

Gymshark's young founder Ben Francis to inspire Croydon's youth

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What do Grand Prix drivers, premier league footballers and Hollywood stars all have in common? They employ personal trainers (PT) to ensure their bodies look good, and are in peak physical condition.

But, it's not just the fast and the famous enlisting the help of PTs; nowadays it's the general public too. In fact, out of the estimated £4.4 billion generated by the UK's fitness industry, the PT sector generates almost £700m.

Celebrity trainers, body-builders, fitness brands and YouTube vloggers like Joe Wicks and Gymshark's Ben Francis have helped the UK fitness industry thrive, and part of this industry is personal training, which has become a professional and well-paid career choice.

From September, Croydon College, opposite East Croydon station in south London is offering qualifications in personal training for anyone over the age of 19. And, is holding an advice day on the 25th May for those interested in starting the course.

Gymshark founder Ben Francis and company director Richard Chapple will be on hand at the college to meet prospective students and to offer insights into their industry and their journey.

Ben Francis was just 19 when he set up Gymshark in 2012. A gym devotee, he has already grown his fitness clothing brand into a business with a multimillion-pound turnover, reporting revenues of £12.8m last year. This rapid expansion has earned the company first place in the latest Sunday Times 100 list of Britain's fastest-growing private companies.

He told The Times: "We are a new breed of company. It's less about selling the clothes and more about selling the mindset," said Francis. "I would rather die happy in 10 years knowing that I've affected people's lives rather than having £1m in the bank or having a Lamborghini."

Aaron Carr head of sport at Croydon College said: "We're delighted that Ben and Richard are taking time out of their busy schedule to come and talk to our students and prospective students on the 25th – Ben's story is inspirational and I know that he will inspire our students.

"The personal training qualification is a new for us, but we feel it's an important addition to our offer. Personal trainers realistically are able to earn up to £50,000 – some much more, courses like these help our students to truly 'own their futures'."

To work as a PT you have to be qualified; the role of a personal trainer includes a strong element of psychology, communication and relationship building, as well as a sound knowledge of physical exercise and safety.

"The courses that we're offering are highly regarded and delivery is blended – which means it's a mix of classroom and online study." Added Carr.

The courses start in September and demand is expected to be high – please call 020 8686 5700 or email khorra@croydon.ac.uk/carra@croydon.ac.uk for more details.

FAST PERSONAL TRAINER FACTS

- There are over 13,000 registered personal trainers in the UK.
- 35% of those are women.
- Approximately 80% of personal trainers work on a freelance basis..
- High-end personal trainers can charge over £1000 for six weeks' work with just one client.
- Physical inactivity currently costs the UK £20bn and the government has started to place greater emphasis on the importance of getting Britons moving.

*– Read more about London's top PTs here:

<http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/health/10-of-the-best-personal-trainers-in-london-to-get-you-fit-in-2016-a3135816.html>

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