

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

24 MARCH 2020

QUESTION NO. 2 in accordance with Standing Order No.9

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Free Swimming

How many people swam for free under the terms of the Your Reading Passport scheme at each Leisure Centre in the last 12 months, and how many of these were aged over sixty years old ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The Council does not record the number of free swims given to people over 60 but distinguishes between Adult and Junior. In 2019, 23,868 free swims were provided broken down across Reading's facilities as below:

Category	Meadway	South Reading L C	Rivermead
Adult	7288	4383	8,869
Junior	1086	500	1,742
Total	8374	4883	10611

(excluding under 3 years which are not part of the Your Reading Passport scheme)

Free swimming and other sports are currently provided and administered through the Your Reading Passport with the aim of encouraging participation in sport and physical activity by those who were less likely to participate in this activity due to demographic or socio-economic group. The way in which the YRP card works is blunt and not necessarily effectively targeting or supporting people who would most benefit from participating in physical activity. The scheme is not supported by either effective data capture nor analytics systems further reducing effectiveness as illustrated by the limited data we have to respond to this question.

Our new Partnership with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) will transform Reading's facilities including 2 new swimming pools and programming changes. These have been identified in the Active Reading consultation as the largest barriers to use. These were therefore prioritised as key areas to be addressed.

This does mean that the subsidy provided by the Council is being differently spent to increase participation in a more targeted, effective and efficient manner. Different approaches and changes to programming are being made

with different groups, concentrating on those least likely to access facilities and participate in activity. While it would be nice to provide free swimming as well as these additional initiatives, Council resources are limited, and we need to prioritise our spending to deliver the best outcomes.

Your Question specifically highlights the over 60's, I list below some of the initiatives that are being introduced to replace the YRP scheme benefitting this group:

- FREE resident play and pay card- up to 30% off the cost of non-member price
- £25.75 Non-resident Better Pay & Play adult card
- £27.95 Better Health and Fitness membership (30% discount)
- Expansion of 60+ activities and clubs across all centres
- Better Club games providing new opportunities for many 60+ club members
- Development of Falls Prevention Scheme
- Development of social prescription working closely with Reading Voluntary Action and Age UK
- Development of walking sports in partnership with Age UK, University of 3rd Age and National Governing Bodies
- Dementia friendly sessions, centres and staff
- Linking activity and core leisure centre timetable to health programmes eg social prescription, exercise referral, Falls prevention etc.
- Offer free trials, taster sessions and open days
- Discrete pool lifts to aid access.
- provide free Disability helper Access
- Community outreach programme targeting priority groups via key partners and delivering monthly sessions in community settings e.g. parks, estates, community centres.

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QUESTION NO. 3 in accordance with Standing Order No.9

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

New Swimming Pools - Changing Facilities

Will the planned new swimming pools at Rivermead and in East Reading include private changing areas available for use by those that do not feel safe changing in unsegregated changing areas used by all genders ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

Thankyou Mr Lightfoot for your question.

There are considerations that need be given to people who may not identify under a particular gender or may feel uncomfortable with gender specific change facilities. Providing gender specific changing is far less flexible and less able to cater for the variety of uses we expect to provide. Changing rooms would need to be built with spare capacity to accommodate the variations of ratios between genders using facilities for different activities, for example Aqua Aerobics will tend have a higher female attendance while general swimming is more balanced.

We will be providing a variety of changing accommodation at the new facilities to include:

1. Changing places which will include hoists, benches and other facilities to accommodate people with disabilities and additional needs and we will also be providing wheel chairs to transfer customers to sports facilities or into the pool using pool pods to enable dignified use of our facilities.
2. Standard disabled changing facilities within the main changing areas.
3. Lockable and secure cubicles within changing villages providing discrete and private changing.
4. Carer and child changing facilities within changing villages.
5. Gender specific toilets associated with changing spaces.

This will cater for the widest range of customers irrespective of gender. Where we have gender specific sessions or activities then associated changing facilities will obviously also be limited to the gender using them.

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24 MARCH 2020

QUESTION NO. 8 in accordance with Standing Order No.9

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Free Swimming

Free swimming for various groups will end as GLL take over the whole leisure contract:

1. Why is this when a Labour government introduced it ?
2. Will this also apply equally at South Reading and Meadway centres ?
3. Will there be charges for parking at all sites, or, remain as now ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

Thank you for your question, there is considerable overlap between this question and your previous question earlier in todays agenda questioning free swimming.

In relation to car parking, charges are currently made at Rivermead and will be introduced at Palmer Park with the first 3 hours being free and 50p per hour thereafter. This is designed to address a number of issues related to long term parking that is restricting access to facilities by customers and elements of anti-social behaviour whilst giving free parking access to the majority of sports users. There are no current plans for South Reading Leisure Centre however, this site will remain under review.

We currently provide free swimming through a Your Reading Passport (YRP) scheme. This method of increasing participation is not necessarily reaching those most in need. It is an unsophisticated method of overcoming barriers and encouraging participation in physical activity. The scheme's functionality is very limited and promotion to people most likely to benefit or in need is limited.

Often cost is not the largest barrier to use. Poor programmes and facilities discourage use. This was indeed also found to be the case in Reading during the Active Reading consultation last year in which over 1100 consultees responded. The biggest identified barriers to use were poor quality facilities along with not being conveniently located or easy to access. These issues were far more acute in Reading than is found nationally. The Focus group with older people also found that awareness of the concessions available such as free swimming was not known and those who were aware of it did not greatly value it.

We, along with our partners, Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) are making a series of changes to make maximum use of resources. We are investing in our facilities to improve the health and well being of people most likely to benefit from undertaking physical activity.

The new Rivermead centre providing a competition pool and community 6 lane pool at Palmer Park, along with improvements and changes to existing centres are to be provided. Included within these developments are: inclusive gym equipment, improved swimming pool access, variable pool depths and a variety of pool water temperatures, improved accessible changing, dementia friendly designs amongst many others. These along with the better distribution of pools across the town and improved quality will address many barriers that YRP is unable to. Similarly, a more varied and targeted programming will provide services better able to meet need, again a barrier identified through the Active Reading Consultation and not addressed through YRP.

These matters were identified in the Equality impact assessment in the report to Policy Committee on 20th January this year identifying GLL as our preferred leisure partner

(For reference Appendix F:

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=3091&Ver=4>)

along with the draft strategic outcomes planning model developed from the Active Reading Consultation (appendix E). I list below some of the initiatives that we will be implementing which will increase use by key groups:

- Better concessionary membership card for people on a low income providing 50% discounts at off peak times
- Free residents cards offering 30% discounts
- £25.75 Non-resident Better Pay & Play adult card
- £27.95 Better Health and Fitness membership
- Expansion of 60+ hubs and activities and clubs across all centres and inter club games
- Better Club games providing new opportunities for many 60+ club members
- Development of social prescription working closely with Reading Voluntary Action and Age UK
- Development of walking sports in partnership with Age UK, University of 3rd Age and National Governing Bodies
- Provision of Cardio and cancer rehabilitation schemes
- Dementia friendly sessions, centres and staff
- Free weekly trials, taster sessions and open days at centres aimed at vulnerable or under represented groups.
- Free disability helper access/carers pass
- Space for Public Health initiatives

- Out reach programmes in non-leisure centre settings
- Social / outreach programmes providing low cost sessions from £1 to £3

With this range of changes and improvements we will reach far more people who will benefit from our investment than relying on the old-style free-swimming initiatives currently employed.