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Sector skills strategy for Scotland 2026–2030



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Foreword

We are now in a position where half of adults in Scotland live with at least one long-term condition and almost two in five adults (39%) have a condition that limits their daily activities.

In 2021-2023, females were expected to enjoy 60 years of healthy life expectancy and males 59.6 years. Behind these figures sit deeply troubling inequalities, as the difference in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas sits at 26.7 years for females and 25.6 years for males.

The need for people to be more physically active has never been more important. Sport, physical activity and their associated sociological, physiological and psychological benefits can help create a more fair, equal and prosperous society.

The Active Scotland Outcomes Framework sets out a shared ambition for increasing physical activity across the nation. Achieving this ambition depends on having a diverse, skilled and confident workforce that can create environments and opportunities that support people to engage in physical activity in ways that work for them.

This sport and physical activity sector skills strategy has been developed collaboratively with Scottish stakeholders, driven by those who are members of the Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board and supported by CIMSPA and **sport**scotland. It has been designed to provide anyone with an interest in the sport and physical activity workforce in Scotland with a clear understanding of some of the key challenges and priorities for the sector. The Board also seeks to foster collaboration with the rest of the UK to share learning and best practice.

The strategy outlines our ambition alongside medium and longer-term aims and provides clear steps to help us achieve success. Alongside this report we will be developing a more detailed action plan to help all stakeholders with an interest in the Scottish sport and physical activity workforce engage and support delivery.

Collectively, the Scotland Professional Development Board and I are dedicated to growing the attractiveness of working in the sport and physical activity sector for everyone. This will ensure that everyone participating in sport and physical activity has an excellent experience and maximise the potential of the sector to enhance health and wellbeing, strengthen communities and help people fulfil their potential.

Elaine McNish

Chair of the Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board



Summary

The ambition of this strategy is to help everyone in Scotland be more active more often through inclusive, safe and enjoyable experiences of sport and physical activity that build confidence, competence and lifelong habits.

The most critical factor in making this happen is ensuring the sport and physical activity workforce is skilled, motivated and valued to provide the best possible experience for those participating.

This strategy has three key focus areas. By focusing our attention in these areas, we will the grow the attractiveness of working in the sport and physical activity sector and ensure everyone taking part in sport and physical activity has an excellent experience.

We will achieve our ambition by:

- improving experiences for the workforce
- improving experiences for employment
- improving experiences in education.

See pages 6 and 7 for further detail.

Our work to date

The impact of the previous Scottish sport and physical activity sector skills strategy 2021-2024

This isn't our first strategy – this strategy builds on the existing foundations built in the delivery of the first strategy published in 2021. Between 2021 and 2024, the Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board played a supporting role in many key achievements for the sector:

- The development and publication of the CIMSPA 2023 Workforce Insights Report, showing who the workforce is comprised of and where they operate
- The publication of 40 professional standards
- The development and publication of the sector's first standards for deployment policy and 14 risk-based evaluations
- The development and implementation of the Scottish Coaching Certificate
- The endorsement of over 1,000 qualifications and CPD courses
- The development of two local skills accountability boards, underpinned by employer skills diagnostic assessments
- The sector's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support programmes and packages that enabled the sectors workforce to return to pre-COVID levels[1]
- The development of the sector's careers hub, where careers, guidance, access to training and the latest jobs can be found
- The connection between CIMSPA and Public Health Scotland in the development of their physical activity referral standards

While progress has been made against our initial ambitions, the Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board has refined these to ensure that they remain relevant for continuation in our 2026–2030 strategy.



The next steps 2026–2030

Through the work completed through the previous strategy, the Scotland WPDB has established a firm foundation for the sector to achieve our vision. However, there are still clear challenges that we face. This is how we aim to address them.

The ambition

The ambition of the Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board and its stakeholders is to grow the attractiveness of working in the sport and physical activity sector and ensure all Scottish customers and consumers have an excellent experience.



The aims and objectives – what we will deliver

During the period of this strategy, we will achieve our vision by focusing our attention on three areas of work:

Improving experiences for the workforce

- We will understand the size and shape of the workforce by gathering local data and inclusivity insight. This will inform regional skills plans and a national workforce profile that helps to increase the diversity of the workforce so that it more closely reflects the communities it supports.
- We will position our sector at the heart of employability initiatives, ensuring qualifications, training and work placements align with our strategic goals, support new entrants and reflect the needs of our communities.

Improving experiences for employment

- We will create spaces for cross-sector connection and collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation through safe, inclusive forums for workforce dialogue.
- We will expore how workforce registration can enhance participant experience, ensuring it is tailored to Scotland's needs.

Improving experiences in education

- We will ensure that our workforce policies, qualifications and training are fit for purpose for the Scottish sport and physical activity workforce, aligning all education provision to our aims and objectives and the changing needs of participants.

How we will deliver the aims and objectives

The Scotland Workforce Professional Development Board will deliver these aims and objectives by:

- being advocates for the delivery of the ambition – Board members will be representative of their area of the sector, feeding into the Board and influencing their relevant networks
- developing subgroups of the Board where there is a need to bring experts together on a topic area aligned to the priorities outlined in the Board's operational plan
- working closely with **sport**scotland, CIMSPA and other national agencies to influence, collaborate and engage with them on the shared vision and objectives
- approving the development and review of new workforce policies and standards, ensuring they are fit for purpose for the Scottish workforce
- advocating for and promoting the use of the **sector's careers hub**
- advocating and promoting the use of the sector's training academy
- advocating and promoting the work of the Workforce Governance and Registration Scheme project
- providing advice, guidance and support on how to better connect local supply with demand, focusing on enabling greater connections between further and higher education and employers and capitalising on Regional Skills Investment Plan opportunities
- overseeing the endorsement and ongoing qualitiy assurance of education products developed by CIMSPA education partners, ensuring they are fit for purpose for the Scottish workforce
- aligning and intergrating the work of the Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Observatory to the work of the Scotland WPDB.



Insight and references

A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2023

GET ACTIVE

CIMSPA professional standards library

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Physical activity referral standards, Public Health Scotland, 2022

PUBLIC HEALTH SCOTLAND

CIMSPA Careers Hub

CIMSPA CAREERS HUB

A vision for sport in Scotland, **sport**scotland, 2025

SPORT FOR LIFE

CIMSPA Standards for Deployment Policy, CIMSPA, 2024

STANDARDS FOR DEPLOYMENT POLICY

CIMSPA 2023 Workforce Insights Report, CIMSPA, 2023

WORKFORCE INSIGHT REPORTS



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