

Leisure Review Consultation Report

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1. Executive Summary

- **395 responses** were received to the consultation on the Leisure Review, of which 214 related to Daisyfield Pools, 176 to Shadsworth Leisure Centre and 5 were received from targeted organisations
- Over **90% of the respondents use or work** at one or both of the facilities
- **More people disagree with the focus of the Leisure Review than agree with it**, with the main reasons given for this being the value of the facilities to the local community, a lack of viable alternative facilities to use and the detrimental impact it would have on health and wellbeing in the borough
- The **vast majority of respondents feel any closure would have a very or fairly big impact on them**, with over 90% of people who use the facility every day feeling it would have a very big impact
- Over half of those people who feel a closure would have a very or fairly big impact indicated that they do not use any other leisure provision
- But **over 70% of people who feel it would have a big impact currently exercise on their own** in addition to visiting a leisure facility, for example running or walking
- Around **three in five indicated that they would not use any other leisure facility if Daisyfield or Shadsworth closed**
- When asked to explain the potential impact of a closure, the main explanations involved increased travel costs and time, a lack of suitable alternative leisure facilities in the area, detrimental impact on their health and a loss of social value gained at the local facilities
- The main alternative suggested related to charging, with **people willing to pay more to keep the centres open**
- Other suggestions included a review of staffing, opening hours and accessing funding opportunities
- Five schools responded to the stakeholder consultation who use the facilities for swimming sessions with their children
- Whilst all schools did not necessarily disagree with the focus of the Leisure Review, they did feel like it would have an impact on them in relation to transport, cost and time

2. Background and Methodology

2.1. Background

In September 2014, Blackburn with Darwen Council agreed to undertake a review of leisure provision to make savings of over £700k. The majority of the Leisure budget is spent on swimming pools therefore the Council requested that Sport England produce an independent report on swimming pool provision across the Borough.

The Sport England report states that there is an over provision of swimming pools in Blackburn with Darwen and that the borough has more swimming pools per head of population than the National and the North West average.

The Council operates seven pools on the following four sites:

- Darwen Leisure Centre
- Blackburn Leisure Centre
- Daisyfield Pools
- Shadsworth Leisure Centre

The Council invested £12.8m in Darwen Leisure Centre which opened in 2010. It is the only Council-owned pool which serves the residents of Darwen and surrounding areas. The Council in partnership with Blackburn College invested £13.5m in Blackburn Leisure Centre which opened in March 2015.

Based on the information and evidence looked at, the review focuses on swimming pool provision at Daisyfield Pools (which opened in 1906) and Shadsworth Leisure Centre (which opened in 1974) as these pools are older and more costly to operate than the newer, more modern facilities.

In order to inform the review, a programme of consultation was agreed by the Council to seek the views of residents, service users and stakeholders.

The Council commissioned Infusion, a local authority research partnership based in Lancashire, to deliver the consultation on their behalf to ensure an independent process.

2.2. Methodology

The consultation on Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre ran from Friday 2 October to Sunday 1 November 2015, a period of 4 weeks.

This approach consisted of two public consultation surveys, one for Daisyfield Pools and one for Shadsworth Leisure Centre. Additionally, a separate stakeholder survey was commissioned relating to either or both of the leisure facilities.

Both public surveys were hosted on the Council's 'The Shuttle' news website and people were signposted here through social media updates, press releases and articles in newsletters.

Moreover, PC terminals were located in each leisure facility so service users could complete an online survey when they visited. Paper copies were also available at each facility for those who were unable to respond online, along with reply envelopes so responses could be returned confidentially.

The stakeholder survey was posted out to a defined list of identified stakeholders, inviting them to respond and comment on the proposals and to seek viable alternative proposals for the running of the facilities. Again reply envelopes were provided so responses were returned directly to Infusion.

In total, 395 responses were received during the consultation.

- 214 responses to the Daisyfield public survey, of which 9 were paper returns
- 176 responses to the Shadsworth public survey, of which 58 were paper returns
- 5 responses to the targeted stakeholder survey

The findings within this report are split between the public results and the stakeholder responses.

3. Public Consultation

3.1. Who responded?

Respondents to the public surveys for Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre were asked to provide their home postcode. A plot of these can be seen in figures 3.1 and 3.2 below.

Figure 3.1: Daisyfield Pools home postcodes (base – 187)

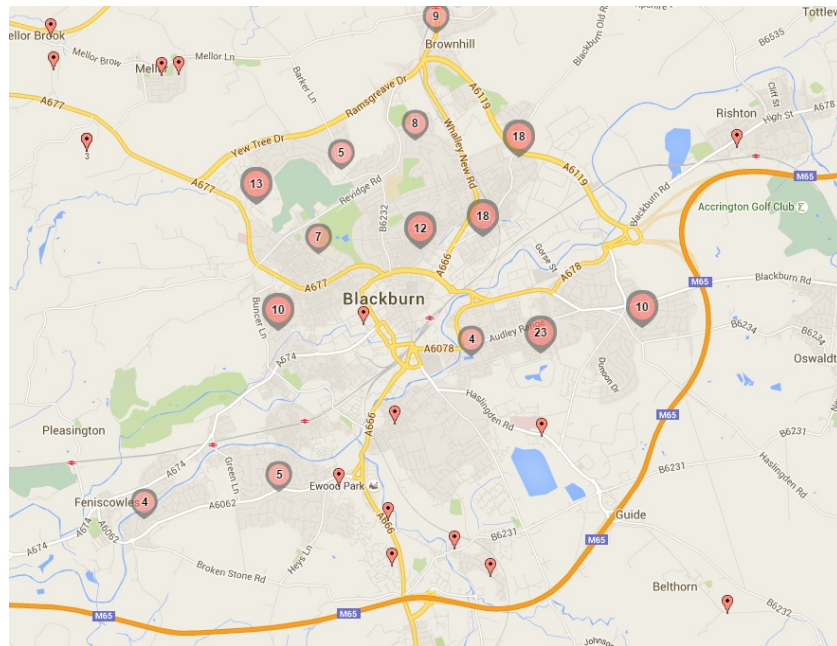
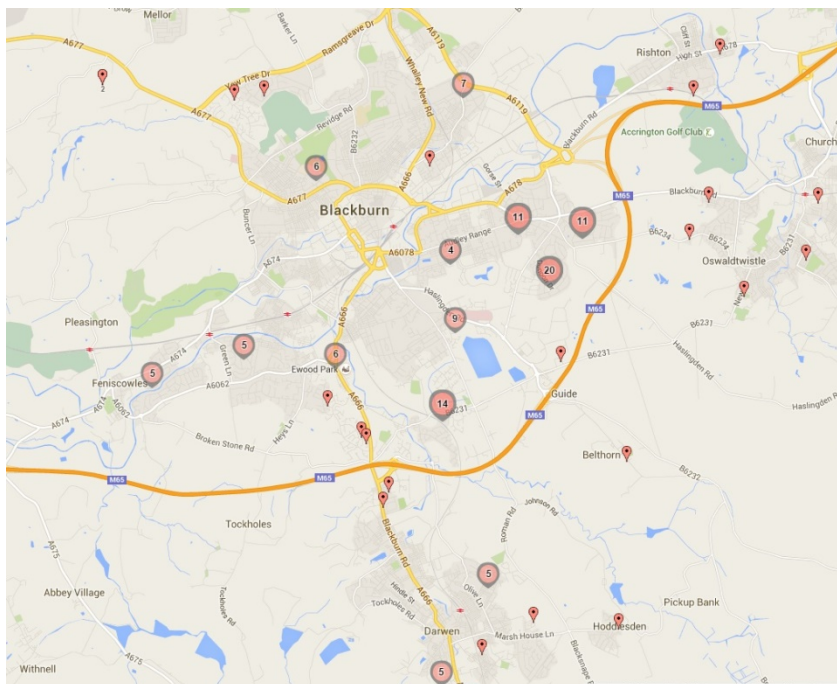


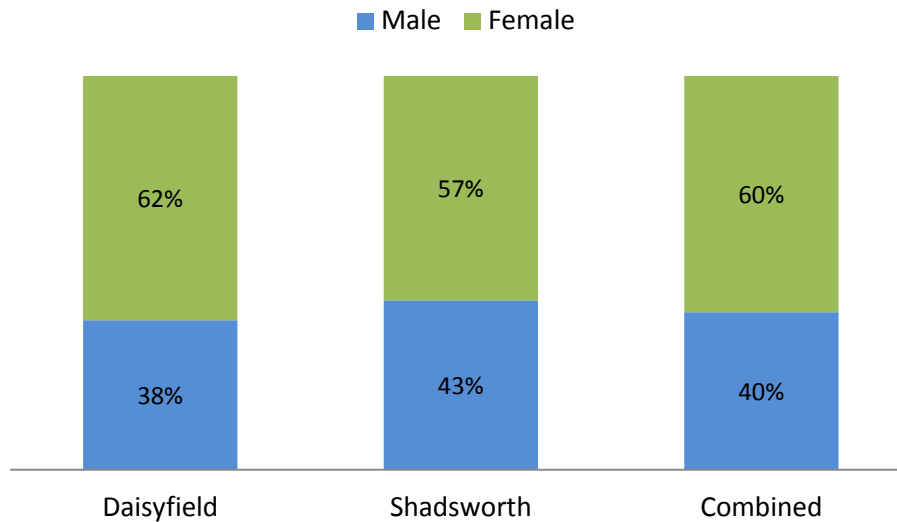
Figure 3.2: Shadsworth Leisure Centre home postcodes (base – 160)



Maps accessed from BatchGeo on 4 November 2015

More females than males responded in both surveys. The combined public response equates to 3:2 split in favour of females.

Figure 3.3: What is your gender? (base – Daisyfield 208, Shadsworth 167)

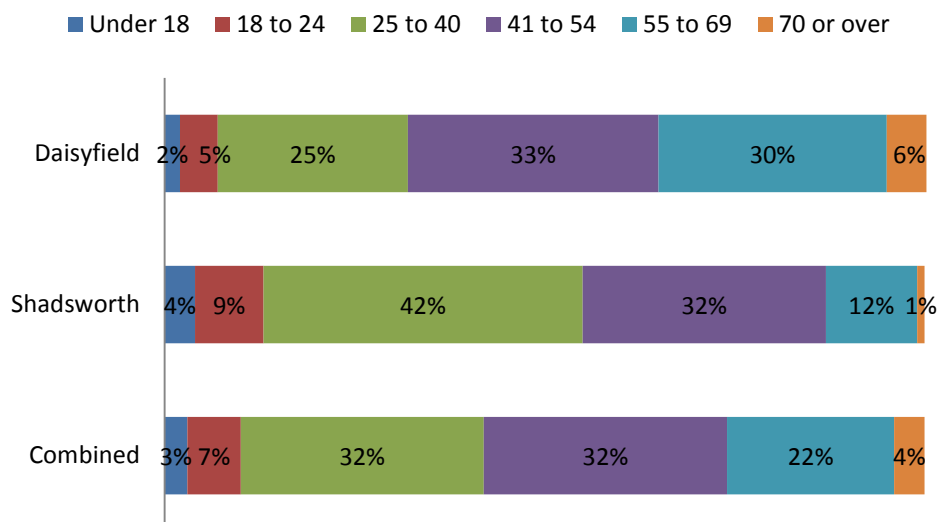


Around a third of respondents to both surveys are aged between 41 and 54.

More than 40% of respondents to the Shadsworth survey are aged between 25 and 40, whereas there was a higher response to the Daisyfield survey from people aged 55 to 69.

Like in many consultations, the younger age group is underrepresented.

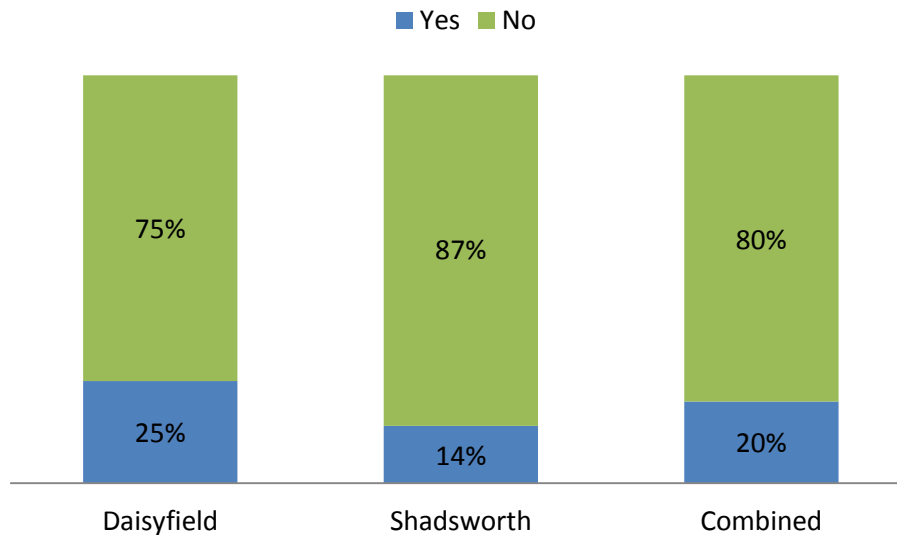
Figure 3.4: Which age group do you belong to? (base – Daisyfield 208, Shadsworth 168)



One in four respondents to the Daisyfield survey indicated that they have a long-standing illness or disability, compared to 14% of the Shadsworth response.

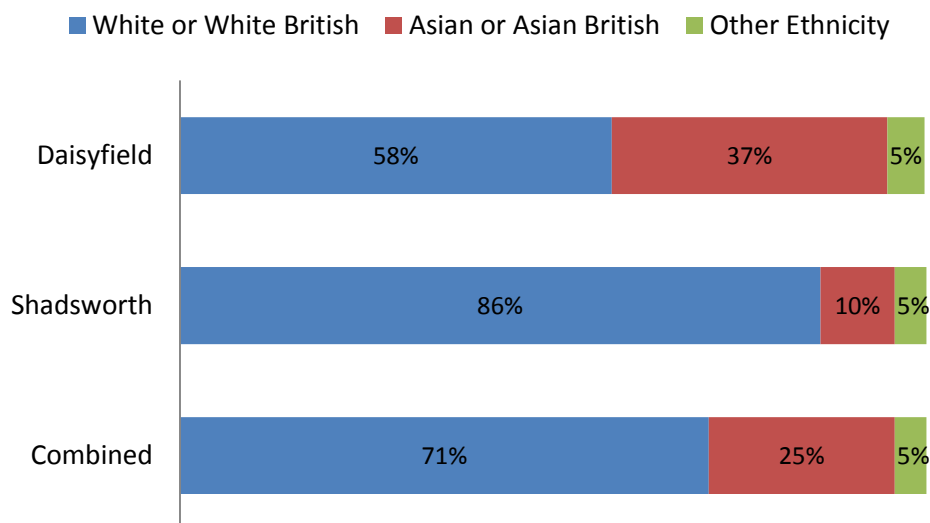
Across the two public surveys, one in five respondents have a long-standing illness or disability. This aligns with the breakdown for the borough according to the 2011 Census.

Figure 3.5: Do you have a long-standing illness or disability? (base – Daisyfield 202, Shadsworth 163)



In both surveys there were more White or White British respondents than any other ethnicity. However, the response to the Daisyfield survey from Asian or Asian British residents/ service users is significantly higher than that of Shadsworth.

Figure 3.6: What do you consider to be your ethnic origin? (base – Daisyfield 204, Shadsworth 166)

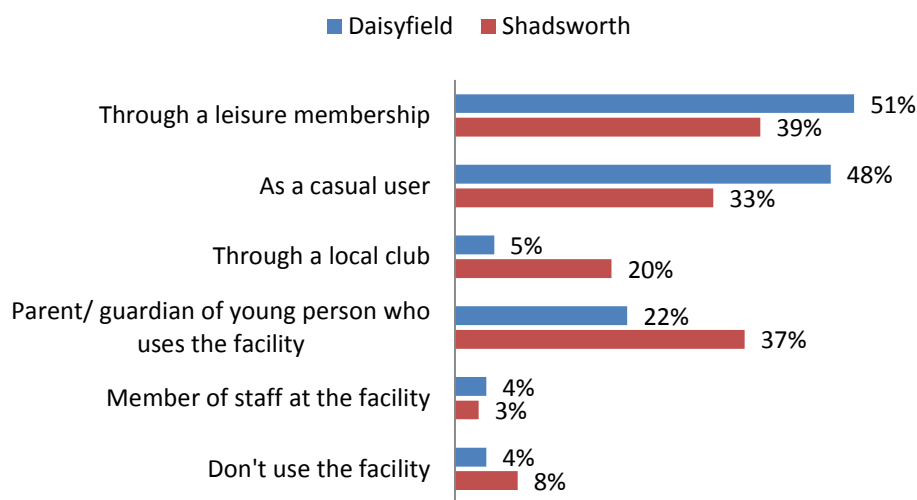


3.2. About their leisure usage

The consultation survey asked respondents how, if at all, they use the leisure facilities. Those who responded to the Daisyfield survey were more likely to use the Pools through a leisure membership than those responding to the Shadsworth survey.

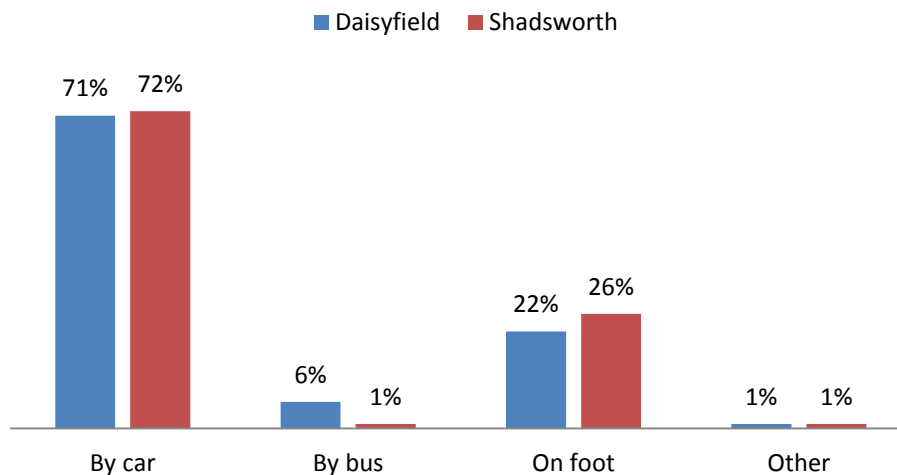
One in five respondents to the Shadsworth survey indicated that they use the Centre through a local club. Note that the majority of these were paper returns from one particular club.

Figure 3.7: How, if at all, do you use the leisure facility? (base – Daisyfield 214, Shadsworth 161)



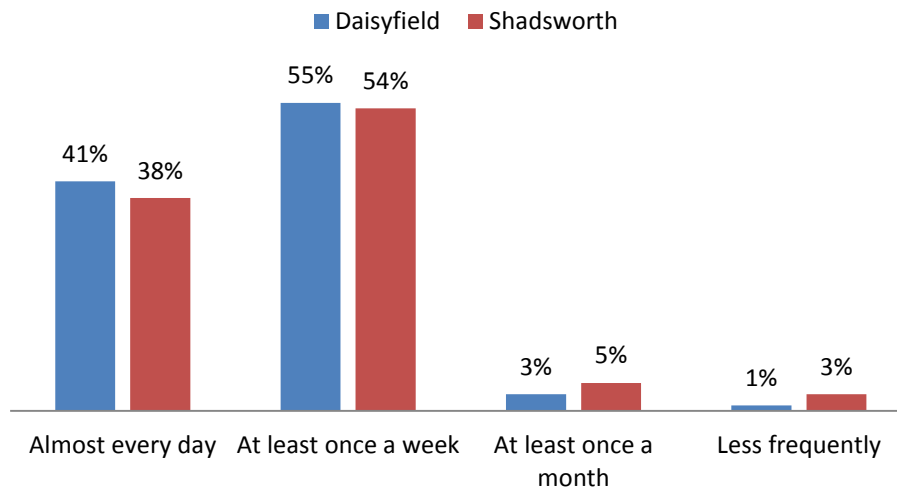
As figure 3.8 below exemplifies, the majority of respondents to both surveys travel to the leisure facility by car.

Figure 3.8: How do you usually travel to the leisure facility? (base – Daisyfield 198, Shadsworth 143)



How frequently the two facilities are used appears to be similar, based on responses to the consultation. Over 90% of service users visit Daisyfield Pools or Shadsworth Leisure Centre at least once a week.

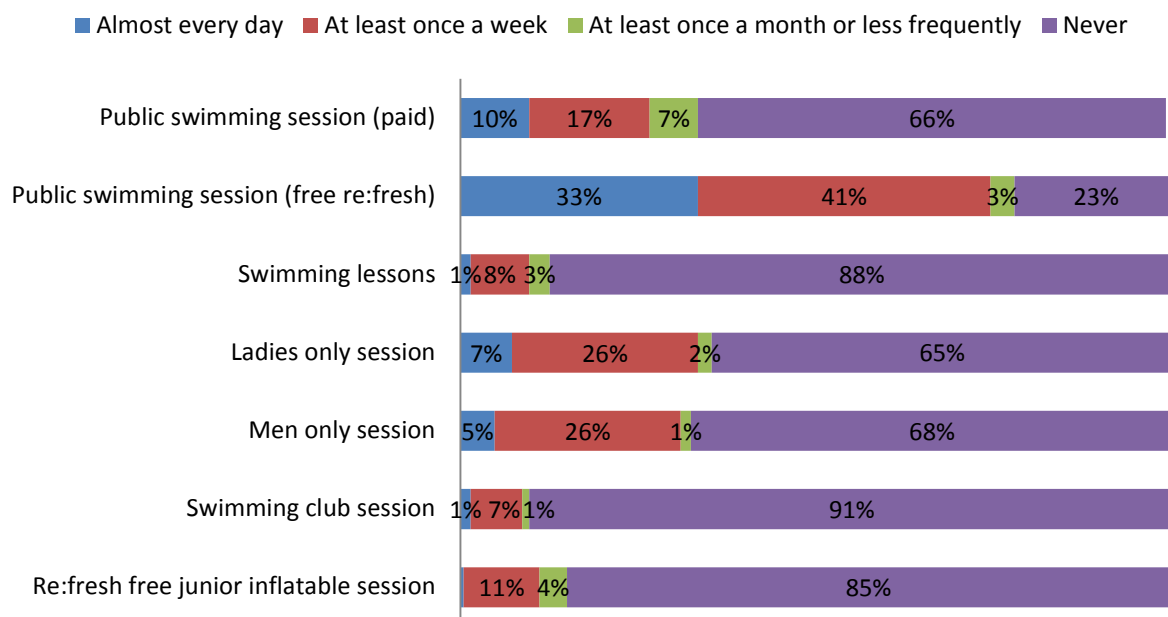
Figure 3.9: How often do you use or visit the leisure facility? (base – Daisyfield 196, Shadsworth 148)



Each centre offers different facilities and activities to service users. The surveys sought to understand how often these were accessed.

Respondents to the Daisyfield survey used the free re:refresh swims most often, followed by gender-specific and paid-for swimming sessions.

Figure 3.10: How often do you use the following facilities or activities at Daisyfield Pools? (base – 206)

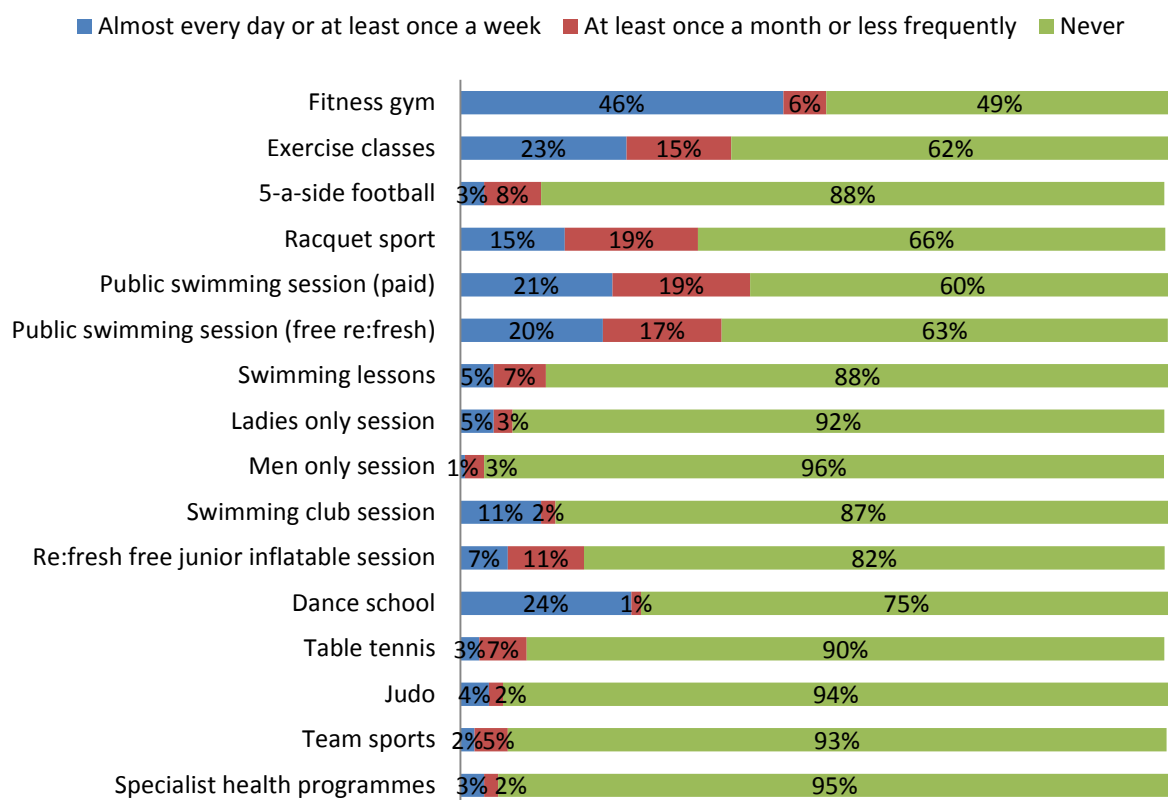


A greater number of facilities and activities are available at Shadsworth Leisure Centre. Respondents to this survey suggest that the fitness gym is the most used element of the Centre.

Public swimming lessons (paid and free), exercise classes and racquet sports are also relatively well used.

One in four respondents use the Dance School, which relates to the number of paper copies received from a specific group of service users.

Figure 3.11: How often do you use the following facilities or activities at Daisyfield Pools? (base – 149)

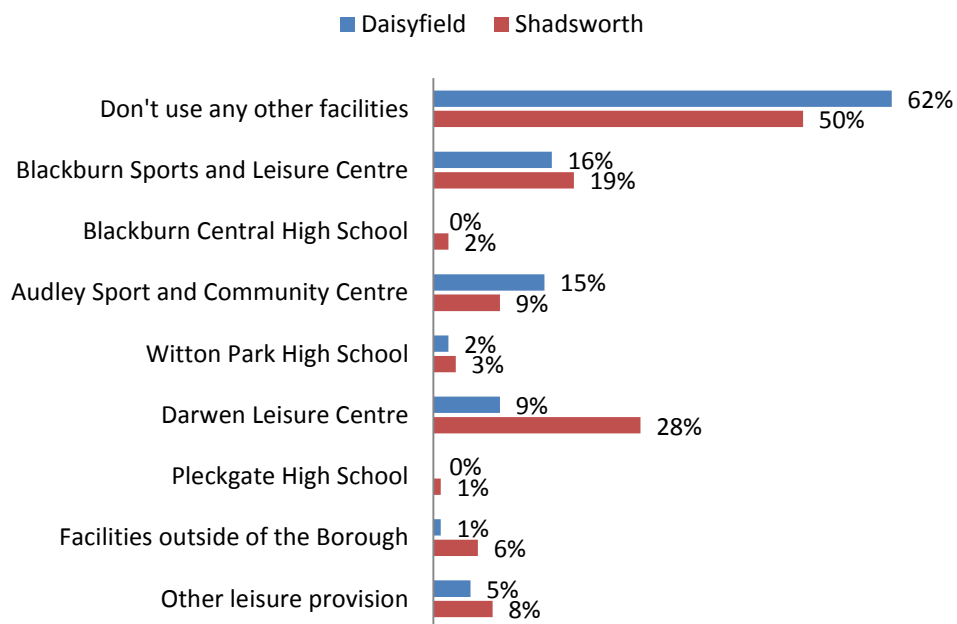


People who responded to the public consultation were asked if they use any other leisure facilities. 62% of respondents to the Daisyfield survey and half of Shadsworth respondents do not use any other facilities.

Of those who do use other facilities, Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre, Audley Sport and Community Centre and Darwen Leisure Centre appear to be the main ones.

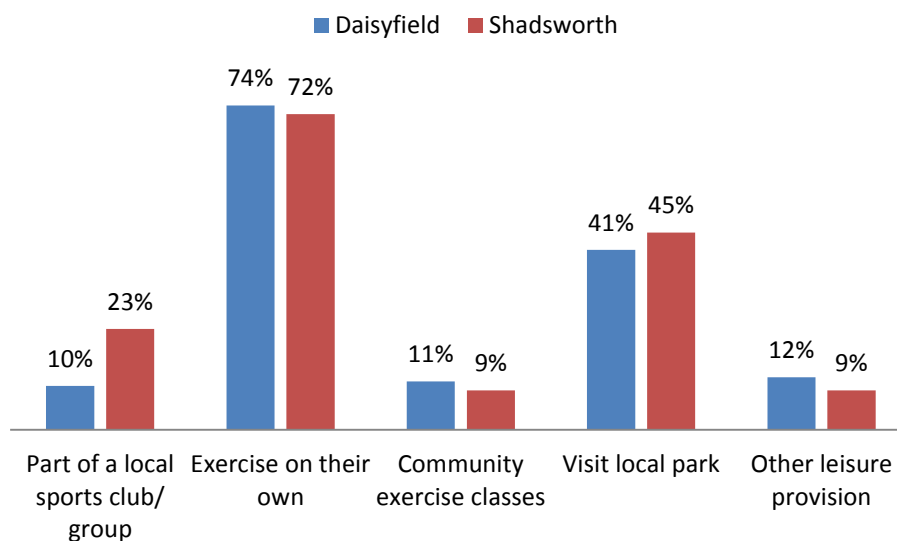
Figure 3.12 overleaf provides a breakdown of the facilities used by both Daisyfield and Shadsworth respondents.

Figure 3.12: Do you use any other leisure facilities? (base – Daisyfield 185, Shadsworth 159)



Asked if they do anything else to keep active and healthy, nearly three quarters of respondents to both surveys indicated that they also exercise on their own (for example, go for a run or a walk). Moreover, at least 40% of respondents across the two surveys visit their local park to keep active and healthy.

Figure 3.13: Do you do anything else to keep active and healthy? (base – Daisyfield 178, Shadsworth 137)

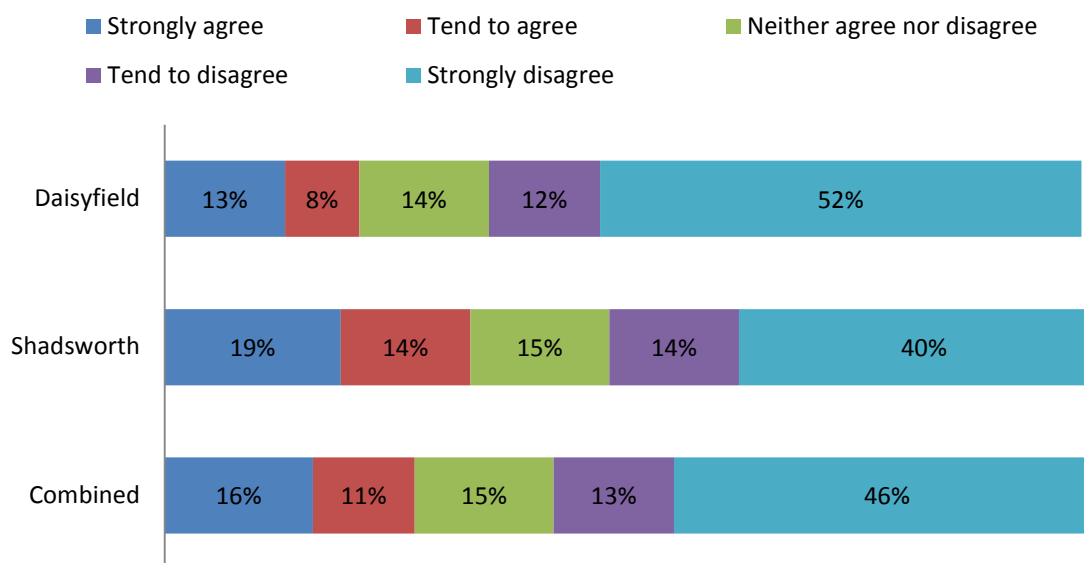


3.3. Impact of the review

The consultation survey first asked people whether they agreed or disagreed with the focus of the Leisure Review on older swimming pools which are more costly to operate.

More respondents disagreed than agreed in both surveys. Over half of respondents to the Daisyfield Pools survey strongly disagree with the focus of the review.

Figure 3.14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the focus of the Leisure Review? (base – Daisyfield 210, Shadsworth 170)



Those who disagree with the focus of the review were then asked to explain why. A range of comments were received with some themes emerging:

- The pools are located in deprived areas where they play an important role in the community

“Both Daisyfield and Shadsworth are an essential resource in the local community”

“I don’t think small local pools should be closed, they are part of our community”

“Shadsworth is a deprived area and needs these for the children”

“It provides a place where we can take part in activities and help us relax from our busy stressful lives, as well as to meet friends and socialise”

- People do not feel able to access alternatives in the borough, with the main reasons being that they are too far away, cost of travel and parking and that the alternative pools would be too crowded

“Surely it will make the new swimming pool too busy if everyone has to use it”

“Traffic and parking are a problem at the new Blackburn pool”

“Closing this down will mean people will have to travel further to benefit from the leisure facilities which will prove to be costly especially for those that are on a low income”

“As a pensioner I feel more at home in local pools as opposed to the large one in town”

“I don’t agree with this idea as I think the new leisure centres will become very busy and unable to cope with the demand”

- Any closure of the facilities would have a negative impact on the health of local people

“On one hand local council is telling the public to eat healthily and get more regular exercise and with the other hand rips the facilities away”

“Blackburn with Darwen is an area that needs help with health, swimming is one area that can not only improve but also avoid health problems”

“The fitness and obesity would go up and down and would cost the NHS more money in the long run due to bad health”

- In the case of Shadsworth, some highlighted the impact on other facilities at the centre where no alternatives are available in the borough (e.g. squash, Dance Academy)

“I use the pool, fitness classes and play squash and there isn’t any other squash facilities in the Blackburn with Darwen area”

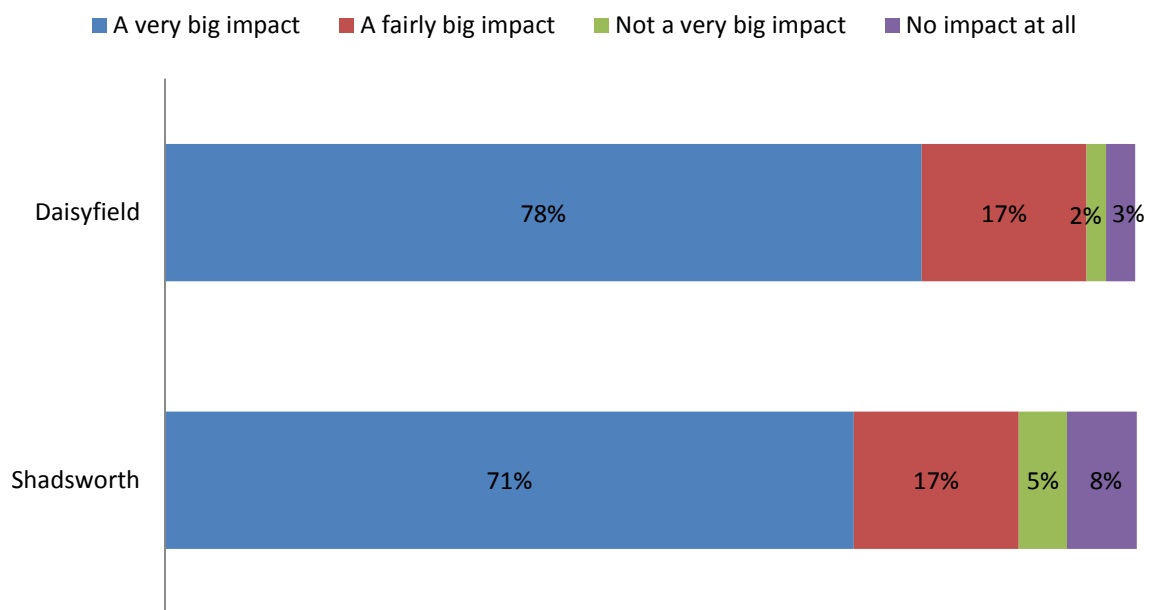
“I don’t agree with Shadsworth as it is more than a pool to the community, it is also a dance school and other clubs based there that are not being taken into consideration”

Respondents to the public surveys were asked what impact a potential closure of the Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre facilities would have on them.

The people who responded to the consultation clearly feel a closure of either facility would have a big impact on them, particularly at Daisyfield Pools.

The majority of those who indicated that any closure would have no impact on them do not use the facilities.

Figure 3.15: If the facility was to close, what impact do you think this would have on you? (base – Daisyfield 212, Shadsworth 170)



For Daisyfield Pools users, the impact appears to be highest amongst leisure members, local clubs and staff. Moreover, people with a long-standing illness or disability appear more likely than those without to feel that a closure would have a very big impact on them.

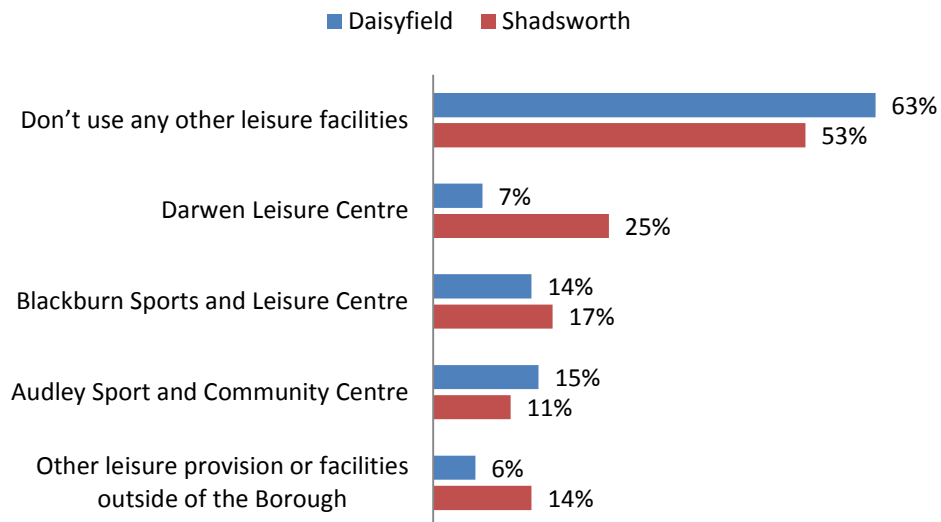
92% of Asian or Asian British respondents to the Daisyfield survey feel a closure would have a very big impact on them compared to 69% of White or White British respondents.

94% of people who use Daisyfield almost every day feel a closure would have a very big impact on them (91% for Shadsworth Leisure Centre users).

Moving on to Shadsworth Leisure Centre, 56% of casual users feeling a closure would have a very big impact compared to 79% of leisure members and 88% of people who use the Centre through a local club.

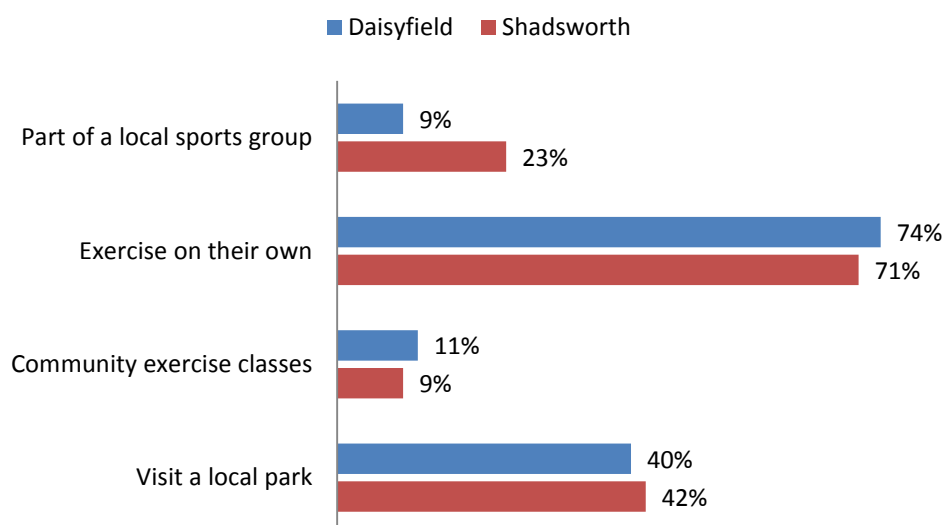
Looking specifically at those people who feel a closure would have a very or fairly big impact on them, 63% of respondents to the Daisyfield survey and 53% of those who responded to the Shadsworth survey do not use any other leisure facilities.

Figure 3.16: Use of other leisure facilities filtered for those who feel a closure would have a very or fairly big impact (base – Daisyfield 174, Shadsworth 139)



Moreover, of those people who feel a closure would have a very or fairly big impact on them, over 70% exercise on their own (for example, running or walking). At least 40% also visit a local park.

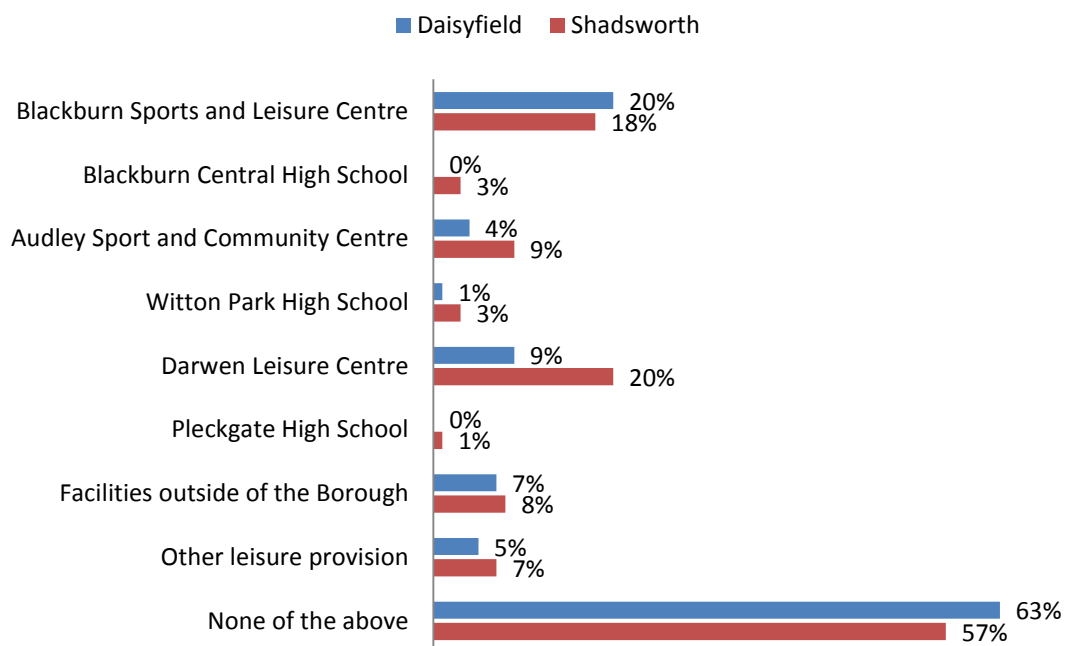
Figure 3.17: Other ways people stay active and healthy filtered for those who feel a closure would have a very or fairly big impact (base – Daisyfield 167, Shadsworth 119)



When asked where they would go if the facility was to close, around three in five people indicated that they would not use any other leisure facility. This is higher for those people who feel a closure would have a very big impact on them.

Around one in five people from both surveys would use Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre instead. Moreover, one in five Shadsworth respondents would use Darwen Leisure Centre.

Figure 3.18: If the leisure facility was to close, which other facilities, if any, would you use instead? (base – Daisyfield 210, Shadsworth 187)



Respondents to the consultation were asked to explain what impact a closure would have on them. The general themes emerging are:

- The adverse impact on the travel cost and time to use an alternative facility in the Borough

“More cost for me not to mention increasing the amount of pollution in the local borough”

“It would increase travelling times to get to another leisure centre and would therefore significantly reduce the chances of using one of the pools”

“It’s the closest to my home and I would find the extra time travelling to others inconvenient as I have a small child”

“I would not be able to go to any other leisure facilities on a daily basis without considerable difficulty and cost”

- Sense that the alternative provision available to them is not suitable or does not compare to the current offer

“I am not prepared to queue for sessions at the new pool, I will simply go out of the area to a pool with adjacent parking”

“It provides facilities which it would be hard to find elsewhere”

“I would swim less as it is more difficult to park at the other swimming pools”

“I wouldn’t be able to enjoy playing squash on a weekly basis and have nowhere else to go”

- A closure would lead to a reduction in the amount of exercise and swimming people do

“Wouldn’t go swimming as often, if ever, due to lack of convenience”

“Closing this pool would most certainly mean I would no longer go swimming as I don’t have enough time or money to get into the town centre”

“I would not go to any other centre”

“I wouldn’t be able to keep fit and healthy”

- The impact it would have on the social value people get from visiting their local centre

“It is a community, besides swimming you meet people”

“It is a great place to meet and socialise as well as getting healthy”

- Impact on specific clubs at Shadsworth Leisure Centre

“I am a member of Blackburn Centurions Swimming Club and the centre at Shadsworth is where most of my training takes place”

“My daughter attends the centre every week as her dance school is based there. I do not/ would not have transport, if the centre was to close no longer be able to get her to her classes”

People responding to the public consultation were then asked if they had any comments or suggestions relating to ways the Council could save money across leisure services.

The main theme running through these comments was to look at the pricing approach at the centres.

“Charge for sessions – it has been beneficial for free refresh sessions but in difficult times as we all are sometimes rather than give all and then take all I am sure there is some middle balance”

“Having spoken to many people at Daisyfield Pool many would be more than happy to pay or at least contribute to the facilities at the pool”

“I have absolutely no objection to abolishing the free Beez card and paying a reasonable fee or membership fee to use Daisyfield Pools and keep it open”

“I would gladly pay a nominal charge for these facilities to be kept open”

“Go back to where people have to pay”

“Charge for facilities, I’m sure most people would agree to that”

There were also a number of comments relating to staffing.

“Making redundant some of those in higher management”

“Take on more casuals rather than contracted staff. This way you will cut down on paying two people for one shift”

Other suggestions include:

“How about using a leisure trust which can provide grant assistance and help run facilities”

“Try to get grants etc or finances from other resources within the council or national lottery, EU funding”

“Reduce the opening times”

“Close during quietest periods, or one on full day per week”

“Use more technology such as membership card scanners etc to reduce the number of staff sitting on reception doing very little between customers”

Finally, the consultation sought to understand any specific impact relating to equality characteristics.

- Gender:

“Daisyfield is the only centre with proper private facilities specially for ladies”

“Loss of men/ boys session on Sunday mornings at Daisyfield”

- Health and disability:

“I would not go swimming elsewhere and this would have an impact on my illness”

“I have cancer I have to use this pool as within walking distance and can't use pools with lots of steps, etc”

“My daughter would be affected due to her visual impairment as she attended Shad for 7 years and is able to access it without support because she knows the environment”

- Age:

“Smaller facility which is a great environment for younger children to learn to swim”

- Ethnicity

“Asian women use the pool a lot and don't feel threatened”

- Religion:

“Because of my religious beliefs I only choose women only sessions, for the privacy”

“As Muslim woman wearing vail Daisyfield has woman only classes where we all have confidence to go without hesitation”

4. Stakeholder Feedback

Five schools in Blackburn with Darwen responded to the targeted stakeholder consultation, all using either Daisyfield Pool or Shadsworth Leisure Centre for class swimming:

- St Stephen's CE Primary School
- St Alban's RC Primary School
- Shadsworth Junior School
- Daisyfield Primary School
- Lammack Primary School

Asked whether they agree or disagree with the focus of the Leisure Review, three of the five schools neither agree nor disagree. One school tends to agree and one strongly disagrees with the focus.

Three of the five schools feel a closure would have a very big impact on them, with the remaining two indicating a fairly big impact.

When asked to explain the impact, schools reinforced the value of swimming lessons for children who may not get these out of school. It is felt that any closure would reduce the opportunity for swimming lessons, increase transport costs and take time out of normal lessons in school.

Specifically relating to any equality groups, one school noted that swimming alongside the public would not be suitable due to the religious views of some parents.

The majority of schools would look to use Blackpool Leisure Centre instead, but that the issue surrounding members of the public would need to be resolved.