

### RAISING THE BAR MAY 2018

#### **IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**



More people More active More often

#### WITH SUPPORT FROM

CIMSPA CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## Foreword



**Steven Ward** Chief Executive Officer, ukactive ukactive first worked alongside Future Fit Training to produce *Raising the Bar* in 2014 – a process to identify the most pertinent skill gaps amongst frontline physical activity professionals, in order to inform future training needs and shape our sector's workforce strategy. In the years since, workforce related issues have grown in importance within board rooms across the sector – with challenges of the quality of existing qualifications representing a risk to our strategic and commercial wellbeing. This risk has provoked a seismic sector-wide response, the likes of which we've rarely seen before.

As such I'm now pleased to share that this edition of *Raising* the Bar has been able to chart significant progress toward addressing this issue. As will be explored in more detail throughout this report, the physical activity sector's Chartered Institute is now fully established as the authoritative body responsible for workforce development. Last year, CIMSPA successfully negotiated a £1.2m funding settlement with Sport England, providing them with the capacity and stimulus to deliver against the task set to them by employers, and have also undertaken a rigorous governance review that culminated in the appointment of Paralympic Champion Marc Woods as their Chair. This core infrastructure has since enabled the organisation to publish a range of professional standards marking the start of meeting the demands of employers. It is now up to the industry to take these forward and apply them to apprenticeship and training delivery, requiring rapid mobilisation by awarding organisations, training providers and employers.

This underlines the hugely significant role that every organisation in the skills development landscape has to play in supporting the development of a fully equipped, professional workforce. Employers, training providers, awarding organisations and exercise professionals themselves must now hold themselves to the same higher, more robust standard put forward by employers and enacted by CIMSPA.

The urgency with which this progress must now be translated to the frontline is key. Not just in order to meet the immediate needs of the 9.7 million gym-goers in the UK, but to ensure the physical activity sector can take its place alongside other allied health professionals as a core delivery arm of the NHS's preventative agenda, and of a government that has named getting more people, more active, more often, as a policy priority.

ukactive welcomes working alongside Future Fit Training to continue driving forward this agenda. What we have in our sector is a coalition of organisations aligned about the future vision for our sector, the workforce we need to deliver it and the impact it can have on the health and productivity of the nation. Now we have to accelerate its implementation.





Tara Dillon CEO, CIMSPA I'm delighted to once again be introducing a *Raising the Bar* report – Future Fit Training and ukactive should be very proud of the valuable evidence base they continue to build with this work.

From CIMSPA's perspective, this research reveals some hugely positive messages – the fact that 100% of respondents believe that professional standards for exercise and fitness will have a positive impact on training quality is exactly where we want to be. This level of buy-in is unsurprising – remember that our work on professional standards has been completely employer-led, with awarding organisations, training providers and education bodies part of the project at every stage – the entire sector has taken responsibility for getting us to where we are now.

Much progress has been made since the last *Raising the Bar* report in 2016. What the sector must do now is follow through and commit to the ecosystem we have collectively created, and the timing of this new insight research aligns perfectly with this. Our first professional standards are now live, with several already aligned to fully-endorsed qualifications, and more coming fast down the pipeline. Our education provider partners will continue this at pace – identifying skills gaps from research such as this, then creating and delivering CPD and qualifications to both close these and develop capability in areas such as inclusivity.

It is employers though who have the greatest influence on ensuring the impact of our professional standards is sustained into real change – their continued commitment will be needed to make the progress we have made permanent and self-sustaining.

I am proud to once again introduce *Raising the Bar* – a joint report undertaken by Future Fit Training and ukactive which provides employers the opportunity to report on the trends and challenges they are experiencing within their workforce, and identify where we can work collaboratively with all stakeholders in the sector to drive up the quality of training and education across the physical activity workforce.

This is the fourth iteration of the report and while our findings show that there is still much work to do - many of the key skill gaps among exercise professionals we first identified in 2014 still exist – we are also pleased to report on the positive progress CIMSPA has made over the past twelve months, resulting in the publication of a suite of new professional standards.

Measuring the impact of these standards will of course take time, as new learners qualify and enter the industry better equipped with the skills required by employers to carry out their roles. It is only then that we will be able to see a tangible change to some of the statistics in this report, and as a sector our challenge now is to work together to ensure that these minimum standards are met, and even exceeded, in the training that is being delivered to the physical activity workforce. In addition, this year we have also explored the readiness of professionals to engage disabled people, as well as building on last year's findings on engaging children.

This research continues to be of the utmost importance to Future Fit Training and I look forward to continuing to work alongside a broad range of partners to get more people, more active, more often.



**Rob Johnson** Founder & MD, Future Fit Training



## Introduction

*Raising the Bar* is an annual review of the physical activity workforce, training and development landscape, undertaken by Future Fit Training and supported by ukactive. Each year this process provides an opportunity for Chief Executives, Human Resources Managers, and Training and People Development Managers from across the industry to share their expertise and experience regarding the current state of their front-line workforce, identifying areas where they excel, and where the industry should turn its focus next to support their ongoing professionalisation.

The first edition of *Raising the Bar*, published four years ago, looked to explore the growing acknowledgement in the sector that its training and development system was not adequately preparing new exercise and fitness professionals to succeed. Both the 'fitness instructor' and 'personal trainer' job roles had evolved significantly over the previous decade – leading to a range of skill and knowledge gaps subsequently opening up. In subsequent years, *Raising the Bar* began to chart the industry-wide movements that were formed to address them: the formal backing of a Chartered Institute for the physical activity sector, and the creation of a physical activity apprenticeship trailblazer to name but two significant developments.

This iteration is able to highlight the substantial strategic and practical progress the sector has made toward addressing issues that have long been identified. In the past year, the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) has secured formal backing from government as the sole organisation responsible for physical activity workforce development – including successfully negotiating a funding settlement of £1.2m with Sport England, and appointing Paralympic Champion Marc Woods as its Chairperson. It has now launched a professional standards matrix fully supported by sector employers and is accelerating through the production of standards to populate it.

Many of the key skill gaps identified in the first *Raising the Bar* still persist and will do for some time without substantial investment to address the impact of historical legacy. Nonetheless, the progress made by CIMSPA since has created an environment in which they can begin to be addressed. New qualifications are now being launched designed to equip activity professionals with a significantly broader and more robust suite of skills, with new students expected to begin studying in 2018.

As such, while we wait for the impact of these reforms to materialise, this report also considers the future strategic direction of the physical activity sector as it continues to grow in stature, and is increasingly recognised as the delivery arm of a government looking to promote physical activity and harness it to tackle specific societal challenges. Inclusivity is key to this, and engaging specific audiences – including the ability to communicate with them confidently and adapt exercise programmes appropriately – will come to be a core skill expected of the fitness workforce. The survey this year explores the readiness of professionals to engage disabled people, as well as building on last year's findings on engaging with children.

To compile this analysis, the report collected data from a range of the largest leisure operators in the United Kingdom, 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 respondents believe the CIMSPA professional standards for fitness will have a positive impact on raising the quality of Personal Trainers entering the industry
- 95% of respondents think that working with disabled people should be included as standard in the Personal Trainer qualification rather than being an optional study route
- 92% of employers have to provide some additional training to fitness staff to ensure they are work ready
- 87% of respondents said that candidates are entering the sector with unrealistic expectations; this posed a recurring issue when looking to recruit high-quality staff
- 86% of respondents think that most exercise professionals are not adequately trained to work with disabled people
- 86% of respondents think that most exercise professionals are not adequately trained to work with children and young people
- 73% of employers believe that personal training qualifications and assessments should take no less than six months to be completed



## Work Readiness of Exercise Professionals

Recruiting and retaining high-quality fitness staff continues to be a consistent and recurring challenge faced by employers in the physical activity sector. Over eight in ten respondents to the survey indicated it was not a process they found easy – which represents no major change to the findings last year – and no single employer indicated that it was a process they found 'very easy.'

There are a number of interlinked, yet separate factors that contribute to whether newly qualified exercise professionals are considered 'work ready.' This section of the report will explore these factors and the various issues the physical activity sector needs to address to ensure all new Fitness Instructors and Personal Trainers arrive in the industry equipped to thrive.

### Our survey identified the following issues encountered when looking to recruit high-quality fitness staff:

Candidates enter the sector with unrealistic expectations	87%
Candidates lack the skills required to be successful	78%
Candidates lack gym floor experience	70%
Candidates are transient and quickly leave the post 61%	-
Insufficient number of candidates 39%	
Candidates are too young 30%	

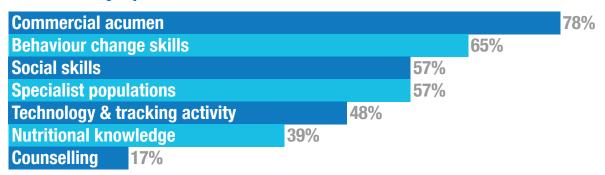
### What are the key skills and knowledge gaps among Personal Trainers and Fitness Instructors?

Unrealistic expectations of earning potential		83%
Unrealistic expectations of the tasks required in the job		78%
Commercial acumen		78%
Behaviour change skills		74%
Social skills		74%
Nutritional knowledge	39%	
Counselling skills	35%	
Technology & tracking activity	35%	

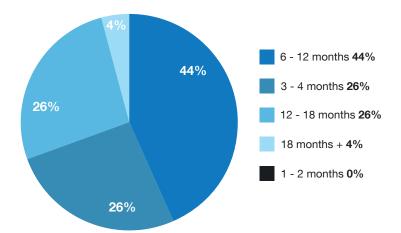
### Do you have to provide additional training to fitness staff (in addition to core qualifications) in order to ensure they are 'work ready'?

Yes			70%
Sometin	nes	21%	-
No	9%		

### Our survey identified the most common components of the additional training delivered by operators:



### Over what minimum period of time do you believe a Personal Trainer should have trained or completed a qualification in order to be work ready?



Candidates come to us a bit raw - we're finding they don't have the social skills to engage clients or sell their services."

There is an overwhelming consensus amongst sector employers that personal training qualifications and assessments should take no less than three months to be completed.

Not a single respondent believed that a personal trainer could arrive 'work ready' if their training took two months or less to complete – whereas three quarters of respondents (73%) indicated that courses and the assessment process should last a minimum of six months or longer. This trend was consistent amongst both smaller and larger operators, although smaller organisations were more likely to favour a qualification with a 3–4-month duration than their larger counterparts.

As such, this data indicates a significant disconnect between the minimum expectations of the industry and the actual duration of programmes currently offered by many commercial training providers. Richard Claydon Soll Leisure



Managing unrealistic expectations:

# Skills vs Knowledge Gaps

This year, the *Raising the Bar* survey introduced new questions looking at the growing issue of unrealistic expectations among Personal Trainers in the industry, and whether they have an impact on a new member of staff's ability to succeed in their job role. An overwhelming majority of employers highlighted that unrealistic expectations of earning potential (83%) and of the specific tasks required in the job role (78%) were the most prevalent knowledge gaps found among newly qualified exercise professionals entering the physical activity sector.

These findings are complemented by a range of common skills gaps that have been identified in every iteration of *Raising the Bar* over the last four years. Newly qualified professionals lack commercial acumen (cited by 78% of respondents), social skills (74%) and behaviour change skills (74%).

Importantly, during the interviews that supported the survey, many operators were eager to highlight a distinction between knowledge gaps and skill gaps: one can impact the *ability* of a newly qualified exercise professional to succeed in the job role, whereas the other is more likely to impact their *willingness*. The prevalent skill gaps this report has identified impact on the immediate ability of a Personal Trainer to thrive; primarily by acting as a barrier to the successful application of their knowledge through the inability to communicate and market themselves effectively.

However, unrealistic expectations – of both earning potential and the tasks associated with the job role – are more closely linked to the willingness of professionals to remain in their job for a longer period of time.

#### Previous ukactive research has suggested that unrealistic expectations are one of the most powerful drivers of low staff retention<sup>1</sup> - which in turn compounds the impact of the skills gaps by not allowing adequate time on the gym floor for professionals to develop themselves organically.

Both these issues can be solved through a more robust, comprehensive and employer-focused approach to initial training and development. Operators and training providers should initially look to collaborate to include accurate descriptions of entry-level job roles, as well as broader paths for progression, as a core part of any Personal Trainer qualification, thus bridging the expectation gap.

Furthermore, CIMSPA's Personal Training Standards – which will be explored in more detail later in the report – should evolve to require knowledge on careers in the physical activity sector. More progressive and proactive training providers may also look to provide a form of work experience to ensure newly qualified personal trainers are fully aware of what their future role will entail.

## 87%

of respondents said that candidates entering the sector with unrealistic expectations was a recurring issue when looking to recruit high-quality staff

<sup>1</sup> ukactive, Retaining Talent Report, November 2017.

# **Priority Skills Gaps:**

#### What do they mean?

The major skills gaps highlighted in this report (lack of commercial acumen, social skills and behaviour change skills) are consistent with all of ukactive and Future Fit's research into this area over the past four years – reaffirming the urgency with which they need to be addressed, but also shedding light on the broad current priorities of a physical activity employer. In particular, the parity with which social skills, behaviour change and commercial acumen are regarded, shows that employers believe the role of a Personal Trainer should encompass aspects of both commercial return and public health promotion and, crucially, the recognition that they mutually reinforce each other. Each of these skills are necessary to successfully engage and retain new clients – especially amongst non-traditional gym goers – which on an individual level can open up an untapped source of potential clients, but which nationally represents a whole new market the sector has yet to capitalise on.

Utilising behaviour change to support inactive people to take part in regular activity not only increases the likelihood they will remain a repeat client, but has a powerful impact on their health and decreases the chance they will develop a range of long-term conditions – supporting the broader narrative of the physical activity sector as a key delivery arm of a government looking to improve the health of the nation. As will be explored in more detail later in this report, CIMSPA's new professional standards for Personal Training stipulate that new qualifications should address these issues, with the intention to significantly narrow these gaps over the coming years. There are two key areas that tend to be lacking – soft social skills and expectations of what they're going to get. Personal training is running a business and that's not conveyed enough."

> Steve Fulton-Allen 24/7 Fitness

#### Lack of confidence in the sector's training and development system

Furthermore, the data collected in this section of the survey also highlights a worrying lack of confidence amongst employers in the sector's commercial training and development system. In last year's survey, every single respondent provided additional in-house training to ensure newly recruited fitness staff were 'work ready' and equipped with the skills to deliver a service acceptable to their brand. **This year, nine in ten respondents indicated they provide additional training, although the two responses which indicated no additional training was provided were from smaller operators – suggesting the issue is likely due to lack of available budget and infrastructure, as opposed to lack of need.** 

This statistic highlights a number of worrying trends that have evolved since last year. Many major employers are still having to allocate significant resources to developing staff at the outset of their employment in order to deliver against the expectations of their membership base. When viewed alongside the sizeable cost many individuals already contribute toward formalised fitness training, either through commercial qualifications or the apprenticeship system, it becomes clear there is - at best – inefficient use of a sizeable financial investment in training across the sector.

However, amongst smaller operators, 18% do not provide additional training and 36% only provide it 'sometimes'. This may indicate that smaller operators, constrained by lack of extra resource to dedicate to professional training, may be required to employ staff who have gone through training of varying degrees, and as a consequence are capable of delivering varying levels of service. More research is required in this area to fully understand the impact of this potential issue.

## **Delivering the Vision**

Improving the quality and work readiness of newly qualified exercise professionals, and better preparing them to thrive in the industry, has been one of the foremost strategic and commercial priorities across the physical activity sector. In the years since it was identified, it has galvanised the interest of a wide array of organisations and led to close, collaborative working amongst them. The ukactive Board and Membership Council – the governance bodies representing the views of sector operators – tasked CIMSPA to champion and lead this work in early 2014 and it has since made commendable progress in delivering a fully qualified, competent and professional physical activity workforce.

#### **CIMSPA Milestone review**

In 2014, CIMSPA was tasked with developing and overseeing a single process to identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to succeed in every major job role in the physical activity sector – from the gym floor through to the boardroom. This 'professional standards matrix' would be developed against the needs of employers, subject to regular reviews, and would subsequently inform the content of new qualifications and training programmes.

All organisations looking to deliver content against these standards – including awarding organisations and training providers – would be subject to a rigorous quality assurance and accreditation process, ensuring that the sector's entire training and development system would be geared toward developing competent, highly skilled exercise professionals, underpinned by a unified, long-term and employer-led strategy, and equipping them with the relevant skills to succeed. **100%** of respondents believe the CIMSPA professional standards for fitness will have a positive impact on raising the quality of Personal Trainers entering the industry

The previous iteration of *Raising the Bar* highlighted the significant strategic progress CIMSPA had made toward realising this goal, having built its credibility amongst sector employers and the medical community, and secured the formal backing of government in two strategic documents: *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, and Sport England's *Towards an Active Nation*.

In the months since, CIMSPA has successfully translated this strategic backing to practical support, having negotiated a funding settlement of £1.2m with Sport England to build their core operating capacity and develop the infrastructure to become financially sustainable. This was complemented by a comprehensive governance review, culminating in the appointment of Paralympic Champion Marc Woods as an independent Chair.

Furthermore, this progress has been matched by an ever growing roster of Employer Partners (sector employers who commit to align their staff development against the CIMSPA professional standards matrix), which now includes almost all the major employers across the sector.

This groundswell of support represents the vital first step in developing a respected kitemark of quality across the physical activity sector and has been rightly acknowledged by the industry as such.



#### 12 | FUTURE FIT TRAINING: RAISING THE BAR

CIMSPA has delivered tangible progress against the asks of the sector in the wake of this strategic support – which should be commended, in the context of limited budgets, operating capacity and a policy and stakeholder landscape in continuous flux. An initial tranche of professional standards for core roles (including both Gym Instructor and Personal Trainer) have been completed, and new qualifications are now being launched aligned against them. As such, it is expected that in twelve to twenty four months' time, newly qualified professionals will have completed training courses that are more comprehensive and that deliver the skills identified by employers that are central to succeeding in the job role. It is worth noting that the new standards stipulate communication skills, behaviour change and commercial acumen – the three key skills gaps amongst Personal Trainers identified in this report – should be included in the new training programmes.

However, it is important to draw a distinction between strategic positioning, signs of progress and the level of practical delivery which, as this report outlines, is urgently required to address the inconsistent (and occasionally ineffective) training provision available today. There remains a gap in the pace and progress required by employers and the current status, naturally reflective of the time it will take for momentum to build. CIMSPA's role is now to ensure these standards are upheld across the industry: to identify, endorse and accredit the training programmes and providers that can deliver these standards, as well as to endorse the appropriately robust end-point assessments that can measure them. Furthermore, stakeholders, employers, prospective students and members of the public should encourage organisations to adopt these standards at the earliest juncture. Opportunities should be explored at a sector wide level to find further ways of accelerating progress, including dramatically increasing the investment available to the sector to support it to fulfil its potential as a driving force behind the health of the nation.

#### **Evolving policy landscape**

CIMSPA's stature in the corridors of power has grown considerably over the previous eighteen months and working alongside ukactive, the organisation is now a recognised provider of expert technical insight and leadership across Westminster for the physical activity sector; ensuring policy-makers are aware of and meaningfully consider the sector's views on education and workforce policy.

Notably this has included working closely with the Department for Education and the newly established Institute for Apprenticeships, to secure the endorsement of new apprenticeship standards in physical activity as well as developing a sector-wide response to government regarding its decision to exclude physical activity from its reforms to technical education<sup>2</sup>. It's only once the professional standards are enforced – and we only accept CIMSPA's accreditation – that we'll see a change in the quality of candidates. Otherwise we'll have this same conversation next year..."

> Joe Oliver Your PT

#### **Positive steps**

It is only once individuals have passed through CIMSPA-accredited qualifications that the industry will be able to chart a meaningful stepchange in the quality and professional competency of exercise professionals. However, in the interim, this survey has identified overwhelming support for CIMSPA's work to date amongst sector employers and the positive impact they perceive it will have on the quality of new training:

## Do you think these standards will have a positive impact on raising the quality of Personal Trainers entering the industry?

#### • Yes: 100%

#### Are you familiar with the recently released CIMSPA professional standards for fitness qualifications?

- Yes: 87%
- No: 13%

## **Engaging Disabled People**

Disabled people are currently amongst the least active people in society – almost twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people. Similarly, disabled people comprise approximately a fifth of the UK population and are therefore a key component of the physical activity sector's market.

#### As such, the ability to engage and tailor activity programmes in line with their conditions was identified as a core skill that should be included as standard in all Level 3 Personal Trainer qualifications, with options to specialise in specific conditions made available as bolt-ons.

Today there are various streams of work taking place to explore how the sector in its entirety – including fitness facilities, the workforce, and training programmes – can ensure it is as inclusive and accessible as possible for special populations. One such programme, which is still in its early stages, is the 'Everyone Can' partnership between ukactive, Activity Alliance, Disability Rights UK and Sport England, looking specifically at the factors that can influence the activity levels of disabled people in a leisure setting.

This is a wide-ranging, multi-year project which will address issues that encompass individual motivation, the availability of opportunities, the customer journey to and from the site, as well as the overall experience of a disabled person at a fitness facility. The final stages of the project will then pilot innovative solutions to the identified barriers ahead of national roll-out. **One central strand of this work will be reviewing the extent to which the current physical activity workforce is adequately prepared to engage and train disabled people.** 

As defined in the Equality Act 2010, a disability can be any physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These can include but are not limited to:

- physical impairments, such as mobility difficulties
- sensory impairments such as those affecting hearing or sight
- learning difficulties, including people with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- mental health conditions or illnesses which have a long-term effect
- genetic and progressive conditions, if the condition affects the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities such as motor neurone disease and muscular dystrophy
- conditions which are characterised by a number of cumulative effects such as pain or fatigue
- hidden impairments such as asthma or diabetes, if these have an effect on day-to-day activities
- past history of impairment

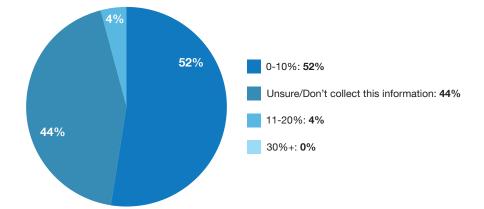
The following results reveal the scale of the challenge in ensuring that the needs of disabled people are recognised, understood and addressed.



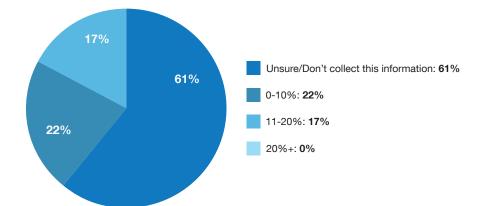
### Do you think that most exercise professionals are adequately trained to work with disabled people?

- No: 86%
- Yes: 14%

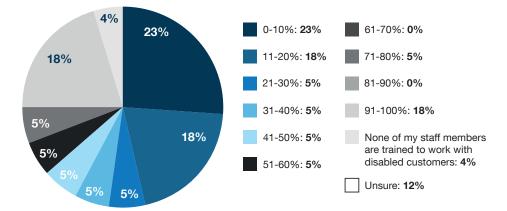
#### What percentage of your exercise professionals are disabled?



#### What percentage of your members are disabled?



Across your organisation as a whole, what percentage of your staff members are trained to work with disabled customers (this includes reception staff, facility and general managers and exercise professionals, etc.)?



#### What does this mean?

It is clear that currently the physical activity sector is not sufficiently equipped nor representative enough to effectively engage and train disabled people.

# An overwhelming majority of respondents (86%) state that current training does not adequately equip exercise professionals to work with disabled people.

However, this figure improves substantially when considering the physical activity workforce in its entirety (including reception staff, managers and so on). Nearly eight in ten operators stated that at least 10% of their staff are trained to work with disabled customers.

This is probably due to a number of commercial and operational issues, all of which are likely to evolve over the coming years. In the individual interviews that accompanied the data collection for this report, a number of operators highlighted that the allocation of limited, competing resources is driven by the needs of their customer base out of necessity and while they outlined their commitment to make changes wherever possible to be more inclusive, embedding a more comprehensive approach is less feasible due to the fact that the perception is disabled people currently only represent a small portion of their members.

This insight highlighted a number of immediate areas for both the sector and policy-makers to look to address – the foremost of which is, tellingly, that more than half (61%) of respondents did not measure or were unsure of what proportion of their customer base had a disability. When asked directly, many were unaware of the breadth of conditions that constitute a 'disability.' Collecting more robust information on the number of disabled gym-goers is essential to making the 'business case' for inclusivity. There are currently more than 11 million disabled people in the UK and their spending power – 'the purple pound' – is worth almost £250 billion.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, one strand of the 'Everyone Can' partnership will look to stimulate demand and motivation for physical activity amongst disabled people through a 'This Girl Can' style marketing campaign. It is predicted that this campaign will lead to a rise in the number of disabled people attending facilities. It is crucial that the sector is able to engage and work with disabled people who want to be active following the campaign. There needs to be a change in what we think about disability. We've got an ageing population that wants to be active for longer, and we need to be able to adapt and engage everyone who walks through our door."

Phil Rumbelow

<sup>3</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-business-champions-to-support-rights-of-disabled-consumers



#### The Right Direction:

# **An Increasing Priority**

Despite the acknowledgement that personal trainers are yet to be able to effectively engage disabled people, the *Raising the Bar* survey findings highlight a positive drive among employers in the physical activity sector to actively prioritise and progress this area.

#### Do you think that working with disabled people should be included as standard in the Personal Trainer qualification rather than being an optional study route?

- Yes: 95%
- No: 5%

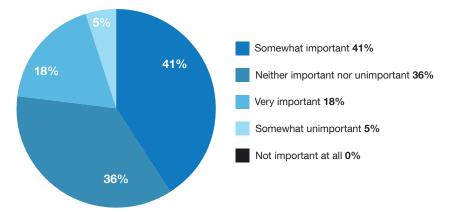
Does your organisation run, or have any plans to run, inclusive group exercise sessions (those that are designed to include both disabled and non-disabled people)?

- Yes: 41%
- Unsure: 32%
- No: 27%

Is it a priority for your organisation over the next five years to grow the proportion of disabled people in your membership base?

- Yes: 64%
- No: 36%

#### How important do you consider a qualification related to engaging disabled people when recruiting new staff?



### 95%

of respondents think that working with disabled people should be included as standard in the personal trainer qualification rather than being an optional study route

Two thirds of respondents will prioritise growing the number of disabled people in their membership base over the next five years

#### What does this mean?

There is a clear appetite amongst operators for a sector-wide movement that champions inclusivity and accessibility, and encourages disabled people to be more physically active. Employers almost unanimously stated that working with disabled people should be included as standard in the Personal Trainer qualification, rather than as an optional study route. This will be central to ensuring all exercise professionals have the confidence and capability to effectively engage disabled people, increasing the likelihood they will remain regular customers and improve their activity levels. This positive outlook is also matched by a will from employers to increase the proportion of disabled people in their membership base, as a majority of respondents (64%) considered it a priority over the next five years.

A number of respondents (41%) also run, or have plans to run, inclusive group exercise sessions for both disabled and non-disabled people, and over half agree that qualifications related to engaging disabled people are an important factor when recruiting new members of staff (59%). Significantly, no employers considered it not important at all.

Each of these factors represent a positive place from which to launch the 'Everyone Can' partnership – a clear willingness to embrace a more inclusive approach to physical activity provision as well as a request for greater support to do so. Progressing this will remain a core priority for ukactive over the coming years.



**Barry Horne** CEO, Activity Alliance We welcome ukactive and Future Fit Training's *Raising the Bar* survey as a means of shining a light on a crucial opportunity to enable disabled people to be active for life. The findings of the survey reveal a challenging yet hopeful picture of the potential for full inclusion of disabled people in the leisure sector.

It is a stark reminder of the work still to be done that just one in seven of those surveyed feel that most exercise professionals are adequately trained to work with disabled people. But there are heartening findings too. Almost all respondents feel that working with disabled people should be included as standard in the personal trainer qualification rather than being an optional study route.

Recent Activity Alliance research has shown that deliverers of sport are much more likely to want to provide inclusive opportunities if they have experience of delivering to disabled people. Activity Alliance's work with CIMSPA on their behaviours framework is crucial in building on the interest that ukactive has identified. If successful, this will mean that sport and leisure professionals will be introduced to the concept of inclusive behaviour early in their training.

We are just getting started with the 'Everyone Can' partnership, but we hope that it can help lead to an environment in which inclusive provision is the default position – not an optional extra. This objective can only be achieved through collaborative work to change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport. Activity Alliance will work closely with ukactive and colleagues in the leisure sector to ensure that disabled people can be active for life."



#### **Preparing the**

## **Future Generation**

Half of all seven-year olds in the UK fail to achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day, harming their physical and mental health, educational attainment and increasing the risk that they will grow into inactive adults.

**Today's children are the least active generation in history.** In the last twelve months, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to tackling childhood inactivity: the pot of money available for schools to spend on activity equipment and opportunities has been doubled, the Primary PE and Sport Premium has been extended for another academic year, and the government has recently launched a review into the viability of 'summer camp' models to support deprived children to be more active and receive nutritious meals in the summer holidays. Facilitating and delivering these opportunities will require appropriately qualified physical activity professionals, whether they work within a recognised gym, leisure facility or in the community.

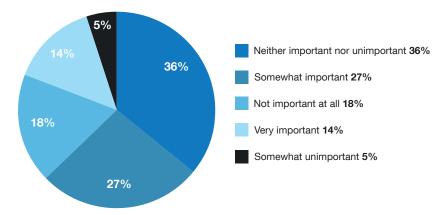
### Do you think that most Fitness Professionals are adequately equipped to work with children?



Do you think that working with children should be included as standard in the personal trainer qualification rather than being an optional study route?

Yes	<b>59%</b>	6
No	41%	

### How important do you consider a children's activity qualification to be when recruiting new members of staff?



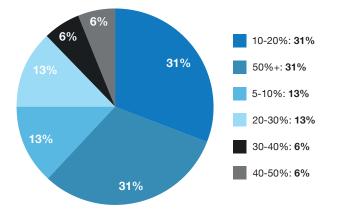
### Is it a priority for your organisation over the next five years to engage children to a greater extent?

- Yes: 55%
- No: 45%

#### Are any of your exercise professionals trained to deal with children?

- Yes: 73%
- No: 27%

#### If so, what percentage of your organisation are trained?



### Are you aware of the extent to which fitness professionals are qualified to work with children under the current Level 3 Personal Training Qualification?

- No: 73%
- Yes: 27%

### How clear is it for you on the extent to which your fitness professionals are able to work with children under their current qualifications?

- Somewhat clear: 32%
- Not clear at all: 23%
- Neither clear or unclear 23%
- Somewhat unclear: 14%
- Very clear: 9%



"

There's a case to embed basic information on children's activity in the standard qualification, with opportunities for specialism if desired."

> James Duncan Fusion Lifestyle

#### What does this mean?

These statistics are broadly consistent with the same findings published in last year's *Raising the Bar*. A majority of operators (55%) are looking to engage children to a greater extent as part of their core membership offer and nearly three quarters (73%) confirm that some of their exercise staff are trained to deal with children.

However, despite these intentions, many employers also hold significant reservations as to the effectiveness of the current Level 3 Personal Training qualification in this area, and a lack of clarity as to whether it confers appropriate legal coverage to work with children. This sentiment was also heavily reiterated in the one-to-one interviews that supported this process. In particular, a number of operators highlighted that the risks associated with providing opportunities for children to access the gym floor – particularly around safeguarding and duty of care – often outweigh the potential commercial benefits associated with a new stream of membership.

Under the current training and development framework and the uncertainty that exists within it regarding children, this attitude is largely to be expected. However, given the government's commitment to promoting childhood activity (as outlined above), failing to address these issues also risks the sector's ability to engage with a potentially lucrative opportunity. Both Sport England and the Department for Education have committed funding to projects that support children to be more active, and while physical activity operators currently possess the infrastructure to take advantage of this opportunity, the lack of staff preparedness may constrain it.

A potential solution to this problem has already been endorsed by the industry:

# Six in ten respondents (59%) indicated a preference to embed 'working with children' as a core part of the Level 3 Personal Training qualification, rather than an optional study route as a specialism or through CPD.

The CIMSPA Professional Development Board should consider this when next reviewing the professional standards that personal trainers are expected to achieve prior to being employed.



Jack Shakespeare Head of ukactive Kids ukactive Kids was established to increase both the number and the accessibility of opportunities for children and young people to be physically active. A key part of this is working alongside sector organisations to make sure they're aware of the role they can play in delivering this ambition. As such, it's heartening to see that the findings from *Raising the Bar* reflects a commitment to positively engaging more children in activity over the next few years.

If harnessed properly, the sector has a huge opportunity to have a positive influence on children's health. We can support them to develop an active habit early in life and set them on a path linked to better health, higher educational attainment and an improved quality of life. I would argue it is the responsibility of our sector to do so, which is why the skills to effectively engage children is something that must come to be regarded as the minimum we expect in an exercise professional.

Children's health is now a recognised priority across society and is a key policy issue for a range of government departments and political parties. There is further to go, particularly on clarifying the extent to which the current Level 3 PT qualification can confer the necessary skills to effectively engage children, but if anything, this indicates there has never been a better time to engage this opportunity head on.

The current professional standards for children, now under development with CIMSPA, represent a marked improvement on existing provision and I look forward to continuing working alongside them, Future Fit Training and other leading employers and providers to continue this work."

## **Moving Forwards**

The publication of the CIMSPA Professional Standard for Personal Trainers represents a watershed moment for the physical activity sector: the next chapter of the industry-wide movement that brought together employers, training providers and awarding organisations, under the banner of a new Chartered Institute, setting a new benchmark of what is expected of the physical activity workforce.

Over the previous twelve months, CIMSPA has secured strategic and financial support from Sport England and is now fully established as the authoritative technical expert on fitness workforce development.

It is only once the exercise professional workforce has gone through the new qualifications and programmes aligned to this standard that we will be able to measure a change in the work-readiness of fitness staff. Reaching this milestone represents a significant achievement in itself and brings physical activity one step closer to meaningful parity with other professional sectors.

This report highlights a range of practical and strategic skill gaps that currently exist in the sector. While the new standards intend to address the immediate, practical issues, the training and development system now has the opportunity to focus on the deeper, structural gaps that currently separate physical activity from other professional industries. This includes both a uniform consistency in the ability to support a broad range of audiences (such as disabled people, children and those living with long-term health conditions) and ensuring new professionals are educated with a realistic understanding of the entry-level job roles available, likely earning potential and career progression opportunities. Our challenge remains the transformation of our army of professionals already in the field, and the support of a continuous learning and development culture that ensures the existing workforce is suitably ready for the opportunities that lie ahead in the future. Nothing short of an industrial strategy is required to address this.

It is ukactive and Future Fit Training's ambition that future iterations of this report will be able to chart a tangible change in the identified skill gaps, as the strategic progress made by CIMSPA and the industry over the last twelve months translates into practical delivery. However, with the resources to now increase their operational capacity, and begin focusing on areas beyond its core remit – for instance coaching and children's activity – is it integral that sector organisations continue to embrace the spirit of CIMSPA's agenda, alongside the base requirements stipulated in the new standards.

Professionalisation of the workforce is a long-term mission that requires the buy-in of employers, suppliers, regulatory bodies and trade organisations. It will continue to be a core priority of the work across the breadth of the sector.





## Methodology

In order to gather the data used throughout this document, Future Fit Training and ukactive further developed a survey exploring a range of key indicators for employer satisfaction with the leisure and fitness industry workforce and added sections regarding the current provision of training relating to engaging disabled populations as well as children and young people.

The survey was sent out through the breadth of the ukactive membership in February 2018, informed by a range of expert interviews with a selection of Chief Executives, Human Resources Managers, and Training and People Development Managers from major employers of fitness staff across the physical activity sector.

The survey process was anonymous in order to promote frank and honest feedback from respondents. A full copy of the survey questions can be obtained upon request from ukactive. For more information, please contact emmagiaretto@ukactive.org.uk.



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