

future fit 
TRAINING



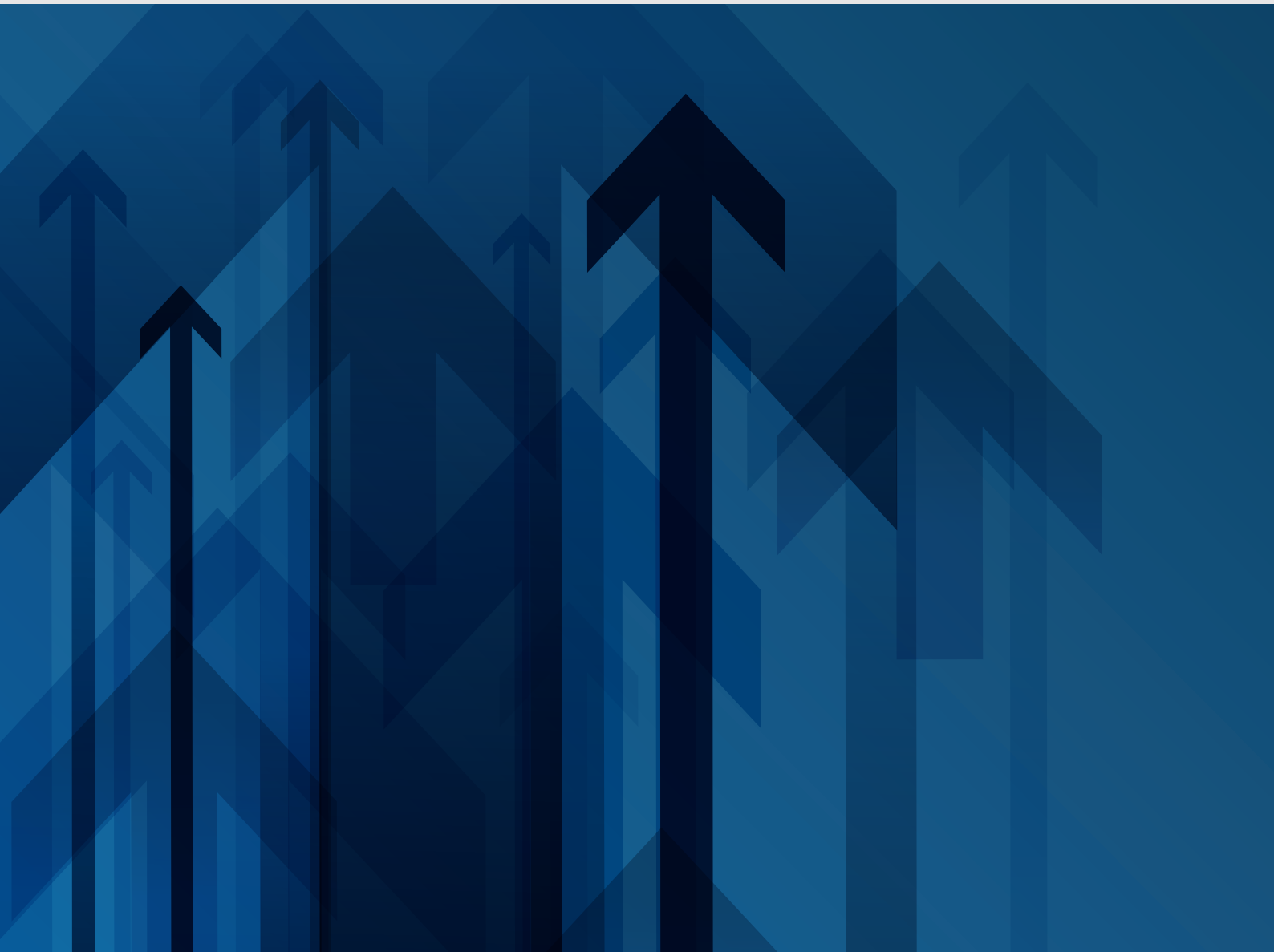
RAISING THE BAR

NOVEMBER 2016

In partnership with



More people
More active
More often



Foreword



Steven Ward

ukactive Executive Director

Over the previous twelve months, the physical activity sector has taken huge strides towards developing a high-quality and fully-equipped Wellbeing Workforce. In time, this team of highly-skilled experts will be ready and eager to get more people, more active, more often, and to take their place alongside other allied health professionals as the front-line delivery arm of the NHS's preventative agenda.

In late 2015, the government published its landmark and aspirational strategy for physical activity, which outlined its intention to make tackling physical inactivity a national priority, backed by a host of wide-ranging policies and investments. In addition to recognising the vital role that the physical activity workforce has to play in delivering this ambition, the strategy included an endorsement of the sector's decision - led by ukactive - to back the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) as the sole custodian for skills and workforce development. To support this, the government earmarked new funding and manpower to work alongside the organisation in driving this agenda and delivering a comprehensive new workforce strategy.

This represents huge strategic progress for training and development in the sector. While still an area that urgently needs addressing - as demonstrated throughout this report - crucially, the stage is now set for CIMSPA to accelerate its work and make a tangible impact on the ability of newly-qualified fitness professionals to thrive.

This is the third year that ukactive has supported Future Fit Training in conducting expert analysis into this area. The vital research explores how leading sector employers are navigating this landscape on the front-line, and looks at what specific steps can be taken at the national level to equip fitness staff with the technical knowledge and customer engagement skills needed to make getting active fun, easy and a permanent lifestyle change for every new member who walks through the door. More broadly, the sector is in agreement that its traditional customer is changing, and that the challenges presented by an ageing population - alongside the rise in individuals living with non-communicable long-term conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity - represent an opportunity to ensure that activity professionals meet the needs of patients, as well as customers.

As government, Sport England and CIMSPA work together to develop a new workforce strategy for the sector, the views of employers must remain central. Those who pay the bill must set the terms and pace of the debate. ukactive welcomes working in partnership with Future Fit Training to drive forward this agenda.





Tara Dillon
CIMSPA CEO

I'm delighted that Future Fit Training and ukactive have invited CIMSPA to introduce the latest *Raising the Bar* report. This evidence base helps CIMSPA focus on ensuring that the skills requirements identified filter through to the training, CPD and qualifications ecosystem that we are building.

That nine out of ten survey respondents are either already working with CIMSPA or are planning to do so in the coming months is very encouraging, and CIMSPA is committed to repaying this trust with careful custodianship of the sector's workforce development project.

Although the report rightly highlights our sectors' skills gaps, I'm confident that the increasing momentum of our work will help address these challenges. CIMSPA's employer-led professional development committees are hard at work building out the professional standards matrix, with initial standards due for publication by the end of the year. 2016 also saw specialised membership pathways open for exercise and fitness professionals, and our new FE and HE partnerships are helping bridge the "employability gap" identified in *Raising the Bar*.

There are still important challenges ahead - particularly on preparing for the increased role of apprenticeships - but our partners Future Fit Training, supported by ukactive, should be congratulated for this excellent work.

I am delighted to be able to present this year's *Raising the Bar* - the annual report we undertake in partnership with ukactive. This ensures employers remain central to the skills and workforce debate, charting the progress of the physical activity workforce as its capabilities grow to meet a fresh array of opportunities and challenges.

We first began this exercise in 2014 to highlight the growing concerns we, and the sector at large, expressed at the work-readiness of newly qualified fitness professionals. Over the past twenty four months, *Raising the Bar* has gone on to consistently raise awareness of this issue and outline specific steps we can take to embed the highest levels of quality in the sector's training and development practices. This includes the importance of working with CIMSPA to develop a minimum assessment strategy, ensure momentum is not lost within the Physical Activity Trailblazer and, for the first time, to review the sector's awareness of children's fitness qualifications and whether they are fit for purpose.

This is an area of the utmost importance to Future Fit Training and I look forward to continuing to work alongside ukactive, CIMSPA, sector employers and the broader training and development stakeholder landscape to ensure the physical activity workforce is equipped with the skills to truly get more people, more active, more often.



Rob Johnson
Future Fit Training Founder & MD



Introduction

Raising the Bar 2016 is the third annual skills and training insight survey delivered by Future Fit Training and supported by ukactive. Each year, this process seeks the views, perceptions and satisfaction levels of senior managers in the physical activity sector regarding the skills and qualifications of the industry's workforce: front-line industry professionals and personal trainers who deliver the sector's ambition to get more people, more active, more often on the ground.

This process, which started in 2014, tracks the sentiment of senior leaders, Human Resource Managers and Training and People Development Managers in the physical activity sector, regarding the capabilities and competencies of their front-line fitness staff and other areas of strategic importance to the skills and workforce development agenda. To date this has included the robustness of the personal training qualification, the demand for an agreed minimum assessment strategy for fitness qualifications, strategic support for CIMPSA and key skills gaps in the industry that require attention.

Given the increasing focus on support for the next generation to get active, for the first time this report also explores the perceived quality of training and qualifications in relation to delivering children and young people's fitness sessions, and it considers whether they truly equip fitness professionals with the skills they need to promote activity safely and effectively amongst children.

There has been considerable progress in the skills and workforce development agenda for physical activity. At the centre of this is the government's new strategy for sport and physical activity, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. The strategy gives a ringing endorsement of the decision taken by the physical activity sector to back CIMPSA to develop a comprehensive new workforce strategy for the sector and deliver it effectively. The *Raising the Bar* report seeks to ensure the voice of employers remains central to this strategy and broader agenda.

To compile this analysis, the report collected data from a range of the largest leisure operators, representing a total of over 45,000 fitness employees, and is supplemented by a number of expert consultations with senior organisation leaders.

Executive summary

- 100% of employers have to provide some additional training to fitness staff to ensure they are work ready
- 100% of employers believe the PT Trailblazer standards are an improvement on the current standards
- 91% of employers are already working with CIMPSA, or have plans to do so in the next 12 months
- 88% of employers believe personal training staff are not currently adequately equipped to engage with 'special populations,' including children, older people and those living with long-term medical conditions
- 84% of employers believe that personal training qualifications should take no less than a 6 month duration
- 78% of employers are uncertain of the robustness of the current children's fitness qualifications

The Skills Gap:

Personal training

Over the past three years, employers have repeatedly stated that a major challenge for their organisation remains identifying and retaining high-quality fitness staff - citing a number of recurring gaps in the skills base of newly qualified professionals - and indicating that the lack of progress in developing higher skilled individuals may represent a strategic and commercial risk for the physical activity sector.

89% of employers confirmed that they do not find it easy to recruit high quality staff - compared with only 11% of respondents who believe it is 'quite easy' or 'very easy.' However, respondents were also keen to emphasise that a tangible change in the preparation of individuals for employment will not occur until further work is undertaken to professionalise its workforce. This process remains ongoing, having started at pace in 2014 but gaining significant traction over the previous twelve months with the backing received for CIMSPA by major employers and subsequently in the new strategy set out by the government.

Our survey identified the following key skills gaps amongst fitness professionals:



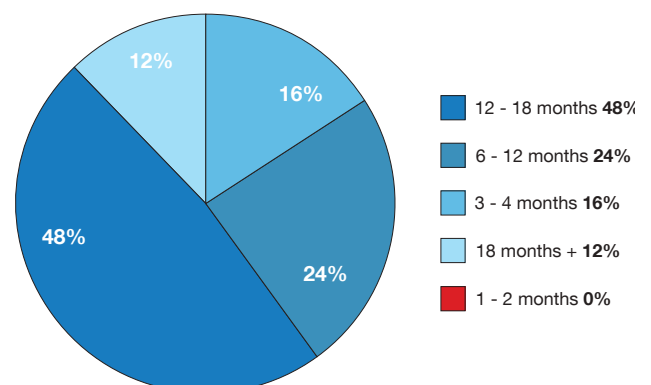
Do you have to provide additional training to fitness staff to ensure they are 'work ready'?

- Yes (84%)
- Sometimes (16%)
- No (0%)

Over what minimum period of time should personal trainers have trained or completed a qualification in order to be 'work ready'?

Employers were unambiguous in their belief that personal trainers should have been trained and assessed for a minimum of three months to be adequately prepared and 'work ready' - with 84% of respondents confirming that courses should look to last a minimum of six months or longer.

The most popular response, favoured by nearly half of all respondents (48%), was that personal training qualifications should take a minimum of twelve months to complete, to provide the length of time for a prospective Personal Trainer to acquire the broader personal and soft skills needed to thrive in the workplace.



What does this mean?

This data indicates a significant disconnect between both the duration of delivery and assessment of many personal training qualifications, and the time employers believe personal trainers should take to qualify in order to develop the skills required to perform to an adequate level. In particular, it is significant that the largest issue identified across the sector (with three quarters of all respondents confirming) is the lack of social and behaviour change skills. These are necessary to ensure personal trainers are able to apply their technical knowledge and support the growth of the sector by engaging with new customers.

In addition, it is clear that major employers are currently significantly underwriting the entire training and development system by allocating substantial investment in additional training for new recruits, to ensure they are able to deliver services to the standard acceptable to their brand. This investment could be substantially reduced by a training and development system that had sufficient quality assurance to give employers greater confidence in new recruits.

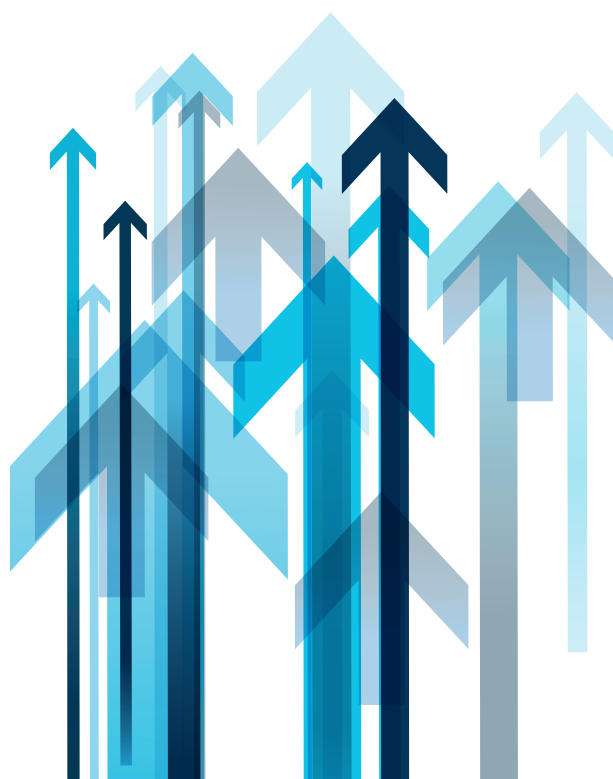
Employers still lack confidence

Overall, the answers in this section of the survey suggest that employers still lack confidence in the skills and workforce development system in the physical activity sector, particularly for entry-level employees, and are footing a substantial bill as a result. This follows a similar trend of the two previous *Raising the Bar* surveys where not a single respondent found it easy to recruit high-quality staff or were satisfied with the Level 3 Personal Training qualification. All employers surveyed stated that they have to provide some additional training to staff to ensure that they are 'work ready.'

In many ways this is to be expected and explained by the strategic developments in the physical activity sector over the past twenty-four months. It has largely focused on solidifying the new strategic direction for skills and workforce development and the initial implementation of a number of streams of work that will drive this forward. Until these new streams of work begin to embed and new standards for training and qualifications are implemented, we are unlikely to see any significant changes to these results.

84%
of respondents believe that
personal training
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***All employers surveyed
have to provide some
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are 'work ready'***



The new ‘Workforce Strategy’

- the way forward

In 2015, via the formal decision-making procedures of ukactive, employers sought to place the sole responsibility for addressing workforce development issues in the hands of CIMSPA. This decision tasked CIMSPA with overseeing a single process for the setting of all standards for all job roles, from levels one to seven. Furthermore, it tasked CIMSPA with establishing a quality assurance process to validate the quality of training delivered against these standards and assess the competencies of graduates emerging from those courses. Finally it called for a single process of recognising professional competency and promoting quality continuous professional development, providing a clear line of sight from entry level roles to the board room.

This support has been enhanced over the past twelve months with the formal backing of CIMSPA from both government and Sport England to develop a new workforce strategy for physical activity. CIMSPA are now looking to deliver this strategy alongside further developing its professional standards matrix, to map every job role in the sector against specific knowledge, skills and behaviours required in employees to function effectively. Both these areas are expected to be implemented in 2017.

“The Personal Training qualification standards haven’t changed in any meaningful way over the last 8-10 years, despite the industry and customer expectations changing massively - more than we ever could have imagined.”

- Employer feedback

The CIMSPA Trailblazer Apprenticeship

Major progress has also been made with the Personal Training Trailblazer Apprenticeship which has been led by CIMSPA with the full backing of major employers and ukactive. The new standards for the personal trainer apprenticeship have now been agreed with the government and submitted to the skills framework.

This survey demonstrates that the new standard is regarded as a significant improvement on the standards currently in place and is set to be adopted as the standard for both funded and non-funded personal training courses. The sector is now focused on developing an effective assessment strategy to match these standards before they can be formally launched next year.

The task handed to CIMSPA has been complicated by the fact that the broader skills landscape has also undergone a major shake-up. Responsibility for skills and training is moving to the Department of Education away from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, linking skills and education at a ministerial level and ending the historic disconnect between apprenticeships and traineeships. Furthermore, there has been a slow pace regarding crucial discussions on the resourcing of CIMSPA to deliver on the ambitions set out in the government strategy, including extensive discussions with employers and Sport England to address that crucial issue. These delays are reflected in some concerns by employers to see greater progress than has been the case.

Each of these developments has contributed to the strategic reorientation of the sector’s ambitions for a professional and competent workforce, and suggests that over the coming twelve months there is scope to deliver meaningful, tangible progress in this area. **If progress is made, then it is hoped that in time the training that fitness professionals entering the industry receive will be more in-depth and will prepare them for work more fully. Once this happens, employers might start to gain confidence that their new fitness staff are more work ready.**

The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA)

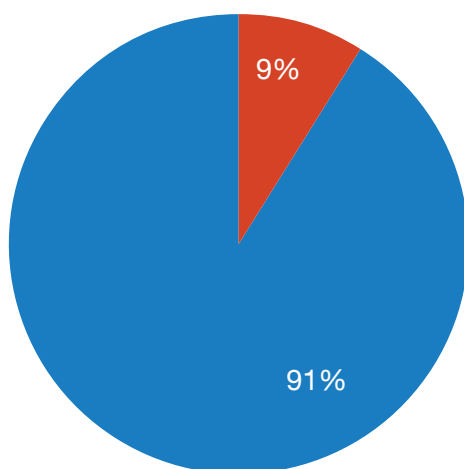
In 2014, CIMSPA was awarded sole custodianship for skills and workforce development within the physical activity sector. The ukactive Membership Council, the body representing all the major physical activity operators in the sector, formally recommended that ukactive withdraw support from SkillsActive and the Register of Exercise Professionals and placed its support fully behind CIMSPA. CIMSPA was tasked with being the sole organisation to deliver the workforce development agenda, in light of its status as a Chartered Institute formed with the backing of the Privy Council.

All the major and influential bodies in our industry now recognise that CIMSPA is the only organisation capable of delivering a unified, long-term strategy.

This endorsement has also been echoed by government in its recent strategies - *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* and *Towards an Active Nation* - a move which confirmed that all the major and influential bodies in our industry now recognise CIMSPA as the only organisation capable of delivering a unified, long-term strategy for the sector's skills and workforce development needs.

This strategic support for CIMSPA is also firmly echoed by employers on the ground, who state unequivocally that the physical activity sector fully supports its mission and will work with the organisation to accelerate its delivery. Nine out of ten respondents to the survey confirmed that they believe the work CIMSPA is undertaking will benefit the sector as a whole, and that they are either already working with the Chartered Institute or have plans to do so in the next twelve months.

91% of those surveyed are already working with CIMSPA or have plans to do so in the next 12 months



■ Yes ■ No

What does this mean?

CIMSPA's authority on skills and workforce development is tied to the position of respect and trust that it holds amongst the sector's employers. Organisations are joining CIMSPA as Employer Partners and have started the process of transitioning their employees to the new sector employee register, the CIMSPA Affiliate Programme.

The ability to engage with and support awarding organisations and training providers to deliver qualifications against the needs of the industry has only increased. The data collected from this survey reaffirms the sector's overwhelming commitment to CIMSPA and the eagerness of employers to drive forward the professionalisation of the physical activity workforce.



The Apprenticeship Trailblazer Programme

In 2012, the Richard Review of Apprenticeships called on government to improve the quality of apprenticeships and ensure they were delivering the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by employers in their staff. Its main recommendation was that employers themselves should be central to all new apprenticeships.

In the years since, the government has launched its Trailblazer Programme, bringing together groups of employers across various industries, tasked with identifying the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employees require to perform in any job role, and how these can be assessed robustly and effectively. The Physical Activity Trailblazer group has been convened as part of this process and has since agreed with government the standards for Level 3 Personal Trainer and Level 3 Leisure Duty Manager apprenticeships, with conversations ongoing regarding their assessment strategies. CIMSPA coordinates the work of this group and the development of standards for all other job roles including Level 2 Fitness Instructor, Leisure Assistant and Children's Activity Practitioner to date.

From 2017, government funding will only be available for apprenticeships designed using this new process, and by 2020 all original apprenticeship frameworks will have been phased out. This represents an opportunity for the physical activity sector to refresh all existing apprenticeships and ensure they truly reflect the needs of employers, as well as set the basis for an agreed benchmark that all new training for physical activity staff are measured against.

100% of operators think the Personal Trainer Trailblazer standards are an improvement on the current standard

What does this mean?

Knowledge amongst the sector of the current Trailblazer standards remains at the same level as it was twelve months previously: over a third of operators are still unaware of this initiative. This is a significant risk. Unless the sector dramatically increases the output and productivity of the Trailblazer process, it risks leaving employers with a lack of apprenticeship programmes on the framework for funding.

Positively, operators still demonstrate a willingness to engage with this agenda and play a role in supporting its development, with all but one respondent eager to learn more. The task is given to CIMSPA to enhance the operations of the Trailblazer process to meet employer needs, engage more employers in the process and accelerate its productivity.

As part of the survey, the new Trailblazer standards were attached and crucially every single respondent who was aware of the personal trainer Trailblazer standards thought they represented an improvement on the current personal trainer qualification. Both these points indicate that employers recognise the central, proactive role they are required to play in this agenda, but also that what they have achieved so far is a significant departure from the status quo.

The 1 May 2017 introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy brings a real focus and impetus to this work and crucial need for it to accelerate its outputs for the sector. Employers are committed to supporting the process for its optimum success.

“The Trailblazer standards and qualifications need to be one and the same. They keep the professionalism of the sector, but also maintain the competitiveness in the market.” - Employer feedback

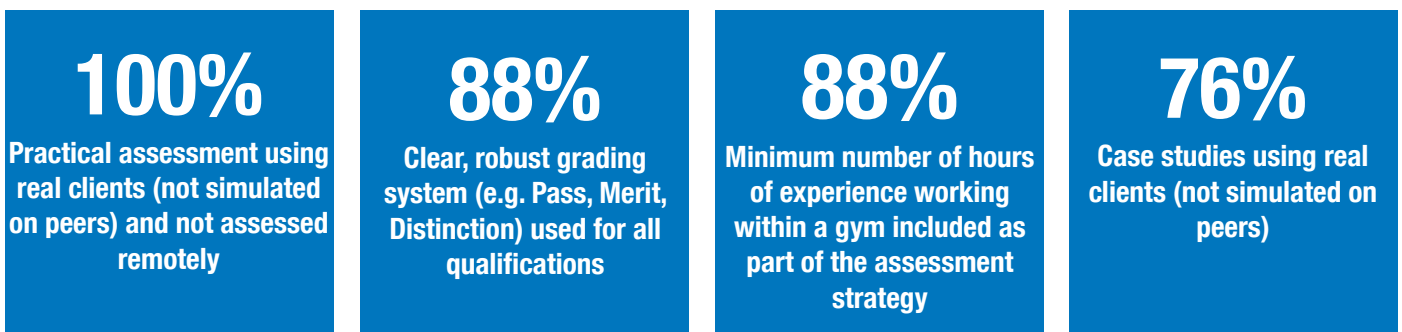
Minimum assessment strategies

In the previous *Raising the Bar* surveys, employers repeatedly highlighted the need to develop more robust training and assessment. This has continued in a similar vein this year with the following responses to questions in this area:

An overwhelming majority of respondents - **96%** - indicated that they felt that the single **Level 3 Personal Training Trailblazer standard should be used to inform all qualifications in the sector at this level, a significant validation of the strategy set out by CIMSPA to use the Trailblazer process to inform wider standards development.**

Respondents also highlighted the need for a number of clear, specific measures that all future qualifications should include in their assessment strategy to ensure that fitness professionals enter the workforce with a competent and relevant set of knowledge, skills and behaviours.

When asked **“Which of the following would you support in an agreed assessment strategy for fitness qualifications?”** - we received the following responses:



“... it has been noted that the continuing professional development courses that are provided in the fitness industry are often too short and compact, meaning that fitness professionals do not receive the level of training/education they require for the tasks they undertake in ‘real world’ practice environments.”

Alexander T. C. De Lyon, Ross D. Neville & Kathleen M. Armour. (2016). *The Role of Fitness Professionals in Public Health: A Review of the Literature.*



What does this mean?

Every single respondent agreed that, as a minimum, all courses should be assessed practically, using a real client as opposed to undertaking a simulated assessment on a classmate or fellow fitness professional.

Crucially, employers also unanimously believe that remote assessment of the practical elements of a qualification is not an acceptable or accurate way to fully judge participants' ability.

This represents a significant change in opinion over the previous twelve months: in the preceding *Raising the Bar* report, only eight out of ten respondents supported the use of practical assessments using real clients.¹

As such, this new figure suggests that employers have grown increasingly wary of qualifications that require little to no real client interaction and do not believe that fitness professionals are qualified to work in their business without it.

Employers have grown increasingly wary of qualifications that require little to no real client interaction

“CIMSPA is absolutely the best placed organisation to develop a minimum assessment standard - but they'll only manage it if they're backed by resources from the sector. It's the only way they'll become sustainable.”

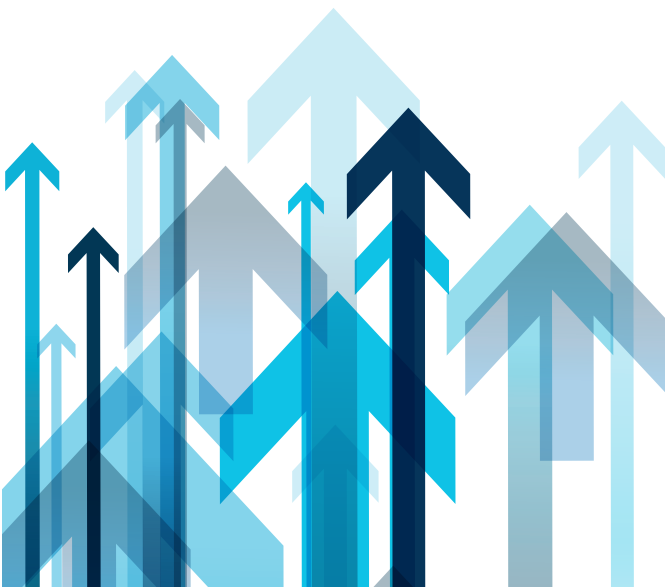
- Employer feedback

Employers are also demonstrably in favour of ensuring all new personal trainers have achieved a minimum amount of work experience with clients in a gym setting prior to qualifying.

Following a number of interviews conducted by ukactive and Future Fit Training with several survey respondents throughout this process, employers also highlighted that they believe CIMSPA is the organisation best placed to design, implement and enforce such a minimum assessment strategy, and is also the only organisation with the authority to ensure it is adhered to.

One respondent also highlighted the merits of the system previously used to accredit personal trainers in the sector - based on a 'Stage One' and 'Stage Two' process. The Stage One qualification would allow a member of staff to work with clients; the Stage Two accreditation would be awarded once the learner had achieved a number of hours of work experience with a number of clients and had demonstrated their ability to work as a Personal Trainer.

¹ Future Fit Training and ukactive, "Raising the Bar", November 2015



Special populations

The NHS's annual budget currently stands at **£120 billion** - of which **70%** is used to support people living with long-term conditions.

Evidence suggests that supporting individuals to be more active could generate **savings of up to 15%** for the NHS and the UK's social care budget ²

Physical activity has been labelled by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges as a 'miracle cure,' able to manage, treat and prevent over twenty serious lifestyle-related conditions. In recent years its profile has grown in the medical community as one of the most powerful lifestyle behaviour factors that doctors should promote to improve the overall health and wellbeing of their patients.

The current Personal Training Standards, which all personal training qualifications are based on as a minimum, require personal trainers to demonstrate ability to work alongside "apparently healthy adults of all ages"³ - a statement that is now recognised by the sector to be dangerously narrow in scope and which potentially renders personal trainers inadequately equipped to deal with special populations, including pre and postnatal clients and clients with medical conditions including diabetes and obesity, many of whom are increasingly seeking their services.

The term 'special populations' has previously been used to describe customers with disabilities, medical conditions such as diabetes, older adults or overweight clients. Customers under this banner are sometimes accessing the services of the sector having been passed through a referral or recommendation from doctors or medical professionals who are increasingly signposting their patients to local activity opportunities. However, such has been the elevation of the role and importance of an active lifestyle, that customers are taking responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and taking the decision to seek out support to get active of their own accord.

"I don't know if GPs get that what we can do is stop their patients coming through the door in the first place"

- Employer feedback

In this year's survey, nearly nine out of ten respondents indicated that they believe personal trainers are not adequately equipped to work with special populations.

The view of major employers in the sector is that individuals previously classed as falling into the special populations category are increasingly the 'typical' client seeking the support and services of their staff.

As a result, **eight out of ten respondents believe that the skills required to engage with and support these special populations should be included as standard in the personal trainer qualification**, as opposed to a system where personal trainers can choose to develop their knowledge in this area via CPD courses, which vary in content, or indeed not undertake any further training at all.

² Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, "Exercise: The Miracle Cure"

³ SkillsActive, "QCF Evidence Requirements and Assessment Guidance", April 2010, < http://www.skillsactive.com/PDF/standards-quals/Personal_Training_NVQ_Evidence_Requirements_and_Assessment_Guidance.pdf>

What does this mean?

The sector now largely agrees that its core market is changing - the promotion of activity as a form of healthcare has grown to become central to the sector's engagement with its members. This is also an area of importance to the medical community, and is heavily tied to the role the physical activity sector can play as part of the broader allied health workforce as it looks to engage with opportunities presented in the NHS and public health system.

Such are the rates of lifestyle related conditions, the challenges posed in the future by an ageing society and the fundamental need for everyone in society to be supported to build activity into their lives, it is crucial for all activity professionals to be equipped to meet the needs of all of their potential customers.

Sector employers are in agreement that the ability to engage with individuals living with long-term health conditions such as diabetes and obesity, in addition to those clients who are pregnant, require nutrition advice, or are over a certain age, should be included as standard in personal trainer qualifications. This should include a greater awareness of "scope of practice" - a term widely used in healthcare - whereby exercise professionals have the ability to identify when a client should be referred to a trained medical or allied health professional.

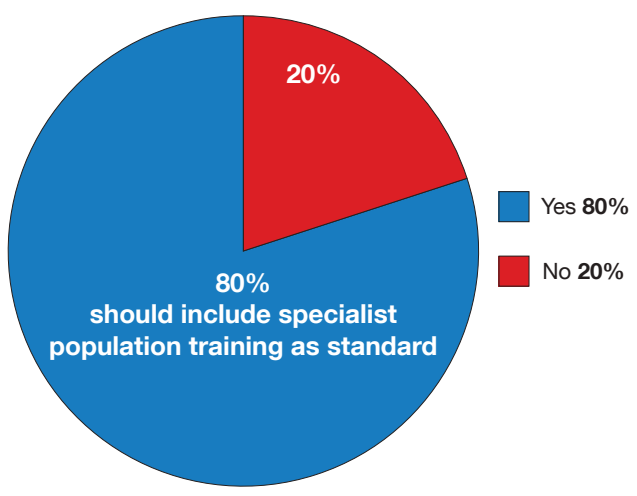
"... the evidence is clear that a personal trainer's role extends far beyond the programming of structured exercise activities. Moreover, like other groups of practitioners within the field of kinesiology, the role has been continually shifting to meet new and emerging practice expectations. For example, evidence shows that personal trainers routinely take on a multitude of roles, including those of teacher, trainer, counselor, coach, supervisor, supporter, nutritionist, biomechanist, bodybuilding evaluator and consultant, life management advisor, weight controller, personal life consultant, business person, and physical fitness advocate."

Alexander T. C. De Lyon, Ross D. Neville & Kathleen M. Armour. (2016). *The Role of Fitness Professionals in Public Health: A Review of the Literature.*

88%
of employers believe that personal trainers are inadequately equipped to work with special populations, such as children, older adults, pre & postnatal, diabetic or overweight clients

It is crucial for all activity professionals to be equipped to meet the needs of all of their potential customers.

80% of employers think that working with special populations should be included as standard in the personal training qualifications rather than being an optional study route



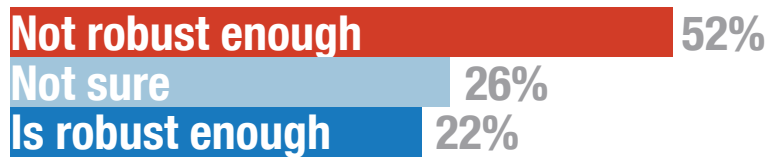
Children and young people

Each year the annual *Raising the Bar* report seeks to provide a snapshot of an additional specific area relevant to the physical activity sector's current skills and training development agenda. Respondents this year were asked to explore the robustness of existing children's physical activity qualifications.

This is an area likely to be of particular importance to the sector, following the publication of a number of recent government strategies pledging to tackle childhood inactivity and provide new opportunities and pools of funding for organisations able to effectively do so. Sport England's strategy - *Towards an Active Nation* - included a major new investment of £40m into opportunities for families to get active together, and the government's Childhood Obesity Plan reaffirmed their commitment to double the funding available for the Primary PE and Sport Premium - a ring fenced pool of funding available for headteachers to invest in school activity and sport.

According to employers, only 57% of staff that currently work with children hold a children's fitness qualification. 17% don't hold a children's fitness qualification and the remaining 26%, employers were not sure if they did or not

The response as to whether or not the training and assessment of children's qualifications is robust enough, suggests that this must be a central priority



The following were identified as the key skills gaps among fitness staff delivering children's activities:

- Communication (with children and parents) (65%)
- Behaviour management and group dynamics (65%)
- Child development (cognitive and physical) (57%)
- Motivation techniques (43%)
- Physical literacy skills (30%)
- Basic nutrition (22%)
- All of the above (9%)
- None of the above (9%)



What does this mean?

Respondents revealed several insights regarding their organisation's approach to children and young people - specifically, that promoting children's activity is a central priority for many organisations, but that only nearly two thirds of relevant staff members do hold relevant qualifications.

The development of the workforce serving these customers is clearly on the agenda of major employers. Respondents did, however, question the robustness of these qualifications and identified a range of areas where there is a shortfall between their staff's current knowledge and the skills required to effectively function in these job roles, with communication skills, behaviour management and a greater expertise in child physical and mental development cited most often.

While cause for concern, these skills gaps are also broadly similar to those identified for personal trainers, where the importance of developing 'soft skills' was highlighted in order to facilitate real customer interaction and engagement. Beyond this, employers are also in broad agreement that a specialised understanding of children's development is required to recommend the correct types and intensity of activity.

Importantly, after having identified these issues, respondents indicated that they were unclear as to how these can be effectively addressed. In particular they suggested that:

There is a lack of guidance and expertise in general for children's fitness qualifications.

Not a single respondent in the *Raising the Bar* follow-up interviews was confident that the industry had a good understanding of the qualifications available to promote children's activity, and all stressed the importance of giving a named, central body in the sector the responsibility for providing expert and independent advice in areas such as this. It was hoped that this would be an area of future work for CIMSPA in the next twelve months.



Dean Horridge

Chair, ukactive Kids

“Many activity professionals who specialise in working with children and young people work tirelessly throughout the year, inside and outside the school gates, instructing, encouraging and most importantly ingraining a love of activity in children. It’s not only essential that these individuals are adequately trained to deliver effective activity sessions and classes, but that they also qualify with all the necessary skills to make being physically active safe, easy and, most importantly, enjoyable.”

Respondents to Raising the Bar 2016 confirmed that there is plenty of scope to go further in this area - particularly to ensure that staff have the necessary communication skills to engage with children from all backgrounds, and at all levels of ability, and to inspire children to adopt an active, healthy lifestyle which can last a lifetime.”



Moving forwards:

what can we do to resolve these issues?

Considerable progress has been made in the physical activity sector's skills and workforce development agenda over the past twelve months. Successive government strategies have been published that name tackling physical inactivity as a national priority, including a commitment from Sport England to work with CIMSPA to deliver an entirely new workforce strategy and support the organisation to fully embrace its role as an authoritative, financially independent chartered institute and the sole custodian for the skills and workforce development of the physical activity sector.

This will be delivered before the end of 2016, and this year's *Raising the Bar* survey confirms that employers still believe there is an urgent need for its implementation, and that CIMSPA is still widely regarded as the most authoritative and best-placed organisation to deliver it. Government must now ensure that this level of support, and the work of various organisations in the sector to arrive at this point, is not squandered. The final workforce strategy must be a plan with the confidence of employers that fully reflects the needs of the sector highlighted in this document.

In line with last year's findings, the sector remains overwhelmingly in favour of developing an agreed minimum assessment standard to address the inconsistency and lack of confidence that currently surrounds employers' attitudes to the workforce, and to ensure that all qualifications equip new entrants to the workforce with the skills necessary to thrive and build a career.

These standards would require buy-in from all relevant organisations in the physical activity sector - including training providers, awarding organisations, employers and regulatory bodies. In turn, the standards would act as a guarantee that all new entrants had been taught to a certain level, including practical experience on the gym-floor. This would have the added benefit of building the sector's reputation amongst the public and the medical community. There is also a need to enforce a robust approach to CPD, which CIMSPA is also championing.

Furthermore, the government's Apprenticeship Levy, due to be implemented in May 2017, will require all large organisations to earmark funding, as a proportion of their pay-bill, to deliver an accredited apprenticeship programme. However, it is agreed amongst the sector that the current apprenticeship standards do not meet the needs of our industry and presently these are the only apprenticeships that will be eligible for this new funding. There is a significant need to accelerate the productivity of the Trailblazer process, with a key need for CIMSPA to deliver in this area.

All respondents indicated that they were eager to support the Trailblazer Programme. Progressing the development of these new standards alongside CIMSPA will be vital in gaining maximum value from the new levy and ensuring that new apprentices are able to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that are now required by employers.

The next twelve months represent an opportunity for the sector to make real, tangible progress against all the areas highlighted in this document - to deliver exceptional training to brand new fitness professionals, equipping them with the skills they need to succeed, and supporting their development through management and beyond.



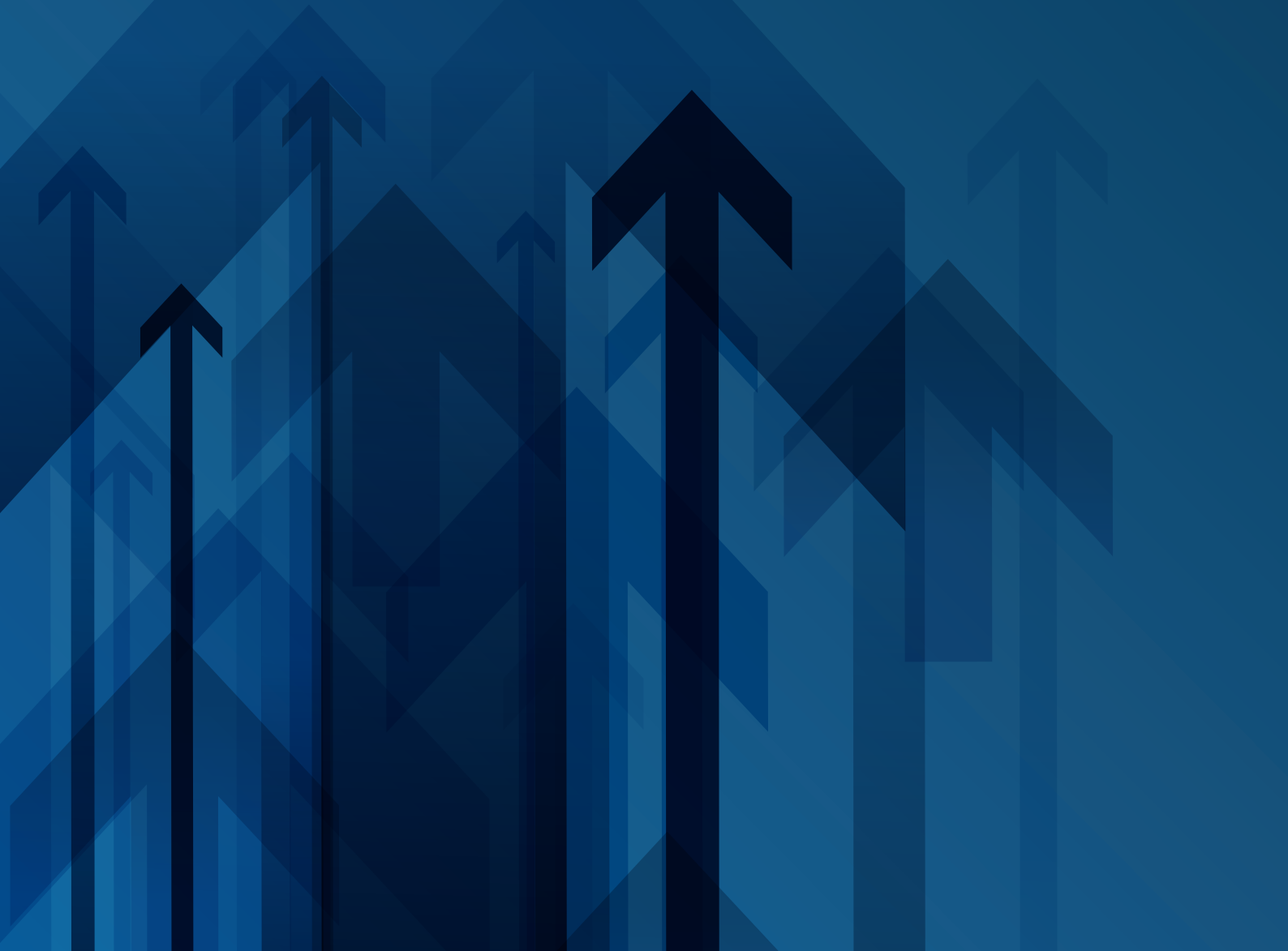
Methodology

In order to gather the data used throughout this document, Future Fit Training and ukactive developed the annual 'Raising the Bar' Skills Survey in 2014, covering various key indicators for employer satisfaction with the leisure and fitness industry workforce. The survey was sent out through our joint networks in September 2014, September 2015, and expanded to include the CIMSPA Employer Partner network in September 2016 to a selection of the largest employers in the sector. The correspondence was directed at senior Human Resource representatives at over fifty organisations in order to gather the most robust insight possible.

In follow-up to the initial survey, we also reached out to a selection of Chief Executives, Human Resources Managers, and Training and People Development Managers of operators. One-to-one expert consultations were introduced to discuss the issues raised in further detail and to receive personal anecdotes as well as insight to sit alongside the quantitative data.

The process was anonymous in order to promote honest feedback from respondents.

A full copy of the survey questions can be obtained upon request from ukactive. For more information please contact JonHulks@ukactive.org.uk.



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