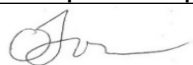


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Update on Sport and Physical Activity including the contract with GLL (Better)	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director of Recreation	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report describes the contribution that the Council's Leisure Service, particularly its leisure centres, is making towards creating a physical activity environment to improve the health and wellbeing being of our residents.</p> <p>There is compelling evidence that being physically active at any age will improve physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>There are many ways to become physically active in Camden including schools, early years, parks and green spaces, sports clubs, leisure centres, and our many Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) youth and community centres – all of which make up Camden's collective system for physical activity.</p> <p>While substantial opportunities exist to be active in Camden and take up is significant and growing, physical inactivity remains a challenge for some residents.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report: Camden Sport and Physical Activity Discovery Exercise 2018 Camden Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire Report Summary 2021-22</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Justin Hill Strategy and Partnership Manager Recreation Services, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 5 Pancras Square N1C 4AG <a href="mailto:Justin.Hill@camden.gov.uk">Justin.Hill@camden.gov.uk</a> 02079742980</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the service update report.</p>	

Signed:



Oliver Jones

Date:

27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

## **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1. The purpose of this report is to describe the physical activity system in Camden and the contribution that the Council's leisure service, particularly its leisure centres, make to physical activity participation, and health and wellbeing in Camden. The report discusses;

- An Overview of the Physical Activity System in Camden
- The Council's Leisure Service – Sport and Physical Activity
- Camden's Leisure Centres and Partnership with GLL (Better)
- Leisure Centre's Contribution to Health and Wellbeing in Camden

## **2. Context**

2.1. The Council's Leisure Service work closely with the Health and Wellbeing Department to lead and develop Camden's physical activity system. The physical activity system consists of all organisations, people and actions which contribute to promoting, restoring or maintaining physical activity behaviours (World Health Organisation). The system requires a range of universally accessible physical activity opportunities, as well as targeted services to support inactive residents and address inequalities. Camdens six leisure centres play a vital role in this system, alongside changes in local areas to make the active choice easier.

2.2. The Council's leisure service takes a population approach to improving the health and wellbeing of Camden's citizens through development and delivery of physical activity interventions for children and young people, adults, disabled citizens and Camden residents.

## **3. Background**

3.1. Camden has an established system for physical activity in the borough. This is essential to increase levels of physical activity and reduce inactivity amongst our population.

3.2. Participation in physical activity is proven to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing. There is clear and compelling evidence that being regularly active makes a vital contribution to health, wellbeing, independence and quality of life. This includes preventing and reducing the impact of long-term health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and a range of cancers. Active living helps promote mental health and wellbeing, with the potential for benefit soon after becoming more active.

3.3. The latest Active Lives data (Active Lives Adult Survey November 22/23<sup>1</sup>) suggests that Camden is well above the national average for resident activity levels. In 2023, 74% of adults were considered active, achieving over 150+

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables](http://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables)

minutes of activity per week. Despite this, in 2023, 18% of residents were found to be inactive, achieving less than 30 minutes per week. From a population health perspective these residents have most to gain from becoming more active, and with 1 in 5 of our adult residents inactive, this represents large numbers of people who could benefit from further support.

- 3.4. Further, we know that there are factors which can have an impact in activity between different social groups. In Camden, data from 2023 suggests adults with a disability or long-term health condition are less likely to be active. There are other inequalities in activity levels of certain population groups; black, asian and other ethnic communities are less likely to be active, as are those in long term unemployment. Generally, activity levels decrease with age and men are more likely to be active than women.
- 3.5. For children and young people, the latest Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire Summary 2021-22 shows that boys are more likely to take part in physical activity than girls, and that participation among certain ethnic groups including South Asian children is less than other ethnic groups.
- 3.6. There are multiple health challenges facing the borough. According to Camden's State of the Borough Report (2024), 2 in 5 children were living in poverty after housing costs in 2022. Obesity levels are also challenging with 50% of Camden adults being overweight or obese and 1 in 3 children in year 6 being overweight or obese. The Office of National Statistics<sup>2</sup> found 39% of households in Camden have no access to private green space compared to the 12% average across England.
- 3.7. We know that participation in sport and physical activity is more difficult to achieve for some children. Girls, children from some ethnic groups, children from our poorer neighbourhoods, care-experienced people and disabled children in particular face additional challenges to leading active lives.
- 3.8. Challenges include access to appropriate facilities, affordability, timing and type of activities and locality, as well as demand on indoor and outdoor facilities including our parks and open spaces. A more supportive environment that makes it easier to cycle and walk, along with consistent behaviour change support and messaging by providers and frontline staff may help to address some of these barriers.
- 3.9. There are also challenges facing the physical activity system, especially providers of activity who have seen rising energy prices, increase costs on supplies and services, challenges in recruiting to jobs and developing the much-needed voluntary workforce across the sector.
- 3.10. The Camden Physical Activity, Health & Wellbeing Discovery Exercise (2018) identified eight key service design principles to provide the best possible circumstances for participation; physical activity should be local, tailored to

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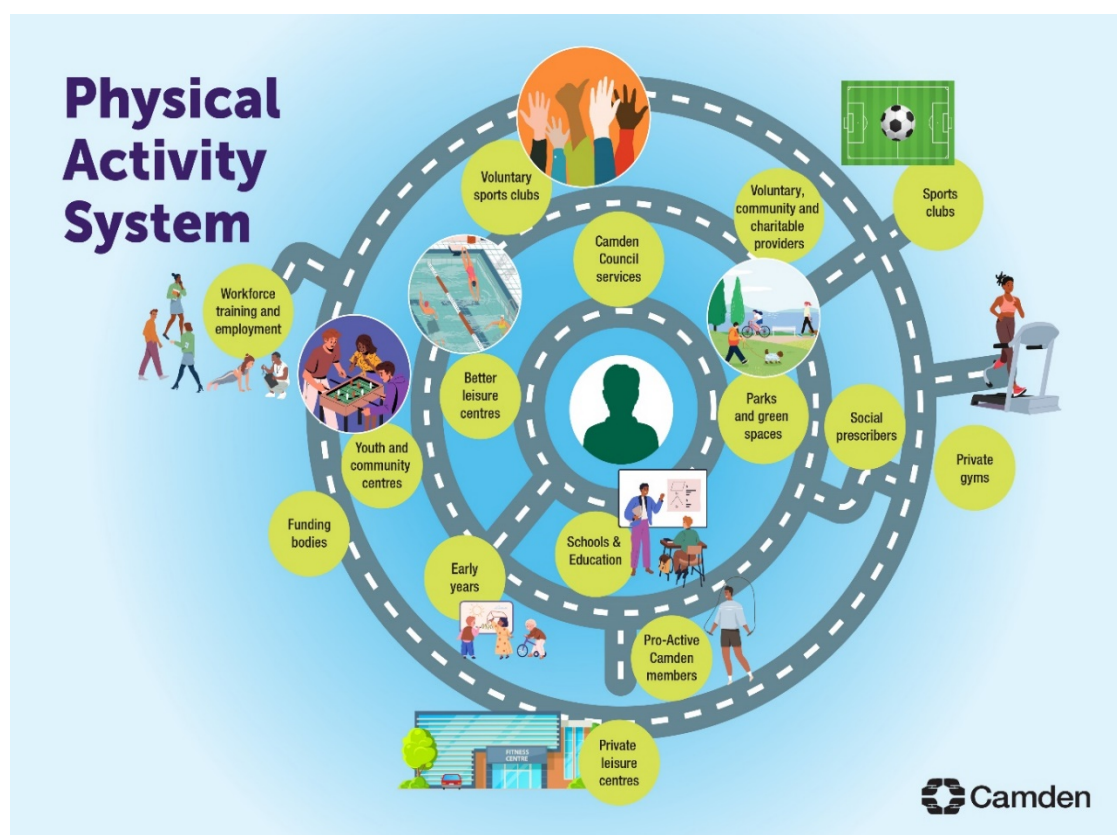
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community needs, welcoming, reach those who need it most, promote opportunities for social interaction, be simple and well-timed, as well as sustainable and consistent. The learning from this exercise underpinned the development of the leisure contract specification and contract procurement.

#### 4. The Physical Activity System in Camden

- 4.1. Camden's residents access sport and physical activity in many ways including: schools, early years, parks and green spaces, sports clubs, leisure centres, and our many VCS youth and community centres, private enterprise – all of which make up Camden's collective system for physical activity. The more choice, accessibility, awareness and connection residents can have with the system the more likely they will become physical activity for a health benefit.
- 4.2. The World Health Organisation describes the physical activity system as all organisations, people and actions which contribute to promoting, restoring or maintaining physical activity behaviours. The infographic below gives a simplified view of Camden's physical activity system, however, there are many influences that impact on an individual's ability to interact with the system including; general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions, living and working conditions, social and community networks and individual factors.



- 4.3. Central to the development of sport and physical activity in the borough is Pro-Active Camden (PAC), the borough's voluntary strategic partnership for sport

and physical activity. It is a coalition of stakeholders from organisations committed to providing and increasing opportunities for Camden citizens to be physically active. Recognising the challenges facing our residents accessing sport and physical activity, especially for children and young people, PAC is currently developing a children and young people sport and physical Action Plan and is supported by the Council's Leisure Service and by the Health and Wellbeing Department.

## **5. Leisure Services - Sport and Physical Activity**

5.1. The Council's Leisure Service is a direct provider, commissioner and enabler of sport and physical activity in Camden. Ours is a large and varied service to reflect the depth and diversity of need, and discretionary, that a great many residents and others access because they choose to – see service outcomes infographic in appendix A. The service works across the population and within the themed areas set out below along with some recent outcomes.

### **5.2. Health and Long-Term Medical Conditions (LTMC)**

5.2.1. We are commissioned by Camden Health and Wellbeing to tackle health issues facing our residents through developing and delivering targeted interventions. The service works closely with clinicians, social prescribers, and front-line professionals to develop and implement interventions for older adults, adults and children living with disability, poor mental health and long-term medical conditions. There is a specific focus on supporting communities that may be less active, like those from South Asian communities in the borough.

5.2.2. Around 600 residents aged 60+ signed up for Camden's Active for Life Campaign in the spring; designed to promote the range of free and low-cost activities in Camden available to all. 12 weeks of support was given to those signing up using integrated behavioural science insights to motivate people aged 60+ into regular physical activity by overcoming common barriers such as limited mobility, low motivation and access constraints. Participants had access to free physical activity sessions hosted by partners throughout the borough, with the aim of encouraging them to try new activities and find sustainable ways to be active. We continue to work with our community partner organisations to build on the success of this campaign.

5.2.3. We are working on understanding barriers & opportunities for people with a range of long terms conditions to be more active, including people with heart disease, stroke, respiratory conditions, cancers and mental health conditions. This includes signposting people receiving rehabilitation, for example following a heart attack, to ongoing opportunities to sustain new activity habits.

5.2.4. Our Get Active Programme (GAP) is a 12-month physical activity and behaviour change intervention for residents with a range of long-term conditions, currently delivered through five GP surgeries in deprived parts of the borough. Since the pilot began (2022) 810 patients - all of whom were performing less than 30mins of physical activity per week - have been referred to the GAP. Results taken during and for completers of the programme show a positive and sustained increase in their physical activity participation, in addition to a steady increase in health & wellbeing. 40% of referrals are from our black and ethnic communities and 72% from the top 3 areas of deprivation. We are now discussing options for extending the service with NHS clinical leads.

### 5.3. Community Sport and Physical Activity for Young People

5.3.1. Our aim is to engage young people in positive activities that meet their needs for physical, mental and social health and wellbeing. Equality of access is an important objective. We link with schools as a key setting for promoting activity through the Healthy Schools Initiative. A whole school approach to physical activity includes curriculum learning, participation across the day, travel to and from school and encouraging participation in activities outside the school day (section 5.4 below) that needs a strong community based physical activity offer for continuity and progression.

5.3.2. We provide free coaching for young people directly in parks (Kilburn Grange and Maygrove Peace Park), and in partnership with youth services, schools (Acland Burghley) and Arsenal in the Community who deliver a Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) project in Cantelowes sports pitch, and the Premier League Kicks programme.

5.3.3. Our Women and Girls football programme offers weekly training sessions for girls aged 7 to 16 which develop a player's fundamental skills to create foundations for a lifelong love of football, players are also able to join our teams through Camden Youth FC, competing in local girl's leagues. In the 23/24 season, the programme had 2,200 training attendances and 970 attendances in local competitions.

5.3.4. Girls Get Moving is our school holiday project for girls aged 8 to 14, which aims to promote positive participation enabling girls to try new activities to find what they enjoy, building confidence and resilience. 110 participants took part in 5 holiday sessions in the last year, average daily attendance of 32 participants during the Girls Get Moving week in the summer holidays. 100% of parents asked said their child's confidence in themselves had improved. One parent said, *"She came home every day with stories of games, and trampolining and rope swinging and mini tennis."*

5.3.5. Friday Night Project (FNP) and Active Wednesday (school holidays) at Talacre Sports Centre, provide a safe and relaxed social environment for young people to be active and interact positively with their peers. An average of 45 young people take part monthly, bringing young people from different communities and post codes together. Multiple youth partners bring young people to Active

Wednesday, one worker stated *'this provides a positive experience for youth settings to come together and take part in joint activities.'*

5.3.6. We offer advice and support to sports clubs and organisations through the Camden Active Mark scheme (relaunch scheduled for early 2025), connecting and bringing organisations together. We aim to promote sustainable, well governed, clubs who provide a positive experience to all members and bring social value within our communities. We're currently working with 10 organisations and our relaunched Camden Active E-newsletter reaches 100 Camden organisations monthly.

5.4. Sports Development, competition, education and training for schools, children and young people

5.4.1. Our high-quality gymnastics facility based out of Talacre Sports Centre caters from beginners to the elite delivering 117 (Children and Young People and adults) classes a week for both gymnastics and trampolining, with specialist SEN classes every weekend.

5.4.2. The education and training programme and partnership with Camden's schools sixth form consortium, LA Swap provides 16 to 19yr olds, at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training at the next point of transition an opportunity to develop skills and qualifications in sports coaching, leadership and development. 40 students are currently enrolled, including 7 young women and 6 students with Educational Health Care Plan's. Many learners progress to further education, training or employment in sport, play, education and youth work in Camden and beyond.

5.4.3. Support for school sport, physical activity and competition in schools is central to young people developing a lifelong physical activity habit. There are key points of challenge where sustaining physical activity is more difficult such as the transition from primary to secondary school and the end of year 11. Work is underway to investigate these touch points further. We offer a year-round sports coaching service including breakfast & lunchtime clubs, curriculum lessons and afterschool opportunities. We offer an annual calendar of leagues and sports competitions for all abilities, boys and girls, with over 60 events working with 36 out of Camden's 37 primary schools.

5.4.4. Outside of schools our team of skilled and engaging coaches provide a year-round programme of activities after school and at weekends and sports school holiday programmes, covering a broad range of sports. 70% of take up since the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) was established in 2021 have accessed free places. There is however a risk to this work as the Government review plans for this funding stream from 2025.

5.4.5. We work with multiple partners to run a programme of activities, competitions and events for disabled people. The highlight of these being a 'Camden Disability Sport for All Day' for disabled young people and their families. The aim is to raise awareness of the accessible offer in Camden. Over 200 disabled

citizens, their carers, and stakeholders attended the event held in September to align with the Paralympics in Paris.

5.4.6. In the London Youth Games (Europe's largest youth multi-sports competition) Team Camden achieved our highest finishing position with a record-breaking 9<sup>th</sup> place overall. Over 1,200 young people were involved in trials and training in the borough leading up to the games that saw 500 young people go on to represent Camden at the London Youth Games competitions.

## 5.5. Physical activity outdoors

5.5.1. We manage 74 parks across Camden, 9 of which have free to use outdoor gyms. Our multi-use games areas (MUGAs) are used for coaching after school and during school holidays. Our skate park at Cantelowes Gardens is a unique and well-used alternative sport opportunity, as is Petanque at Waterlow Park. We also have tennis courts and netball courts for hire but the biggest challenge and frustration from a sports perspective is that Camden does not have a full-size football pitch in the borough or the space for one. Our staff deliver walk leader training to willing volunteers to led free community health walks, some of which are targeted at community groups; all are great for informal exercise and socialising.

## 6. **Camden's leisure centres and partnership with GLL (Better)**

6.1. Camden's leisure centres are an essential component of the physical activity system in the borough. Our six centres offer a mix of universal and targeted opportunities for residents and non-residents to be physically active. The membership and pricing strategy maximises income from those who can afford to pay, while providing concessionary membership and activity pricing for those meeting certain criteria, making access more affordable. Concessions account for 42% of total leisure centre membership, demonstrating the popularity and need for such pricing policy. Leisure centres are used by Camden residents, schools, local clubs and community groups as well as those working and studying in the borough.

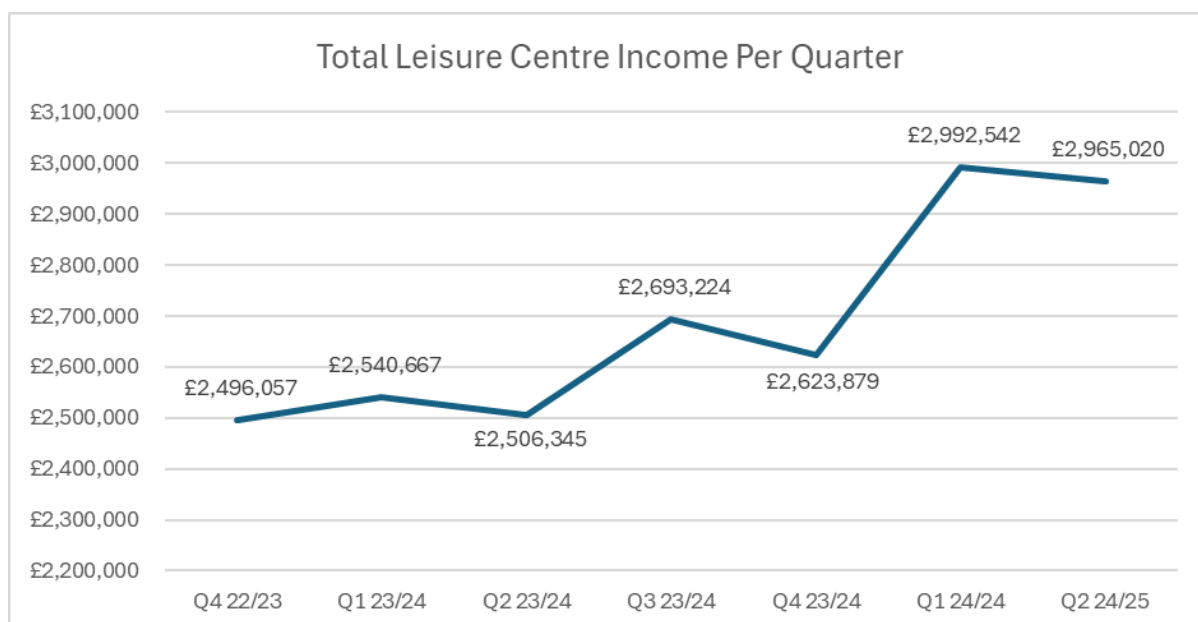
6.2. During the past 12 months there have been more than 2.1 million visits to our leisure centres, the majority being Camden residents. Memberships whilst not quite at pre-pandemic levels stand at 26,700 of which 11,141 are concessions.

6.3. Camden's leisure centres provide multiple wet (a total of 9 pools including learning and leisure water space) and dry activities in one place. Fitness gyms are a key component of our leisure centre offer; however, we do not set out to compete with 'budget gyms'. Budget gyms have their own place within the physical activity system, which tend to be one dimensional in their offer catering for 'gym only' in most cases (some with exercise classes) and extended opening times. Our centres, like some of the charitable providers in Camden provide warm spaces for non-users, facilities to improve health and wellbeing and to socialise. There are targeted programmes for people with long term



medical conditions, free access for specialist groups and supported environments to participate, none of which is replicated by the private sector.

- 6.4. Camden’s leisure centres are managed by GLL, a charitable social enterprise and workers co-operative that operates under the brand name of ‘Better’. GLL were awarded the contract through competitive tender on a 10-year term let in 2020, continuing their tenure in Camden which began in 2005. The leisure centre service covers its costs and sets out to contribute over £1.2m per annum to Council budgets to support core services.
- 6.5. The contract specification is bespoke to Camden to achieve a high quality and inclusive leisure centre offer within our facilities, as well as developing pathways out into the immediate communities surrounding each leisure centre. At the contract’s core are the eight design principles developed as part of the 2018 Sport and Physical Activity Health and Wellbeing Discovery Exercise mentioned in section 3.10 above. GLL are a key contributor to the Pro-Active Camden partnership.
- 6.6. **Pressures and challenges:** The pandemic left its mark on leisure centre membership take up, income and usage. Leisure centres were forced to close for 8 months in total during the 3 lockdowns with government enforced restrictions on restarting services. Usage has recovered and is now broadly in line with pre-pandemic levels. Income is back to 98% of what it was pre-pandemic, although not adjusted for inflation (see table below). Memberships hit a low of 23,000 as a consequence of the pandemic, but is now steadily recovering and stands at just under 27,000 today, however it is still below pre-pandemic levels.



*Quarterly income across all six Council owned leisure centres*

- 6.7. During lockdown periods, GLL maintained a caretaking role within our centres ensuring that they were maintained and ready to open as soon as restrictions were lifted. During this time GLL had zero income to cover these costs as

membership fees were frozen. As such, the Council allowed GLL to retain an element of the leisure contract surplus owed to the Council from 2019/20 to assist with GLL's cashflow. This was in accordance with the Government produced Procurement Policy Note (PPN 02/20) which provided guidance for public bodies on payment of their suppliers to ensure service continuity during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. The retained surplus was returned to the Council in full. GLL benefitted from the government furlough scheme and were also successful in securing support through the National Leisure Recovery Fund. All of which meant that Camden's leisure centres were open for our residents throughout the pandemic period when restrictions allowed.

- 6.8. In 2022/23 the energy crisis brought a new and ongoing challenge to keeping our centres open; utilities expenditure rose by 141% between 19/20 and 22/23 (just under £1.1m increase) and has remained high. To mitigate this impact GLL implemented a number of energy saving upgrades including smart lighting and standardised the temperature of our swimming pools to save on heating costs. Camden's leisure centres have remained open and fully operational throughout these challenging periods for our resident's health and wellbeing. However, these are huge financial increases to operating costs that have led to closure of private gyms and is putting immense pressure and viability on some of the charitable sector facility operators in the borough.
- 6.9. Demand for spaces in our centres outstrips supply especially at peak times. As such there is a tension between income generation to continue to provide concessionary membership and balancing the competing demands of pool and sports hall space to deliver a balanced programme of activities and usage. For context, whilst fitness gyms, exercise and spin cycle classes can operate at a profit, the reality for swimming is very different requiring a subsidy of roughly £12 per person per swim. Inflation hikes have pushed up the cost of operating the leisure centres, but we have not passed these costs on in full to keep our centres affordable to residents.
- 6.10. Half of the leisure centres have either been refurbished or constructed within the last 14 years and are relatively modern and provide high quality facilities and experience for users. However, Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre and Oasis Sports centre have faced long periods of facility closures. The sports hall at Swiss Cottage has had multiple courts closures over a prolonged period of 19 months due to a defect in the construction of the sports centre – a temporary solution has enabled the Council and GLL to lay a new sports hall floor, but the source of the issue will require an investment of £1m to rectify the design flaw and re-provide the wet changing at the centre. The indoor pool at Oasis Sports Centre was closed for 10 months due to an aging pool tank and plant which have since been repaired. It is the borough's oldest leisure centre, originally built in the 1930's with significant development in the 1960's and 1980's. Home to London's most central public heated outdoor pool, the Oasis is a much loved public asset that has served many generations of Camden citizens. However, there are significant challenges we need to overcome to ensure the building is able to operate for years to come. Elements of plant are antiquated, unreliable

and will requiring replacing at estimated cost of £3.5m. The building is not accessible as some customers areas are not step free. The majority of the site is dated and in need of renovation. The customer journey around the centre is poor and the dimensions of some of the rooms are not conducive for their purpose i.e. studio 2 is long and thin while the women's changing room is far larger than needed.

- 6.11. Kings Cross Fitness (pictured below) is Camden's newest leisure centre and is partially open for High Intensity Interval Training classes and interactive cycle fitness sessions. The lower ground floor facilities including a new fitness gym and four court sports hall are planned to open in May 2025. This will help to address a deficit of sports hall / indoor space for physical activity in the borough.



*View of Kings Cross Fitness from York Way*



*Reception Area of Kings Cross Fitness*

## **7. Leisure Centres contribution to health and wellbeing in Camden**

- 7.1. Our leisure centres are contributing to We Make Camden by helping to create healthier communities.
- 7.2. Camden's leisure centres have a variety of membership options to make it easier to participate although this can make the choices overwhelming for some. Annual pre-paid memberships offer a discount against monthly direct debit options. Pay and play membership (with a pay and play card) offer cheaper access to activities. All membership types have a concessionary option. Non-residents are charged more to use our centres.
- 7.3. We want our leisure centres to be representative of Camden's population so that they feel familiar and welcoming to our residents, with a strong connection and relationship formed. GLL employs 318 workers in Camden, (25% are Camden residents) all of whom receive the London living wage. GLL is a charitable social enterprise and registered society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit & Societies Act 2014. 54% of the workforce are female and 5 are registered disabled. GLL works closely with Good Work Camden to develop its workforce within the borough currently offering; 5 apprenticeships, 2 supported internships and 4 work placements. GLL is also one of the exit route employers for the Councils Sports Education and Training Programme. GLL work closely with local employment brokers, such as KX Recruit, when recruiting for vacant positions in Camden to ensure that employment opportunities within our leisure centres are advertised and open to residents in the first instance.
- 7.4. In addition to the universal offer and activities, every day within any of our centres there are targeted offers for those who are less active or who face greater barriers to participation. These offers range from sessions for disabled residents through to gender specific activities, offers for older adults or those

with long term medical conditions. For example, there is a free swim offer for 60+ and GLL partner with the stroke and neuro rehabilitation service who use our gym's. MIND is using our pools to support patients improve their mental health through swimming. GLL have a national partnership with Carers UK and, as part of this partnership, have promoted a low-cost membership for residents who are members of Carers UK or in receipt of carers allowance. In partnership with Camden Children and Learning, Care Experience young people aged 16-25 can access a free (to the young person) leisure membership, currently 90 young people have memberships.

- 7.5. There is a thriving community learn to swim programme with 3,132 young people developing this life skill. GLL deliver school swimming lessons to 66 schools per year and 5,180 pupils to help key stage 2 attainment to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over 25 metres. Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre offers physiotherapy and osteopathy services and will host broader public health services from time to time such as health checks and smoking cessation drop-ins. Kentish Town Sports Centre, Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre and Oasis Sports Centre host weekly Warm Spaces sessions during the colder months to support the community with a warm space to socialise, read a newspaper or use free WiFi/phone charging. Oasis Sports Centre host regular HIV testing in conjunction with the GMI Partnership. In 2023, GLL held an event at Pancras Square Leisure in partnership with the London Sight Loss Council and the Thomas Pocklington Trust, to support people with visual impairment to get more active and access leisure centres.
- 7.6. Sports Clubs and voluntary groups rely on using our centres for their activities as local and affordable venues. Some of these organisations receive support for their activities, for example Camden Swiss Cottage Swim Club has over 200 weekly lane hours in our pools at a heavily discounted rate. Fleetwell and Starfish Disability Swims clubs receive free time in our pools to deliver volunteer led swimming for disabled residents. We also have a discounted community booking rate for organisations delivering inclusion and targeted development sessions within leisure centres.
- 7.7. GLL partner with multiple organisations to connect with and encourage use of the centres by the local community. For example; The Winch Youth Organisation has access to the pitch at Swiss cottage Leisure centre with one session per week for free to support their children and young people engagement activities. The Family Centre at Edith Neville Primary School host a weekly free swim at Pancras Square Leisure for families from the school and local area for children up to 5. GLL work with Age UK Camden to support health and wellbeing initiatives for older adults in the borough.

## **8. Recent developments and interventions**

- 8.1. At the beginning of the year with Council backed investment into the gym at Swiss Cottage, which included a complete look and feel make over along with a full replacement of gym equipment. This has supported a growth in membership at Swiss Cottage from 7,851 in October 23 to 8,637 in October 24. In January the Café at Swiss Cottage, a destination for both centre users and



the general public re-opened providing a much-loved space for socialising. A brand-new soft play facility has just been completed at Swiss Cottage doubling the capacity of the old soft play and includes a specialist area for under 2's play. The reception area has been remodelled to improve customer flow and make it easier for interaction between centre users and staff by removing physical barriers. GLL recognise the importance of the welcome and first impressions shape how people feel about using the centres in future.



*New Swiss Cottage Gym Functional Zone*



*New Swiss Cottage Gym Cardio Zone*



*New Reception Area at Swiss Cottage*



*New Expanded Soft Play at Swiss Cottage*



### *New Under 2s Soft Play at Swiss Cottage*

- 8.2. Pancras Square Leisure has also had improvements to the gym offer with the creation of a functional space with alternative gym equipment to support a more varied workout. In addition to the inclusive gym equipment already in place in the gym, the new area also has 'ski erg' machines to support upper body workouts. These machines were requested by our users, one of whom is a Camden based 2028 Paralympic hopeful wheelchair athlete. This new gym equipment layout and mix has also been replicated at Kentish Town Sports Centre, and Oasis Sports Centre, enabling a broader range of universal and targeted programming.



*New Pancras Square Leisure Functional Fitness Zone*

- 8.3. Oasis Sports Centre outdoor pool area decking has been completely replaced with a more attractive and easier to maintain resin surface. This follows improvements made pre-summer to the overall customer experience.



*New Pool Deck at Oasis Sports Centre*



- 8.4. All of these improvements respond to the additional challenges facing the sector to drive revenue growth to sustain a high quality and sustainable offer for our residents.
- 8.5. A new weekly women only evening has been added at Swiss Cottage for exclusive use of the new gym and parallel exercise classes to increase activity choice and encourage more women and girls into the centre. This complements the eight other weekly women only activity sessions across the leisure estate.
- 8.6. Sports development staff at Talacre Sports Centre are now qualified to deliver specific trampolining sessions for Special Educational Needs (SEN) children.
- 8.7. In July GLL celebrated the 2024 recipients of its GLL Sports Foundation Awards. 39 talented athletes were awarded a total of £24,000 in the form of financial support and free access to our centres to train towards their performance goals. The Foundation also offers physiotherapy and important mental health support for these aspiring athletes.

**9. Conclusion and focus in coming months**

- 9.1. Leisure centres form a critical part of the physical activity system in Camden. They are key community assets that support residents be active, socialise and feel good and improve overall health and wellbeing.
- 9.2. Usage and memberships are both increasing but there is a clear challenge to grow income further against the backdrop of increased operational costs and in a sector where there continues to be facility closures, narrowing opportunities for being physically active.
- 9.3. Our leisure centres will require continued investment to ensure that they meet the expectations of residents, workers and visitors into the borough and remain viable health assets.
- 9.4. The concessionary offer enables affordable access to our centres and make up 42% of the membership based. However, we know that there are parts of our community who face barriers to participation and / or require support to access our centres.
- 9.5. The following table summarises the key focus areas for coming months that we believe will ensure leisure centres continue to thrive and are used by even more residents, especially the inactive and underrepresented individuals.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Indicative Timetable</b>
South Asian Engagement / Outreach work to improve connection with and use of leisure centres	Plan in place by end Dec 24 and outreach commencing in January 2025
A refreshed older adult programme and offer	In place from March 2025

Reviewing the leisure centre offer for disabled residents	April 2025
Remodelling of Talacre Sports Centre	Estimated completion summer 2025
New gym and sportshall at Kings Cross Fitness and full centre opening	Estimated completion spring / summer 2025

## **10. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

The new contract with GLL coincided with the Covid pandemic which led to a delay in its signing and sealing. The contract has now been signed and sealed but there are ongoing negotiations between the Council and GLL relating to the impact of Covid, energy costs and current service is expected to have a material financial impact.

The Active Living and Get Active programmes are funded from Public Health (PH) income, these are non-income generating services and PH only funds agreed, eligible expenditure.

## **11. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

11.1. Legal Services have been consulted, and their comments are incorporated.

## **12. Environmental Implications**

12.1. Camden has invested heavily over recent years to cut the carbon emissions of its buildings, achieving a 63% reduction since 2009/10. Leisure centres account for three of the top five energy consuming buildings within Camden's corporate stock, this does not include Pancras Square Leisure, which features as part of 5PS.

12.2. A £1.1m scheme is underway to decarbonise Talacre Community Sports Centre, due for completion in Winter 2025/26. Two further Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) applications are being drafted for Kentish Town Sports Centre and Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre.

12.3. The Kentish Town scheme would introduce air sourced heat pumps (ASHPs), increase efficiency of existing plant, Solar PV and minor fabric upgrades at a cost of circa. £2.3m, 80% of which would be provided by PSDS and 20% from internal funding. If the bid is successful then the project is expected to be completed in Winter 2026/27. A £3.8m scheme to introduce ASHPs, increase efficiency of plant and distribution and install Solar PV at Swiss Cottage would also be 80% funded via a PSDS grant, and complete by Winter 2027/28.

12.4. Combined, the three schemes have the potential to reduce Leisure emissions from 1625tCO<sub>2</sub>e annually to 732tCO<sub>2</sub>e, a 55% reduction.

- 12.5. Since returning from the Covid-19 lockdowns, GLL have invested approximately £400,000 in energy efficiency interventions to the leisure centre estate, including conversion to LED light fittings and refurbishments and upgrades to the centres' Building Management Systems (BMS).
- 12.6. One of GLL's core values is 'Respecting the Planet', and they have a number of policies that represent this value. Each leisure centres has an Energy Champion who works to upskill their colleagues on environmental policies and practices. The leisure centres' recycling rates have increased significantly over the past 12 months with a focus on education for staff and customers and new recycling bins across all of the facilities.
- 12.7. The Council and GLL worked in partnership with Power Up North London to install Solar PV at Talacre Community Sports Centre in an arrangement where the leisure centre purchases reduced-rate solar-generated electricity from PUNL and any excess electricity generated by the panels that is not used by the centre is returned to the National Grid at a commercial rate.
- 12.8. GLL have a range of environmental 'housekeeping' measures including quarterly overnight audits of all centres to ensure that plant is operating efficiently and reducing the environmental impact of the facilities.
- 12.9. Additionally, staff are encouraged to utilise Active Travel methods to attend work.

**REPORT ENDS**

# Appendix A – Camden Leisure Services Infographic 2024

## How leisure services are making Camden a healthier, safer and more vibrant place January - December 2024

### Leisure Centres

There were **2,178,660** visits to Camden's six leisure centres in 2024 so far.



**318** members of staff  
**77** of which are Camden Residents  
Total of **26,700** memberships

**11,141** of leisure centre members have a concessionary membership, giving them low cost access.

#### We supported

**5,180** pupils  
**66** schools  
**5** apprenticeships  
**2** supported internships  
**4** work placements

at our leisure centers through the Schools Swimming Programme

**3,132** students are on our Learn to Swim programme  
18 activity sessions aimed at people with disabilities, per week

£24k worth of support awarded to 39 talented Camden athletes - GLL Sports Foundation

Capital investment of over £1m to improve centres

Based on the new measure for levels of physical activity, Active Lives (2023)

**4<sup>th</sup>** Camden is the 4th most active borough in London with 73.7% of our adult residents meeting the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity every week.

### Outdoor Facilities

We have free to use outdoor gyms, multi-use games areas, a skate park (Canteloves Gardens), and Petanque (at Waterlow Park). We also have tennis courts, netball courts, and a sports pitch (at Kilburn Grange Park) that can be hired.

What are our participants telling us?



"My kids absolutely love the holiday schemes. There's so much for them to do and they never want to leave"

Parent feedback, Girls Get Moving Holiday Camp

### Active Community

#### Active Wednesdays

a sports and social event during the school holidays for young people aged 11-17

**250+** attendances

Average attendance of **37** young people each week

#### Friday Night Project

a monthly sports and social event for young people aged 12-17

**360+** attendances

Average attendance of **45** young people each week

**41%** of new attendees in 2024 were female

**Girls Get Moving** holiday programmes provide a fun, safe, positive space for girls, aged 8-15 years, to try new activities, gain confidence and make friends – building towards positive experiences and lifelong activity

92% of GGM holiday scheme attendees were Camden residents. 63% were BAME

Daily average **32** participants of 32 participants in the GGM Summer 2024 Week  
Parent feedback, "My child really enjoyed this week and particularly enjoyed new sports and games she hadn't tried before e.g. boxing"

**3,210** attendances in girls football training and competitions



The Camden Active Mark, a capacity building accreditation, will be re-establish in January 2025.

**100** signed up to Camden Active Newsletter, receiving monthly information on how they can use sport and physical activity to build stronger communities and their capacity

Camden Green Gym (nature conservation wellbeing volunteer programme) has been running for over 20 years by experienced TCV staff. The group work across 40 green sites in the borough

we manage **74** parks across Camden 9 free to use outdoor gyms

### Children and Young People

Competitions scheduled in 2023/2024 include:

**42** CSSA Primary Competitions & School Games Competitions

**12** Sport 4 All events

**7** Inclusive Competitions

**89 sessions**

Gymnastics and trampolining has **89** weekly classes with over 1,550 children regularly attending each

In 2024 Talacre had over

**5,000** attendances from children and young people to our holiday scheme of which 70% attended for free as part of our extension to HAF scheme.

**36/37** Primary Schools have signed up to the Primary Competition and Participation Package 23/24, offered as a Traded Service through Camden Learning.



**77%** of students enrolled achieved their NVQ sports Level 1-3 qualifications, with 53% more students signed onto the course than last year

Team Camden came 9th in the 2024 London Youth Games, our highest ever finishing position



Team Camden came 9th in the 2024 London Youth Games, our highest ever finishing position

### Our work with the Health and Wellbeing Department

#### Get Active Programme

**12** month programme

LB Camden and Public Health provide the Get Active Programme (GAP) across Camden and Islington. The 12-month physical activity intervention is available at a select number of GP surgeries.

**72%** of referrals are from the top 3 areas of deprivation

**26%** of referrals were related to mental health (70% male / 30% female)

**44%** of participants were BAME

**810** 2-Year Period

810 referred patients started the GAP over a 2-year period (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2024) all performing less than 30mins of physical activity per week. At 3, 6 & 12 month the programme saw an average increase in the number of PA minutes per week: 172, 217 & 228 respectively, in addition to a steady increase in health & wellbeing.



#### Active For Life Campaign

600 residents signed up to our behavior change campaign for over 60's 12 weeks duration, 7 VCS organisations hosted a range of free and low-cost activities in Camden with support to develop an active habit.

#### Working in partnership

Pro-Active Camden is the strategic partnership for sport and physical activity and is working on a new 5 year strategy for physical activity for children and young people.

**26** Bloomsbury wellbeing walks took place over the last year  
**493** attendances in 2024

Other community led walks have taken place across the borough

