

# Sport and physical activity sector local skills plan

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough : 2026–2029

CREATED BY

Sport and Physical Activity Sector  
Local Skills Accountability Board –  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough





## Contents

### Photo credits:

CIMSPA would like to thank Vivacity for their support in sourcing photographs for this skills plan.

# Introduction and context

## The Sport and Physical Activity Sector Local Skills Accountability Board – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

### About the board

**Chair:** Daryl Emes, Cambridgeshire Partnership Manager, GLL

### Board member organisations

- Anglian Learning
- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridge Regional College
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
- East Cambridge District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Forever Active
- GLL
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Inspire Education Group
- Inspire 2 Ignite
- South Cambridgeshire District Council

## Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – geographical area

This local skills plan is for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, extending to the boundaries of the county of Cambridgeshire and City of Peterborough region.

It includes the cities of Cambridge and Peterborough, as well as the surrounding district councils of South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire, with a total population of approximately 689,000.



## 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.



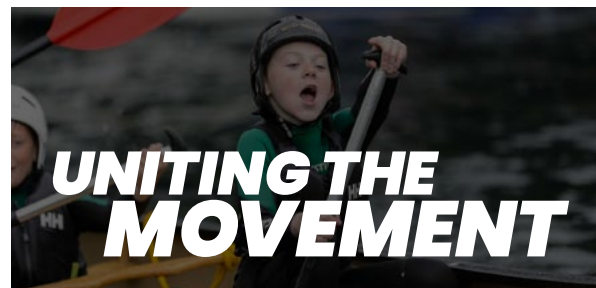
### Get involved

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 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough .

[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

The Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), led by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, sets out a coordinated, employer-led approach to aligning post-16 education and training provision with the evolving needs of the local economy.

The plan does not list sport and physical activity as one of its four headline priority growth sectors, however, there are still important connections between the LSIP and this plan. LSIP actions and funding can influence the sport and physical activity workforce and as such connect to this plan.

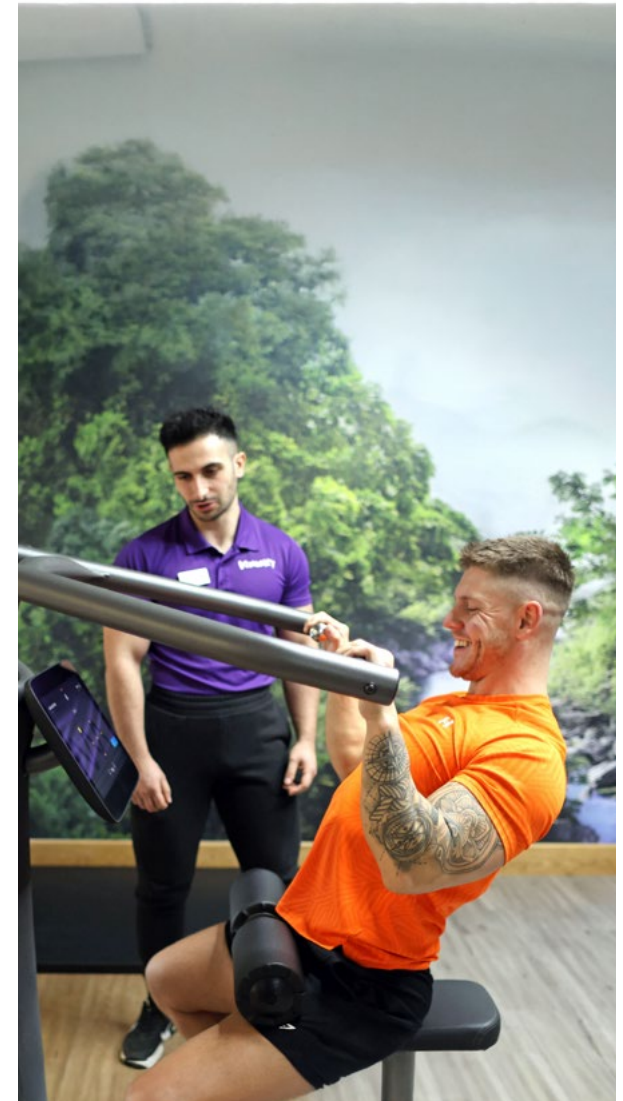
Key links between the LSIP and this plan:

- The LSIP emphasises the importance of transferable skills such as communication, leadership, problem-solving and digital competence. These are central to roles in sport and physical activity, from coaching to facility management.
- LSIP funding for training providers (colleges, adult learning centres) can be leveraged to create or expand sector qualifications.

- While the LSIP focuses on economic growth, health and wellbeing sectors (including sport and physical activity) are part of the local labour market needs.
- LSIP events and employer engagement activities can be used by sport and physical activity organisations (for example, local football clubs, leisure trusts and Active Partnerships) to connect and create networks.

Even though sport and physical activity is not a named LSIP priority sector, the plan's skills priorities, training investments and employer engagement mechanisms can directly benefit the workforce in this field.

[CAMBRIDGESHIRE LSIP](#)



# 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

This plan has three headline recommendations:

### 1 Support employers with workforce recruitment

Proactively support employers in the sport and physical activity sector by identifying new talent pipelines and establishing connections to ensure a representative workforce.

### 2 Strengthen career pathways

Support recruitment and retention of the workforce through clear career pathways with training and progression opportunities.

### 3 Align with local health priorities

Align with local health priorities by enabling appropriate provision for the community and promoting the sector workforce's impact.



## 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

**Support employers with workforce recruitment:** Proactively support employers in the sport and physical activity sector by identifying new talent pipelines and establishing connections to ensure a representative workforce.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
RECRUIT SUPPORT TRAIN	1a	Establish partnerships between key stakeholders to promote job vacancies and career opportunities within the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers, education providers and sector professionals use the CIMSPA Careers Hub as a singular point of reference for career pathway information, vacancies and qualifications/training in the sport and physical activity sector</li> <li>The LSAB has partnerships with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, vocational training providers and apprenticeship providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CIMSPA Careers Hub data</li> <li>Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
RECRUIT	1b	Promote and celebrate roles and career pathways in the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sector is represented at career events and fairs</li> <li>Case studies are used to celebrate and highlight career opportunities</li> <li>Increase in applications for job roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Development Tool data (reduction in roles needed)</li> <li>Employer recruitment data</li> <li>Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
SUPPORT	1c	Grow employer engagement in CIMSPA's and the LSAB's local skills work and data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More employers in the region using the Workforce Development tool</li> <li>Local employers are engaged with the delivery of this local skills plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 1 continued

**Support employers with workforce recruitment:** Proactively support employers in the sport and physical activity sector by identifying new talent pipelines and establishing connections to ensure a representative workforce.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>RECRUIT</b> <b>SUPPORT</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	1d	Improve the diversity of the workforce to support widening participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local sector organisations engage with diverse communities to garner interest in and understanding of sector careers</li> <li>▶ Diverse communities are accessing sector job opportunities</li> <li>▶ The workforce is representative of the local area within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough</li> <li>▶ Diverse workforce members serve as role models, encouraging participation in underrepresented communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Job market data analysis – CIMSPA Data Lens</li> <li>▶ Employer diversity data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**Strengthen career pathways:** Support recruitment and retention of the workforce through clear career pathways with training and progression opportunities.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	2a	Build connections between education providers and employers to ensure training aligns with workforce needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More employers working with education partners</li> <li>▶ More training that responds to skills needs highlighted by local employers is delivered</li> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data is used to develop and deliver ‘train the trainer’ courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of courses delivered</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b>	2b	Promote existing sector training provision to support the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Workforce Development Tool is used to identify individual employer training needs</li> <li>▶ The CIMSPA Careers Hub is used to access quality-assured training</li> <li>▶ Employers are aware of and use local training provision</li> <li>▶ Increased uptake of training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ CIMSPA Careers Hub data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b> <b>TRAIN</b> <b>RETAIN</b>	2c	Support employers to embed continuing professional development (CPD) for all levels of the sector workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More employers invest in CPD for their workforce</li> <li>▶ More local employers use CIMSPA employer partnership to access CPD opportunities for staff</li> <li>▶ Local employers use CIMSPA professional status pathways to plan and enable staff progression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool data</li> <li>▶ Number of CIMSPA employer partners</li> <li>▶ Number of individuals with CIMSPA professional status</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**Align with local health priorities:** Align with local health priorities by enabling appropriate provision for the community and promoting the sector workforce's impact.

Theme(s)	No.	2026–2029 actions	What does success look like?	How will it be measured?*
<b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>3a</b>	Work with local health leads to identify ways for the sport and physical activity workforce to support healthcare priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Established links with primary care networks and local authority partners support identification of needs</li> <li>▶ A community forum informs exercise referral and preventative healthcare programme and workforce requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of community forum attendees</li> <li>▶ Number of LSAB members from primary care and local authority organisations</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>TRAIN</b>	<b>3b</b>	Work with training providers to deliver accredited training that aligns with healthcare and workforce needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool training needs data is used to develop relevant provision</li> <li>▶ Quality-assured training aligned with local healthcare skills needs is delivered in the region</li> <li>▶ The workforce is trained to support healthcare priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce Development Tool Data</li> <li>▶ Number of courses delivered</li> <li>▶ Training provider course completion data</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>3c</b>	Implement physical activity programmes that address local healthcare and accessibility needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employers use exercise referral data to inform provision planning</li> <li>▶ Physical activity programming is reflective of the communities and local demand across Cambridgeshire</li> <li>▶ A process in place to be able to review and coordinate appropriate delivery</li> <li>▶ Communities are aware of the provision, how they can access it and how this can support them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ GP and GLL exercise referral data</li> <li>▶ Number of tailored physical activity programmes</li> <li>▶ Programme attendance data</li> <li>▶ Local documentation and reporting</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>3d</b>	Promote and celebrate the impact of the sector on the health of communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Examples of sector professionals positively impacting the local community are shared and celebrated</li> <li>▶ Examples of the sport and physical activity sector contributing to local strategic and healthcare priorities are shared and celebrated</li> <li>▶ Increased recognition of the contribution the sector brings to health and wellbeing in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Qualitative data</li> </ul>

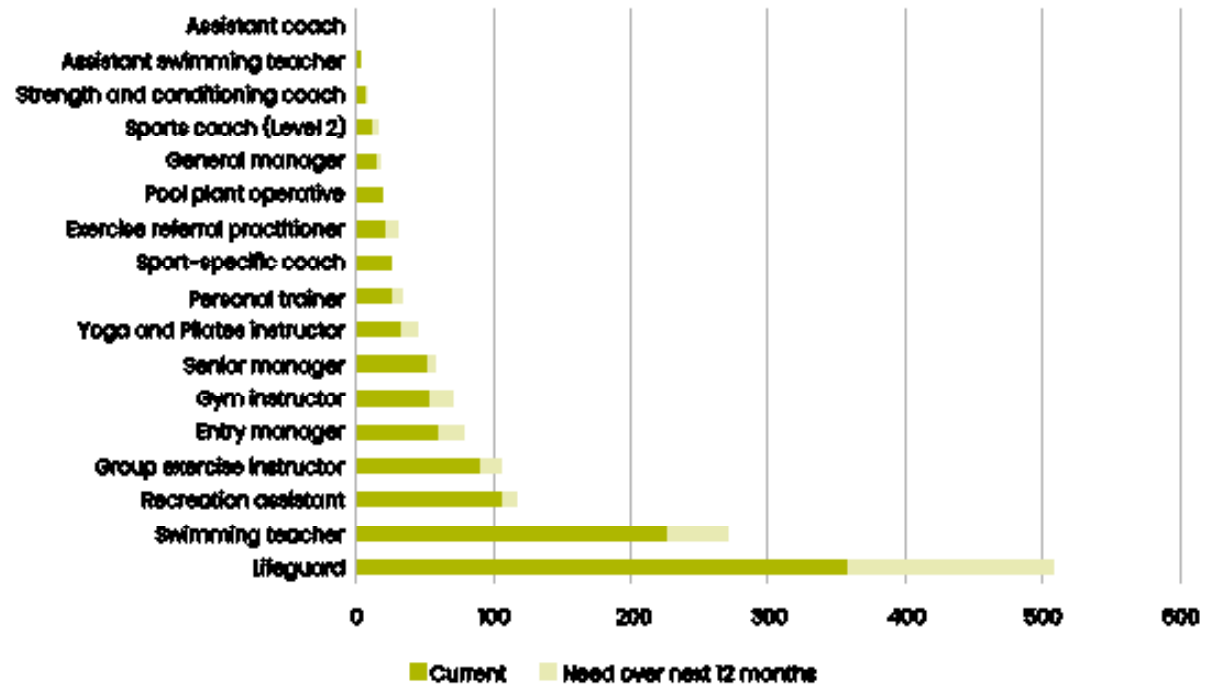
\*See glossary below for more information on specific terms.

# Data and insight that have informed this work

## Local workforce skills diagnostic data

This data shows a projected 26% increase in sector staffing demand over the next 12 months. This has highlighted shortages in the number of lifeguards, swimming teachers and gym-based practitioners, clearly evidencing the need for targeted local skills development and structured workforce progression pathways.

Source: Data collected from 17 employers across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, 2024–2025



## Snapshot of the region

- In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 65.5% of adults are active, while 23.0% are inactive and 11.5% are fairly active<sup>1</sup>
- Inactivity rates are highest in Peterborough and Fenland, above the England average and other parts of the region.<sup>1</sup>
- In Cambridgeshire, 3.5% of 16–17-year-olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This figure rises to 6.4% in Peterborough. This data highlights the need for targeted career pipelines.<sup>2</sup>
- In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 854 individuals per 100,000 people aged 16 or above started an apprenticeship – the lowest combined authority figure in England. This creates a clear case for expanding employer engagement and entry routes into apprenticeships.<sup>3</sup>
- Language inclusion is a prominent need in many parts of the region: in Peterborough, 22.7% of the population cannot speak English well or at all. In Fenland, the percentage rises to 28.2%.<sup>4</sup>
- The cities of Cambridge and Peterborough are ethnically diverse, with 25.4% of Cambridge and 24.6% of Peterborough residents being non-White, higher than the England average of 19%.<sup>4</sup>
- In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, around 20.8 % of the working-age population is economically inactive, with 27,800 people inactive specifically due to long-term sickness, highlighting the scale of local health-related workforce needs.<sup>5</sup>

## Data sources

1. Active Lives Online Adult Data, Sport England, 2024

[ACTIVE LIVES ONLINE ADULT DATA](#) ↗

2. Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority, GOV.UK, 2025

[PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION](#) ↗

3. Apprenticeship starts (England), Department for Education, 2025

[APPRENTICESHIP STARTS](#) ↗

4. Census 2021, Office for National Statistics, 2021

[CENSUS 2021](#) ↗

5. Funding Committee Connect to Work report, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, 2025

[FUNDING COMMITTEE CONNECT TO WORK REPORT](#) ↗

# 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

<b>Sector workforce</b> 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
<b>Broader workforce</b>	Receptionist, bar staff, kitchen and catering assistant, waiting staff, cleaning assistant, domestic assistant, sales and retail assistant, chef.

### Support chain occupations

<b>Sector workforce</b> Occupations aligned with CIMSPA professional standards	Entry manager, general manager, senior manager, tutor, assessor, coach developer, health navigator, pool plant operative.
<b>Broader workforce</b>	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

<b>Enablers</b> 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.
<b>Influencers</b> 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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