

Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

Devon: 2025–2028

CREATED BY

Sport and Physical Activity Sector
Local Skills Accountability Board –
Devon



Contents

Photo credits:

CIMSPA would like to thank City College Plymouth and Plymouth Active for their support in sourcing photographs for this skills plan.

Introduction

Devon Local Skills Accountability Board

Chair: Rhys Jones, Chief Operating Officer, Plymouth Active

Vice Chair: Dr Phil Brown, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Plymouth Marjon University

Board member organisations

- Active Devon
- Active Torridge
- Anna FemFitness
- Argyle Community Trust
- B! Health and Fitness
- City College Plymouth
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Devon Chamber
- Devon, Plymouth & Torbay Careers Hub
- Exeter College
- LED Leisure
- Lex Leisure
- Mid Devon Leisure
- Plymouth Active
- Plymouth Marjon University
- South Devon College
- Street Games
- Teignbridge District Council
- University of Exeter Sport
- Vista Wellbeing
- YMCA Plymouth

Funding and support

Our local skills work to engage with employability-focused organisations and build a representative sport and physical activity sector workforce is funded and supported by Sport England and the National Lottery.



Get involved

To learn more about this local skills plan or the work of your local skills accountability board, please contact CIMSPA who will link you with their skills hub manager for Devon.

partners@cimspa.co.uk

Local Skills Accountability Board website page:

[LOCAL SKILLS ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD WEBSITE PAGE](#)

INTRODUCTION

How local skills forums will help in delivering our plan

The Devon Local Skills Accountability Board has created “local skills forums” that will contribute to the ongoing delivery of the Devon Local Skills Plan.

There are four local skills forums – North, East, South and West Devon – aligned with the boundaries of the One Devon Integrated Care Partnership. Plymouth is included within the West Devon local skills forum.

Each local skills forum will focus on region-specific challenges, gathering insights and feedback that reflect the unique needs of their area, which will then be brought forward to the local skills accountability board for strategic consideration.

Local skills forums will meet every other month. Meetings will be online – improving accessibility for stakeholders, especially those in rural or underserved areas.



Foreword

Wellbeing and health are key words used in the transformation of the UK through sport and physical activity, pioneered by Sport England and supported by CIMSPA. But what do they mean to our sector and workforce?

As this transition takes place, we will create a new narrative to connect with partners in the health and wellbeing sectors. This will allow us to deliver greater, more impactful and measured health outcomes through sport and physical activity.

The simple phrase **“it’s all about people”** really resonates with me in reference to our workforce. To deliver what our communities need in our ‘places’, we must understand what the need is. That may be recruitment for certain roles due to shortages or upskilling the right people to deliver a service that is needed locally.

The Devon Sport and Physical Activity Local Skills Plan will capture what the region needs directly from the people working within it. This ranges from identifying skills gaps to providing support and links to help colleagues and organisations recruit, train and retain the people they need to deliver the greatest outcomes in our communities.

It may sound simple, but if we are to provide meaningful services that are sustainable and understood, this will take time, strong leadership, collaboration and action.

Education providers, operators, local authorities, public health services, charities and other important stakeholders all have a part to play in coming together to improve the health of our communities and help guide the work of this local skills plan. Our sector is primed and ready to support the cause.

On behalf of all of the stakeholders who have been involved in putting this local skills plan together, we look forward to making a difference in Devon. Our sector knows its scope and worth, but we need to adapt and be proactive in our work to evidence the impact we can have in tackling inequalities and improving the health of Devon. To do that, we have to start with our workforce – after all, above everything else, it’s all about people.

Rhys Jones

Chair of the Devon Local Skills Accountability Board
Chief Operating Officer, Plymouth Active

CIMSPA and local skills



The right training, delivered in the right place, at the right time.

Our collaborative local skills project is bringing together employers, education providers and employability-focused organisations to effectively and efficiently match supply and demand.

CIMSPA – the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity – is the chartered professional body for the sport and physical activity sector workforce.

In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity”. This strategy explicitly backs CIMSPA’s rollout of local-based skills and training: “We will support CIMSPA in the development of local skills improvement plans with full national coverage.”

In line with its “Uniting the Movement” strategy, Sport England has commissioned CIMSPA to help accelerate local-focused skills improvements within the sport and physical activity workforce.

CIMSPA has already deployed a complete delivery team of multiple skills hub managers working at a local level across England, Wales and Scotland.

The CIMSPA skills hub manager within Devon works with the area’s local skills accountability board and with other organisations, carrying out skills diagnostics and helping to deliver the recommendations within this local skills plan.

[LOCAL SKILLS ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD WEBSITE PAGE](#)

Vision and context

Vision

The vision of this sector local skills plan is to build a robust, skilled workforce in the sport and physical activity sector in Devon, enhancing the wellbeing of our local communities.

Mission

- Foster local partnerships between the sport and physical activity sector and education providers to drive workforce development and innovation.
- Enhance health creation by aligning workforce skills with public health priorities, promoting sustainable pathways from healthcare to physical activity.

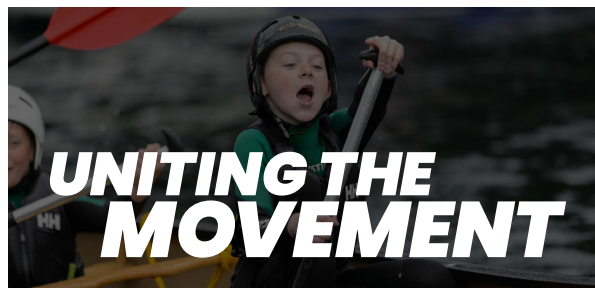


National context



DCMS strategy context

In August 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published “Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity”. This strategy explicitly backs CIMSPA’s rollout of local-based skills and training: “We will support CIMSPA in the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans with full national coverage.”



Sport England strategy context

In 2021, Sport England launched Uniting the Movement, a 10-year strategy outlining the importance of the workforce in driving change to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

Uniting the Movement strategic priorities include:

- Unleashing the power of diversity
- Ensuring people have access to help from those who relate to their experiences
- Training and qualifications fit for the future
- Better career choices
- Organisations contributing more to the social fabric of their communities

With this, the sector’s workforce must be representative of the community it serves, creating sustainable careers, placing local employer and individual need at the heart of training and development. There is a collective responsibility to ensure the sport and physical activity sector is a valued and accessible career choice with progression for individuals.



The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 context

The passing into law of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 places employers at the heart of the skills system, making it easier for people to access the skills required to secure well paid jobs in industries with skills gaps.

Employers and training providers must work together to identify the skills needed locally and address the skills gaps. For further education colleges and training providers who access funding to deliver their training, it is now a legal requirement to work with employers to develop skills plans. Adult skills funding is being developed, and funding must align to the employer-identified priorities.

Local context

Devon & Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan

The Devon & Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) aims to work with employers and education providers to produce a skilled workforce better matched to the needs of business. It is being jointly led by the Devon and Somerset chambers of commerce.

The plan focuses on five key challenges identified by local employers and stakeholders:

- Current and future skills needs
- Communication
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Infrastructure and rurality
- Local skills sector concerns

While sport and physical activity have not been focal points within the Devon & Somerset LSIP, the sector's significant benefits and contribution to public health, economic growth and community wellbeing have been recognised in the plan's latest progress report. This has resulted in plans for a targeted skills bootcamp aimed at addressing some of the sector's raised concerns and provide immediate skills development support.

“Our partnership with CIMSPA is essential for equipping professionals at all levels with the skills needed to meet sector demands and address emerging challenges. By prioritising both technical and transferable skills, we ensure that the workforce is prepared not only to excel in the sport and physical activity sector but also to contribute across multiple industries within Devon.”

Ronnie Carter – Devon and Somerset LSIP Executive and Projects Manager

Links

[DEVON & SOMERSET LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN](#)

LSIP engagement with the sport and physical activity sector

The Devon & Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan was published in August 2023 and a progress report was finalised in June 2024.

Priority 9 of the LSIP is to “encourage sector skills clusters” and the progress report notes that close collaboration is taking place between organisations engaged within the LSIP and with the sport and physical activity sector:

“Sport and physical activity partnerships have provided a platform for us to contribute to the development of skills strategies in the sports and physical activity sector, an area with significant potential for job creation and social impact.”

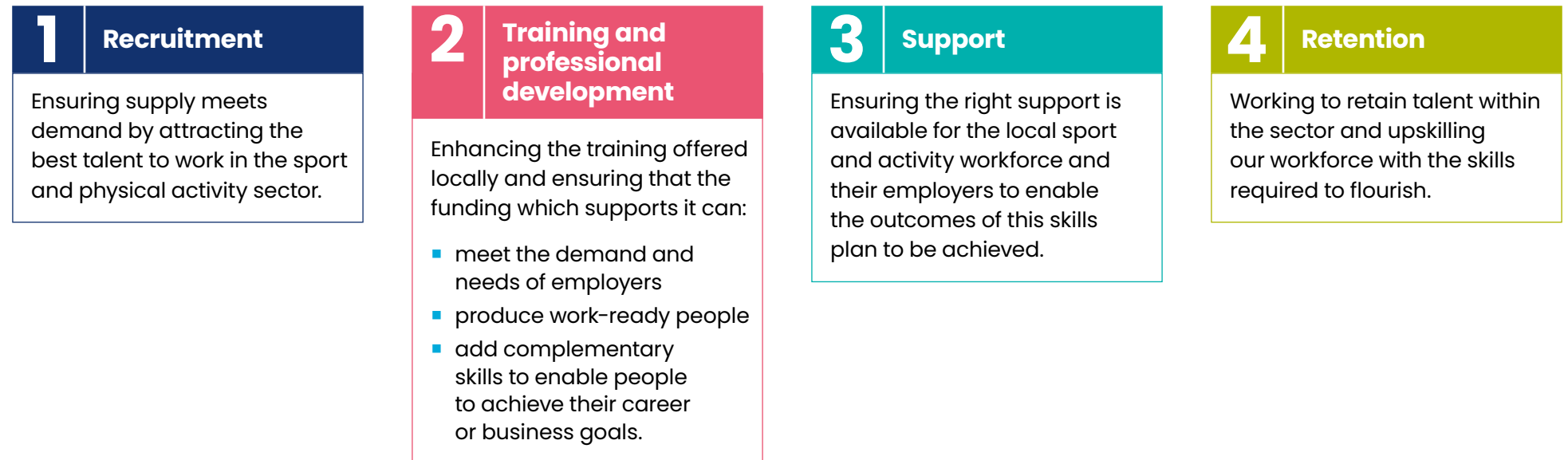
Devon & Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report June 2024



Themes, recommendations, partners and stakeholders

Themes

This plan has four themes.



Recommendations

This plan has five headline recommendations:

Develop education partnerships

1

Develop a pipeline of skilled candidates through strategic partnerships between local education providers.

Enhance training and development

2

Improve the quality and accessibility of training and development opportunities to meet local sector needs.

Strengthen networks

3

Strengthen support networks and provide a collaborative environment for all sector employees and employers – with a particular focus on sole traders, micro-enterprises and SMEs.

Enhance retention strategies

4

Increase sector workforce retention by improving career progression transparency and supporting continuous professional development.

Align with the health sector

5

Support preventive care with sport and physical activity through a well-qualified workforce.

Partners and stakeholders

CIMSPA and the local skills accountability board will work collaboratively with a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver on the actions that underpin this plan's recommendations.

These include:

Education and training providers

Those delivering accredited training – both sector/occupation-specific training and training around basic skills, knowledge and behaviours – for example, further education colleges and higher education institutes.

Skills and sector partners

Those with knowledge and understanding of the sport and physical activity sector, with expertise to support both employers and training providers, for example, Active Partnerships, national governing bodies of sport and other system partners.

Employers and deployers

For example, leisure providers, coaching companies and gym owners.

Recommendations, actions and milestones

RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop education partnerships: Develop a pipeline of skilled candidates through strategic partnerships between local education providers.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	1a	Work with higher education providers to support the development of qualifications mapped to the sector professional standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased number of higher education providers offering CIMSPA-endorsed qualifications ▶ New education products, including micro-credentials, developed and adopted by the sector ▶ Successful development and implementation of degree apprenticeships in collaboration with industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Data Lens ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN	1b	Work with further education providers to support the development of qualifications mapped to the sector professional standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Creation of curriculum frameworks that meet professional standards ▶ Further education providers develop programmes that align with local labour market demands ▶ Increased number of further education providers offering CIMSPA-endorsed qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Data Lens ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	1c	Enhance apprenticeship pathways to build employer-driven, skills-focused talent pipelines for the future workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Existing apprenticeships are reviewed and aligned with employer needs, for example soft skill development ▶ Education provider apprenticeship delivery capacity is expanded based on demand ▶ Education providers and employers collaborate to ensure a high-quality apprenticeship offering ▶ Increased number of employer-driven apprenticeship programmes aligned with sector needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Data Lens ▶ Local documentation and reporting ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data

To achieve recommendation 1, we will work closely with higher and further education providers, employers and other sector stakeholders to align educational offerings with the sector's occupational professional standards. This includes supporting the creation of new qualifications, developing apprenticeships and ensuring that education products meet local labour market needs. Continuous collaboration and feedback loops with employers and education providers will ensure that the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Enhance training and development: Improve the quality and accessibility of training and development opportunities to meet local sector needs.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN	2a	Establish data-driven sector training needs analysis to identify skills gaps and target training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Comprehensive data on local skills gaps and training needs is regularly collected and analysed ▶ Training programmes are tailored to the specific needs of the local workforce ▶ Increased participation in targeted training programmes ▶ Reduction in identified skills gaps through consistent training efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN	2b	Build collaborative training partnerships between local training providers, employers and other sector stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Formal partnerships established between local training providers and employers ▶ High engagement in joint training programmes and initiatives ▶ Participants and employers perceive training to be high quality and valuable ▶ Ongoing expansion of collaborative training efforts based on demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	2c	Increase access to flexible learning platforms, including online courses and blended learning models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Development and adoption of accessible online and blended learning platforms by local sector stakeholders ▶ High participation rates in flexible training opportunities ▶ Employees value the flexibility and accessibility of training ▶ Improved retention of employees engaged in flexible learning options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Number of courses sourced through the Training Academy ▶ Local documentation and reporting ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data

To achieve recommendation 2, we will collaborate with local training providers, employers and other sector stakeholders to ensure that training opportunities are data-driven and address specific skills gaps in the sector. By building partnerships and offering flexible learning options, we will improve the accessibility and quality of training. Continuous monitoring will ensure that our training initiatives remain relevant and impactful at the local level.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strengthen support networks: Strengthen support networks and provide a collaborative environment for all sector employees and employers – with a particular focus on sole traders, micro-enterprises and SMEs.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN	3a	Establish localised peer-to-peer networking platforms for employers and employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Employers and employees actively participate in regular local networking events and online forums ▶ Employers and employees value and benefit from peer support ▶ Increased collaboration between a range of employers of sport and physical activity occupations including education providers, local government and healthcare providers ▶ Sustained engagement in and growth of the networking platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN	3b	Implement peer-led learning and support groups to facilitate knowledge sharing and problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High engagement in peer-led support groups, with consistent attendance and participation ▶ Employers and employees value and benefit from peer-led learning ▶ Employees are able to develop through shared knowledge ▶ Participant support groups are regularly adapted in line with participant needs and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
RECRUIT RETAIN	3c	Identify and support potential mentors and mentees within the sector to establish a formal career mentorship programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mentors and mentees are matched on the basis of their skills, experience and goals ▶ High participation rates in mentorship programmes ▶ Improvements in mentees’ career development ▶ Improvement in mentees’ job satisfaction ▶ Mentorship programmes are seen as valuable by both employees and employers ▶ Clear improvements in career progression and retention among mentees ▶ Expansion of the mentorship programme based on positive participant feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data

To achieve recommendation 3, we will focus on building strong local peer-to-peer networks and mentorship programmes. These initiatives will provide employers and employees with valuable support, fostering collaboration and shared learning. By working with local sector leaders and business support organisations, we will create an environment where employees and business owners can thrive through strong professional connections and support structures.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Enhance retention strategies: Increase sector workforce retention by improving career progression transparency and supporting continuous professional development.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	4a	Foster collaboration between key stakeholders (including CIMSPA, employers and training providers) to create a comprehensive career map with qualifications and continuous professional development access at all career levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clear career pathways established for all sector occupations, with specific qualifications and experiences mapped to each stage of career development ▶ Transparent career progression opportunities ▶ Improved workforce retention rates ▶ Career progression resources and tools such as the CIMSPA Careers Hub and Careers Guidance Course are readily available ▶ Workforce members are satisfied with the career progression resources and tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Insight department data ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	4b	Ensure that regular continuous professional development opportunities are available for all occupations to maintain CIMSPA-endorsed qualifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased participation in continuous professional development programmes across all occupations and career stages ▶ Higher skill levels and qualifications among sector professionals, resulting in better job performance and career satisfaction ▶ Better alignment of sector workforce qualifications with professional standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting

To achieve recommendation 4, we will work closely with CIMSPA, training providers and employers to develop transparent career pathways and provide access to ongoing continuous professional development opportunities. This will ensure employees are fully supported in their career journeys, leading to improved retention and job satisfaction. Continuous feedback from stakeholders will guide improvements to ensure the system remains aligned with sector needs.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATION 5

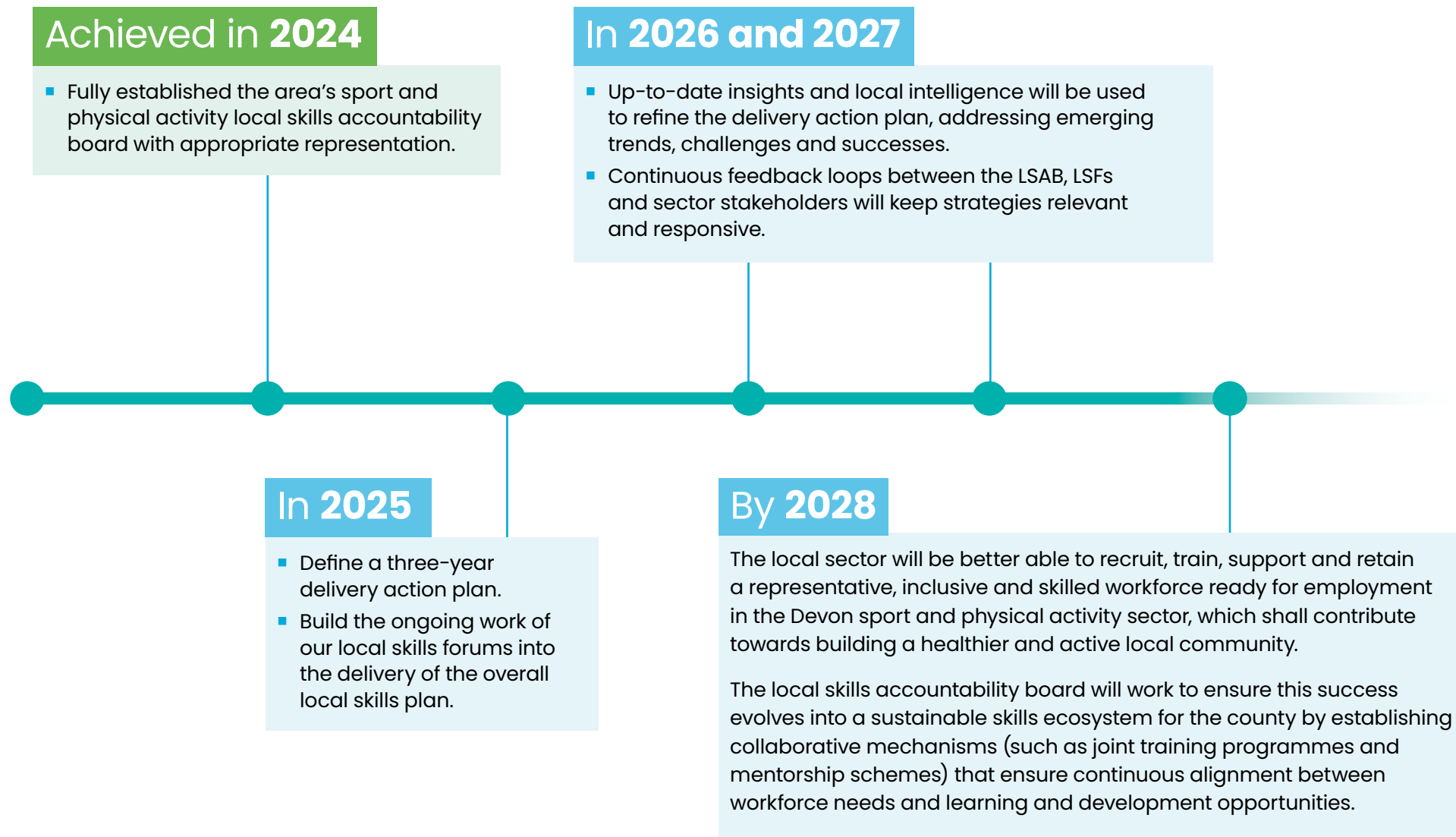
Align with the health sector: Support preventive care with sport and physical activity through a well-qualified workforce.

Theme(s)	No.	2025–2028 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT TRAIN	5a	Foster partnerships between the sport and physical activity sector and local health organisations to integrate sport and physical activity into preventive care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strong partnerships between health and sport and physical activity organisations ▶ Healthcare providers understand and value the role of physical activity in positive patient outcomes ▶ Increased use of sport and physical activity professionals in preventive healthcare treatment ▶ Increased public awareness of the role of physical activity in preventive care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
SUPPORT TRAIN	5b	Ensure professionals working in health-related sport and physical activity roles gain and maintain relevant, quality-assured and endorsed training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Higher rates of professionals gaining relevant, quality-assured and endorsed training in health-related roles ▶ Increased credibility and professional recognition of physical activity professionals in healthcare settings ▶ Continuous professional development opportunities that help professionals to maintain their qualification standards are readily available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Data Lens ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting
TRAIN RECRUIT	5c	Develop specialised continuous professional development programmes focused on managing long-term conditions through physical activity interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Specialised continuous professional development programmes focused on managing long-term conditions through physical activity interventions are readily available ▶ High participation rates in specialised continuous professional development programmes ▶ Sport and physical activity practitioners have increased understanding of managing long-term conditions through physical activity interventions ▶ Improvements in healthcare statistics related to long-term condition management ▶ Healthcare providers and sport and physical activity participants value the increased specialist knowledge and service delivery of sport and physical activity practitioners ▶ Ongoing expansion of CPD offerings to address evolving healthcare needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Local documentation and reporting ▶ Local workforce skills diagnostic data

To achieve recommendation 5, we will collaborate with local healthcare organisations and sport and physical activity providers to integrate physical activity into preventive care programmes. We will ensure that professionals are well-qualified through CIMSPA-endorsed qualifications and provide ongoing continuous professional development opportunities to align with healthcare needs. These efforts will create a strong connection between the health and sport and physical activity sectors, driving better health outcomes through physical activity interventions.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

Milestones



CASE STUDY

City College Plymouth



The Devon Local Skills Accountability Board has played a crucial role in connecting educators and employers in the county, providing a platform to discuss sector needs and align workforce development strategies. Through this collaboration, City College Plymouth has been able to improve their curriculum offering to equip students with skills that are in demand from local employers.

As a member of the LSAB, City College Plymouth has been able to harness the Devon CIMSPA Regional Datapack, local workforce skills diagnostic data and a connection with fellow LSAB member Plymouth Active to identify local employer needs. As a result, three key changes were made to the college's qualification offering:

Water-based skills

One standout change has been the inclusion of water-based skills within the curriculum for the Leisure Team Member apprenticeship delivered by the college. This addition provides learners with essential life skills and employment-focused competencies, preparing them for roles in the leisure industry. Many students have already earned their RLSS UK National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) as a direct result of this initiative, with a number of apprentices now completing the qualification with Plymouth Active.



Level 3 fitness qualifications

Feedback from LSAB employer members highlighted local demand for fitness professionals with Level 2 and Level 3 gym-based qualifications. This insight prompted the college to reinstate a fitness-focused course at Level 3, equipping learners with sector-recognised qualifications and making them more employable in the sport and physical activity sector in Devon.

Conflict management training

Local employers also raised that skills in conflict management were important for sector roles, with additional training needed in this area. In response, City College Plymouth reviewed an existing conflict management module included in its public services curriculum and adapted this for inclusion in sport and physical activity qualifications. With learning supported by sector-specific virtual reality scenarios, students are now able to gain essential knowledge for transitioning into a sport and physical activity career.

With City College Plymouth now a CIMSPA Further Education Partner, future plans for further improving their offering include gaining CIMSPA endorsement for their courses and embedding population health management into the curriculum to further align with national sector trends and needs.

“This alignment of education and workforce needs demonstrates the value of the LSAB in fostering partnerships that benefit both learners and employers.

By integrating real-world insights into curriculum design, we are not only preparing students for employment but also addressing the broader workforce requirements of the sport, health and physical activity sector across local, regional and national levels.”

Liam Stevens, Curriculum Lead and Development Officer, Faculty of Health and Active Wellbeing at City College Plymouth

Wider alignment with local skills work

Exeter College Skills Bootcamp

Skills Bootcamps are flexible courses of up to 16 weeks that offer people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and support their career progression. Funded by the UK government and contributions from employers, Skills Bootcamps have been developed as part of the government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee. The initiative is designed to close the skills gap in England that has been intensified by the disruption that coronavirus caused to job sectors and businesses.

The development of a bespoke Skills Bootcamp with Exeter College is a direct result of discussions held within the Devon Local Skills Accountability Board and the data and insights gathered through their collaborative efforts. While the sector is not explicitly identified as a priority for the Skills Bootcamp scheme, the board and college recognise the critical need to offer career development opportunities in sport and physical activity.

Through close collaboration, LSAB members and Exeter College are designing a Skills Bootcamp that aligns with regional workforce needs. The bootcamp will be aimed at aspiring managers, equipping individuals with the skills to progress in their careers and gain valuable business management knowledge. Recognising the importance of bridging the gap between the sport and physical activity and health sectors, the course will also include content focusing on population health management.

This initiative leverages LSAB insights to ensure that the curriculum is relevant, forward-thinking and capable of addressing sector-specific challenges such as workforce readiness for roles in long-term condition prevention and management.

The Skills Bootcamp is expected to launch in 2025, providing targeted upskilling opportunities that prepare professionals to meet the evolving demands of both the sport and physical activity sector and the health sector. This approach not only supports individual career progression but also strengthens the local workforce's ability to contribute to broader health outcomes.

“The collaboration between Exeter College and the Devon Local Skills Accountability Board in developing Skills Bootcamps represents a significant step towards enhancing the skillsets of our local workforce in this sector. By working together, we aim to provide flexible, sector-relevant training that addresses the specific needs of the membership. This partnership not only supports students in gaining valuable skills but also ensures they are well prepared to support the current needs and future opportunities of our employers to thrive.”

Lucinda Sanders – Director of Higher Education and Adult Learning at Exeter College

Wider alignment with local skills work

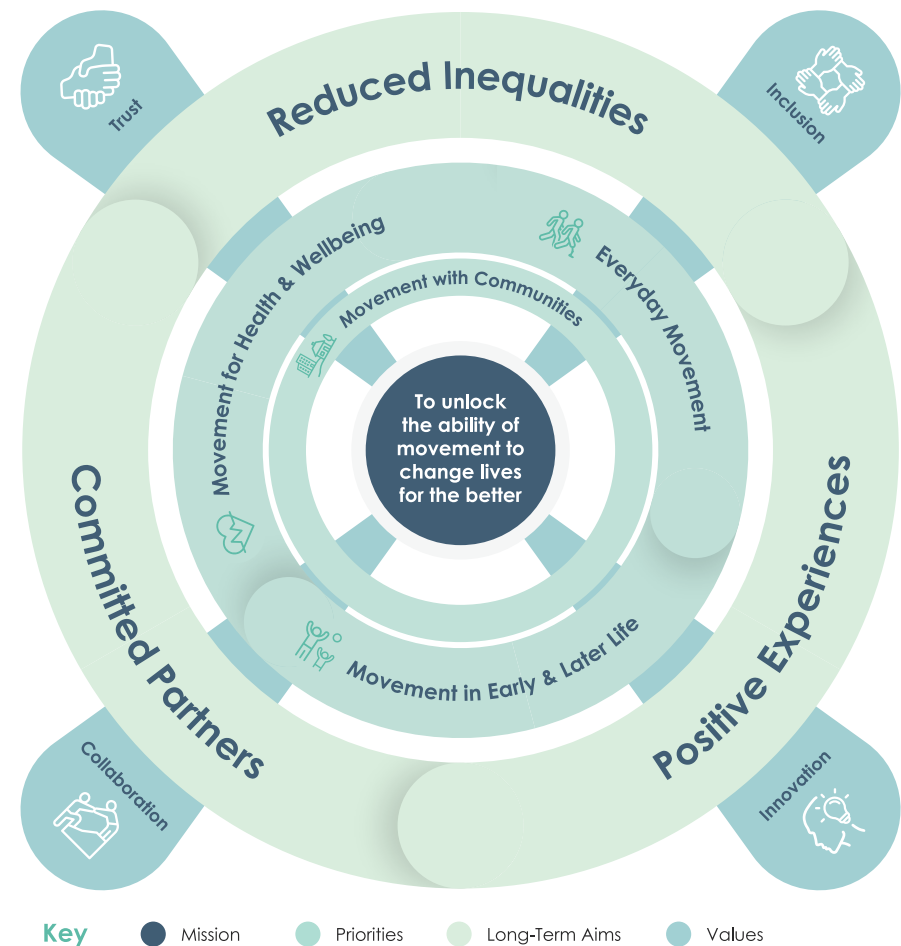
Active Devon – Devon Moving Together



Active Devon is striving towards its vision of everyone in Devon being active for life and unlocking the ability of movement to change lives for the better.

The organisation works with communities and partners to make connections and enable people to move more.

Devon Moving Together is an integrated strategy created by Active Devon. The strategy's priorities mutually enhance and support each other to move towards the long-term aims identified.



About Devon

Devon is the third-largest county in England with a population of 1.2 million. Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay are its three major urban centres and a third of Devon's residents live in rural communities.

Public sector administration is diverse and includes a county council, two unitary authorities and eight district or city councils as well as town and parish councils. In the health sector, a new integrated care system was formed in 2022.

Devon's natural environment drives a vibrant tourism economy. However, it also leads to local challenges including rural isolation and seasonal shifts in its population and economy.

Local activity demographics and diversity

- Devon has a significant population of older people, already exceeding England's estimated 2035 population age profile, and is ageing further.
- A quarter of people in Devon live with disabilities or long-term conditions. They are twice as likely to be inactive.
- 149,000 people live in the 20% most deprived communities in England. The dispersed, rural nature of many of these often masks inequality, isolation and deprivation.
- Although ethnically diverse groups form a low percentage of the population (3.5%), 41,000 individuals from ethnically diverse communities live in Devon.
- A third of adults and half of children in Devon do not move enough to receive the full health benefits of physical activity, and inactivity is more prevalent among people who are marginalised by wider societal inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on certain communities, exacerbating inequality.

By helping people who are marginalised to make movement a part of their lives, Devon Moving Together aims to help to address these inequalities.

[ACTIVE DEVON STRATEGY - DEVON MOVING TOGETHER](#)

Active Devon – Future of Public Leisure in Devon report

Active Devon’s Future of Public Leisure in Devon report collates and explains collaborative work towards the challenge of how to “unlock the full potential of Devon’s leisure services” to help the region’s population live longer and healthier lives by being more active, more often.

The report makes the case for how, in Devon, “there is considerable hidden potential in our network of public leisure facilities supported by a growing skilled workforce to be a catalyst for change”.

Report highlights

- There is growing momentum to bring leisure into the conversation as a genuine contributor to an emerging ill-health prevention agenda.
- The report includes a recommendation that the county’s leisure providers work together as a “whole system” in support of a shared outcome to help “Devon move together”.

Key datapoints

- There are 10 local authorities in Devon helping to keep residents and visitors healthy and connected through physical activity by supporting 36 major leisure facilities across 27 towns and 2 cities in Devon.
- These include 19 25m swimming pools and 1 50m pool.
- Devon’s leisure services employ over 2,000 people with more than 800 full-time equivalents (FTEs) – from pool lifeguards and duty managers to swim coaches and physical activity practitioners with specialisms in health conditions.
- Devon public leisure services received 4,680,000 visits in 2022.
- The estimated annual local authority support for public leisure in Devon is just over £27 million.
- For every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity, whether through leisure facilities, community settings or natural environment assets, nearly £4 is generated for the economy and society.

(See full report for all references and footnotes)

[FUTURE OF PUBLIC LEISURE IN DEVON REPORT](#)

Data and insight that have informed this work

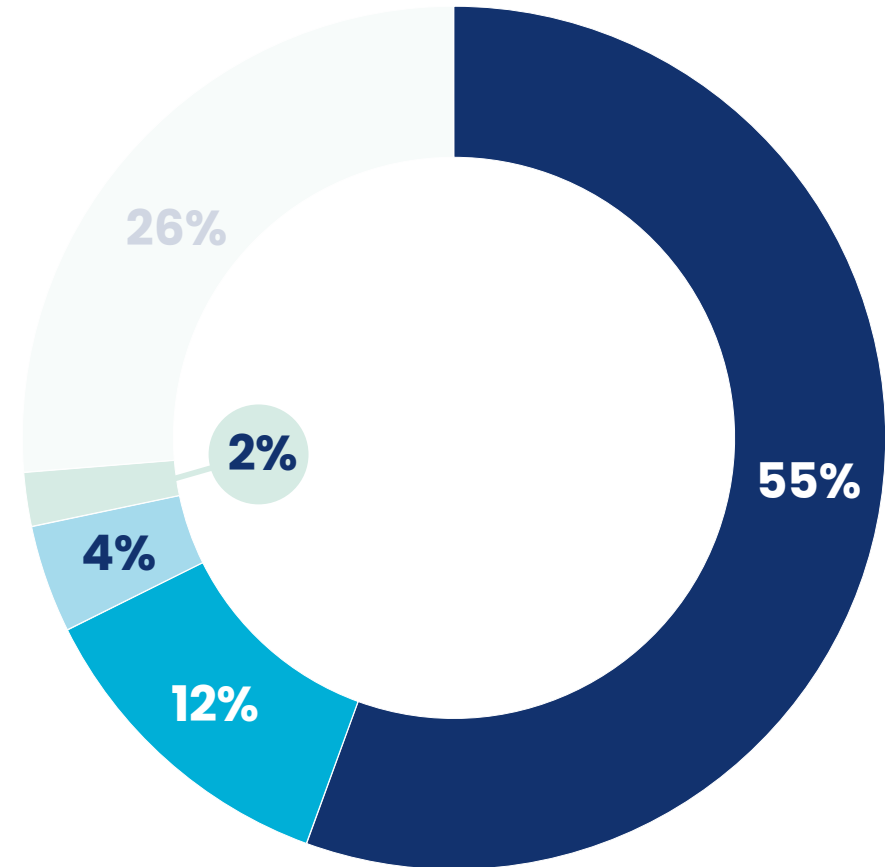
Devon CIMSPA Regional Datapack 2024

Businesses in the region: Size

The predominance of micro-enterprises (55%) and small enterprises (12%) within Devon's sport and physical activity sector highlights the region's reliance on smaller-scale organisations. These businesses often face unique challenges, including limited resources for workforce development and career progression.

The Devon Local Skills Plan addresses these challenges by prioritising accessible, scalable training solutions tailored to micro and small enterprises, enabling them to upskill their workforce, improve business resilience and foster sector growth. By focusing on these smaller organisations, we ensure that workforce development initiatives benefit the majority of businesses operating in the region.

- 55% Micro-enterprises (1-9 employees)
- 13% Small enterprises (10-49 employees)
- 4% Medium enterprises (50-249 employees)
- 2% Large enterprises (250+ employees)
- 26% Businesses unaccounted for



The total percentage in this chart sums to 99% because the individual values were rounded down for simplicity.

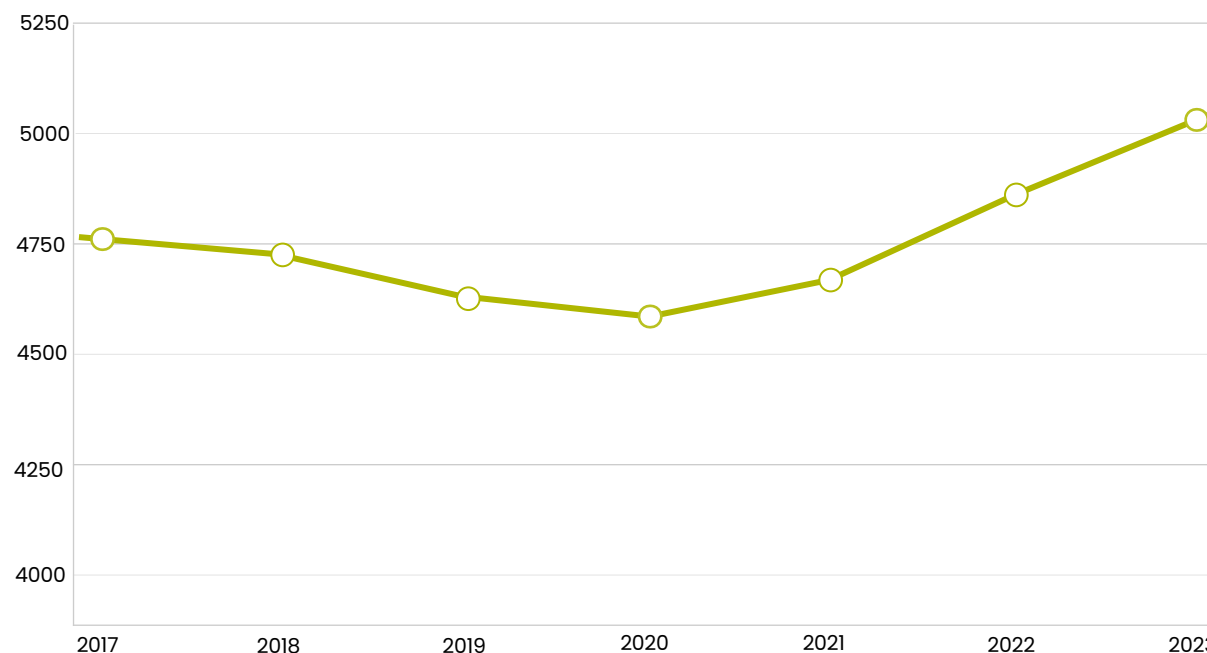
Businesses in the region: Growth

The steady workforce growth of 5.2% within Devon’s sport and physical activity sector since 2017, as highlighted in this graph, reflects a positive trajectory for the sector’s employment capacity. This growth, driven by either the establishment of new businesses or the expansion of existing ones, underscores the increasing demand for skilled professionals in the region.

The Devon Local Skills Plan leverages this momentum by focusing on workforce development initiatives that equip individuals with the skills needed to sustain and amplify this growth. By aligning training provisions with sector needs, we can ensure that the sector remains a significant contributor to the regional economy while addressing potential skills shortages.

There has been a growth in the size of the workforce employed by Devon’s sport and physical activity sector of 275 since 2017, seeing a total increase of 5.7% in employees over the 6-year period. This shows growth across the sector within the region and suggests that either new sport and physical activity businesses have formed or that existing sport and physical activity businesses have expanded.

Cumulative **employee** growth



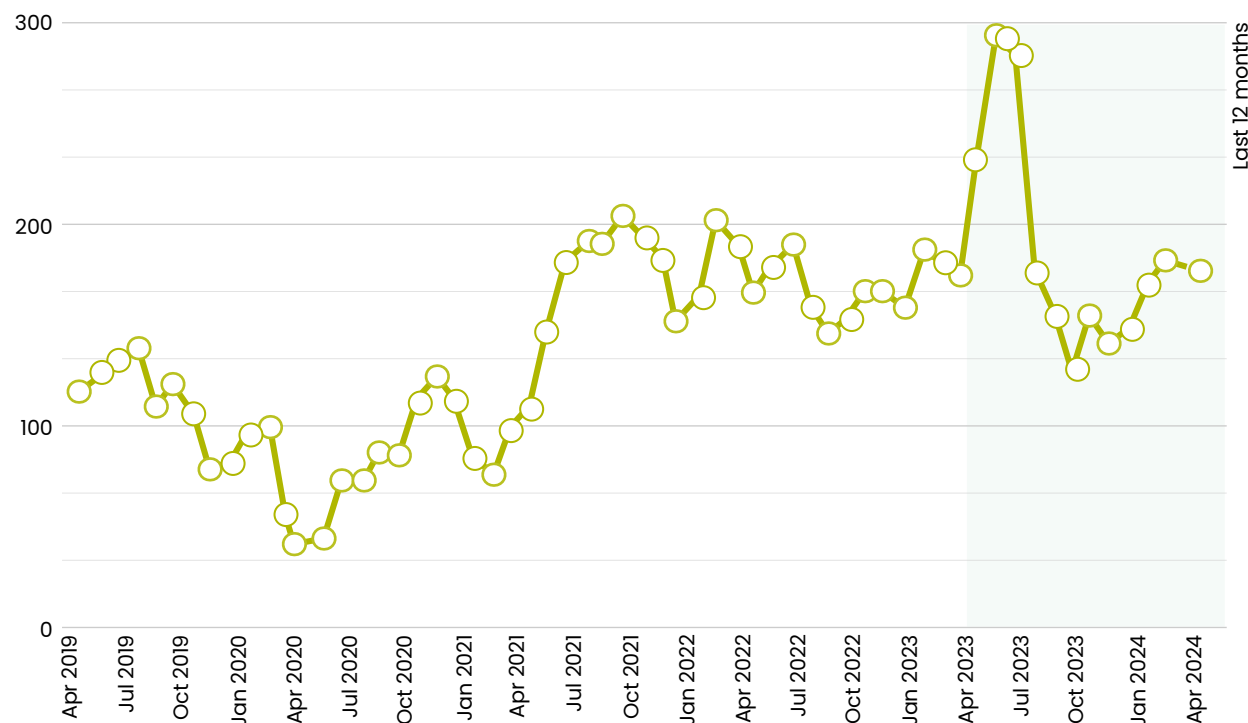
+5.2% estimated growth

The best estimate of the annual growth rate of the number of employees of all the companies operating within the sport and physical activity sector in Devon.

Recruitment: Job postings

The steady increase in job postings within Devon’s sport and physical activity sector, peaking at over 1,000 in 2023, reflects a growing demand for skilled professionals and heightened competition among employers, with 265 organisations actively recruiting in the last year. This highlights the sector’s expansion but also underscores challenges in attracting and retaining talent.

The Devon Local Skills Plan must address these dynamics by enhancing workforce readiness, bridging skills gaps and ensuring alignment between training provisions and employer needs. By fostering a skilled workforce, we can alleviate recruitment pressures and support the sustainable growth of the sector.



2019 550

2020 434

2021 694

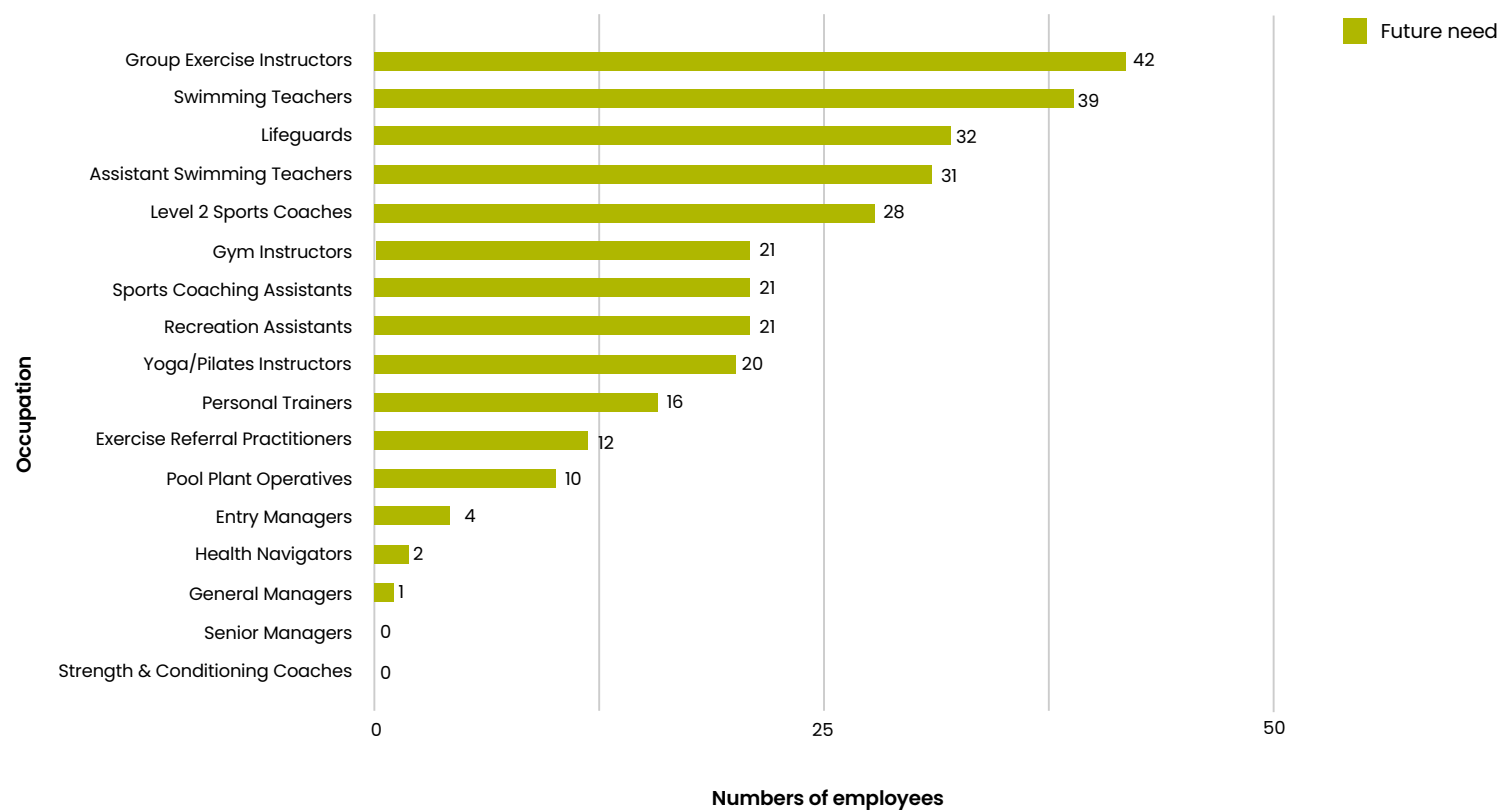
2022 839

2023 1,012

Devon Workforce Skills Diagnostic Survey data

This visual represents data collected through the CIMSPA local workforce skills diagnostic survey, spanning October 2023 to January 2024. The insights, representing 21 responses in Devon – over half of which were from multi-site sector operators – highlight the current employment levels and future workforce needs across various roles in the sport and physical activity sector.

The data underscores significant demand in occupations such as lifeguards, swimming teachers and assistant swimming teachers, revealing key areas where workforce planning and targeted upskilling initiatives are essential to meet future operational needs and address existing skills gaps.



General insight highlights

Recruitment

- **High demand for key roles**
There is consistent demand for gym instructors, personal trainers, lifeguards and swimming teachers, reflecting the sector's staffing challenges.
- **Upskilling opportunities**
Many organisations are progressing existing staff into needed roles, but gaps remain in recruiting fully qualified candidates.
- **Barriers to recruitment**
Common recruitment challenges include low pay, accessibility and competing with jobs requiring no formal qualifications that offer better salaries.

Training

- **Training budgets**
While many organisations allocate training budgets, cost and accessibility of training are persistent issues. Larger organisations tend to have more resources for training compared to micro-enterprises and SMEs.
- **Focus areas**
To meet sector requirements, training priorities are currently (ideally CIMSPA-endorsed) swimming teacher and gym qualifications as well as lifeguard certifications such as the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ).
- **Barriers to training**
Common barriers to providing staff with training include the high cost, difficulty in accessing local courses and the inability to release staff for training sessions.

Work placements

- **Engagement with young workers**
Several operators offer work placements for 16–23-year-olds, providing real-world experience and introducing them to sector opportunities.
- **Barriers to hosting placements**
Some organisations cite limited resources, lack of staff to supervise and logistical issues as obstacles to offering work placements.

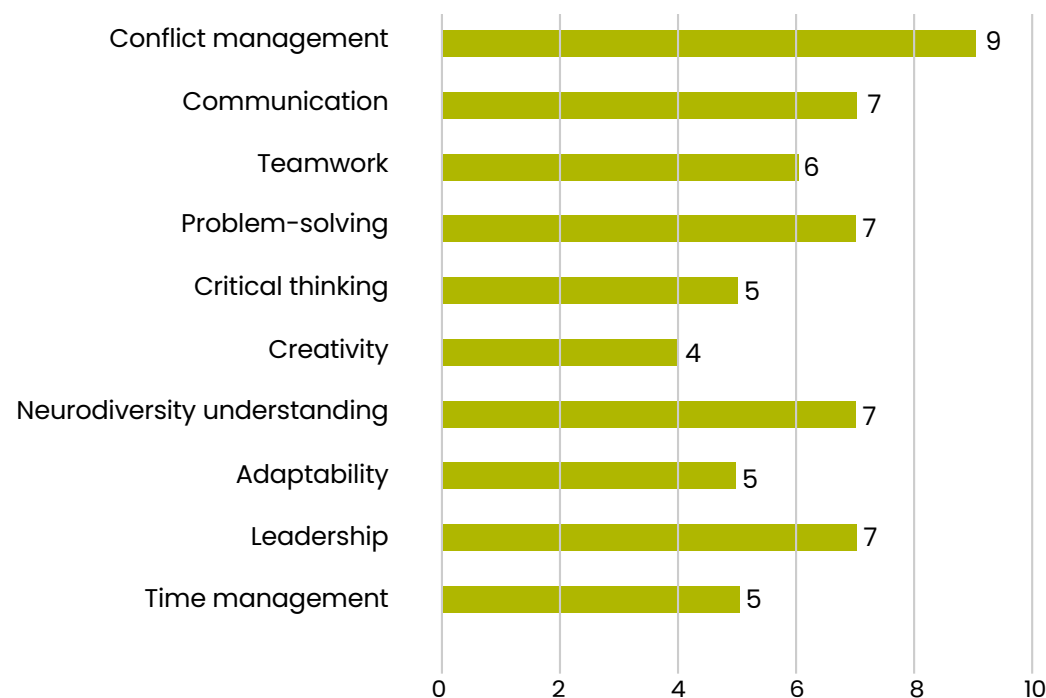
Retention

- **Persistent retention challenges**
Issues like low pay, lack of career progression and the transient nature of younger workers (who are often lifeguards) contribute to high staff turnover.
- **Retention efforts**
Organisations are focusing on upskilling staff and creating progression opportunities to improve retention.
- **Region-specific concerns**
Rural areas face additional challenges due to accessibility and limited candidate pools.

Devon LSAB Employer Survey 2024

Employability skills requirements

What would be the key employability skills required to upskill your workforce?



Key employability skills for upskilling the workforce

This visual represents responses from 11 sport and physical activity operators participating in the Devon Local Skills Accountability Board. These operators represent a mix of organisation sizes, from SMEs to larger organisations with workforces exceeding 250 employees. The survey aimed to identify the key employability skills necessary to upskill their workforce, reflecting the diverse needs of the sector.

Insights from the data

- **Conflict management** emerged as the top priority, identified by nine respondents, indicating a significant demand for managing interpersonal and workplace conflicts effectively.
- **Skills like communication, problem-solving and leadership** were also emphasised with seven votes each, highlighting their importance in ensuring a cohesive and effective workforce.
- **Neurodiversity understanding** also ranked highly, reflecting the sector's growing recognition of inclusivity and the need to create supportive environments for all employees.
- Other critical areas included **teamwork, critical thinking, adaptability and time management**, each receiving five to six votes.
- While **creativity** was noted by fewer respondents (four), this still signifies its role in fostering innovation within the sector.

Sector relevance

These findings underscore the importance of equipping employees with both interpersonal and problem-solving capabilities to navigate the dynamic nature of the sport and physical activity sector. By addressing these skill gaps, organisations can enhance workforce resilience, productivity and adaptability in line with local and regional priorities.

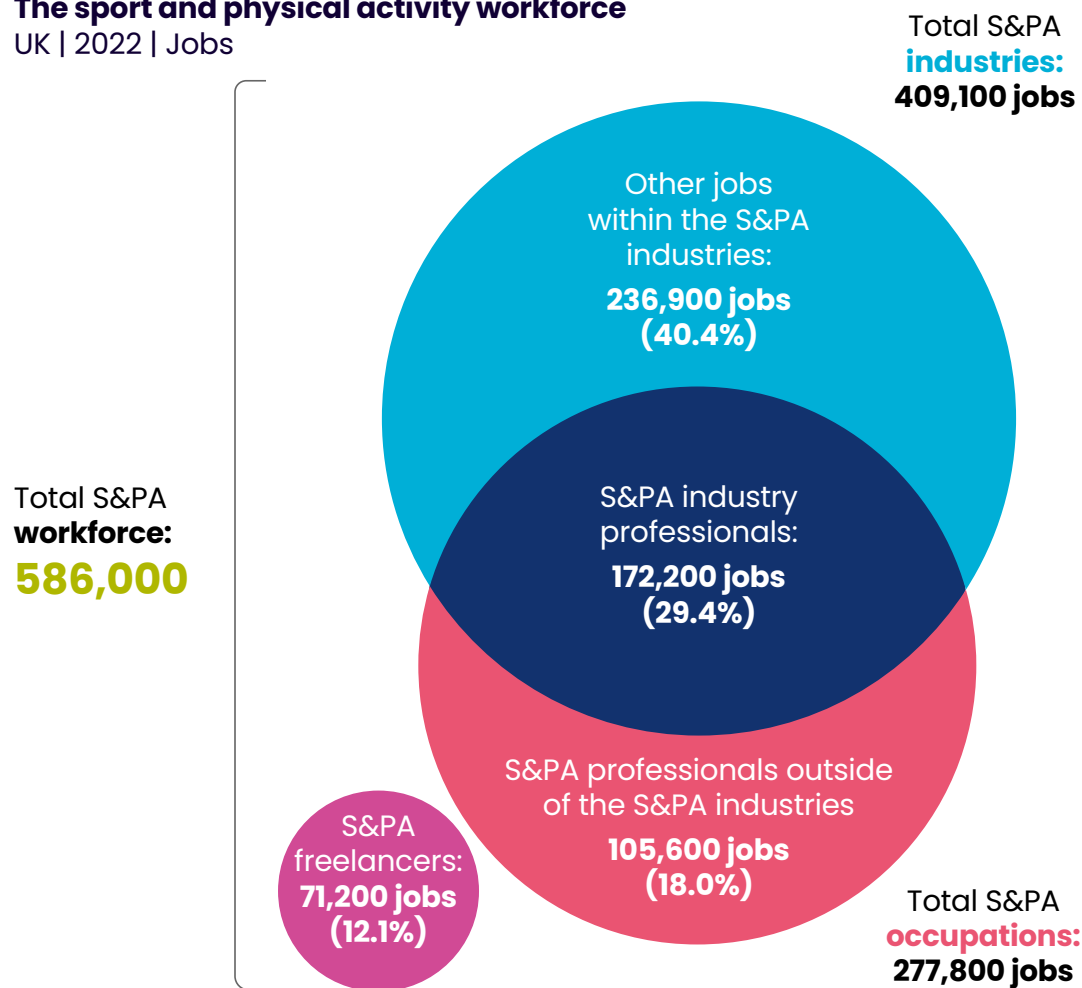
CIMSPA Workforce Insight Report 2023

Where they work

This visual provides a comprehensive breakdown of the UK’s sport and physical activity workforce, highlighting the diverse employment structures within the sector. With only 29.4% of the workforce classified as industry professionals and 12.1% as freelancers, it underscores the need for targeted workforce development to support career progression, job security and sector sustainability.

The Devon Local Skills Plan must ensure that training pathways account for this mixed workforce, providing accessible upskilling opportunities for professionals, freelancers, and volunteers, ultimately strengthening the sector’s resilience and ability to meet increasing demand.

The sport and physical activity workforce UK | 2022 | Jobs



Source: Lightcast (2023.1) and ONS APS

Sector workforce demographics

The national picture outlined below will allow the Devon Local Skills Accountability Board to benchmark the data we collate against these national averages to improve diversity within our workforce.

Sport and physical activity core occupations tend to be less diverse than the UK-wide workforce.

Age

- On average, workers in sport and physical activity occupations are young, with 30% of jobs held by those between 16–24 years of age – three times the average of all occupations.
- Sports coaches, sports players and sport and leisure assistants have the youngest worker demographics.

Disability

Fewer workers within the sport and physical activity sector workforce report having a disability (13%) compared to the average of all occupations (16%). This is likely linked to the age profile of the sector workforce and to the physical demands of the occupations.

Gender

- Compared to the average, sport and physical activity workers are more likely to be male, although there are signs that this is changing.
- The share of male workers in sector occupations overall is 56%, down from 62% in the previous Workforce Insights Report (2020).
- In contrast, women are more likely to work part time (38%) than men (14%) in the overall economy*.

SOURCE [↗](#)

Socioeconomic group

- Compared to the wider workforce, the sport and physical activity sector workforce has a higher proportion of workers in lower socioeconomic groups (LSEGs), driven by higher shares of students and semi-routine occupations (28% vs 23% workforce-wide).
- The sport and physical activity sector also has a higher proportion of small employers and own-account workers (23% vs 9% workforce-wide), consistent with the importance of freelancers to the sector.

Ethnicity

- On average, the sport and physical activity workforce are less diverse than the UK-wide workforce, with more than 87% of sport and physical activity workers being of White British ethnicity compared to 79% elsewhere.
- White Other and Black are the second and third most represented ethnicities within the sport and physical activity workforce.
- Looking across sport and physical activity occupations, sports players and fitness instructors are the most diverse in terms of ethnicity, although both are below the wider workforce average.

The scope of the sport and physical activity sector

Sector and industries definitions

The sport and physical activity sector:

“Everyone working in the sport and physical activity workforce in the industries and occupations detailed below and overleaf.”

Sector industries

Industry definitions from CIMSPA for the purpose of this strategy are shown in the table (right).

Paid/voluntary workforce

This sport and physical activity sector local skills plan aims to be broad enough in its outcomes to not need to be separated by employment/deployment status.

Industry	Definition
Exercise and fitness	Services, activities and venues that predominantly improve participant physical fitness.
Community sport	Sport/skill-based services, activities and venues that increase participation and develop skill, sometimes targeting under-represented groups and inequalities.
Leisure operations	Services, activities and venues that predominantly improve participation in physical activity.
Health and wellbeing	Holistic services and activities that promote improvements across all aspects of health, sometimes involving health care and other non-sector professionals.
Adventure sport	Activities, services and venues both indoor and outdoor improving participation in sport perceived as having a high level of risk.
Performance sport	Competitive sport and activities including those in which athletes receive payment for their performance; professional, semi-professional and grassroots sport.

Occupations

Introduction

“Occupations” are a standardised set of job roles that cover the whole of the sport and physical activity sector. For example, what some operators might call a “leisure attendant” is considered to be part of the “recreation assistant” occupation.

Definitions

- Frontline – occupations in sport and physical activity directly servicing the needs of the participant.
- Support chain – occupations in sport and physical activity servicing the needs of the front line and/or the facilities.
- Extended workforce – enablers and influencers of sport and physical activity who are not part of the sector workforce.

Frontline occupations

Sector workforce Occupations aligned with CIMSPA professional standards	Gym instructor, core group exercise instructor, coach, coaching assistant, personal trainer, strength and conditioning trainer, pilates based matwork instructor, yoga instructor, aspiring manager, entry manager, health navigator, swimming teacher, lifeguard, recreation assistant, assistant swimming teacher, sports therapist*, nutritionist*, sport nutritionist*, physiotherapist*. *Occupations supported directly by other professional bodies
Broader workforce	Receptionist, bar staff, kitchen and catering assistant, waiting staff, cleaning assistant, domestic assistant, sales and retail assistant, chef.

Support chain occupations

Sector workforce Occupations aligned with CIMSPA professional standards	Entry manager, general manager, senior manager, tutor, assessor, coach developer, health navigator, pool plant operative.
Broader workforce	Sport development officer, researcher, teacher, administrative occupations, finance occupations, health and safety, quality manager, environmental manager, auditor, sports media and reporters, general assistant, maintenance operative (examples).

Extended workforce

Enablers Enablers of sport and physical activity who don't necessarily hold a CIMSPA-recognised professional qualification	Primary school teachers, teaching assistants, PE teachers, childcare workers, carers, sport event staff/volunteers, activity group leaders (e.g. scouts, guides, etc), officiating.
Influencers Influencers of sport and physical activity who don't necessarily hold a sector-specific professional qualification	Parents, sport role models, sport and fitness models, sport and fitness social media influencers.

Glossary

CIMSPA Data Lens

The CIMSPA Data Lens is a real-time intelligence dashboard for the UK's sport and physical activity sector.

The Data Lens system uses web-scraping APIs to open access data and machine learning, all segmented through real-world definitions specific to the sport and physical activity sector.

It can be interrogated specifically in niche areas such as exercise and fitness or community sport, or even specific geographies at a county or town level.

[DATA LENS](#) 

Local documentation and reporting

Throughout the lifespan of this local skills plan, CIMSPA and the local skills accountability board will look to incorporate any new sector-specific data created by local stakeholders that helps us understand the impact of our actions.

For example – employability and skills reports, survey results and impact reports.

Local skills accountability board (LSAB)

A group of local education and training, skills/employability, health and employer stakeholders across a region and within the sport and physical activity sector.

LSABs are co-ordinated and managed by CIMSPA, enabled by Sport England and National Lottery funding. An LSAB is collectively responsible for the creation, implementation and renewal of a sport and physical activity sector local skills plan.

Local skills improvement plan

Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change. They are created by employer representative bodies appointed by the UK government.

This document is NOT an LSIP.

Local workforce skills diagnostic data

CIMSPA has a team of local skills hub managers working across England, Scotland and Wales.

These skills hub managers are engaged in collecting workforce skills intelligence directly from employers in their local area, through a detailed and standardised workforce skills diagnostic survey.

This data can then be segmented at the level of the local skills accountability board for use in better understanding local workforce needs and in monitoring the success of workforce improvement initiatives.

Micro-enterprises

Micro-enterprises are very small organisations with 1–9 employees and a turnover or balance sheet total of less than €2 million.

Glossary

Preventive healthcare roles

Preventive healthcare focuses on supporting adults to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing through a range of proactive measures. These include regular screenings and check-ups as well as participation in physical activity and considering other lifestyle choices and changes.

Many occupations within the sport and physical activity sector work collaboratively with healthcare providers to support individuals with their health, both providing expert, tailored advice and signposting to other services where needed. Examples of these roles include health navigator, exercise referral specialist and health and wellbeing coach.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data is non-numeric, descriptive information that gathers experiences and perceptions. It includes case studies, feedback via surveys and forms, and interviews.

SME (small- and medium-sized enterprises)

An SME is any organisation that has fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50 million or a balance sheet total less than €43 million.

Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

This document is a sport and physical activity sector local skills plan. It is a local skills plan specific to the sport and physical activity sector in a specific region.

The plan has been created by the local skills accountability board (see above), coordinated and managed by CIMSPA.

The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Devon



ALL TOGETHER, MORE SUPPORT



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

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