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Sport and fitness for today's youth

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Olympic Gold and world champion cyclist Nicole Cooke (left) and Central YMCA chief executive Rosi Prescott (on right) with children from the Central YMCA Club Y Active programme.

Champion cyclist peddles physical activity to children

A WORLD champion cyclist visited London's largest health and fitness club in a bid to inspire children to become involved in physical activity.

Central YMCA – home to more than 5,000 members – played host to gold medalist Nicole Cooke, as she met children from the Y Active programme, set up to encourage children aged two to 14 to take part in regular exercise.

The kids had the chance to show off their own cycling skills on the club's training bikes and Barry Cronin, club executive director, said: "We were honoured to have Nicole at our club. She is an inspira-

tion, not only to the children we work with, but to people of all ages throughout Britain."

Nicole spoke about the essential ingredients needed to achieve cycling success and underlined the pivotal role her parents' play in helping her realise her Olympic dream.

She also learned how the Club's Y Active programme is transforming the lives of children and young people by providing activities including aikido, trampolining, drama classes, play schemes and holiday programmes in a safe and fun environment.

A FORMER university nightclub has been turned into a state-of-the-art fitness centre in a bid to help students keep fit and healthy.

The Queen Mary University of London, Mile End, has spent £5m developing the Qmotion health and fitness centre, on the site of the student union entertainment facilities.

Manager Charlotte Kendrick said the aim was to provide students with an improvement on the small gym that the university relied on before.

She added: "It has proved to be an extremely positive development and the gym has over 2000 members already and we only opened in September.

"The health and fitness issue is constantly in the news and the university are trying to do their bit in developing this gym.

"Because it's a brand new concept for us we have to put our own mark on it as we aren't inheriting someone else's ideas.

"We aim to be successful but not at the cost of our members which a lot of gyms do. I come from a fitness background and have worked in an environment

every week up."

"We need to take stock of how things work and find out what the students, staff and public want as we are also available for external membership and hire."

The gym offers a fitness area along with a sports specific area, two studios, a sports hall, squash court and dedicated ladies only gym.

There is also a treatment section that provides acupuncture, homeopathy, sports and remedial massage therapy and the Bowen Technique which is a gentle and non-invasive series of soft tissue moves performed on muscles, ligaments and tendons.

Charlotte added: "We hope to keep adding and developing as we go along. The students have really taken to the concept and although we are open to the public our members are predominantly from the student body.

"We offer great membership rates for them and the feedback so far has been exceptionally positive. It is a case of trial and error but if we can continue in this vein hopefully we will continue from strength to strength."

Sports self esteem programme is launched nationwide

A PROGRAMME that aims to raise self-esteem through sport has been launched in schools across the UK.

The Motive8 course – designed by schools manager Tim Holdsworth – centres on teamwork and communication, which helps students realise the importance of their contribution.

Tim said: "It is about feeling good about the person you are. While it's normal for adults to lack confidence from time to time, it's important that

children should feel happy about themselves the majority of the time.

"Many studies have shown that youths receiving extra physical activity have a tendency to demonstrate improved attributes such as advanced brain function, increased self-esteem and better behaviour, all of which influence many aspects of school and social life."

The course is linked to a worksheet that supports individual lesson

objectives, such as communication skills, being open and gaining a sense of identity as a group.

The programme has already been trialled in one secondary school with with pupils from years seven, eight and nine chosen at a teacher's recommendation.

Year seven children with particularly low confidence were chosen to participate whilst years eight and nine were selected for being ill-disci-

plined and having lack of concentration during lessons.

Tim added: "By using team work and thinking outside the box in physical activity, the children learned how to channel their attention to the task ahead of them.

"Self-esteem helps children try new tasks and skills without any worry of failure and it gives them the ability to make friends easily and also build a solid foundation for life."

A £300,000 gym at a specialist college has been reopened after it was destroyed by fire last December.

Queen Alexandra College – for adults and youngsters with sensory, physical and cognitive impairments – was left with a burned out shell after the accidental blaze. It has now been repaired and kitted out with 36 stations of Stage Two IFI accredited Cybex CV and resistance equipment, freeweights area and a balcony housing a stretch area and it has been branded as Feelgood Health and Fitness. Feelgood Health and Fitness, which is located in Harborne area of Birmingham, is a dual use facility. The centre currently has 400 members, 500 pay and play customers and is used by the 150 students and staff at the College.



Four new FitKid franchises open across country

A NATIONAL fitness brand which specialises in kids' fitness has seen four new franchises open in the space of a month.

Nicky Kay, franchise director for FitKid, said the new franchisees will cover North Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, Norwich, Islington and Stoke Newington, and Wood Green.

She added: "This franchise is so important to us to help spread the word about childhood obesity and work with as many people as possible to give our children the best start."

The pilot franchise, in Poole and Bournemouth is now running over 35 classes a week and new projects have also been secured with Bournemouth School Sports Partnership.