
REPORT TO:	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 14
DATE OF MEETING:	24TH APRIL 2008	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	STUART BATCHELOR (Ext. 5820)	DOC: s:\leisure\committee reports\leisure centres\access to leisure services for children in care - april 08.doc
SUBJECT:	ACCESS TO LEISURE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND THEIR FOSTER FAMILIES	REF: SB/SAC
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:HCS07

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members approve the scheme and specifically the provision of free access for looked after children to selected sports development and playscheme activities.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To inform Members of a scheme to improve leisure participation for looked after children and agree their free access to selected sports development and playscheme activities.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 There are 33 children and young people in care placed within the South Derbyshire District Council area.
- 3.2 Responsibility for their parenting is regarded as a corporate activity and requires the County Council with its statutory partners such as Borough and District Councils to work together to achieve best possible outcomes on their behalf.
- 3.3 Increasingly, Councils across the country, including two tier authorities, are providing free access to leisure facilities for children in care to promote healthier lifestyles and increased participation in community-based activities.
- 3.4 For a variety of early parenting experiences children in care have a disproportionate rate of obesity and lower participation in sporting and recreational activities than their peer group.

- 3.5 A further 28 children, mainly those with significant disabilities, are provided with respite foster care within the District Council area and the County Council would also wish to see a free access scheme extended to this group.
- 3.6 The table below provides further detail of the numbers involved:

Summary of Numbers of Looked After Children's Placements and Foster Carers by District Council Area				
Council Area	No. of LAC Placed in Area	No. of DCC Foster Carers living in Area	No of Birth Children of Foster Carers Living at Home in Area	No of LAC Placed with Foster Carers in Area (includes Children in Respite Care)
High Peak	49	41	36	40
Chesterfield	81	82	62	80
Nth Est Derbyshire	36	32	34	50
Bolsover	38	37	46	34
Amber Valley	50	47	31	54
Erewash	33	32	25	46
South Derbyshire	33	25	17	28
Derbyshire Dales	25	37	36	24
Total	345	333	287	356

- 3.7 Free access to leisure Centres and activities for foster families will help promote the recruitment and retention of carers throughout the County. It will, particularly, encourage foster carers to use leisure and recreational facilities alongside the children they are placed with and ensure appropriate supervision.
- 3.8 All eight Derbyshire Borough Councils have been asked to participate in the scheme, which will be reviewed after a year.
- 3.9 The operators of Green Bank Leisure Centre, Rosliston Forestry Centre and Etwall Leisure Centre have agreed in principle to operate the scheme, and it is proposed to include some sports development and playscheme activities.
- 3.10 The County Council will issue a special card as proof of identity which will give the holder access to the free activities, which in the case of the leisure centres is swimming, and at Rosliston Forestry Centre free car parking. For sports development and playscheme it would apply to 'pay and play' activities such as '5 for a Fiver', sports coaching and dance sessions.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of the free use provided to the looked after children will be covered by the centre operator in the case of leisure facilities and for sports development and playscheme the Councils revenue budget. For the maximum number of the eligible 61 children who live across the District this cost will be marginal as they will not be taking the place of other paying young people. In fact the participation by the foster childrens family which will be paid for by the County Council may well marginally increase income levels.
- 4.2 The County Council have offered to fund all charges arising from use of leisure facilities and activities by foster carers or their children.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 This proposed scheme supports the safer and healthier objective of the Corporate Plan as it will provide physical activity opportunities in a cost effective way.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 This scheme provides the opportunity to give looked after children more opportunity to be physically active and engaged in leisure pursuits.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The project will assist in the recruitment of foster parents which are crucial to ensuring that looked after children have the opportunity to achieve their potential as members of the community.