

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Update on Sport and Physical Activity Opportunities for Disabled Citizens in Camden	
REPORT OF Director of Recreation	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Disability Oversight Panel	DATE November 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report provides an update for the Disability Oversight Panel (DOP) Committee on the sport and physical activity provision for disabled citizens in Camden and the ongoing service developments and targeted initiatives. Contact Officer: Stephan von Schilling Active Living Manager London Borough of Camden Telephone: 020 7974 1518 4 th Floor 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Email: stephan.vonschilling@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATION That the Disability Oversight Panel notes and comments on the update.	
SIGNED: 	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report responds directly to the chair of DOP who requested the following key themes were investigated:
 - a. General update – What is the offer for people with disabilities
 - b. Carers' offer at Leisure Centres – Are carers given the best offer to encourage them to be more physically active?
 - c. Deaf and Hard of Hearing provision - What does the offer look like in Camden Leisure centres – specifically deaf yoga provision and more how much of the universal offer is appropriate and attractive?
 - d. Welcome at Leisure Centres - Could the welcome at leisure centres in Camden be better geared towards disabled people.
 - e. Recent developments at Camden's Leisure Centres
- 1.2 The CDSPAN (Camden Disability Sports and Physical Activity Network) is the borough's strategic forum for sport and physical activity for disabled people and is linked to PAC (Pro Active Camden, the overall strategic partners for sport and physical activity in Camden). Information from CDSPAN members has been used to compile this report.
- 1.3 Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) operate and manage Camden's six leisure centres and offers 10 targeted disability sessions. Camden has a strong network of community organisations representing the disability community. GLL has active relationships with 6 of these and see it as their responsibility to work with them as well as their own Learning and Development team to better understand the requirements and reasonable adjustments which need to be made for disabled citizens.
- 1.4 Camden's Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) department provides classes or activities (where other providers cannot) either directly or with partners.
- 1.5 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add.

2. GENERAL UPDATE

- 2.1 There is a broad and varied offer of physical activities for disabled people in Camden with over 60 sessions per week delivered by the sport and physical

activity service, GLL and camden-wide disability partners: [Activities for disabled people - Camden Council](#)

- 2.2 GLL are committed to providing targeted activities, including interventions to encourage residents that are less likely to exercise for a range of reasons including support for those who face financial barriers, confidence issues, as well as new routes into physical activity for deaf and disabled people, those living with poor mental health and those with long-term health conditions. GLL's activities and memberships for deaf and disabled people can be found here:
<https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/1271010/Camden+Accessible+Activity+Guide+FINAL+JULY+2023.pdf/a067f4d5-75ba-cfd4-d892-e9a13097ca85?t=1689761783409>
- 2.3 As a charitable social enterprise, GLL see it as their 'purpose' to improve the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of all Camden citizens, and one of GLL's values which shapes their 5-year plan is 'Tackling Health Inequalities'. Their equality, diversity and inclusion policy aims to ensure that their purpose is delivered by their workforce across all the leisure centres in Camden (and in the community) in a vibrant, equitable and inclusive way.
- 2.4 Camden GLL's Community Team, along with a lead member of staff from each leisure centre, attended a workshop in Disability Equality Training in November 2023 led by Purple Tuesday which is a global social movement and brand for improving the customer experience for disabled people and their families. The staff who attended have become Champions in their work teams with a view to rolling out coaching sessions with colleagues. The training will also feature in an annual refresher training package available to other staff.
- 2.5 In Spring 2024, Kentish Town Sports Centre launched SEND swimming lessons on Thursdays. This followed the success of these sessions at Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre. Both sessions are incredibly popular which has led to an additional SEND swimming lesson being added on a Sunday at Kentish Town and there are also plans for an additional class at Swiss Cottage.
- 2.6 Disability training – GLL's Community team have attended three different training sessions based around disability equality. These sessions covered language, stereotypes and how the world can be made more accessible to disabled people. Two of these sessions had a focus on recruitment and the benefits of recruiting disabled people into the workplace, and the support available both for the employee and the employer. The community team achieved Propel Mentor status in partnership with the Mason Foundation, an organisation with whom GLL is now working on a national level to support Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion objectives for employing disabled people.
- 2.7 London Inclusion Sports Academy (LISA) has increased HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) (see Appendix 1) capacity by 10 children per day. It has launched two SEND after school clubs and doubled the capacity of Go! Go! Ninja!

- 2.8 LISA's comparison of Camden with other local boroughs (Islington, Lambeth, Haringey, or Brent) shows that: - Camden has good quality (but not enough) SEND CYP provision, on the ground, and evidenced through attendance at sports centres, the London Youth Games, Special Olympics, and Royal Parks. They believe CDSPAN is a best practice example of community development in Council sports and health services. It enables member organisations to be able to hear from leaders across public health, education, leisure, and competition frameworks in one place and supports positioning, impact, sustainability, and efficiency. LISA have recognised that Camden is the easiest borough for them to work in, so they pilot all their complex provision there.
- 2.9 SPA are working with Health and Wellbeing to ensure that Camden has the right opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to maintain a healthy weight. This will look to promote appropriate existing activities which are local and at a convenient time.

3. CARERS' OFFER AT LEISURE CENTRES

- 3.1 Carers in Camden can currently attend GLL's local leisure centres at no cost when they are with the person they are caring for and supporting them undertake their activity. They are not permitted to do their own work-out.
- 3.2 Those who receive Carer's Allowance (a small proportion due to the eligibility criteria) can access their own workouts at the concessionary rate. Carer's Allowance is the main carer's benefit and is £76.75 per week (2023/24) for a minimum of 35 hours. It is the lowest benefit of its kind. In the UK, 977,506 carers were in receipt of Carer's Allowance in 2022. It is not paid to older carers.
- 3.3 There are an estimated 15,600 carers in Camden of whom 4,000 are registered with Camden Carers. About 500 of those receive Carer's allowance. 170 per year receive a health assessment (with Camden Carers) where a recommendation to be more physically active is often given. Camden SPA have worked with Camden Carers over the last nine months to explore the best opportunities for carers in Camden to be more active. We know this is a priority group who have poorer health outcomes. They face many barriers to being physically active. These include lack of time, motivation and financial barriers which have been intensified by the cost-of-living crisis. Camden Sports and Physical Activity have worked with them to provide resources (to inform their members of local opportunities) and links to GLL.
- 3.4 Camden Carers believe that there needs to be an easy and attractive way to entice their members to join and use leisure centres. They have pointed out that in Hackney, where leisure centres are also managed by GLL, carers can access swimming for free. There is a different contractual agreement in Hackney, and this could be possible in Camden but would need to be funded. SPA worked hard to get a good contract for Camden, for example Camden has concessionary member and activity options which unlike other authorities are not time restricted.

- 3.5 In addition, GLL offer free swimming for Camden residents over 60s Monday to Friday before midday with a concessionary pay and play membership. Some carers may not be able to make that time due to their duties.
- 3.6 GLL have an ongoing national partnership with Carers UK, and in dedicated periods during the last year have offered a Carers membership at a rate of £30 per month to support Carers UK campaigns. The membership was first offered until 15th January 2024, and then again in April 2024 for 'Active April'.
- 3.7 GLL offered welcome sessions across all the centres in Camden and neighbouring boroughs for carers to pop in and have a centre tour and try out an activity for free. They would be happy to do this again and would welcome support from the carers network to encourage take-up of this welcome offer.
- 3.8 There is an opportunity for better marketing and communication about the offer and GLL will be working with Camden Carers to achieve that.

4. DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PROVISION

- 4.1 Tackling health inequalities in one of GLL's values and therefore we are committed to supporting future targeted initiatives for deaf and hard of hearing citizens.
- 4.2 GLL has undertaken a programme of BSL training for swimming teachers working with deaf and SEN schools in the borough for their school swimming lessons. This programme will be refreshed and offered to all staff in 2024.
- 4.3 There are currently no sessions in specific deaf and hard of hearing sessions. This type of session is not well-established in the industry. It is worth investigating what aspects of the universal offer are most attractive and suitable. However, in-line with GLL's programme of BSL training, they are interested in working with partners across the borough in establishing if this type of session is requested by deaf and hard of hearing and then building a suitable and sustainable programme which could include deaf yoga if there was demand.
- 4.4 GLL in Reigate and Banstead are currently working with an organisation for deaf people to provide sports for the deaf community. They currently have some funding and are hoping to use this funding to roll out their sports programme across the country by working in partnership with GLL centres.

4.5 GLL will consult with Camden residents who are deaf and hard of hearing to better understand the needs of this community and what activities and programmes they recommend we consider.

4.6 To help inform the provision they propose a consultation event similar to the Visual Impairment engagement which they carried out in March information about the event can be found here: www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk/events/access-gyms-making-vi-fitness-better/

4.9 The proposed engagement event for deaf and hard of hearing would be similar and inform what provision is needed and how best to promote it. The event would also allow those deaf citizens who simply want to have a look around the opportunity to do so in a friendly and supportive way.

4.11 Asif Iqbal (Camden Technical and Rehabilitation Officer – Deaf) has given insight into a perceived lack of opportunities and how activity is promoted and ran a series of training sessions with leisure centre management and front-line teams to educate the teams on this insight.

4.12 GLL does not currently have any entry-level staff who are fluent in BSL and able to undertake activity-specific sessions utilising BSL, but are interested in this as a training opportunity, particularly if there is sufficient demand from the Deaf community for this type of session. GLL will also put out an expression of interest to staff in neighbouring boroughs who may be BSL fluent.

5. WELCOME AT LEISURE CENTRES

5.1 The welcome at Camden Leisure Centres is important for all users but disabled users often need extra support and a ‘trusted’ person to whom they can refer.

5.2 GLL have operated a ‘concierge’ system since 2020 which takes staff out from behind a desk and allows them to connect with people more readily.

- 5.3 The concierge role responds to enquiries and are often a customer's first port of call; they deal with transactions, handle any queries, and even go out into the community on outreach projects. By moving telephone calls to a dedicated Customer Service Centre, Concierge staff in centres are now able to immediately respond to customers in front of them and provide a welcoming introduction. From providing team support to the warmest of welcomes, the focus is on ensuring that customer service level is always at the highest level.
- 5.4 There is hearing loop provision in the leisure centre receptions at all leisure centres except for Oasis Sports Centre and the new King's Cross Fitness – GLL are investigating installations at these two centres.
- 5.5 GLL has a suite of induction and ongoing training both online and face-to-face for their workforce. Training includes Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Disability Awareness, Customer Service, and Making Every Contact Count. Additional training is provided for activity specific roles, such as group ex-instructors delivering disability sessions will have Exercise for Disabled People Level 3.
- 5.6 GLL's established Learning & Development guidance and processes for their workforce includes regular refreshes and there will be further disability awareness training in 2024 and annually. Workforce communication on the many initiatives and schemes which they support throughout the borough undergoes continuous improvement to ensure that GLL staff are conversant with the breadth of disability provision to signpost users to.
- 5.7 GLL have created user guides for disabled users (Appendix 5)
- 5.8 GLL recognise that this is an area which can be improved even further. It has been a useful exercise to look at this (including the information in Appendix 4) and there is work to do, as outlined above. They also welcome suggestions from residents and the panel.

6. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS – SWISS COTTAGE LEISURE CENTRE REFURBISHMENT

- 6.1 GLL are investing £600k into Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre as their commitment to improving services for the local community and making the leisure experience even better.
- 6.2 The first phase started late last year and included improvements to gym areas; the overall layout of the gym to allow an expansion of both functional and strength zones while replacing all the gym equipment with brand-new Technogym kit suitable for disabled users and making the space a more comfortable and motivating place for all. The works were completed in January 2024. See Appendix 2.

7. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS – PANCRAS SQUARE LEISURE REFURBISHMENT

- 7.1 The objective of these works is to modernise the look and feel and introduce a functional zone which is in keeping with latest fitness trends.
- 7.2 The gym improvements have been co-designed with Pancras Square Leisure members. Data from annual user survey, reviews and feedback have all highlighted the need and demand for a dedicated functional training space and a modernised product, which allows for improved programming. See Appendix 3

8. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS – TALACRE SPORTS CENTRE

- 8.1 A 'Changing Places' toilet/ changing facility is planned for Talacre Sports Centre. This will bring the total number in Camden to six, making it one of the highest densities in inner London.
- 8.2 In 2024, 16 Camden staff have been trained to deliver Rebound Therapy (a fun way to improve coordination and spacial awareness) The idea was to provide new, bespoke trampoline classes for SEND children. Initially, there were two classes every Sunday with 12 places in each class. This has now grown to three due to increased demand.

Appendix 1

In 2023 LISA (London Inclusion Sports Academy) looked at CYP SEND provision in Camden, speaking to three groups: commissioners and funders, sports providers, and parents & educators.

Broadly, the discussions confirmed that: - commissioners were somewhat unclear about CYP SEND provision capacity, and impact - sports providers felt that there are not enough SEND holiday schemes and after school clubs - parents felt that there was a significant lack of accessible, SEND specific provision generally .This echoes LISA's experience of delivering CYP SEND services in Camden.

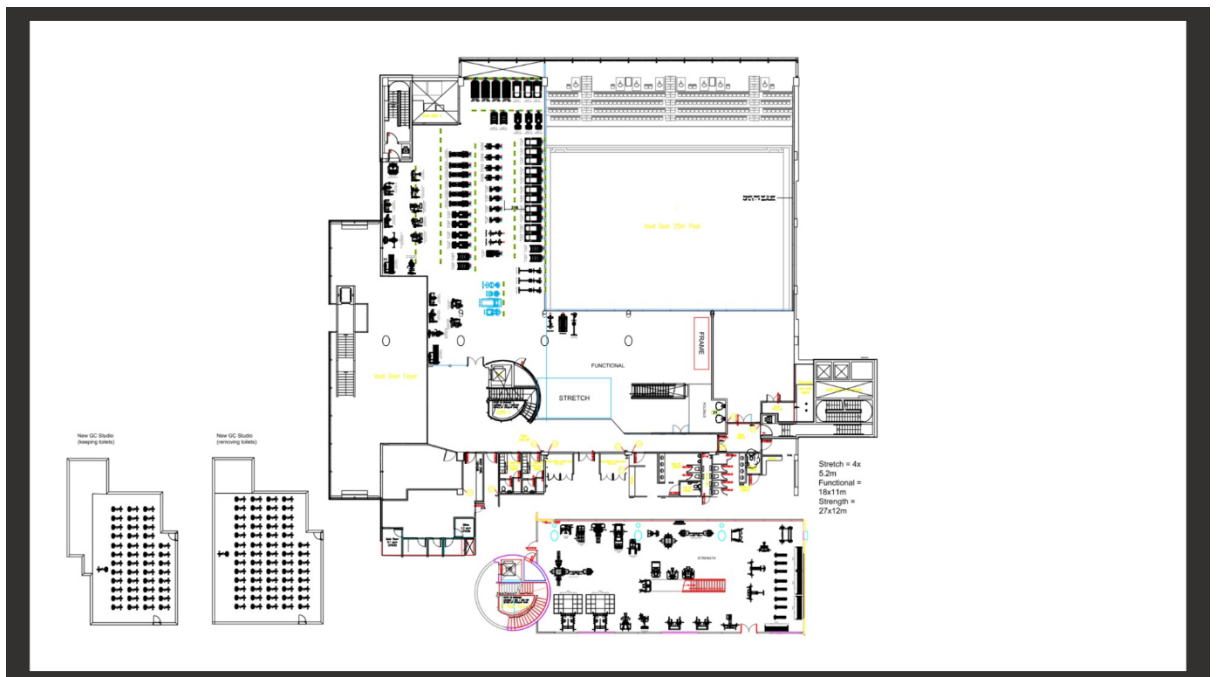
Key themes emergent from the conversations have been - tensions with Short Breaks commissioning - SEND HAF capacity - Lack of SEND after school clubs - Shortage of Inclusion Sports Supported Internships available

LISA SEND HAF Programme:

[LISA SEND HAF - DfE best practice case study](#)

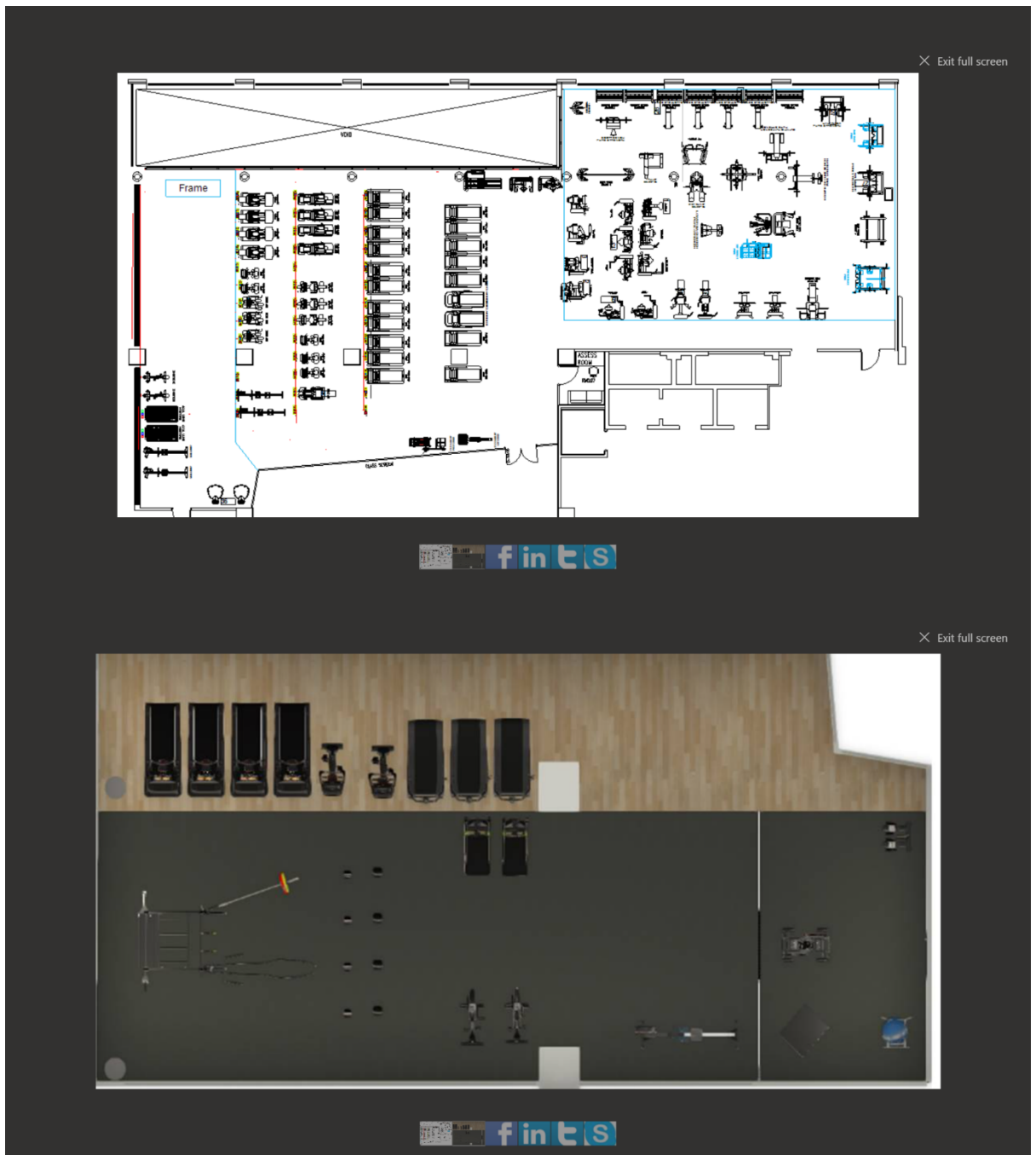
Appendix 2

Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre



Appendix 3

Pancras Square Leisure



Appendix 4

Supporting information

Sport England Active Lives data shows disabled people are consistently twice as likely to be inactive compared to non-disabled people (20.7% vs 40.8%). And yet the Activity Alliance report that Three-quarters (76%) of

disabled people express a desire to be more active.

In September 2022 Camden Public Health in conjunction with Pro Active Camden (PAC) hosted a physical activity symposium (which looked to ensure that the offer was representative) and concluded that the offer for disabled children and young people was underrepresented. As a result, this has become a priority work area for PAC.

Apprenticeships- Out of the three entry-level apprentices at GLL in Camden, one has declared a disability.

Supported internships at GLL – During 2023, there were 2 supported interns.

Camden workforce – in 2023 3.03% of Camden staff have declared to have a disability.

Appendix 5

User Guides

First Time User Guide to make the entire process of accessing and using a leisure centre less daunting: [Camden First Time User Guide \(better.org.uk\)](https://www.better.org.uk/camden-first-time-user-guide)

There is also a guide to using the Pool Pods which give independent and comfortable access to our pools. [What Is A Poolpod? | Better](#)