

OakNorth Sector Pulse

HEALTH & WELLBEING

JULY 2025



OakNorth



Industry overview

The UK's health and wellbeing sector has shown continued resilience over the past six months, with gyms, fitness operators, and wellness providers remaining core to the nation's evolving healthcare ecosystem. Despite consumer spending remaining subdued due to [ongoing economic pressures](#), spending on physical and mental wellbeing has [remained resilient](#). The country's gym market continues to expand, with younger adults driving this surge in customer numbers, lured by the attraction of socialising while getting fit, [instead of in pubs and bars](#).

This growth is underpinned by a wider cultural shift, with improvements to mental health now overtaking weight loss as the primary driver for gym membership, particularly among younger and midlife demographics. Workplace wellness programmes have also accelerated adoption, with employers, [aware of the benefits to productivity and the reduction in absenteeism](#), increasingly investing in fitness subsidies and partnerships, as part of broader wellbeing strategies.

All of this comes against a backdrop of continued NHS strain, growing interest in preventive care, and the anticipated arrival of significant policy changes in the second half of 2025, including the potential passage of the UK Mental Health Bill. Together, these developments signal a sector that is not just enduring, but rapidly evolving.



Key trends of the last six months

The rise of AI in preventive and personalised healthcare

Between February and June, the UK saw multiple milestones in AI integration across the health and wellness space. The NHS launched a pilot in April 2025 to deploy AI-based early warning systems for hospital safety risks, [signifying a positive next step towards embedding AI into mainstream preventive care](#).

In the consumer space, companies such as Cera and Thiva continued scaling AI-powered platforms that track vitals and predict care needs. The release of 'UP Transform 3.0' in May 2025 by OakNorth customer and Manchester-based provider of personalised training and nutrition programmes, Ultimate Performance, sees the introduction of live feedback features using biometric data to personalise routines and meal plans in real time. [Search interest in "AI personal training" also rose by 70% over Q2 2025](#), confirming its rising adoption.



The UK saw multiple milestones in AI integration across the health and wellness space

Private spending holds steady

[Recent figures show](#) that while 58% of consumers cut back on dining out and entertainment, only 12% reduced health, fitness, or gym-related spending. Indeed, OakNorth customer and health and fitness club operator, Total Fitness, [recently reported](#) record membership levels, as well as a 19% increase in total visits to clubs in the 12 months to June 2024.



58% of consumers cut dining and entertainment, but only 12% cut health or fitness spending

Women's health in focus

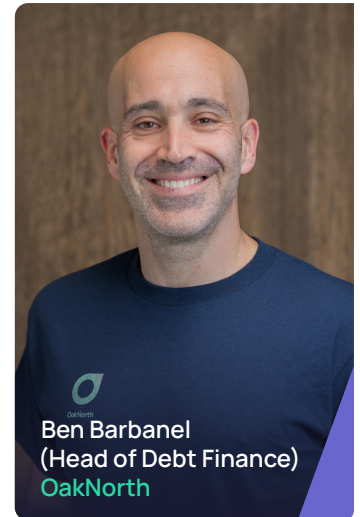
Several high-profile campaigns made headlines in H1 2025, such as NHS England's #CheckInMidlife initiative, having driven increased awareness of menopause, hormonal health, and cycle-based training. Additionally, in June, Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, announced the launch of a national maternity investigation to drive improvements in national maternity and neonatal care. As such, [funding in UK-based Femtech startups grew 40% in H1 2025 compared to the same period in 2024](#).



40% rise in Femtech funding follows NHS campaigns and national maternity care focus

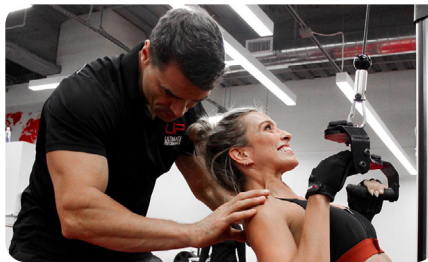


Over the last six months, we've seen the health and wellbeing sector not only withstand economic pressure but continue to innovate and grow. AI is moving from hype to reality in fitness and preventive care, women's health is rightly receiving national attention, and consumer demand for wellness has remained remarkably resilient. As we look ahead to the second half of the year, which could see landmark changes to mental health legislation and the launch of the Employment Rights Bill, we expect this sector to gain even more momentum. We are proud to support the forward-thinking operators who are driving better health outcomes and shaping a stronger, more inclusive wellbeing economy."



Ben Barbanel
(Head of Debt Finance)
OakNorth

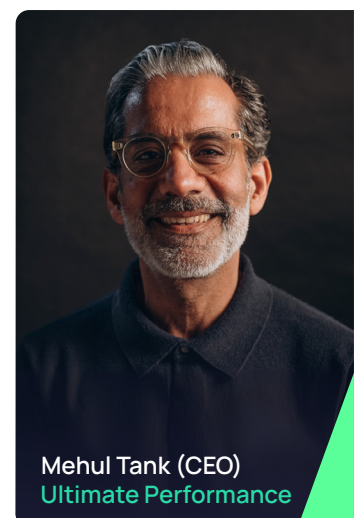
Customer insight



As we move into the second half of 2025, we see a continued trend for people to track key health metrics, reflecting a growing desire to live not just longer lives, but better quality, healthier lives. Individuals are increasingly aligning their daily habits with data-driven, science-backed approaches to improving their lifestyles.

Ultimate Performance, with its over 15 years of experience in transforming clients' lives, is uniquely positioned to demonstrate how our personal training system delivers benefits beyond aesthetic improvements but also quality of life and health markers. We track more data than any other fitness business in the world, and we are currently looking at what other data we might collect to further underscore the benefits of our U.P. Method.

What we offer clients is an evidence-based approach that delivers results and includes a concierge-level service, beyond the gym floor, that supports our clients with key aspects of their health."



Mehul Tank (CEO)
Ultimate Performance

“In 2025, the conversation has shifted more towards strength training as individuals consider pharmaceutical interventions for weight-loss. UP supports clients on their strength training journeys, whether they are taking GLP-1 drugs or not and we have a responsibility to educate consumers that losing weight is just one part of the puzzle. Without adequate protein, comprehensive nutrition coaching, sustainable habit formation, and strength training, rapid weight loss will always lead to muscle loss, and preserving muscle is vital to improving the quality of people’s lives.”

“With a better-informed population and a growing demand for trusted expertise, Ultimate Performance is exceptionally well-placed to grow in 2025, because results will always speak loudest.”



I was on fast track to a heart attack at 43 – until I took control of my weight”

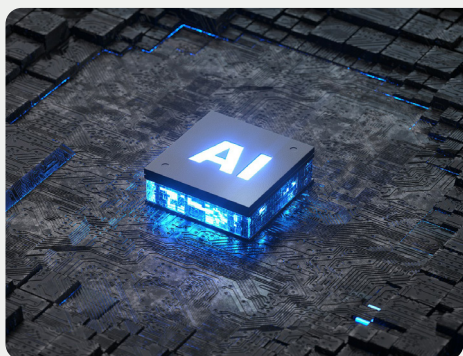
AN OAKNORTH CASE STUDY

As a testament to Ultimate Performance’s personal training programmes, Head of Debt Finance at OakNorth, Ben Barbanel, shared his experience of working closely with the Manchester-based provider of personalised training and nutrition programmes, which saw him lose 23kg, drop his body fat from 40% to just 14%, as well as reduce his resting heart rate from 86 bpm, to just 54 bpm, all within just nine months.

His experience with them was so impressive that in May 2024, we were delighted to provide them with growth capital to help fund their expansion.

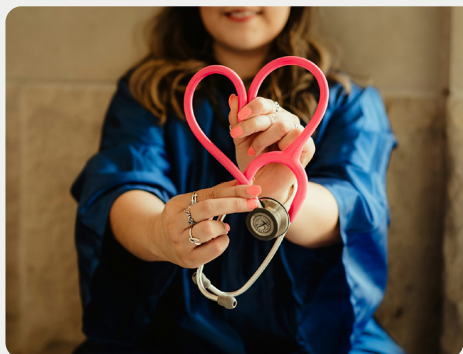
Read more about Ben’s story [here](#).

Deal spotlight



A leading provider of end-to-end diagnostic services

In April 2025, we supported pioneering health company, [Inuvi](#), with a £16m loan to drive future growth and acquisitions, including of [Physiological Measurements](#), the award-winning provider of community non-invasive diagnostic services in partnership with the NHS.



London-headquartered medical communications consultancy

In April 2025, we provided a £5m financing facility to [SCIRIS Group](#), a London-headquartered medical communications and market access platform backed by Waterland Private Equity. The capital will enable SCIRIS to strengthen its liquidity, streamline working capital management, and position the group for further organic expansion.

Outlook for the next six months

Seasonal surge following the 'second new year'

Operators will be gearing up for the [typical September - November uplift](#), often referred to as the 'second new year', when post-summer routines kick in and consumers re-engage with wellness goals. Furthermore, early promotions, employer wellbeing incentives, and a growing appetite for mental health-supportive fitness, such as yoga, boxing, strength training, will further fuel this momentum.



Wellness goals return as routines reset after summer break

Mental health reform and workplace investment

The UK Government is expected to pass the long-awaited Mental Health Bill in autumn 2025. If enacted, it would introduce new patient rights, reforms to community-based support, and greater integration of mental health into primary care.

Additionally, we expect a growing number of UK employers to expand private mental health offerings, including onsite counselling, teletherapy partnerships, and digital burnout screening, in response to the UK's shift and growing societal focus.

At the same time, Labour's Employment Rights Bill could have significant implications for those with mental health issues or going through menopause.



Mental Health Bill may expand rights and primary care integration 2025

M&A to drive innovation

The dealmaking landscape in the latter half of 2025 is expected to be shaped by strategic recalibration and forward-looking readiness. Businesses with resilient balance sheets and dealmakers equipped with clear priorities and well-developed scenario planning will be best placed to capitalise on emerging opportunities. Despite ongoing macro-economic challenges, M&A continues to be a critical lever for driving innovation, building resilience, and enabling transformational growth.



Strategic M&A remains key for innovation and growth despite economic headwinds

Get in touch with the team at questions@oaknorth.co.uk or visit oaknorth.co.uk for more information.