

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration & Environmental Services (Land & Environmental Services)

Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee : 4 April 2007

Subject: Leisure Services Free Fitness Assessment Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To update the Committee on the performance of the free Fitness Assessment Scheme that has been run by Leisure Services since 2002/03

2. Background

- 2.1** In 2002 the Council funded Leisure Services to provide free Fitness Assessments for the citizens of West Dunbartonshire. £14,000 was provided to fund additional staff cover and to purchase necessary equipment for the Cosmopolitan Fitness suites within the Council's 3 main leisure centres. The objective of the initiative was to deliver 1,500 free fitness assessments within 2002/03.
- 2.2** The overall aim of the scheme is to assist people to identify and improve their own fitness level in an effort to improve their overall health and well-being.
- 2.3** A Fitness Assessment consists of a one-to-one session with a qualified Fitness Attendant who provides healthy lifestyle advice as well as assessing the person's level of fitness. A full assessment takes around one hour to complete and includes measurements of body fat percentage, blood pressure, flexibility, lung efficiency and stamina.
- 2.4** The scheme proved successful in the first year and has enjoyed continued success each year since.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The annual target of 1,500 Free Fitness Assessments was achieved by Leisure Services in 2002/03 and the target has been gradually increased each year since then. The section aims to achieve 2,000 free fitness Assessments per annum from 2009 onwards and is presently working towards achieving this target.
- 3.2** 1,737 Free Fitness Assessments were delivered in 2005/06 and the service target for 06/07 is 1,850.
- 3.3** Since 2003 Leisure Services has carried out an annual survey of the customers who had a free fitness assessment in the previous year.

The aim of the annual survey is to determine if the customer's needs and requirements were being met and to establish the impact the fitness assessment had on their diet, exercise and lifestyle.

- 3.4** The results from these surveys have confirmed that, for many people, the Fitness Assessment has been a catalyst for them to improve their health through increased exercise and improved diet. Leisure Services also uses the annual survey as a measure of the general service provided and to highlight where improvements can be made.
- 3.5** The survey results from 2005 show that almost half (47.2%) of respondents said that the Fitness Assessment had an effect on their diet and 78% said it had encouraged them to exercise. An increased level of fitness (53%) and the commencement of an exercise programme (49%) appear to be the main benefit from taking the Fitness Assessment. These two elements have also shown to be the main benefits in previous year's consultations.
- 3.5** The two Exercise Counsellors who operate the GP Exercise Referral Schemes for Alexandria/Dumbarton and Clydebank utilise the fitness assessment equipment within the three centres to assess newly referred clients before recommending their exercise prescription.
- 3.5** As part of the SHAW (Scotland Health At Work) Bronze award submission Leisure Services also recently introduced a programme of mini health assessments for Council staff. These mini health check days will run over a two year cycle and will aim to reach as many staff from the various Council services as possible. The mini assessment involves the following tests:
- Height and weight
 - Body fat percentage
 - Blood pressure
 - Lung efficiency
 - Body strength
- 3.6** The first of these mini health check days was on Monday the 11th December 2006. Cosmopolitan Health and Fitness staff visited Council premises at Garshake Road, Rosebery Place and Elm Road to undertake mini fitness assessments for Council employees wishing to participate. As part of the project, Council staff were also encouraged to book at one of the main sites for a full Fitness Assessment.
- 3.7** On the day a total of 88 employees participated and had a mini health assessment. 30 staff also booked for a full Fitness Assessment at one of the main sites. Analysis of the tests results from the day clearly indicates that the majority of participants taking part in these assessments would benefit from taking more regular exercise.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** To accommodate the provision of the required number of Fitness Assessments each year some additional staff cover is required. The cost of this is covered within the funding received to deliver the project.

- 4.2** Staff who carry out Fitness Assessments are trained and qualified to do so, they are also fully competent to give exercise and lifestyle advice as part of the assessment process.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** £14,000 was allocated towards delivery of this initiative as part of the 2002/03 budget process. Funding has continued each subsequent year and in 2006/07 the funding allocated was £14,666. The funding for 2007/2008 will be £15,000 contained within the revenue estimates.

- 5.2** A full Fitness Assessment would normally cost a customer in the region of £20 - £25 at most private clubs and local authority run fitness facilities.

6.0 Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There are no risks associated with this report.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** Removing the barrier of price from the Fitness Assessment has enabled more people to access this opportunity.
- 7.2** The annual survey results since 2003 are supporting the premise that the free Fitness Assessment can act as a catalyst for people to take action to improve their health. The fitness assessment facilities at each centre are also a useful support tool for the Exercise Referral Officers in operating the GP Referral schemes.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** **The Committee is requested to note the success of the Leisure Services Section in delivering this health promoting project.**

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Date: 2 March 2007

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All