



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Leisure for free pilot scheme
Date:	11 November 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Andrew Steenson, Health and Fitness Officer

Relevant Background Information

Leisure for free is a pilot scheme aimed at improving the health of those people living in areas of high deprivation, through the provision of free leisure centre membership.

The scheme is funded by the Public Health Agency and will provide 200 people with free leisure centre membership for one year, on the basis they attend a set number of times per month.

The aim of the scheme is to increase the physical activity levels of participants to the point where exercise becomes habit. On completion of the scheme, staff will work with each individual to ensure they can continue to participate in physical activity through our Boost leisure discount scheme and existing community programmes.

Key Issues

The scheme will look to improve the health of each participant through the provision of free access to leisure provision and access to a qualified fitness coach. It is anticipated that this programme will be advertised in January and begin recruiting in February 2011.

Selection of areas

It is recommended that this scheme is piloted in four areas across the city so that any differing factors for areas can be identified and considered prior to any possible expansion of the scheme. It is also targeted at areas of high deprivation. This is a core objective of the funding from the Public Health Agency. It also links with the Council's own strategic theme of 'Better support for people and communities' under the areas of 'People are healthier' and 'Inequalities reducing'.

In identifying the areas in which the pilot scheme could initially be offered, the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 results were considered. This report highlights the following super output areas as being the most deprived in each of the 4 sectors of Belfast:

Area	Super Output Area	Places available
North	New Lodge 1	50
South	Blackstaff 2	50
East	Ballymacarrett 3	50
West	Whiterock 2	50

Allocation of memberships for this scheme will be split evenly across the four areas listed above.

Recruitment of participants

Information regarding the scheme will be disseminated through Council community centres, elected Members, Healthy Living Centres and community and voluntary organisations in each of the areas identified above. A press release highlighting the scheme will also be sent to each of the local newspapers in the areas identified above.

The information will direct residents to the Belfast City Council website where a complete list of postcodes for each of the identified areas can be found, as only those resident in certain postcodes will be eligible for the scheme. A contact telephone number will also be provided for those without internet access.

Should more than 50 residents register for the scheme in any of the four identified areas, selection of residents will be on a randomised basis. There will also be a waiting list.

Programme overview

Once selected, each resident will be required to attend an introduction meeting with their fitness coach. At this meeting the resident's health will be assessed, in line with our current fitness suite operating procedures. Should the health of any resident be deemed to be at risk, they will not be selected for the scheme and referred to their GP.

Those residents selected to participate in the scheme will be required to attend the leisure centre a minimum of 4 times a month during the first 4 months. This will increase to a minimum of 6 times a month during the next 4 months and up again to a minimum of 8 times a month during the final 4 months. Each month the participants will be required to meet with their fitness coach for a follow up assessment.

Monitoring and evaluation

In order to assess the feasibility of rolling this scheme out to other areas across the city a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed.

The activity of all participants will be collected and reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure attendance targets are being met. Each participant will also complete a Health Related Quality of Life questionnaire every month which will be analysed for any changes in perceived health, self-esteem and attitudes towards

physical activity. The findings for each area will also be compared to identify any trends or variable which may have an impact on the future development of this scheme. Factors such as proximity to provision, type of provision available and attitudes towards physical activity will need to be considered as part of the evaluation for this scheme.

Quarterly reports will be provided to the Public Health Agency, in line with the terms and conditions of funding. A final evaluation report will also be brought to Committee for their consideration.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Public Health Agency will provide £24,000 funding to cover the cost of memberships. There are no additional financial implications

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve the areas selected for the pilot of this scheme

Decision Tracking

Evaluation report will be brought to Committee by April 2012
Officer responsible: Andrew Steenson, Health and Fitness Officer

Key to Abbreviations

None

Documents Attached

None