

London Borough of Barnet Sports and Physical Activity Consultation

Introduction

The Council aims to improve the rates of participation in Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) by improving opportunities for traditional sport and physical activity services in Barnet. The Council is looking to understand how all sport and physical activity opportunities can be extended far beyond just leisure centres in Barnet and what role the Council and other partners should play in the future provision of these services. In doing so, the Council would like to ensure that positive health outcomes are achieved for all residents.

As part of its overall engagement Barnet Council commissioned a Leisure Services Survey during October and November 2013 to ensure that sports and physical activity provisions in the Borough is informed by public opinion.

Methodology

The Survey was conducted via telephone interviewing, and aimed to find out the types of sports, physical activities and other forms of exercise that residents take part in, as well as identify resident needs, any barriers that prevent participation, and any opportunities to increase/change the scope of sport and physical activity in LBB. A total of 1,103 telephone interviews conducted with a sample of Barnet residents. This survey was also made available online via the Council's website.

A total of four workshops were carried out with a wide cross-section of Barnet residents intended to supplement the findings of the representative telephone survey and non-representative online survey, and achieve extra understanding of the issues raised by enabling a more open-ended discussion around the key themes.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders included schools, various council services, community groups, and NHS and healthcare professionals. Private sector providers were not included at this stage. A full public consultation on preferred future options to take forward Sports, Physical Activity and Leisure development in Barnet will be undertaken at a later stage.

Main conclusions and recommendations

Types and locations of exercise

The survey found that the most popular individual non organised activity undertaken by residents is walking for leisure/exercise (40% of residents who exercise), alongside other activities such as swimming, running/jogging, and cycling.

Telephone survey residents who were significantly more likely than average to say that they walk for leisure or exercise include those who are female, those who are retired, and those who have an illness or disability.

Parks and open spaces and children's playgrounds (as well as swimming pools) were nominated as the most important facilities which the Council provides. Half of Barnet's residents

use parks and green spaces for their physical activity and exercise. This makes them the most popular locations for exercise in the Borough.

Residents who do some form of physical activity or exercise are more likely to participate in activities that are mainly outdoor (47%) rather than indoor (34%), and which are not organised classes or activities (75%).

Exercise classes were the most popular organised activity.

Frequency of exercise

The majority of residents (82%) do some kind of sport, physical activity or other exercise at least once a week. However, it is worth noting that particular groups are significantly more likely to never exercise or to exercise infrequently: these include residents with a disability and residents aged 65 or over.

Results show that just over half of residents (51%) do at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week (that is enough to raise their heart rate and breathing) – the amount recommended by the Chief Medical Officer Guidelines; this represents a slightly smaller proportion of residents achieving this level of physical activity per week than that reported in the 2012 Active People Survey (56%)¹.

However, the survey results also showed that 71% of residents said that they would like to take part in any/more sports/physical activity/other forms of exercise. This suggests that there is scope to increase the amount of physical activity and exercise undertaken in the Borough in the future.

When these residents were asked which activities they would like to take part in, the most common response was swimming (36%), followed by tennis (16%).

Recent Behaviour Changes

It is also worth noting that some workshop participants at Burnt Oak and Colindale had previously used certain facilities, but had ceased to do so because of reasons including transportation; poor facilities; and poor value for money.

In the West Hendon workshop, issues around security and feeling safe were highlighted, particularly in relation to getting to Cophall (due to poor lighting in an underpass).

Swimming

More than a third (36%) of residents who reported that they would like to participate in any/more sports or physical activities said they would like to do swimming, making it the most frequently identified activity. However, more than a quarter of residents (26%) who would like to participate in other sports or activities that they don't currently do identified swimming as an activity which is not currently available in their local area within Barnet.

¹ It must be noted that the data used to calculate this measure in the Active People Survey is derived from a series of more detailed questions, whereas the 2013 Barnet Council Leisure Services Survey uses only one question to collate this information. Therefore, due to these differences, caution should be exercised when directly comparing results between the two surveys.

Lack of facilities in and around Underhill

Residents in Underhill ward perceive a “gap in services” in their local area: residents who want to take part in other activities but do not feel that they are available in their local area are significantly more likely (at 90% confidence) to live in this ward. In particular, swimming badminton, football and gyms were the activities that most residents in Underhill felt were missing.

Publicity and Awareness

Around a third of residents (32%) who rated council owned leisure services as poor or worse indicated that they lacked awareness or knowledge of these services. When asked if there is anything Barnet or other local organisations could do that would help increase their participation in sports, physical activity or exercise, 14% of residents thought that awareness/advertising should be increased. Some Workshop participants showed a lack of awareness in terms of which facilities are provided by the Council, and which are privately run.

Cost

Cost and time were identified as the most common reason for not taking part in activities. .

Low Participation Groups

The key findings of the low participation groups are summarised in Table 1 below.

The Council could focus on increasing participation amongst those **with a limiting disability/illness, those with children aged under 5, and those of a BME background**. Some of the specific barriers to participation which affect these groups include a lack of time or of crèche facilities (residents with children aged under 5) or a lack of/inability to access facilities (residents with a limiting disability or illness).

Table 1: Summary of statistically significant findings relating to the protected groups

Group	Statistically significant findings
Aged 55+	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a community centre or village/church hall for their physical activities• Give disability or age as a reason why they participate in any/more sports, physical activities or exercise• Say that <i>nothing</i> would encourage them to use parks or open spaces to do any/more sports, physical activities or other exercise <p><i>Less likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Want to participate in more activities (<i>but</i> those who do are more likely to want to do walking/rambling/hiking in particular)• Be a member of any leisure centre
Female	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have taken part in keep fit / dance exercise / aerobics / spin classes and yoga / toning / Pilates in last month <u>and</u> also more likely to select these as activities they would like to do but don't do already

<p>With a limiting disability/illness</p>	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never exercise; and more likely to do less than 30 minutes per week, or none at all • Say that leisure services across the Borough aren't accessible to them • Want to use the gym (as an individual – not as part of a class) <u>and</u> also more likely to think this is not available in their local area. <p><i>Less likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a member of any fitness or leisure centre
<p>With children aged under 5 in the household</p>	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly do other, non-organised activities rather than organised ones • Mainly do outdoor rather than indoor activities • Want to do any/more sports, physical activities or other exercise • Say that a lack of time or a lack of crèche facilities prevents them from taking part in any/more physical activities
<p>BME residents</p>	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do mainly other, non-organised activities rather than organised ones • Do mainly indoor rather than outdoor activities • Want to participate in more activities that keep them fit
<p>Of Jewish religion or belief</p>	<p><i>More likely to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 'I already do enough' as a reason for not doing any/more exercise or activities • Say there is 'nothing' that Barnet Council or other local organisations could do to increase their participation in sports, exercise or physical activities

Suggestions about how these groups could be supported included:

- Better and more targeted advertising and communication;
- Free or discounted/subsidised entry to facilities;
- Ensuring all venues are family friendly and safe;
- Providing more culturally and ethnically sensitive facilities (e.g. separate changing rooms based on gender);
- Utilising the support of volunteers or local voluntary organisations to help improve access for the vulnerable or disenfranchised;
- Providing transport assistance to disabled people.

In addition to the groups already identified as having lower participation, Workshop participants were also keen to consider the particular needs of other groups, including young people, working people, and people who are single (particularly those who do not have easy access to transport).