

THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR

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"The ukactive Blueprint can and will unleash the physical activity sector to reach its vast and fullest potential in getting the nation active. Gyms, leisure facilities and fitness professionals are the people keeping the country moving – playing an indispensable role in safeguarding the health of the nation. Only by working in full partnership with government will it be possible to mobilise the resources we need to finally deliver an active life to everyone."



STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Government should substantially scale-up its collaboration with the Sector to support its role as a key delivery partner in the promotion of active lifestyles and public health.

Fig 7.

INTRODUCTION

The physical activity sector is a driving force in the UK for positive physical and mental wellbeing. It harnesses capacity, expertise and motivation from public, private and third sector providers, and is united behind a common mission to get more people, more active, more often.

From corporate gyms and the local authority leisure centres which form integral community hubs, to sports providers, equipment suppliers, National Governing Bodies and local running clubs, the physical activity sector provides a crucial service to millions of people every day, largely without public funding. It is on its shoulders that the NHS is affordable today. It will be on its shoulders that the NHS is affordable in the future.

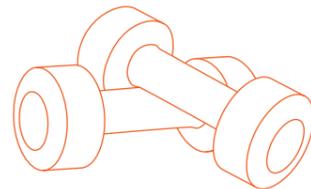
Over recent years, the physical activity sector has grown to incorporate a far wider array of delivery bodies. Traditional gym and leisure operators have fused with sports delivery bodies and the public health sector to create a broader industry united by its common goal of getting the nation moving.

In the same way as manufacturing or the service economy have a vital role to play in maintaining and growing the UK's economic infrastructure, the physical activity sector protects and improves the country's human health infrastructure, with an unrivalled reach and momentum to do so.

A healthy population is essential to a thriving productive economy that is competitive in the global race. The physical activity sector is the means of delivering this healthy nation, able to thrive on the challenges that we face.

To meet those challenges, however, requires an industrial-scale level of cooperation between the physical activity sector and a government that unites the support of a broad range of partners such as major charities and commercial brands. This grand 'Industrial Partnership' is needed to unite all parties behind their shared goal of getting more people, more active, more often.

It is not something that can be done to the sector, but something that the sector must create in partnership and co-design with government. This report sets out a number of steps that can be taken within a range of areas to get people more active.



GIVEN ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING TODAY, AND POTENTIAL IMPACT IN THE FUTURE, AN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY SHOULD BE CREATED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

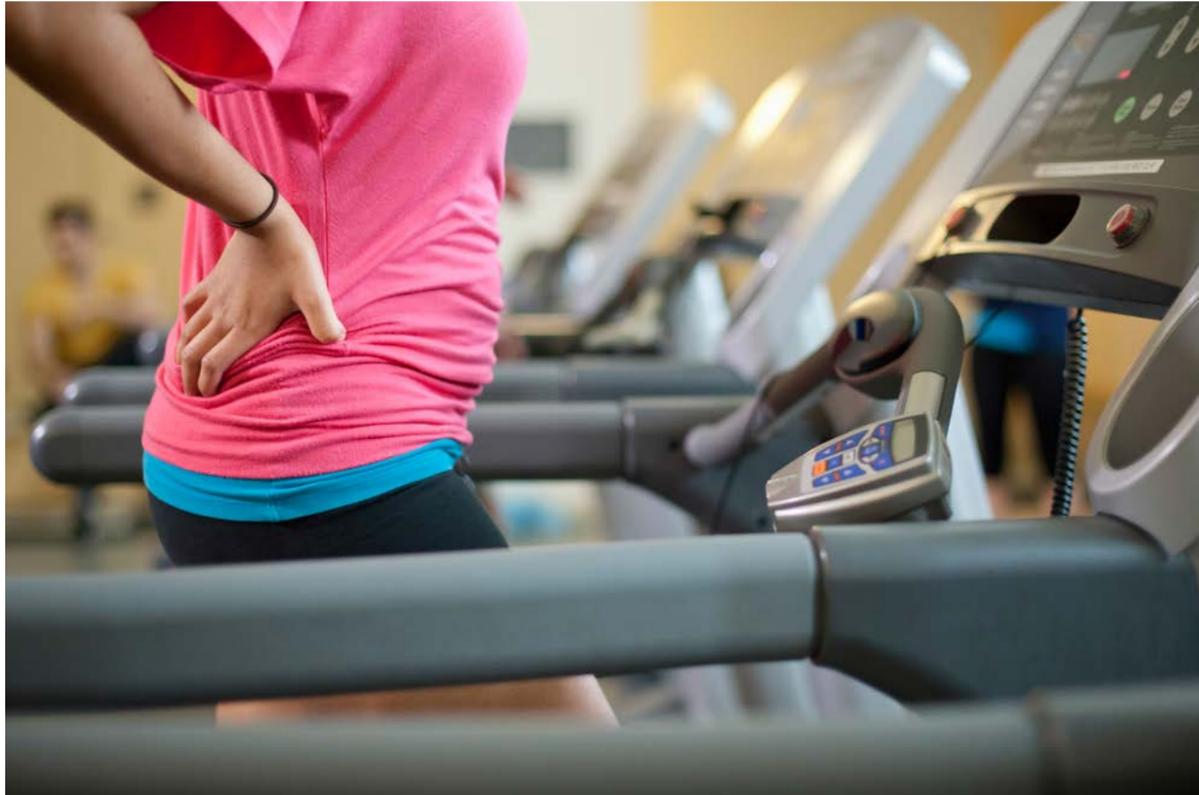
1 The physical activity sector is a vast and significant driver of the country's wellbeing, used by millions of people every day to get active. Government should substantially scale-up its collaboration with the sector to support its role as a key delivery partner in the promotion of active lifestyles and public health.

>> Government has a number of 'Industrial Partnerships' with sectors deemed vital to the nation's success. Given its impact on health and wellbeing today, and potential impact in the future, an Industrial Strategy should be created between government and the active leisure sector. This should outline regular and consistent government engagement; be underpinned by specific goals and investments; and fully explore how government's public health strategy can be supported and how both parties can take specific steps to ensure everyone has the opportunity and motivation to be active. Resource, capacity and focus commitments from the physical activity sector combined with government prioritising the sector would result in a long-term collaborative partnership for the benefit of the UK's health and wellbeing and chart a course of collaboration for the next ten years.

>> The Cutting Red Tape programme is a successful initiative encouraging business and government to identify and improve industry regulation. Without sacrificing standards, this programme should be applied in the active leisure sector. This would scale back excessive and unnecessary regulation and allow leisure providers the freedom and impetus to invest in new facilities and programmes.

>> Following on from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's consultation on the issue of tax and financial regulation of physical activity and sport, the Treasury should produce a review on reducing the cost of trade for physical activity organisations and providers. This would reflect the unique nature of physical activity provision in the wellbeing economy and should consider longer-term measures such as the official reclassification of physical activity provision as healthcare provision, with consequential benefits to the way in which it is regulated and taxed.

>> Sport England and other national sports funding bodies should invest in a major review of the technological infrastructure which currently underpins the physical activity sector's delivery. This should be done in collaboration with the wider physical activity sector. It should be followed by a national investment programme – based on international examples and best practice from the private sector – to develop a modernised technical system across the sector to provide greater insight and understanding of behaviour patterns and the effectiveness of methods of delivery.



2 Led by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's consultation, and as part of Sport England's new direction, all groups with the mission and vision to get more people, more active, more often, including National Governing Bodies, should have an equal opportunity to bid for and access funding, with the most effective and competitive models given priority.

>> Whether it is a totally voluntary community group working in the most deprived community, or a major international consumer brand that wishes to put physical activity into the mainstream by launching a national advertising campaign, government and its agencies should be a supportive friend, enabling all parties to achieve more through collaboration.

>> The current system of sports funding should be re-imagined so that anyone can easily and fairly access government support, regardless of definition or setting, if they have a role to play, or something to be gained from getting more people, more active, more often.

>> Reforms should be made to Lottery funding criteria to make this possible and Sport England should get the support necessary to take a more investment-based approach enabling it to recoup its investment over time.

3 Local authorities, with their local leisure operators, have a unique role to play in safeguarding and improving the health of the nation. It is essential that local authorities, CCGs and the broader health community engage with and support the physical activity sector to support the protection of vital services.

>> The Department for Communities and Local Government should work with CCGs and the wider health community to ensure that both the actual and potential future impact of leisure services is considered within all holistic local spending reviews, and that the impact of leisure providers is cited within all Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. Given the value that leisure, activity and sports services create for local communities, Government should explore establishing such services as mandatory, particularly for areas of deprivation for which other forms of provision may not be on offer.

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4 The physical activity sector is a champion of inclusivity and diversity within the vibrant communities it serves. Government and local authorities should work alongside the sector to identify opportunities to support traditionally inactive populations and deliver the wider ambition of an active lifestyle for everyone.

>> The active leisure sector should be given support to improve, modernise and invest in its facilities with the ambition that every facility in the country complies with the English Federation of Disability Sport's *Inclusive Fitness Initiative*. Public Health England should join forces with ukactive and the Department for Work and Pensions to expand the award-winning *Instructability* programme led by Aspire and funded by Sport England, as well as supporting the growth of any employer-led programme of its type that demonstrates an impact. A clear message must be sent that the physical activity sector is one where everyone can feel like they belong, regardless of age, sex, disability or sexual orientation.

>> More women and girls use gyms and swimming pools to get active than play sport.²² This should be celebrated and encouraged, and the pioneering 'This Girl Can' expanded so it can support more women to get active in all settings. This should include more collaboration with the physical activity sector to expand its reach.

>> Other priority segments should be identified for the creation of national frameworks and campaigns that inspire local action. *Change4Life* and *This Girl Can* have shown that national campaigns can be adapted for local action by entrepreneurial and creative physical activity sector organisations. Other areas – such as older adults – should be considered locally to instigate new projects, products and outreach.

²² H Jones et al, "Adult Participation in Sport", Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (August 2011), < https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137986/tp-adult-participation-sport-analysis.pdf >, [accessed 25/09/15]

5 The image and resources of trusted brands can play a huge role in inspiring more people to take part in physical activity programmes. The physical activity sector should fully explore the contribution private companies can make to getting more people, more active, more often.

- >> As part of a new, independent Physical Activity Network championed by Public Health England and ukactive, a series of initiatives should be created to identify large corporate brands that have the potential and reach to partner with or support the development of local physical activity opportunities. The reach and presence of big brands should be utilised to get more people active. The Physical Activity Network should broker partnerships and collaborations that have the potential to develop an impact.
- >> Sponsors of corporate sporting events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games or the Rugby World Cup should be encouraged, as part of their agreements, to make specific commitments around investment in local activity opportunities, particularly those that target inactive or under-represented groups.

- >> Major consumer brands should have access to the latest evidence of what physical activity works to ensure that their programmes and campaigns are evidence based, well targeted and end up as more than a PR or CSR exercise for corporate or commercial purposes. If brands are invited to the table, they must approach the issue from an informed and credible perspective, rather than simply pursue cynical marketing approaches to achieve their own objectives.
- >> Bodies such as the Premier League, which has already demonstrated considerable commitment to improving health and wellbeing by getting more people active, should be connected to the wider physical activity sector to ensure that its programmes are of high quality, utilise the latest evidence of what works and are supported to maximise their reach.

