

Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

Birmingham and Solihull:
2026–2029

CREATED BY

Sport and Physical Activity Sector
Local Skills Accountability Board –
Birmingham and Solihull





Contents

Photo credits:

CIMSPA would like to thank BBX Fitness LTD for their support in sourcing photographs for this skills plan.

Introduction and context

The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Birmingham and Solihull

About the board

Chair: Balbinder Bhogal, Managing Director, BBX Fitness LTD

Vice Chair: Ross Szabo, Chief Operating Officer, Sporting Structures

Board member organisations

- Activity Alliance
- Aspire Active Education Group
- Aston Villa Foundation
- BBX Fitness
- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham City FC Foundation
- Birmingham City University
- Birmingham Metropolitan College
- Birmingham Newman University
- Birmingham Voluntary Services Council
- British Blind Sport
- Coach Core
- Everyone Active
- Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College
- Lawn Tennis Association
- Muslim Sports Foundation
- PGL
- Places Leisure
- Safety Training Awards
- Solihull College & University Centre
- South and City College Birmingham
- Spark Active
- Sport Birmingham
- SportsKey
- Sport Structures
- Street Games
- Swim England
- Team Super Sports
- The Gym Group
- Think Active
- University of Birmingham
- Warwickshire Cricket Foundation

Birmingham and Solihull – geographical area

There are two primary local authority councils within the region of Birmingham and Solihull: Birmingham City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. The West Midlands Combined Authority, established in 2016, plays a strategic role in overseeing transport economic development and regeneration across the region.

Across Birmingham there are 10 sub regions:

- Sutton Coldfield
- Perry Barr
- Erdington
- Ladywood
- Hodge Hill
- Edgbaston
- Hall Green
- Selly Oak
- Northfield

Solihull sits to the east of Birmingham. The two regions are linked by the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board.



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.

The CIMSPA workforce development manager within Midlands works with stakeholders in the local area, carrying out skills diagnostics and helping to deliver the recommendations within this local skills plan.

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.



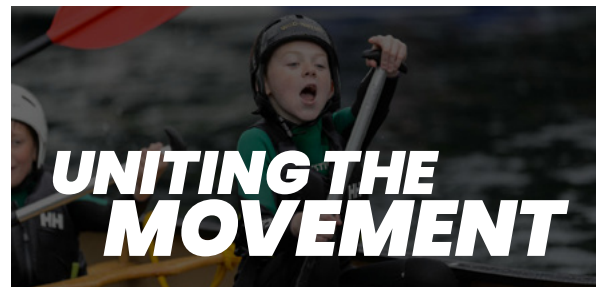
Get involved

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 Birmingham and Solihull.

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

West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan.

As the region’s employer representative body, the Coventry and Warwickshire Chambers of Commerce manages the region’s local skills improvement plan (LSIP). The plan spans across seven local authorities, including those of Birmingham City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, and focuses on three priorities:

Confirming sector skills needs

This priority aims to make sure that training providers know what employers are currently asking for as well as emerging needs. It also focuses on making it easier for people to understand what training options exist and filling any gaps in what’s currently offered.

Leadership and management skills

Businesses across the region report needing stronger leadership and people-management skills within the workforce to support them in adapting to new technology, digitalisation and the move towards net zero. The key skills in demand are strategic, performance, project and change management. This priority is all about

helping organisations to grow by improving leadership skills and addressing gaps in how this training is delivered and promoted.

Essential skills for employment

Professionals who are adaptable and confident with core skills like maths, communication, critical thinking and digital abilities (including digital marketing) are needed for a well-rounded workforce. This priority focuses on improving both soft skills and basic digital skills for both young people still in education and adults who need accessible ways to upskill.

Collaboration and connectivity are a key factor in future success of regional plans. As such, the LSIP spanning this region has been pivotal in shaping the Birmingham and Solihull local skills plan.

The Birmingham and Solihull sports and physical activity local skills accountability board have considered the LSIP priorities when creating the recommendations of this plan to ensure our sector contributes to organisation and employee development, economic growth and skill sustainability across the region.

[WEST MIDLANDS AND WARWICKSHIRE LSIP](#)



Themes, recommendations, partners and stakeholders

Themes

This plan has four themes.

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

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

3	Support
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.	

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

Recommendations

This plan has 3 headline recommendations:

1 Improve recruitment and retention

Support employers by building a robust talent pipeline that is accessible to the area's diverse population and enables workforce progression and retention.

2 Raise the profile of the sector

Promote the impact of sport and physical activity delivery on local health and economic priorities to raise visibility and credibility with system partners.

3 Drive connectivity and collaboration

Facilitate the growth of local partnerships by strengthening existing networks and developing understanding of the sector's impact on wider regional priorities.

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, Active Partnerships, national governing bodies of sport and other system partners.

Employers and deployers

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

Recommendations and actions

RECOMMENDATION 1

Improve recruitment and retention: Support employers by building a robust talent pipeline that is accessible to the area’s diverse population and enables workforce progression and retention.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
RECRUIT SUPPORT	1a	Develop recruitment pathways to make starting a career in the sector accessible to all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strong relationships between local employers, education providers, community organisations and local government agencies ▶ Increased understanding between stakeholders of each other’s priorities, barriers and the contribution each can make to the sector workforce ▶ Employers using CIMSPA work placement guidance to gain confidence in their ability to provide meaningful volunteering opportunities and work placements ▶ Individuals aspiring to work in the sector can access route that meets their needs ▶ A pipeline of work-ready applicants results in more efficient recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Workforce Development Tool data ▶ Education provider sport and physical activity course destination data ▶ Labour market data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	1b	Assist employers to embed staff development planning for their workforce to retain professionals within the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sector employers reporting reduced staff turnover ▶ Employers providing relevant development and progression opportunities using the CIMSPA professional status framework ▶ Higher retention of high-performing staff ▶ Improved employee satisfaction ▶ Employers reporting that skills gaps are filled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Workforce Development Tool data ▶ CIMSPA professional status data ▶ Qualitative data

Recommendations and actions

RECOMMENDATION 1 continued

Improve recruitment and retention: Support employers by building a robust talent pipeline that is accessible to the area's diverse population and enables workforce progression and retention.

**RECRUIT
SUPPORT**

1c

Increase the diversity of the local workforce to be more representative of the local demographic and ensure inclusive opportunities to be physically active.

- ▶ Improved understanding of inclusivity best practice among employers
- ▶ Employers embed inclusive practice into people strategies
- ▶ Individuals with professional status highlight recognised sector career pathways to underrepresented communities
- ▶ Underrepresented communities view careers in sport and physical activity positively
- ▶ Closer alignment between the demographic of the region and the sector workforce at all levels
- ▶ Employer diversity data
- ▶ Workforce Development Tool data
- ▶ Qualitative data

To achieve recommendation 1, we must invest in building the capacity of local employers to offer career opportunities which meet the different motivations and needs of their current and future workforce.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 2

Raise the profile of the sector: Promote the impact of and opportunities within the sport and physical activity sector to raise visibility and credibility with system partners and the future workforce.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
RECRUIT TRAIN	2a	Embed sector careers guidance within education networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Education providers use CIMSPA partnership to develop their sector-related careers provision ▶ CIMSPA Careers Guidance resources are used in schools, colleges and universities ▶ Learners and graduates understand the career pathways and opportunities available to them in the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Education Partner data ▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data ▶ Qualitative data
RECRUIT	2b	Leverage major sporting events to increase understanding of and interest in sector careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Case studies of sector workforce impact at major events are shared and celebrated ▶ Volunteering opportunities provide a starting point for careers in the sector ▶ More individuals applying for sector training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data ▶ Education provider applicant data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT TRAIN RETAIN	2c	Employers use CIMSPA partnership and professional status to support professional recognition of the local workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ More local employers invest in CIMSPA employer partnership ▶ Professional status is embedded as a standard for the local workforce ▶ Sector professionals use their professional status to showcase their expertise ▶ Individuals demonstrate their commitment to professional development through attaining higher levels of professional status ▶ Employers collaborate, learn from and support each other to raise overall standards for the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CIMSPA Employer Partnership data ▶ CIMSPA professional status data ▶ Qualitative data ▶ Employer networking event data

To achieve recommendation 2, we must showcase how the sector offers clear and accessible career pathways and embed consistently high standards to generate sustainable talent and investment pipelines.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 3

Drive connectivity and collaboration: Facilitate the growth of local partnerships by strengthening existing networks and developing understanding of the sector’s impact on wider regional priorities.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
SUPPORT	3a	Build a culture of networking and connectivity within the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sector stakeholders working together to shape valuable networking and learning events ▶ Sector stakeholders are aware of and accessing networking events ▶ Lasting relationships being established between the region’s sector stakeholders ▶ Sector employers are aware of and using workforce development support such as CIMSPA resources and partnership, Active Partnership provision, training opportunities and devolved funding ▶ Organisational capacity is increased through resource and knowledge sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Workforce Development Tool data ▶ Local event data (number of stakeholders involved in development; number and sector diversity of attendees) ▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data ▶ CIMSPA partnership data ▶ Qualitative data
SUPPORT	3b	Drive cross-sector collaboration by championing the impact of sport and physical activity and developing opportunities to align with priority sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Partners from other sectors attending sport and physical activity networking events ▶ Increased awareness and understanding across LSIP priority sectors of the widespread benefits of collaborating with the sport and physical activity sector ▶ Partners from other sectors accessing physical activity services to support their workforce ▶ Partners from other sectors understanding professional status and using it to identify skilled sector professional to collaborate with, for example for exercise referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local event data (number of attendees from other sectors) ▶ Workforce Development Tool data ▶ CIMSPA professional status data ▶ Qualitative data

To achieve recommendation 3, we must understand and build on the existing networks and structures across our sector as well as others to identify where we can add value and provide solutions.

*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

Data and insight that have informed this work

CIMSPA Birmingham and Solihull 2026 Extended Datapack 2025

The regional datapack for Birmingham and Solihull, collated by CIMSPA, highlights a range of significant data about the sport and physical activity sector in the region. It also includes external factors that influence the workforce's impact to offer a rounded insight into the environment in which this skills plan will be delivered.

The LSAB has used this data to shape the recommendations of this plan and ensure that they are targeted and relevant to Birmingham and Solihull's needs.

Key highlights from the datapack that have influenced this plan:

Economy

Growth

In general, the sector in Birmingham and Solihull is healthy and growing. Businesses are reporting increased turnover and employee rates for the sector are predicted to grow:

- Figures from 2025 record a 142% increase in sector turnover, increasing the total turnover to just shy of £6 billion.
- The paid workforce is predicted to grow by 3.1% each year.

Therefore, we can safely say the sport and physical activity sector is an economic contributor in the region. As the sector grows, it's essential that workforce planning is embedded to enable sustainable development from recruitment to retention of skilled professionals.

Business size

72% of the sector is made up of microenterprises of 1–9 employees. As small businesses are more likely to be isolated, fostering networks and collaboration is essential to ensuring they can access the system support critical to their resilience.

Inactivity

Birmingham's economic inactivity sits above the UK average, with 28% of 16–64 years olds not involved in the labour market. This indicates the need for more employment initiatives to support those who are economically inactive across the region with gaining access to education and experience that will support them into work.

Health

When assessing Birmingham and Solihull health data against UK averages, we can see that more people across all age groups are experiencing health issues:

- 9.6% of people (16 yrs+) are pre-diabetic or have diagnosed type 2 diabetes (national average 7.8%).
- 6.6% of year 6 children are severely obese (national average 5.6%).

With physical activity being a major component of improving health outcomes, the sector workforce will be a key resource for health partners when addressing these statistics.

The impact of the 2022 Commonwealth Games

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games brought not only an international multi-sport event to sports fans across the city but also lasting impacts for the economy, health and the sport and physical activity sector:

- £1.2 billion into the economy
- 22,380 full-time equivalent years of employment
- £70 million injected into West Midlands for The Games Legacy Plan
- 6.9 million attendees, participants, volunteers and employees

As part of the vision to deliver ‘the Games for Everyone’, the games and legacy programmes provided a wide range of opportunities for local people and businesses to engage and participate. Workforce development was one of the many results. Volunteering, employment, training and learning opportunities supported the careers of residents across the region.

Across Birmingham and Solihull, there is infrastructure to host similar sporting events in the future. This plan aims to highlight the contribution that the sector workforce makes to major events by ensuring that this impact is seen. Sharing the stories of workforce members will inspire more people to get involved in volunteering or pursue careers in the sector. This narrative will ensure that sporting events across the region have a lasting impact on the communities across Birmingham and Solihull.

Source: Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, One Year Post-Games Evaluation Report – Executive Summary, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2024

EVALUATION OF THE BIRMINGHAM 2022 COMMONWEALTH GAMES [↗](#)

Appendices

CIMSPA Birmingham and Solihull 2026 Extended Datapack 2025



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 the local skills accountability board (see above), 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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