



Influencer Award

Name of organisation or individual nominated

Inclusive Fitness Initiative

1. **What were you trying to change?** (maximum 200 words)

Help us understand your vision, aims and the factors that drive you forward

Historically the fitness industry has portrayed an image that you need to be fit, slim and toned to attend a gym. However, the benefits of exercise for **everyone** are well documented. Currently the Government is pushing a target of getting two million people more active by 2012 however physical activity levels are significantly lower for disabled people, only 9% take part in regular physical activity in comparison to 21% of non disabled people (Sport England Active People Survey, 2008). Despite legislation against disability discrimination coming in to effect through the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the fitness industry has been slow to react to creating facilities and services that are accessible for disabled people.

Since 2001 the IFI has been supporting the fitness industry to become more inclusive through promoting and providing better access to fitness facilities for disabled people. The IFI supports facilities to attract people that would not typically become users of fitness suites, including disabled people, older adults, and people with medical conditions so that as many users as possible have an opportunity to become active in an inclusive, non-intimidating environment. These changes in the fitness industry aim to contribute to a reduction in physical activity inequalities and health inequalities.

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2. How did you use your influence? (Maximum 200 words)

Who did you influence, what methods did you use to influence them and how did you overcome problems etc.

The IFI model (created following extensive research in 1998) addresses inclusion in the widest sense, supporting and stimulating developments in the following areas:

- Accessibility
- Inclusive fitness equipment
- Staff training
- Inclusive marketing

Using this model, the IFI successfully influenced Sport England to recognise the barriers facing disabled people in accessing fitness facilities, leading to funding of £6 million to support the project. Further investment was then secured from The National Sports Foundation and Sports Match to the value of £1.95 million.

The IFI Mark was developed as the nationally recognised standard for inclusion in the fitness industry which proved to be an important resource in influencing facilities in becoming more inclusive.

The IFI has influenced fitness equipment suppliers to develop inclusive fitness equipment that meets the needs of both disabled and non-disabled people through the development of inclusive fitness equipment standards and a Research and Development Programme.

The IFI Regional Inclusive Activator Programme worked with local organisations to promote inclusive fitness and break down perceptual barriers that disabled people and the industry have.

The IFI Mark brand is now recognised within the industry and becoming increasingly sought after amongst disabled people.

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3. What changed? (Maximum 200 words)

e.g. Did you change a law, an attitude, a policy, a conflict situation?

The IFI has successfully initiated and supported the fitness industry to become more inclusive, key achievements to date include (but are not limited) to:

- A network of 365 IFI Accredited Facilities (by the end of 2009) including a range of small, medium and large-scale facilities in both public and private sectors.
- The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games is promoting IFI Mark Accreditation to the Paralympic Games Training Venues throughout England. Over 50% of these facilities have now achieved or are working towards IFI Mark accreditation.
- First in the world to develop and publish inclusive fitness equipment standards.
- 10,000 members of staff received disability equality training and 3000 fitness instructors received specific disability fitness qualifications by the end of 2009.
- In excess of 10% of all new users at an IFI facility are disabled people which is 8% more than non-accredited facilities.
- The IFI has helped develop a cultural shift in the fitness industry and is becoming integrated into many regions county sports plans.
- By the end of 2009, the IFI Mark accredited facilities will have attracted 96,626 new disabled users and 1.6million visits by disabled people to fitness facilities.

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