



the national governing body for group exercise

# **EMD UK: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTOR PAY**

# BACKGROUND

---

In 2019 EMD UK published its first ever industry white paper, *Sweating Your Assets*, the value of group exercise. The paper was written at the close of three years of research and consultation.

EMD UK has been continually requested by sector workforce stake holders to offer guidance on instructor pay, including, operators, instructors, leisure operators and group exercise instructors. Many professional sectors do offer pay band guidance and as such EMD UK undertook a further consultative process on suggested pay band guidance for the sector. The consultation recognised that pay cannot be mandated but guided pay bands representing current pay standards can be considered by all stakeholders in negotiating and planning pay.

Through regular and open dialogue with instructors across the sector EMD UK published the consultation paper limited to a proposal recommending pay band guidance based on years of service/experience and qualifications which are quantifiable. This consultation did not include many other good practice examples such as commission-based payments. The suggested pay bands in the consultation were based on previous consultations with over 25 thousand instructors based on what their current pay per session was. This showed substantial variation nationally with no set pattern. Some instructors are being paid as little as £12 per session and other instructors are being paid as high as £65 per session. The consultation paper recognised the multi factorial reasons for variations in the pay and invited both operators and employers to add additional comments to the consultation to aid the understanding of challenges that both operators and instructors face in agreeing pay.

The consultation paper was sent out to the sector over a period of 4 weeks (for further information please request a copy of the initial consultation paper). The purpose of the consultation was to seek opinion from instructors in the sector as to whether they felt having pay band guidance was useful and whether having pay band guidance would support instructors and operators in their discussions on pay. The consultation paper laid out proposals for 4 pay bands across level 2 and level 3 group exercise instructors as well as guidance for other value-added rewards for instructors which may be adopted by operators whose own business models may not suit a pay band structure. The paper recognised that the only pay that is legislated in the UK is minimum wage and that whilst it is common for a profession to have published pay band guidance that this is guidance only and cannot be legislated.

# EMD UK INSTRUCTORS PAY CONSULTATION RESULTS SUMMARY



## Where did it go?

The survey went to over 25,000 instructors, operators, and employers across the sector through social media platforms, EMD UK's database of instructor members and strategic partners.

## Who did we hear from?



58 organisations including 9 leisure trusts, 4 private health clubs, NHS, active partnerships, councils, leisure centres and business owners.



416 individual instructors.



Further insights across social media showed engagement with the consultation across more than 5000 instructors.

## Overview

- 86% of respondents agreed that having pay band guidance was useful. 3% did not agree that pay band guidance was useful and 11% were undecided or unsure.
- Instructors welcomed the review, however, sceptical as to how it will be implemented and felt employers would not increase pay where pay needed to increase.
- Some operators/businesses don't believe suggested pay scales would be viable for them based on local authority restrictions, geographic location, or their own internal business models.
- Some examples of good practice were shared via operators including paying well for specialist sessions, paying to be upskilled, one off payments to both freelance and contracted instructors during the energy crisis, paying staff during the first phase of the COVID-19 lockdown on top of furlough.
- Some operators welcomed the guidance and supported the pay bands and many operators do have models of good practice where instructors are paid within the bands indicated.



# KEY FEEDBACK THEMES FROM EMPLOYER OPERATORS:

---

## **Theme 1 – ‘Variation in pay geographically led’**

Employers felt where they had multiple sites across varied parts of the country that standardised pay may not be possible particularly when controlled by different local authorities.

## **Theme 2 – ‘Pushing pay up may impact the consumer’**

Some employers felt that to pay the rates suggested that this would increase their costs and the consumer would have to bear this cost and that this may reduce classes. Some operators felt the paper did not consider their business costs.

## **Theme 3 – ‘Support the proposed guidelines and intend to work towards them’**

Some operators fully supported the guidelines and felt they could work towards them. Other operators recognised that pay had not been increased for group exercise instructors for several years. In some instances, employers identified that group exercise instructors were not included in annual reviews.

## **Theme 4 – ‘One pay band for any discipline may affect staff recruitment’**

Some operators felt that paying based on qualifications and experience within one pay band that this may affect their ability to recruit. Other operators felt that this may also lead to them leaning on less qualified instructors.

# KEY FEEDBACK THEMES FROM INSTRUCTORS:

---



## **Theme 1 – ‘It’s not just teaching the classes?’**

Instructors appreciated the recognition of more work than just the session, this includes arriving to the class early and staying at the end for feedback etc, the time put into lesson planning, learning pre-choreographed/designing own content, having to provide their own equipment when teaching for an operator and struggle with finding cover.

## **Theme 2 – ‘Pushing pay up may impact the consumer’**

Some instructors felt it was not always about the pay. That they sometimes taught classes for free and felt valued by participants. Instructors feel their teaching is validated from within via member’s feedback. Some instructors felt the funding wasn’t there to pay specialist instructors when there’s a community need. Some instructors however had opposing views and there was a consensus of feeling undervalued and finding your worth is hard. Some instructors felt the need for industry regulation.

## **Theme 3 – ‘Stagnant pay’**

Instructors felt pay has remained stagnant for decades, pay has fallen over the years even with various qualifications and progressing in both qualifications and experience, pay cuts with inflation and having to work other jobs to pay the bills. Some instructors showed examples of where their pay had been reduced by employers.

## **Theme 4 – ‘Pay’**

Some instructors felt they would be able to provide more classes if paid at the level suggested. Some instructors felt the level 4 suggested pay would be prohibited for many small facilities. Some instructors felt they were earning nothing once time, tax and pay expenses were taken out and, new instructors being paid the same as those with years of experience and more qualifications was not fair and equitable. Some instructors appreciated a more uniformed approach across the sector to make fair.

## **Theme 5 – ‘Employer led change’**

Instructors feel employers will disregard any recommendation and are concerned as to how this is going to be implemented. Instructors would like to take to take this to CEOs. Instructors are concerned operators would employ new instructors on lower bandings. Some instructors felt smaller operators pay better than larger ones.

## **Theme 6 – ‘Qualifications’**

Instructors feel they pay for training/CPD and recognition for CPD. Some instructors felt a contract which recognises skill and comprehensive qualification is needed.

## **Theme 7 – ‘Location, location, location’**

Instructors felt that there is no transparency from operators on different rates being paid within a local area. Instructors gave examples of where pay varied even within the same operator in the same town for the same class.

# OUTCOME

---

Whilst there are many qualitative comments made these are difficult to group as data results. However, they have been considered in adjustments made to the pay bands and notes post consultation. There is some similarity across comments made by both operators and instructors. The quantitative data confirms a high percentage of instructors support pay band guidance being published by the governing body for group exercise so that the guidance can be used where guidance is sought or needed.

EMD UK are pleased to be able to publish pay band guidance as an outcome of this consultation. The guidance is written as a supportive document that takes into consideration the feedback and comments raised by both operator/employer, studios, and instructors.

EMD UK encourage this paper to be used as guidance by the sector to support instructor pay and to support methods of valuing group exercise instructors beyond pay.

To that end EMD UK publish the attached pay band guidance.

This paper will be reviewed annually.

# LEVEL 2 PAY BANDS

---

## **Band 1**

£20-28 per class

**Upper pay band  
£28 per session  
or greater**

Level 2 instructor with less than 12 months experience and holding the professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice.

## **Band 2**

£25-30 per class

**Upper pay band  
£28-30 per  
session or greater**

Level 2 instructor with more than 12 months experience and holding the professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice.

## **Band 3**

£30-35 per class

**Upper pay band  
£32-35 per  
session or greater**

Level 2 instructor with more than 3 years' experience holding two or more professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice.

## **Band 4**

£35-40 per class

**Upper pay band  
£38-40 per  
session or greater**

Advanced instructor with more than 5 years' experience, producing own class content holding three or more recognised qualifications or two qualifications one of which is level 3



the national governing body for group exercise



# LEVEL 3 PAY BANDS

---

## **Band 1**

Pay band £30-35

**Upper pay band  
£35 per session  
or greater**

Level 3 instructor with less than 12 months experience and holding the professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice.

## **Band 2**

£35-40 per class

**Upper pay band  
£40 per session  
or greater**

Level 3 instructor with more than 12 months experience and holding the professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice..

## **Band 3**

£40-50 per class

**Upper pay band  
£45-50 per  
session or greater**

Level 3 instructor with more than 5 years experience and holding the professionally recognised qualification and experience for two or more scope of practice.

## **Band 4**

£50-65 per class

**Upper pay band  
£55-65 per  
session or greater**

Level 4 Specialist instructor with more than 5 years' experience, holding two or more professionally recognised qualification and experience for their scope of practice. One qualification at level 4.



# PAY BANDS

---

**NB.** These pay bands are recommendations to be used where the pay band can be appropriately applied. The paper recognises that these pay bands may not fit all employer business models and that employers may have business models that dictate their own pay scales with influencing controls or governance of instructor pay that are external to the business. As such instructors may need to discuss with employers what factors influence pay within the structure in which the instructor is employed. Examples of, but not limited to, could be geographical influences, class size and numbers, local authority governance.

**NB.** These pay bands identify a scale of pay within a band that is recognised as lower and higher levels of pay within that band. Where instructors are paid below the minimum within a pay band it is recommended to employers that instructors be moved to within the pay band and onto the scale. It is recommended that instructors discuss with employers influencing factors within the business that would allow individual instructors to move up the pay scale within a band or move into a higher band. The paper encourages employers to develop their internal systems to recognise the pay bands and to support instructors in moving within and up to the upper pay bands or the next pay bands.

**These pay bands will be published annually and recommends to employers that group exercise instructors be included annually in the employers own internal pay structures and reviews for annual uplift and cost of living pay rises.**

# PAY BANDS

---

**NB.** Where instructors can be recognised for valued contributions not quantifiable above it is recommended that employers consider other varied models of good practice. Employers may wish to consider adding value to instructors non-financially by offering support to instructors in career progression, personal growth, support, training, professional memberships, insurance, licence agreements, health and wellness and planning and development time. This is not an exhaustive list as many employers already have many elements of support that are appreciated by instructors and considered good practice.

**NB.** Where employers are not able to meet the recommended pay band ranges due to their own business models, regional differentiation or business circumstances or prefer to reward and value group exercise teachers differently, employers may wish to recognise the financial burden on instructors and add value to their instructors by considering other financial support measures for training or resources such as:

- Pay for music subscription centrally for all instructors to access
- Pay for music licensing centrally for all instructors to access
- Support with in-house training to meet CPD requirements
- Adding some additional non-teaching paid hours to a contract to allow for planning, meet and greet, community support.
- Assisting with travel costs
- Paying for meeting and training time
- Bonus scheme based on continuity of class numbers
- Commission based scheme