During a recent survey of 600 gyms, more than half reported they didn't know their CAC.

● **Lifetime Value (LTV)**

How much money a single customer generates for you, on average, over the time they use your services. This metric is becoming more of a regular measure for the health and fitness sector.

● **Payback Period**

How long it takes to recover the money spent on customer acquisition. This is important as it helps you understand how fast you can spend money on acquiring new customers without creating a cashflow hole and is required to make informed marketing decisions.

Customer Acquisition Cost

How to figure it out

A simplistic way to do this is listing out your business costs related to winning new customers and dividing that by the number of members you sign in that same period – one calendar month or one quarter, for example.

It's important to include the cost of all business activities connected to customer acquisition, such as advertising, posters, local radio ads, print materials, Google ads, staff – including the time it takes to tour prospects and any commission – and free joiner gifts.

Factor in discounts too and make sure you allow for seasonality, which will impact the effectiveness of your customer acquisition programme.

You can't include general fixed costs, such as wear and tear, rent and rates, so it's important to determine the type of business you want to run. The day-to-day costs of running your club must be kept separate from the costs of acquiring members.



Provide a five-star experience and you'll convert more prospects

Lifetime Value

How to figure it out

Lifetime Value is talked about in two ways; member tenure and member yield or ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) and comes down to how many months, on average, one customer stays and how much they spend during that time.

The average tenure of members can be skewed by sleeper members. Check for any sleepers when doing your calculations and remove them from your dataset to ensure you're working from accurate figures.

Next is the average revenue per member, which you multiply by the tenure to get an average Lifetime Value. You need to calculate Lifetime Value by looking at what members are actually paying per month – not your advertised rate. Any membership discount you give is actually an acquisition cost and must be added to your cost of acquisition.

The longer a member stays, the more they get into the habit of buying a coffee or grabbing a snack and seeing these costs as part of their visit experience.

It's difficult to calculate this revenue, so exclude it for now, but bear in mind the impact retention can have on your members' lifetime value across all areas where they spend with you. This is also true of membership referrals.

Payback period

How to figure it out

Once you know your customer acquisition costs and average revenue per month you can work out how many months, on average, it takes for the member to be a customer in order to create a profit.

A return on your investment enables you to reinvest money into winning another customer, and this payback period is what indicates how fast you can be spending money.

In simple terms, if it costs £50 to acquire a member and they pay £50 a month membership, your payback period is one month, which means you can spend £50 again next month to win another customer; although note that you are getting no margin.

However, if your acquisition cost is £100 and the average membership is £25 per month, your payback period is four months. This means you need to either wait four months before reinvesting, raise investment or take on debt so you can accelerate growth by winning customers faster than it pays back.

The alternative is to reduce your customer acquisition costs and/or increase your membership prices, so payback is quicker.

Markers of success

In pretty much any sector, a Customer Acquisition Cost to Lifetime Value (CAC:LTV) ratio of 1:3 indicates your business is growing effectively. This means if you're spending £30 acquiring a new customer and they generate £90 of lifetime value you're spending about the right amount.

If you're closer to a 1:1 ratio (ie, you're spending £30 to get a customer who generates £30) you're spending too



CAC:LTV

1:1



Reduce marketing costs,
focus on customer
conversion and tenure

1:3



Balanced marketing spend

1:5



Spend more on marketing
to accelerate growth

CAC = Customer Acquisition Cost
LTV = Lifetime Value

much acquiring new customers and need to reduce your costs or increase your lifetime value. However, if you're at 1:5 you're not spending enough on growing your business.

Although it sounds impressive to have a higher CAC to LTV ratio, it probably means you're missing out on accelerating your speed of growth and can afford to invest more in marketing.

Offsetting member losses

There are several schools of thought around offsetting the loss of member volume that some clubs are experiencing as we come out of lockdown, with various solutions being proposed. These include:

1. Finding cheaper ways to acquire customers

For example, tap into a new social media platform you haven't used before, work to get more positive customer reviews online or source a new marketing partner.

2. Increasing your prices

This will enable you to operate a similar size business

with fewer members, but you need to be confident that this increase is competitive and will land well with your existing members and not deter new ones.

3. Reducing prices

This will enable you to attract more customers and increase member volume.

Which route you take should depend on local market conditions and competition. The 'price increase' strategy needs to be supported by exceptional facilities and services. The 'price decrease' strategy means you will have to significantly increase the volume of sales to bring in more revenue and that can be challenging.

You'll need a solid plan to source new customers and unless you're already in the low cost sector, it could also bring you into competition with budget gyms, which have the economies of scale to run their businesses more cheaply.

Added to that, when companies discount, they often lose tenure, as the type of person that joins on

the back of a discount generally isn't a person that would have joined or stayed at your normal rate.

Many people ask whether retention is more important than sales. They're both vital for a successful business, but think of it like this: if you have 1,000 customers that stay for three months you'd have to sell an additional 3,000 memberships to achieve the same revenue when compared with 1,000 customers that stay 12 months.

Growing secondary spend

Developing other revenue streams can help offset the immediate loss of members, while increasing spend-per-member can be especially valuable where there's resistance to membership price increases.

Increasing secondary spend has the added benefit of leading to increased revenues across the board as your membership numbers rebound by making each member more valuable.

Upsell existing members with new services, such as weight management programmes, food boxes, coffee club memberships and fitness testing. Doing so will also have the benefit of improving your overall service and driving retention, so the business will do better and members will be happier.

Research carried out with a mid-market chain showed that after seven months' membership, members were spending up to an additional 50 per cent of their monthly fee on secondary spend within the club.

Play to your strengths

It's important to recognise your strengths and weaknesses. Fitness businesses have a deep understanding of health and wellbeing and the benefits of exercise and provide amazing customer experiences through this knowledge, but you may feel you are light on skills in areas such as customer acquisition.

If this is the case, focus your energy on your core strengths. By providing a five-star experience you'll convert more prospects, get more referrals, encourage more secondary spend, work more efficiently and in doing so, reduce acquisition costs and increase lifetime value, as members will naturally stay longer, due to the excellent service you're offering.

Outside your core competencies, implement the best systems you can get to help your business function with leaner resources. For example, if it's beyond your scope, you don't need to build a digital home workout platform when you could partner with an expert offering the same thing and when it comes to your customer acquisition programme, you may want to outsource this, by selecting the strongest partners.

The wise adage says that if you keep doing the same things you'll keep getting the same results – if you're lucky. The risk is that you'll see diminishing returns as other operators become more competitive, so now is the time to embrace new ways of working as you scale-up your business for post-lockdown growth. ●

About the authors

Paul Bedford is a health club retention specialist, while Jamie Owens is director of fitness partnerships at Hussle



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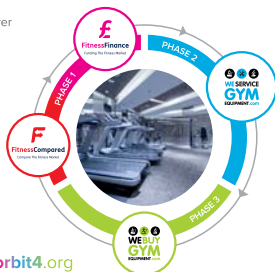
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In the frame

As the UK's first dedicated development framework for leisure comes to the end of its initial four-year term, Jamie Groves, MD of Denbighshire Leisure and Sarah Watts, CEO of Alliance Leisure, discuss the impact

Why did you launch the Leisure Framework?

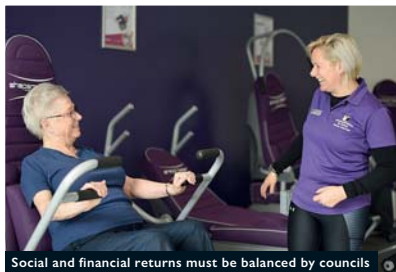
Jamie: Launched in 2017 by Denbighshire County Council and managed by Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, the UK Leisure Framework was designed to help public sector bodies transform their leisure offer with successful and sustainable facilities.

It was born out of the success of our first partnership with Alliance Leisure, where we spent almost £10m upgrading facilities after years of under-investment. Our positive experience of the process led us to develop the framework and appoint Alliance Leisure as leisure development partner, to help other local authorities, by removing the burdens of public procurement.

How is it benefiting local authorities?

Sarah: The UK's public sector procurement process is one of the longest and most expensive in the EU. By making the process quicker and easier, the framework makes the development of public sector leisure facilities more efficient and affordable.

The framework adopts a full service approach, supporting all elements that contribute to a



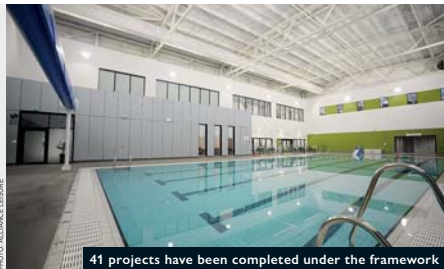
Social and financial returns must be balanced by councils

successful, sustainable development, including design, business planning, funding, construction and marketing. Most other frameworks don't have such scope, focusing instead on individual elements.

The focus on reducing costs and improving efficiencies means local authorities can dedicate more of their budget to the development.

This approach also helps to mitigate investment risk, as working with experts in leisure regeneration – and maximising efficiencies at every stage of the development – helps ensure the finished project delivers desired outcomes and creates income-generating opportunities, which in turn, drive sustainability.

Jamie: The process is also completely transparent, so local authorities can be certain of the costs, which gives them the confidence to invest. Thanks to the framework, we've seen that confidence grow, with £144m committed investment in public sector leisure facilities over the last four years.



41 projects have been completed under the framework



PHOTO: ALLIANCE LEISURE

Operators must consider all types of facility provision



PHOTO: ALLIANCE LEISURE

The aim is to create self-sustaining facilities

Completed projects	41
Completed project questionnaires	120
Committed investment	£144m
Projects underway	12

What impact has the framework had?

Sarah: The framework has ensured the successful completion of vital projects designed to deliver lasting impact. Many would never have gone ahead without it, as the local authorities quite simply wouldn't have been able to afford to deliver them.

Projects range from installing the new sports pitches, such as the first 3G pitches in Anglesey, to transforming facilities at scale, as we helped Inverclyde Leisure to do, investing £2.6m in three leisure centres to achieve a 75 per cent increase in net income and 51 per cent rise in membership.

Jamie: To date, 41 projects have completed, with 12 more underway. Regardless of size or cost, all projects are designed to impact local health and social outcomes by creating healthier communities, while also being economically sustainable to ensure local authorities achieve their income targets.

How can it help local authorities?

Jamie: These are challenging times for public sector leisure. The pandemic has highlighted just how important physical activity is for our mental and physical health, yet Sport England figures show that COVID-19 has had a profound effect on people's activity levels, with those from black, Asian and minority ethnic and lower socio-economic groups disproportionately affected.

The need for public leisure will be greater than ever post-pandemic, but facilities have to be much more relevant if they're to create better social and

UK Leisure Framework: example projects

COMPLETED

- St Helens Council, Newton-Le-Willows Leisure Centre £4.2m
- West Suffolk Council, Newmarket Leisure Centre £1.8m
- Monmouthshire County Council, Monmouth Leisure Centre £7.4m
- Kirklees Active Leisure, Batley Sports & Tennis Centre £1.5m
- Conwy County Council, Stadiwm Zip World £0.25m
- Denbighshire County Council, Rhyl Leisure Centre £1m
- Denbighshire County Council, SC2 £15m

ON-SITE

- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Dudley Leisure Centre £17.4m
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Halesowen Leisure Centre £8.4m
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Crystal Leisure Centre £4.1m
- Brentwood Council, King George's Playing Fields £8m
- Wiltshire Council, Melksham Community Campus £14m
- South Somerset Council, Chard Leisure Centre £14m
- Sevenoaks District Council, White Oak Leisure Centre £20m

financial returns for local authorities. By mitigating the risk and making developments easier and more cost-effective, the framework will allow councils to invest in the right provision to bring economic, health and social benefits to their communities.

Sarah: Local authorities will need to broaden their offerings, both indoors and outdoors, to create active environments that can be used by as many members of the community as possible to ensure value for money. They must consider splash pads, zip wires, outdoor play and parkour to really invigorate their leisure spaces and generate returns.

At its heart, the UK Leisure Framework is a proven vehicle for delivering inspiring schemes that increase opportunities for physical activity. ●

Alliance Leisure: www.allianceleisure.co.uk

The Framework: www.leisureframework.co.uk

Alpert has dedicated decades of his life to supporting people with special needs

Mike Alpert

Kath Hudson talks to the thought-leader and trailblazer

While you were CEO of The Claremont Club in California, you introduced a number of exercise as medicine programmes. How did this come about?

For me, the inspiration first came in the early 90s, when I had a club in Oregon and worked with a five-year-old who had spina bifida. Seeing the powerful impact that coming to the club had on him changed my life and made me want to do more.

Years later, after I had moved back to California and joined The Claremont Club, I saw Julie Main give a speech at IHRSA, about the work she was doing at her clubs in Santa Barbara. I asked her if she would share her template and allow us to customise it.

The first programme we launched was the Living Well after Cancer programme, in 2006. It focused on women who had had breast cancer, although there were a few with other cancers. This evolved into a partnership with Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center and Robert & Beverly Lewis Family Cancer Care Center.

We offered a twice-weekly, 13-week programme, with cardio, strength, conditioning, nutritional advice and oncology massage. We soon realised all these women had families which also needed support, so we extended free club membership to all of them. Altogether we helped more than 1,340 women and their families, including eight small men's groups.

Following the success, we went on to launch our Pediatric and Young Adult Cancer programme. Again this treated the entire family at no cost. It was a year-long programme which met twice a week, but they could use the club at any time. Everything we offered at the club was free including 13 weeks of summer camps, field trips, Kids' Friday Night Out, Breakfast with Santa and each child could bring their best friend as well.

How were these programmes funded?

It all came off the bottom line. However, the programmes ended up making us more money, because our customers really liked what we



The facilities have specialist equipment for spinal injury rehabilitation



Staff are trained in disciplines such as Patterned Neural Activity Recruitment

ON THE COVER

The Perfect Step Foundation

After the sale of The Claremont Club in August 2020, The Perfect Step Foundation, headed up by Hal Hargrave, relocated to a brand new 7,000sq ft site in Pomona, California. The new site allows for more space to expand services and the addition of further therapies including mental health support, chiropractic and acupuncture.

The Perfect Step Foundation leverages the latest data and discoveries to push the limits of what is possible for people living with paralysis, in order to help individuals live their healthiest life, with fewer secondary complications, increased independence, fewer or no medications and a better mindset.

All exercises are performed out of the wheelchair to build strength: the body responds to the stimulation of weight-bearing and sensing gravity. The science of Patterned Neural Activity Recruitment is used to reorganise the nervous system and/or rebuild pathways in the brain to get more tangible outcomes than traditional therapy. "Essentially, we are trying to re-create functional movement patterns over and over again to promote neuroplasticity," says Hargrave.

He also stresses the importance of physical activity in maintaining the health of the individuals he works with. Although they can never guarantee they can help people to walk again, he says 80 per cent of The Perfect Step clients regain some sort of

You will not find a bigger believer in the notion that exercise is the most powerful form of preventative medicine in the world

PHOTO: THE PERFECT STEP



Hal Hargrave, head of The Perfect Step Foundation

function below the level of their injury.

"What we do guarantee is that for those who are committed to our programme, their recovery and an exercise regimen, they will get more healthy and reduce their secondary complications, while increasing quality of life and independence," says Hargrave.

The benefits include better blood pressure stabilisation, increased bone density, reduced bladder infections, pressure sores and hospitalisations due to the injury and improved mental and emotional strength.

"You will not find a bigger believer in the notion that exercise is the most powerful form of preventative medicine in the world," says Hargrave. "Through exercise all my secondary complications have been reduced because of the components of load-bearing being able to keep my bones strong, circulation efforts which reduces my susceptibility to blood pressure issues and blood clotting, as well as moving urine out of my bladder to ensure less likelihood of bladder infections and exercise which promotes muscle contractions, thus putting more fat on my body to prevent pressure sores and joint stabilisation while reducing my pain."

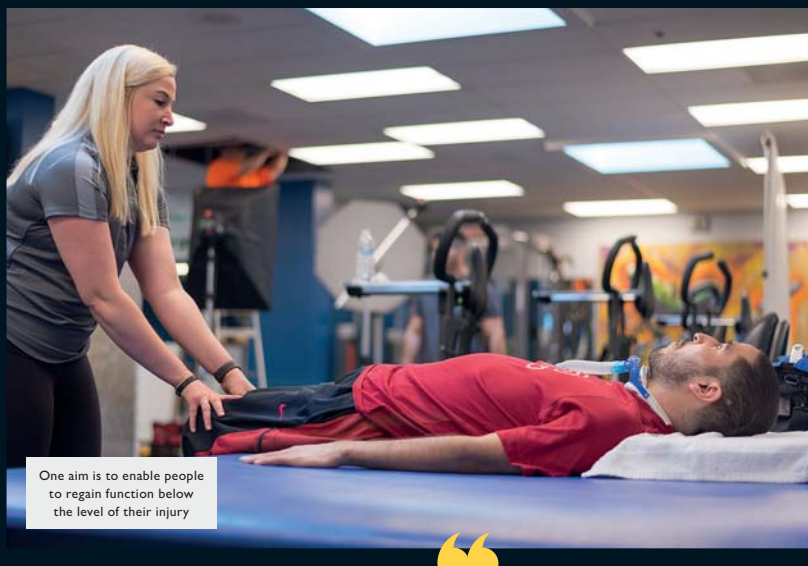
The programme is currently engaged in a multi-year IRB-approved medical research study conducted by Kaiser Permanente, to assess the impact. The results will be used to help fight for legislative reform.

The Perfect Step has also launched a programme to train others to become Certified Paralysis Recovery Specialists. To undertake the training, candidates need to have a four-year degree in relation to the human body, such as sports science, human biology or exercise physiology.

PHOTO: THE PERFECT STEP



The team gives one to one support



One aim is to enable people to regain function below the level of their injury

- ▶ were doing and the culture it created. Our member attrition had always been 21 to 24 per cent, but we saw this drop to 15 per cent once we started running these programmes. When we questioned our customers on what they liked about the club, they all mentioned the sense of shared values and the work we were engaged with – helping people who were in dire need.

How did the Spinal Cord and Paralysis programme come about?

In 2007, my daughter's 17-year-old friend, Hal Hargrave, suffered a spinal cord injury which left him paralysed from the neck down. When we visited him in the acute rehabilitation hospital he was being treated at, I told his parents that when he finished his transitional living care we would get him back to the club that he had grown up in and begin working with him there: taking him out of a sick care environment and back into an electric and wellcare environment. After making that promise to his family, I was not really sure what I could do with him, but I was committed to trying.

I went back to the club and told the board of directors that I needed a second pilates studio, which would give me 800sq ft to work with Hal.




When we questioned our customers on what they liked about The Claremont Club, they all mentioned that we were helping people who were in dire need

Then I sent my wellness director and two of my PTs to train at Project Walk in Carlsbad to learn cutting edge, non-traditional methods for treating SCIs: using load-bearing exercises and Patterned Neural Activity Recruitment which reorganises the nervous system and/or rebuilds pathways in the brain to get more tangible outcomes than traditional therapy.

Hal's physiatrist at Casa Colina Rehabilitation Hospital began referring his patients to train at the facility and in December 2013, The Be Perfect Foundation [set up by Hargrave and his family to support people with disabilities] and The Claremont Club made the joint decision to expand the operation by taking on the first ever Project Walk franchise and expanding into a 3,000sq ft space on the club's campus.

As it was part of a franchise, this became our first fee-based programme and we worked



Hal Hargrave has been the inspiration for incredible progress in exercise for spinal injury interventions

PHOTO: THE PERFECT STEP

About the Be Perfect Foundation

Hal Hargrave Jnr

The Be Perfect Foundation is a non-profit organisation with a mission to provide financial and emotional support to people living with paralysis. It works with The Perfect Step Foundation and The Claremont Club.

Be Perfect has changed the lives of hundreds of people with paralysis by keeping them in recovery, purchasing medical necessities and providing guidance and emotional support.

Hal Hargrave created Be Perfect in 2007, just a few months after he suffered a life-altering car accident that left him paralysed from the neck down.

To date, the foundation has raised more than US\$6m for people with paralysis.

Be Perfect helps paralysis patients get back into the game of life. This is made possible through the partnership of Be Perfect, The Perfect Step and The Claremont Club. Each of these organisations is key to making recovery possible.

Mission

To provide direct financial and emotional aid for individuals living with paralysis by providing resources, paying for medical expenses, restoring hope and encouraging personal independence through a non-traditional method of exercise-based therapy.

Vision

To live in a world where paralysis does not financially burden families to the point of emotional turmoil and physical distress and where a lack of both hope and resources does not exist.

Be Perfect promotes a holistic, exercise-based therapy approach to recovery, offering scholarships for activity-based therapy at The Perfect Step to qualified recipients. The charity also provides supplemental funds to those who can't afford things such as wheelchairs, car adaptations, medical bills, daily medical necessities and financial assistance for outpatient therapies.

with individuals with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, stroke, Parkinson's, traumatic brain injury, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and transverse myelitis. The club ran a Cycling for Parkinson's programme alongside, offering sessions in the cycling studio three times a week.

Could you tell us about some of the most extreme conditions you have helped people with?

Augie Nieto, the founder of Life Fitness and Hammer Strength, came to us as a result of suffering from ALS. We had never worked with anyone with ALS before, but I had known Augie since the 80s and really wanted to help him.

He was completely dependent on his power chair, needed a ventilator, a feeding tube and a neck brace. However, working with him in the gym and on the gait trainer we managed to bring more movement back into his arms and legs, so with the help of an upright gait trainer, Augie was able to walk his youngest daughter down the aisle at her wedding.

Another young African-American man we worked with had suffered a severe C5/C6 injury. His life was incredibly limited and he could only move his chair by blowing into a tube.

PHOTO: THE PERFECT STEP



The aim is to recreate functional movement patterns to promote neuroplasticity



Exercises are done out of wheelchairs, to enable more freedom of movement

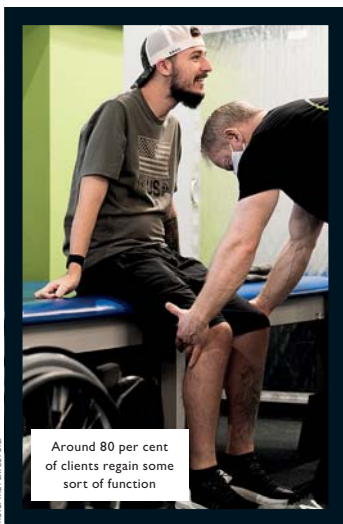
We helped him to get some movement back into his arms, but his father was distraught that if he got to the point where he had use of both of his hands that he might then try to commit suicide.

To give him renewed purpose, we offered him a job in the club. Initially he said, "what could I do?" I asked him if he would read stories to the kids in the kids' club twice a week. This worked very well: the children did not see his legs, but rather they saw his heart and soul.

Parents were always thanking us because they said that thanks to Jason their children were learning about empathy, tolerance and compassion. Jason went back to college and has become an amazing man and contributor to society, mentoring other families who have gone through the same experience as him.

What advice do you have for operators who'd like to deliver these programmes?

Start out slow. Do your homework. Choose one area which is dear to you and really research it. Find partners to align with: respected physicians and clinicians. We have always been very open that we are available to anyone who wants to do what we did – we will give you our knowledge for free. ●



Around 80 per cent of clients regain some sort of function

STRONG CONNECTIONS

CV kit has been fully connective for some time, but with the rise of the hybrid gym goer, what are strength suppliers doing to meet the demand for a fully connected offer?

ClubIntel reports that 72 per cent of global operators now offer on-demand and livestream workouts – up from 25 per cent in 2019 and with tech giants such as Apple, Samsung and Google getting involved, the demand for hybrid is only set to grow. Consumers are demanding

a connected offering that allows them to track all aspects of their in-gym workouts, side by side with their training outside facilities.

We spoke to suppliers to see how they're adapting their strength offerings to meet this ever-growing demand for connectivity.



PHOTO: PRECOR

Connecting all areas of the gym floor allows staff to set goals and create training plans for clients



PHOTO: PRECOR

With Preva and Sony Advagym, users tap a sensor with their phone to see how-to videos



PHOTO: PRECOR

Precor

Steve Carter

"A fully connected gym floor is no longer just nice to have, it's essential," says Precor's Steve Carter. The company's networked fitness solution, Preva, combines with Advagym by Sony, to give gym-wide digital connectivity across every piece of kit and area of the gym, from cardio to strength.

Advagym is a console-free solution. Users tap a sensor puck with their mobile to see how-to videos and receive guidance on recommended weights and numbers of reps. The tempo display on the app – which can be edited by a PT if they want to add a variation – ensures they're completing the movement safely. The app then logs the exercise.

Preva captures workout data from CV kit and syncs with the Advagym app, giving users an entirely connected experience. Sensor pucks can also be displayed in other zones – for example the strength area or outside

Because Advagym is a console-free experience, everything happens on a user's phone



a group ex studio – so exercisers can receive workout guidance and log activity throughout an entire facility.

“Connecting cardio, strength and all other areas of your gym floor, allows staff to set goals, create training plans and track progress – a fully joined up approach that’s vital for offering a results-based customer experience,” says Carter. “Because Advagym is a console-free experience and everything happens on a user’s phone, there’s no change to the aesthetics of the machines and no issue that screens will look out of date before the kit reaches the end of its life span.”

Advagym also allows operators to analyse data on kit usage and the number of repetitions each machine is doing and adjust the gym floor accordingly. It also sends notifications if kit isn’t running smoothly, so managers can take action to minimise member dissatisfaction.

“This is the way the industry is going; gyms must have a platform offer that interacts with members both inside and outside facilities. Connectivity is the future,” says Carter.



PHOTO: MATRIX

Users can set their benchmark weight and define training goals to begin a personalised progression programme

Matrix Fitness

Chris Brown

“The Ultra Series includes an Intelligent Training Console to guide a fully-connected strength experience,” says Chris Brown of Matrix. “This helps newcomers get started or strength enthusiasts really challenge their limits. Users can set their benchmark weight and define training goals to begin a personalised progression programme, which helps them reach their goals.”

The Matrix Intelligent Training Console provides eight to 12 weeks of guided, personalised, progressive strength workouts. It connects strength with a facility’s existing digital ecosystem, helping create a complete, unified exercise experience. The customisable interface



PHOTO: MATRIX

The Matrix Intelligent Training Console provides personalised workouts

represents a gym’s brand with every set, creating another touchpoint to interact with members and build engagement.

“It’s easy to connect to our Personal Trainer Portal, Workout Tracking Network – which lets members capture data from favourite fitness apps on one customisable interface – and Asset Management solutions via wifi or ethernet,” says Brown. “Asset Management offers a 360-degree view of all strength equipment status on virtually any internet-connected device, alongside insightful reporting capabilities.”

“The Console also works with RFID and for members, it includes a Workout Snapshot function, so they can review past sessions and track overall progress, providing quantifiable results to keep them motivated,” he explains. ▶



Members sign in to Biocircuit Free to pick up where they left off last time

Biocircuit Free is the first time artificial intelligence has been applied to a strength training experience

Technogym

Luke Townsend

"We've created Biocircuit Free, a fully-connected strength training solution offering a personalised workout experience to help users achieve their goals," explains Technogym's Luke Townsend. "This concept enables operators to maximise single strength stations while offering a wider variety of exercises to members."

Biocircuit Free is a fully-connected digital experience – members sign in to their chosen piece of kit, which allows them to set and save their set-up, plus test and track their workouts via their Mywellness account.

This pre-exercise set-up includes adjusting the seat position and offering a range of different goal-specific workouts and additional advanced training methods.

Each time the member signs in, Biocircuit Free adjusts to their profile, suggests they start where they left off or offers alternative training options.

"Biocircuit Free offers four key pillars," says Townsend. "Its

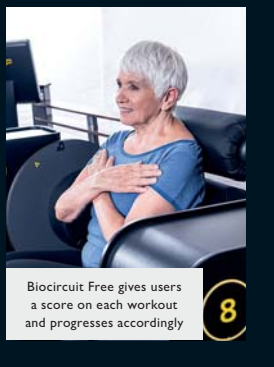


PHOTO: TECHNOCOM

'personal training without a trainer' setting is the first time artificial intelligence has been applied to a strength training experience.

"The 'Technogym Coach' records compliance with each workout and gives a score, which if completed three times in a row, triggers an offer to progress the workout. The 'coach' encourages members during workouts, and – by understanding compliance – gradually adjusts training and recommends different progressions.

"It's a fully connected strength training circuit with no need for supervision that evolves based on consistency and compliance," says Townsend.



Biocircuit Free gives users a score on each workout and progresses accordingly

PHOTO: TECHNOCOM

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eGym

Kerstin Obenauer

"We're a pioneer in digitally connected strength equipment, releasing our first software-driven strength circuit in 2010. Today, our Smart Strength Series sits at the heart of our fully connected ecosystem," says Egym's Kerstin Obenauer.

Egym's Smart Strength Series has gone through several hardware evolutions to ensure the physical experience continues to match the quality of the programming, performance feedback and motivational functionality. The intelligent circuit automatically responds



PHOTO: EGYM

The intelligent circuit automatically responds to the bespoke ergonomic and training needs of individuals using an RFID chip

The Smart Strength Series integrates with many systems



PHOTO: EGYM

to the bespoke ergonomic and training needs of individuals using an RFID chip. Every workout is logged, with regular performance tests ensuring the programme remains progressive.

"Our Smart Strength Series integrates with the Egym Smart Flex connected mobility circuit and our Fitness Hub, the gym floor centrepiece that enables contactless onboarding, as well as a number of third-party fitness trackers, cardio equipment brands and body analysers," says Obenauer. "Our digital stores collate information and present it back to trainers and users in an easy-to-understand format, via an app. This enables a single point of access to collated training from multiple sources, at any time, from anywhere, creating a complete wraparound training experience, supported by, but not limited to, the four walls of a training facility."

Keiser

Paul Dudley

"We've created a fully connected metrics system, which combines the performance monitoring capabilities of our equipment with the power of cloud-based neural networks, to provide an advanced fitness and performance platform," says Keiser's Paul Dudley.

"Keiser Metrics captures performance data from our strength equipment and incorporates biometric and activity data to generate an accurate model of each workout. This is then passed to an artificial neural network, which detects trends and divergences



PHOTO: KEISER

from normative datasets.

"Once enough data has been gathered, the system begins to provide suggestions and detect potential injury triggers. Offline session caching allows access to past workouts when an internet connection is not available," says Dudley.

"Keiser Metrics allows users to have a single source for all data, fully encompassing data from third party apps."

Once enough data has been gathered, the system begins to provide suggestions and detect potential injury triggers

Keiser Metrics combines all data in a single location for users



PHOTO: KEISER



THE LEVERAGE DEADLIFT SHRUG



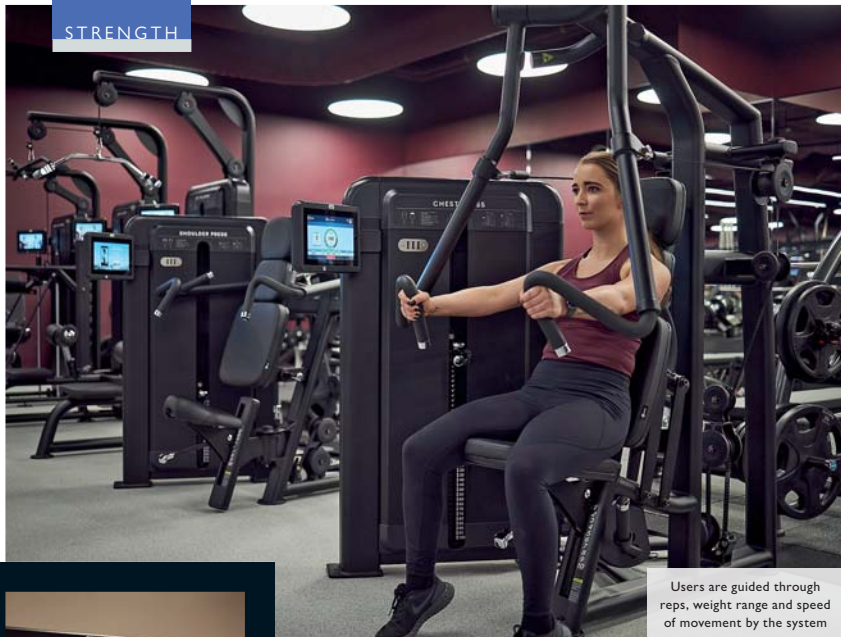
THE POWER OF PROPER FORM

The Leverage Deadlift Shrug by Nautilus goes above and beyond other shrug machines. The Leverage line is more adjustable, customizable and feels more like free weights; allowing individuals to train on the Deadlift Shrug and transfer their skill to free weights once comfortable. The Deadlift Shrug is plate loaded which can use universal weight plates from other areas of the gym. Users can load up in weight safely in the designated path, teaching users correct deadlift form. The descending resistance challenges users at the peak of the movement, creating stress that will grow user strength.

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Users are guided through reps, weight range and speed of movement by the system



Pulse Fitness consoles act as a coaching guide

PHOTO: PULSE FITNESS

Pulse Fitness

Richard Sheen

"Ensuring operators have a fully-connected offering has been a priority and when we launched our premium strength line, it was our must-have element," says Richard Sheen of Pulse Fitness.

"The range comes with a 10.1-inch android training partner that guides members through reps, weight, range and speed of movement – tracking and recording activity.

"The consoles also act as a coaching guide, offering static instructions and video demonstrations."

Pulse Fitness offers QR codes on its strength equipment, allowing members to track exercise data and access instructional videos.

Pulse's strength equipment is also fully connected to its new app – called Trakk – which allows



PHOTO: PULSE FITNESS

operators to set personalised goals and stay connected to members, wherever they choose to work out.

For members, Trakk offers workout and goal tracking and acts as a personal training tool.

"This completes the fully connected circle, accurately recording member data on cardio, strength, and cable machines, while also providing an asset management tool for operators across our product portfolio," says Sheen. ●

Strength equipment is fully connected to the Pulse Fitness Trakk app which allows operators to set personalised goals

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Living Longer Better

As our sector starts to recover, there will be changes in the needs of communities, consumers and the provision of opportunities. To explore this subject we hosted a virtual round table to better understand views on key workforce questions

The What?

Sport England tells us four out of 10 people are less active now than before the pandemic.

The Why?

As a nation, we need to learn lessons from COVID-19 and prove the value of physical activity to consumers, the health sector and the government.

The How?

Our facilities need to become more inclusive and community-based, but what does this mean for our workforce?



Muir Gray
Optimal Ageing



Tara Dillon
CIMSPA



Stuart Armstrong
Sport England



Elaine Briggs
FutureFit Training

The debate

What will be the main impact of COVID-19 on activity levels?

Muir: There's evidence activity levels are down and weight is up. There will be increased awareness of the impact of inactivity and an opportunity for the fitness industry workforce to reach subgroups of society they've never reached before.

Tara: A post-pandemic world represents one of the greatest opportunities for our sector in a generation. Government messaging constantly reinforced the importance of staying active throughout this last year and we know many people have taken steps for the first time to develop an active lifestyle.

Gyms and leisure centres will be influential, but we must remember not everyone wants to join a gym. Many enjoy a plethora of ways of staying active, and new habits have formed. Ensuring our sector broadens its offer in providing safe and enjoyable active environments that everyone can access is essential.

Stuart: The pandemic will leave a legacy of behaviour change. The economic impact will mean disposable income available for sport and leisure will be limited. People will look for low-cost, flexible, hyper-local activity.

Elaine: The UK is one of the most obese countries in Europe, so we must reposition and reimagine our sector and ecosystem to enable people to be more active. The gaps between those who have access to exercise and physical activity and the motivation to take part and those who don't, will be wider than before. There will be a need for our sector to rethink how to engage with those people to save the nation's health.



The health service needs to prescribe activity every time a drug is prescribed, says Gray

The NHS needs to shift £100m from the drugs budget to the activity therapy budget

Muir Gray, Optimal Ageing

What will these changes mean for the development of the sport and physical activity workforce?

Tara: There are many opportunities for our sector. To take advantage of these, we need to prioritise a new style and skill set in leadership that allows us to create a different type of approach to workforce development locally.

We need a leadership that can adopt a whole system approach to active lifestyles and work with local authorities, education providers and employers to show how healthy localities can impact social and economic outcomes.

Stuart: We predict a significant contraction in the workforce for employed roles, which means displaced workers will either look to other sectors or set up new opportunities.

Less employment in facilities will necessitate adaptation and becoming more flexible with where they work. Micro gyms, pop-up gyms, mobile activity provision at home or in community centres etc, will become increasingly essential.

Elaine: Opportunities for people to train in new and reimagined roles will be necessary to address a more holistic and community-based approach. Workforce development will need to ensure professionals can deliver a fully-rounded service and understand their local community's needs and priorities to be part of the solution.

What opportunities do you see?

Muir: The health service needs to help – prescribing activity every time a drug is prescribed.

Tara: There needs to be a greater understanding of the health and social priorities of local authorities. We need to work with local partners to become catalysts for change.

We'll work with key stakeholders, operators, active partnerships and sports bodies to shape and support a workforce around impactful, sustainable systemic change.

Stuart: The possibilities are endless: retraining opportunities, employment solutions such as apprenticeships, traineeships and kickstart, as well

We need to take a whole system approach to create a 'National Wellness Service'

Elaine Briggs, FutureFit Training

as providing the support and guidance for people to start micro-businesses and social enterprises.

We could establish local and community employment collectives and trust banks, so people can access 'micro credit' and short hours employment can be aggregated to become something longer-term.

Elaine: Having to adapt to a new way of working and living under lockdown has provided the opportunity to do things differently, embrace technology, undertake learning and reach out to others. The result will be our workforce seeking a more flexible way of working and collaborating.

How can we ensure that wellbeing through exercise is available to all on a more equitable basis, rather than being the preserve of the well-off?

Muir: The NHS needs to shift £100m from the drugs budget to the activity therapy budget.

Tara: We have the most incredible 'product', which anyone can access, regardless of gender, background, postcode or finances.

If product focus is one step, then the next must surely be delivery. An inclusive and creative model, providing accessible, safe, enjoyable environments, is ours to share.

Our role needs to be better understood in the allied health professions

Tara Dillon, CIMSPA



We need to educate the workforce and the public about the benefits of leading a healthy life

PHOTO: LES MILLS

Collaboration, contribution and solution firmly ensconced in every delivery model's mindset and values are also key.

Stuart: Our [Sport England] strategy has a major aim to connect efficiently with health. Our workforce must be professionally recognised and regulated to make social prescribing easier and part of the standard health offering.

We'll also extend our pilot work with occupational therapists based in leisure facilities to make this support more easily accessible.

Elaine: We need to educate our workforce and the public about the benefits of leading a healthy life. The workforce needs to understand that the answer lies not in fitness and facilities but in communities and health.

The public needs to be made aware of the many opportunities they have to become healthier in their local areas, assisted by a professional and credible workforce recognised by the health sector.



We need to build an industrial strategy and explore the possibility of a sector deal with the government

Stuart Armstrong, Sport England

Stuart: The workforce needs a better understanding of health conditions generally. Having a workforce able to engage with people with long-term health conditions is essential to meeting their needs and giving them confidence that they will be cared for effectively.

Elaine: There's a step to be taken before 'semi-medicalising' the workforce. That is to change behaviours and mindsets about our sector's training and what it does.

We need to reimagine our sector and the vital part we play in people's health. Only with a willingness to change our services will we present the opportunities for a different approach and essential skills.

Should we be 'semi-medicalising' our workforce?

Muir: Long-COVID is just another long-term condition; the workforce needs the confidence, skill and knowledge to treat it as such.

Tara: We have excellent standards of impactful practice such as cancer prehab, diabetes clinics etc. We do, however, need to continue to educate advocates, such as GPs and occupational and mental health professionals, about the benefits of activity.

Our profession is skilled-up to increase activity among the population – we can help prevent people from becoming ill – but our role needs to be better understood by allied health professions. That's not to say that our workforce shouldn't always look to upskill, but I don't think 'medicalising' our professionals will encourage more people to get active, whereas getting the support and buy-in from our healthcare colleagues will.

How can we get funding to reskill the sector?

Tara: Funding is critical. We need to work with the government to ensure activity is at the forefront of their minds when rebuilding society. We've got to do that in a more unified way than previously.

Stuart: We need a stronger understanding of the employment and skills required of our sector – we need granular knowledge from the ground up.

Then we'll be able to tap into local sources of skills funding, influence education providers, and build a national picture to develop an industrial strategy and explore the possibility of a 'sector deal' with the government.

Elaine: We need to take a whole system approach when considering what skills are required to create a 'National Wellness Service'. This would require buy-in and funding from local and national agencies. The measurements of such training would link to local and national priorities and outcomes. ●



Discover Orbit4

The advanced tendering platform for gym operators

Daniel Jones is the brains behind Orbit4, the world's first digital ecosystem to manage and facilitate the entire commercial fitness product cycle. We caught up with him at Orbit4 HQ in Cheshire

What is Orbit4?

Orbit4 is the umbrella brand for our fitness industry platforms: FitnessCompared, FitnessFinance, WeServiceGymEquipment and WeBuyGymEquipment.

The company has qualified and aggregated the industry's best partners so that gym operators have access to the wider market. We're providing automatic pricing following the bidding process when gym operators are looking to purchase and finance gym equipment, tender for service contracts and dispose of or resell unwanted assets. We've even given our industry its own fitness equipment comparison site!

These are really exciting times for our group, which recently received £350,000 of growth funding to help us ramp up services for our customers

Daniel Jones, CEO, Orbit4

Why are gym operators and your partners so excited about this platform?

Orbit4 is an amazing present to the industry and a genuine win-win for any company involved in the fitness industry. It allows gym operators to go digital when it comes to purchasing, financing, maintaining and disposing of fitness equipment.


Our qualified, aggregated partners are placed into our bidding platforms to provide the perfect ecosystem to tender at relevant times during the asset cycle. Spreading the net across the whole industry in a few clicks of your mouse enables you to quickly and impartially test the market.

What's the next big thing?

Gym operators are particularly excited about our plans to combine all the businesses on one dashboard called Orbit4 Premium.

With the inception of WeBuyGymEquipment in 2015, FitnessCompared in 2018 and now FitnessFinance and WeServiceGymEquipment, it is the next logical step.

Orbit4 Premium is currently in its final build phase so we're looking forward to making further announcements in the forthcoming weeks. These are really exciting times for our group, which recently received £350,000 of growth funding to help us ramp up services for our customers.



Orbit4 provides digital solutions for purchasing, financing, maintaining and disposing of fitness equipment

Why is Orbit4 important for the industry?

As an industry, we've been buying fitness equipment, renewing service contracts, managing and disposing of assets in what some would say is an archaic way for far too long. The automotive industry has made digital the norm for purchasing, servicing and trading-in. Our industry needs to seriously catch up with the rest of the world and Orbit4 is the perfect solution. Pure digital transformation is here!

What is the process of aggregating the partners?

It's essential that we partner with quality companies who are going to represent our brands well and share the same values. We carry out a thorough vetting process when we have an enquiry from a new fitness equipment supplier, service provider or trader. Each business must have an element of experience in the sector, hold relevant insurance certificates and have a positive reputation. The fitness industry is a small world so we know many of these brilliant companies already, as well as the less reliable ones (to avoid!)

What are your plans for the future?

As explained before, we have successfully brought investment into the business via debt funding. The short-term plan is to employ more people across

the USA, EMEA and the UK. Our platforms have been live in the US and EMEA for two and a half years so it's now time to up our game and drive our offering into more countries within these regions.

New opportunities are presented to stakeholders depending on what product or service they offer. In turn, gym operators benefit from the increased efficiencies via streamlining the procurement process, financing, tendering of service contracts and achieving the best price for unwanted equipment.

The inclusive nature of the platforms provides the perfect environment for all stakeholders to do business efficiently, effectively and with 100 per cent transparency.

Can you save the planet?

We can help! If your fitness business is more environmentally friendly, then it will appeal to a passionate and loyal customer base. Orbit4 will help you do that while reducing your expenses and cutting the negative environmental impact of your business.



More: <https://orbit4.org>

Email Daniel Jones: daniel@orbit4.org

Aiming for Equality

Moving Communities is our chance to demonstrate our value and develop a universal service for all, argues Martyn Allison

Sport England and its partners should be applauded for the investment in *Moving Communities*, because it not only gets us further forward in the development of data-based evidence, it also brings together a range of data about how well we're recovering from the effects of the pandemic while giving insights into how we can contribute to the huge challenges facing councils and the health sector.

Money from The National Leisure Recovery Fund, recently distributed by Sport England, provided £100m to help address some, but nowhere near all, the financial problems being experienced by public leisure facilities, however, it leaves a problem which is likely to continue, despite reopening.

Any operator or provider in a contractual relationship with councils will face a difficult year and the period between the May 2021 elections and the setting of the 2022/23 budgets will be critical in shaping the future of public leisure.

There are three reasons we must now seriously engage with *Moving Communities* to maximise the quality and coverage of data it will provide:

1) Recovery

It will enable us to track our own recovery and see how well this is happening, who's returning to facilities, their views on the experience and how efficient and effective we are.

By sharing and comparing data and evidence, we can identify and build on good practice and share innovation. Above all, we can learn from and support each other.

2) Evidence

It will provide us with an evidence-based narrative to share with councils as they investigate future policy and financing of leisure services over the short-, medium- and longer-term.

It will help us define who's benefiting from our services, who's not using them and their social value.

- ✱ Many leisure centres have shifted from requiring subsidies by councils to making profits or surpluses
- ✱ At the same time, their use by the less well off has fallen from 62 per cent in 2014 to 39 per cent in 2019

- ✱ Sport England's *Moving Communities* initiative is monitoring the impact of government investment in leisure centres
- ✱ However, *Moving Communities* data is not fairly representing the whole of society and is focusing on gym memberships

“

Generating an accurate picture of how leisure centres are used will be a big step towards redesigning a service that addresses rising health inequalities

It will enable us to get a better balance between efficiency and effectiveness so we can contribute to the wider health-based partnerships that will develop within the Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks. Health investment is evidence-led and without evidence, relationship building will be much harder.

3) Further support

It will enable Sport England to demonstrate to central government the impact of the £100m recovery fund and make the case for further support.

This could be additional financial support direct to councils through a further allocation to the recovery fund, specific recognition through local government financial settlements, or funds allocated through health policy and funding.

Failure to provide evidence that the initial funding has been successful would not be helpful for those making our case.

As a previous chair of the Quest/NBS board I've always encouraged the sector to make more use of data and evidence – both to help improve its performance and to evidence its value and impact. However, I've often found reluctance to fully engage with measurement, whether it be the National Performance Indicators, Active Lives, or the NBS itself.

As a sector, we seem very comfortable when the data confirms how good we are but less comfortable when it exposes our weaknesses and where we could improve. This cultural reluctance has held us back in the past and will do so again if we don't wake up fast to the importance of data to the current challenges and opportunities ahead of us. ▶

✿ Activity on a pay-as-you-go, casual or concessionary basis is not being counted in official numbers in many cases

✿ We're only tracking what's happening with more wealthy people and excluding people who are less well off

✿ These weaknesses in data collection will mean we fail to show the full picture of the social value of our services

✿ We must report accurately on how facilities are being used and how they're addressing health inequalities



We risk being accused of making health inequalities worse, not better, at a time when they're increasing

My optimism is tempered by fears that the story we might tell using *Moving Communities* could be partial and flawed by the data itself and how it's collected. These very personal reflections emanate from research I've done recently when developing my thinking on Proportionate Universalism, as presented in a paper published by the Sport Think Tank (www.HCMmag.com/universal).

I have four concerns.

1) **Representative data**

We expect early attendance to be constrained by safety and financial concerns, so any picture painted by this data will be a partial one and hardly representative of our communities.

In addition, if we only rely on participation data generated from membership schemes to paint the picture, we're very likely to demonstrate – as we did before the pandemic – that we mainly serve those coming from better-off communities.

If this is the case we risk being accused of actually making health inequalities worse, not better – at a time when health inequalities are increasing due to the pandemic.

2) **Access to data**

Usage of facilities by the less-well-off and other often excluded groups usually happens through casual use, targeted programmes and concessionary charging schemes and is often missed from participation data, because this data is either harder to access and collect or unavailable.



3) **Incomplete sample**

Although operators and councils are being asked to survey all customers to minimise the risk of a biased picture emerging, the customer experience surveys behind *Moving Communities* rely on online responses generated via email requests which could miss many of those accessing the facilities on a casual, targeted or concessionary basis.

Given initial COVID-19 safety requirements mean more customers have to provide contact information, this should limit under-representation in the initial stages of reopening, but once these requirements are relaxed, the reliance on using more easily accessed data relating to usage by people with memberships would result in a biased picture emerging again.

4) **Stakeholder priorities**

If we only rely on this easily accessible membership scheme data from which to calculate social value there's a further danger that we'll be telling a partial story and one that many councils and health partners may find unhelpful – especially if their primary focus is on those most in need and on reducing health inequalities.

Participation data by deprivation

The implications and potential risks of only using membership scheme data are shown clearly in Graph 1, produced for me last year by DataHub.

It shows an analysis of usage by deprivation in 2019, using data from 908 sites that provided consistent data across a full 12-month period, including over 93 million visits from 3.4 million individuals.

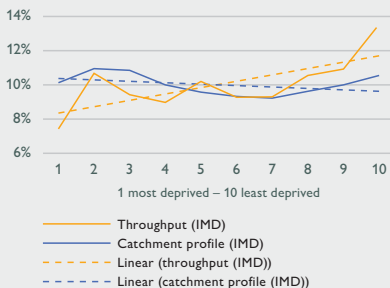
The orange line shows participation by deprivation levels, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD – the official measure of relative deprivation for England. The line rises from the most deprived to the least deprived, showing participation increasing in line with wealth.

The blue line is the overall catchment population living within a 15 minute drive-time of the sites in the sample – again shown by IMD group.

This trend line falls from the most deprived to the least deprived, showing that there are more people in the most deprived groups living in the catchment area than from the least deprived groups.

The two lines cross roughly in the middle at the level of socio-economic group IMD 5.

GRAPH 1 INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION
Participation vs catchment profile



To the right of where they cross usage is over-representative of the least deprived communities. To the left of where they cross usage is under-representative of the least deprived communities.

This means when it comes to the *size of the catchment*, a greater number of people are from deprived communities, but when it comes to *participation*, the people who take part are more likely to be well off.

The two dotted lines are trend lines for throughput and catchment population.

There's a risk the same picture or an even worse picture will be presented by the *Moving Communities* monitoring study.



New research

A recent research paper called *The contribution of leisure centre usage to physical activity in the United Kingdom: evidence from a large population-based cohort*, published this year in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, concluded that leisure centres do make a valuable contribution to health, saying:

"In this large population-based study, our results demonstrated that the provision of local authority leisure centres contributed a median of 55 minutes of moderate/vigorous leisure-time physical activity per week to the recommended 150 minutes of moderate/vigorous physical activity per week.

"This means local authority leisure centre members achieve approximately a third of the World Health Organization's recommended 150 minutes of moderate/vigorous weekly physical activity through leisure centre use.

"This is an important contribution, which should be combined with an encouragement for users to be active in other environments to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity."

But they also found that:

"Those from more deprived areas were less likely to access local authority leisure centres. As [they] have potentially less disposable income,

Leisure centres contribute 55 minutes of the recommended 150 minutes of exercise each week

it's possible that price is a contributing barrier to access, but we were unable to examine the effect of concession pricing, since the trust made changes to its concessionary access scheme in the period covered by the data extract.

"This was further complicated by the way memberships were tagged in the reporting systems, with the term 'concessionary' applied to any discounted membership, rather than just to those on low incomes or who were registered disabled.

"Pricing in the local authority leisure sector to encourage use by targeted groups is complex. Quantitative studies have reported that offering free memberships can increase participation but that if free use is removed, usage is not always maintained.

"Of interest in the current study, the majority of exercise referral usage was on a pay-as-you-go basis. Given that those who took out prepaid/ monthly memberships used the centres for a

Generating an accurate picture of how leisure centres are used will be a big step towards redesigning a service that addresses rising health inequalities

TABLE 1

National Statistics, Socio-economic Classification, Analytic Classes

- 1 Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations
 - 1.1 Large employers and higher managerial and administrative occupations
 - 1.2 Higher professional occupations
- 2 Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- 3 Intermediate occupations
- 4 Small employers and own account workers
- 5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- 6 Semi-routine occupations
- 7 Routine occupations
- 8 Never worked and long-term unemployed

much longer period of time, the leisure trust should explore ways of encouraging a move from pay-as-you-go to a prepaid monthly membership for this group, as it may improve retention.

"A caveat for this must be that pricing strategies do not exclude those in who are in the lowest income brackets. Qualitative evidence indicates that navigating the competing pressures of providing services for the public good and remaining commercially viable make pricing decisions difficult and that pricing is only one barrier to accessing facilities.

"We acknowledge the complexities of the interactions between concessionary pricing and commercial viability; however, where concessionary pricing schemes exist, they must be clearly defined and accurately tagged within the reporting systems to enable future examination of their effectiveness."

The usage data shown in this research reflects the same pattern shown in Graph 1 – namely

over-representation from the better off and under-representation from the least well off.

It also highlights the challenges of collecting non-membership data from casual users and from concessionary charging schemes that do not differentiate between users. If this data collection problem is replicated in *Moving Communities* it will fail to show a full picture of the value and impact of the service we provide.

Customer profiles and experience

Moving Communities also utilises much of the data collection technology of the National Benchmarking Service (NBS). I've pointed out previously that although this service has highlighted a significant improvement in financial efficiency when it comes to the delivery of leisure services, we have seen a deterioration in access – particularly among people in socio-economic groups six and seven – those in semi-routine or routine occupations (see Table 1).



It's important that operators try as hard as possible to maximise the accuracy of the data

Before the pandemic, the financial performance of public facilities was improving significantly and the 2019 annual report from the NBS showed the median for cost-recovery in leisure centre management standing at 107 per cent – an increase from 91 per cent in 2014.

Although there are still variances in terms of performance, depending on the type of management and the nature of the facilities, this average shift of 16 percentage points has transformed the industry from requiring subsidy to making a return for many councils. It means that 62 per cent of facilities were no longer subsidised and the median return to councils was £85,804.

But at the same time, the level of use by people in socio-economic groups six and seven had fallen from 62 per cent in 2014 to 39 per cent in 2019, while the level of use by people in socio-economic groups one and two (higher and lower managerial occupations) has risen from 55 per cent to 62 per cent in the same time frame.

This shows that although profitability was improving, representation by those with the greatest health needs was getting worse.

Once again how we collect data about our users in *Moving Communities* will be critical to the story it finally tells. The system is designed to use online surveys, but if operators do not have access to casual users through email there's a real danger the picture we paint and the story we tell will be flawed and unhelpful.

It's important that operators try as hard as possible to maximise the accuracy of the data collected from all users, despite their concerns about the time and effort required to complete these tasks. We all share a responsibility to present the fullest evidence base we can.



Social Value

Finally *Moving Communities* will also enable us to calculate the social value being generated, but if this is mainly derived from the better-off members of our communities who can afford to join and pay regular membership subscriptions and complete online surveys, once again the picture we paint could be partial or flawed. Demonstrating high social value in relation to the most affluent is unlikely to stimulate additional investment from councils that are struggling with their finances.

Recovery and inequality

The state of council financing means that many facilities will be under threat and if recovery is slow the problem will continue to get worse.

Irrespective of how hard we work to make the data as accurate as possible, the core of this problem will remain – namely the nature of the current business model, which has driven the generation of more earned income and the reduction of council subsidies, in many cases replacing it with financial returns back to some councils.

While we've improved our efficiency as a sector, we've also reduced access for many and as a result, our effectiveness in terms of equality has exposed the fragility of this model, which will make recovering from our current position challenging.



Allison say while we've improved our financial efficiency as a sector, we've reduced access for many

Conclusions

Councils may be faced with a stark choice – moving even further to a commercial model and excluding more of those most in need, or thinking about how they can justify additional short- or long-term investment that is more focused on addressing health inequalities. They may also question whether leisure facilities are the best way to do this.

Some councils will simply accept that leisure centres can make little or no contribution to addressing health inequalities and at best they will operate in a way that assists with the health maintenance of people who are most willing and able to pay.

There will, however, be some councils and operators that will be willing to find innovative solutions to address both health improvement and health inequalities.

This will require councils to invest more and operators to change 1. how they use membership schemes so they don't exclude people unnecessarily, 2. how they set and use concessionary charging so it doesn't exclude people and, 3. how they develop inclusive programming that doesn't involve specific

groups in short-term interventions at the expense of being included in a more universal service. This means changing how the system works.

As Sir Michael Marmot argues in his report *Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on*, (www.HCMMag.com/Marmot) in order to address deep-seated health inequalities, we must use the totality of resources in a concerted way, rather than relying on 'additional' pots.

"Focusing solely on the most disadvantaged will not reduce health inequalities sufficiently," said Marmot. "To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. We call this proportionate universalism."

Generating a clear and accurate picture of how our leisure centres are being used and how they are recovering will be a big step towards redesigning a service that is truly universal but proportionate to need. *Moving Communities* is not only a great chance to demonstrate our public value but also an opportunity to improve our contribution to addressing rising health inequalities. ●

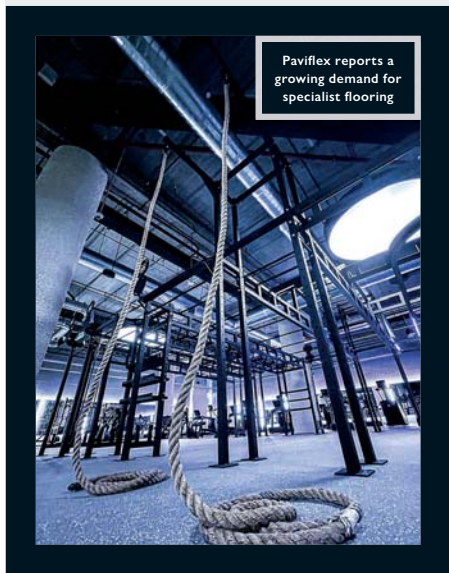
Floor it

Choosing the right flooring is critical for gym and health club operators. Suppliers share their latest news, tips and product launches to help you choose wisely

Gym flooring is a major investment and changing it can be disruptive, so making the right choice is vital



PHOTO PAVIFLEX



Paviflex reports a growing demand for specialist flooring

PHOTO PAVIFLEX

We're launching a new type of flooring at FIBO 2021 that will maximise shock absorption and noise reduction



Manuel Martínez / Paviflex

Buyers in the fitness market are demanding specific technical flooring for gyms, searching for products that are easy to install and maintain, waterproof, anti-bacterial, hard-wearing, long-lasting, non-slip and with shock absorption and acoustic isolation properties.

In our range, Fitness Xtreme and Fitness Xtreme Eco are the most in demand and during this atypical year, we've also invested a lot of time developing a new

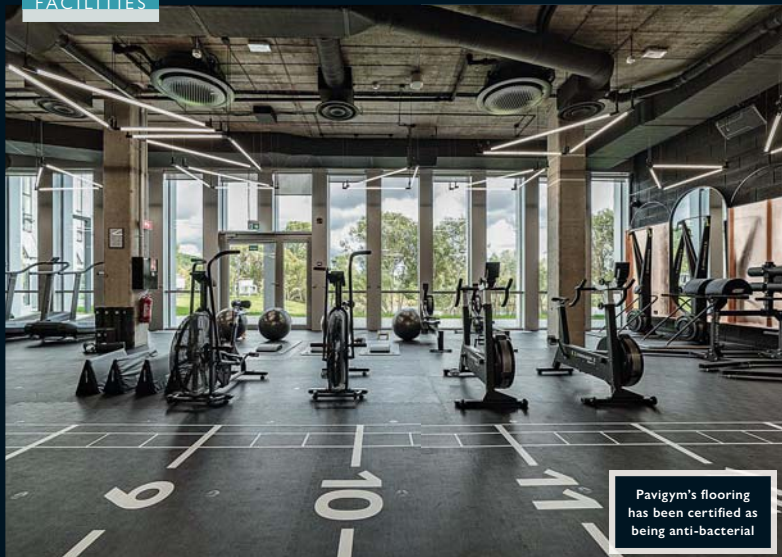


stronger flooring called Monster, with an eco version called Monster Eco.

This is made from 14mm thick pure virgin rubber in 1sq m tiles, to satisfy the most demanding requirements for heavy use.

At present we're also working on and testing a new type of flooring that will maximise shock absorption and noise reduction. We expect to present this at FIBO 2021 and we believe it will become one of our best sellers.

PHOTO PAVIFLEX



Pavigym's flooring
has been certified as
being anti-bacterial

Our virgin rubber floor has been certified as bacteriostatic, fungicidal and with a VOC A+ rating

Kenny Wattam / Pavigym

Most operators didn't used to think carefully about their flooring choice, but now they're realising how important it is to offer a clean space to their customers.

Our gym flooring solutions are virgin rubber, so they're not porous and are completely waterproof – they don't absorb any liquid, whether it be sweat or anything containing viral material. This avoids bad odours and makes floors easier to clean and disinfect.

They've also been certified as bacteriostatic and fungicidal and thanks to these properties,

they both inhibit the growth of microorganisms and have the capacity to eliminate some of the microorganisms present on the surface, to prevent the spread of various diseases.

Another key factor, which is perhaps less known, is that our virgin rubber flooring is internationally certified by the VOC directive as class A+ when it comes to the emission of volatile organic compounds.

This means it doesn't release emissions into the surrounding air, including those carrying microorganisms that may be present on the floor.





Overflow gym areas need protective flooring before heavy equipment is located there

John Halls / Physical Company

The current focus for operators is understandably on must-dos: cleanliness, limited class capacity and social distancing. While flooring might not be the first thing that comes to mind when it comes to COVID-19 response, there's much that can be done to support these efforts.

For example, we're hearing from a number of our club partners that members have appreciated having their own personal workout spaces clearly marked. So much so, that these will be offered moving forward on a more permanent basis, meaning a professional finish is now required.

Our solution – similar to the floor graphics you see in supermarkets – has been developed in partnership with a floor transfer and vinyl specialist. Lines are removable

as and when needed, but won't peel up in the meantime.

More short-term, but still an important consideration while social distancing remains in force, overflow gym areas need protective flooring to be put down before heavy equipment is relocated there. Rubber tiles for example – fitted as a temporary solution without being bonded down – can protect floors in the short term and then be lifted up and used elsewhere further down the line.

Finally, we must touch on mats, which absolutely need to be easy-clean. We're seeing a number of operators replacing existing stock with closed cell, wipe-clean, non-sweat absorbing Airex mats – both for ongoing hygiene reasons and to give members a confidence-boosting fresh start.



PHOTO: PHYSICAL COMPANY



PHOTO: PHYSICAL COMPANY

Physical Company flooring
on show at Six3Nine
personal training, London

Gym activities can take place as normal – the noise and vibrations are imperceptible to neighbours

Andy Roberts / TVS Group

We were recently tasked with supplying and installing problem-solving flooring solutions in a new strength, conditioning and mobility gym in the heart of a busy London suburb.

Architect-designed Gymnasium in Wandsworth features three training studios: Athletica – where the focus is on cardio and high impact activities; Stronger – a dedicated space focusing on strength training; and Compete – a studio where budding gymnasts can develop core strength and skills.

The Compete studio backs onto a tower containing residential and business premises, presenting potential noise issues, so after an acoustic appraisal, it was agreed we should supply and install a multi-layered flooring solution with noise dampening qualities.

Our chosen approach also inhibits vibrations caused by gym activities from entering other parts of the building.



The overall effect means assorted gym activities can take place as normal and noise and vibrations are imperceptible to neighbours both nearby and further afield – a win-win solution for all.

The Stronger studio, located at ground floor level, features six elite-level lifting platforms. Part of the task was to enable a seamless transition between the surrounding flooring and the lifting platforms.

We installed heavy duty TVS Sportec tiles over impact protection tiles, ensuring a flush finish between the junction of the gym flooring and the lifting platforms. This detail is not only aesthetic, it also means there's less likelihood of tripping as gym members move between zones.

Flooring in the Athletica studio was much more straightforward, as we were able to install a single layer of our TVS Sportec heavy duty rubber tiles straight over the concrete substrate.



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- ▶ Hard-wearing, sound-deadening flooring for weightlifting areas.
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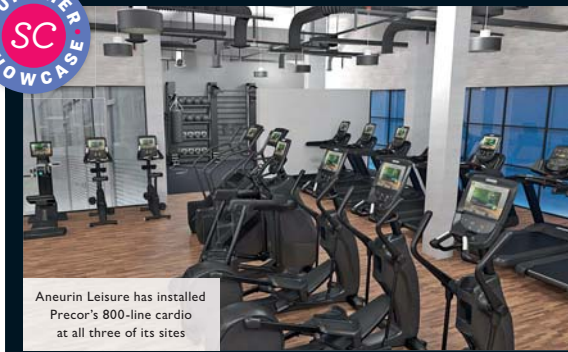
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We saw this time as an opportunity to strike and to come out of lockdown with a new offer and a competitive edge

Tom Kivell, Aneurin Leisure



Aneurin Leisure has installed Precor's 800-line cardio at all three of its sites

The power of networking

Aneurin Leisure Trust used lockdown to transform and digitise its gyms, ready for reopening

Welsh leisure trust, Aneurin Leisure, in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, forged ahead with full gym refurbishments in all three of its sites, despite the pandemic, with the centres each offering a hybrid in-person and digital gym solution for returning and new members.



Aneurin Leisure is putting technology at the forefront of its offer to ensure it can engage with members from all demographics

Steve Carter, Precor UK

Following the £600,000 refurbishment, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre, Abertillery Sports Centre and Tredegar Sports Centre each feature a full complement of Precor strength, cardio and functional equipment, with Precor's networked fitness solution and Advagym by Sony together ensuring a strong focus on digital connectivity throughout.

Tom Kivell, Aneurin Leisure's fitness development manager, says: "We decided to refurbish the three facilities as our previous kit was eight years old and very dated. We started the process in September 2019, but the pandemic put everything on hold. Considering the impact coronavirus has had on our sector, everyone's mindset has been understandably cautious. "We could easily have stalled our redevelopment plans, but thanks to the government furlough scheme, access to new grants and careful budgeting, we knew we could invest, grow and set ourselves up to thrive after reopening. We saw this time as an opportunity to strike and to come out of lockdown with a new offer and a competitive edge in our area."

The cutting-edge facilities now each offer Precor's top-of-the-range 800-line cardio in the all-new Black Pearl All Tungsten colourway, with P82 touch-screen consoles and the Preva networked fitness solution.

In addition to delivering content via the gym's cardio machines, Aneurin Leisure opted to complement Precor's new Resolute Strength line with Advagym by Sony – the unique solution that guides exercisers in using the machine safely, by loading each sensor with how-to videos, as well as logging every rep and exercise completed.

Steve Carter, managing director of Precor UK, says: "In bucking the trend and choosing to future-proof its facilities now, Aneurin Leisure is testimony to the fact that our industry can come out of the pandemic fighting fit. In choosing to partner with Precor, Aneurin Leisure is putting technology at the forefront of its offer to ensure it can engage with and attract members from all demographics and provide a best-in-class offer in the area." ●

● www.precor.com



Boosting membership sales post lockdown

Hussle's free marketing channel

It stands to reason this year's primary focus will be recouping lost revenue and driving income, and we wish our industry every success as it begins rebuilding memberships bases.

When the post lockdown bounce starts to wane, Hussle can help attract the 85% of the population not currently interacting with our sector through access to:

- 🦋 Extended 'network effect' marketing reach nationally
- 🦋 Big-brand commercial partnerships, such as Revolut banking App's 3.9 million UK users
- 🦋 Corporate giants including Facebook, CBRE and the NHS

In the last 18 months Hussle has:

- 🦋 Brought 66,000 disengaged ex-members back
- 🦋 Encouraged 14,000 brand new customers into gyms
- 🦋 Turned more than 30,000 try-before-you-buy customers into direct club members

Can your club afford to miss out on this risk-free opportunity? On average, 26% of Hussle customers go on to become direct members of gyms they visit, and Hussle's new Membership Conversion Service proactively encourages users to directly join clubs they attend regularly.



www.hussle.com/list-my-gym

Active Leeds has had 7,000 visits to its sites via Hussle in two years



A proven revenue generator

An ongoing partnership between Active Leeds and Hussle has created exciting results in the form of increased usage and memberships



PHOTO: ACTIVE LEEDS

Hussle has helped us to communicate our vision to a much wider audience than we could have achieved alone

Mathew Frieze, Active Leeds

Active Leeds has been working with Hussle as its digital marketing partner for the past two years, creating nearly 7,000 visits to the trust's 12 sites in that time.

"We felt working alongside Hussle was a good opportunity to get a wider customer base into our facilities," says Mathew Frieze, sales and retention officer at Active Leeds. "We needed a way to expand our membership portfolio and felt that engaging Hussle's services was the most cost-effective way for us to achieve this."

"Hussle has helped us to communicate our vision – that Leeds is the best city to be active in – to a much wider audience than we could have achieved alone."

"Anyone using the Hussle platform is exposed to our facilities, meaning we attract customers we'd never normally get through the doors – not just people who live in Leeds but anyone working in the area or passing through as they're moving around the country. We've attracted a new segment of the market that we wouldn't otherwise be able to tap into. It's very beneficial for

us and has allowed us to increase our footfall and revenue."

"Our number of customer visits increased 33 per cent year on year (comparing Q1 2019 with Q1 2020), despite the fact we were only trading for half of March due to COVID-19," explains Frieze. "Hussle visited to give us a performance review and we agreed some actionable plans to help us increase our revenue further in 2020. However, this was just before the pandemic hit, so we're looking to resume these plans shortly."

Hussle's nationwide marketing power attracts customers to Active Leeds through commercial partnerships and its corporate offering, which has also enabled the trust to grow its membership base. "The way Hussle goes about advertising follows our brand and the messaging – getting more people active – is in line with ours too," says Frieze. "We know that some customers go on to join our clubs directly and we look forward to working with Hussle's new Membership Conversion Service later this year."

● www.hussle.com/list-my-gym



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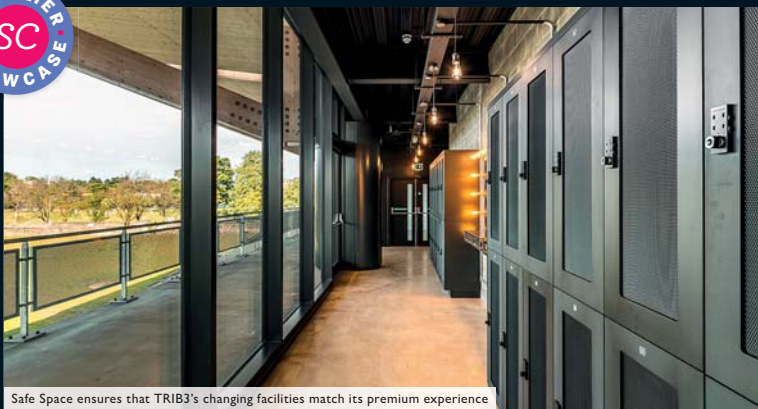


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Safe Space ensures that TRIB3's changing facilities match its premium experience

PHOTO: SAFE SPACE

Changing concept

Safe Space Lockers has extended its partnership with boutique fitness franchise TRIB3, in a new 10-site supplier agreement, following the recent installation at TRIB3 Edinburgh



PHOTO: TRIB3

We want every visit to TRIB3 to be an unforgettable experience and the changing facilities are a big part of that

Kevin Yates, TRIB3

Safe Space, supplier of lockers and changing room solutions to the fitness and leisure industry, has been a chosen supplier to boutique fitness studio operator TRIB3 since 2016, installing changing facilities at eight TRIB3 studios so far across the UK and Europe.

Most recently, Safe Space completed the design and installation of the changing rooms at TRIB3 Edinburgh, a new corporately-owned site and the brand's first studio in Scotland, which opened in May. TRIB3 Edinburgh is part of the iconic Raeburn Place development in Stockbridge. The site, which is known as the birthplace of international rugby, is currently undergoing major work in keeping with its sporting heritage, to establish a new hub for the community.

Tasked with designing a changing room concept for the Edinburgh studio in line with the operator's distinct look and feel, Safe Space's solution incorporated 32 two-tier lockers with keyless locking mechanisms, utilising perforated sheet metal in black for the doors to align with the brand's industrial style.

As part of the work with TRIB3, Safe Space also advised on the design of the overall changing

area, in order to maximise space and ensure that the facilities matched the premium experience that TRIB3 is renowned for.

"We want every visit to a TRIB3 store to be a unique and unforgettable experience. Our ethos and customer journey focuses on 'prepare, sweat and recover', with the changing facilities being a big part of that," explained Kevin Yates, CEO of TRIB3.

"Over the years, in working with Safe Space, we've evolved and developed our locker room offering, exploring new product and design developments, and the support and advice from the Safe Space team has been invaluable. They've delivered our vision for every store, on time and on budget and, crucially, achieving the unique look and feel that's central to the TRIB3 brand.

"The Edinburgh site is particularly significant as our first in Scotland and one of our largest stores; we're really happy with the outcome."

Following the recent install at TRIB3 Edinburgh, Safe Space was awarded a new 10-site supplier agreement to support the roll-out of new corporately-owned and franchise sites across the UK and overseas.

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The study looked at how exercise affected more than 18,000 middle-aged and older men and women

Creating a sense of purpose

Physical activity gives structure and meaning to people's lives, according to new research

A study published in the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* looked at how exercise affected more than 18,000 middle-aged and older men and women in the US.

Researchers examined data from the ongoing *Health and Retirement Study*, which gathers longitudinal data about the lives, attitudes and activities of American adults aged 50 or older.

Human Flourishing Program

Led by Ayse Yemiscigil, a postdoctoral research fellow with the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, the study looked at people's responses to statements such as "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life" and "my daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant".

The team then revisited people's attitudes a few years later, correlated with the amount of exercise they did.

People with a greater sense of purpose may be more likely to engage in physical activity. At the same time, physical activity can contribute to a sense of purpose, so it becomes a virtuous circle

The findings suggested that people's exercise habits may influence their sense of purpose in life – while the reverse is also true, as having a sense of purpose seemed to have a positive effect on how much they exercised.

In short, it seems that those with the most steadfast sense of purpose at the start of the study were the most likely to become active over time – and vice versa.

Positive connections

Yemiscigil said: "People with a greater sense of purpose may be more likely to engage in physical activity."

"At the same time, physical activity can contribute to a sense of purpose, so it becomes a virtuous circle."

"We tested these hypotheses using a cross-lagged panel model in a nationally representative, longitudinal panel of American adults."

"An increase in sense of purpose was associated with higher physical activity four years later – above and beyond past activity levels."

"Physical activity was also positively associated with future levels of sense of purpose in life, controlling for prior levels of purpose in life."

"The findings demonstrate a bidirectional relationship between sense of purpose in life and physical activity in large samples of middle-aged and older adults tracked over time."

● More: www.HCMmag.com/purpose



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