

## **Turn Your Workforce into Corporate Athletes with FLX**

Our simple-to-use, expert system can have a meaningful impact on performance, pain and ultimately absenteeism.

There are several different causes of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in the workplace, ranging from physical, environmental, ergonomic and many others. One likely cause, which is less often discussed, is a lack of physical literacy. This is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. (International Physical Literacy Association, 2017). Not to be confused with physical activity, which the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.

Depending upon their age, children are advised to spend between 60-180 minutes, per day, exercising and adults at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or at least 75 mins of high intensity exercise, per week.

Research has demonstrated a link between academic performance and physical fitness and activity for children of all ages and socioeconomic groups. There is also an inverse association between physical fitness and reported violent and antisocial incidents in school.

Physical education, games and sport for children have a demonstrable positive impact on physical health and affective, social and cognitive function. Furthermore, physical activity habits in childhood seem to determine, in part, adult physical activity behaviour, which is a key determinant of adult health. (Weiler, 2014).

We all recognise the importance of physical activity, and physical literacy simply enables us to perform activities in a more coordinated and efficient manner, facilitating more competent movement.

It is commonly recognised that recent generations have been less active than past generations and, as such, their movement skills are less efficient.

Worryingly, only 1 in 4 adults meet the global recommended level of physical activity and more than 80% of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently active (WHO, 2020). In addition, the amount of physical activity in our young people is reducing each year (Youth Sport Trust, 2021).

The Government definition of child neglect is "the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development." (Government, 2013). Now is surely the time to commit to providing our children with a comprehensive physical activity and literacy programmes.

It is set against this background of inactivity and physical literacy neglect that we are asking our workers to perform physical tasks that their bodies are not prepared well enough to perform. Imagine being asked to write a novel without knowing your ABCs, producing a fluent and coherent story would be an impossible task. Physical literacy is the ABC of movement, yet we are asking workers to produce movements that sometimes require a high degree of physical literacy without them first knowing their ABCs. Is it any wonder that MSDs are on the increase despite improving levels of health and safety, as well as worker education and physical and mental health support? And, as the generations become less active, the situation is only going to get worse and the long-term impact on worker health is worrying.

We refer to workers as corporate athletes. They need the same level of support, education and training as athletes, albeit on a more scalable basis and more relevant to their 'events'. We need to produce programmes that are effective at improving work readiness for corporate tasks and prepare the body's mechanics, so that workers are able to cope with the tasks being asked of them. Even less active workers, such as those performing data entry tasks, produce repetitive, quasi-static movements that have deleterious effects on their nerves and muscles.

An automated and simple-to-use self-assessment system, producing driven interventions in the form of advice and exercise can have a meaningful impact on performance, pain and ultimately absenteeism.

This approach is exactly what FLX Health has created in the form of the FLX App.

It looks at the intrinsic biomechanical profile of a worker. This is a measure of the capacity of each joint and system to perform naturally for that individual. It complements the movement and risk assessments found in the HSE MSD risk assessment tool and by identifying the areas of the body that need addressing to prepare the body better for those (high or low risk) tasks, and then what the best self-help exercises to help mitigate the risk are.

The app has two sections: injury risk management and self-help pain management. It is a very person-centred approach, promoting self-awareness and empowering users to take control of their bodies.

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