

# Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

Tees Valley: 2026–2029

CREATED BY

Sport and Physical Activity Sector  
Local Skills Accountability Board –  
Tees Valley





## Contents

### Photo credits:

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# Introduction and context

## The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Tees Valley

### About the board

**Chair:** Darren Humphreys MCIMSPA, Director of Operations, Tees Active

### Board executive

- CIMSPA
- Tees Active
- Swim England

### Board member organisations

- Coach Core
- British Triathlon
- Bede Sixth Form College
- Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)
- Darlington Borough Council
- Everyone Active
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Hartlepool College of Further Education
- Middlesbrough College
- Middlesbrough Council
- Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation
- Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
- Stockton Riverside College
- Street Games
- Teesside University
- Tees Valley Sport
- You've Got This

## Tees Valley – geographical area

This local skills plan is for the Tees Valley region, setting out priorities and actions for the sport and physical activity workforce across the area. The plan focuses on employers, education providers, partners and stakeholders operating within the Tees Valley Combined Authority landscape.

The Tees Valley region comprises the following local authority areas:

- Stockton-on-Tees
- Darlington
- Hartlepool
- Middlesbrough
- Redcar and Cleveland

The plan reflects the shared workforce challenges and opportunities across these areas while recognising local differences in provision, employer size, community need and health outcomes. It is designed to support collaboration across borough boundaries, ensuring a coordinated approach to recruitment, training, progression and professional standards for the sport and physical activity workforce.



## 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 workforce development managers working at a local level across England, Wales and Scotland.

### 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 workforce development manager for Tees Valley.

[partners@cimspa.co.uk](mailto:partners@cimspa.co.uk)

[LOCAL SKILLS ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD WEBSITE PAGE](#)

## 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

### Tees Valley Local Skills Improvement Plan

Tees Valley's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is an employer-led framework designed to ensure that post-16 education and training reflect the skills needs of local employers. The LSIP is led by the Northeast England Chamber of Commerce, which works with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, education providers and employers to shape a responsive local skills system.

The LSIP focuses on better aligning employer collaboration with labour market demand and supporting inclusive economic growth across Tees Valley. This provides a strategic backdrop for all local workforce development activities.

Although sport and physical activity is not identified as a headline priority sector within the LSIP, it is recognised as part of the region's foundational economy, supporting local employment, progression opportunities and community wellbeing. The sector plays a key role in addressing inactivity, health inequalities and delivering preventative health and wellbeing services across Tees Valley.

As demand for leisure, health and community-based services continues to grow, the sector's workforce needs to align strongly with the LSIP's cross-cutting priorities around skills, employment pathways and employer-led training.

### Alignment with this plan

Like the LSIP, this Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Plan for Tees Valley is built on deep engagement with employers, education partners and local stakeholders. It mirrors the LSIP's emphasis on:

- employer-led workforce development, ensuring that training and progression routes reflect actual employer needs in Tees Valley
- collaboration between employers and education providers, so that curriculum and work experience better prepare learners for local careers
- data and insight to support evidence-based decisions about skills gaps and workforce priorities
- inclusive pathways into work, connecting local people, particularly those from under-represented groups, into good-quality employment.

This plan translates those broader LSIP principles into sector-specific actions that will support workforce growth, retention, professional recognition and alignment with local health and wellbeing priorities. It reinforces the role the sector plays not only in local economic development but also in improving community health, participation and social cohesion – key outcomes valued in the wider Tees Valley skills ecosystem.

# Themes, recommendations, partners and stakeholders

## Themes

This plan has four themes.

<b>1</b>	<b>Recruitment</b>
Ensuring supply meets demand by attracting the best talent to work in the sport and physical activity sector.	

<b>2</b>	<b>Training and professional development</b>
Enhancing the training offered locally and ensuring that the funding which supports it can:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Meet the demand and needs of employers</li><li>▶ Produce work-ready people</li></ul>	
Add complementary skills to enable people to achieve their career or business goals	

<b>3</b>	<b>Support</b>
Ensuring the right support is available for the local sport and activity workforce and their employers to enable the outcomes of this skills plan to be achieved.	

<b>4</b>	<b>Retention</b>
Working to retain talent within the sector and upskilling our workforce with the skills required to flourish.	

## Recommendations

The Tees Valley Local Skills Plan sets out a shared approach to building a skilled, resilient and future ready workforce for sport and physical activity. Shaped by employer insight, workforce data and local priorities, the plan focuses on creating clear career routes, strengthening skills and retention, and ensuring the workforce can support both community wellbeing and local health outcomes.

This plan has four headline recommendations:

### 1 Create entry routes

Create clear, supported entry routes into the sport and physical activity sector to meet employer demand and improve workforce recruitment and retention across Tees Valley.

1

### 2 Support education, training and progression

Align education provision with local workforce needs to support progression, upskilling and long-term careers in the sector.

2

### 3 Develop a representative, diverse and inclusive workforce

Develop a workforce that reflects Tees Valley's communities by providing opportunities to underrepresented groups and supporting access to careers in the sector.

3

### 4 Align with the healthcare sector

Strengthen the impact of Tees Valley's workforce on local health and wellbeing priorities by collaborating with healthcare sector partners as well as embedding professional status and targeted training into workforce development planning.

4

## Partners and stakeholders

CIMSPA 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 as well as Active Partnerships, national governing bodies of sport and other system partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Tees Valley Sport.

### Employers and deployers

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

# Recommendations and actions

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**Create entry routes:** Create clear, supported entry routes into the sport and physical activity sector to meet employer demand and improve workforce recruitment and early retention across Tees Valley.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	1a	Support education providers to ensure learners are aware of pathways into the sector and career ready.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Teachers, career advisers and education providers are confident promoting professional pathways into the sector</li> <li>▶ More learners choose courses aligned to their aspirations, supported by the <a href="#">CIMSPA Careers Hub</a> and local guidance</li> <li>▶ Education providers partner with CIMSPA to align curriculum to employer needs in Tees Valley</li> <li>▶ Employers report improved access to career-ready candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Education provider learner enrolment data</li> <li>▶ TVCA “Shout Out” portal careers engagement data</li> <li>▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Number of CIMSPA education partners</li> </ul>
<b>RECRUIT</b>	1b	Work with Jobcentres, employers and community partners to promote sport and physical activity careers as viable local employment options, linking people directly into entry routes and vacancies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased awareness of sector careers among jobseekers</li> <li>▶ Increased use of CIMSPA Careers Hub via Jobcentres</li> <li>▶ More jobseekers and career-changers apply for sport and physical activity roles</li> <li>▶ Increased number of individuals with CIMSPA professional status across Tees Valley</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Jobcentre Plus engagement data</li> <li>▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data (reduction in roles needed)</li> <li>▶ Number of individuals with CIMSPA professional status</li> </ul>
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	1c	Deliver regular support hubs that improve employee onboarding and early career support to reduce early attrition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employers regularly attend support hubs and share onboarding tools, templates and good practice to strengthen early career support</li> <li>▶ New starters report a better onboarding experience and improved confidence in their role in the first 3–6 months</li> <li>▶ Improved retention in the first 12 months of employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of support hubs</li> <li>▶ Support hub employer attendance</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Employer recruitment data</li> </ul>

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 1 CONTINUED

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	1d	Develop coordinated and valuable entry pathways into the sector involving work experience, including work placements, volunteering, traineeships and pre-employment programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employers offer work placements, volunteering opportunities, traineeships and pre-employment programmes</li> <li>▶ Employers regularly attend careers events and advisory boards to highlight available opportunities</li> <li>▶ More learners and jobseekers complete pre-employment work experience</li> <li>▶ Learners and jobseekers report greater understanding of sector careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer attendance at FE/HE advisory boards and careers events</li> <li>▶ Number of work experience opportunities</li> <li>▶ Education provider and Jobcentre work experience data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	1e	Improve employer awareness and use of recruitment, training and workforce funding to enable filling of skills gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Simple guidance on accessing funding is developed with support from colleges, TVCA, Tees Active, local authorities and wider partners</li> <li>▶ Employers are aware of and understand how to access funding opportunities</li> <li>▶ Employers access funding for recruitment and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of employers applying for funding support</li> <li>▶ TVCA funding uptake figures</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data (employer feedback on clarity and impact of funding guidance)</li> </ul>

To achieve recommendation 1, we will use data and employer insight to shape training and work experience that meet local workforce needs, creating stronger pathways into sector careers.

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**Support education, training and progression:** Align education provision with local workforce needs to support progression, upskilling and long-term careers in the sector.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	2a	Use workforce insight and employer feedback to shape education routes and provide accessible career pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Mismatches between curricula and employer skills needs are identified</li> <li>▶ Education providers and employers collaborate to continually ensure education provision meets workforce needs</li> <li>▶ Courses and training are updated to reflect real employer demand</li> <li>▶ Reduced skills mismatch in recruitment, early employment and for staff progression to senior roles</li> <li>▶ More staff progress into senior roles and remain in the sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Education provider course destination data</li> <li>▶ CIMSPA professional status data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	2b	Provide tailored support and a platform to micro-enterprises and SMEs, ensuring a whole-picture approach to meeting sector needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local training opportunities teach business skills as well as technical role-based knowledge</li> <li>▶ Online resources for small businesses are highlighted to SMEs and micro-enterprises</li> <li>▶ Regular employer networking events including all business sizes create stronger collaborations across Tees Valley</li> <li>▶ SMEs and micro-enterprises can access support without heavy time burden</li> <li>▶ SMEs and micro-enterprises feel represented and engaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of events held</li> <li>▶ Event attendance</li> <li>▶ Number of training opportunities including business skills in the curriculum</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 2 CONTINUED

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	2c	Create a one-stop shop that signposts local training and mentoring opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Staff and employers can easily find local training</li> <li>▶ Increased uptake of training and mentoring opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Training provider course completion data</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	2d	Support education providers to increase quality of provision and deliver learning aligned with the sector's employer-led professional standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More education providers are CIMSPA Education Partners</li> <li>▶ More CIMSPA-endorsed qualifications and apprenticeships aligned with employer-led professional standards</li> <li>▶ Learners and apprentices are equipped to gain professional status upon entering the sector workforce</li> <li>▶ Employers report job applicant skillsets being better matched to their workforce needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of CIMSPA education partners</li> <li>▶ Number of endorsed learning products</li> <li>▶ Number of CIMSPA student members</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data (reduction in skills needed)</li> </ul>

To achieve recommendation 2, we will strengthen awareness of career pathways across Tees Valley, ensuring people can enter, progress through and remain in the sector. This will be delivered through a collective approach with employers and education partners.

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**Develop a representative, diverse and inclusive workforce:** Develop a workforce that reflects Tees Valley’s communities by providing opportunities to underrepresented groups and supporting access to careers in the sector.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	3a	Improve employer understanding and delivery of inclusive recruitment practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Inclusive practice resources are signposted to and used by employers</li> <li>▶ Best practice examples are collected and shared</li> <li>▶ Employers are confident in embedding inclusive recruitment strategies into their recruitment processes</li> <li>▶ Sector recruitment practice is consistently inclusive</li> <li>▶ More diverse applicant pools</li> <li>▶ A more diverse sector workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer recruitment data</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	3b	Ensure that people from underrepresented groups are aware of and can access sector careers through community outreach and by providing work experience opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased awareness of sector careers across underrepresented groups</li> <li>▶ Collaboration with the DWP connects underrepresented groups to work experience opportunities</li> <li>▶ Increased volume of work experience opportunities available</li> <li>▶ Work experience opportunities are high quality and support career readiness</li> <li>▶ More diverse applicant pools</li> <li>▶ Employers report improved career readiness from job applicants</li> <li>▶ More people from underrepresented groups enter roles confidently and sustain employment</li> <li>▶ A more diverse sector workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ DWP data</li> <li>▶ Employer recruitment data</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 3 CONTINUED

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	<b>3c</b>	Deliver cultural competence, inclusion and accessibility training that enables the existing workforce to serve Tees Valley’s communities confidently and safely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More employers embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training into workforce plans and development</li> <li>▶ Staff report greater confidence in working inclusively</li> <li>▶ Improved service experience for diverse communities and groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ EDI training uptake/ completion</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>

To achieve recommendation 3, we will build a deeper understanding of Tees Valley’s diverse communities and embed inclusive practices across recruitment and training, opening routes into careers and strengthening the sector’s ability to support local communities.

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 4

**Align with the healthcare sector:** Strengthen the impact of Tees Valley’s workforce on local health and wellbeing priorities by collaborating with healthcare sector partners and embedding professional status and targeted training into workforce development planning.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b>	4a	Embed professional status across the sector to increase credibility with healthcare partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employers embed professional status in recruitment and role scopes</li> <li>▶ More employees hold professional status across Tees Valley</li> <li>▶ Consistent language improves understanding of workforce capabilities across the sectors</li> <li>▶ Increased credibility of the sector workforce with health care partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of individuals with CIMSPA professional status</li> <li>▶ Number of job adverts with professional status embedded in role descriptions and requirements</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	4b	Support the sector workforce in gaining the skills and confidence to work with participants with additional healthcare needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employers embed specialist training for working with people with additional healthcare needs in learning and development plans</li> <li>▶ Staff regularly complete training in working with people with additional healthcare needs</li> <li>▶ Sector professionals are confident and knowledgeable in delivering services to participants with additional healthcare needs</li> <li>▶ Communities report positive, safe experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ CIMSPA Dashboard CPD data</li> <li>▶ Education provider course completion data</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	4c	Work with healthcare partners and training providers to deliver accredited training that aligns with healthcare priorities and workforce needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Closer partnerships between sport and physical activity and healthcare organisations</li> <li>▶ The sector is recognised as a trusted partner in Tees Valley’s health and wellbeing priorities</li> <li>▶ Local training reflects healthcare priorities</li> <li>▶ Co-designed training improves workforce readiness for health-aligned interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of joint training initiatives</li> <li>▶ Number of learning products aligned with health-related professional standards</li> <li>▶ Qualitative data (feedback from NHS/ public health partners, case studies)</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> </ul>

To achieve recommendation 4, we will embed professional standards across the Tees Valley workforce and strengthen collaboration with public health and wellbeing services. This will ensure that the sector is trusted, consistent and equipped to support local priorities such as managing inactivity and long-term conditions.

\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

# Data and insight that have informed this work

## An overview of local workforce skills diagnostic findings

Tees Valley's sport and physical activity workforce operates in a distinct context shaped by health inequality, economic transition and a high reliance on community-based delivery. There is a greater concentration of frontline, entry-level roles in leisure, aquatics and community sport alongside smaller employer sizes and different operating models.

This creates acute recruitment and retention pressures, particularly for roles such as recreation assistants, lifeguards, coaches

and instructors which are essential to service delivery but often lack clear, visible progression pathways.

Tees Valley's workforce is shaped by student turnover, SME-led provision and limited access to flexible funding, making retention and progression just as important as recruitment. Many employers rely on short-term or part-time staff, with fewer structured development routes into supervisory, management and leadership roles.

This local skills plan responds to these challenges by focusing on clear entry pathways, stronger alignment between education and employers, inclusive recruitment, professional standards and closer integration with health systems. It recognises that workforce resilience in Tees Valley depends on building long-term careers, not just filling vacancies.

Source: Local workforce skills diagnostic findings from 38 employers in Tees Valley, 2025



### Current and needed workforce

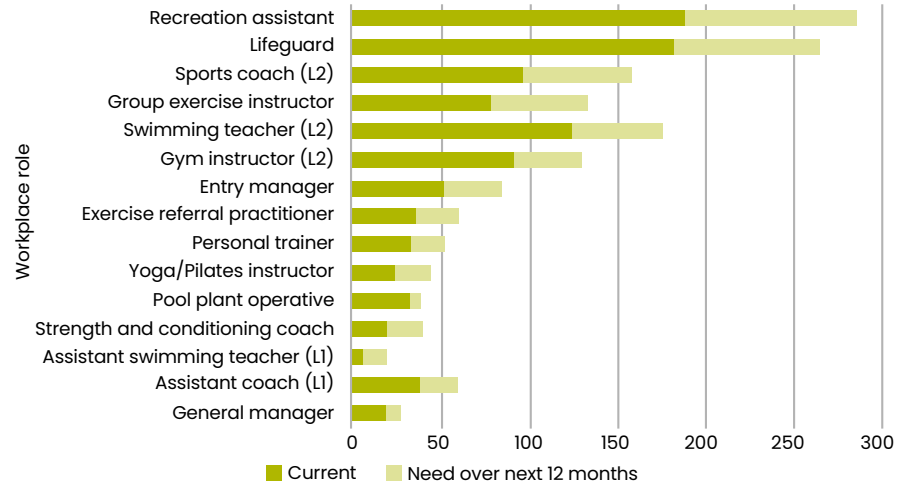
The data from across Tees Valley highlights significant pressure on frontline and entry-level roles that are essential to the delivery of sport and physical activity services. The highest levels of demand are for recreation assistants, lifeguards, swimming teachers (level 2), group exercise instructors and sports coaches (level 2). These roles form the backbone of leisure centres, swimming facilities and community sport provision. Shortages directly impact service capacity, safety and accessibility. The scale of demand indicates an urgent need for clear entry routes, improved careers guidance and accessible training pathways to support recruitment into the sector and build a sustainable pipeline of future workforce talent.

Alongside this, the data shows growing demand for roles aligned to health and wellbeing priorities, including gym instructors, exercise referral practitioners, strength and conditioning coaches, personal trainers and yoga/Pilates instructors. This reflects the sector’s expanding role in preventative healthcare, tackling inactivity and supporting communities with complex needs.

Demand for management, technical and infrastructure roles such as entry managers, general managers and pool plant operatives also highlights the importance of retention, progression and leadership development to maintain safe and effective services. This reinforces the need for a coordinated workforce approach in Tees Valley that connects recruitment, training, progression and health system alignment to ensure long-term resilience across the sport and physical activity sector.

Source: Local workforce skills diagnostic data collected from 38 employers in Tees Valley, 2025.

Tees Valley Current Roles and Needed Roles



## Health

Tees Valley's health profile reinforces why workforce development in sport and physical activity is a prevention priority.

Economic inactivity and long-term sickness are a major local challenge, as Tees Valley faces some of the highest levels in England of both. 25.5% of the population is economically inactive, with 35.2% of this number being as a result of long-term sickness.<sup>1</sup>

The region's healthy life expectancy is also low at 58.8 years (4.3 years shorter than the national average).<sup>2</sup> Across Tees Valley, healthy life expectancy is also significantly lower than overall life expectancy<sup>2</sup>, resulting in many residents spending a substantial proportion of their lives in poor health.

This means that the sector plays a critical role beyond traditional sport and leisure, reinforcing the importance of a skilled sport and physical activity workforce that can support preventative healthcare, inactivity reduction and wellbeing at a community level.

As such, employers increasingly require staff who can work confidently with inactive populations, support behaviour change and align with health and wellbeing priorities. However, this demand is growing faster than workforce capability, creating a skills gap between traditional delivery roles and health-aligned practice. To tackle this challenge, this local skills plan aims to better connect entry routes, training and progression focused on meeting current demand.

## Data sources

<sup>1</sup>Annual population survey Oct 2024–Sep 2025, Office for National Statistics, 2025

[ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEY](#) ↗

<sup>2</sup>County Durham and Tees Valley: Health, Wealth and (Unequal) Opportunities to Thrive, Health Equity North and the County Durham Community Foundation, 2023

[OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE HEALTH EQUITY NORTH AND THE COUNTY DURHAM COMMUNITY FOUNDATION](#) ↗



# 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 grass roots 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

## Business skills diagnostic

CIMSPA has developed and launched a business diagnostic process through its workforce development team.

Sole traders and micro-enterprises of fewer than 10 employees make up 89% percent of the businesses in our sector, including over 73,000 freelancers and sole traders.

The diagnostic focuses in particular on this business type – building an understanding of their business needs and exploring how we can position our product offer and partner support to meet these.

In 2026, the Workforce Development Tool replaced the local workforce skills diagnostic and business diagnostic surveys.

## 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.

## Local skills improvement plan

Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change.

LSIPs:

- place employers at the heart of local skills systems
- facilitate direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers, providers and local stakeholders
- help learners gain the skills they need to get good jobs and increase their prospects.

Each LSIP has a designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), appointed by the Department for Education.

This document is **NOT** an LSIP.

### Local workforce skills diagnostic data

CIMSPA has a team of local workforce development managers working across England, Scotland and Wales.

These workforce development 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.

In 2026, the Workforce Development Tool replaced the local workforce skills diagnostic and business diagnostic surveys.

### Professional status

Professional status is a defined understanding of the level at which an individual can apply their skills, knowledge and experience to working in the sport and physical activity sector. Professional statuses are issued by CIMSPA as a chartered professional body and recognised regulator.

### 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.

### 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 key stakeholders from the local area and coordinated and managed by CIMSPA.

### Workforce Development Tool

The Workforce Development Tool, based on the sector's employer-led professional standards which are managed by CIMSPA, is an employer-focused online suite of surveys.

The tool has been developed by CIMSPA to capture workforce insights from organisations operating in the sport and physical activity sector. It explores and supports recruitment, retention, training

and workforce planning by gathering data on current workforce structure; skills gaps; recruitment practices; training and development needs; diversity and inclusion; and volunteer engagement.

Local workforce development managers use the Workforce Development Tool to collect data from sport and physical employers across each region of the UK.

This data will help inform each region's local skills plan, identifying current skills within the workforce and gaps that need to be filled based on demand in the area.



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