

Slim Line Profits Lead to New Type of Gym

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During 2014, a report in the Lancet Medical Journal found that the United Kingdom has the highest proportion of obesity and overweight people than anywhere in Western Europe, with the exception of Iceland and Malta. 67% of men and 57% of women were found to be either overweight or obese. Even more concerning, is the fact that 26% of boys and 29% of girls were also found to be overweight.

In January 2015, a report published by researchers at King's College London suggested that although the proportion of children aged 10 and under may be levelling off, the proportion aged 11 to 15 years old is still rising. It also concludes that the number of obese people in the UK has trebled during the past 25 years. Public Health England estimates that the direct costs of treating obese people in 2015 will be in the region of £6.3 billion and the indirect costs to the economy will be in the region of £27 billion.

Only 13% of consumers in the UK currently use a gym. The other 87% of consumers have a variety of reasons for abstaining, including falling real incomes, reduced leisure time and a concern that gyms are only for healthy, young and fit people.

This last reason is actually rather important, as a large proportion of the adult population is over-weight. This trend has led one gym in Stockport to abandon the typical gym model and introduce a strategy to attract less healthy people through its doors.

Avondale gym is part of the "Life Leisure" group of fitness centres which are located in the borough of Stockport. In 2011, when it closed for refurbishment, it was making an annual loss of £170,000 and only had 500 members. Today, the gym has a membership of 1500 and has an annual turnover of £11.5 million and makes a profit of £30,000.

The new strategy at Avondale is "a gym for people who do not go to the gym". The price of the monthly membership was reduced from £27 per month to only £18 and a crèche was opened up so that parents can leave their young children whilst they work out. This has been developed so that single parent families are able to use the facility.



"I previously just didn't know what to do, I felt rubbish compared to everyone else, in fact, I felt like you could only join a gym when you got to your goal weight, not as a way of getting there!"

Jane, Member at Avondale Gym, Stockport

