

**Client:** Hilton International  
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## FOUNDATION

# LES MILLS FUND FOR CHILDREN

The provider of group fitness classes Les Mills launched its Fund for Children in June this year, providing support for charities with a focus on children leading active lives. Chief executive **KEITH BURNET** explains how they aim to create healthy childhoods

*We're a New Zealand company but operate in 16,000 health clubs in 80 different countries around the world.* We have 13 different fitness programmes, which are primarily for group exercise, and have just launched Born To Move classes aimed at children. This is part of the reason that we have just launched the foundation.

*Our vision as a company is about a fitter planet and a world that is more healthy and sustainable.* Children's fitness is a big part of what we plan to do in the future so it made sense for us to try to make a difference with our programmes, but also to help different charities that support children and their health and wellbeing in a financial way.

*It is very early days and we are still establishing our fundraising streams.* One example is that when a client buys a licence to run Born To Move classes, we donate 5 per cent of all the licence revenues that come from that particular programme, and ask our customers to match that. As we are in our first year we are doing targeted grant-giving. We have raised over £10,000 in the last two months but we are identifying charities that fit our criteria and then approaching them and working with them directly, rather than the other way round. Next year the grant-giving process will be more formalised, and we will be in a position to receive grant applications, review them and allocate

funds accordingly. So far we've given



two grants of £5,000 each, and by the end of the year we will have made four.

*Every three months we run a large consumer instructor event called GFX where over 2,000 people come and do classes all day.* On the back of those events we are making grants. In June we ran one in Alexandra Palace, and as a result made a donation to the Panathlon Foundation (pictured), a charity that supports disabled young children doing a variety of different types of activities around the country. We also held one in Belfast and donated money to a local charity called JT Inspires, which also works with young children to get them active. We will be holding another event in Liverpool this month where we intend to do the same. Our instructors, who we call our tribe, regularly get in touch



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with us to say they are supporting a particular cause, and ask us how we can help. That is where the charities we currently support come from.

*With JT Inspires, while we are making cash donations we also help them by using our network of instructors.* One of the things they were looking for as a resource is people that can help come and take a class with some of the children they are supporting. So instructors are the other way we can help. We would put out an appeal in a local area via social media, and people come forward and volunteer. When looking at charities we can support, we don't just say "we can give you some money", it is more about asking what we can help them with on an ongoing basis.

*The charities we have supported so far have been primarily around exercise or activity,* but the perimeters of the foundation are around general health and wellbeing. The number one thing we look for in a charity is its work with children, the second is looking at some sort of exercise or activity and health education.

*We don't have a minimum or maximum grant that we offer,* it is more about what suits that charity. We want it to make a meaningful difference, and depending on the organisation it could be small or it could be big. We work with the Hilton in the Community Foundation. We're not a large business so running something like this is effectively a full-time job, so they have assisted us with the framework. They host us and we pay them a fee to do that. However, the business pays that fee, so for every pound we raise, 100 per cent goes directly to whatever charity we are raising for. ■