

## Report for improving the Active Leeds swimming lesson product.

Date: 24/08/2021

Report of: Business Manager, Active Leeds

Report to: Chief Officer, Operations and Active Leeds

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

### **What is this report about?**

#### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval to improve the swimming pathway at all Active Leeds swimming pools by increasing the number of weeks of swimming lesson delivery to 50 weeks and include free swimming for all children and adults enrolled on swimming lessons.
- The delivery of the swimming lessons for 4 additional weeks (12 weeks for parent and toddler lessons) of the year and access to free swimming will assist with supporting children to live healthy and physically active lifestyles and also ensure children progress quicker to ensure they have the ability to swim unaided quicker and reduce the chances of drowning in and around water and supporting safe and stronger communities and in particular support Leeds to be a child friendly city.
- The pandemic has meant that some children and adults have not had swimming lessons for over a year and those who have been able to attend will have only attended a maximum of 20 lessons since March 2020, increasing the number of lessons per year will help rectify the deficit. Pre covid there were just under 11,000 children on private lessons across all leisure centres and with the current restrictions we are only able to operate just over 6,000, meaning that over 5,000 children a week are missing out on their swimming lessons and demand analysis highlights we could have over 15,000 children wanting to learn to swim at the leisure centres so even more are currently missing out.
- Following consultation with customers it has been highlighted the current arrangements of not providing swimming lessons on weeks where there is a bank holiday only benefits those families who go on holiday during these weeks. If you go away at other times the swimmers will not swim for multiple weeks per year which would likely mean it takes the child/adults longer to reach the end of swimming lessons therefore increasing the overall cost to the customer.
- The price of the monthly swimming lesson direct debit will increase based on the cost of the additional 4 weeks of extra delivery of lessons (12 weeks for parent and toddler lessons, however there will not be any price increases for people already in the parent and toddler lessons). However, customers will benefit from the added value of free swimming as part of

the new scheme, will more than compensate for an increase as well as getting 4 additional swimming lesson sessions.

## **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer, Operations and Active Leeds to give:

- a) Approval to move to 50 weeks a year of swimming lessons for children and adult programmes.
- b) Approval to increase the monthly swimming lesson direct debit, removing the need for a Leeds card and include public/family swimming in the swimming lesson direct debit membership
- c) Approval to change the age of free swimming from under 5 to under 3 years old for anyone not on the swimming lesson programme.

## **Why is the proposal being put forward?**

- 1 When comparing Active Leeds swimming lesson programme to other providers across the country it is common practice to run swimming lessons programmes for 50 weeks of the year and only have a break over the Christmas/New Year period to ensure continued assessment of the public can be achieved.
- 2 Consistency is key, we learn new skills when we continually practice them breaking for bank holiday weeks added to the usual absence for family holidays, events and sickness hinders the progression of the swimmer.
- 3 When parents/guardians were consulted regarding removing the bank holiday breaks only 7% said they would not support the change. Over 75% said they would want this and the remaining were unsure and required more information.
- 4 71% of those who completed the survey said they took their child to public swimming outside of lesson times, and 91% of people said they would make use of free swimming, indicating including free public swimming for the child enrolled on lessons will give great value to many families.
- 5 Using insight from our governing body Swim England we found that nationally most providers were offering free swimming to under 3s rather than under 5's like Active Leeds currently do. However, as the people will get free swimming as part of the new swimming membership children could have free swimming up the age of 12 and beyond depending how long they stay in the scheme.
- 6 Active Leeds has an annual income budget for swimming lessons of just under £3m, increasing the number of weeks swimming lessons are delivered has the potential to increase annual income with a small increase to expenditure costs (additional staffing costs).
- 7 The impact of the pandemic has seen current numbers of children attending lessons at only 55% of what they were precovid and the ability to increase lessons and free swimming will help children/adults to catch up quicker and allow Active Leeds to deliver swimming lesson to more people as currently demand for swimming outstrips the supply.

## What impact will this proposal have?

**Wards Affected: Across all Leisure Centres in the City.**

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 8 The impact of this proposal will increase the rate at which children/adults gain swimming ability, ensuring they gain this important life skill will make Leeds a safer place for children to grow up in.
- 9 Including free swimming in the cost of the membership will allow families to come swimming and spend quality time exercising and practising the skills taught in lessons for just the price of an adult swim, rather than currently paying for the child/family swim.
- 10 Delivering lessons over 50 weeks will give consistency to the customer and fair access to all, the current practice doesn't always make sense for example the break for the first bank holiday in May when the children are still attending school and not being during the holidays.
- 11 Increasing the number of weeks lessons are delivered will provide the teaching staff with financial stability, at the moment they currently do not get paid the teaching rate of pay when we have the swimming lesson breaks.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 12 Consultation has taken place with a variety of colleagues in Active Leeds. This includes swimming teachers, centre staff as well as senior officers and the finance team. The Executive Member, responsible for Active Leeds has been consulted with on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021
- 13 Early in 2021 we conducted a survey on swimming lesson satisfaction and asked questions around improving the product to be delivered over more weeks and including public swimming which was positively received.
- 14 Trade unions have been consulted on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

## What are the resource implications?

- 15 Staffing costs will increase in order to deliver the additional lessons and this will cost £9,913 per annum across the whole of Active Leeds.
- 16 We propose the price of swimming lessons will increase to £26.50 per month after removing the need to purchase a Leeds card. The current cost for swimming lessons are standard price £24.95 a month and Leeds card rate £22.95 a month. The cost of a Leeds Card is £12.50 per year which people have to pay on top of their swimming lesson cost and requires management from centre staff to administer and chase customers to update the membership when it expires each year which is often confusing for customers. The proposal is to combine the cost of the card into price of swimming lessons and everyone will benefit from a slightly cheaper price, as currently there is a standard price (non Leeds card holders) Leeds card price and Leeds card extra price. The service is proposing to have 2 prices moving forward a standard price (but this will be the old Leeds card rate) and the Leeds Card Extra price (no changes to the Leeds Card extra are being proposed to safeguard the more disadvantaged customers). Removing the Leeds card price leads to less confusion for customers and makes them more accessible to everyone as well as less administration from site staff (currently 50% pay the standard price and 50% pay the Leeds card price excluding those who pay the Leeds Card extra). The price per lesson will remain the same at £6 per lesson so there is no increase in the cost of each lessons, the price has

only increased to include 4 extra lessons and the Leeds Card payment (12 for parent and toddler lessons, but no changes to price point for people in our parent and toddler sessions currently, but they will benefit from extra lessons without an increase in payments) year equivalent to £24 a year spread over 12 months or a £2 a month increase on the standard and Leeds card extra price.

- 17 There will be a small amount of administration involved after each bank holiday where we credit those swimmers who would usually attend on a Monday as swimming lessons won't run during the bank holidays.
- 18 Due to the proposal including free swimming, the income currently generated from junior public swimming will be impacted, however a report ran to compare those currently enrolled on swimming lessons and attending public swimming sessions in 2019/2020 we found that only 5512 swims were paid for by a swimming lesson customer which would give an approximate income loss of £11,000 per annum.
- 19 Projected income generation on current numbers enrolled on swimming lessons could see us generate an additional £200k per annum, but as people will not be buying the Leeds Card as people only tend to buy the card to get a discount to swimming lessons. This will mean a £50k loss on Leeds card sales for Active Leeds. This will mean the total income from doing these changes will increase to £150k per annum on pre-covid swimming lesson levels of just under 11,000 children. However if the numbers on the programme increase which there are plans to do once restrictions are lifted this will increase income on an annual basis.

### **What are the legal implications?**

- 20 Not applicable – significant operational decision.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 21 Staff unaccepting of the change – staff informed of the proposed change 6 months ago, with FAQ's developed on the back of this feedback. However as staff are not contracted for swimming lesson it does add in additional issues, which staff have been involved in the plans. Additional teachers have also been trained to carry out swimming lessons to increase the number of staff able to teach lessons.
- 22 Customers unhappy of the change – Opinions sought from customers, clear communication plan and benefits of the new product to be explained in simple terms.

### **Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?**

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 23 Inclusive Growth - Health and Wellbeing is one of 12 big ideas and it states the importance of active lifestyles in fully realising social, educational and economic potential.
- 24 Health and Wellbeing - Physical Activity is one of 12 priorities for the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board (and the only lifestyle risk factor identified individually within a specific priority) – 'More people, more physically active, more often'.
- 25 Climate Emergency – At the same time of moving to 50 weeks Active Leeds will also be implementing a new digital paperless system for recording attendance and progress, helping to reduce the carbon footprint of running the swimming programme.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

#### **a) What other options were considered?**

- 26 Include badges within the direct debit – customer feedback wasn't as positive on this proposal as these are seen a reward parents like to give for passing a level.

- 27 Continue as we are currently operating, but this will mean children progress at a slower rate and some people are greater affected by the weeks of non-delivery.
- 28 Deliver over 52 weeks – this would mean having later opening times over the Christmas period when we are typically quieter and is a time everyone gets a break from activities.

**b) How will success be measured?**

- 29 The swimmers enrolled and income will be the two main sources. We will also look at the numbers of children accessing the free swimming on their membership. Progress of the swimming will be monitored to show the impact of not missing weeks of provision to show children progressing quicker than previously.
- 30 Customer feedback and satisfaction is always important to measure our success, which we will continue to do customer surveys to monitor feedback on the changes.

**c) What is the timetable for implementation?**

- 31 Member payments to increase from October 2021. Customers enrolled on lessons to be able to access free public swimming from September 2021 to give people extra period of free swimming.

## **Appendices**

- 32 Appendix 1 Equality Impact Screening.

## **Background papers**

- 33 None