



FINANCIAL TIMES

THE FAT OF THE LAND

By Jon Boone, Education Correspondent
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Growing concern about obesity in children has prompted a US education company to open its first "fat camp" in the UK, writes Jon Boone. Aspen Education Group said yesterday it would open a Wellspring Camps modelled on its US chain this summer in the Lake District, offering a range of fitness activities and health education.

Ian Carter, a director of Wellspring in the UK, said prospects were good for companies offering help to parents worried about obesity.

"The UK has caught up with the US in terms of the number of overweight and obese young people," he said. The company is starting with 30 children aged 12-17 years but plans to increase that to 120. A four-week course will cost £2,900, six weeks £4,300 and two months £5,200.

Wellspring expects to emulate its rapid growth in the US where it has set up six camps and one boarding school in the three years since Aspen Education set it up.

Alarm about obesity has prompted the weight loss industry to turn its attention to younger people, with Weight Watchers and Slimming World opening services to children.

The Carnegie International Camp at Leeds Metropolitan University, which was set up in 1999, claims to be the UK's first weight loss camp.