



**Executive
9th October 2006**

**Report from the Director of
Policy and Regeneration**

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Access of Older People to Sports and Leisure Facilities –
Final report of Scrutiny Task Group
(Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel)**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the *Access of Older People to Sports and Leisure Facilities* Task Group to the Executive. It provides officer comments and information on the legal, financial and diversity implications of its recommendations.
- 1.3 The recommendations from the task group report require implementation by the following departments:
- Sports services
 - Community care
 - Brent Adult and Community Education Services

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the recommendations made in this review (listed on page 1 of the task group report) and thank the Task Group for its work.
- 2.2 To ask the relevant service areas to monitor progress in relation to the task group recommendations and to report back to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

3.0 Key Points from the Task Group

- 3.1 The Task Group was initially set up in response to some concerns around older people's access to sports and leisure facilities in Brent, which surfaced during the joint inspection of older people services (final report June 2005).

- 3.2 The issues raised by the inspectorate arose from the annual sports and leisure centre user survey, undertaken in 2003, which found that only 5% of users are aged 60 and over.
- 3.3 However, subsequently, the findings of the sports and leisure centre user survey 2004 have become available, showing a marked improvement. In 2004, 14% of users surveyed were aged 60 and over (this is compared to a borough wide figure of 15% of the population aged 60 and overⁱ¹)
- 3.4 In light of this, the Task Group decided to review its remit and to focus primarily on the issue of access to information.
- 3.5 A number of consultation methods were undertaken to investigate what barriers older people may face when trying to access sports and leisure, including:
- a mapping exercise detailing existing services and facilities being provided
 - a letter to all Members of Brent Council seeking their comments;
 - an article in Brent Magazine inviting the public to comment;
 - a letter and questionnaire to voluntary and community groups working with older people.
- 3.6 The results of the consultation exercise and the conclusions drawn from them are detailed in the final report (**Appendix A**), and led to the Task Group agreeing six recommendations (as detailed below).
- 3.7 The task group's final report was agreed in January 2006. Officer changes and the local council elections in May have caused delay in this report being forwarded to the Executive.

4.0 Recommendations from the Task Group

- 4.1 The Task Group recognised that the research it had carried out was exploratory, and that the services involved would benefit from further research. This is why a number of recommendations have been made on services carrying out further research. The recommendations are as set out below:
- 4.2 **(1)** That officers from Community Care, the Sports Services and Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES) work together on the '*activities for older people*' web page on the council website, particularly on improving the site in relation to physical activity for older people.
- 4.3 **(2)** That officers in Sports Services work closely with the Communications Unit to encourage the promotion of the current and future discounts available for older people at leisure centres, particularly the increased discounts available to those aged over 60 from January 2006. Officers are to ensure that:
- Information is kept up to date and accessible

¹ <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/UpdateTable.do>

- 'Traditional' methods of informing people are continued, and the internet is not the only mode of communication, particularly for the older population.

- 4.4 (3) That the Sports Service carries out some further research into communication methods by testing the extent to which word-of-mouth knowledge is shared. This should take place once the physical activity programme for adults aged over 50 at Bridge Park has been given a sufficient amount of time to be fully implemented and rolled out, and the service has a baseline of figures against which any testing can be compared.
- 4.5 (4) That the issue of transportation and information regarding options for older residents to access sports and leisure facilities is monitored by the Sports Service and the Transportation Unit, and is reported back to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate.
- 4.6 (5) That the 'Brent integrated Care co-ordination service'² project considers the promotion of physical exercise and sport in future action planning, particularly in relation to the identified key element of '*preventative services being commissioned from the voluntary sector*'.
- 4.7 (6) We recommend that the Chief Executive considers which unit should take the lead role to deliver this cross-council initiative.

5.0 Service Departments' Responses

5.1 Sports Services

The Sports Service welcomes the findings of the Access of Older People to Sports and Leisure Facilities review. Since the review was undertaken a number of key changes have been implemented including a revision of the leisure discount scheme to give a cheaper purchase price and greater discount to concessionary groups. We have also run a campaign on the JCDecaux boards promoting free swimming in the Borough for pensioners, disabled people and under 5's and we will continue to use a variety of different methods to keep all Brent residents informed of the opportunities available to them. We will continue to work with the leisure contractors to develop their programme of activities for pensioners and over 50's in order to raise physical activity levels by these age groups as well as looking at opportunities outside of specialist facilities and working in partnership with agencies such as the PCT and voluntary groups to increase levels of physical activity.

5.2 Housing and Community Care Department

The Housing and Community Care Department welcomes the report on Access of Older People to Sports and Leisure facilities. The report is within the Department's remit to ensure a coherent older people's strategy in Brent. The key themes of older people's wellbeing, quality of life and an active life are central to this.

² A pilot project being carried out as part of the Department of Health's pilot '*partnerships for older people project*'

These are being pursued through a Council-wide Strategy for Older People with representation from partner agencies and service areas and Better Government for Older People. The Department will pursue the issues raised in the report on access to sports and leisure through the above structures. Work is ongoing to ensure that people aged 50+ are fully involved in and access a wide range of activities for older people.

The Department will ensure that it continues to work with other service areas to improve the quality of information on the website, communicate using all channels, and promote access to activities and the preventative agenda with specific reference to services being commissioned from the voluntary sector through the Brent Integration Care Co-ordination Service.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 None specifically in relation to recommendations contained in 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 and that these will form part of the annual work programme.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 The Local Authority has the power to provide recreational facilities by virtue of s19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

8.0 Diversity Implications

8.1 Recommendations from task groups are incorporated within service departments' delivery or development plans and as such will be subject to the equalities impact assessments carried out by services as part of their work program. In addition, the annual review of Overview & Scrutiny activities includes an equalities impact assessment.

8.2 This report hopes to address equalities issues to help make services fairer and more easily accessible to all.

9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

9.1 None at this stage.

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