

Life Lessons

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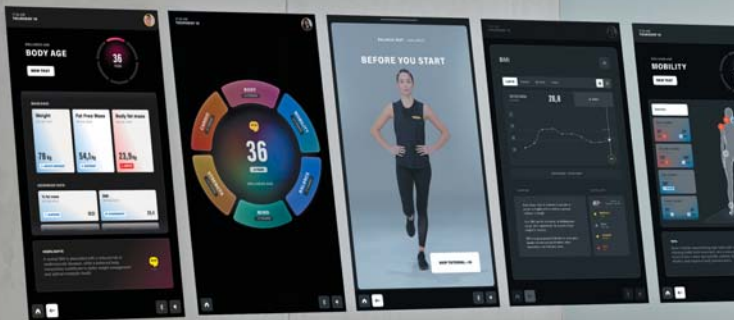
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ON THE COVER

# Jonny Wilkinson

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## Brace for impact

**Weight loss drugs are altering consumer behaviour, disrupting sectors from food retailing (smaller portions) to apparel (less fabric needed). We need to move fast to align with this new reality**

Imagine January arriving, with the New Year uplift in members failing to materialise.

This is the prospect we'll be facing in January 2025, now weight loss drugs offer consumers an easy and viable alternative when it comes to shifting those unwanted post-festive kilos.

Although clearly this isn't the only motivation for joining a health club, it applies to enough January recruits to be a variable that will suppress sales.

These game-changing drugs are arriving so fast it makes your head spin. They're easy to access and already being widely adopted, with traction being driven by four things – the medical profession, human nature, easy online sales and consumers' aspirations of wellness.

The fundamentals of medicine are drugs and surgery and doctors are clearing their lists of multiple cases with a simple GLP-1 or tirzepatide weight loss drug prescription.

This trend will be strengthened by recent research that found they have beneficial side-effects, including improved mental health, the resolution of some addictions and eating disorders and the prevention of neurodegeneration, making them the wonder drug of the moment.

Consumers see them as a way to fast-track their wellness journey and this plays to humans' hard-wiring to take the line of least resistance – why sweat when you can simply take a shot to shift those unwanted kilos?

With this looming threat, the sector must swing into action now and tackle the challenge with new packages, marketing, lobbying, research and training.

People on these drugs need to exercise to maintain their new weight and avoid losing muscle mass. This point must be driven home to doctors and health services, so every weight loss drug prescription or online sale comes with an exercise prescription or guidelines.

At present, mentions of exercise at the time of prescription or sale are cursory and non-specific, so this train has left the station without us on board.

We need our trade associations to be lobbying globally to get exercise prescribed along with these



The arrival of weight loss drugs is disrupting the sector

**“We need our trade associations to be lobbying globally to get exercise prescribed alongside every weight loss drug”**

drugs, while operators could consider directly prescribing them in a kind of reverse takeover.

Research and training are vital – we need to know how they impact the body when it comes to exercise, then qualifications must be developed, so our exercise professionals can deliver safe, effective support. There is much to do.

Some operators, such as Equinox, have a year's head start, having launched specialist packages in 2023. Now it's time for the whole sector to galvanise to ensure we turn this development into a positive.

Liz Terry, editor  
lizterry@leisuremedia.com

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PHOTO: REBEL

PHOTO: REBEL

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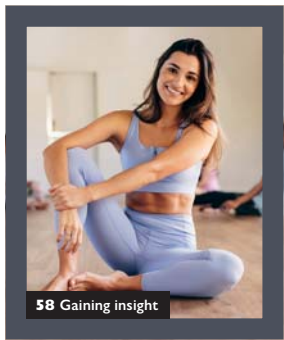
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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / JACOB LIND

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**Jonny Wilkinson**

Founder,  
One Living

# HCM Forum

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry.

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Write to [forum@leisuremedia.com](mailto:forum@leisuremedia.com)



*A new style of mind/body training, will enable the sector to take the lead in delivering mental health support in de-medicalised settings*

**Gavin Baxter**

Active IQ



Gavin Baxter

I read your editor's letter on mental health training (HCM issue 3 2024) with great interest and wanted to highlight the work being done by qualifying bodies to take steps towards delivering against this need.

It's undeniable that there's a growing recognition of the demand for a holistic approach to wellness, with 81 per cent of professionals believing it's important to make facilities and programmes more inclusive for people experiencing mental health struggles or aiming to avoid them.

The call to integrate mental health disciplines into fitness programmes is growing, reflecting an increasing demand from consumers for the provision of more inclusive and supportive environments.

We've embraced this progressive mindset and taken proactive steps to improve mental health

education and qualifications over the past four years, by delivering comprehensive mental health-based training programmes that have garnered significant interest, with over 3,000 registrations since 2020.

However, while the focus has been on accrediting bodies to drive change, we believe employers and trainers also have a crucial role to play when it comes to delivering mental health support. It's imperative fitness professionals actively pursue CPD in this area and also that they receive encouragement and support from their employers to do so.

This will equip them to meet the growing demand by creating a new style of mind/body training, enabling the sector to take the lead in delivering mental health support in de-medicalised settings.

We know being physically active has a positive impact on mental

health, with studies showing regular physical activity can reduce the risk of depression by 30 per cent. As an industry we're rapidly improving our support for the shift from 'how I look to 'how I feel' and Active IQ is committed to facilitating this transition.

Our accessible mental health training programmes, offered through our network of providers, equip fitness professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to support their clients effectively.

While the industry hasn't yet integrated dual-training in PT and psychotherapy – as called for in your editor's letter – the growing interest in mental health training among fitness professionals indicates there's an opportunity to develop qualifications that could eventually combine both fields for the benefit of consumers, staff and operators.

“

*There's an opportunity to develop qualifications that could eventually combine PT and Psychotherapy*



Calls to integrate mental health disciplines into fitness programmes are growing





*The project directs people from NHS services to the YMCA, where they take part in coached sessions tailored to their needs*

## Access to exercise is taking pressure off clinical services

**Becky Sutton, Liz Fletcher and Sarah Needham**

Sport for Confidence

Nottinghamshire Healthcare has enlisted the support of Sport for Confidence to drive prevention through the development of integrated place-based interventions in adult health and social care.

Working with a consortium of partners, we're supporting a pathway from health to leisure services so people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can participate in physical activity.

The project is a fantastic example of how a whole-system approach can deliver health and social care outcomes that not only work for the individual, but also take the pressure off clinical services by recruiting the skills and services of a diverse array of community providers.

The project directs people from NHS services to their local YMCA Community and Activity Village, where they take part in weekly



PHOTO: BECKY SUTTON

Becky Sutton



PHOTO: SPORT FOR CONFIDENCE

Liz Fletcher



PHOTO: SARAH NEEDHAM

Sarah Needham

coached Bocca sessions delivered by the YMCA and designed in collaboration with the NHS Newark Intellectual Developmental Disabilities team (NIDDT).

Healthcare professionals – such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists – adapt their clinical expertise to the activity-oriented setting and work with sports coaches to make personalised adjustments, ensuring everyone can participate in a meaningful way.

Sport and physical activity has the power to deliver a vast array of

physical and mental health outcomes and this project opens the door to participation opportunities, while creating a network of support that drives social connection and community engagement.

The project started as a result of a multi-disciplinary team of therapists in Newark wanting to signpost adults with learning difficulties to accessible sporting groups. They quickly realised there were very limited options.

Following research and discussions the NIDDT collaborated with the YMCA and other partners to enable this vision to become a reality.

Feedback has been hugely encouraging. It's fantastic to be able to offer an alternative to at-home rehabilitation which encourages social interaction, movement and therapy all under one roof. ●  
More: [www.sportforconfidence.com](http://www.sportforconfidence.com)

*Becky Sutton is chief operating officer at Nottinghamshire Healthcare; Liz Fletcher is national lead at Sport for Confidence; Sarah Needham is specialist senior physiotherapist on the Newark Intellectual Developmental Disabilities team*



YMCA Newark is delivering sessions with Bocca England



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Wilkinson's mission is  
to champion mental  
and physical wellbeing



***“We’re striving to awaken another dimension in people and share with vulnerability, truth and honesty”***

## **Jonny Wilkinson**

**Founder, One Living**

**At just 24 Jonny Wilkinson achieved his dreams by landing the perfect drop kick to win the 2003 Rugby World Cup for England. He talks to Liz Terry and Kath Hudson about how getting what he thought he wanted made him feel empty and was ultimately the start of his journey to launch the One Living brand**

### ***Talk us through how it felt to score that World Cup winning drop goal***

My body took over. In that moment I was in the zone and allowed the magic to happen. The muscle memory of the 100,000 times I'd practised that kick took over and I had this experience of being out of body and witnessing the ball drop and a feeling of absolute presence, freedom and fullness.

### ***How did it feel afterwards?***

Things wore off very quickly. Going on the big tour holding the cup was an uncomfortable experience for me and left me feeling confused with a feeling of emptiness. I didn't handle being celebrated very well and was desperate to get back on the field to satisfy my warrior-saviour-martyr archetype.

With success and recognition I got caught up believing I'd become someone special and as a result I started to believe I had more to lose than to gain. I felt more pressure and more fear of failure.

Before that kick, when I was far more open and willing to explore, I enjoyed my rugby and surprised myself a lot more on the field.

A few weeks after the World Cup I played a match for my club, Newcastle, and took a big hit on my already damaged neck, which meant spinal surgery and a long time out the game, but once I left hospital I couldn't seem to switch off and allow myself to heal – the day after my operation I was

back hammering away on the exercise bike, trying to prove myself again and hang on to who I was, as it felt as though this was disappearing fast.

Without rugby I was lost. I was spending seven to eight hours a day in the gym and on the pitch, even though I knew I wouldn't be playing for nine months. It led to me suffering from over-training syndrome.

Within two or three months, my body was in a mess. The non-stop stress of being single-focused and not allowing myself any recovery time meant I broke down physically and mentally. It was sheer frustration, followed by panic, followed by anxiety, grief and depression. Over the next four-and-a-half years I managed only a total six months without injury.

Such an overloaded approach inevitably led to break down. My body was letting me know that it needed to heal and if I wasn't going to support its recovery then it would end up forcing me to do so. As a result of that, I look back and appreciate that rest and relaxation is a huge part of performance. The more recovered and balanced we are, the more capable we are.

### ***Did you achieve your dream too early?***

When we get too caught up in the outcomes we're striving for, I feel we can sacrifice the awesomeness of the here and now. We end up believing that our successes will pay us back later down the line, only to realise that this just isn't the case. ▶



*When you follow things intuitively you realise you're being guided, but I was never listening to that*

When you get what you want, you don't gain anything you didn't already have, because our happiness is in our nature – in who we are.

I actually think it's great to achieve your dream as early as possible, because then you see through this illusion and have more time in your life to devote to exploring what truly matters.

Having passion for something and a purpose in life is a beautiful, powerful and privileged thing. I've found that the most potent performance mindset is to have a strong vision for what you want and an unshakable drive to go after it, but to have no real insistence when it comes to how things turn out. It's a subtle and tricky balance, but this way we can accept and let go of everything that happens to us in order to be fully present for what and where the opportunity really is.

When I came back from all my injuries I vowed to myself that I would make the most of every moment. I meant it but it can be easy to slip back into old habits. Deep beliefs die hard.

### **What lies behind this for you?**

I grew up consumed by fear as a young child and came to the conclusion that the antidote to this horrible sense of doom was perfection and success. I loved rugby deeply, so if I wanted to play the sport, then according to my value system, it had to be at the highest level, I had to be the kicker and had to work harder than everyone else. I couldn't let people down, in fact, I believed that it was my responsibility to save them – whatever that meant.

When things didn't go according to plan, I allowed it to hurt so badly. It's amazing how these conclusions I came to dominated my journey. They brought about such urgency and intensity, which got the job done, but they also caused a lot of issues and a heck of a lot of stress.

I was convinced that the answer to my own salvation was going to be through winning everything and being recognised as the best. My mind simply followed this instruction. It went looking for every possible threat, competing at every opportunity, never switching off. I begged for some space and respite but it was only doing what I was asking it to do.

### **How did you go about changing your approach?**

It was all about developing awareness of how I was being and how I really wanted to be. The key was becoming more aware of my mental and emotional state and not confusing that awareness with analysis.

I've spent my life following my mind and trying to appease it, not understanding that it was actually following me. I was stuck in a limiting cycle and had to get some distance between me and my feelings and thoughts – to learn to just be with them and not get lost in them. I had to get some choices back.

The second opportunity was to recognise a safe space, then trust and relax into it.

The strong nervous energy that creeps into your body leading up to a game, is undoubtedly a performance enhancer, but it's intense and can easily be mistaken for a danger signal. If we don't recognise, embrace and allow the feeling, then we end up reacting to it.

Before you know it, the thing you've spent your life dreaming about and preparing for becomes the thing that you will do almost anything to avoid!

I would sit in the changing rooms before a game and turn over every stone of the forthcoming match. 'What if they do this?' 'What if we lose?' 'What if I miss and it's all my fault?', then I'd see other players standing looking relaxed – they looked different; balanced and content – and I'd ask if they were ready and they'd just shrug and say: 'Yeah. I've done my training.' Their attitude was: 'I'm ready, let's see how it goes.' This was inspiring to me, but seemed massively out of my reach.

### **What was going on in your head?**

The bombardment in my mind was lack of trust. I was crying out to feel calm.

When you follow things intuitively with trust and openness, then you feel guided by something bigger, but having this level of faith was a challenge for me.

The intuitive voice comes from a place of curiosity, and exploration, rather than a place where you're trying to control everything. When I felt good, it was awesome, so really I knew all the answers



Wilkinson had a successful  
stint at French club Toulon  
toward the end of his career





Wilkinson at the  
launch of One Living at  
Twickenham in June 2024



*Trust is the difference  
between logic and magic.  
Magic comes in those  
moments like the World  
Cup drop kick when you  
let go and go all in*

to the questions I was torturing myself with, but I wasn't trusting my gift. I wasn't able to relax and just express and celebrate myself. I 'believed away' my creativity, my surprise, my joy, the magic – all the bits you talk about after the match.

The negative voices would tend to stop as soon as I was on the field and the whistle went. But after a while the whistle would go and I would still be thinking. That's when I knew I'd crossed the line. I was running around trying to think my way through a game, against great competitors who were playing intuitively. There was only going to be one winner in that battle, because feel beats thought and creative mode beats survival mode every time.

Trust is the difference between logic and magic. Magic comes in those moments like the World Cup drop kick, when you let go and go all in. And you don't have to be a rugby player to experience magic, it's available right here and now for everyone, everywhere.

When we follow our passions, we live true and that's how we serve the deepest, but when we put the focus on the outcome, that's when we start to create discord and chaos. If you're passionate, open, humble and willing then you're living more authentically I feel.

### ***How did that experience lead on to what you're doing now with One Living?***

While working in professional sport I'd seen so much laboratory-esque food – almost space aged – and met many people who were living on it and were fit, but not healthy. I was definitely one of them, so I started looking into nutrition and its impact on mental and emotional health.

At the same time my wife was doing a master's degree in nutrition and exploring gut health and advanced nutrition. It was a really interesting and revelatory time: we started making living foods at home, such as kimchi, sauerkraut, sourdough bread, kefir and yogurt. When then moved on to kombucha, which at that time was only available in niche stores. We wanted to make it as accessible, affordable and as good tasting as possible.



Wilkinson scored 1,000 career test points for England

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / PAOLO ROMAN

That desire to make living drinks with the utmost integrity – so what was in the bottle at the end was as close as possible to how it began and still living and growing – became our number one journey.

### ***What difference did it make to your health when you discovered living food?***

Ease and effortlessness. The bacteria in living foods support and enhance the communication pathways between the brain and gut, which lends an effortlessness and wholeness to living that's unobtainable when your energies are being drawn towards imbalance and stress.

The connection between the gut and the brain brings you into balance, so you become one with everything, working together. When you feel whole and in balance, that's what sports people call the zone, and that's when your performance takes off.

Living bacteria and gut health weren't on the radar a few years ago, but now they are it presents us all with a great opportunity to optimise our health.

### ***You started as No 1 Living and now – six years later – you've rebranded to One Living. Why?***

The 'Number One' part got in the way of the mental, emotional and physical health journey we believe in, which is not about competing or comparing yourself with anyone else. It's not about being number one but about feeling at one: being ▶

## About One Living

Established in 2018, One Living was certified a B Corp business in 2023. It has partnered with food-sharing charities such as Fair Share to ensure that drinks that might go to waste (such as in dented cans) don't get sent to landfill.

The packaging is infinitely recyclable and the drinks are made with natural ingredients and packed with billions of live cultures and antioxidants, they're authentically brewed, raw, unpasteurised, dairy-free and vegan.

**\* Kombucha Health Shots** Come in two types, Gut & Immune and Gut & Brain

**\* Kombucha Sugar Free Cans**

Available in ginger with turmeric; raspberry with pomegranate; passion fruit with goji and a new recipe with enhanced flavours and added B vitamins

**\* Living Plus Kombucha with**

**adaptogens** Available in Calm (ashwagandha, camomile and passion flower); Immune (reishi mushroom, yuzu and ginger), Focus (panax ginseng, blackberry and elderberry)

**\* Organic Kombucha Bottles** A brewery range enjoyed as a non-alcoholic alternative – available in ginger with turmeric; raspberry with pomegranate and passion fruit with goji

**\* Water Kefir** Available in strawberry with rhubarb; lemon with yuzu and mint

**\* An all new category and product range** from One Living will be announced August

[www.oneliving.com](http://www.oneliving.com) or [tim@oneliving.com](mailto:tim@oneliving.com)

connected with yourself, with others and with your environment. The name change reflects that purpose.

The first five years was about education, because we were way ahead of the curve – the reason kombucha wasn't readily available was because the market wasn't ready and there was a lot of education to do. That has been a challenge, but now we're at the point of being able to fully express who we are.

The market is also more established and consumers are starting to explore living foods and as a result, we've reviewed everything we're doing and our messaging.

The ambition and the vision has always been about impact and trying to make a difference and the rebrand speaks that language, with the organisation now having three branches from the same trunk. These are called One Living, One Giving and One Wellbeing.

One Living is the product range which aims to positively impact the health of all who consume it; One Giving is our connection with mental health charities and every purchase directly funds these organisations in their drive to make a difference to people who are suffering. One Wellbeing is our own wellbeing messaging and content which people can connect to via the website or a QR code.

Through sharing my experience in this way I would love to create a community and the conditions for it to thrive, connect and inspire. For it to be a safe and exciting space for people to explore perspectives and practices for unlocking new possibility in their lives.

Content includes self-regulating and heart opening techniques, such as shaking, sighing, grounding and box breathing, to name a few.





One Living gives health club operators straightforward ways to support the mental health of members

We're looking to expand our base of people creating the content, so it becomes a daily diet of food, information and energy. There's also a feedback opportunity, so people can share their transformations and inspire others.

There are multiple ways people can access this material, we're just doing our part in sharing what's already there and our experience and our version of it. We're trying to reawaken another dimension in people and share with vulnerability, truth and honesty.

**Tell us about your first charity collaboration**

The first charity we're partnering with is the Mental Health Foundation, because of the huge amount the team there has been doing in this space for many years, they're making a heck of a difference. ▶



*When you bring the mental, emotional and physical together as one and find balance, it can connect you to the magical*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES



*You think that once you get what you want you'll be free and full, but successes don't resolve our problems or heal our core wounds*

I'm ambassador for the charity and we've been inspired by their work and seeing how much goes on behind the curtain of their organisation. We'll also be looking to support a further four to six charities this year.

#### **Was it a deliberate decision not to put your picture on One Living products?**

I think the message is important, not the person. With people there are limits, but a message can be limitless and I'm just the messenger.

It's important to me that people understand the brand and what it stands for and feel they can trust it. I don't want to be that smiling face so people think we're saying, 'buy this and be like him'.

We didn't just want to put a drink out there and say, 'Try this. It's brilliant'. We wanted to say 'this is the spirit of where it's come from, this is the heart and there's more to this health and wellbeing journey for you to discover'. Everything we do is about transparency, honesty and authenticity.

Also, we don't want people to drink the kombucha as though it's another pill. When you bring the mental, emotional and physical together as one and find balance, it can connect you to the magical and drop you into a new dimension you never knew was possible.

#### **Does this feel like achieving a dream?**

I thought I'd achieved everything I ever wanted at the age of 24 and then realised that's just not how it works. You think that once you get what you want, you'll be free and full, but successes don't resolve our problems or heal our core wounds.

My potential is hidden by my struggles and to uncover it I have to turn to face my inner challenges, look after myself and become responsible for my own mind, body and balance. I have to open up space for joy and freedom and for living in the moment.

As you can tell, I'm kind of into it. This is my truth and it pervades everything I do.

You're getting an idea of what it was like for my teammates. Non-stop, very focused and intense! ●



PHOTO: TOM JEWAN/GETTY IMAGES

Wilkinson and the World Cup-winning drop kick

## More about

### **Jonny Wilkinson**

Widely considered one of the most successful rugby players of all time and the world's leading fly-half during his career, Wilkinson played in four Rugby World Cups, won 91 caps for England and six for the British and Irish Lions.

He spent 12 years with Newcastle Falcons and moved to French club, Toulon, from 2009 until his retirement in 2014.

Wilkinson broke several records, including the test rugby record for all-time leading points scorer; was the first English player to reach over 1,000 career test points for England; set the international rugby drop goal scorer world record and became the highest international point-scorer. He was the highest point scorer in the 2007 Rugby World Cup and in the 2007 Calcutta Cup, he completed a full house – try, penalty, conversion and drop goal in the same match.

Wilkinson has been inducted into the World Rugby Hall of Fame and in 2003 was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year and international player of the year by the International Rugby Board. He won the ERC European Player of the Year in 2013 and has been awarded honorary doctorates by Northumbria University and the University of Surrey.

He's the author of five books; hosts the I AM podcast series, where he speaks to inspiring thought leaders; founded the Jonny Wilkinson Charitable Foundation to support research into mental health and initiated NSPIRED, a foundation providing emotional support to teachers and coaches. He's also a regular sports pundit for ITV and Sky Sports. ●

● *Jonny Wilkinson will be a keynote speaker at the HCM Summit in London on 24 October 2024. Find out more at [www.HCMsummit.live](http://www.HCMsummit.live)*



Wilkinson's mission is to  
promote mental health  
and physical activity



## Elevate India to launch with India Active

Trade show and conference, Elevate, is expanding to India next year, with an event scheduled for Mumbai on the 27 and 28 February. Elevate is owned by Quartz Sequoia Events.

The UK Elevate team is working in collaboration with India Active and Inter Rads Exhibitions to bring the event to fruition. Elevate India will be one of the first B2B events dedicated to the fitness sector in India, supporting a developing industry with an exhibition and two education theatres.



The London event is expanding to Mumbai in 2025



PHOTO: ELEVATE

**Our key objective in building Elevate is to be the catalyst for a thriving and united sector**

Lucy Findlay-Beale

Last month saw the seventh Elevate take place in London. Some 6,000 visitors travelled to the ExCeL centre to see more than 200 speakers and visit the exhibition.

Event director, Lucy Findlay-Beale, says: "Our key objective in building Elevate is to be the catalyst for a thriving and united

sector. Through the innovation on the show floor and the education in the conference, visitors leave with tools to drive progress, ignite business growth and raise the importance and standard of physical and mental health."

More: [http://lei.sr/j9K8U\\_H](http://lei.sr/j9K8U_H)

## Prime IV Hydration & Wellness unveils plans

Nutrient vitamin IV therapy franchise, Prime IV Hydration & Wellness, is accelerating its expansion across the US, having recently launched its third location in Nashville's Green Hills area.

Founded in 2017 by wellness industry veteran and scientist

Amy Neary, Prime IV has grown to over 125 locations. Services include IV therapy, micronutrient injections, NAD+ treatments, weight loss solutions, cryotherapy and bioidentical hormone replacement therapy.

The company plans to open an additional 97 locations this year, aiming

for a total of 750 franchises by the end of 2027. In 2023, Prime IV opened 59 new wellness centres, marking a 120 per cent year-over-year growth, up from 113 per cent in 2022.

The latest Nashville location was developed through a partnership with local healthcare entrepreneur, Dr Gary Ferguson.

"In recent years, I've seen consumer preferences noticeably shift from traditional inpatient hospital and ambulatory care experiences to more accessible, preventative healthcare modalities that place personal wellbeing first," he said.

"That shift is directly responsible for the incredible growth that brands such as Prime IV are seeing today."

More: [http://lei.sr/y5K2J\\_H](http://lei.sr/y5K2J_H)



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANASTOK

Prime IV has ambitions to open 750 franchise locations by the end of 2027

## The Gym Group reports strong half-year results

The Gym Group has built on the positive momentum of 2023, with a strong performance in the first half of 2024, showing an uplift in membership, yield and like-for-like revenue.

For the period ending 30 June, the low-cost operator increased revenue by 12 per cent to £112.1m (H1 2023: £99.8m).

Membership continues to grow and stood at 905,000 on 30 June, compared with 867,000 at 30 June 2023. Like-for-like revenue also grew by 9 per cent.

With four gyms opened this year – bringing the total to 237 – and four more opening soon, Will Orr, The Gym Group CEO, confirms the company is on track to meet its target of 10 to 12 new sites this year.

Orr said: "We're making encouraging progress with our strategic priorities under our *Next Chapter* growth plan, delivering good growth in membership and yield.

"We've further strengthened our financial position, while stepping up our opening programme in line with our target of opening 50 high-quality sites over the next three years with high ROIC, funded from free cashflow.

"After a strong first half, we expect to deliver full year results at the higher end of market expectations."

With further strong cashflow generated in the first half, net debt stood at £54.6 million at 30 June, compared with £66.4 million at the 2023 financial year end.

More: [http://lei.sr/9v3q9\\_H](http://lei.sr/9v3q9_H)



PHOTO: THE GYM GROUP

Will Orr has done a strategy reboot

## United Fitness Brands moves into franchising

As United Fitness Brands gears up to launch its fifth Reformcore location at Battersea Power Station this month, the multi-brand boutique operator has told *HCM* it's moving into franchising.

Richard North, formerly CEO, has changed roles to head up global franchise growth.

North has a background in franchising: helping to grow the Anytime Fitness estate; was European head of franchise for grocery brand, Getir, and launched franchised



PHOTO: UNITED FITNESS BRANDS

United Fitness Brands will be franchising Triyoga, along with its other four brands

skincare brand, Skinsmiths, opening nine clinics in seven months.

He says Barrecore, Reformcore and Triyoga will be the first brands to be franchised, with Kobox and Boom Cycle following in phase two. "We intend to actively discuss the opportunity from August this year and people will be able to enquire via our website," he says.

There are ambitions to open 150 sites globally in five years. The UK commuter belt will be the first target.

Malcolm Armstrong took up the role of CEO of United Fitness Brands in May. He joined the company as chief operating officer in March this year, after seven years with Virgin Active.

More: [http://lei.sr/b3G5s\\_H](http://lei.sr/b3G5s_H)



PHOTO: UNITED FITNESS BRANDS

**We're aiming to open 150 locations in the next five years**

Richard North

## Third Space is on a roll with three new openings

Third Space is celebrating the launch of its 11th club in London at the historic Battersea Power Station development, a new, high-end neighbourhood for London.

Colin Waggett, CEO of Third Space, says: "We first engaged with the Battersea Power Station estate team way back in 2015, and knew then we had to be part of this development.

"It's familiar yet unique, a blend of function and form. Such is the demand, we're already operating with a wait-list



PHOTO: THIRD SPACE

With backing from KSL, there are plans to double the Third Space portfolio



PHOTO: THIRD SPACE

**We knew we had to be part of this development**

Colin Waggett

to ensure we manage the usage of the club to deliver a great experience."

Architect, Rafael Vinoly, has created a quirky, fluid, modern style for the mixed use development, including tactile, sustainable materials and curved metalwork.

Inside the club is 28,000sq ft of training and recovery space, including

a spa, naturally-lit pool, gym with a custom-designed rig and dedicated studios for 160 classes each week. This is one of three Third Space clubs to open this year, along with Clapham Junction and Wood Wharf, following investment from KSL Capital.

More: [http://lei.sr/y3n8N\\_H](http://lei.sr/y3n8N_H)

## Elaine Jobson publishes on high performance



PHOTO: JETTS

Elaine Jobson will be at the HCM Summit signing her new book

Happy staff make more profitable businesses is the message of Jetts CEO, Elaine Jobson's new book *High Performance through Happy People*.

Jobson will be travelling from Australia to London for the HCM Summit on 24 October where she'll meet delegates and do a book signing for everyone who wants to secure their own copy.

"This is essentially a book on corporate culture through the lens of leadership," Jobson told HCM. "It's about how to drive performance while retaining happy people."

Jobson says when she started her career, 30 years ago, companies often prioritised performance and growth at any cost: "Many had toxic cultures in which employees were expected to climb the corporate ladder, often

trampling on those around them in a frantic rush to reach the top."

In the book, which she was invited to write by Major Street Publishing, Jobson challenges this approach. "Through my experience of culture change at multiple brands within the industry I felt like I had created a formula that other leaders could use," she says "I am passionate about culture and want to provide insights and tools into how other leaders can achieve cultural excellence."

Jobson says she's shared everything she's learned, applied and gained results from and includes case studies, practical advice and real-life strategies on how to turn struggling cultures into award-winning workplaces.

More: [http://lei.sr/z7s9p\\_H](http://lei.sr/z7s9p_H)

## LifeFit Group confirms deal with Waterland

German health and fitness operator, LifeFit Group, has confirmed it has a new investor – Waterland Private Equity Investments.

The deal will enable the company to accelerate the growth strategy it has pursued since its foundation in 2019, with the backing of Oaktree Capital, which has seen the portfolio grow from approximately 50 clubs to more than 140 clubs, with more than 400,000 members.

Waterland has extensive experience in the health and fitness industry, having invested in Basic-Fit from 2005 to 2013, supporting its journey to becoming the second largest health club operator in Europe.

It also held major stakes in the Exercise Group and is still invested in German gym chain Fit/One.



PHOTO: LIFEFIT GROUP

***We're delighted to have such a competent and experienced investor as Waterland***

*Martin Seibold*

CEO, Martin Seibold said: "We're delighted to have such a competent and experienced investor. With their expertise and financial support, we're absolutely certain we'll be able to further strengthen our position in the market and expand our business".

More: [http://lei.sr/3j6u8\\_H](http://lei.sr/3j6u8_H)



PHOTO: LIFEFIT GROUP

Fitness First Black is the premium brand

## GWJ publishes *Wellness Policy Toolkit*

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has released a new report emphasising the critical role of mental wellness in supporting overall mental health.

Authored by GWI research fellows Ophelia Yeung, Katherine Johnston and Tonia Callendar, the new report, *Wellness Policy Toolkit: Mental Wellness*, offers a detailed roadmap for enhancing mental wellbeing on a global scale.

The toolkit is designed to show communities, businesses and public policymakers why and how they should use targeted policies to promote mental wellness.

This 85-page toolkit aims to illuminate the widespread impact and economic burden of poor mental wellbeing, exacerbated by rising rates of depression, anxiety and loneliness: all issues intensified by the pandemic, global conflicts and climate change, straining community health and social resources to their breaking point.



PHOTO: GWI

From L to R: Ophelia Yeung, Katherine Johnston and Tonia Callendar

The report champions mental wellness as a distinct and complementary policy area to traditional mental health approaches, outlining a variety of actionable and inclusive strategies, such as social prescribing, arts and cultural engagement, access to nature and redesigning built environments to foster mental wellbeing.

Lead author, Callendar, said: "Supporting our mental wellness doesn't mean we need to spend a lot of money or take an expensive trip. This toolkit will help everyone, from the newly initiated to seasoned policymakers, understand why focusing on mental wellness is so crucial."

More: [http://lei.sr/U6a8a\\_H](http://lei.sr/U6a8a_H)

## Heartcore sued in Coreformer collapse case

Boutique operator Heartcore, founded by entrepreneur, Jessie Blum, is paying damages to a violinist whose career was cut short following an accident during a class in 2019.

Maya Meron suffered abdominal damage and a fractured left elbow when the locking bar on Heartcore's bespoke machine, called the Coreformer, gave way while she was in the downward-facing dog position.

The injuries were career-ending for Meron. Her lawyers claimed the Coreformer is not a safe product as it is possible to perform the routine with the locking bar not secured.

Heartcore will not comment on the case, but in court argued it was user error and Meron had failed to follow the instructor's directions to lock the bar. It's understood Meron had attended 43 classes during which she was taught to lock the bar. She claimed in her final class that she was told to adjust the locking bar



PHOTO: HEARTCORE

The case holds lessons for the wider health club sector

in a different way. Nonetheless, the two parties are understood to have settled out of court and the damages could run to £250,000.

Heartcore is a profitable and successful operator with seven sites offering dynamic Pilates in affluent areas of London and an award-winning online platform.

As Pilates skyrockets in popularity around the world, this case underlines the importance of assuring safety: running through safety checks with clients, ensuring they are fully aware of all of the different positions, as well as checking insurance cover.

More: [http://lei.sr/4g4Q9\\_H](http://lei.sr/4g4Q9_H)

## Fitfluencers negative for mental health



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/DAVID N. DODD

Social media health influencers can help change behaviour but can also cause mental distress

New research shows that following social media health influencers motivates young people to exercise more vigorously and eat more fruit and vegetables, but their mental health often suffers, with health influencer followers showing more depression, anxiety and negative mood than non-followers.

*Healthier But Not Happier?*  
*The Lifestyle Habits of Health Influencer Followers*, published in the *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, was a cross-sectional study of 1,022 18- to 25-year-olds across New Zealand, the US and the UK, undertaken in 2021.

Influencers are often perceived as more credible, trustworthy, knowledgeable, authentic and attractive than traditional messaging

channels, which might make them more effective in health behaviour engagement, but possible harms include reinforcing the fit ideal and presenting unrealistic body images, which are both associated with increased body dissatisfaction, depressive symptoms and compulsive levels of exercise and obsession with particular diets.

Social media usage has also been correlated with poor adolescent wellbeing, decrements in body image and poorer mental health.

The research authors conclude that although health influencers may be effective at changing behaviours, more research is needed before recommending them as such.

More: [http://lei.sr/7A2m6\\_H](http://lei.sr/7A2m6_H)



## Anna Lewandowska reveals Edan Studios

Former Polish karate champion, Anna Lewandowska, has announced the launch of a multi-concept boutique in Barcelona, Edan Studio, which will include HIIT, Reformer Pilates and dance.

Lewandowska has signed franchise agreements with Holmes Place Brands for two concepts – TRIB3 and PILAT3S – and will design the dance classes herself, which will be based on Latin, bachata and reggaeton.

Lewandowska is the founder of five fitness and wellness companies, including Foods by Ann, which has a social media following of 5.6 million people.

Personal training services will be offered, along with special events, including signature Anna Lewandowska bootcamp-style

training, dance showrooms and brand partnerships with Lewandowska's portfolio of products.

Scheduled to open in September in the Eixample District of Barcelona, the 1,000sq m club will have a gym that includes both Technogym and Life Fitness equipment, while 4F will be the retail partner, providing a selection exclusive sportswear and accessories.

"Edan Studios is more than just a place to work out, it's a wellness paradise that reconnects to the part of you that loves to move together with music," said Lewandowska. "A place where members can access personalised services, group training, engaging events and a supportive community."

More: [http://lei.sr/Y7D3A\\_H](http://lei.sr/Y7D3A_H)



PHOTO: ANNA LEWANDOWSKA

Lewandowska is creating a "wellness paradise"

## Gen Z are pushing exercise engagement

According to Ernst & Young research, the gap between female and male engagement in physical activity is narrowing, with Gen Z adult female engagement figures on the rise.

The *EY Sports Engagement Index* found that 49 per cent of females in the UK engage with physical activity in some way, with 18- to 24-year-olds being the most engaged at 66 per cent; compared with 79 per cent of males of this age.

Female participation often focuses on activities with low barriers to entry, such as running, cycling, hiking, wellness, dance and aerobics workouts. They also dominate studio, spa and health club based activities, such as yoga, HIIT, dance-based workouts and Pilates.

In the UK, 13 million women follow or participate in sports, and/or attend some form of sports event, compared to 18 million men. Female engagers are also becoming very important



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Young women are more engaged with physical activity than previous generations

contributors to most of the UK's top 20 sports: they constitute more than one third of the engagement base in football and nearly 30 per cent in Rugby Union. They make up 39 per cent of runners; 36 per cent of cyclists; 44 per cent of tennis players and 46 per cent of badminton players.

Tal Hewitt, sports strategy lead at EY-Parthenon, says: "Sports

organisations must recognise and adapt to the needs of the female audience to avoid being left behind. By nurturing female participation, attendance and followership, they can ensure this vibrant fanbase continues to grow and evolve, reshaping the industry for decades to come."

More: [http://lei.sr/b8A9w\\_H](http://lei.sr/b8A9w_H)

## F45 now offering workouts on Strava

F45 Training has become the first health and fitness operator to make its functional/HIIT group workouts available on Strava, the digital community with 125 million members.

The integration between the F45 Training LionHeart app and the Strava app allows members to automatically upload class type, average heart beats per minute, calories and location and track their progress against others and themselves.

Strava has created a F45 Training Club on the app that F45 members can join to connect with fellow members. They can also choose to appear on a global leaderboard, showcasing a ranked list of members.

"Becoming the first global functional fitness franchise to collaborate with Strava in a unique way deepens the connections our members and Strava users have to their fitness and wellness journeys – all as a global, like-minded community," said Tom Dowd, CEO of F45 Training.



F45 group workouts are a mix of HIIT and functional training

Mateo A Ortega, VP of connected partnerships at Strava, says the integration reinforces its dedication to foster active communities worldwide: "We're excited to open up opportunities for athletes to connect, support each other and share their fitness journeys with our global community," he said.

Under new CEO, Tom Dowd, F45 is resetting its strategy and direction and recently resolved a long-running dispute with David Beckham over payment for his ambassadorial duties, while also keeping him as an investor.

More: [http://lei.sr/u3v6u\\_H](http://lei.sr/u3v6u_H)

## Xplor Mariana Tek adds in-app gamification

Boutique fitness software platform, Xplor Mariana Tek, has launched in-app gamification to help studios motivate members to reach their goals.

The gamification suite allows studios to set milestones and share their achievements with friends. Personal goals can be automatically tracked

in-app; clients are incentivised to set targets for class attendance and are celebrated when they achieve this.

Studios can set challenges to motivate members, build community, encourage new class bookings and allow consumers to track their progress and climb the leaderboard.

"Challenges are an effective way to bring your community together while working towards personal goals," says Shannon Tracey, VP of sales and marketing for Xplor Mariana Tek. "For the consumer, it's incredibly motivating and allows them to up their workout frequency and build new routines. For studios, it's a way to build brand sentiment and really solidify the power of community."

"With more fun, memorable, and motivational experiences, we're making it easier for studios to turn drop-in users into regular members."

Xplor Mariana Tek is currently used by fitness and wellness studios in the UK, US and Canada, with plans to expand into Europe and Australasia.



1Rebel is an early UK adopter of the Xplor Mariana Tek platform in the UK

More: [http://lei.sr/N5C6a\\_H](http://lei.sr/N5C6a_H)

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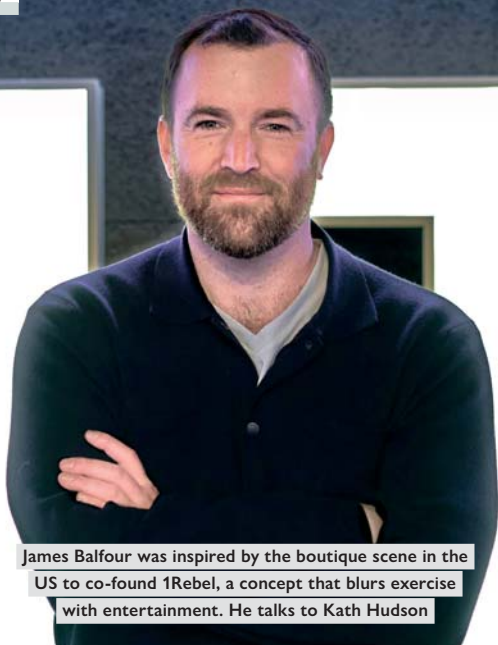
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James Balfour was inspired by the boutique scene in the US to co-found 1Rebel, a concept that blurs exercise with entertainment. He talks to Kath Hudson

# James Balfour

**You've had investment from Imbiba as part of its new £90m leisure fund – what are your plans?**

The pandemic took its toll on our business, as it did everyone's, so we needed to get finance and Imbiba is a great partner. It specialises in hospitality and leisure, especially in London and has a number of good brands in its portfolio.

The deal also means we have some supportive investment directors on our board – Lizzie Ryan and Alison Wong.

Our core demographic is 25- to 35-years-old and about 70 per cent are female, so it's going to be incredibly beneficial for the whole business to have women on the board who understand the journey of our core customer base.

**Does Imbiba have a background in health and fitness?**

It has backgrounds in hospitality and leisure: bars, restaurants, experiential leisure and hotels, so I think fitness is a natural fit for that portfolio.

Compared with the hotel industry, the fitness industry has been unimaginative in terms of design and experience and woeful in training and development. The most exciting hotel chains around the world are works of art – they're beautiful, they're engaging and they've got character.

However, while we can learn a lot from hotels, hotels could also learn a lot from fitness, especially the boutique fitness industry, because hotel gyms are generally boring and lacking in character. If all of the major hotel chains put a boutique studio on



1Rebel Victoria has the  
flagship cycle studio

PHOTO: REBEL

“

*I'm pleased to say we're having  
our best year ever in 2024.  
Everyone's smiling*

”



their ground floor, which was accessible for guests and on off the street for consumers, they'd have a much more vibrant, applicable fitness offering.

The more brands define themselves and say this is not for everybody, but the people who like me are going to love me, the more that resonates with today's consumer.

#### How did you steer the business through the pandemic?

Overwhelmingly, it was because of our people and culture. At the start I spoke to the entire team and said we have the choice of reducing the workforce by 20 per cent or we – as the full time employees – can all take a hit on our salary and when we come out of this we'll be able to look to our left and right and say: "Okay, I did this for you, you did this for me." And that's what we did.

Keeping the team together was the North

Star that kept me going and it was also one of the most rewarding things I've ever experienced. We're a much stronger and more focused business as a result. There's nothing like hard times to make you really analyse what you're doing and where you need to go. While it was a painful process, once you go through adversity you feel stronger for the next challenge.

#### You must have a very loyal team as a result

Yes, I've always dreamed about having a team where you can have the same relationship as you do with your best friends: you can have the difficult conversations, because you know how they'll react and so you can navigate that pretty easily. We've got that in spades.

Working hard on the culture has paid dividends and we have very low staff turnover, both at head office and with instructors. We have some natural

## The 1Rebel Concept

The 1Rebel experience is built around instructor-led workouts, with 7,500 classes each month across 10 London sites

**Reshape** a mix of treadmill and bodyweight/ dumbbell training

**Reformer** a Pilates concept

**Ride** indoor cycling

**Rumble** boxing and strength

**Rebuild** a 75 per cent intensity workout

Clubs operate on a **pay-as-you-go** basis, with various options offered. The price of one class is £25, but savings are made with multiple classes purchased.

**Membership** packages are also on offer, starting at two sessions a month for £40 up to an unlimited pass for £189 a month.



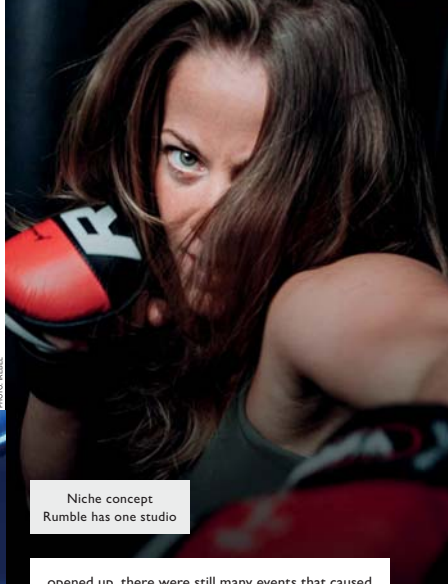
turnover in the front of house team, who tend to be on zero hours contracts and also go off to work in the West End and on cruise ships sometimes, but a lot come back. All of the team are incredibly capable, hardworking, honest and genuine people, so my hope is to keep the team at the same size, while we double the size of the business.

We've recently strengthened the business with the appointment of Adam Bellamy – former chief financial officer of PureGym – as our chair. He's a veteran operator with private equity experience, very smart, very focused and is already having a great impact.

**Did your customers also stay loyal through the pandemic?**

Absolutely. We've got incredible buy-in from our rebel army, although last year (2023) was still challenging, as while the industry and the country

PHOTO: REBEL



Niche concept  
Rumble has one studio

opened up, there were still many events that caused a break in fitness habits, such as train strikes, tube strikes, heat waves, spiralling inflation and interest rate hikes. There was a huge amount of uncertainty. But now London is back and 1Rebel is back. It was around November last year when I really started to see things bounce back and I'm pleased to say we're having our best year ever in 2024. Everyone's smiling. We're looking forward.

**Are you planning any expansion now you have the Imbiba investment?**

Right now we sit with 10 clubs in the UK, a flagship in Dubai and two in Melbourne, Australia. Within three to five years I'd like to double in size, getting up to 20 clubs in the UK.

Ninety per cent of our focus is going to be in London, where we have an established customer base and a great team.

If you go back to pre-COVID days, international growth was an alluring goal. Everybody wanted to plant flags internationally, to show they had a ubiquitous product that would add zeros for valuations going forward, however, when the pandemic happened a lot of overseas sites that weren't fully established became a very challenging part of businesses, as they weren't able to be supported by the wider cashflows that leverage against head office costs. We were no different and our international clubs need a bit more time to get them to where we want them to be. ▶

**“  
Having now done some  
franchising, we realise  
that doing boutiques well  
requires detailed focus,  
blood, sweat and tears  
that can only be delivered  
by the homegrown team**”

Reformer is a popular  
class at 1Rebel



*We need to remove the stigma of weight-loss drugs and build a relationship with the people who use them*

We believe 1Rebel can work in any primary and secondary city globally, but we won't be going to any new countries in the immediate future – we need to focus on where we already have our businesses. At the moment the greater returns are in London, which is partly to do with the immaturity of our international business.

We feel we're in a good position. The business is going exceptionally well and we have a bit of time on our side now, as most private equity companies want to see a multiple of their investment on a three to five year horizon, so we have time to deliver and reach our ambitions.

A lot of our competitors will also come up for sale in the next 18 months – as their pre-COVID private equity partners look to exit – so our timing was good, as the market will become very crowded soon.

We've also just raised £6 million of debt and that will help with our rollout.

**Will you continue franchising?**

Going forward, we're going to do it by ourselves and we've already made the decision to exit the franchise agreements we had in Saudi Arabia and Israel [1Rebel's operations in Tel Aviv are now being run by Holmes Place].

With hindsight, having now done some franchising, we realised that doing boutiques well requires a lot of detailed focus, blood, sweat and tears that can only really be delivered by the homegrown team. Franchise partners often have other priorities.

Boutiques are a very focused, customer service business, there are around 30 touch points from when a customer opens the door to when they leave and getting any of those wrong can impact the potential of that person returning.



**Why did you decide on Melbourne and Dubai?**

Dubai is one of the most exciting cities in the world and has attracted huge amounts of investment, as well as drawing talent from around the world seeking a great lifestyle and low tax. It's an exciting place to be with a lot of residents in our demographic.

Australia has always been a fantastic fitness market for my father, [Mike Balfour, founder of Fitness First] and we've learned that if you're an English business you have a greater chance of success in an English-speaking nation, purely due to the fact that some things get lost in translation. We've got a great team in Australia and Melbourne is an incredible city.



The 1R Clothing collection is driving new revenue streams

#### Is there anywhere of interest in the UK where you plan to expand?

Manchester, Liverpool, Dublin and Edinburgh all make sense, but when you make the decision to go somewhere else it should be backed with enough capital for two or three clubs minimum. If you put one club there, you can sometimes create a problem for yourself. Life is a lot easier when you have that network effect and can move people around to cover for holiday or illness. The network gets stronger with scale, but a lone club in a distant city can easily get into problems.

#### You've diversified into retail, with clothing and toiletries, what's the thinking?

Our brand punches above its weight for its size, but I'm always looking at where we can invest to make it an even greater experience. When we upgraded our toiletries, we entered into a wonderful partnership with Wildsmith to create a signature blend of in-club toiletries to elevate the members' pre- and post-workout experience and are also selling them in new retail spaces at the clubs.

Designing our own clothing range, 1RCollection, was a natural progression to get the brand out there and to be seen by people we haven't yet reached. We'll be announcing more exciting things in the not too distant future.

#### How are the four elements of 1Rebel performing at the moment?

Reformer is doing very well for us, but the other concepts are equally as good. We only have one Rumble studio now, at our flagship location in Oxford Circus, London, because the demand for boxing is more niche and we're working out whether that will continue to grow alongside the other concepts.

Before we pull the trigger on further expansion, we've got to make sure our existing international clubs deliver model returns, so in the near term – the next 12 months – 90 per cent of our focus will be on London,

#### When you're ready to go overseas, where looks interesting?

Europe is struggling, America is doing exceptionally well, east Asia and the Middle East is booming. Hong Kong and Singapore have always been great markets. I love Scandinavian cities – the market size is small, but it's very fitness-forward and fashion forward, with an educated population who like to see new brands emerge.

The beauty of having a number of concepts is that our studios are black boxes we can adapt to trends. Having said that, I'd be reluctant to have more than four concepts, because then you lose authority in relation to what you're doing.

**There is a lot of talk about mental health. What's your approach?**

Gyms can be poor at supporting people with their mental health. Sometimes parts of the sector contribute to poor mental health, such as when you see fitness influencers on social media, quite frankly, telling lies.

I'm not on social media personally and wish it didn't exist. We're on it as a company, because you can't avoid doing it, but I think it's causing huge amounts of poor mental health and I think a lot of fitness influencers don't understand the damage they're doing.

Given the complexity of the mental health categories, it's important to recognise the limitations of the industry. We're not doctors or mental health practitioners, but we can inspire people to move and that's a great start. As fitness operators we sell 'exercise as medicine', packaged as a fun experience and we need to communicate that message more clearly.

## About Imbiba Growth LLB

Imbiba says it has developed and supported more companies in the leisure, lifestyle and entertainment market than any other UK investment firm.

It aims to invest in high-growth businesses across the leisure, lifestyle and entertainment market.

In addition to providing capital to accelerate growth, Imbiba provides portfolio companies with support in areas such as property, operations, recruitment, procurement, marketing, social media and finance.

**“***Social media is causing huge amounts of poor mental health and a lot of fitness influencers don't understand the damage they're doing*

**What was the original inspiration for 1Rebel?**

We stand on the shoulders of others in many respects. Barry's and SoulCycle were doing incredible things, as pioneers in the boutique industry in the States. It made me feel really connected as a consumer and I thought this is what I want: fun, instructor-led, high intensity classes that are anonymous, but also inclusive. I felt we could do that, but evolve the concept with more strings to our bow and with a focus on design and experience. In many respects that's remained our core belief.

When we founded the business, nine years ago, London was a 'work hard play, play hard' environment and we spoke to that in many respects. Now I think it's a 'consistency' environment, with young people more informed on things, such as sleep recovery. The messaging we've got to get across now is about how it's consistent, good practice that delivers compound results.

**What are the hottest trends you see?**

Longevity is one. We've got to the point in society where very few people die suddenly, the majority live longer, but some suffer from ill health in later life, which can be challenging. The problem ▶



A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail is leaning over a large, dark, rectangular weighted box. She is wearing a grey long-sleeved top with a circular logo on the chest, black leggings, and orange and black sneakers. The box has a large white letter 'R' on its side. The background is a dimly lit gym with blue and red stage lights and smoke in the air.

Reshape  
classes deliver  
body sculpting



*The messaging we've got to get across now is about how it's consistent, good practice that delivers compound results*

is that when you're young you don't think illness will ever happen to you, but there is a huge amount that can be done to communicate the importance of looking after your health while you're young in order to improve your healthspan.

Another trend I'm supportive of – according to the information currently available – is weight-loss drugs. So often people put off joining a gym until they lose weight and it becomes an element of procrastination. If these drugs can get people to a point of confidence where they'll go to a gym, we might see the market explode.

We need to remove the stigma of weight-loss drugs and build a relationship with the people who take them, as there's data to show that if people don't make lifestyle changes they revert when they stop taking the drugs, so it's important to reach out and help them change their behaviour.

**What drew you into the fitness industry?**

When I left university I wanted to join the army, but my father convinced me not to, so I did a hybrid and joined an honorable artillery company

while also working in the City – it's a very exciting place, but it wasn't for me, I wanted to do something more fulfilling, so I took time off to achieve my goal of climbing Mount Everest.

When I was considering my career choices afterwards, I realised that if I didn't go into the fitness industry I'd be turning my back on a huge amount of collected experience and knowledge from my father, that a lot of people would have killed for. Having been dealt those cards it made sense to make the best of them.

**What impact did climbing Everest have on you?**

It was an incredibly arduous and challenging expedition, with 72 days on the mountain and some people unfortunately losing their lives during that weather window.

Getting to the summit of any mountain feels like an emotional experience. There's limited oxygen so your heart is pumping harder and it brings a sense of gratitude and appreciation when you have to strain for life.

## **Imbiba investments**

**\* 1Rebel**

Boutique health club owner operator.

**\* Big Fang Collective**

Works with artists, DJs, chefs and collectives to remodel derelict spaces into entertainment venues

**\* Clays**

Indoor interactive clay-shooting experience bar

**\* F1 Arcade**

An immersive F1 racing simulation experience with hospitality

**\* Farmer J**

Modern eatery serving nutritious Mediterranean food

**\* House of Gods**

A boutique hotels and bars business

**\* Pizza Pilgrims**

Sells Neopolitan pizza at 14 UK restaurants and events across the country

**\* Leisure TV Rights**

TV-led, family entertainment, gaming venues

**\* Little Houses Group**

Offers co-working, fitness and childcare under one roof

**\* Monkey Puzzle Day Nurseries**

The UK's third largest childcare provider

**\* Purple Dragon**

Family private members club



Balfour plans to roll out 1Rebel with backing from Imbiba

Last year, I climbed Nevada del Tolima, a volcano in Columbia and I cried my eyes out on the summit. It's heavenly when you're above the clouds, at six in the morning and the sun's coming up. It was such a beautiful place and a reminder I was so lucky to be there and that life is very precious.

**Did you ever doubt you'd make it to the summit?**  
No doubt – I was obsessed and had a real fire in my belly. I thought nothing but positive thoughts over and over on a ridiculous loop – that's the approach you have to take with anything really challenging.

I don't think any entrepreneur will ever tell you they're ever going to fail. They have a belief that's got to be matched with commitment and hard work and the nimbleness to change plans if required.

**That must have been amazing brain training**

There are people who were dealt a bad hand in life and create strong minds by going through adversity and coming out of the other side and

there are people like me, with comfortable upbringings, who have to seek out adversity.

I always felt I needed to challenge myself to prepare for the future. Adversity gives you perspective and is a powerful tool for dealing with what life throws at you.

**What do you think is up ahead for the industry?**

We've been through a lot in the last few years and it will be a long haul to get through the political nonsense we've had to deal with for so long, which has eroded the middle class and created 1920s levels of wealth inequality.

On the positive side, interest rates will come down, inflation is already at around two per cent and there will be money coming to investors who'll be looking to deploy their capital. In the next five years, this industry will go through a huge transformation. I believe there are exciting times ahead. ●

STYLING: JESSICA OLIVER

PROMOTION

# Vivacity: Stronger with EGYM

Adding EGYM's easy onboarding, personalised workouts and progress-tracking is driving retention and engagement at Vivacity Premier Fitness



Easy onboarding  
from EGYM drives  
member engagement



Vivacity's financial performance has been transformed with EGYM



**J**ust six months after integrating EGYM's smart training solutions, Vivacity Premier Fitness in Peterborough has achieved record retention and membership duration alongside a significant reduction in attrition.

"EGYM's ecosystem of training solutions has made an unprecedented impact on the club's financial performance, accelerating our pandemic recovery and safeguarding the sustainability of our offer in a highly competitive market," explains Ian Rowe, head of customers and sales at Vivacity, Peterborough. "Member engagement has gone through the roof, thanks to EGYM's easy onboarding, personalised workouts, and intuitive progress-tracking that supports and motivates every member on each step of their individual health and wellbeing journey."

As part of its pandemic recovery strategy, Vivacity Premier Fitness has established itself as the 'go-to' venue for the community's health and wellbeing needs, with a targeted emphasis on

“*EGYM's ecosystem of training solutions has made an unprecedented impact on the club's financial performance*

*Ian Rowe, Vivacity Premier Fitness*



- ▶ attracting and retaining the over-50s, an age group that's traditionally been difficult to engage.

Rowe continues: "Peterborough is blessed with many gym facilities, from budget to high-end. EGYM has empowered us to create a unique and unrivalled proposition, aligned to our new health and wellbeing strategy. Vivacity is the city's only facility to offer EGYM's market-leading open platform."

"Currently, we've integrated EGYM's Fitness Hub, and Smart Strength and Smart Flex series, all of which link to our Pulse Fitness equipment, creating a completely connected gym floor and offering a training experience which motivates and supports members from day one."

Vivacity is offering EGYM's open platform that integrates with all its equipment

Tanya Hall, UK tender and partners manager at EGYM, says: "Since EGYM launched at Vivacity in December 2023, the team has onboarded more than 1,200 members, half of whom are over 50, with an incredible 85 per cent retention rate.

"In the 50+ category, data shows a strength improvement of 18.2 per cent and an average reduction in BioAge of 8.7 years, pointing to multiple health benefits and protection against conditions such as osteoporosis, diabetes and poor immunity. These users are also regular visitors, clocking up an average of 4.9 visits per month, fostering long-term active, healthy lifestyles." ●

More: [www.egym.com](http://www.egym.com) or [uk-sales@egym.com](mailto:uk-sales@egym.com)

PHOTO: EGYM

“

*Since EGYM launched at Vivacity, the team has onboarded more than 1,200 members, with a retention rate of 85%*

E G Y M

# FITNESS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

EGYM integrates 200+ of the world's leading fitness brands to create a training experience, so smart it's genius.



# Everyone's talking about Medical memberships

**As the UK healthcare sector struggles with ever-increasing demand, health club operators are stepping in and offering members welcome medical support. Kath Hudson reports**

**T**he opportunity now exists for health club operators to offer access to GPs and various health checks as an add-on to memberships, creating another revenue stream, adding value for members and support for health services. Some operators in the US are going as far as offering in-depth health testing, which puts those with the means to pay in an excellent position to optimise their health.

US operator, Life Time, launched Miora Longevity and Performance in November 2023, for example. This health optimisation service involves a consultation, a diagnostic blood test and metabolic code assessment to determine the health of adrenals, thyroid, pancreas, liver, kidney, lymph, gut, the immune system, brain, cardiovascular, pulmonary and neurovascular systems, as well as hormone levels. Results are then used to create a tailored programme involving exercise, diet, HRT, IV therapies, weight loss drugs, hot and cold therapy, hyperbaric chamber and compression therapy.

This year, Equinox teamed up with Function Health to offer a US\$40,000 a year membership called

Optimize by Equinox, which offers 100 laboratory health tests to inform personalised programmes. Equinox partner, Dr Mark Hyman, co-founder of Function Health, said the partnership marks a historic moment when health breaks out of the doctor's office: "By combining Equinox's expertise and Function Health's 100+ lab test approach, we're unlocking a level of health and fitness that surpasses even what top doctors and biohackers can access," he said.

In London, Surrenne at The Emory hotel (see page 84) has created a health offering alongside its gym, Tracy Anderson studio and spa, working with partners such as Virtusan and 3 Peaks Health to offer medical interventions that link into the programming of its £10,000-a-year health club membership.

In the wider health club market, many members are simply after a GP appointment, or maybe an overdue blood pressure check and this is something operators are now able to offer.

Sheffield International Venues (SIV) and Westfield Health blazed a trail in 2018, by partnering to launch a Fitness Unlimited package that allowed people

PHOTO: RETNA/HELIX HOLDINGS



Nordic health club operator, Treningshelse Holdings, now offers a health membership

to add 24/7 access to a doctor over the phone, as well as telephone counselling and membership to an online mental health and wellbeing service to their membership for between £26.60 and £38 a month, including access to leisure facilities, but very little progress was made following this, until the upsurge in interest from consumers following the pandemic.

What are the next steps for operators wanting to offer a more holistic service and access to medical interventions? We ask the experts.



*We're unlocking a level of health and fitness that surpasses even what top doctors and biohackers can access*

Family Sports Club has a healthcare membership that helps retention



PHOTO: TRENINGHELSE HOLDINGS

## Trygve Hagen

### Treningshelse Holdings

**T**reningshelse Holdings, which runs clubs under brands such as Family Sports Club in the Nordics, offers Frisk Health Membership, which gives members access to health services 24 hours a day, for an additional 99kr a month (US\$9.20, £7.26). Around 10 per cent of our new members sign up when they join.

To run the service we have partnerships with digital medical suppliers Kry and Nordic Netcare

Services include video consultation with a GP from anywhere in the world; text-based prescription renewal; video consultation with a psychologist and medical nurse advice over the phone 24 hours a day. If GPs are unable to resolve the issue with a video consultation,



*During holidays, people don't come to the clubs as much, but value having access to health services while they're travelling*

they can refer to the specialist health service and if physical tests are needed, there is the option of working with a personal trainer.

Members using the service report a high degree of satisfaction and we find it provides additional revenue during low-season periods. For example, during summer holidays, people do not come to the clubs as much, but value having access to health services while they're travelling, which means they're less likely to cancel their membership.

This is an area of focus for us and we're aiming to develop further healthcare services for our members. Many people who seek out training often have a problem with their health and we want to be able to offer specific solutions.





*We currently work with three UK-wide health and fitness operators and are in discussions with other chains*

## **Dr Chris Morris**

### **HealthHero**

**H**ealthHero offers virtual consultations with practising doctors for a range of everyday illnesses. As part of the appointment, should the doctor feel it's appropriate, we can offer private prescriptions for medication or referrals to secondary care. We can also signpost the patient back to their own GP or, when necessary, to NHS urgent care.

Most patients don't require an examination or to have investigations, such as blood tests.

For those patients who do, we advise them to see their NHS GP, attend an Urgent Care Centre or Emergency Department depending on the urgency of their condition.

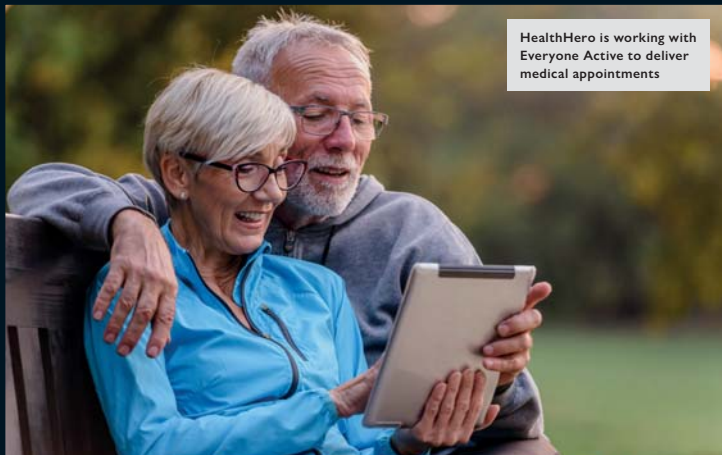
In addition to virtual GP appointments, we also offer remote physiotherapy consultations with a focus on musculoskeletal health, to facilitate prevention and management of aches and pains. Our registered physiotherapists provide early intervention and education to help patients make proactive changes and reduce the risk of minor problems becoming more serious.

We currently work with three health and fitness operators, including Everyone Active.



PHOTO: HEALTH HERO

We're definitely seeing an appetite to increase access to healthcare and wellbeing services across the sector, as a valuable service to engage members, so we're currently in discussions with other chains to provide their communities with access to HealthHero's virtual GP service. Outside the health club sector, we work with a range of clients including corporates, insurance and cash plan providers, and SMEs. ▶



HealthHero is working with Everyone Active to deliver medical appointments

Everyone Active members can opt in to a special wellness membership



*Since the Everyone Wellness membership launched in December 2023, only 14 per cent of appointments have led to referrals*



PHOTO: EVERYONE ACTIVE

## Duncan Jefford

### Everyone Active

Everyone Active launched an Everyone Wellness membership in 2023, becoming the UK's first leisure operator to offer fully integrated health support.

With the integration of services from our partner HealthHero into our membership benefits, customers have access to a virtual GP service via video and phone consultations. The process is managed by HealthHero, once members contact them through the app.

The wellness membership also gives customers access to a wide range of exclusive benefits to help with their mind, body and wellbeing, including free guest passes, apps that support mental wellbeing, prescribed exercise, free PT and more than 120 product savings from major wellness brands.

More than 25,000 people have signed up to a Wellness membership so far, with 25 per cent of new fitness sales choosing this option. The health support element can be added to any Everyone Active membership for £9.99 (US\$13.00, €12.00) per month, while the service is also available from £7.99 (US\$10.38, €9.53) as an

add-on for people living with long-term health conditions who are referred to move more with us.

The service costs £55.99 (US\$78.00, €66.70) a month as a standalone.

The HealthHero app connects data and appointments to each customer's doctor, and HealthHero can also refer customers directly to their doctor, therapist or urgent care after their consultation.

Since the product launch in December, only 14 per cent of appointments have resulted in referrals to doctors, which shows how the service is relieving strain on the health service.



*People pop in to do a blood pressure check and around 60 per cent need to have an intervention*

## Emma Cunningham

### Horizon Leisure

**H**orizon Leisure opened a Health and Wellbeing Hub last year, as an alternative way to reach members of the community where they are on their fitness journey. Designed to not look like a fitness facility, it's located in a shopping centre and has a welcoming reception area, with sofas at the front and the gym tucked at the back.

The Hub offers blood pressure, cholesterol and health checks by highly-qualified fitness professionals, who look for early detection of conditions, as well as smoking cessation and weight management programmes and an introduction to exercise for targeted groups, such as weightlifting for men over 50 and people with high blood pressure.

The people we're targeting wouldn't voluntarily come to our other leisure centres – many of them still don't see the value of physical activity and are not inclined to invest



PHOTO: HORIZON LEISURE

in it – so this is a way of introducing them to our services and supporting and educating them about their health. Havant has notably high adult obesity rate, at 27.2 per cent, and 68.2 per cent of adults in Hampshire have excessive weight.

We also use this service as a feeder to our leisure centres. We offer a Foundation programme, which involves four weeks at the Hub, followed by four weeks supported at a leisure centre. A year after launching, 33.3 per cent of Foundation participants have transitioned to Horizon Leisure membership and many more use the facilities on a pay as you go basis. A further 86.2 per cent said they were motivated to continue their fitness journey.

In November 2023, we launched the Community Pod, where people can pop in to do a blood pressure check, and the results are fed directly back to their doctor. Around 60 per cent need to have an intervention, which helps work towards reducing CVD risk locally.

Everything we offer is either free or very low cost. As a charitable trust, this community initiative is supported by the commercial side of the business and external funding. However, the aim is to get to the point where the service is self-sustaining. It's a great community resource, so we've been approached about opening more hubs around the borough, which we are to do once we've perfected the model. ▶



The wellbeing hub is designed not to look like a fitness facility

PHOTO: HORIZON LEISURE



PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE / JERUJAH HOLSTON

# Dr Jonathan Leary

## Remedy Place

Kath Hudson talks to the founder and CEO of the US-based social wellness club

**H**CM first reported on social wellness club Remedy Place back in 2018 and the concept is now scaling, with new locations under development.

Although not yet linked to a specific health club operator, Remedy Place is trailblazing with the types of tests and interventions it offers, as Jonathan Leary explains "Remedy Place, offers a range of functional medicine tests to optimise members' health," he says. "The main objective of functional medicine is to identify issues and then holistically address them. It's all about getting to the root cause of any health concerns. Prevention hinges on catching potential issues before they become problems: functional medicine is the future of our healthcare system in the US."

PHOTO: REMEDY PLACE



"We use blood and stool tests to reveal deficiencies, toxicity levels, sensitivities, imbalances in any system or organ and much more. This extensive data collection provides a comprehensive blueprint of what's happening in the body and all the necessary information to create an individualised programme, fix the root cause of any issues and enhance overall performance."

"To make this service more accessible and mainstream, individual tests could be offered, ideally which are most relevant to the client's needs. A good starting point is a micronutrient test, which identifies any deficiencies. This information can help adjust diets and supplements accordingly and correcting deficiencies can lead to rapid and significant improvements in health."



FOR SALE

## Roko Health Clubs

A collection of four well presented leasehold health and fitness clubs - available for sale individually or together.

Each club comprises a fully equipped operational entity but also offers significant potential for enhancement with strategic capital investment, which would unlock substantial income and capital value.

### Chiswick, W4 3UH

- Leasehold, 18 years unexpired
- Built footprint approx. 2,489.5 sq m (26,796.4 sq ft)
- Site approx. 0.40 hectares (1.00 acres)
- Guide price £1.25m

### Gillingham, Kent, ME8 6BY

- Long leasehold, 105 years unexpired
- Built footprint approx. 2,962.6 sq. m. (31,888.7 sq. ft.)
- Site approx. 1.26 hectares (3.12 acres)
- Guide price £3m

### York, YO30 4TU

- Long leasehold, 108 years unexpired
- Built footprint approx. 2,963.8 sq. m. (31,902.3 sq. ft.)
- Site approx. 4.36 hectares (10.78 acres)
- Guide price £1.1m

### Nottingham, NG2 7RN

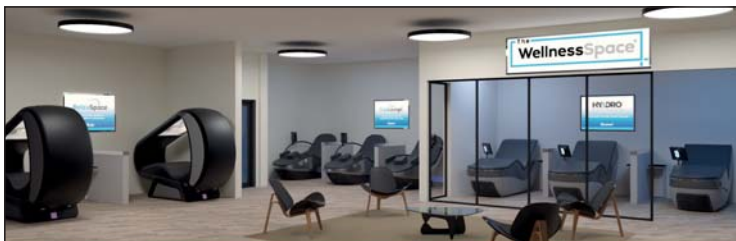
- Long leasehold, 104 years unexpired
- Built footprint approx. 4,087.3 sq. m. (43,995.4 sq. ft.)
- Site approx. 3.64 hectares (8.99 acres)
- Guide price £2.85m

[savills.co.uk/leisure](https://savills.co.uk/leisure)

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## Bottom line, successful club operators need WellnessSpaces

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*The results show the holistic benefits of physical activity, such as improved confidence and better sleep levels*



UK Active is working with Savanta to deliver consumer insight data

# Consumer engagement

**A** new research project is exploring UK consumers' relationship with gyms, swimming pools and leisure centres. The work is being undertaken via a regularly-updated consumer engagement study conducted by research outfit Savanta ([www.savanta.com](http://www.savanta.com)) and commissioned by industry association, UK Active, with the first set of results published in a report called *On the road to Vision 2030*.

The aim is to observe the behaviours, experiences and feelings of consumers, using their responses to generate insight that can be deployed by the sector to better understand which types of engagement they respond to when it comes to joining, visiting and enjoying facilities.

*On the road to Vision 2030* is based on 16 months' of data taken across five waves of polling and so far, more than 10,000 existing, former, and potential fitness and leisure consumers have been involved.

As the sample grows, an ever more nuanced picture will be painted about what consumers want to see from our sector, so we can better understand the role facilities play within communities.

## About the sample

Participants comprise a nationally representative sample of people from across the UK, with data segmented into three specific focus groups.

The first group are **current members** and people with active memberships and have taken part in an activity within a facility within the last three months.

The second group are people who've **previously been a member** of a gym or

**Dr Matthew Wade and Georgie Poole talk us through research from UK Active and Savanta that gives a deeper understanding of what motivates consumers**

leisure facility but do not currently have a membership, while the third group are those that have **never been a member**.

This breakdown was chosen to ensure the feelings and behaviours of those who are engaging with, have engaged with or have never engaged with our sector, are reflected in the insights collected. This sample means we can compare responses between those that do and do not interact with our sector, informing decisions on how non-members can be supported and engaged.

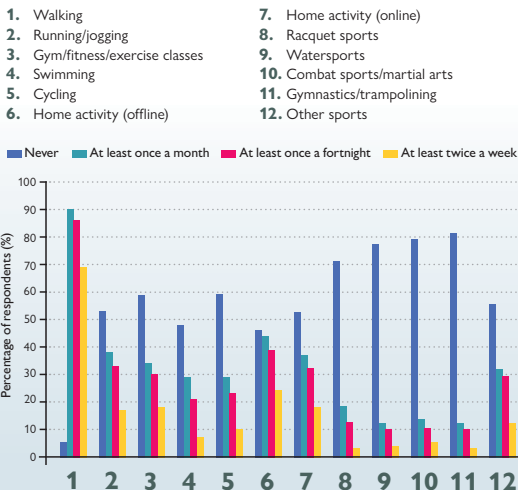
## Initial findings

This first report explores topics including current physical activity levels, membership status and some of the main barriers and motivations users and non-users have when taking part in activities in facilities. It also examines what can be done to encourage retention and participation.

The full report also touches on what health means to consumers and perceptions around how the sector is supporting people with long-term health conditions.

Across the sample, each individual was asked what activities they take part in and how often they do them (see Figure 1 overleaf). ▶

Figure 1: Activity participation frequency



Source: Savanta/UK Active

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / JACOB LUND

From January 2024, walking was the most popular activity, with 69 per cent of the sample walking at least twice a week, 86 per cent at least every two weeks and 90 per cent monthly.

**Gym attendance**, including exercise classes, attracted 18 per cent of the sample to participate twice a week, 30 per cent at least every two weeks and 34 per cent at least every month, with 59 per cent of the sample never undertaking these activities.

**Running** attracted 17 per cent twice weekly, 33 per cent every two weeks and 38 per cent monthly, while 53 per cent said they never run.

**Swimming** attracted 7 per cent of the sample twice a week and 21 per cent every fortnight, with 29 per cent going at least once a month, while 48 per cent of people in the sample never swim.

**Online home exercise** attracted 18 per cent twice a week, 32 per cent every two weeks and 37 per cent monthly, with around 53 per cent never working out at home.

**Offline home activity** engaged 24 per cent twice a week, 39 per cent every two weeks and 44 per cent every month, with 46 per cent never exercising offline at home. The overlap between exercising in the gym and at home was not recorded.

### What motivates people?

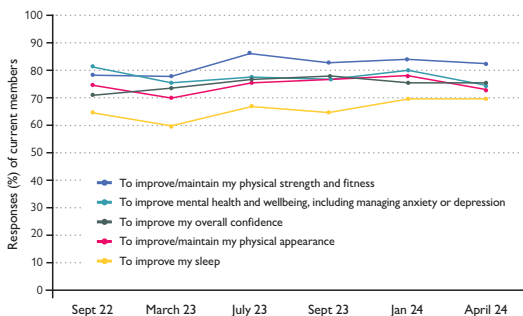
To understand why consumers choose to become members of facilities, current members were asked what motivates them to attend (Figure 2). The researchers gave a wide range of options for respondents to choose from, however, five main motivations emerged:

- 82%** To improve/maintain my physical strength and fitness
- 79%** To improve my mental health and wellbeing, including managing anxiety or depression
- 75%** To improve my overall confidence
- 75%** To improve/maintain my physical appearance
- 67%** To improve my sleep



*The research team found that cost is the main perceived barrier to joining, with this being consistent across each of the time points*

Figure 2: Top five motivations for joining



Source: Savanta/UK Active

These results show the holistic benefits of physical activity, with responses such as improving confidence and bettering sleep levels indicating that users are attending facilities to benefit their mental, not just physical wellbeing. Interestingly, while these motivations have remained consistent across each of the survey waves, their weighted value has adjusted slightly.

For example, in September 2022 – potentially due to the impact of the pandemic – ‘improving mental health’ was the most popular reason given at 81 per cent, a score it hit again in January 2024. However, ‘improving and maintaining physical strength and fitness’ has seen its score increase from 79 per cent to 83 per cent over that time-frame, taking the lead since March 2023.

The benefits of physical activity for mental health and wellbeing are increasingly recognised and it's reassuring to see that this is a highly motivating factor for consumers.

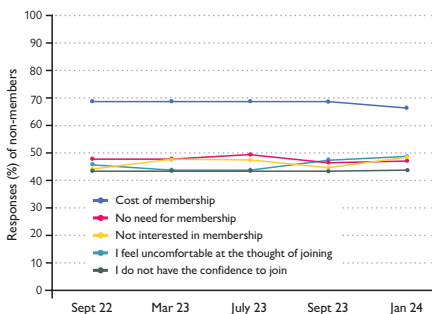
All motivations are tracked quarterly with the results enabling decision-makers to better understand how operators can tap into these to attract new members, as well as ensuring value for those already engaged in our sector.

### What are the main barriers?

Alongside looking at motivations for attending, it's important to analyse the main barriers consumers face when they consider participating. These questions were asked of former members and those who have never been members (see Figure 3).

The research team found that cost is the main perceived barrier, with this being the most selected reason consistently across each of the time points surveyed. With the rising cost of living and consumers facing choices for their disposable income, researchers are watching to see how the results of this question change over time. ▶

Figure 3: Top five barriers to joining a gym or leisure facility



Source: Savanta/UK Active.

Interestingly, the data from January 2024 shows the barrier relating to cost declining by a couple of percentage points and during the planned waves of polling it will be essential to see if this continues on a downward trend.

Other barriers for non- and former members included the feeling that there was 'no need for a membership', 'not being interested in a membership', a 'lack of confidence' and 'feeling uncomfortable in a gym or leisure facility'. This initial report outlines some of the ways these barriers can be overcome.

Tracking these barriers across each of the quarterly waves will be essential to understanding what currently holds people back from engaging with the sector.

### Long-term health conditions

Across the physical activity sector in the UK there's a clear awareness that focusing on health is a positive way our sector can demonstrate the role facilities are playing in supporting the national health crisis. In January 2024, extra questions were added to the Savanta survey to enable researchers to better understand consumers' perceptions and understandings of health, as well as their knowledge of programmes within facilities that could support them.

In January 2024, respondents with a health condition were asked whether they knew of programmes at their local gym or leisure facility that could help them manage their condition – 17 per cent of respondents with a condition

Quarterly data will provide a deeper understanding of what matters to people

were aware of these but 68 per cent were unaware and 15 per cent said they didn't know.

While there's a greater awareness among those who are members of a facility and have a health condition (in comparison to non-members), there's also work to be done to ensure that both members and non-members with health conditions are aware of services being delivered at facilities near where they live that could provide the support they need.

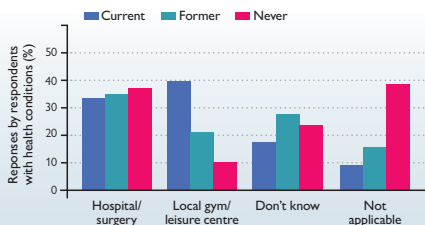
In order to understand the preference of those with a health condition when it comes to where they would like to receive support, a further question was included, which asked: "Would you prefer to receive support for your condition at a hospital/surgery, or at your local gym or leisure centre?"

Overall, 35 per cent chose hospital and 21 per cent a local gym or leisure centre (Figure 4).





**Figure 4: Location preference to receive support for a health condition**



Source: Savanta/UK Active. Responses provided by respondents with health condition, split by membership status, January 2024



***This consumer polling will support the building of sector intelligence for use by the sector, as well as providing material for political engagement***

When these results were broken down by membership status, receiving support at a gym or leisure centre was favoured by 40 per cent of current gym members, suggesting that current members are more aware of the benefits gyms and leisure centres are providing for those with long-term conditions and feel comfortable accessing support in these spaces.

This is the first wave of this questioning and the consequent iterations of the quarterly polling will help us to build on these findings and understand how perceptions grow and develop.

### **Conclusions**

This first report from Savanta and UK Active lays the foundations for understanding consumers' current attitudes towards the UK's physical activity sector and as quarterly data is collected, it will provide a deeper understanding

of what matters to people when it comes to their health and fitness, as well as the choices they make in relation to using facilities.

As the sector continues to play a significant role as part of the national health agenda, this consumer engagement polling will support the building of market intelligence that can be used by operators and suppliers within the sector, as well as providing useful material for political engagement. The findings will also help to inform UK Active's work areas and support the organisation's *Vision 2030* mission to get five million more people active by 2030. ●

*Dr Matthew Wade is head of research and development at UK Active  
Georgie Poole is senior head of marketing, events and engagement at UK Active*

More: [www.HCMmag.com/savanta](http://www.HCMmag.com/savanta)



*The level of support  
I get from Xplor Gym  
is what customer  
service is all about*

# SOFTWARE SUPPORT

Green Gym Group partnered with Xplor Gym for an all-in-one gym management software solution to save time and improve the member experience

**T**he Green Gym Group – an innovative independent operator – was established to help people take care of their health without harming the planet.

The gym was using on-premises gym management software and a separate membership payments platform, however, this made running the business tough and didn't optimise opportunities or deliver the highest levels of customer support.

## Time-consuming inconsistencies

The owner-operated business would see different data in each system, which caused confusion over who had and hadn't paid, for example, and this led to time being spent investigating what was going on and often meant a poor experience for the member.

"As a small, independent, affordable gym, it's really important to us that members meet their financial obligations," says Andy Little, MD at Green Gym Group. "Members would call up to cancel and the payments portal would say that they hadn't paid for previous months, yet they would tell me they'd paid, so I'd have to spend time phoning up the payments provider to clarify."

## Accurate information

Ready for a change, the Green Gym Group switched to Xplor Gym in April 2023. With embedded membership payments, the software gives accurate, timely information.

"Xplor Gym gives me the data I need as a gym owner to understand how my business is performing," says Little. "As well as reliably showing when members





PHOTO: THE GREEN GYM GROUP

Using Xplor Gym software has been transformational for The Green Gym Group

have paid, I can see if a Direct Debit fails and can also use the email and SMS automation tools to let those who've stopped paying before their membership has ended know and explain what to do next.

"This makes it easier to provide a positive experience without needing to charge for failed payments. It's better to leave a good impression when a member chooses to leave as they're more likely to return in the future, creating a trustworthy business within the community."

Since switching to Xplor Gym, the business has consistently achieved an 88-90 per cent collection rate.



***"Xplor Gym gives me the data I need as a gym owner to understand how my business is performing"***

***Andy Little,  
The Green Gym Group***

### Supportive partner

The Green Gym Group has also found the support available incredibly valuable.

Little shares: "Members of the Xplor Gym support team help answer the questions I have fast. As a gym owner, time management is crucial to my success, so being able to ping over an email to a responsive team is invaluable.

The level of support I get from Xplor Gym is what customer service is all about. It's what I strive to deliver to my members. This is testament to the effort the support team goes to." ●  
More: [www.xplorgym.co.uk](http://www.xplorgym.co.uk)



Life  
Lessons

 A portrait of Neil Randall, CEO of Urban Gym Group. He is a man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a grey zip-up jacket over a dark blue shirt. He is leaning forward with his arms crossed on a dark surface, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.
 

Randall is now  
CEO of Urban  
Gym Group

PHOTO: KATH HUDSON

# NEIL RANDALL

## CEO, Urban Gym Group

Disappointment about being  
passed over for promotion  
gave Neil Randall, the resilience  
he needed to climb the ranks.  
He talks to Kath Hudson about  
the challenges he faced early  
in his career and the skills  
he learned from them

I joined a high-end health club business straight from university and did well in PT and duty management. I was doing a lot of fix-up projects: going into clubs that weren't performing in PT and turning them around. However, it was the regional fitness manager roles that everyone wanted and when one came up I thought I would be a front runner, however, I didn't get the job. Not only that, I didn't get much feedback and felt the person appointed wasn't performing as well as me.

I carried on doing my thing and before long another role came up. I thought I stood a good chance, but the same thing happened again.

Being a sportsperson I was equipped to deal with failure – I play cricket where it only takes one bad shot to be out – but I was left thinking why isn't this happening for me? I always give everything I have – sometimes to my own detriment, as I make sacrifices in my personal life that I probably



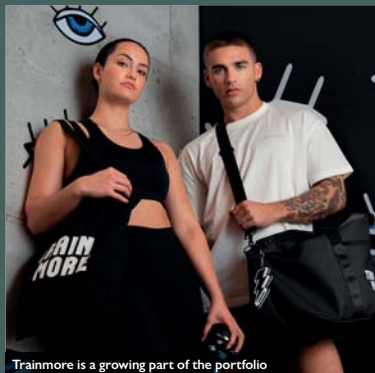
*The rejections were a small part of my career,  
but taught me resilience and accountability*

shouldn't – so when I felt I wasn't getting anywhere it was hard to take. It felt as though I wasn't getting noticed and I wondered if that would ever change.

#### Leadership skills

At that point I had two options. I could get frustrated about the company not valuing me and walk away, or keep my head down and carry on doing what I was doing. I did the latter because I enjoyed the job. While it was difficult walking into regional meetings with everyone knowing I had been unsuccessful twice, I decided that to be a strong leader of others, you have to be a leader of yourself first, so put myself in that headspace and hoped it sent a strong message.

Shortly after I was invited to go on a leadership course, which was very intense. We were given the coordinates for a location and everyone had to follow a slightly different brief to get there. Then we were taken to Cheddar Gorge for potholing, before ▶



Trainmore is a growing part of the portfolio



going to a Mountain Rescue Centre. For three days we were put through our paces and even woken in the middle of the night to be given tasks.

As a group, we made a bad job of one particular task and I was the only person to take responsibility. I encouraged the others to look at the learnings and what we could do differently with hindsight. Later on, I was pulled aside by the instructor and told they'd hadn't seen anyone with that level of emotional intelligence and awareness before. Two weeks later, I was given my first club and that was the start of my GM and senior leadership career, having bypassed the regional manager stage.

### Resilience and accountability

When I look back, I consider those as the defining points of my career and use the lessons a lot. The rejections were a small part of my overall career, but taught me resilience and accountability. In leadership you don't always have things your own way. In business, as in sport, you can't blame other people for your own performance. You have to be accountable. It's better to speak up in a group and say "we could have done better here."

Now we have these conversations in my boardrooms and executive rooms. I make it clear to all the members of my team that if something didn't go according to plan that's okay, but whatever we decide on in the room, we align on when we walk out. I try to manage all my stakeholders in that manner.



***I have every confidence in my business that people will tell me what's going on because they know they're not going to get pulled apart***

Learning accountability has been really useful in my role as CEO, because you end up being accountable for everything that happens in the company. If you are very openly accountable you get to the core of the problem quicker. I have every confidence in my business that people will tell me what's going on because they know they're not going to get pulled apart.

You have to give people that safe space to be open and honest without it resulting in pain. You can ask challenging questions, such as "what have you learned from this process?" and "do you need any help now from me in turning this around, or are you just informing me?" So you can get to the core of the problem more quickly and agree on a course of action. It's not positive syndrome, it's about keeping people with you and empowering them to make their own informed decisions. ●

PHOTO: KATH WINTER/ISTOCK

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INNOVATION

Body Bike is used  
in the immersive  
cycle studio

# POWERING AHEAD

Indoor bikes may remain stationary, but the discipline is in constant motion. Innovators tell Steph Eaves how they're keeping pace with the latest trends

Body Bike is  
working with Les  
Mills in Auckland



PHOTO BODY BIKE / LES MILLS

*“Our latest app feature is a 12-gear system that shows very precisely how hard you’re working”*



PHOTO BODY BIKE / LES MILLS

## Uffe A Olesen

### Body Bike

#### How are you responding to trends?

We’re seeing the continued proliferation of different styles of indoor cycling – for example: endurance, performance, HIIT, dancing on a bike, immersive, etc. It’s all there alongside more traditional, fitness-focused classes.

Our Body Bike Smart+ Phantom has a unique new gear ratio for this reason – we’ve increased the diameter of the crank and reduced the weight of the flywheel so in dance-based programming you have a wonderful light feel on the pedals, with the option to still dial up the resistance.

At the other end of the scale we believe the bike’s magnetic resistance is unique when it comes to how strong the resistance can be; this is still a challenging bike for those who want it to be.

#### How are you increasing engagement with riders?

The Body Bike app turns a smartphone into the console on any Body Bike Smart+ bike, meaning riders can see their data on an engaging, colourful, backlit screen during class and take all that data away with them at the end of the ride.

Downloads of our app were up 8 per cent in 2023 against 2022 and we’re continuing to develop new features, the latest being a new 12-gear system that

shows very precisely how hard the rider is working. It’s based on Functional Threshold Power, which the app can also calculate.

#### Do you have any new integrations you can tell us about?

Our latest integration is with Apple, which now draws Body Bike power and cadence profiles into the Apple Watch. But this is just the latest integration, with Strava another important one. More: [www.body-bike.com](http://www.body-bike.com)

### CASE STUDY

#### Les Mills Auckland

BODY BIKE recently supplied 85 Smart+ bikes to Les Mills’ flagship club in Auckland. We have a strong, longstanding relationship with Les Mills and are delighted to be back in its clubs.

In the Auckland City club, a fantastic, immersive studio delivers exceptional indoor cycling experiences every day. We’re excited to be part of that.

## Ryan Lefever

### Core Health & Fitness Schwinn Group Cycling

#### What trends are you noticing?

A significant one is the integration of advanced technology into indoor cycling equipment. Features such as interactive displays, virtual ride experiences and connectivity with fitness apps are becoming increasingly popular, providing users with a more engaging and immersive workout experience.

In response, we've integrated our Openhub platform into our Group Cycle portfolio, becoming the first to incorporate a tap-to-pair feature that allows riders to seamlessly sync their Apple Watch or Samsung Galaxy.

Another trend is the emphasis on personalised and data-driven workouts. To optimise training, consumers seek equipment that

PHOTO: CORE HEALTH AND FITNESS



*"Our X-bike is used in infrared sauna cycling classes, and has proven to withstand the heat while maintaining its durability"*

tracks performance metrics such as heart rate, power output, and cadence. Our Schwinn Z-Bike addresses this demand with personalisation features that enable riders to input their maximum heart rate or Functional Threshold Power and pair any heart rate strap to the console.

#### How are you increasing engagement?

The newest learning opportunity from Schwinn, The Schwinn Bridge Certification, offers a cost-effective and time-efficient pathway for fitness instructors to enhance their qualifications. Recognising instructors' existing knowledge and experience, the Bridge Certification streamlines the process, saving time and money. By completing this certification, instructors earn Continuing Education Credits and Units, ensuring ongoing accreditation while adding new skills to their coaching toolkit.

#### Tell us about your new integrations?

Our latest is the enhanced connectivity of our Z-console, which can now seamlessly connect to various group display leaderboard systems. These include popular platforms such as Intelligent Cycling, Zwift and many others. These integrations allow riders to join virtual group rides, compete in challenges, and track their progress in real-time alongside a global community of cyclists. More: [www.corehandf.com](http://www.corehandf.com)

Schwinn Group  
Cycling's Red Room

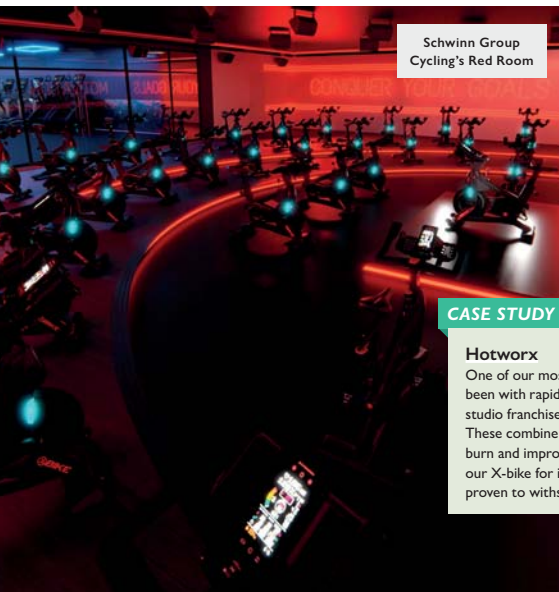


PHOTO: CORE HEALTH AND FITNESS

### CASE STUDY

#### Hotworx

One of our most creative client collaborations has been with rapidly-growing operator, Hotworx, a fitness studio franchise specialising in infrared sauna workouts. These combine heat and exercise to maximise calorie burn and improve overall fitness. Hotworx utilises our X-bike for its infrared sauna cycling classes and it's proven to withstand the heat, due to its durability.



*"Our collaboration with Pure Energy sees us integrating its library of curated music mixes into the Keiser M Series bikes"*

PHOTO: KEISER

## Hannah Lewin

### Keiser

#### What trends are you picking up?

Firstly, technology is transforming indoor cycling. Riders demand real-time data tracking, seamless connectivity with fitness apps, and immersive virtual experiences. This tech-driven approach enables cyclists to monitor their performance metrics during each session.

Secondly, there's a growing desire among fitness enthusiasts to train like athletes. This trend is characterised by a focus on structured, performance-oriented workouts. Cyclists are adopting HIIT, power-based training, and periodisation techniques traditionally used by professional athletes.

#### How are you increasing engagement with riders?

We're ramping up engagement through our relaunched Keiser M Series app and on-demand offering, The Ride.



PHOTO: KEISER

The app offers diverse workout options and real-time performance tracking. Users can choose workouts tailored to their fitness levels and goals if they use it alone, while it can also be used in classes by participants to connect them with fellow riders, share achievements and participate in challenges.

Detailed performance metrics, allowing riders to monitor their progress and set new targets. Our on-demand classes, The Ride by Keiser, take engagement to the next level.

By combining our tech with some of the world's best instructors, riders can improve their fitness and recreate the in-class experience at home or in their gym. More: [www.keiseruk.com](http://www.keiseruk.com)

### CASE STUDY

#### Pure Energy

Keiser has embarked on a collaboration with Pure Energy, a provider of music solutions for fitness professionals. We're joining forces to infuse the indoor cycling experience with energising music that enhances motivation and performance.

Together, we're integrating Pure Energy's library of curated music mixes into the Keiser M Series bikes. These mixes are designed to complement different types of cycling workouts, from endurance rides to high-intensity intervals, ensuring riders are immersed in the rhythm and momentum of their sessions.

We're also working with Pure Energy to develop cycling playlists tailored to workout objectives and preferences.

Whether riders are seeking an adrenaline-fueled sprint or a calming cooldown, they can access a range of playlists that elevate their experience. ▶



## Mike Michels

### Life Fitness

#### What trends are you noticing?

The return of participants back in the saddle. As gym memberships continue to increase, this is bringing people back to indoor cycling classes and for some, it's their very first class experience. Gym owners are having to refocus and invest in the environment and experience they offer.

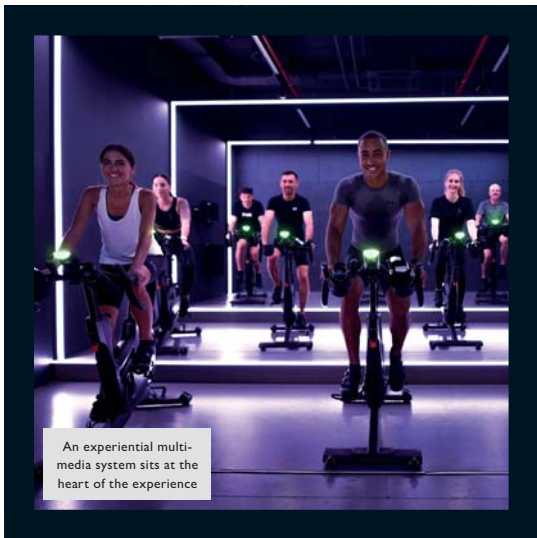
Our indoor cycling ecosystem provides variety in programming to meet the different needs and fitness levels of all participants. Our bike consoles allow for instructor-led 'rhythm rides' and performance-based power or heart-rate training. Our Connect digital interactive gaming system can offer leaderboards, team races and scenic footage and a virtual cycling solution for class programming without a live instructor.

#### How are you increasing engagement?

ICG/Life Fitness has a fully-integrated ecosystem driving its group cycling experience, all based on its patented Coach by Color Training programme, which is available for 10 years on products.

The Coach by Color programme relies on the naturally stimulating

*"Our Pedal Efficiency Graph allows participants to see the power outputs from their right and left legs"*



An experiential multimedia system sits at the heart of the experience

properties of colour to accurately coach effort during a workout. It elicits the right psychological and physiological responses to encourage greater effort. It also fosters connections among members and enhances instructor communication, increasing social interaction, while maximising results.

The ICG Connect System is an interactive multimedia set-up that brings experiential fitness to the heart of the group cycle offering, driving purposeful goals and fitness targets by unifying the bike's interactive animated consoles, music, choreography, video and real-time data, along with team and individual gaming.

Riders can also connect to the bike's console with the ICG

Training App to record, track and share their workouts.

#### Tell us about your new features

We enhanced our IC7 bike model with a new Pedal Efficiency Graph (PEG). The graph allows participants to see in real-time the power output between right and left legs.

At any point during class, instructors can direct riders to the PEG on their bike console and perform pedal stroke drills to increase overall efficiency which leads to better balance between right and left legs, higher total power output and increased training results.

More: [www.lifefitness.com](http://www.lifefitness.com)

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Gamification is transforming indoor cycling

## CASE STUDY

## Fitness First

One project we're proud of at Wattbike is the collaboration with Zwift and Fitness First to develop dedicated Wattbike zones. This project involves integrating Zwift software with three AtomX bikes on the gym floor at Fitness First Cottons.

Since installing the AtomX bikes last year to replace the previous spin bikes, we've seen a remarkable proof of concept, demonstrating the opportunity to grow more spaces such as this.

To further enhance the space, Fitness First has brought in an AV and design company to elevate the area, creating an engaging and motivating environment. The goal is to link all its bikes to Zwift, allowing more members to participate in community rides on this dynamic platform.

*"To capitalise on the gamification trend, we've enhanced our Wattbike Hub app"*

## Tom Crampton

## Wattbike

## How are you responding to indoor cycling trends?

Gamification is revolutionising indoor cycling, with platforms such as Zwift and Rouvy leading the charge. These platforms offer e-sport competitions, which drive motivation and community involvement.

To capitalise on this trend, we've enhanced our Wattbike Hub app and plan to introduce new features to maximise its potential over the coming months. We currently have a leaderboard in beta testing that will go out to the public over the next few months. This will help people compete against each other and see where they rank amongst their peers.



PHOTO: WATTBIKE

## How are you increasing engagement with riders?

We hold an annual educational day for industry experts to help upskill them on the usability of the bikes, as well as share resources they can use at their facilities to create an engaging environment. This will be a growing part of our calendar as we look to do more of these types of events with varying communities.

Another key area we focus on in order to build engagement is the spaces where our bikes are located – in particular, our Wattbike zones. We have excellent setups in some of the largest gyms across the UK, utilising Zwift and Wattbike zones to capitalise on the current trend of gamifying indoor cycling.

## Any new integrations?

Our bikes are fully compatible with third party apps such as Zwift, Rouvy, Intelligent Cycling and CicloZone, allowing riders to access virtual racing and integrated workouts.

The Wattbike Atom is a Zwift-Certified indoor trainer, which means you can compete in the Zwift racing league and battle against other virtual riders. More: [www.wattbike.com](http://www.wattbike.com)

# The industry's favourite bike. Reimagined.

Step into the future of fitness with the Keiser M3i Studio Bike – where tradition meets innovation.

Engineered to provide unmatched performance, comfort and durability, this revolutionary bike redefines the indoor cycling experience.

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# Conversations about the future

Dr Tim Anstiss is developing coachbots that are supporting positive behaviour change for operators such as Life Leisure and KA Leisure



Dr Tim Anstiss

An article in last month's edition of *HCM* looked at research which found the three top AI chatbots – Google Bard, ChatGPT and Llama 2 – were unable to determine people's 'readiness to change' from the language they used during chatbot conversations.

'Readiness to change' is described in the five motivational stages of behaviour change – see Table 1.

The research also suggested that even if a chatbot is able to determine a person's 'stage of change', it mainly provides them with information to help them change – even though a recent review paper indicates that information provision alone is one of the least effective ways of supporting a person in changing their behaviour.

In addition, when chatbots rely on data gathered from the internet, the quality of the answers they return can be questionable. Sometimes they even make up scientific references that don't exist.

The good news is that all this may not matter very much, as generative AI models are not the only ways to develop chatbots.

## Background insight

I've spent much of my career as a doctor working in the physical activity and health field, including helping the UK's Department of Health develop the 'Let's Get Moving' National Physical Activity Pathway.

I've trained thousands of health and leisure professionals in motivational interviewing and brief interventions for physical activity, most recently helping the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine with its Moving Medicine Initiative – specifically its Active Conversations course ([www.hcmmag.com/activeconversations](http://www.hcmmag.com/activeconversations)).

I've become curious about the role chatbots can play in helping people become more active – including people with health problems.

Table 1: **The five motivational stages of behaviour change**

- 1 **Precontemplation**  
*Not thinking about change.*
- 2 **Contemplation**  
*Thinking about change but not yet decided. Ambivalent. Mixed Feelings.*
- 3 **Preparation**  
*Getting ready to change.*
- 4 **Action**  
*Changing the behaviour.*
- 5 **Maintenance**  
*Keeping up the new behaviour.*



Coachbots are chatbots  
that are programmed to  
support behaviour change



**“Coachbots won’t replace skilled professionals, but will augment them, enabling the delivery of hybrid coaching at pace and scale”**

This interest started while I was delivering staff training in health coaching for an initiative called 'Derby, a city on the move', a Sport England-funded project in the East Midlands.

The project lead asked if I could create a chatbot to help people become more active. We developed one with a coaching style and called it a coachbot. It was added to the project's website and since then, interest in this technology has taken off.

### The growth of coachbots

Over the last few years, we've developed phone-, tablet- and PC-based coachbots – chatbots that coach, but don't instruct – for a range of clients, including NHS England, The London Borough of Southwark and Respiratory Innovation Wales.

We've also worked with a social prescribing programme, a public health institute, some NHS Trusts, health charities and talking therapy providers.

Each coachbot focuses on supporting different positive behaviours – for example, becoming more active, stopping smoking, drinking less, taking up health screening, losing weight, improving mental health and wellbeing and even being better prepared for an upcoming health-related appointment.

We've developed coachbots in Arabic, German and Slovenian, as well as English – and even developed one as the interface for a tiny robot!

To date our coachbots have delivered over 10,000 chats. Here are some of the things the users of these have told us:

- "It was clear, concise and easy to use"
- "I found it very fast and responsive"
- "It gives you the space to think and not be judged"
- "I found it very helpful and supportive"
- "It made me think of ways to handle situations"

- "It's good to get instant help"
- "It makes you think about things in a structured way"
- "This feels like a friendly conversation"

### The results

One independent study of our coachbots in a busy talking therapies service found many clients developed a positive relationship with the coachbot, saying it helped them to think more clearly, helped reduce their anxiety and provided them with ideas to help themselves. Some particularly appreciated the anonymity the coachbot provided.

### Working with Life Leisure

We're currently working with John Oxley and LifeLeisure in Stockport, developing a suite of bespoke coachbots aimed at increasing uptake, engagement and outcomes from LifeLeisure's Exercise on Referral programme, improve the onboarding process for new members and supporting existing members in getting the most from their membership – including helping them design and implement a personalised wellbeing plan that goes beyond physical activity.

We'll also be assessing the impact of these coachbots on membership retention.

Both KA Leisure in North Ayrshire and Leisure Focus are also exploring the role co-designed coachbots can play in engaging local communities, guiding people towards self-directed healthy change and integrating with local health systems, all while pivoting to wellbeing.

Recognising that a coachbot can help people become better prepared for an appointment and more ready to engage in a programme, we've also started working with Stuart Stokes at ReferAll to explore how the solution can best be integrated into its self-referral platform ▶

**"Each coachbot focuses on supporting a positive behaviour – for example, becoming more active or stopping smoking"**

Coachbots have also been developed in Arabic, Slovenian and German



### Further research

King's College London is seeking research funding to explore how coachbots might help people with Type 2 diabetes make changes to reduce their risk of renal failure – changes that might involve getting support to become more active

Keele University is helping us explore the role coachbots might play in helping people with multiple long-term conditions take steps towards improved health and wellbeing, as well as increasing uptake rates for a cardiovascular screening service.

The Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine is helping explore the development of an automated, conversational, quality-assured screening and guidance process to help people with health conditions become active safely – knowing that many people need reassurance.

### Reflecting on the past

Ten years ago I wrote a couple of articles in *HCM* magazine – one on health coaching and the other on wellbeing coaching. At the time I said: *“If all health and fitness professionals were trained in proven methods of health coaching, such as motivational interviewing, more members would achieve their health goals, retention figures would climb, and the health of the nation might just improve.”* And, *“Without wishing to understate the importance of doctors, psychologists and other mental health professionals in helping people with psychological health problems get well, I believe many of us would benefit from evidence-based wellbeing coaching by a professional. This service is best offered in non-clinical*


*settings such as health clubs and leisure centres.”*

So it was fantastic to read in last month's *HCM* about all the great work going on around the country as operators make progress with their pivots to active wellbeing.

### Where next?

My prediction is that this trend will be accompanied by an increased use of friendly, smart conversational agents such as coachbots. These agents won't replace conversations with skilled professionals, but

Kings College London is seeking funding to explore diabetes interventions, including exercise



**“Many clients develop a positive relationship with a coachbot, saying it helped them think clearly, reduced anxiety and provided them with ideas to help themselves”**

will augment and complement them, enabling the delivery of 'hybrid' or 'blended' health and wellbeing coaching to many more thousands of people, at pace and scale and at a low cost per session.

People will have increased choice when it comes to how they engage, get help navigating the system to more quickly find and access the services they want and need, while experiencing a NICE-compliant intervention designed to increase their readiness to change and engage in more and better self-care.

Operators will be able to generate and act on unique behavioural insight data about what matters to people, their reasons for changing, their plans and any additional help they might need, while pressure on local health systems will fall, if only a little.

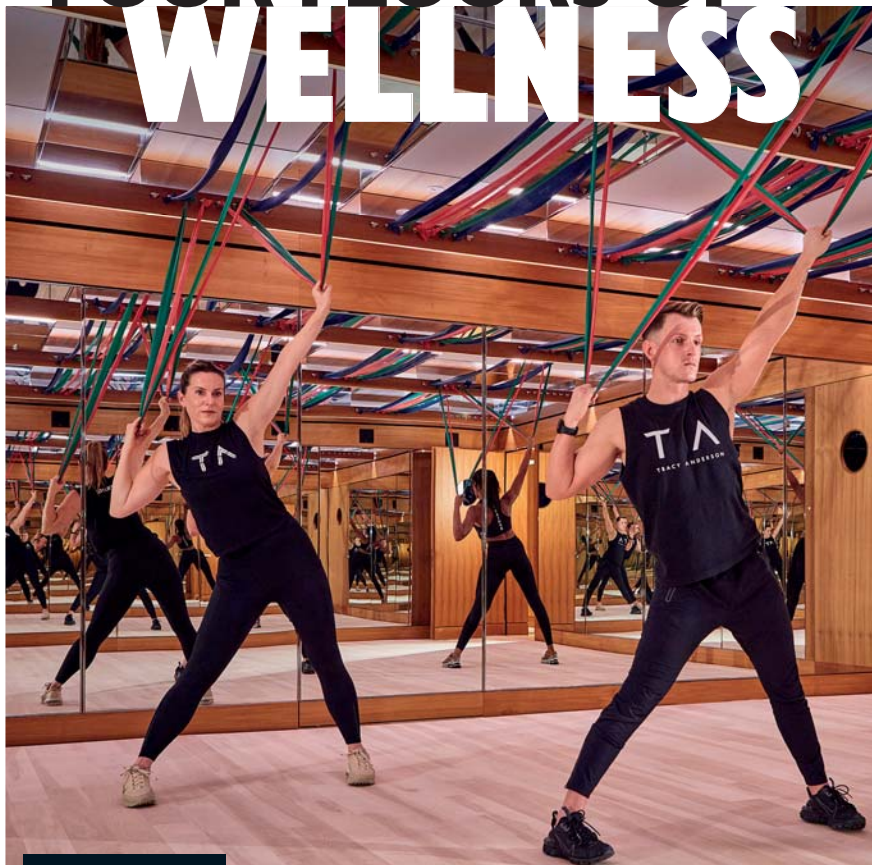
At Virtual Health Labs we feel we're just getting started on our mission of helping a million people a day take steps towards improved health and wellbeing. ●

*Dr Tim Anstiss is a medical doctor, educator and coach and founder of Virtual Health Labs.*  
More: [www.virtualhealthlabs.com](http://www.virtualhealthlabs.com)

NEW OPENING

The Maybourne Group has unveiled its all-new London hotel The Emory. Megan Whitby goes behind the scenes at Surrene, its cutting-edge health and wellness club

# FOUR FLOORS OF WELLNESS



Tracy Anderson has opened a studio at Surrene with her isokinetic ceiling





*Capped at 100 members, annual membership for the London club costs £10,000, with an additional joining fee of £5,000*



**T**wenty-four-carat gold ceilings, snow showers, mushroom sculptures and a workout studio with an isokinetic ceiling by fitness pioneer Tracy Anderson are just some of the standout features of Surrenne, the hot new health and wellness club being heralded as London's next-generation longevity space.

The 2,000sq m private members wellness enclave covers four floors beneath The Emory, the new all-suite hotel in Knightsbridge, which is owned by the Qatari Investment Authority and managed by The Maybourne Hotel Group, the brand behind Claridges.

Leading the charge in conceptualising Surrenne is Inge Theron, Maybourne's creative director of spa and wellness design and fitness amenities who has created a next-generation concept, blending fitness services, recovery, beauty and a multisensory spa.

Maybourne has ambitions to own the longevity market and is planning subsequent Surrenne developments at its properties in Europe and the US.

#### Commercial concept

"Surrenne represents a paradigm shift in wellness," Theron says. "We've considered every detail, meaning it's at the forefront of science, diagnostics and functional medicine, as well as fitness and holistic wellness and preventative medicine."

Theron is working on five new projects for Maybourne. Each will have a Surrenne and in every case, its core principles of a guest-centric, science-first, evidence-based and results-driven customer journey will shine through, but with a holistic influence.

"The wellness industry is now on the frontline of health and preventing people from getting unwell," she says. "My job at Maybourne has been to create an instantly recognisable take on longevity that the company can own and roll out around the world."



## About Tracy Anderson

Tracy Anderson is a fitness pioneer, responsible for developing workout modalities, a variety of specialist equipment and a portfolio of eight studios in the US, Spain and the UK.

The Tracy Anderson Method was designed to create balance in the body and is based on more than two decades of scientific research and content development.

Anderson trained as a dancer, moving on to develop her method – based on exercising the small muscles – developing custom workouts combined with specialist diets.

The protocols give exercisers the power to develop long, lean muscles using dance-based movements.

Anderson is known for having worked on physical transformation

with a wide range of celebrities, including Jennifer Lopez, Robert Downey Jr and Gwyneth Paltrow, who became her business partner in 2008, in addition to the members who attend her studios each week for in-person classes and use her online platform.

Over the past twenty five years, the Tracy Anderson Method has grown and evolved, with Anderson continuing to develop new routines every week to ten days to ensure clients develop and avoid exercise plateaus.

In addition to the in-studio classes, workouts were originally available on DVD, then online and are now streamed immersively on virtual. More: [www.tracyanderson.com](http://www.tracyanderson.com)



Tracy Anderson

Capped at 100 members, annual membership for the London club costs £10,000 (US\$12,662, €11,752), with an additional £5,000 (US\$6,331, €5,876) joining fee and has already sold out.

Hotel guests who aren't members – both at The Emory and Maybourne's adjacent hotel The Berkeley – can also use the facilities on a 24/7 basis.

For members, the essence of Surrenne lies in meeting them where they are on their wellness journey with expert guidance. This starts with a clinical check-up by 3 Peaks Health ([www.3peakshealth.com](http://www.3peakshealth.com)), a health and lifespan company, led by CEO Dr Mark Mihail, who also serves as Surrenne's medical director.

Insights gleaned from the checks serve as the foundation for personalised solutions-focused plans created by a team of fitness specialists, nutritionists, physicians and head of fitness Simon Inman.

"We're looking at creating journeys that feel incredibly meaningful," says Theron. "Our job is to send guests back into the world feeling better than when they walked in."


"Surrenne is designed to harmonise with people's lifestyles, facilitating the attainment

of health objectives effortlessly. Our state-of-the-art facilities ensure members can seamlessly integrate in-depth, science-backed wellness retreats or programmes into their daily routines without disruption."

### Multisensory environments

Spaces in Surrenne have been designed so just being in them improves the wellbeing of guests and staff through fragrance, light and soundscapes. Partners curating these experiences include specialists from White Mirror ([www.whitemirror.studio](http://www.whitemirror.studio)).

Working with neuroscientists, sensory aspects have been designed to include a 'golden lightscape' with circadian lighting, an ever-evolving soundscape driven by AI and a bespoke smellscape – all, says Theron, are proven to enhance wellbeing.



**Membership starts with a clinical check-up with  
3 Peaks Health, with insights gleaned serving  
as the foundation for personalised  
solution-focused plans**

The gym at Surrenne is fitted with a range of kit from different suppliers

"We've got the data that shows how fragrances influence neural pathways and what's been so interesting is that the fragrance at Surrenne has been so well received because it's scientifically proven to make people feel good," she says.

"What captivates me most about Surrenne is the moment you step inside, your nervous system enters a calmer state. This is now a true body, mind and soul offering," says Theron.

#### Storytelling to the fore

Inspiration for these immersive experiences stems from Theron's previous collaboration with Australian film director Baz Luhrmann at Miami's dramatic Faena Hotel (see [www.spabusiness.com/faenamiami](http://www.spabusiness.com/faenamiami)).

"Baz taught me to use design as a medium for storytelling," she says. "He always encouraged ▶

#### Surrenne suppliers

**Fitness:** Technogym, Woodway, Hydrow, Hyperice, Hypervolt and Peloton

**Pools:** Oak Pools

**Heat experiences:** Design for Leisure, Klafts and TechnoAlpin (snow shower)

**Designer:** Remi Tessier

**Treatment beds:** Gharieni

**Skincare:** Stella by Stella McCartney, FaceGym, Dr Lara Devgan and Geneo

**Towels, linen and robes:** Frette, Nuno and Jalin

The new wellness space has a 22 metre lap pool



*The strategy was to create spaces so luxurious within Surrenne that they defy the hardcore science going on in the building*

PHOTO: SURRENNE

me to envision the guest experience – close your eyes, step out of the elevator, what do you smell, hear, see? He instilled in me the importance of crafting moments,” says Theron.

“Now, we’re bringing storytelling into health and wellness,” she says, “you need to be confident in what it means to you as a brand and how you want to express that across touchpoints in a consistent and considered way. You can’t build a brand or convince a client of your authority without a compelling story.”

With regards to interiors, Theron wanted to create a space so luxurious that it almost defies the hardcore science going on in the building. “Through luxurious interiors and wellness-centric environmental details, Surrenne exudes a delicious, inviting warmth, akin to a second home,” she says.

#### Expert partners

A vital part of bringing Surrenne to fruition has been strategic alliances with global experts who deliver the evidence base to drive wellness prescriptions.

Maybourne partnered with welltech specialist Virtusan to benefit from its advisory board which includes mindfulness and self-compassion specialist, Dr Shauna Shapiro; professor of neurobiology and podcaster, Dr Andrew Huberman; and Harvard professor of genetics, Dr David Sinclair.

“Partnering with Virtusan unlocked its thought leadership to ensure the decisions we make are validated,” says Theron. “Surrenne has tapped these experts to create one of the most robust offerings in the world.”

Other specialists on board include fitness pioneer Tracy Anderson, nutritionist



The design of  
Surrenne is by  
Remi Tessier



PHOTO: SURRENNE

Inge Theron has  
masterminded the  
creation of Surrenne



and functional medicine practitioner, Rosemary Ferguson and skincare guru and plastic surgeon, Dr Lara Devgan.

#### A medical basis

In-house programming extends from the medical – with options such as microbiome analysis, chiropractic and epigenetic testing – to wellness treatments, such as FaceGym workouts and cryo facials.

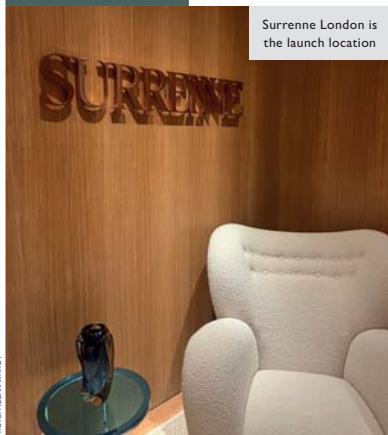
Members can peruse an extensive menu of services, ranging from GP consultations, MRIs and blood tests to mammograms, with advanced medical interventions – including brain scans, carotid artery ultrasounds, AI mole mapping and liver function tests – available via Surrenne's partner, OneWelbeck ([www.onewelbeck.com](http://www.onewelbeck.com)).

"Surrenne transcends the traditional spa experience," says Theron. "Along with ▶

PHOTO: SURRENNE

Surrenne London is the launch location

PHOTO: HESAN WHITBY



their day-to-day wellness routine, members can seamlessly access life-saving diagnostic tests. Then, thanks to our partnership with OneWelbeck, we can expedite referrals to specialists within 48 hours, empowering guests to stay ahead in their health journey."

### The wellness menu

Theron believes Surrenne offers one of the most impressive wellness menus in the UK, saying: "We cater for everyone, from those seeking immediate relief to those invested in long-term wellness."

"Whether you prefer holistic therapies such as fork tuning, deep tissue massages, ashatsu or a rebirth with salt and honey, we have it. I even created a 21-step scalp massage inspired by my time in Korea," she explains.

When it comes to treatments, Surrenne launched with an exclusive partnership and facial featuring Stella by Stella McCartney, marking the eco-conscious brand's debut as part of a pop-up exclusive to Surrenne. Theron says this offering catered to a younger clientele, as well as those committed to sustainability.

The menu also includes advanced facial technology, encompassing Geneo, EMS by Miha Bodytec ([www.miha-bodytec.com](http://www.miha-bodytec.com)), radiofrequency, ultrasound, lasers, currents and light therapies, as well as treatments using products from plastic surgeon, Dr Lara Devgan and rituals from Theron's facial fitness brand, FaceGym.

Contrast bathing for health and recovery is a fundamental part of the offering

Theron also wants to roll out retreats, saying: "We would send guests wearables, connect with their doctor and arrange for blood tests in their home city, so when they stay with us, we have their results and personalised plans ready."

Additionally, she wants to foster a sense of community among members, with plans for a 12-month schedule of events, including brand residences and expert workshops. This summer outdoor programmes including wild swimming in The Serpentine ([www.hcmmag.com/serpentine](http://www.hcmmag.com/serpentine)), while running clubs will also be introduced.

### Customer base

While a significant portion of Surrenne's early members were female Tracy Anderson devotees, more men are now joining. The typical member profile ranges from affluent locals to businesspeople, elite athletes and longevity enthusiasts.

PHOTO: SURRENNE



The spa provides a full menu of holistic and wellness treatments

PHOTO: SURENNE



***Despite initial apprehensions around pricing, membership provides access to almost £60,000-worth of treatments and diagnostics a year***

"Many of our members are well-versed in longevity and already have a team of doctors and specialists, but because we're brand-agnostic, our head of medical collaborates with their specialists to complement their existing health journey," explains Theron.

"Despite initial apprehensions around pricing, membership provides access to almost £60,000 (US\$76,500, €70,100) worth of treatments and diagnostics every year," she says.

According to Theron, membership models are transforming the wellness industry, as they provide the capital for investment, enabling the operator to enhance the facility and experience.

#### Hotels and healthcare

Hoteliers are recognising that hotel wellness destinations can be a major USP and cash generator. "Today, many affluent guests choose their destinations not only for comfortable amenities and F&B, but also for access to healthcare, personalised programming and tools for improving wellbeing," says Theron.

"I'm excited by the convergence of scientific rigour and accessibility which is enabling people to integrate wellness into their everyday lives" she continues. "I expect a fusion of curiosity and commercial insight to fundamentally transform the landscape for wellness businesses." ●

# Playful wellness

Megan Whitby visits London's chic new wellness club, Surrenne



London's wellness scene is increasingly competitive, with global operators investing heavily in urban retreats. From the moment you step inside Surrenne, the private wellness club at London's latest hotel The Emory, it's clear a new niche combining health, luxury and playful innovation has been carved out.

Entering Surrenne at the lowest basement level, I'm struck by the inviting atmosphere where wood-clad interiors, bathed in mellow lighting, are accentuated with copper touches and cosy seating. The health cafe is approached by what seems to be a feature wall filled with bubbling blue liquid, but to my surprise, it's a secret door which slides aside to reveal an opulent bathing hall with a 22m pool, 24-carat-gold ceiling and mosaic walls twinkling with crystal geodes.

Come evening, guests can swim by candlelight, while underwater speakers create a soundtrack for their workout. Funky spa robes, striped pink pillows and slippers with bright orange accents add a playful twist.

Around the thermal pool are a sauna and an aromatherapy steamroom with a pink glass portal. The standout feature, however, is a snow shower which provides a refreshing finale to contrast bathing cycles.

“Attention to detail underpins all aspects, taking the notion of luxury wellness to new heights”

## Tracy Anderson at Surrenne

Surrenne's impressive circular staircase leads to the modern gym, complete with advanced cardio equipment, a changing room and group exercise studio for up to six people. All are boutique-sized and designed for members.

Up two floors is the temple where devotees of Tracy Anderson can go to work out. Marking the UK's first studio dedicated to Anderson's classes, the space – currently booming with music during a class – has been a major draw for members and can be heated to 95 degrees with 75 per cent humidity during workouts.

“Working out in the heat and humidity provides a number of benefits,” says Anderson. “Sweat encourages the body to release toxins and improves the skin's elasticity and tone. The heat also keeps the muscles warm, ready to move and malleable.”

“When you exercise and sweat you are utilising the body's natural cooling mechanism. Guess what? All it wants in return is new water. Now that's cleansing!”, she says.

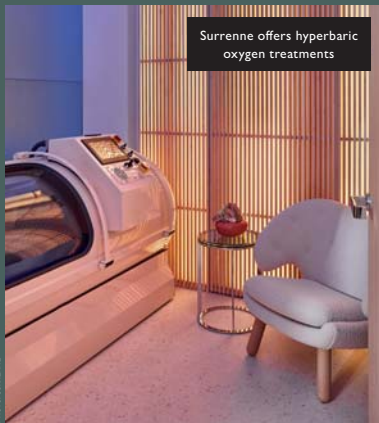
## Striking spa

Surrenne's spa and medical clinic features solar sculptures, soft pink lighting, mushroom artwork and crystals. The spa's reception and retail space retail top-end wellness products ranging from energetically charged perfumes and VR goggles to workout gear and skincare tools. Behind this is a hyperbaric oxygen chamber suite and a diagnostics room.

Eight treatment rooms feature artwork by Damien Hirst and Helle Mardahl, including one double room with two hammam suites clad in white marble.

Attention to detail underpins all aspects, taking the notion of luxury wellness to new heights, yet the quirky touches temper its exclusivity and invite guests to embrace a life of balance, fun and wellbeing. ●

Surrenne offers hyperbaric oxygen treatments



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# Product innovation

Steph Eaves rounds up the latest health, fitness and wellness kit



## Ojmar's batteryless lock is a revolutionary step towards sustainability, says Aitor Elorza

Smart lock manufacturer Ojmar has released the OTS20 Batteryless – the first battery-free electronic locker lock on the market. The smart lock is powered by Ojmar's patented 'Push Power' tech, which harnesses the energy created by a simple push of the button.

The OTS20 Batteryless has been designed for sustainability, with every component being 100 per cent recyclable. The lack of a battery means waste is reduced significantly. This contributes to a cleaner environment and helps clubs to advance their carbon footprint reduction goals.

Ojmar's Aitor Elorza says: "This signifies a revolutionary step towards sustainability and innovation in the fitness and wellness industry. This unique system is free from batteries, wires, and maintenance, not only simplifying operations, but also fostering eco-friendly practices by reducing electronic waste and energy consumption. Thanks to



PHOTO: OJMAR

*"This unique lock system is free from batteries, wires, and maintenance"*

Aitor Elorza



PHOTO: OJMAR

● The lock is easy to install and use

Push Power technology, the need for battery replacements is a thing of the past. It's a game changer, transforming clubs into greener, more sustainable spaces while enhancing the user experience."

[fitness-kit.net](http://fitness-kit.net) KEYWORDS  
OJMAR

## New PBM bed is futuristic and offers many health benefits, says Kloodos' Julie Cichocki

Kloodos has secured the global distribution rights for a photobiomodulation (PBM) pod that also emits negative ions.

Based on red and near-infrared therapy, Cell Stack enables facilities to customise the light sessions – selecting from continuous or pulsed wave rates and six irradiance levels.

Kloodos, which brought the bed to market in a joint venture with a medical equipment manufacturer, says Cell Stack is unique because users can pinpoint the joule (energy) dose they're exposed to. And it's developed a series of protocols, averaging around 20 minutes, to help manage mitochondrial health, recovery, rehabilitation, circadian rhythm balancing, hormonal regulation and stress/pain relief.

● The Cell Stack emits infrared and negative ions



PHOTO: KLOODOS

*"We can't wait to set the longevity world alight with this new product"*

Julie Cichocki



PHOTO: KLOODOS

The bed also emits a steady flow of negative ions which are believed to optimise air quality to increase the body's ability to recover.

In addition, it's ergonomically-designed and rather than lying on hard perspex, it sports a specially-created silicone mattress "to support and caress the body".

"We can't wait to set the longevity world alight," says Kloodos founder Julie Cichocki. [fitness-kit.net](http://fitness-kit.net) KEYWORDS  
KLOODOS

## Total Body Cycle will intensify group exercise says

### Matthew Pengelly of Matrix Fitness

Matrix Fitness has launched the Total Body Cycle. This reimagined air cycle is optimised for quick transitions and aims to intensify group exercise and HIIT by transforming cardio workouts into a total body exercise.

Belt-drive air resistance means the harder the riders pedal, push and pull, the more challenging the workout. The design is also quieter than chain-drive resistance. Ergonomically designed handlebars offer multiple grips for riders of all sizes and the frame is reinforced steel to withstand heavy usage.

Matthew Pengelly, managing director of Matrix Fitness UK said: "We know that within a group setting, time is everything, and we've made sure the Total Body Cycle allows for fast transitions

● The new Total Body Cycle from Matrix Fitness

PHOTO: MATRIX FITNESS



*"We've made sure the Total Body Cycle allows for fast transitions between users"*

Matthew Pengelly

between users so instructors can keep up the intensity between circuits. A quick-pull lever lets you instantly adjust seat height, the sculpted seat requires just

one wrench to level, the low-maintenance belt-drive streamlines service and minimises downtime so that it's always ready for the next user. We've even added a transport handle, so it's easy to move the cycle between training areas."

The Total Body Cycle features a backlit LCD console that captures watts, RPMs, heart rate, calories, time and distance. It also offers integrated device storage.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
**MATRIX FITNESS**



## Ecore's Performance Collection offers a holistic solution for customers, says Rich Willet

Ecore has expanded its Performance Collection with the introduction of its new flooring solution, Performance Motivate Plus.

Tailored for light strength and conditioning workouts, it's designed to complement

Ecore's Performance Beast flooring, which is made to withstand heavier weights.

Rich Willet, president of Ecore's Flooring Business Unit, said: "With the introduction of our latest flooring innovation, we're not just expanding our product line, we're also rounding out a comprehensive collection of products tailored to meet every user's training demands."

Available in rolls, Performance Motivate Plus is a 10.5mm surface featuring Ecore's patented Tru technology which fusion-bonds a 2.5mm vulcanised composition rubber (VCR) surface layer to an 8mm VCR base layer. The

PHOTO: ECORE



*"We're rounding out a collection of products tailored to meet every training demand"*

Rich Willet, Ecore Flooring

surface layer provides durability and slip resistance, while the base layer's upcycled VCR provides ergonomic support to users. The new structure allows flexible, seamless design.

[fitness-kit.net](https://fitness-kit.net) **KEYWORDS**  
**ECORE**

● The new product is designed for light strength workouts



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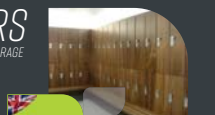
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# Sex differences in fat metabolism

A new study has found major differences in the way males and females utilise fat during exercise, as Kath Hudson reports

**T**he way fat stores are metabolised during exercise is different in males and females, according to a US study, which shows the need for more research into how exercise impacts the female body.

Published in the journal *Nature Metabolism*, the research was undertaken by the Molecular Transducers of Physical Activity Consortium, a collaboration of more than 100 scientists across a number of universities, studying the molecular changes which occur during and after exercise to advance the understanding of how physical activity improves and preserves health.

While exercise changes the health of fat stores in both sexes, making them more metabolically active, scientists discovered vast differences in the way fat tissues in males and females responded to running on a treadmill over an eight week period.

While males burned fat for energy, females were more likely to preserve and 'recycle' their fat mass.

Although females burned fat at the start of the trial, by the end of eight weeks their fat stores had reverted to how they had been at the start, although they did not gain fat in the way their sedentary counterparts did.

## Getting energy in different ways

"We saw both sexes mobilise their metabolism to get the energy they need," said first author Gina Many. "But they get their energy in

*Females draw less on fat stores, likely because they are vital for reproduction*

different ways. Females do so without drawing so much from their fat stores, likely because these are critical to reproductive health."

While too much body fat can cause disease in some people, depending on how and where their body stores it (with this differing according to body type and genetics), having body fat is also important for health, as it controls parts of the endocrine system, among other things.

In recent decades, scientists have learned that fat isn't just unwelcome weight, but a major organ that runs through the body. Like the skin, it secretes hormones and other compounds that play an important role in our health.

Ovulation and menstruation typically stops if women's body fat drops below 18 per cent, with 22 per cent currently thought to be the optimum level.

"These findings help set the landscape to understand disease risk and establish a basis for more personalised and targeted health interventions," said Many.

## Equitable health studies

The results also highlight the need for health studies to include males and females, as traditionally research has been heavily skewed towards males. ●

More: [www.hcmmag.com/fatscience](http://www.hcmmag.com/fatscience)



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The most comprehensive **AI-based** assessment station that leverages physical and cognitive tests to automatically create personalised training programs with **Technogym AI Coach**.

Discover more



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