

#saveleisure

Unless the UK government steps in to help now, we risk losing nearly 50% of our public leisure centres.

1. *Public leisure must be protected to avoid the widening of health inequalities in the recovery phase from COVID-19*
 - As charities, public leisure facilities offer physical activity to vulnerable and under-represented groups through targeted programmes (e.g. for older adults, individuals with long-term health conditions, disabled people, individuals struggling with their mental health) and reduced membership schemes for people from low-socio economic groups, which often encompass BAME groups
 - Vulnerable groups are 18% less likely to be active than those from more affluent groups
 - Vulnerable groups are also twice as likely to die from Covid-19 than more affluent groups
 - Public leisure provision contributes £3.8bn in social value to the UK (England, Scotland and Wales) every year

2. *Public leisure facilities should be a key partner in achieving the government's target of reducing obesity, managing diabetes, and improving the nation's health to limit the impact of a potential second wave of Covid-19.*
 - The UK has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world with one third of children and two-thirds of adults overweight
 - University of Liverpool research shows that being obese increase the risk of dying from Covid-19 by 38%
 - 75% of people who have been hospitalised with Covid-19 were overweight or obese
 - Leisure centres provide weight management and GP referral schemes
 - Promoting an active lifestyle is a key intervention to counteract the effects of social isolation, especially in older adults and other at-risk individuals, such as those living with chronic diseases associated with ageing and lifestyle.
 - Leisure facilities play a crucial role in the NHS' plan to build infrastructure for social prescribing in primary care

3. *Public leisure facilities are a lifeline to support people's mental health.*

- There is a growing mental health problem in the UK especially among vulnerable groups
- Older people experienced heightened distress during lock-down due to higher risk and extreme isolation. They need to go back to physical exercise and community spaces to avoid functional decline ASAP.
- Many people will have endured a very lonely lockdown
- Regular physical activity is proven to improve mental health
- We provide safe spaces for connection and interaction

4. *Public leisure facilities need ring fenced funding to survive and provide much needed support*

- 48% of all public leisure facilities face closure, 1,300 could disappear by the end of the year, along with more than 58,000 jobs
- Up to 35% of venues will not be able to reopen due to the exceptional increased costs
- Closing leisure facilities is at odds with the government's plan to reduce obesity and improve the nation's health through exercise in the face of the second wave of Covid-19

We call on the UK government to act now to save this vital, irreplaceable part of our communities by: investing circa £800 million to provide an emergency relief fund to sustain UK leisure infrastructure and services through the Covid-19 lockdown and the recovery phases to the end of March 2021.

QUOTES AND SUPPORTIVE STATEMENTS

Professor Nanette Mutrie MBE, Chair of Physical Activity for Health at the University of Edinburgh, said:

"The leisure industry must be saved if we are to prevent an increasing cost burden for the NHS in dealing with increasing obesity, type 2 diabetes and poor mental health which loss of activity will create. Money used to save such facilities, which are in danger of permanent closure due to the impact of the pandemic, must be seen as an investment and as future cost saving to the NHS. Public leisure facilities need to re-open in order that the health benefits of activity are available to all and all age groups and not just to those who can afford a private membership."

Mark Tweedie, Chief Executive of Community Leisure UK, said:

"Communities without leisure centres are unimaginable, so we are reaching out to everyone to unite behind our #saveleisure campaign for specific fixed term Government financial support to save our leisure centres and community based services. Public leisure centres feature at the heart of communities – they play an essential part in supporting health and wellbeing and help to reduce escalating costs to the NHS and social services. They are places where communities connect and have

fun, they serve all age ranges and abilities, from parents with babies, through to sports clubs, walking groups and gentle exercise classes; and in these unprecedented times, they will be vital to help millions of people maintain their physical and mental health, and build resilience to, and rehabilitate from Covid-19. We know Sport England have made the Government aware of the severe impact on public leisure provision and are continuing to support this vital part of our sector to secure additional financial support as serious concerns remain over its economic viability, and we welcome the recent DCMS Select Committee report highlighting the urgent need for funding to preserve leisure facilities and community based services."

Tara Dillon, CEO of CIMSPA, said:

"Leisure is a sector that creates enormous economic, health, social and community benefits, but it is one of the last to reopen. This has created huge financial challenges and we urge the Government to provide this additional targeted financial support to protect these public leisure facilities which are at serious risk of closure. If they are allowed to close, communities up and down the country will lose vital facilities, and we will lose many thousands of jobs among the talented and dedicated leisure workforce."

Huw Edwards, CEO of ukactive, said:

"COVID-19 has been devastating to the fitness and leisure sector. This is a health crisis, and a secure and thriving sector will be crucial in supporting the nation's health, wellbeing and recovery. That is why we are calling on the Government to provide crucial support for the entire sector by delivering urgent assistance through regulation and taxation, as well as the vital financial investment needed to keep our essential facilities in operation. As part of this call, we have urged the Government to save public leisure by committing to an immediate £800m investment to address both the period of closure, and also the recovery as facilities reopen. Now, more than ever, the nation cannot afford to lose these vital community assets"

FURTHER INFORMATION:

- 1) Official campaign page - <https://communityleisureuk.org/work/saveleisure-campaign/>
- 2) On Twitter #saveleisure
- 3) In The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/jul/15/special-report-the-battle-to-keep-britains-leisure-centres-open>
- 4) In The Telegraph - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/2020/07/15/leisure-centres-gyms-launch-national-saveleisure-campaign-amid/>



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WHAT

#saveleisure is a digital campaign urging the UK Government to commit circa £800 million relief funding to enable the full reopening and recovery of the public leisure sector accounting for the catastrophic impact of Covid-19.

Supported by Community Leisure UK, ukactive, CIMSPA and other partners, **it relaunches on Twitter on Monday 27 July at 10am.**

Without specific relief funding we estimate a third of all public leisure facilities in the UK will not reopen and half will face permanent closure by the end of the year.

More info <https://communityleisureuk.org/work/saveleisure-campaign/>

HOW TO TAKE PART

- **Contact your local press.** Send them an email and ask them to run an article highlighting the issue using the #saveleisure hashtag. Let them know the Guardian and the Telegraph are backing the campaign and that the campaign is supported by Community Leisure UK, ukactive, CIMSPA and other partners.
- **Contact ambassadors including any famous sports people from your town.** Tell them we need to take urgent action together to save the leisure facilities they love, as well as the wider public leisure sector. Ask them explicitly to join the campaign and give them precise instructions on how to do so.
- **Email your customers.** Ask them to share on their social media profiles how much they love your facilities and services, and use the #saveleisure hashtag. Explain the specific issues you're facing and tell them how much you need their support.
- **Post on your social media platforms** (especially Twitter as the main platform for the campaign) following these guidelines:
 1. **Always** use the #saveleisure hashtag: without it you won't be part of the campaign
 2. Send several Tweets per day if you can
 3. Wherever possible tag @OliverDowden and @RishiSunak | For Scotland: @KateForbesMSP and @JoeFitzSNP | For Wales: @WGCulture @ElisThomasD @wgmin_finance
- **Send this link to anybody you think can be an advocate** (the revised landing page will go live on Monday 27 July before 10am) <https://communityleisureuk.org/work/saveleisure-campaign/>