



TO: Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

FROM: Director of Adults and Health

DATE: 5th June 2023

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: All

WARDS AFFECTED: All

TITLE OF REPORT: Leisure services and re:refresh update

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To respond to recommendations made by the Committee on 21st November 2022 and provide an update in relation to development of the re:refresh leisure programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:-
- a) Note this update report

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 1st November 2022, officers from Commercial Services, Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing and Prevention, and Public Health were asked to attend a one off Task and Finish Group to brief members of the Scrutiny Committee about the provision of leisure services, leisure centre usage and the re:refresh leisure programme.
- 3.2 The group discussed a range of issues including:
- The scope of the re:refresh offer and who it was targeted to benefit
 - The current offer and how this has developed historically
 - The funding for the initiative both historically, now and in the near future.
 - How users access the programme
 - Booking arrangements for sessions
 - Availability issues
 - How leisure centres were dealing with the issues caused by the economic situation
 - How leisure centres sought to attract people to centres and the methods used.
- 3.3 Following a discussion at the subsequent Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 21st November, the following recommendations were made:
- That the Executive Member be requested to report to a future meeting of the Committee on how the changes in the future funding for re:refresh will be managed, how this will impact on service provision and the impact on Leisure Centres.

- That the Executive Member be requested to look at how accessibility to the Re: fresh programme is managed with particular regard to issues relating to digital bookings which may exclude some sections of the community.
- That the Executive Member be requested to report back to the Committee on how reductions of funding will impact on the health of the borough and how the work on going in partnerships that could help mitigate this.

3.4 The following 'Key Issues' section of this report provides an update in relation to each of these recommendations.

Current leisure and re:fresh offer

3.5 Blackburn with Darwen Council provide a range of leisure services and offers, which are delivered across council owned leisure facilities and other community centres and spaces. These provide a range of opportunities for sports, leisure and physical activity for local residents. These services are delivered and funded by a combination of council departments across Commercial Services, Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing and Prevention and Public Health.

3.6 Access to these services ranges from traditional paid gym memberships for Leisure Centres and the re:fresh programme. re:fresh incorporates a programme of activities designed to encourage residents to be more physically active, to eat healthily and look after their mental health. A key element of re:fresh is the provision of low-cost (£1) exercise sessions within Council leisure centres. This includes designated swimming pool and gym sessions for adults who live, work, have a GP or are in full-time education in BwD.

3.7 Further sessions also branded under re:fresh include community based activities requiring a referral from a health professional (e.g. exercise referral, weight management and falls prevention) and others which target specific population groups (e.g. ante/post-natal and learning disabilities). A diagram setting out the **re:fresh only** elements of the Council's leisure provision is below.

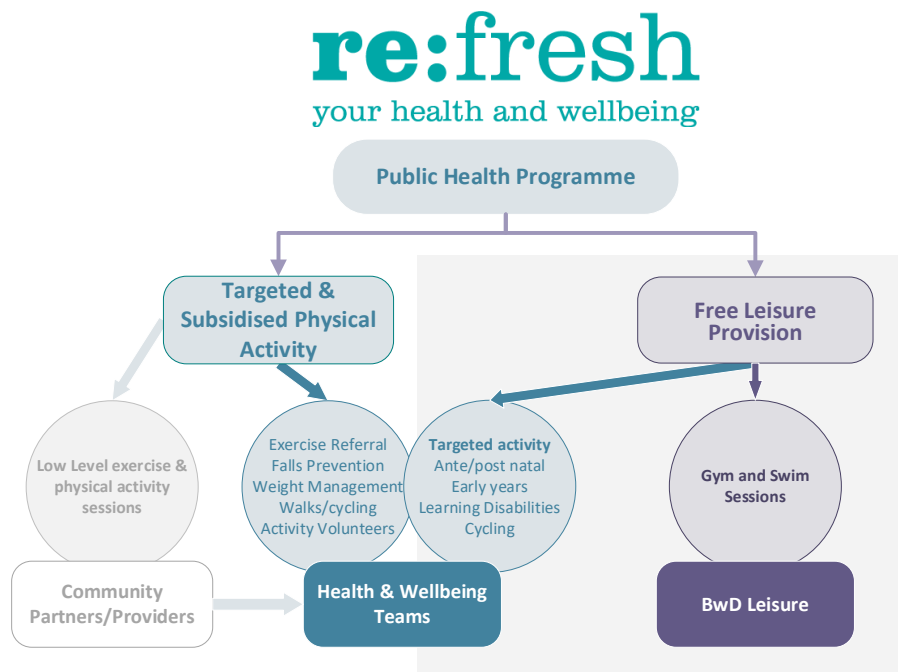
3.8 The re:fresh programme is funded through the public health grant, with pool and gym space within leisure centres provided as an 'in kind' contribution. Following the pandemic, there was a significant reduction in attendance at leisure centres and evidence of a drop in physical activity by residents more generally. In response an additional one-off contribution of £265,000 was provided to enable the re:fresh programme in leisure centres to be delivered for free during the 2022/23 financial year. A weekly programme of 101 hours of free swimming and gym sessions, and heavily subsidised targeted activity sessions has been implemented. This yielded 16,650 re:fresh attendances up to the end of December 2022 (estimated as 22,205 up to the end of the 2022/23 financial year).

4. KEY ISSUES

Changes to future re:fresh funding, impact on service provision and Leisure Centres

4.1 A new timetable for the re:fresh Leisure programme has now been developed for 2023/24 which includes an increased number of sessions, now 110 hours. The additional sessions include several child and family swimming sessions.

Figure 1: re:refresh programme



4.2 Whilst the previous £1 charge for adult gym and swim re:refresh sessions will be reintroduced, swimming will continue to be free for children aged between 1 – 16 years where they are accompanied by a parent or guardian who is eligible for re:refresh.

4.3 In addition to this, a sustained campaign with membership reductions has been ongoing to encourage more leisure centre members to join on a more long term basis. A year on year comparison of the membership base showed an increase of 30% across the three leisure centre sites at February 2023, in comparison to February 2022. This includes all members who pay by direct debit or pay a one-off yearly fee. This has helped to support the recovery of the service post-pandemic and mitigate against the significant rises in energy costs required to run the leisure centres. High energy costs are likely to continue into the 23/24 financial year.

Accessibility of re:refresh and digital exclusion

4.4 In order to promote the new re:refresh programme a six week communications campaign has been developed and an official launch will take place in mid-June. This will enable systems and staff to be ready to accommodate the new programme and become familiar with the changes.

4.5 Appropriate assets for promotion of the new programme have been developed including promotion on bus stops and digital display boards. Hard copy leaflets have been produced which will be distributed across the borough including in community centres and other venues. Communications materials have also been redesigned to encourage attendance by underrepresented groups and include images which are representative of the borough’s diverse communities.

Impact on health and partnership working

4.6 Officer from across Commercial Services, Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing and Prevention and Public Health continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor

membership and attendance at both paid and re:refresh programmes. This includes information on attendance by age, gender and postcode by deprivation, to ensure that the programme is meeting the needs of local residents.

4.7 To date these meetings have prompted the above changes to the re:refresh programme for 2023/24 and have also helped to identify further gaps in provision across the borough. For example, further free community-based sessions have been introduced targeting specific population groups which are known to undertake less physical activity than recommended. This includes those living with poor mental and physical health, older adults, vulnerable women and girls, people with learning disabilities and autism, and ethnic minority groups. These sessions have been delivered in partnership with community organisations at a variety of times and in venues that aim to reduce barriers to participation. The activities have included women's walking football, wheelchair basketball and other sports, seated exercise, walking groups, zumba and yoga. Over 300 hours of sessions have been delivered, with more than 500 members of the public attending over a 9 month period, more than 400 are regularly attendees. The sessions have been funded through the Public Health grant, which has recently been continued for 2023/24.

4.8 Regular updates on the above programmes will continue to be provided and discussed with the Executive Member at the Public Health, Wellbeing and Prevention SPT meetings.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no policy implications arising directly from this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 In 2023/24 the re:refresh leisure (and communities) programme will continue to be funded via contributions from the Public Health grant and costs in kind through the Leisure budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no other resources implications arising from the contents of this report.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality and health implications arising from the contents of this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

11.1 The recommendation in this report are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer.

VERSION:	1
CONTACT OFFICER:	Paul Taylor, Head of Commercial Services Richard Brown, Head of Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing & Prevention Cath Taylor, Consultant in Public Health
DATE:	25 th May 2023
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	