



**SPORT  
ENGLAND**

# WORKING IN AN ACTIVE NATION

THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE  
STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND



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# FOREWORD



Our strategy *Towards an Active Nation*, published in May 2016, sets out our vision for how we want everyone in England regardless of age, background or level of ability to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. In order to achieve this, it is essential that we think of those people that we are seeking to engage as ‘customers’ and we need an in-depth understanding of what they are looking for in their sport and physical activity experience.

We know that our customers have a broad array of very diverse and specific needs. Providing them with a great experience requires a workforce that is responsive to their needs, and able to engage them in a way that will make them feel welcomed and valued.

There are many incredibly talented individuals working in a range of roles right across the different parts of the sector, and their passion, commitment and knowledge of sports and physical activity are great assets. We want to increase their numbers by attracting more people with the skills and behaviours our sector needs and by retaining those who are already within our workforce by enhancing their abilities and offering them even more support in their roles.

This *Working in an Active Nation* strategy is focused on the experiences of those who are paid to work within the sector, defined as:

*“Those people who are employed or self-employed in either a part-time or full-time capacity in sport and/or physical activity.”*

***“IF SOMEBODY IS EMPLOYED IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, THEY ARE A KEY PART OF THE PAID WORKFORCE ON WHICH THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY ACTIVE PEOPLE WILL DEPEND.”***

Whatever their role – frontline, administrative, managerial, or support – if somebody is employed in sport and physical activity, they are a key part of the paid workforce on which the experience of many active people will depend. There is a huge amount of passion and goodwill among those who work in the sector, sometimes without commensurate value or recognition.

This strategy has been developed following extensive research and consultation to better understand best practice in sport and physical activity and across other industries. It sets out the challenges our sector faces and represents a ‘call to action’ for employers and education providers to help drive a transformational change in the way we recruit, develop and retain people who work in sport and physical activity. If we succeed, our workforce will thrive and our customers will be much better served.

**Jennie Price CBE**  
Sport England Chief Executive

# SUMMARY

The ambition of this strategy is to ensure that the people working in sport and physical activity are skilled, motivated and valued and that they're equipped to provide the best possible experience for people who are active or want to be more active.

The strategy has two main objectives. Firstly, there's a need to support the workforce to become more customer focused and at the same time develop the workforce so that it's recognised as professional.

Five strategic approaches have been identified, which combine together to realise these objectives (see page 13 for more detail):

- A sector that's driven by a comprehensive evidence base that provides a deeper understanding of the impact of the workforce on the people we seek to engage.
- To be a high performing and inclusive sector run by inspiring, 'people-focused' leaders at all levels of the professional workforce.
- Building a more diverse workforce with inclusive values and behaviours.
- A workforce that's recognised as high performing and professional, supporting individuals within the workforce to thrive and develop themselves throughout their working lives.
- A sector that's seen as one of the top career choices for prospective graduates, apprentices and trainees, with the highest retention rates in key sector roles.

Tackling each of these challenges will require a two-pronged approach. Firstly, there's a need to ensure that the sector is supported to bring about systemic change. Secondly, there are a series of key actions which will mostly be accomplished with the support of identified sector partners.

Some of the key actions include:

- Publish a sector-wide workforce insight report, providing a more complete picture of the challenges facing the sector.
- Invest £1 million to establish partnerships with specialist organisations that are able to provide bespoke leadership and organisational development programmes.
- Launch a new Workforce Diversity Fund for organisations seeking to support individuals from diverse backgrounds to thrive in the workplace.
- Produce a sector-wide diversity and inclusion action plan with clear aspirations for tackling under-representation of specific groups in the workforce.
- Establish, implement and quality assure a new framework of professional standards that better articulates the behaviours and skills required for all job roles within the sector.
- Encourage sector employers to take advantage of work-based learning and development opportunities presented by the changing landscape of apprenticeships (including higher and degree-level apprenticeships).



# MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The framework below shows how this strategy will tackle the challenge of enhancing the capability of the sport and physical activity workforce to engage a broader range of customers, through a series of strategic approaches each with a set of key actions.

These help to achieve the two primary objectives and have a range of positive impacts on the customer, employee and employer, contributing to the key strategic outcomes outlined in *Towards an Active Nation* and *Sporting Future*.



# VISION

This strategy presents a challenge to our sector to ensure that the people working in sport and physical activity feel confident, valued and supported. By doing so, they will be more able to provide the best possible experience for the people who are – or who want to be – active, especially those who need the most support. The vision of the strategy is to work across the sector to build:

## **A skilled, motivated and valued workforce to inspire an active nation.**

Conversations with stakeholders across sport and physical activity centred around two themes that form the primary objectives of the strategy:

## **A MORE CUSTOMER-FOCUSED WORKFORCE**

Our aspiration is to ensure that people who are engaged in sport and physical activity have the best possible experience.

To achieve this, the workforce must be recruited, developed and supported in the right way. There are many organisations that are already exceptional in developing their employees to provide an excellent customer experience. We would like this to become more widespread, so that the sport and physical activity sector is seen as a leader in customer experience and satisfaction.

This strategy proposes a shift in emphasis to help us understand how the professional workforce can best support each individual, with workforce development placing a deep understanding of customers at its heart.

***“AS A SECTOR WE NEED GREATER FOCUS ON CUSTOMER-FACING SKILLS. CUSTOMER SERVICE IS AT THE HEART OF OUR THINKING AND STRATEGY.”***

LORRAINE PATRINOS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF LEARNING & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GLL

## **A WORKFORCE RECOGNISED AS PROFESSIONAL**

People who work in the sport and physical activity sector are passionate and committed. They are often driven by a strong sense of purpose and a desire to make a difference to the people and communities they serve. These skills, qualities and attributes are some of the sector's greatest assets, but many people outside of our sector are not as aware of these capabilities as we'd like them to be. To rectify this, our sector needs to establish some of the elements that will identify it as a serious professional career. This includes a clear set of professional standards, career development pathways and new qualifications and training approaches, as well as a culture of ongoing professional development aligned to an industry-wide code of conduct.

By taking these steps, not only will our workforce be more widely recognised as professional, but it will help people feel united and proud to be part of this sector. It will foster increased collaboration to achieve growing and sustained participation in sport and physical activity.

***“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.”***

FUTURE FIT TRAINING AND UK ACTIVE REPORT 'RAISING THE BAR' 2017

# SETTING THE SCENE

In 2016, we published two strategies focused on the development of people who support the customer experience: *Coaching in an Active Nation* and *Volunteering in an Active Nation*. These both reflect the importance placed on people development across the sector and show our commitment to supporting stakeholders to enhance the sporting experience through the development of people working at all levels in sport.

*Working in an Active Nation* has been produced in recognition of the major role that the professional workforce has to play in delivering the aspirations and targets outlined in our strategy, *Towards an Active Nation*. This is the third in a series of strategies that combine to represent a 'call to action', shaping how the sector values and develops all of the people who work in sport and physical activity.

By focusing on these areas, we also aim to have both a short and medium-term impact on key engagement outcomes whilst taking a long-term approach to sector change, in line with the Government's strategy, *Sporting Future*.

*Sporting Future*, the Government's strategy for sport, identifies the following areas for development of the professional workforce in sport:

- Make sport an attractive career option for the brightest and most able individuals
- Give individuals working in sport access to open and transparent recruitment processes
- Have clear career pathways and opportunities to develop and progress throughout their careers.



# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

## A WORKFORCE TO SUPPORT BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

We want to encourage people to make new physical activity habits, but we recognise that old habits can be difficult to break.

If an individual does take their first steps towards embracing physical activity, their interactions with members of the workforce can very often 'make or break' their perceptions of the experience and greatly influence their likelihood of returning. While a positive initial experience is vital, it's also

essential that the experience is maintained over the long term so that physical activity is more likely to become a regular part of a person's life.

Members of our workforce can help people to feel welcome, develop goals, orientate their lifestyles to – and develop a strong personal connection with – activity. They also play a role in nurturing friendships, social bonds and a sense of belonging and community. This can be important in strengthening an individual's resolve to stay committed to their physical activity journey.

## CASE STUDY: 'THIS GIRL CAN SWIM' PILOT

The number of people swimming has been in decline for years, with women dropping out at twice the rate of men. In partnership with five major leisure operators, we developed This Girl Can Swim (TGCS) to deliver a truly customer-centric experience to women in leisure centre swimming pools, in the style of the successful This Girl Can campaign. We spoke to our target audience to design a whole experience with them, from what they wanted to know about the sessions when first hearing about them, to the welcome at reception, the facilities in the changing rooms, and the experience in the pool. The results of the sessions so far include:

- Over 50% more women swimming in TGCS sessions than standard 'women's only' sessions
- More inactive women (nearly 1 in 3) and greater diversity of women taking part than national averages
- Over a quarter of women had not swum in the last 12 months (4% had never swum)
- More than a quarter (28%) had never swum at the centre before.

Central to the success of the TGCS experience has been the role of workforce. Leisure centre staff with a wide range of roles (receptionists, duty managers, instructors) all received customer services training specially designed to help them identify and support customers with low confidence and emotional barriers.

A pool-side helper role was created. Helpers welcomed women at reception and carefully managed the session and pool space to make sure women of all different abilities and confidence levels were getting the most out of their session. The best pool helpers really got to know the women in their sessions and created a warm, friendly and social atmosphere that kept people coming back. Women told us that they started the sessions for a number of reasons, but almost all said the pool helper and the community atmosphere they created was the reason they kept coming back. Of the women who attended, 85% said having a pool helper is important.

"I was really ill for a long time and this has really helped me to get back into exercise and feel more confident. The poolside helper makes the session for me really, without her I am not sure I would have kept coming."

**THIS GIRL CAN SWIM ATTENDEE**

"The poolside helper keeps people coming back, she isn't there to judge, we just want everyone to enjoy themselves."

**DUTY MANAGER AT HATCH END LEISURE CENTRE**

"I always try and get to know the swimmers and to build a relationship. I want to build a link between the centre and the community"

**THIS GIRL CAN SWIM POOL HELPER**



## A WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

Many businesses have recognised that their approach to the recruitment and development of talented workers needs to improve if they are to make sure that they could retain a competitive advantage. Technology giants, such as Google and Microsoft, have left behind outdated recruitment procedures that disadvantage those not from prestigious universities or privileged backgrounds. They now favour more inclusive hiring approaches which have enabled them to unearth what has been described as 'talent that whispers'.

***"WE BEGAN TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY ANALYSING THE 'MISSED TALENT' THAT WE FELT WE SHOULD HAVE HIRED, BUT DIDN'T."***

**TODD CARLISLE, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR, GOOGLE**

The technology sector has traditionally been heavily reliant on young workers. Several companies have recognised that young people are motivated differently from previous generations and are driven by a different set of values:

- **Career:** having a job that allows them to use their strengths, and promotes their learning and development. This is at the heart of intrinsic motivation. Having the right mix of skills, knowledge and behaviours, and the flexibility to mould to the shifting requirements of the modern workforce, are key ingredients for the sector.
- **Community:** feeling respected, cared about and recognised by others drives a sense of connection and belonging. A workforce that is inclusive and welcoming of all, regardless of background, age or ability, is important.
- **Cause:** feeling that you make a meaningful impact, have clarity of purpose and role, identify with the organisation's mission, and believe it does some good.

Career, community and cause make up the 'psychological contract' – the unwritten expectations and obligations – between employees and employers which are seen as being particularly important to young people in today's workforce. When that contract is fulfilled, they are more likely bring their whole selves to their role. But when it's breached, they can become less satisfied and committed, contribute less and underperform.

Analysis by Investors in People has highlighted that if all UK companies mirrored the approach of some of the best performing businesses by adopting modernised recruitment and learning and development approaches, the UK economy could benefit from an efficiency gain of £77 billion<sup>2</sup>.

Given the sport and physical activity sector's reliance on young people in the workforce and the direct correlation between improved employee wellbeing and enhanced efficiency, performance management and training practices need to be modernised in line with the changing needs of the workforce of today. Many organisations across the sector understand this and have excellent people development approaches in place, but this is not consistent throughout the sector. *Working in an Active Nation* aims to take good practice and make it common practice.

## CASE STUDY: CROSS SECTOR CREATIVITY – SPORT FOR CONFIDENCE

Sport for Confidence is a unique social enterprise which uses the principles of occupational therapy – promoting health and wellbeing through occupation – to support sport and leisure facilities to become more inclusive and welcoming. The organisation focuses specifically on making it easier for disabled people, and first-time users of a facility, to take part in activity.

The main goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational therapists achieve this by working with people, other health professionals and communities to make it possible to engage in the activities they want, need or are expected to do.

Working across traditional leisure centres, sports clubs and green spaces, Sport for Confidence support all existing members of staff – from receptionists and catering staff to instructors, coaches and swim teachers – to become more inclusive in their day-to-day work. This is achieved

through work-based observation, informal conversation, behavioural modeling, workshops and informal learning opportunities carried out on a daily basis. All learning opportunities are designed with the intention of making individual client or group experiences more enjoyable and rewarding.

In addition, by being based inside a leisure facility, the model encourages other Allied Health Professionals and GPs to use the centre more regularly – entrusting their clients with sport and physical activity professionals who can confidently support people to achieve occupational outcomes in a safe and inclusive environment.

The work of Sport for Confidence has been recognised by the Royal College of Occupational Therapy and by NHS England's Allied Health Professionals into Action as an example of innovative practice.

# OPERATING PRINCIPLES

## HOW WE WILL WORK

To achieve the objectives of *Working in an Active Nation*, a series of operating principles have been identified as essential to successful implementation of the strategy.



### LEADERSHIP THROUGH CONSENSUS

This strategy reflects the desire for a galvanising approach to the development of the professional workforce to help guide the industry towards becoming a high performing and well-respected profession. There is a genuine will to pull together the ‘sum of the parts’, which requires the collective buy-in from organisations to work together, commit to the professional standards being developed for the sector, and embrace a culture which helps to attract and retain great people.



### COHESION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Optimising the potential of the people in our sector will require the engagement of employers, agencies, employees, training providers, education institutions, and of every individual within our professional workforce. This strategy will be guided through ongoing sector dialogue with key stakeholders so that we’re able to adapt to new challenges and devise solutions collaboratively.



### LEARNING BY DOING

While the end point of the journey is well defined, some of the ways of getting there are less clear. Therefore, we will take an iterative, agile and action-based learning approach to help identify the best interventions that will provide the most effective ways of delivering the objectives.



### CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

There are a wide range of roles, such as those in health and social care, education, planning, community development, and a variety of roles working in nature that could have an impact on influencing people’s behaviours to be active.

We’ll seek to forge new partnerships with other organisations from outside the sport and physical activity sector that can support our journey of improvement.



### TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

There’s no doubt that technological advances will have an enduring impact on the workforce of the future. Technology will be a central feature in our thinking as we develop the solutions that the strategy will require. Our emphasis will be on the development of modern learning and development approaches that are able to adapt to a range of contexts and a range of personal characteristics. By adopting the principle of ‘mass customisation’, we’ll provide individuals with bespoke learning solutions at scale.

# STRATEGIC APPROACHES

## WHAT WE WILL DO

**WE HAVE FIVE STRATEGIC APPROACHES, EACH WITH A SET OF KEY ACTIONS, THAT WILL HELP STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE.**



### INSIGHT-LED DELIVERY

**A SECTOR THAT IS DRIVEN BY A COMPREHENSIVE EVIDENCE BASE THAT PROVIDES A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPACT OF THE WORKFORCE ON THE PEOPLE WE SEEK TO ENGAGE**

The fragmented nature of the physical activity landscape means that it's difficult to develop a clear and coherent picture of the sport and physical activity workforce. Our consultation highlighted the need for a sector-wide approach to deepen our understanding of the size, make-up, capacity, capabilities and motivations of people within its workforce. This would allow us to track progress and develop more targeted and effective approaches to achieving the outcomes.

It's also important to ensure that our increased understanding of the needs of our customers is embedded in all learning and development programmes, so that more people in the workforce are better equipped to provide our customers with fantastic sport and physical activity experiences. Research conducted by London Sport highlighted that there's a gap between the skills and behaviours exhibited by people within the workforce and the expectations and desires of inactive or recently active people<sup>3</sup>.

Developing our understanding of these areas will give organisations within our sector vital information to guide investment, policy and activity to recruit, develop and retain people with more of the behaviours aligned to customer needs.

### SECTOR SUPPORT

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of all industry data sources to provide a quantitative and qualitative understanding of the workforce, deepening our understanding of the labour market, customer perceptions and expectations.
- Build an enhanced evidence base of the positive return on investment generated by adopting diversity and inclusion practices.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Standardise the annual staff surveys carried out by funded organisations to provide baseline information on staff wellbeing.
- Commission research into the sport and physical activity labour market to provide a comprehensive picture of the scale and scope of the workforce.
- Publish an industry-wide workforce insight report, providing a more complete picture of the challenges facing the sector.
- Convene active 'communities of learning' around our key investments to harvest action-based insight on the needs of the workforce in these areas.
- Establish a means to measure the satisfaction of customers across the sector and use the information to determine future courses of action.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

BY 2019

We'll have a comprehensive understanding of the scale and scope of the workforce, including skills gaps, customer perceptions and employment trends.

BY 2020

Our partners will be using our insight to make improvements to their diversity and inclusion practices and further develop their recruitment and management approaches.

BY 2021

Our insight will be recognised as a credible source of information for sector stakeholders and will be a valued 'lever for change'.

BY 2023

We'll have seen a significant increase in customer satisfaction.





## ENHANCED LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

### *TO BE A HIGH PERFORMING AND INCLUSIVE SECTOR RUN BY INSPIRING, 'PEOPLE-FOCUSED' LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE*

Great leadership can help transform a workforce to deliver outstanding results. The value of strong leadership is universally recognised across the private, public and third sector. We need to create a framework to increase the depth and breadth of skilled leaders across sport and physical activity.

Leadership takes place at all levels in the workplace, not just at the senior executive level. Many roles within the workforce require leadership capabilities and this should be recognised and supported to build and nurture relevant skills and behaviours.

We're particularly interested in exploring the needs of leaders in organisations involved in our 'place based' approach to local physical activity provision. This approach is challenging people to think outside organisational 'silos' and consider collaborative approaches to working with people in sport and physical activity.

Organisational culture is an essential part of what strong and effective leadership helps to create. From the senior executives to the supervisors of leisure centre attendants, creating a culture where people are valued and their wellbeing is prioritised is a key aspiration of this strategy.

### SECTOR SUPPORT

- Work collaboratively across the sector to develop clear, coherent pathways and development opportunities for all people with aspirations to progress in leadership and management roles.
- Support and incentivise leaders to engage in coaching and mentoring, encouraging the adoption of 'reverse mentoring' in identified organisations to foster a more diverse and inclusive leadership culture.
- Engage with organisations from within and outside the sector to explore best practice in relation to organisational development.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Conduct a thorough sector analysis of the development needs of leaders and managers across the sector.
- Identify organisations that are most in need of leadership development.
- Invest £1 million to establish partnerships with specialist organisations to provide bespoke leadership and organisational development programmes.
- Implement a cutting-edge programme of support for leaders and managers in prioritised organisations.
- Develop a leadership community that brings together leaders and managers from different backgrounds and parts of the sector to learn from each other and share experiences.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

BY 2019

We'll have established partnerships with organisations that are able to provide cutting-edge leadership, mentoring and organisational development solutions.

BY 2020

50% of leaders and managers at all levels across the sector will have engaged in industry-recognised leadership development endorsed by CIMSPA.

BY 2021

40% of employers will be actively engaged in mentoring or coaching the next generation of potential leaders and managers.

BY 2021

We'll have evaluated the impact of these programmes and will be using the learning to deliver enhanced programmes of support.

BY 2023

We'll see increases in employee satisfaction and retention.

## CASE STUDY: LEVERAGING LEADERSHIP – LEADERS IN GM

Leaders in GM is a collective effort to mobilise a community of leaders from across all sectors of Greater Manchester. It's part of a programme of activities that will support leaders in the county to achieve the ambitions of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

It's not a traditional leadership programme to build leadership skills, but fundamentally about connecting with people, creating impactful relationships and innovating.

Oldham Council chief executive Carolyn Wilkins said: "Stronger Together is more than simply the title of our Greater Manchester Strategy, it's the foundation of our work on leadership. We believe that the more connected we are, the more we understand each other's business, the greater our resilience and our ability to thrive as leaders. A strong community of leaders, across all parts of the city region, is essential if we are to deliver on the ambitions we have set for our people and places."

### Carolyn Wilkins

Chief Executive, Oldham Council

## CASE STUDY: TALENT TRAILBLAZER – PLACES FOR PEOPLE LEISURE, RISING STARS

As part of its leadership development and succession planning strategy, Places for People Leisure (PfPL) run an annual elite talent development programme called Rising Stars. Its aim is to develop and retain potential leaders who have the ability, aspiration and engagement to rise and succeed in key leadership positions at PfPL.

They're nominated and selected from a rigorous assessment day for up to 20 places annually. The six modules are held monthly at inspirational sporting venues and delivered by heads of departments on their specialist area. As well as a unique networking opportunity, it gives

them a greater knowledge and understanding of the different areas of the business, the organisation's culture, vision and values and how their own centres can contribute to PfPL's overall goal of creating active places and healthy people.

Rising Stars complete assignments between modules to apply the learning, with the programme finale in the style of Dragons' Den, with PfPL's Board Directors playing the part of the Dragons.

Now in its fifth year, the programme has been hugely successful, with 55% of graduates being promoted to key leadership positions and 79% still employed by PfPL. It's also been awarded 10 CIMSPA continuing professional development points as part of PfPL's skills development partnership with CIMSPA.



## INCREASED DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### *A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE WITH INCLUSIVE VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS*

A diverse and inclusive working environment is as inextricably linked to individual and organisational performance as the skills and remuneration of the employees. Creating a working culture where people from all backgrounds are represented, welcomed and can achieve their full potential is a modern-day business imperative<sup>5</sup>. While UK legislation sets minimum standards, an effective diversity and inclusion strategy goes beyond legal compliance and seeks to add value to an organisation by contributing to employee wellbeing, engagement and ultimately performance.

***“WE BELIEVE DIVERSITY IS FUNDAMENTAL TO SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGING A MORE DIVERSE CUSTOMER BASE, PARTICULARLY WITH EXISTING HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS. DIVERSITY AT ALL LEVELS BROADENS THINKING ACROSS THE SECTOR TO ACHIEVE GREATER LEVELS OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS.”***

WORKFORCE SURVEY RESPONDENT

Companies with inclusive talent practices in recruitment, promotion, development, leadership, and team management generate up to 30% higher revenue per employee and greater profitability than their competitors<sup>6</sup>. Analysis by management consulting firm McKinsey found that, “companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians”<sup>7</sup>.

Many organisations are already working to address workplace diversity. Examples include the work led by Sporting Equals and Women in Sport, which has been recognised as important for addressing some of these gaps. ukactive and the Activity Alliance (previously EFDS) are also piloting approaches with a number of leisure operators to help support more disabled people into the workforce. Initiatives such as Instructability and Kick It Out are pioneering new approaches to embracing diversity in sport and physical activity.

### SECTOR SUPPORT

- Provide training and education to support organisations to embed inclusive practices and behaviours in their corporate culture.
- Ensure the organisations we invest in have the appropriate systems and expertise in place to recruit, develop and retain people from all backgrounds.
- Publicly recognise organisations that make positive steps towards improving the diversity of their workforce by showcasing positive examples of improving culture through great leadership.



## KEY ACTIONS

- Produce robust baseline measures of the diversity of the workforce across the sector.
- Develop new relationships with recognised experts in establishing inclusive cultures and organisational change.
- Launch a new Workforce Diversity Fund for organisations that are seeking to support individuals from diverse backgrounds to thrive in the workplace.
- Explore opportunities to extend our work with expert equality partners to support workforce development.
- Establish a cross-sector coalition of organisations committed to improving diversity and inclusion across the sector.
- Produce a sector-wide diversity and inclusion action plan with clear aspirations for tackling under-representation of specific groups in the workforce.
- Maintain data collection on workforce diversity to monitor progress of change.
- Leverage existing investments in organisations to establish clear plans and aspirations to improve diversity at all levels of the workforce.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

**BY 2020**

Each funded organisation will have mentor support in place for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

**BY 2020**

We'll publish our first diversity tracking report which will show progress against the plan's aspirations.

**BY 2021**

100% of funded organisations will have made improvements in the diversity profile of their workforce.

**BY 2023**

Our sector will be recognised as a pioneer in transforming the diversity of the strategic decision-makers and leaders within the workforce.

## CASE STUDY: INCREASING DIVERSITY – INSTRUCTABILITY

InstructAbility was set up to address the disproportionately low numbers of disabled people working in the leisure industry and getting active, due to a number of physical and attitudinal barriers.

Designed by the spinal injury charity Aspire and funded by us, the project is delivered in partnership with training providers and leisure operators. Accessible training courses offer qualifications such as YMCAfit Gym Instructor, IoS Swimming Teacher, Clubbercise and Seated Sosa.

A key part of the programme involves a voluntary industry work placement, where newly-qualified instructors use their lived experience of disability to encourage other people in the local community to take part in exercise.

More than 330 disabled people have gained leisure professional qualifications to date, including people with physical, sensory and mental health difficulties.

Half of programme graduates have secured employment by a vast range of employers including YMCA, Places for People, Virgin Active and Fitness First.

The impact of InstructAbility has been independently evaluated by Public Health England, which concluded the programme has positive benefits for participants that impact their health, wellbeing and employment opportunities.

InstructAbility graduates are providing a sustainable legacy of lasting change as they forge careers and become decision-makers of the future. A number are operating their own personal training businesses, with some collaborating with training providers or opening their own inclusive gyms employing disabled staff.

Aspire is working with the University of Birmingham to publish a set of best practice guidelines for training and employing disabled people, to support everyone to enhance opportunities for disabled people to work in the sector.





## A CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING PROFESSION

*FOR THE SECTOR TO BE RECOGNISED AS HIGH PERFORMING AND PROFESSIONAL, ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUALS TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE AND DEVELOP THEIR ABILITIES THROUGHOUT THEIR WORKING LIVES*

Defining the behaviours and skills required for the various roles in the sector is a key priority. We fully endorse the work of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) to establish a new set of professional standards which will create the basis for a range of new, role-relevant qualifications.

This will help establish new training packages offered by quality-assured education providers, leading to the production of more 'job ready' applicants entering the workforce.

Driving this change of approach will stimulate interest in working within the sector, and will change both the performance of individuals and organisations to accelerate the impact on the wellbeing and health of our nation.

### SECTOR SUPPORT

- Work in partnership with CIMSPA to drive sector change and support them to become a strong, well respected and sustainable chartered institute.
- Engage other sectors, such as health and education, to ensure that the level of understanding of the benefits of physical activity is appropriately integrated within initial education and ongoing development of their staff.
- Establish a stronger culture of professional development across the sector.
- Lead a sector-wide project to identify the priorities to support the process of digital transformation and technological advancement.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Work with CIMSPA and key sector partners to:
- Establish, implement and quality assure a new framework of professional standards that better articulates the behaviours and skills required for all job roles within the sector.
  - Drive the creation of a qualifications framework that is clear, progressive and comprehensive.
  - Advocate on behalf of the sector to ensure that sport and physical activity is appropriately considered within the emerging landscape of technical qualifications (T-levels).
  - Develop an endorsement programme for all awarding organisations and training providers within the sector.
  - Build an accessible suite of industry-recognised learning and development opportunities for all members of the professional workforce.
  - Encourage employers and employees to take advantage of the benefits of CIMSPA membership.
  - Track the progress of the numbers of people joining the sector and being retained.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

BY 2019

A professional standards framework will be in place and embraced by the sector. Collaborative partnerships with other professional bodies or occupations will be established.

BY 2021

The number of employer members of CIMSPA will have increased by 100%. 50% of the workforce will be actively engaged in CIMSPA-accredited continuous professional development.

BY 2023

Our sector will be widely recognised as professional and will be making a valuable contribution to the industrial growth of the country.

## CASE STUDY: CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION – PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

Moving Healthcare Professionals is a partnership led by Public Health England with the support of a coalition of partners from health and social care. Its aim is to better educate and support healthcare professionals to promote physical activity in a way that will maximise the chances of the patient embracing a more physically active lifestyle.

The programme recognises that healthcare professionals are uniquely placed to guide and support inactive people to become more active:

- More than 1 in 10 people visit their GP every two weeks and there are 1.2 million health related visits to a community pharmacy every day.
- There are over 600,000 healthcare professionals in the country who will each see nearly half a million patients during their career, most of whom will be inactive or at risk of becoming inactive.
- They are considered trusted experts – research tells us that 1 in 4 patients would be more active if advised to do so by a GP or nurse.

The Moving Healthcare Professionals programme involves:

- Training existing healthcare professionals (face-to-face, eLearning and updating clinician-facing resources).
- Upskilling the next generation by working with medical colleges to embed physical activity into the curriculum.
- Testing innovative ideas, such as the integration of physical activity advice in hospital care and physical activity prescription pads.
- Robust evaluation.

GP Clinical Champions and Allied Health Professional Clinical Champions (a pharmacist, a physiotherapist, a midwife and a psychologist), have trained over 8,000 healthcare professionals to date and many more people want to replicate the model. It's gained international recognition and the learning is influencing other partners.



## IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

*A SECTOR THAT IS SEEN AS ONE OF THE TOP CAREER CHOICES FOR PROSPECTIVE GRADUATES, APPRENTICES AND TRAINEES, WITH THE HIGHEST RETENTION RATES IN KEY SECTOR ROLES*

Sport and physical activity needs to become a career chosen because it's a genuinely attractive choice for a broader cross section of the labour market, rather than a profession chosen only by those with a sporting prowess or interest.

To achieve this, we must ensure this strategy takes into account the evolving reforms in technical education and apprenticeships which present a number of alternative pathways for talented individuals to enter and develop within our workforce.

The development of a career map based on the work undertaken on professional standards will make it easier for individuals entering and moving through the sector by signposting quality-assured training, recognising transferable knowledge, skills and behaviours.

### SECTOR SUPPORT

- Assist CIMSPA to play the vital brokerage role across the landscape between education providers and employers, to ensure that sport and physical activity-related education and training meets the needs of the sector.
- Drive the adoption of industry-leading talent acquisition and management approaches to attract the most skilled people and support those already within the workforce to advance their skills and progress their careers.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Encourage sector employers to take advantage of work-based learning and development opportunities presented by the changing landscape of apprenticeships (including higher and degree-level apprenticeships).
- Increase the number of employers who are committed to staff development as members of CIMSPA.
- Invest in County Sports Partnerships or local partners to support small employers and employers to recruit, develop and retain a high quality, diverse workforce.
- Establish baseline information on employment trends including measurement of rates of retention and progression.
- Launch a career development platform to allow individuals to personalise their learning and development, and identify their potential career journey.
- Work collaboratively with government and other industry stakeholders to explore the ways that the sector can contribute to the UK Industrial Strategy.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

BY 2020

A clear and coherent careers framework will be in place.

BY 2021

All sport and physical activity sector training providers will be endorsed and quality assured by CIMSPA.

BY 2022

There will be a more accessible, demand-led and coherent approach to funded training across the further education and higher education sectors.

BY 2023

We'll have doubled the number of people engaged in training through apprenticeships across the sector at all levels.

We'll have seen improved retention rates across the sector

## CASE STUDY: RETENTION REVOLUTION – PREMIER INN

Premier Inn has an organisational focus on people and culture. Its labour turnover is 50% compared to major competitors, where labour turnover can be as high as 100%. Hospitality is challenging from a people perspective as roles are not necessarily seen as careers. There are a significant number of part-time roles and for some it's seen as a stop gap.

The organisation therefore focuses heavily on how to attract people, how to treat them once

they are recruited, paid-for progression and employing great leaders who can effectively manage. Premier Inn recruit for attitude (engaging, friendly staff) as it's the hardest thing to train. Apprenticeships are a key element of their strategy and all apprentices are paid the national living wage.

Customer focus is included within every training session. It ensures that all employees understand the vision. A focus is placed on guest and team scores and they actively guard against complacency. The organisation praise and recognise those who serve customers/guests well.

## CASE STUDY: INCLUSIVE INNOVATOR – VIRGIN ACTIVE

Virgin Active is breaking down barriers and proactively diversifying its recruitment policy. While this is a policy based on it's core values, it's also one built on positive business outcomes.

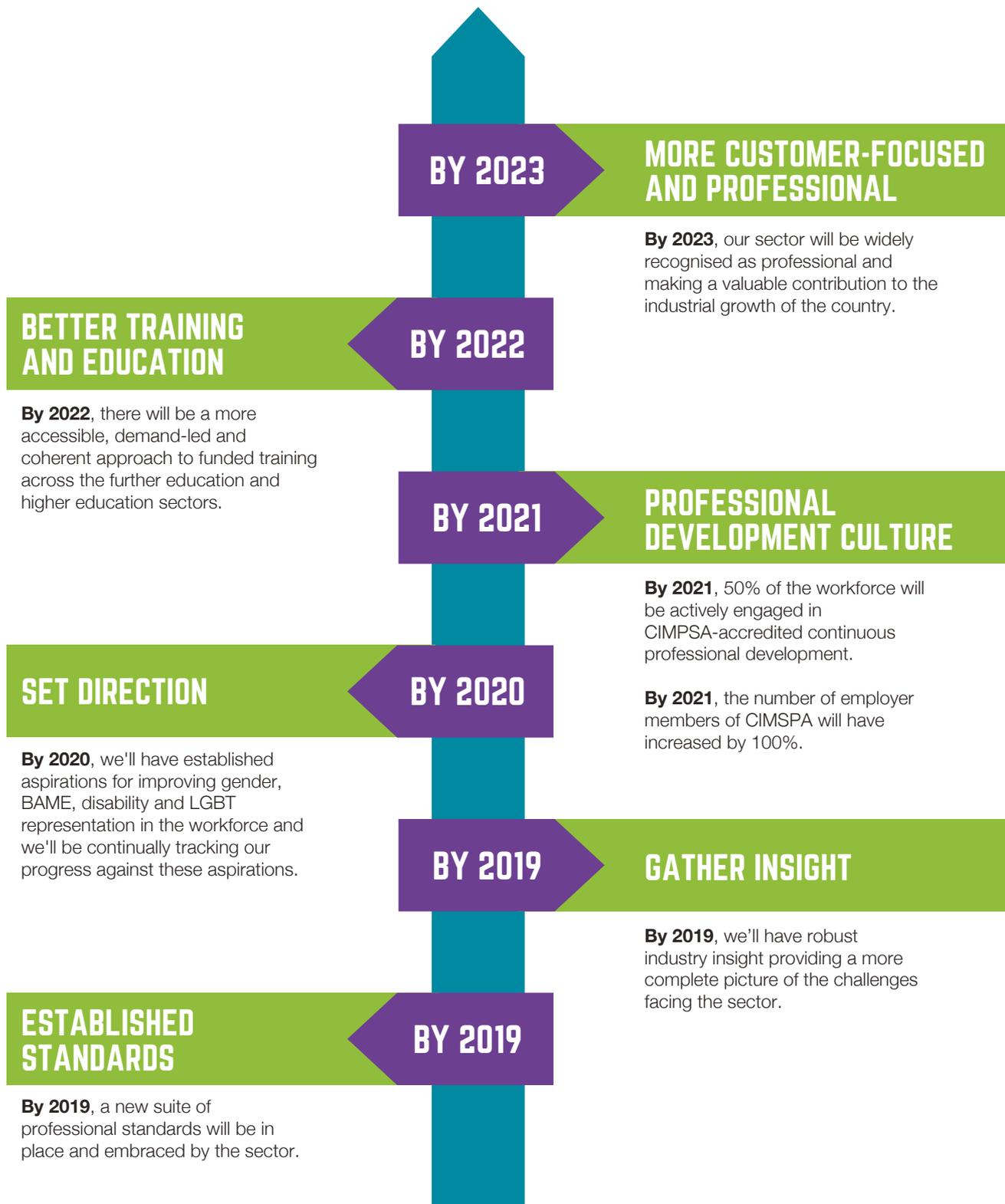
First on the list has been to rebalance its gender balance across the business. With an ambitious target of realigning its general manager population to 50/50 by 2020, the organisation is now stretching boundaries to be a far more inclusive employer right across the board.

Sir Richard Branson has long held a passion for supporting ex-offenders and providing the circumstances that reduce reoffending. Through

open dialogue within prisons and rehabilitative charities, it sought ways to improve the opportunities and access for ex-offenders. In doing so, Virgin Active joined 'Ban the Box', removing the question concerning convictions from its application process. With ex-offenders now being recruited, this has generated a more inclusive approach across its hiring managers who are now active in offering opportunities to further underprivileged groups.

This is early days for Virgin Active and while it has started the drive and recruited ex-offenders, it's seen first-hand the benefits of more inclusive policies across other areas of the business (i.e. Virgin Trains). Virgin has always been known for being innovative and disruptive. This is another area where its open-minded commitment to thinking differently is providing a business advantage.

# TRACKING PROGRESS ON THE JOURNEY





# INSIGHT CONSULTATION RESPONSES

There's a lack of clear insight on the sport and physical activity sector, making it difficult to gauge a clear picture of the key actions that were required to develop the workforce. That's why it was important to consult with as much of the sector as possible and to then correlate the findings with the data that was available, to establish the primary strategic approaches and key actions.

The consultation generated a large number of issues, challenges, ideas, and opportunities – some examples are highlighted in the diagram below. The output generated through this consultation process was then structured into some key themes specifically relevant in the development of our workforce.



# EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

## What we heard

Career pathways in sport and physical activity were reported as lacking coherence, with many roles in the sector viewed in isolation rather than part of a progressive chain. Ultimately, the proposition to join the sector workforce needs to be strengthened, as part of our collective efforts to create a more compelling reason for why somebody, particularly from a non-sporting background, would want to work in sport and physical activity.

A number of other sectors have been able to take steps to become more cohesive and aligned. For example, the Engineering Council authored a single strategy and set of technical standards for all engineering roles in the automotive, construction, aviation, electronics and computing industries. Learning from other sectors will prove fruitful in our work to enhance our sector.

A need for more leadership and progression opportunities for aspiring leaders was also identified. This includes addressing bottleneck at middle management and an increased emphasis on succession planning within organisations to help nurture and retain talent.

## What we know



**400,000+ PEOPLE**  
WERE EMPLOYED IN THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR<sup>8</sup>.

As is common in the UK economy, many people work in small organisations and so we're looking to influence and engage across a fragmented sector<sup>9</sup>.

Most employers with small organisations have between:



**1-49 EMPLOYEES**

Most employers with micro organisations have between:



**1-9 EMPLOYEES<sup>10</sup>**

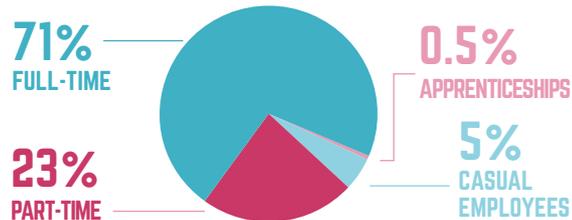


**80%**  
OF PEOPLE WORK IN MICRO BUSINESSES



As well as the range of organisations involved, the professional workforce itself is varied and features employed and self-employed roles working on a full-time, part-time and casual basis.

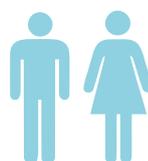
Types of employment for those working in the leisure and fitness industry<sup>11</sup>:



Compared with the whole of the sport and physical activity workforce:

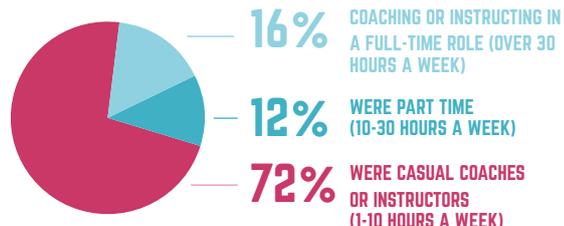


(The part time employment rate for the UK economy as a whole is 28%<sup>13</sup>).



**900,000 PEOPLE**  
IN ENGLAND ARE REGULARLY PAID TO COACH OR PROVIDE INSTRUCTION (AT LEAST ONE PAID HOUR A WEEK)

Of those:



# TRAINING AND EDUCATION

## What we heard

There's currently no established professional standards framework for the sector that's well understood by individuals, employers and/or education providers. It's clear that the industry needs a qualification framework that's fit for purpose and compelling.

Our consultees were clear that the value of investment into the development of the workforce was poorly understood across the sector. It was argued that high quality insight, highlighting the value of people development, was needed in order to foster a greater and more consistent commitment to the development of people and learning.

Additionally, the recruitment of job-ready applicants with the right interpersonal skills and motivations to engage effectively with customers, was identified as being a big challenge.

Feedback also suggested that even though we're very clearly a service-based sector, qualifications have largely centred on technical skills. Service-based delivery skills and behaviours need greater emphasis in learning and development.

## What we know



**27,000 ADULTS**

STUDIED A SPORTS-RELATED EDUCATION PROGRAMME ACROSS 612 DIFFERENT FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES AND PRIVATE PROVIDERS<sup>14</sup>.



**57% OF EMPLOYERS**

IN LEISURE AND FITNESS BELIEVE THEY DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE TRAINING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THEIR STAFF<sup>19</sup>.



**76,000 STUDENTS**

IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIED SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-RELATED COURSES IN 2015.

THIS REPRESENTED 3.3% OF THE TOTAL STUDENT BODY (2,317,880)<sup>15</sup>.



**27.5% OF MANAGERS**

IN LEISURE AND FITNESS OCCUPATIONS HOLD A MANAGEMENT QUALIFICATION<sup>20</sup>.



**22,490 PEOPLE**

STARTED AN APPRENTICESHIP IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE PAST YEAR.

THIS REPRESENTS 8.6% OF THE TOTAL APPRENTICE POPULATION (2.3 MILLION)<sup>16</sup>.



**86% OF RESPONDENTS**

THINK THAT MOST EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS ARE NOT ADEQUATELY TRAINED TO WORK WITH DISABLED PEOPLE OR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE<sup>21</sup>.



**147,000 ADDITIONAL PEOPLE**

WERE ENROLLED ONTO OTHER FUNDED OR SUBSIDISED LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT COURSES (SUCH AS COACHING OR FITNESS QUALIFICATIONS, ETC.)<sup>17</sup>.



**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.



**91% OF EXERCISE AND FITNESS EMPLOYERS**

REPORT THE NEED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR NEWLY HIRED PERSONAL TRAINERS TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE 'WORK READY'<sup>18</sup>.

# WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

## What we heard

The lack of diversity in sport and physical activity remains a challenge. This was identified as a key area to address in discussion with sector professionals who identified that across boardrooms and senior executive post holders, there is a lack of representation from BAME, female and disabled individuals.

There was also a strong message to suggest that commitment to diversity should go beyond compliance or obligation, towards a more inclusive culture which genuinely values diversity.

**“THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGY SHOULD BE AN ENABLER TO ATTRACT ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY TO ASPIRE TO WORK WITHIN THE SECTOR AND TO REACH THEIR GOALS AT WHATEVER LEVEL THAT MIGHT BE.”**

ANDY DALBY-WELSH, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE ACTIVITY ALLIANCE (PREVIOUSLY ENGLISH FEDERATION OF DISABILITY SPORT)

## What we know

There's been an increase in the number of female Chief Executives in national governing bodies (NGBs):



Yet there has been little change in the overall number of women in leadership roles, which remained static at 30% between 2013-2016.

Leisure and fitness sector average gender split across management roles:



The divide widens in senior management roles:



In County Sports Partnerships (CSPs):



Yet...



Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities are under-represented:



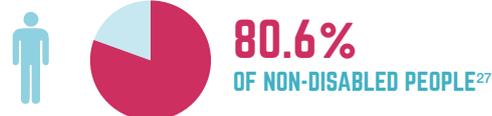
However...



The number of NGB boards and board members that are BAME<sup>26</sup>:



Percentage of people in employment in the UK:



(THE EMPLOYMENT RATE IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS UNKNOWN. THIS IS AN AREA WHERE WE WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE THE DATA.)

# RETENTION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

## What we heard

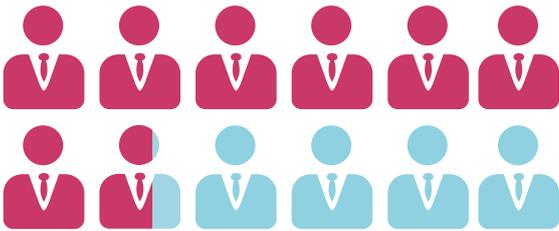
During the consultation, several training organisations and employers highlighted that many people leave the industry within 12-18 months (post-qualification) to pursue careers in other professions or sectors.

Hours of work, rates of pay, employee satisfaction and wellbeing, career earning potential and a blockage at middle management, were regularly cited as reasons for people leaving positions.

**“THIS STRATEGY IS A MISSING PIECE IN THE JIGSAW – IT UNDERPINS THE HUGE INVESTMENT THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS. PROTECT THE INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT THE INDIVIDUALS TO BE THE BEST AND MOST SUCCESSFUL THAT THEY CAN BE”.**

WORKFORCE SURVEY RESPONDENT

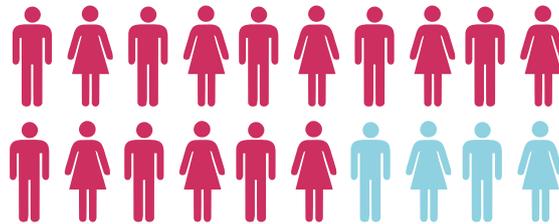
## What we know



### 64% OF MANAGERS

IN THE LEISURE AND FITNESS SECTOR ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB AND THE MAJORITY ARE LOOKING OUTSIDE OF THE SECTOR. REASONS CITED FOR WANTING TO LEAVE WERE THAT THEY WERE FRUSTRATED WITH POOR PAY, A LACK OF PROGRESSION AND POOR MANAGEMENT/CULTURE<sup>28</sup>.

ukactive research has suggested that new recruits into exercise and fitness roles often have unrealistic expectations and this is one of the most powerful drivers of low retention.



### 80% OF EMPLOYERS

HIGHLIGHTED THAT UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF EARNING POTENTIAL AND OF THE SPECIFIC TASKS REQUIRED IN THE JOB ROLE WERE THE MOST PREVALENT KNOWLEDGE GAPS FOUND AMONG NEWLY-QUALIFIED EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS ENTERING THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR<sup>30</sup>.



THE ‘DUTY OF CARE REVIEW’, CONDUCTED IN 2017 BY BARONESS TANNI GREY-THOMPSON, HIGHLIGHTED THAT THE SECTOR NEEDED TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WORKFORCE THAT LOOK AFTER ATHLETES IN COMMUNITY, TALENT PATHWAY AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS. THE REPORT RECOMMENDED THAT MENTAL HEALTH, WORKPLACE WELLBEING, IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WERE KEY AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED<sup>29</sup>.

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