

## HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FITNESS FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Other than the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004, there are no specific health and safety laws for leisure activities. However, leisure facility operators must comply with their general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the associated regulations.

Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people who may have medical conditions which put them at a higher risk of an adverse event during physical activity/exercise. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help determine if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for an individual.

Exercise professionals and fitness centres are still successfully being sued for negligence in relation to services they offer. Negligence requires three elements to be satisfied:

- (1) a duty of care must be established between the plaintiff and defendant
- (2) there must have been a breach of that duty by the defendant and
- (3) the damage (injury) must have been the result of the breach, or caused by the breach of duty.

Operators must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the health and safety risks to both workers and participants to help decide what they must do to make their activity safe.

Once these risks have been assessed, operators should implement sensible and proportionate measures to control the risks.

The following notes are intended to promote serious consideration of safety and suggest possible courses of action.

### 1. Gym Equipment (Fixed & Free)

- Consider maintenance of equipment
- Equipment servicing arrangements
- Frequency of in-house/external inspections
- Check competency, skills and suitability of those performing the checks
- Comment on general condition of equipment being provided at the time of assessment
- Consider the age of equipment, are there any signs of wear and tear?

### 2. Supervision of Users

- Staff rota
- facility continuously manned for all operational periods
- Staff qualifications and training undertaken
- Staff registered with Register of Exercise Professionals (REPS)
- Access control into facility
- Operating procedures in place
- Staff training undertaken
- Any user special needs requirements identified i.e. disabilities, and to be considered.
- PARQ procedures in place - initial health screening arrangements, procedure to be followed if contra-indications noted.

### 3. User Injury

- Induction scheme in place
- Consider lack of user familiarity with gym equipment
- Qualifications of trainers & supervisors employed in facility
- Does equipment provide back-up guidance signage to further inform users on how to use following induction

### 4. Access

- Unauthorised use must be controlled with monitored admission system in place
- Security of facility to be considered
- swipecard entry only allowed after induction
- manned reception, or permanently supervised gym facility

### 5. Coached / Organised exercise sessions / classes

- Consider quality of coaching and support arrangements
- Qualifications of instructors, appropriate instructor to member ratios maintained
- Class sizes restricted
- Internal or external instructors used for classes. Check qualifications and possibly (if independent / self - employed) insurances held, i.e. ensure current on a routine annual basis.
- Anyone involved in the coaching or training of members has a responsibility to ensure that safe and proper practice is followed. This is especially important when novices are involved.
- The leisure facility should ask instructors to supply photocopies of all relevant qualifications, NGB Membership, insurance details and first aid certificates to be kept on file
- It is advisable for The leisure facility to have a code of practice that they expect their instructors to adhere to
- The leisure facility should set criteria for appointing Instructors and provide the appropriate training and guidance notes, where necessary, to ensure that they are able to effectively discharge their duties

The Fitnut Management Team responsibilities include managing all of the above and also ensure:

- Familiarisation with the Risk Assessment of the activity to be undertaken and ensuring all advised safety precautions are in place
- Visual inspection of the facility or equipment to be used prior to commencing the activity to ensure it is safe
- Every participant is aware of the risks associated with the activity and takes due care
- All participants respect the leisure facility Code of Practice, Facility Safety Guidelines, and do not bring the leisure facility into disrepute
- Provision of high a standard of leadership and instruction as is reasonably practicable at all times
- All participants use all relevant safety equipment
- Instigation of the leisure facility emergency procedures if necessary and reporting all incidents and near misses within 24 hours

## Safety

- Safety Policy is up to date
- Current leisure facility Safety Policy and Procedures displayed
- Risk assessment up to date, new equipment assessed as purchased.
- Current Code of Conduct displayed
- Emergency procedure

## Training

- The provision of adequate training or accreditation of fitness staff
- The dissemination of safety information.
- The promotion of appropriate training including first aid/AED/Fire warden

## Management of Activities

- Fitness Instructors have adequate knowledge or qualifications for the role that they undertake.
- Fitness Instructors are fully aware of the leisure facility Safety Policy and Procedures.

## Equipment

- The production of an annual inventory of leisure facility equipment
- The appropriate and safe storage of equipment
- The correct maintenance, using contractors where appropriate, in accordance with Manufacturer's guidelines
- Maintaining records of safety checks, including electrical equipment
- The immediate removal of damaged and unsafe equipment
- Ensure equipment is suitable for the level of participation
- Ensure equipment is not used unsupervised by those unskilled in its usage
- Loaned equipment is returned in safe working order
- Ensure that Safety Procedures are implemented, reviewed annually and amended where necessary
- Disciplinary procedures for members disregarding safety policy.
- Inspection of Equipment, maintenance logs, safety record and Accident Report Forms.
- Monitoring Fitness Instructors compliance with Safety Policies.

## Safety Action Plan

Each year, the leisure facility should complete a Safety Action Plan. This will provide a starting point for assessing the management of Health and Safety within the centre and provide direction for making improvements.

## Safety Inspections and Audits

Fitnut will manage and monitor the leisure facility practices to ensure that their Health and Safety Procedures are being adhered to. Any inspection will be recorded and a copy sent to the Facility Manager.

The Health and Safety Executive may audit the leisure facility at any time. They may also follow up reported accidents and incidents by inspecting safety documentation, equipment, instruction levels etc

Given these safety considerations, there is a need for permanent staffing within the leisure facility to be available and to make routine inspections on a regular basis. It would also be reasonable to establish a clear policy with respect to safety and staff supervision. Should anything unfortunately happen that would reflect upon the safety aspects of the centre, members of staff may be required to give evidence and their knowledge of procedures, routines and their actual application in practice could be assessed. The reporting of an injury at the centre with evidence of no, or poorly thought out and implemented safety procedures may have serious long term consequences.

*Extracts from Health & Fitness Centres – a guide to their management and operation. Evans-Platt C. (1992) Longman, London*