



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Fitness Suite Admission Procedures
<b>Date:</b>	14 August 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Katrina Morgan-Talbot, Acting Leisure Services Manager

### Relevant Background Information

Since Leisure Services began operating health and fitness suites there has been an inconsistent approach to screening customers prior to using the facilities. In some sites anyone of the permitted age could use our fitness facilities without any form of "health screening".

Following the Building Upgrade Programme when a single source supplier was used for all equipment in each site and since the Council employed two full time instructors in eight centres, management have been working to improve procedures to ensure a consistently high level of service delivery at all sites.

Since September 2006 all users of Belfast City Council fitness suites have been required to complete a health screening questionnaire known as a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ). A customer with no identified health risks is permitted to sign a "waiver" and gain entry to the fitness suite without having direct contact with a fitness instructor. Customers who identify health risks are required to have an induction meeting with a Health and Fitness Coach who provides advice on programmes and can identify any underlying factors which may be detrimental to the customer when using the facilities.

This approach meant that many of our new customers were not given support from our qualified staff in terms of goal setting, effective exercise programmes, safe use of the equipment or benefits of our membership schemes.

Membership of our BOOST leisure card scheme has increased from around 9,000 in 2006 to almost 30,000 currently. Uptake of our direct debit membership has almost doubled, indicating that we have doubled the number of customers who use the centres twice or more each week on a long term basis. Fitness suite usage has also increased.

## **Key Issues**

As we work to continually improve our services, a more focused procedure for access to our fitness suites is being introduced. To ensure that we provide a safe, rewarding and enjoyable experience, from September 2008 all new customers wishing to use Council fitness facilities will require an induction with a qualified member of staff, this will have the added benefits of;

- meeting a qualified member of staff to discuss current health status and suitability for exercise;
- an equipment orientation for safe and effective use;
- an agreed programme of exercise;
- programme updates and reviews;
- an opportunity to market Boost membership packages;
- an opportunity to market other centre based activities;
- providing a more customer focused fitness suit experience;
- ensuring that regular exercise becomes part of a healthy lifestyle; and
- ensuring that all health and safety procedures are explained

The right to waiver the induction will no longer be an option for new customers. Current users, who have already completed a screening questionnaire, will continue to be permitted entry on production of their existing membership card.

This approach reflects best practice in the leisure industry. It is intended to undertake as many inductions as possible when new customers arrive at our centres however there will be occasions when a qualified fitness instructor will not be available to assist with an induction. A bookings and appointment system has been set up to ensure that new customers can arrange for an induction with minimum waiting times in these circumstances.

A public awareness campaign through City Matters, Council website and centre specific posters and will make current and potential customers aware of the new procedure.

## **Resource Implications**

### Financial

There are no financial implications with the introduction of this process.

### Human Resources

Reception staff will make bookings for inductions as part of their duties. Health and fitness coaches with the support of other staff qualified as fitness coaches will carry out inductions as part of their duties.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and recognise that on occasion, new customers will not be given access to our fitness suites until they have followed the induction process.

<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
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PARQ – Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire
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<b>Documents Attached</b>
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Appendix 1. Flow chart of fitness suite induction process
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