

active
Northumberland



ACTIVE NORTHUMBERLAND
**ANNUAL SERVICE
REPORT 2022/2023**

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Our Vision

Our vision is “To be the Best Community and Wellness Provider in the UK” at delivering quality leisure, physical activity, and sporting opportunities across Northumberland and to improve the health and fitness of the population of Northumberland in line with the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing strategy.

People in Northumberland will have a better quality of life as a result of their participation in physical activity and sport. Active Northumberland is not just about sport, it is about “wellness” and feeling fitter, with a focus on improving health and wellbeing and preventing ill health and social isolation.

Our Background

Active Northumberland (AN) is a registered charity (company limited by guarantee) formed in 2014 from a merger of several different leisure service providers.

AN has circa 830 employees consisting of a mix of contracted (both full and part time) and casual staff, and a Board of 10 non-executive Directors (trustees) with a diverse and relevant range of expertise and senior level management experience. AN operates nine large leisure centres (some of which combine library services) and several smaller facilities, including community facilities and welfare facilities. All of AN’s facility and service management contracts are delivered within the county of Northumberland.

The majority of the facilities operated by AN are owned by Northumberland County Council (NCC) and are leased to AN, who in turn manages the operation of leisure facilities and services for NCC under an Operating or Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement, coupled with a performance management framework ensures progress is appropriately recorded and acknowledged, and that under AN’s management, NCC’s leisure assets and resources are optimised and successfully contribute to NCC’s Corporate Plan priorities and objectives.

Increasing Health & Social Impact

As part of the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028, we are working to deliver the strategic priorities together with, and complementing the work of, our partners.

Providing children and young people with the best start in life

We aim to encourage Children and Young People (CYP) and their families to make positive lifestyle and social choices that will help their physical, social, and mental health wellbeing.

We believe that every child and young person has the right to be active, to benefit from being active in a safe, positive, and trusted environment, and to have an equal chance to achieve their potential.

Positive experiences at an early age help build the foundations for an active life. If children and young people have experiences that feel fun, positive and give them a sense of confidence, they are more likely to want to be active in the future.

We have put an even stronger spotlight on safeguarding, so that children and young people feel safe when being active, and parents are confident that we are a safe choice with the welfare of their children being paramount. To achieve this, we have reviewed our safeguarding policy and now ensure that all our colleagues have read and understood it, by making it part of our mandatory training.

We provide fun and positive learning experiences across the Service for Children and Young People from birth right through to apprenticeships within our facilities.

Q1

Our Nursery at Hirst Welfare currently has 42 children attending on a regular basis, where our dedicated officer works alongside the early years team to create a personalised curriculum based on the Hirst Welfare ethos, being unique to our setting.

The staff listen to the children; take their ideas and wants and needs into consideration, allowing them to make some decisions and put some of their ideas into practice. The environment is always safe and secure. Each child has their own key worker so that a trust and caring relationship is built.

We continue to run courses to educate parents and carers and during Q1 we successfully ran both an oral health course and a healthy eating course to try and educate families on the importance on these things and what the parents can continue to do at home to encourage the children to continue to make sensible choices, these all link into the curriculum.

Our Mams on the Move Scheme is designed to help support physical and mental health for new mums after giving birth and continues to grow both in numbers and sites that we operate from. During Q1 we redesigned our membership offer to include mams on the move sessions, whilst increasing accessibility and opportunities for new mams to widen their health and social opportunities.

As the scheme continues to develop, we are delighted to work in partnership with Public Health and the midwife team to deliver antenatal Aquatic sessions at both our Berwick and Wentworth Facilities as part of the Mams on the Move scheme.

Mams on the Move featured in the evening chronicle during Q1, and a strong marketing push saw the Facebook page hit 1800 members.

We continue to support schools within Northumberland by giving opportunities to develop whole school approaches in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity (PESSPA) with the intent to develop positive attitudes to physical activity for CYP. The aim is for CYP to learn to have a lifelong positive attitude to physical activity which will in turn lead to healthy active lifestyles throughout their lifetime. We continue to embed fundamental skills of physical literacy in schools to ensure the necessary building blocks are in place for a good start for CYP.

We remain unique to any other leisure providers by using experienced qualified PE teachers to deliver a bespoke programme of Physical Education and an advisory service within first, primary, middle, secondary, high, and special schools. We continue to be the trusted and preferred provider within the county of Northumberland and have SLA agreements with 30 schools.

The four School Games Organisers (SGO) have continued to deliver the national programme into schools across the four areas of Northumberland and have worked closely with the Active Partnership RISE and the other two SGO areas to ensure every school has received a consistent School Games offer.

We promote good physical health and wellbeing of CYP in Northumberland by offering schools and families a voucher system to attend centres in holiday times and support school staff with their health & wellbeing by encouraging them to join Active's corporate gym membership, currently 26 members of school staff have taken up the offer.

Our junior gym saw significant growth during Q1 and grew by a further 8% during Q2. At the end of the quarter, we had 1,129 junior members between the ages of 11-15 years. During the summer holiday period, we added a number of additional junior gym sessions resulting in 7855 visits over the holiday period.

Our Learn to Swim Framework not only gives each child gives children confidence in their ability to swim, but it also promotes strong mental wellbeing and provides the skills and

motivation to lead a healthy and active lifestyle through regular swimming through to their adult life.

During Q1 we increased our participation by an average of 33% in comparison to the same period in 2020 and operated an average occupancy level of 93% across all lessons within the scheme.

School Swimming is directly attributable to achieving one of the KS2 outcomes in education and we continue to support 150 schools across the County, although Q1 indications suggest that the pandemic has impacted upon the ability of year 6 pupils failing to achieve the 3 national outcomes.

In Q1 this year, we relaunched our apprenticeship programme and began the recruitment campaign for nine new leisure operation apprentices (one at each of the largest sites) and a business support apprentice (central). By relaunching our apprentice programme, we continue to contribute to giving young people the best start in life at the higher end of the age group.

Q2

In Q2 we delivered a county wide inclusive Commonwealth Games Live Event collaborating with Alnwick Garden and Castle as well as other stakeholders. The event's aim was to target CYP from across the county that were most in need of a physical activity intervention with the intention to improve their physical, social, and mental health wellbeing. We continue to deliver the Barclays and FA girls' football program in Berwick-Upon-Tweed.

During Q2, our Nursery colleagues began to explore opportunities to introduce maths and English into the Nursery setting, whilst also concentrating upon Oral Health that was initially introduced in Q1. The Nursery is also looking to undertake the Better Health at Work Award, with the aim of achieving Bronze within 12 months.

As the Mams on the Move scheme is currently being delivered via the reserves from Sport England funding, during Q2 we began to plan for delivery of the scheme without central funding. During meetings with key personnel, we mapped a desire to create a pathway of exit routes from the Mams on the Move Scheme to pre-school activities and then to junior memberships. This pathway would create additional physical opportunities for the pre-school age group, whilst the income would help make the post self-funding.

Junior "Elevate" is our session to ensure that our younger members are safe and confident to use our gym equipment, whilst providing a framework to ensure their training is effective and fun. During Q2 we delivered a total of 420 'Elevate' sessions to our junior facility users.

During Q2, we also piloted two family group exercise classes at Ashington Leisure Centre, enabling parents/carers and their children to participate in a class together. These classes have proved to be an initial success, in particular the family clubbercise class proved to be a real hit and we hope to launch similar types of classes throughout the county during Q3.

Within our facilities we continue to deliver valuable life skills to CYP, through a wide range of coaching and tuition opportunities.

Our Learn to Swim Framework not only gives each child gives children confidence in their ability to swim, but it also promotes strong mental wellbeing and provides the skills and motivation to lead a healthy and active lifestyle through regular swimming through to their adult life.

During Q2 our participation has grown by 37% in comparison to the same period 2020, We are operating at an average of 94% occupancy level.

Q3

During Q3 we increased our junior gym sessions at Blyth and Concordia by an extra hour a day to increase opportunities for our younger members to access the gyms, whilst we also scoped opportunities to change the booking system to increase access during term time and prevent drop off due to lack of opportunity.

At Hirst Nursery, as a consequence of some of the children struggling with speech and language issues, the whole team have been working with speech and language therapists to be better placed to support the children with one of team undertaking a specialist speech and language course.

The Nursery staff also continue to update their knowledge of child protection and are preparing for their next OFTSED inspection, which could be due in the very near future.

In Q3 The PESS teaching team continued to deliver high quality Physical Education across partnership schools. Each school receives CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for their staff and ensures that all are competent and confident to deliver all aspects of the Physical Education curriculum.

Berwick Academy have made full use of the new bowling green in the sports centre by teaching primary pupils how to play indoor bowls. The sessions will continue over the next couple of months and will hopefully lead to some of the youngsters wanting to continue in their spare time.

During Q3 we delivered a total of 305 'Junior Elevate' sessions across our facilities ensuring our young members can exercise safely and effectively.

During Q3 we developed a new programme called 'Active Babies' which will launch in the new year. Active Babies is a 6-week course incorporating fun, interactive dance, and movement for babies 6 weeks and older. We have also planned to launch 'Active Tots' which will be focused on activity for toddlers. Both courses will form part of our 'Mams on the Move' programming promoting physical activity for new parents and children.

Q4

In Q4 the PESS team delivered bespoke whole school CPD in addition to their weekly provision. Schools benefitted from specific gymnastics CPD and welcomed the opportunity to become more confident and competent at delivering PE (Physical Education) sessions.

Every school in the PESS partnership attended a Health & Wellbeing festival for their Y4 children. This was an opportunity for 180 children to visit Blyth and 210 children to visit Morpeth to participate in physical activity and healthy eating activities. The team collaborated with local supermarkets and received donations of fruit and vegetables to give away to the children. A further 60 children at the Wise Academy received in-school delivery.

The team continues to forge links with schools that are not part of the partnership SLA and have delivered playground leadership sessions into a number of schools. They continue to deliver School Games support and the County Final took place at Ponteland Leisure Centre. A KS3 Inclusive Festival for students with SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) was held at Concordia where 120 students were able to participate in bowling and other multi-sport activities.

We continue to support girls' activities through FA funding and delivered a Disney inspired Girls football session at Newbiggin Sports and Community Hub. 50 children attended that had been identified by their schools as those in need of inspiration to participate in PA. We also ran a CPD event for 10 teachers in parallel to the festival, this was a good opportunity to collaborate with NCT and make use of joint facilities.

Hirst Nursery continues to work towards their Ofsted inspection which could happen at any time now. A mock inspection has been arranged with the early years team to help prepare the staff for the format and expectations of an inspection as not all the team have taken part in an inspection yet. The Nursery is full for babies on a Wednesday and the children are learning about Ramadan as a member of the team is celebrating this. Safeguarding continues to be a huge focus for the team.

Summary

Throughout the year at Hirst Nursery we have ran a number of courses on a number of topics aimed at educating parents and families. Through delivery it is hoped parents will be equipped to encourage children to make sensible choices. The Mams on the Move programme has continued to operate and develop. We have increased provision to include more facilities and have introduced a membership offer to increase accessibility and opportunities to engage in physical activity along with their newborns. As part of the Mams on the Move programme, we have introduced 'Active Babies' and 'Active Tots' sessions to further promote physical activity for new parents and children. The four School Games Organisers (SGO) have continued to deliver the national programme into schools across the four areas of Northumberland and have worked closely with the Active Partnership RISE and the other two SGO areas to ensure every school has received a consistent School Games offer. We have introduced Junior Elevate sessions this year within our gym facilities and have delivered over 1000 sessions to safely and successfully onboard our young members.

Empowering people and communities

Our definition of what makes us love where we live may vary, but factors like opportunity, safety, feeling we belong, and that people care for each other are common.

Sport and physical activity are not necessarily the first thing that comes to mind when people consider what makes a great place, certainly compared to some of the bigger concerns in life, but we believe it can be a huge force for good.

We advocate the value of sport and physical activity as not only an essential tool to improve lives and strengthen communities, tackle inequalities, and create great places to live, but as a tool that local leaders can use to confront other issues.

We recognise the need for a collaborative approach and working with local decision makers on their local priorities, helping them use sport and physical activity to deliver the outcomes they want, and their communities need.

Our partnership working with Public Health ensures that we continue to provide an approach to physical and mental health that relies upon exercise as opposed to medicine, whilst also supporting residents to manage and understand their own health care.

Q1

Although funding for the Mams on the Move has ended, we continue to deliver the service in partnership with Sport England from unspent reserves that have been carried forward because of the pandemic. The challenge for this year is to deliver the same outcomes in the communities, without the reliance upon external funding.

Through the development of the scheme in Q1 to introduce classes as part of our membership offer and by extending to the delivery of antenatal sessions in Wentworth and Berwick, we are widening the scope of the scheme whilst signposting the mams to exit routes to maintain their health journey beyond the scheme.

We will also look to ensure that some of our apprentices, once appointed, are supported in gaining the appropriate qualification to deliver mams on the move sessions, to help the sustainability of the scheme and to release the lead officer to meet with midwives and GP Surgeries to increase visibility and signposting from the health professionals.

To support the great partnership work that we undertake with Public Health to deliver both referral and cardiac rehabilitation sessions, we are constantly looking to strive and improve on our volunteer led sessions that are delivered in and around our local communities.

We continue to deliver walking session in partnership with the Ramblers Association and in Q1 delivered an average of 18 weekly wellbeing walks across Northumberland, equating to an average of 200 people walking on a weekly basis, led by our 123 volunteer walk leaders.

We continue to seek to promote the benefits of walking, whether through our organised walks or just walking in general, by working with the Public Health team as part of the walking steer group set up to help develop and promote the benefits of walking participation.

We continue to work strategically with Northumberland Communities together to support them to deliver on their local priorities, outcomes, and community needs. We have been working

closely with the team to deliver projects in Hirst Welfare and the refurbishment of Newbiggin to greatly enhance the site as a community hub.

During Q1, we were invited to be a strategic partner as part of the leisure collaborative group, working with NCC, PH and RISE to deliver a coordinated approach for the improvement of health and well-being of the residents of Northumberland and working together in reducing health inequalities. As part of this collaboration, Active has shared key usage and membership data that will help formulate a strategy of the group to tackle health inequality in the County.

Q2

As the Mams on the Move scheme is currently being delivered via the reserves from Sport England funding, during Q2 we began to plan for delivery of the scheme without central funding. During meetings with key personnel, we mapped a desire to create a pathway of exit routes from the Mams on the Move Scheme to pre-school activities and then to junior memberships. This pathway would create additional physical opportunities for the pre-school age group, whilst the income would make the post associated with the scheme self-funding.

At the end of Q2, we celebrated our health walkers with our annual walking event at Kielder as part of the Kielder Marathon weekend. Despite the appalling weather, over 100 walkers were involved in the event and had the option to take part in a 2-, 4-, 6- or 8-mile walk, all finishing at Kielder Waterside. Joined by the Senior Management Team on all the walks, the event provided a useful opportunity for the walkers and the walk leaders to meet the wider management team and discuss issues and ideas around the walking programme and access to our facilities. All walkers were transported to and from Kielder and upon completion of their chosen walk were provided with a medal, goody bag and refreshments.

We continue to seek to promote the benefits of walking, whether through our organised walks or just walking in general, by working with the Public Health team as part of the walking steer group set up to help develop and promote the benefits of walking participation.

During Q2, the capital works to Newbiggin Sports and Community Hub were completed. The centre has undergone a £1.9m facelift, which has seen it refurbished and remodelled to provide a new community hub and improved sporting offer, along with a function room, community allotment and football pitch. It now has a new, modern, and welcoming reception area, a library area with public-access PCs and a community café, which aims to be a welcoming social space for local people. Visitors will be able to access a range of services, whether it be learning new skills, help in finding employment or even health checks and advice. The hub will be a focal point for the community and have a real focus on support and development of skills, friendships and health and wellbeing.

Q3

The PESS service have continued to use our facilities to deliver both partnership and school games events/festivals to support young people to use our facilities, whilst also increasing daytime usage.

Partnership school staff continue to encourage students to sign up to the corporate gym offer to support them with their physical wellbeing and mental health.

Active Northumberland worked with Cramlington Town Council, Northumbria Police and Cramlington Youth Initiative to use North Burn as a pilot site for delivering youth football sessions on the Muga on a Friday evening to detract from anti-social behaviour in the area.

The General Manager continues to forge a partnership with all concerned parties to provide opportunities within Cramlington, resulting in a theatre performance also being delivered within Concordia prior to Christmas.

Q4

The last quarter has seen us pilot two preschool sessions at our Blyth facility. Active Babies and Active Tots have been developed to support new mums following on from the post-natal classes we have on offer as part of our mams on the move program. We have incorporated these sessions as part of the Active Northumberland membership to encourage new mums to retain their membership throughout their pregnancy and immediately after their pregnancy through allowing them to attend pre/post-natal classes and Active Babies/Active Tots as part of their membership. The sessions have seen great levels of engagement from both our members and casual members and as a result we will look to expand the Active Babies/Active Tots sessions into some of our other facilities over the coming months. This week we started to deliver a post-natal class at our Berwick facility and the early signs have been fantastic with some good levels of engagement.

Summary

Although funding for the Mams on the Move has ended, we continue to deliver the service in partnership with Sport England from unspent reserves that have been carried forward because of the pandemic. The challenge for next year is to deliver the same outcomes in the communities, without the reliance upon external funding. As discussed previously, work has been undertaken to expand provision and increase income generated within the programme to ensure its viability. We have continued to be part of the leisure collaborative group, working with NCC, PH and RISE to deliver a coordinated approach for the improvement of health and well-being of the residents of Northumberland and working together in reducing health inequalities. As part of this collaboration, Active has shared key usage and membership data that will help formulate a strategy of the group to tackle health inequality in the County. We have continued to develop our Wellbeing Walks programme throughout the year. We continued to hold the Kielder Walk which engaged over 100 walkers. Next year we will continue to work with Public Health and the Health Trainer service to further develop the Wellbeing Walks programme.

Tackling some of the wider determinants of health

“Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age. These conditions influence a person’s opportunity to be healthy, his/ her risk of illness and life expectancy. Social inequities in health – the unfair and avoidable differences in health status across groups in society – are those that result from the uneven distribution of social determinants.”

Active Northumberland continue to work with NCC and partners to tackle the wider determinants of health and achieve the outcomes as stated in the Health and Wellbeing strategy, noticeably in relation to recreational and leisure opportunities, social exclusion (in rural areas), employability and the wider health inequality picture.

Q1

As one of the largest employers in the County, we strive to offer employment opportunities for residents and then improve our retention through offering a fair salary with added benefits to our people. We continue to be a national living wage employer, ensuring all ages employed receive the same salary. During Q1 we ensured that our band 1 and 2 colleagues were moved onto £9.50 per hour (in line with the NLW increase) and commenced negotiations with our trade unions partners in relation to an appropriate pay award for our people for 2022/23.

During Q1, we launched our new Apprenticeship Programme in partnership with Creative Sport & Leisure to recruit 9 positions throughout the county with the learners undertaking the newly accredited CIMSPA Leisure Team Member Apprenticeship. This apprenticeship will train apprentices “from no qualifications to fully qualified” in multiple operational roles. This will help us fill hard to recruit areas as such Lifeguards, Swimming Teachers and Gym Instructors and offer school leavers a progressive pathway into employment.

During Q1, we signed 9 existing colleagues to a Duty Manager apprenticeship, improving our retention of middle managers, whilst offering personal development.

We continue to provide up-skilling opportunities to our aspiring Duty Managers with a further 2 team members undertaking the Leisure Duty Manager apprenticeship, bringing the total to 11 colleagues who have now signed up for this program.

As mentioned earlier within this report, we continue to work with Public Health to deliver health improvement programmes that rely upon exercise and movement as opposed to prescribed medication.

During Q1, we received 292 referrals into our Exercise on Referral programme which is on target to achieve our referral target for the year, and we completed 180 initial assessment appointments for those waiting to join the scheme.

During Q1, 76 participants attended their 12-week assessments, and 91 participants completed the scheme. At the end of Q1, there were 369 participants live on the Exercise on Referral programme which is the highest number since returning to delivery from COVID.

During Q1 we received 129 referrals into our weight management programme. This is below the target we would set to achieve our yearly target for referrals, however promotion around the programme and an increase in referrals is expected later in the year.

We had 61 participants who started the programme in Q1, and 59 participants completed the programme within this period.

Active Northumberland have been identified as a partner to sit on the steering group for the weight management health care needs assessment in Northumberland aiming to co-develop an approach to managing healthy weight in adults across the county.

We have continued to run the Escape Pain programme at Blyth Sports Centre during Q1 with further cohorts planned for delivery in Q2.

Quarter 1 has also seen us join many other colleagues from within the NHS and Public Health to form a weight management service health care needs assessment steering group. This group will help formalise a pathway that will help breakdown some of the barriers to clients through offering a more collaborative approach.

Q2

We received 60 applications for the apprentice scheme and at the beginning of Q2, these applications will be shortlisted, and interviews undertaken by our Quality Assurance Manager and GM's.

We continued to advertise our apprenticeship positions as there were 5 positions still available. During Q2, we were able to recruit to these remaining positions and now have 5 apprentices already undertaking training on some of the specific courses to achieve key industry qualifications such as the NPLQ Lifeguarding qualification and level one gym instruction.

During Q2 we received 328 referrals into the exercise on referral programme and 201 referrals into the weight management programme. Although the number of referrals on the weight management programme increased from Q1, we still continue to be slightly under target. We do, however, expect to make up the shortfall in Q4, following the festive period.

During the same period, we undertook 170 initial assessments for Exercise on Referral, which is on target to achieve the commissioned 1000 referrals.

The number of participants live on the Exercise on Referral programme at the end of Q2 was 347, which is slightly down on Q1.

During Q2, 100 participants completed their 12-week assessment, and 89 participants completed the scheme. The % of Exercise on Referral participants who adhere to the programme at 12 and 24 weeks continues to be above target however uptake to the programme from referral is below target.

The total number of attendances for Exercise on Referral sessions during Q2 was 3601, increasing from Q1 and in spite of the summer holiday period where attendance can sometimes reduce as participants are often used for childcare.

Active Northumberland have been identified as a partner to sit on the steering group for the weight management health care needs assessment in Northumberland aiming to co-develop an approach to managing healthy weight in adults across the county. Steering group meetings have continued throughout Q2.

During Q2, we continued to deliver Escape Pain at Blyth Sports Centre.

Q3

During Q3 we were able to continue with our focus on employability as part of our strategy to contribute to tackling some of the wider determinants of health in our communities.

During this quarter, we appointed a further 4 apprentices across the estate. As part of our training and development programme we successfully recruited 2 Business Administration Level 3 apprentices who commenced work in December, working within the business support team at Concordia. These apprentices will be working with our partners Creative Sport & Leisure on an 18-month programme tailored to administration within the leisure environment.

We have 3 remaining apprenticeship positions available (Wentworth, Prudhoe & Berwick) which we will hope to fill in Q4. Our Leisure Team member apprentices are working through the key elements of the apprenticeship with most of them already achieving the NPLQ qualification.

We have held meetings with Northumberland Skills at Blyth as to how we can develop a volunteer scheme within our facility, specifically around refugees, to provide some appropriate work experience in the community.

We have also worked with local providers to be able to store sports wheelchairs at Blyth that enables the delivery of wheelchair Rugby within the Sports Hall (as seen on ITV news). The introduction of wheelchair rugby to Blyth further strengthens the links that the site has to disability groups and groups with accessible needs.

Willowburn were also heavily involved in raising the awareness of people who have stomas, supporting a challenge to swim 10 miles by a local resident with a stoma.

Throughout Q3 the PESS team continued to support schools with developing their daily 60 active minutes as requested by the Chief Medical Officer. They are using student voice to empower young people to lead active healthy lives. We feed information to the NCC Strategic Partnership Group and work collaboratively to ensure all young people are given the best opportunity to have choices.

During Q3 we received 306 referrals into the exercise on referral programme and 251 referrals into the weight management programme. The referral numbers for the exercise on referral programme remain ahead of target to achieve our commissioned 1000 referrals. Again, we have seen an increase in the number of referrals received to the weight management programme. During Q3 we have prepared for the influx of weight management referrals we typically see in the new year and have planned to deliver multiple programmes at several sites.

During Q3 we carried out 203 initial assessments, 86 participants completed their 12-week assessment, and 101 participants completed the scheme. The % of Exercise on Referral

participants who adhere to the programme at 12 and 24 weeks continues to be above target however uptake to the programme from referral is below target.

The total number of attendances at our exercise referral and Active Life was reduced during Q3 because of the break in sessions over the Christmas period.

Q4

In total we received 1292 referrals to our exercise referral scheme for the year. This is above the 1000 referrals we are commissioned to deliver. Overall, the number of those on the waiting list to join the scheme has increased. This is largely due to an increase in the number of referrals we have received in Q4 for Berwick. The large number of referrals we had waiting to join the program in Cramlington was reduced at the end of Q4.

Overall, we received 935 referrals for our weight management programme over the course of the year. In Q4 we started 11 programmes across the county. As expected, referrals to the service were high in January and February and as a result additional courses will run into the next financial year in order to provide a service for these referrals.

The number of participants live on the exercise referral programme at the end of Q4 was 342. In Q4, we carried out 191 initial assessments, 81 participants completed their 12-week assessment, and 102 participants completed the scheme. Attendance numbers at exercise referral sessions at the end of Q4 were the highest they have been throughout the year.

As a result of the removal of funding for the weight management service for 23/24, during Q4 we have planned how we adapt our service to deliver the best outcomes for our referrals.

Summary

As one of the largest employers in the County, we strive to offer employment opportunities for residents and then improve our retention through offering a fair salary with added benefits to our people. We continue to be a national living wage employer, ensuring all ages employed receive the same salary.

In total we received 1292 referrals to our exercise referral scheme for the year. This is above the 1000 referrals we were commissioned to deliver. We also received 935 referrals for our weight management programme. As a result of the removal of funding for both exercise referral and weight management in 23/24, we have worked to remodel our offer to provide the best outcomes for our service users. We will continue to deliver exercise referral in 23/24, incorporating those referred for a BMI 25+ who previously would have accessed weight management, into the programme.

Adopting a whole system approach to health and social care

Over the last few years there has been an unprecedented increase in the demand on health and social care, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. The whole system approach in

Northumberland is aligned to the concept of a collaboration of people, services and buildings which have the health and wellbeing as a common concern and interest.

As a charitable organisation and as the largest leisure provider in the County, we are well placed to not only directly provide a health and wellbeing service, but to also link into other organisations to either support or deliver their plans and goals.

Q1

During Q1 we have continued to work closely with Public Health to deliver our exercise on referral and weight management schemes, with the latter designed to help tackle the obesity problem in the County.

As part of the leisure collaborative group, we have provided valuable insight into our membership and usage data to assist with a wider assessment of health inequalities and equity of access to leisure opportunities across the County.

We have also been identified as a strategic partner to sit on the steering group for the weight management health care needs assessment in Northumberland aiming to co-develop an approach to managing healthy weight in adults across the county.

During Q1 we have continued to encourage our colleagues to make every contact count as part of their interactions with every customer and these conversations continue to encourage changes in behaviour that have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and populations.

In January, we also opened our doors to residents who were directly affected by the storms, working closely with partners to ensure that residents had a safe haven, food and drink, and shower facilities at a time of personal distress for many.

Q2

During Q2 we offered our sites up to NCC as Warm Zones for the coming winter months, where residents can use our facilities to keep warm and have a hot drink/meal /shower without having to worry about their own utility costs.

This, of course, could impact upon our ability to reduce our subsidy through increased demand for warm areas and hot water.

During Q2, we continued to deliver Escape Pain at Blyth Sports Centre. Escape Pain is a group rehabilitation programme for people with chronic joint pain that integrates educational self-management and coping strategies with an exercise regimen individualised for each participant. It helps people understand their condition, teaches them simple things they can help themselves with, and takes them through a progressive exercise programme so they learn how to cope with pain better. Musculoskeletal-related pain has a major impact on individuals and society. In the United Kingdom, an estimated 9.3 million working days were lost to musculoskeletal (MSK) pain between 2008-2009 with back, neck, shoulder and knee pain being the most commonly reported MSK problems. MSK-related pain is the second most

common reason for GP visits and accounts for approximately 20-30% of all GP consultations in the UK. Through collaboration with local GP practices in Blyth, we aim to reduce the burden on the NHS and through Escape Pain ensure appropriate self-management techniques are taught reducing further NHS visits.

Q3

Berwick Sports & Leisure Centre continues to trailblaze in the County and following on from the introduction of exercise classes for those who suffer with Parkinson's, the site has now joined with the MS Society Alnwick and District Group to deliver exercise classes to MS sufferers. Thought to be the first of its kind in the County, the class already has 10 regular members who benefit from both chairs based and standing exercises, along with the mental health benefits of a cuppa and a chat afterwards.

Also in the North, at Willowburn, we have worked with Hospice care and NUFC Foundation to deliver dementia football at Willowburn, providing physical activity for dementia sufferers and their carers along with a social gathering afterwards.

Active Northumberland has always taken pride in the service that it has delivered for commissioned services through Public Health, particularly in relation to exercise on referral. Data collated by Active has been used in the production of medical articles and journals to provide national evidence as the success of funding and the wider success of intervention measures to not only improve participants health, but to reduce further costs and burden on the NHS.

In December, we were advised that the funding that was received from Public Health for this critical part of our service was to be withdrawn from the start of the 2023/34 financial year.

Whilst we have adopted the whole system approach to health and social care and worked to deliver to Public Health outcomes, the withdrawal of funding removes a critical piece of this jigsaw.

Nevertheless, as a Company, we believe that there is sufficient evidence to show that this scheme makes a difference to outcomes in the County and work will commence in Q4 to review how we can deliver the same outcomes but through a different methodology and delivery plan.

Q4

As a result of the removal of Public Health funding for our exercise referral and weight management programmes in 23/24, during Q4, we have worked to see how we can remodel our scheme in order to still deliver the best outcomes for our users. From Q1 next year, we plan to continue to deliver our exercise referral scheme. However, those with a BMI of 25+ who previously would have been eligible for referral to our weight management programme, can now be referred to exercise referral. This is a delivery model Active Northumberland have experience in delivering, having previously delivered the scheme in this format before working with Public Health to remodel the scheme to incorporate a tier 2 weight management service.

As a result of these changes, Active Northumberland will no longer deliver a tier 2 weight management programme. We will however continue to explore options for delivery of a tier 2

service. We have attended primary care network meetings to communicate these changes and have written to GP practices.

In Q4, we were identified as a partner to contribute to the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA) in relation to Ageing Well. This workshop will take place in Q1 next year.

During Q4 we have been working with Reed Wellbeing who deliver the National Diabetes Prevention Programme in Northumberland. We are working with a wide range of partners to deliver an engagement event to be held in Cramlington at Concordia Leisure Centre. The engagement event will look to bring partners together and raise awareness of activities and services available for those at risk of becoming type 2 diabetic.

Berwick Sports and Leisure Centre have continued to deliver exercise classes for those with Parkinsons and MS. The classes continue to be well attended and provide both physical and social benefits for the participants.

Summary

Active Northumberland has always taken pride in the service that it has delivered for commissioned services through Public Health, particularly in relation to exercise on referral. Data collated by Active has been used in the production of medical articles and journals to clearly evidence we are committed to providing an evidence-based service and contribute to the evidence base around physical activity interventions. In December, we were advised that the funding that was received for this critical part of our service was to be withdrawn from the financial year 2023/34. During the last quarter of the year, we have worked to remodel our scheme and will continue to deliver exercise referral in 23/24. We will continue to work with local GP practices and the wider system including social prescribers, physios, and health trainers to ensure referrals into the programme and that we are providing outcomes to the community. We are looking to expand our delivery of targeted interventions and specialist classes including our exercise sessions for Parkinsons, MS and Escape Pain.

Active Northumberland – Service Plan Success 2022-23

Our annual service plan outlines our intentions to achieve our objectives and improve our organisation. This section covers how we have met our objectives and improved our organisation to date.

Improving service quality

We continue to strive to improve service quality across the organisation, against the backdrop of significant economic challenges facing both the Company and residents.

Q1

The global shortage of chlorine has continued to be an issue across the whole of Q1, with supplies of liquid sodium hypochlorite becoming scarce, on top of the lack of availability of

HTH products. We have again managed to keep our swimming pools operating during this difficult time by sourcing different suppliers to ensure that we always have a chlorine supply.

We have continued to improve the look of our trading areas and have upgraded the café furniture at Prudhoe Waterworld, with furniture at Concordia due to be delivered Q2.

We have also commenced a roll out of repairs to the furniture at Blyth.

During Q1 we upgraded the Bowling point of sale system at Wentworth, allowing easier booking for customers by introducing online bookings.

We have resurrected our plans for increasing the number of swimming lessons that we deliver as part of the learn 2 swim scheme and hope to begin consultation with staff around this change in Q2. This will increase the number of weeks that we deliver lessons from 46 to 50, ensuring that the service is more accessible across the full year.

Q2

During Q2, HR drafted letters ready to be shared with Unions and contracted swim instructors and we now hope to have full agreement by the end of the year.

Due to the success and growth of the current scheme, we suspended new entries to the scheme as we were faced with a bottleneck in the middle stages. This temporary arrangement allowed for the swim teams to accommodate and move existing people within the scheme to create some movement through the creation of higher stage lessons.

During Q2, we adjusted the lesson structure to increase the amount of middle stage classes. The increase has helped those customers to move classes but as the demand still high and the growth continues to stretch the scheme.

During Q2, the capital works to Newbiggin Sports and Community Hub were completed. The centre has undergone a £1.9m facelift, which has seen it refurbished and remodelled to provide a new community hub and improved sporting offer, along with a function room, community allotment and football pitch. The ground floor gym area has been reconfigured to provide a dedicated cycling/spinning studio while the first floor has been converted into a new gym area with weights and state-of-the-art cardio equipment. In addition, the three squash courts and viewing gallery have been refurbished, and the six-court sports hall has been upgraded. Since opening at the back end of Q2, 84 people have joined the facility with a membership.

In preparation for the summer holidays during Q2, we launched a cross-sell feature on our booking app allowing customers the opportunity to view available activities at other facilities during a period where a lot of activities at their primary facility would be occupied. The cross sell in the app drove upwards of 8k bookings and £30k revenue and provided customers an alternative facility to carry out their activity when their primary facility may have been fully booked.

Responding to customer feedback, work is underway with a digital and marketing agency to create and develop a website that portrays Active Northumberland as a nationally recognised go-to provider for leisure facilities in our County. The aim is to get more people active by delivering a digital experience that attracts more customers by showcasing our places,

products, brands, and activities. To achieve this, we aim to deliver a seamless booking experience which people want to use again, and again.

Q3.

During Q3 we commenced our first meetings with service improvement groups at each site, with the goal of collaborating with onsite teams to improve on how we deliver our services at each site.

Initial meetings were attended by the Director of Operations, Operations Manager and Health and Safety Manager, along with a diverse spread of the work groups at each site. Although the initial meetings tended to be a scoping exercise, some key actions have already been identified that, when implemented, will improve the overall service that we deliver to our customers and communities.

In Q3 we have secured further funding from the FA to deliver girls Disney Inspired festival and teachers CPD event. This is working in collaboration with the Ashington & Coquet girls Football partnership and aims to ensure all girls have equal access to football both in the curriculum time and extracurricular.

Q3 saw the Active team commence the new website design project with Drummond Central (DC) being appointed after a competitive procurement process. The discovery phase of the project including 1-1 interviews with members of staff at Active Northumberland including General Managers, Senior Management team, MEAs and the contact centre to get a rounded view of the business's requirements for content.

The findings from the discovery phase formed the basis of the web design. The pillars of which were:

- Showcase our places: Our buildings, spaces and places
- Showcase our products: Our services – both leisure and fitness
- Showcase our people: Our teams and how they support our customers

The design process included several workshops to create an informative and inspiring series of web pages, and used component-based design which allows Active to manage all of the content internally through the Umbraco platforms Content Management System.

Build was started in November and completed in December, with the Active team uploading all the content for the centres, activities, and information. Photoshoots were undertaken at key centres to showcase the product further including covering accessibility.

Finally, staff members were invited to review the website to help understand any gaps in information or areas of opportunity. The goal being to launch the website on the 25th January 2023.

Q4

Q4 saw the development of an Elevate focus group to share best practice and highlight any issues with delivery and the onboarding process with our new members. The focus group

included input from our fitness teams and MEA's. The focus group highlighted a consistent approach to Elevate delivery with our core membership. However, the focus group also highlighted that we could engage better with our junior members. Focus group meetings will continue and will focus on our junior members and how we can broaden activities that are available to them.

Quest continues to be the Sport England recommended Continuous Improvement Tool for leisure facilities and sports development teams, designed to measure how effective organisations are at providing customer service. During Q4, three of our facilities were assessed across a range of modules including Operational Management, Customer Journey, and Tackling Inequalities. Berwick were awarded with 'Very Good' quest accreditation.

During Q4 the new website launched which incorporated a mobile first design. The new website increased content for service users around our facilities and activities. Content was added around our Health and Wellbeing services, school services, enhanced accessibility, and environmental strategy. New photography was undertaken to better showcase our services and facilities. The evolved app presentation will make it easier for service users to book popular activities. In addition, app integration with the website will provide a seamless app to web experience and consistent content.

Summary

Responding to customer feedback, we have worked with a digital and marketing agency to create and develop a website that portrays Active Northumberland as a nationally recognised go-to provider for leisure facilities in our County.

The aim is to get more people active by delivering a digital experience that attracts more customers by showcasing our places, products, brands, and activities. To achieve this, we aim to deliver a seamless booking experience which people want to use again, and again. We have launched our new website and continue to look at how we can improve our services. Work is underway to incorporate automated timetables into the website, allowing service users to book popular activities and have access to the latest and up to date content more easily.

We continue to explore how we can improve our business intelligence, tracking our most popular landing pages and activities to enhance our customer journey. We are also developing a help centre page containing frequently asked questions allowing service users to access information that may be relevant and useful.

Improving operational efficiency

Q1

During Q1, we were able to conclude the transfer the management of two facilities out of our portfolio and thereby reduce our operating cost at each of the facilities.

The management of Prudhoe Football & Sports Centre was transferred back to the school on the 1st April 2022, with no TUPE implications.

The operation and management of the Pegasus Riding Centre was successfully transferred to Kirkley Hall in May, along with the TUPE transfer of associated staff.

Discussions with Bedlington High school have also commenced with a view to transferring the management of the Sporting Club Bedlington back to the school from September 2022.

Q2

This transfer was successfully concluded during Q2 (31st August) with the Northeast Learning Trust taking responsibility for the management of their facility from this date and without the requirement for any TUPE transfer of colleagues. One contracted member of staff and one long term casual team members both chose alternative roles at Hirst and Newbiggin and to stay with Active Northumberland. The Executive Management team continue to work on final reconciliation figures to understand any in year savings that may be achieved.

Q3

Consultation with the swimming instructors over increasing the learn 2 swim programme from 46 weeks to 50 weeks commenced in December, with the objective of having the increased programme being delivered from February 2023, thereby increasing revenue from the programme.

Environmental initiatives that were planned in Q2 were rolled out and implemented across the portfolio. Any initial impacts of these measures will be analysed during Q4.

Q4

During Q4, we concluded the Swimming Instructor Consultation. Current Non-True Casual Swimming Instructors were offered a new 52 week or 39 School / Term Time contract. 40 NTC have now accepted contracts. 24 Contracted Swimming Instructors now have contracts based on their specific delivery. This has offered more job security to those employees and greater control on delivery for Active. Implementation will be the 1st April 2023.

Alongside the consultation we have successfully implemented a Market Force adjustment for the Level 2 role. This MFA - D increase has attracted new members of staff from outside the organisation. This will help with the increasing success and growth of the current scheme.

During Q4 we have undertaken several scoping sessions focusing on continued delivery of exercise referral scheme. Through this process, we are looking to develop a scheme which continues to deliver outcomes for service users, whilst improving operational efficiency.

Summary

Throughout the year we have transferred management of a number of facilities out of our portfolio and therefore reduced some of our overall operating costs.

Improving service usage and retention

Q1

Through the work of the newly appointed Membership Experience Advisor (MEA) positions the number of new members classified as a sleeper (not attended within 30 days) within the first 90 days of their membership has reduced from 15% to 10% since the start of the quarter.

MEA's have been tasked with ensuring new members are onboarded successfully within their facility. Through ensuring new members are using the facility and are getting the most out of their membership it is hoped that both individual usage and retention will improve.

The newly branded membership journey pathway 'Elevate' was launched for customers at the end of Q1. In June there were 459 'Elevate' sessions booked by customers with an increase expected in Q2. The new member journey will continue to be assessed throughout the year.

This quarter we also launched a fitness challenge that ran across all our facilities to improve member engagement. The challenge required members to join a team headed up by one of our Fitness Managers. The team that generated the most 'MOVES' through using Technogym equipment within our facilities would be the winning team. This challenge engaged over 600 of our members who contributed 'MOVES' to their teams total.

Due to the new Berwick Sports and Leisure Centre, usage at this facility continues to grow. When compared to the last 6 months usage at the old facility, the first 6 months usage at the new centre has seen an 113% increase in gym usage, 75% increase in fitness class usage and 34% increase in public swim usage.

Q2

'Elevate' sessions have continued throughout Q2. During Q2 we have delivered a total of 2555 Elevate sessions. This includes 1083 'Getting Started' sessions, 694 'Getting Active' sessions, 358 'Stay Focused' sessions and 420 'Junior Elevate' sessions. 'Elevate' sessions are designed to onboard our newly acquired facility users effectively, ensuring they have the relevant knowledge and confidence to exercise towards their fitness goals.

The overall number of facility visits has increased from Q1 in Q2. This is largely driven by an increase in facility usage during the summer holidays. The number of non-member visits increased by 13% during Q2 when compared to Q1. The increase in non-member visits was primarily driven by increases in swimming and softplay facility visits.

MEA's have continued their focus on onboarding our new members who are newer to exercise and continue to engage with the longer-term aim of retaining our members for longer.

During Q2, work has started to assess our digital and virtual physical activity offers across our facilities. Through this work we aim to increase access to physical activity for our members and as a result improve engagement and retention.

Q3

During Q3 we have worked with Northumberland Skills at Blyth to provide lunch time vouchers for those who attend Northumberland Skills sessions.

We introduced pickleball sessions at our facilities at Blyth and Concordia offering a new activity to take place in our sports halls. Pickleball is a form of indoor short tennis for people of all abilities.

'Elevate' sessions have continued throughout Q3. During Q3 we have delivered a total of 2071 Elevate sessions. This includes 834 'Getting Started' sessions, 560 'Getting Active' sessions, 372 'Stay Focused' sessions and 305 'Junior Elevate' sessions. 'Elevate' sessions are designed to onboard our newly acquired facility users effectively, ensuring they have the relevant knowledge and confidence to exercise towards their fitness goals.

Membership Experience Advisors 'MEA's' continue to be in post and have continued their focus onboarding new members to the 'Elevate' programme. MEA's work to ensure new members are booked onto each step of the Elevate programme and therefore receive a personalised fitness programme and support with their goals. It is hoped through ensuring this personalised service and increasing the level of support to our new joiners that more will achieve their goals and retain their membership as a result.

Q4

Due to the increased volume of joiners in the new year, we have delivered an increased number of Elevate sessions in Q4. We delivered a total of 3199 Elevate sessions. This includes 1216 'Get Started', 935 'Get Active', 493 'Stay Focused' sessions and 555 'Junior Elevate' sessions.

Q4 has seen an increase in the number of visits to the facilities. Both member and non-member visits have increased, with a sharp rise in the number of PAYG visits to the gym facilities. PAYG fitness class visits have not risen as sharply due to the high occupancy rates of fitness classes already attended by members. The February half term holidays saw a high number of PAYG swim visits, particularly at Concordia, Prudhoe Waterworld, and Berwick Sports and Leisure Centre.

Despite cost-of-living pressures, retention rates for members coming to the end of their contract remains strong. In Q4 we retained on average 82% of members whose contracts were coming to an end each month.

Active Babies and Active Tots have been developed to support new mums following on from the post natal classes we have on offer as part of our mams on the move program. We have incorporated these sessions as part of the Active Northumberland membership to encourage new mums to retain their membership throughout their pregnancy and immediately after their pregnancy through allowing them to attend pre/post natal classes and Active Babies/Active Tots as part of their membership. The sessions have seen great levels of engagement from both our members and casual members and as a result we will look to expand the Active Babies/Active Tots sessions into some of our other facilities over the coming months.

At Willowburn in the February half term we offered £1 child sessions across a range of activities including multi-sports, bouncy castles, and balance bikes to increase participation in activities for children. Willowburn have also adopted a reduced price for softplay as a trial to try and increase participation and target local groups.

Summary

Compared to 21/22, recorded attendances at our facilities have increased by 95% in 22/23. With the opening of the new Morpeth Sports and Leisure Centre it is hoped that this can further increase in 23/24. Work is underway to assess the impact of our MEA's and Elevate service on customer retention. Work is also underway to review our customer journey to ensure new joiners are provided with the support they need to feel empowered to attend our facilities more often.

Improving the community representativeness of service

Q1

During Q1 we initiated our first customer forum groups at Wentworth, engaging with a range of customers on their views of the booking system and the facility timetable for both swimming and fitness.

We also altered our Group Exercise program at Ponteland Leisure Centre to accommodate school exams in our fitness studios over a six-week period, ensuring that we gave the pupils the best opportunity to succeed during their GCSE's.

Q2

During Q2 we continued to liaise with community groups and local partners through our representation at the Ponteland School and Leisure Management Committee.

We also continued to liaise with key partners at Hirst Welfare on a bi-monthly basis and held a series of meetings with customers in relation to the re-opening of Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre, culminating in an open day prior to the official opening in conjunction with NCT, signposting residents to the opportunities available to them within the refurbished facility.

As part of the energy crisis and cost of living crisis, we have offered our sites as Warm Spaces, where we hope to be able to offer warm and welcoming buildings to residents to reduce their requirement to operate heating during the winter months.

As part of our Kielder walk event, participants were able to complete their chosen walk alongside members of the Active Northumberland management team. This provided a useful opportunity for the management team to engage with members of the community and a platform for participants to provide feedback of their experiences with Active Northumberland.

Q3

Our sites were officially accepted and advertised as warm spaces, an area where any member of our communities could visit and sit to keep warm or take advantage of our catering offers across the portfolio.

Due to the size and nature of our facilities it is currently difficult to assess how many residents have utilised the sites through this scheme and we would always hope that our facilities are naturally warm and welcoming without the need to publicise that they are warm spaces.

Our GM in the Southeast met with several Age well participants in relation as to how best we can develop their sessions in line with their needs and requirements.

Q4

We are currently planning a forum with some of our disabled users at Ponteland Leisure Centre to understand their experience of attending our facilities.

In partnership with the Northumberland FA, our facilities are taking part in the Grassboots project. The project seeks to collect good quality, preloved football boots and kit – which has often been grown out of but is still in great condition - and re distributes it to children and families who need it most. Donation points have been set up at a number of our facilities. As well as promoting sustainability, the project aims to address the current cost of living crisis, helping to keep children playing football by removing financial barriers.

During Q4 at the Willowburn Leisure Centre, we continued to support charities by being a drop off location for essential clothing for Ukrainian refugees.

At Berwick, work continued with the NCC Sport Development and the Newcastle United foundation as part of the Get Onside project. Get Onside is a rallying cry to be on the side of change when it comes to gender equality in football. Organisations and individuals across football are committing to take action to improve the landscape for women and girls in the game. As part of this work new sessions and courses have been developed including adult multi-sport, ladies soccercise and an emerging talent centre for girls. During Q4, Berwick LC also supported a local resident with pool time and social media exposure to help raise awareness and funding for motor neuron disease. In total £3525 was raised for swimming 39 miles (62,618 metres).

Our facilities have continued to support Healthwatch Northumberland. Healthwatch Northumberland is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. They are there to listen to the issues that really matter to people in Northumberland and to hear about residents' experiences of using local health and social care services. We are supporting this work by hosting monthly drop ins and advertising these events on our social media channels.

Summary

Throughout the year we have worked to ensure our services are representative of the communities they serve. We have held customer forum groups, receiving feedback on the range and times of available activities, informing timetabling within facilities. We have worked with a wide range of partners and charities to help support communities. We are often hosting organisations such as banks or those in the VCS to provide access to the community using our facilities.

We continue to work with the sports development team to ensure a range of accessible activities across the county. This is an area we will look to further develop in 23/24. As a result of COVID, a number of specialist sessions for those with disabilities had stopped. This is something we will look to enhance provision of in 23/24.

Improving service user satisfaction

Q1

As detailed earlier, we suspended entry to the learn to swim scheme to allow movement of existing users to higher stage lessons to remove a bottleneck created by the success of the scheme and the lack of teachers to deliver additional lessons. Once the bottleneck is removed, we will reopen the lower stages to meet the current demand.

During Q1 we received 423 customer comment cards. Over 60% of these comments were responded to within 2 days and 43% of these comments were resolved within a 2-day period. Assessing our customer feedback monthly allows us to identify areas of the business in which the number of comments has increased and allows us to address any issues that have arisen.

Active Northumberland, in conjunction with Sport England and Moving Communities are contributing to research to understand the participant experience of using public leisure centres and their activity habits. The Moving Communities Customer Experience Survey was sent out to our facility users during Q1. This survey aims to assess customer perceptions and satisfaction with their chosen facility with the aim of improving facilities and services going forward.

Q2

During Q2, we received 479 customer comment cards. 60 % of these comments were responded to within 2 days and 46% of these comments were resolved within a 2-day period.

In this quarter we completed a brand tracking exercise giving the opportunity for our members and non-members to feedback what the Active Northumberland brand meant to them. This allowed us to assess the current market and drivers of attendance and membership. We were able to get valuable feedback on the awareness and perceptions of the Active Northumberland brand. We also received NPS (net promotor score) and CSAT (customer satisfaction) scores for our facilities along with valuable individual centre feedback.

Q3

During Q3, we received 407 customer comment cards. 64% of these comments were responded to within 2 days and over half of all comments resolved within a 2-day period.

During Q3 we began to develop a survey for users who had booked and attended an 'Elevate' session in order to gain valuable customer feedback.

Q4

During Q4 we received 704 customer comment cards. 46% of these comments were responded to within 2 days and just under half of these comments were resolved within a 2-day period.

As part of our brand tracking, we have asked members for feedback regarding the service we provide. 66% of member respondents agree our centres have 'friendly, helpful staff'. 74% of members respondents agree we are their 'preferred place to work out'.

During Q4 our facilities took part in the 'Lets Move for a Better World' challenge ran by Technogym. The global event challenges gym facilities across the globe to donate 'MOVES' by completing physical activity within a facility. The challenges pits facilities across the country against each other in order to be the facility with the highest amount of 'MOVES' donated. The challenge proved a success with over 45,921,811 MOVES logged in the UK alone and Active Northumberland seeing two of their centres in the top 20 spots. Berwick Sports & Leisure Centre came an impressive #15 in the country with 514,829 MOVES and Blyth Sports & Leisure Centre achieved #17 in the country with a close 512,880 MOVES. As a combined total Active Northumberland achieved an impressive 2,155,152 MOVES. The challenge allows members within the facility to work together to increase the facilities total, increasing the sense of community within facilities.

During Q4 there were various small upgrades that took place across facilities to improve service user satisfaction. At Willowburn, upgrades including repairs, painting and decorating took place within the facility.

Summary

As an organisation we continue to collate and respond to customer feedback. Our process for addressing customer comments and complaints ensures a quick response and resolution. Throughout the year we have completed brand tracking exercises, gathering feedback from our service users regarding the service we provide and areas for improvement.

As part of our QUEST assessments, we have received feedback and comments on areas which we can improve. As a result of these comments, a service improvement plan will be created and implemented to ensure we provide the best possible service for our users.

Improving employee satisfaction

As reported in our outcomes report in 2021/22, we launched Version 2 of the Future Fit learning and development platform providing the Active workforce access to a wide variety of online courses including Equality and Diversity, Fire Safety, Mental Health Awareness and Safeguarding. The new platform enables all Active team members access to the full library of

courses available. We have been monitoring our completion rates and encouraging those who are not fully compliant to undertake all required modules.

Q1

During Q1 we have continued to focus on encouraging our colleagues to undertake the appropriate training to ensure that they have all the skills required to undertake their roles. At the end of Q1, we had achieved 83% compliance for all required learning and our teams had completed 6025 modules.

To support this focus, we have developed a staff area on our app, where colleagues can not only access their training, but can also access our people policies and receive push notifications to improve our communication channels.

To encourage personal development amongst our middle management team, we had 9 Duty Managers initially sign up for a Duty Manager apprenticeship.

As part of our budget setting exercise, we agreed to continue to offer Westfield Health staff benefits for this financial year.

In response to the staffing shortage in the industry, we offered our colleagues a financial incentive to refer a friend to work with us, resulting in the reward being paid after their friend has worked with us for 3 months and worked an average of 10 hours a week.

Q2

Our team members continue to work through our mandatory training modules and Active Northumberland specific Policies. At the close of Q2 we have 84.5% of the workforce fully compliant, 5.5% with training which has expired and 10% which is overdue. The General Manager team continue to monitor their sites performance and encouraging their workforce to make sure they are compliant.

We continue to provide useful service updates through our app and internal communications to ensure staff are up to date with the latest news and changes.

The number of Duty Managers who have signed up to the Duty Manager apprenticeship has increased from 9 to 11 at the end of Q2. This provides a personal development opportunity amongst our middle managers and should help to retain them as part of our team.

During Q2 we launched our Active Heart scheme for Active Northumberland staff. Each month the management team highlight members of staff within their facility who have delivered great customer service or performed exceptionally within their role, and they are nominated to receive an Active Heart. Winners are shared as part of the weekly staff

communications. This has been introduced as a mechanism to recognise and reward staff for their hard work and to ensure this does not go unnoticed.

Work to provide a staff awards night has continued in Q2 and will take place in Q3. Again, this will provide an opportunity to ensure staff feel their work is valued and recognised.

Q3

With the desire to increase our learn 2 swim scheme to 50 weeks, we commenced consultation with our swimming workforce around our proposals. During consultation we advised that this was an opportunity to reward our instructors with permanent contracts, which has been an action plan to achieve since just before the pandemic began. Once we complete the consultation, we will be able to move some of our non-true casual colleagues onto appropriate contracts of employment.

During this period, we also took the opportunity to undertake a competitor analysis into pay rates for instructors, both swimming and exercise, due to the difficult nature of attracting new staff into these roles. The review concluded that in order to be competitive, we would need to increase our hourly rate for both swimming and exercise instructors.

A paper was presented to Board, where it was agreed to pay market force supplement to swimming instructors and to increase the market force supplement for exercise instructors. This would ensure that we would pay £17 per hour for a swimming instructor and £22 per hour for exercise instructors but allowing us to attract and retain professional colleagues to support the ongoing delivery of our programmes.

Our team members continue to work through our mandatory training modules and Active Northumberland specific Policies. At the close of Q3 we have 86.2% of the workforce fully compliant, 8.5% with training which has expired and 5.3% which is overdue.

During Q3 we developed a new suite of FLEX reports for the Senior Managers designed to assist the General Managers in identifying up-and-coming expired modules. Since its introduction we have managed to cleanse our sites (removed staff from the database) and updated the staffing information to make the reports more accurate. We will continue to work with Future Fit to develop the next wave of weekly reporting in Q4.

During Q3 we hosted our staff awards night to celebrate the achievements of our workforce throughout the year. Over 200 staff were present, and transport was provided to and from each of the facilities ensuring employees from all over the county could attend. Various awards were presented on the night including centre and employee of the year. Overall, the night was a big success and well received by members of staff.

Q4

During Q4, we concluded the Swimming Instructor Consultation. Current Non-True Casual Swimming Instructors were offered a new 52 week or 39 School / Term Time contract. 40

NTC have now taken a contract. 24 Contacted Swimming Instructor now have contracts based on their delivery. This has offered more job security to the employee and greater control for Active. Implementation of the 1st April 2023.

Alongside the consultation we successfully have implemented a Market Force Allowance to the Level 2 role. This MFA - D increase has attracted new members of staff from outside the organisation. This will only help with the increasing success and growth of the current scheme,

In Q4 we continued to develop additional reporting methods and information gathering for our Mandatory Training Platform FLEX. The platform now identifies the CPD points allocated to each of our Mandatory Training Modules. Our modules equate to 16.5 annual CPD points, 6.5 more than the annual CPD points recommended by CIMSPA.

Summary

As an organisation we have implemented a number of initiatives throughout the year to ensure our employees feel valued and satisfied within their roles. During Q3 we hosted our staff awards night to celebrate the achievements of our workforce throughout the year. Over 200 staff were present, and transport was provided to and from each of the facilities ensuring employees from all over the county could attend. We also took the opportunity to undertake a competitor analysis into pay rates for instructors, both swimming and exercise, due to the difficult nature of attracting new staff into these roles. The review concluded that in order to be competitive, we would need to increase our hourly rate for both swimming and exercise instructors which has now been implemented.

We continue to support our staff through access to CPD. Our Flex platform allows access to a range of courses and CPD which is constantly being updated to reflect changes in the industry. Access allows staff to feel confident within their job roles to deal with a wide range of challenges.

This year we have also launched our Active Heart Scheme, allowing staff to be nominated by their fellow employees for delivering great customer service or performing exceptionally within their role. This ensures staff feel appreciated and acknowledged for their hard work. We have also continued to invest in Westfield Health to ensure our employees have access to wellbeing services.

Reducing environmental impact

We are fully aware that the carbon footprint of our portfolio, is one of the largest in the Council and combined with the spiralling cost of energy, the noticeable increase in the impacts upon global warming, we have a responsibility to work with the Council towards their target of being a net zero County by 2030.

The Capital investment strategy of the Council will ensure that by the end of this financial year that three of our older leisure centres will be replaced by new energy efficient buildings that have been constructed using high efficiency building materials, including high density insulated cladding, high energy-efficient glazing with thermal screening, air source heat pumps (Morpeh) which use outside heat to help power the buildings, LED lighting throughout, and photovoltaic (PV) solar panels. These will all help to reduce the carbon footprint of the new and contribute to the council's vision of a net zero-carbon economy.

The ventilation systems at these sites, will also use the latest 'smart' technology to increase control and efficiency through the building management system.

Q1

Despite several issues with the completion of the Ground Source Heat Pumps at Willowburn, they were commissioned for Q2, but will run alongside the operation of the Gas Boilers in the first instance. Work to install solar panels at Blyth was completed during Q1, completing the installation programme following from the installs at Prudhoe and Wentworth.

We will continue to work closely with the Council's Energy Team to monitor energy consumption, although benchmarking against the last two years will be difficult due to facility closures during periods of lockdown and operating restrictions.

To support our carbon reduction initiatives, we will focus upon reducing our waste by increasing our efforts to design out waste, keeping materials in operation and productive use for as long as possible and work with NCC to increase recycling across the Estate.

During Q1 we have worked with Neighbourhood Services to review our waste contracts, with a view to increase the number of commercial waste collections that we currently receive. To support this, we have also reviewed how we collect recycling waste across the Estate and hope to have new internal recycling bins within our facilities that will ultimately reduce our waste to landfill.

As we continue to build on our HIVE brand, one of the key elements that we are very passionate about is wherever possible we have selected local suppliers and ensure both parties have strong environmental ethos. We try to be kinder to the environment by using plant based and compostable packaging.

During Q1 we have continued to operate our ventilation at increased levels to ensure that we continue to bring fresh air into the building to protect both colleagues and customers from the increase in Covid in the County.

Having recognised the importance of swimming pool covers to reduce heat loss in our swimming pools, we have taken costs to the capital strategy group to consider for replacement of worn covers.

Q2

During Q2 we updated our Environmental Policy to recognise the exponential global rise in energy costs, the visible effects that climate change is having upon the world in which we live and the requirement of the Company to demonstrate responsible behaviour to contribute to a sustainable environment for everyone. One of the key areas of the strategy is to create an Environmental Management System (EMS) that will provide the company with a framework through which our environmental performance can be monitored, improved, and controlled, by setting out objectives and targets as part of our strategy.

The Senior Management team have subsequently created an action plan to reduce energy costs across the Estate, to be implemented over the next 12 months:

- Operate leisure pools at 30C (Q3)
- Operate standard pool at 28C (Q3)
- Operate learner pools at 28C (Q3)
- Reduce pool air temps (Q3)
- Reduce Sauna Temps to 80C (Q3)
- Reduce Spa temps to 36C (Q3)
- Review operation of BMS System
- Review operation of VSD
- Switch off fitness equipment overnight
- Switch off catering equipment overnight
- Install Pool covers where required
- Explore the option of reintroducing Biomass at Wentworth.
- Cost up early closure of Morpeth Pool

To help with the delivery of energy reduction plans, we launched a recruitment strategy to identify 10 Energy Champions across the estate. These Energy Champions will make sure that good housekeeping and carbon reduction measures are a daily habit. The Energy Champions will be supported by an Environmental Control qualification delivered by our partners Right Directions.

In order that we are transparent on our environmental strategy, we have planned for the introduction of public facing environmental boards to display our key environmental messages to the community detailing how we intend to manage our carbon footprint reduction and recycling plans, and how they can contribute.

Q3

During Q3 we began to implement some of the energy saving measures, as highlighted above in order to reduce our energy usage and costs across the portfolio. The Executive team explored the opportunities of mothballing the swimming pool at Morpeth Riverside prior to the new facility opening but decided that the loss of income would be too great.

At Concordia, work commenced and was completed on the replacement of the air handling unit in the swimming pool area. During this period, the centre team were able to keep the pool open to the public, despite having no heating in the changing rooms and the pool hall being

heated by electric blowers. The new air handling unit should prove to be more energy efficient.

As part of the environmental strategy, the order for new recycling bins was placed, which will allow increased recycling opportunities for customers and colleagues.

We also met with our waste provider (NCC) to identify how we could increase the amount of recycling that is collected by the refuse team, agreeing that the waste team would undertake a detailed review of the opportunities available at each site. This will lead to reduced waste sent to landfill and hopefully a reduction in the number of collections required on a weekly basis.

Environmental champions were appointed in Q3 and will receive appropriate environmental training in Q4. Following the environmental training the champions will undertake a series of energy reducing measures, including an out of hours survey, creation of energy consumption league tables and introduce an environmental management section on our daily walk the floor check sheets.

Q4

Our new public facing environmental boards were installed across all sites, publicising our commitment to reducing our environmental impact across the County. The Boards provide a great visual for both staff and customers to understand our current impact at each site in terms of utilities, water, and waste to landfill, along with our policy and plan to reduce consumption in each of the reported areas.

We also met with representatives from NCC to discuss any early impacts of the energy reduction measures that have been implemented.

During Q4, three of our facilities (Ashington, Berwick & Wentworth) were QUEST assessed. The assessment is the UK's Quality Scheme for Sport & Leisure Operators which concentrates on five specific modules and Environmental Management was one of them. Our facilities scored very good for our environmental management, the second highest score, within the assessment.

Summary

As an organisation, we updated our Environmental Policy to recognise the exponential global rise in energy costs, the visible effects that climate change is having upon the world in which we live and the requirement of the company to demonstrate responsible behaviour to contribute to a sustainable environment for everyone. One of the key areas of the strategy is to create an Environmental Management System (EMS) that will provide the company with a framework through which our environmental performance can be monitored, improved, and controlled, by setting out objectives and targets as part of our strategy. As part of this work, we recruited and trained environmental champions to ensure carbon reduction measures are a daily habit. We have installed public facing environmental boards across our facilities, ensuring we are transparent with our commitment to reducing our environmental impact across the county. As part

of QUEST, our facilities scored very good for environmental management, the second highest score possible in the assessment.

Reducing public subsidy:

The public sector continues to face unprecedented financial, health and social challenges due to the cost-of-living crisis, compounded by the war in Ukraine and the ongoing problem of Covid.

Against the financial demands faced by the Council and the Company, we believe that Active Northumberland continues to be best placed to help the Council meet these health and social challenges and to help readdress health inequalities and to help break down barriers to enable residents who are socially excluded, disadvantaged, isolated and vulnerable to participate in physical activities to achieve their wellness goals.

We believe that, despite the rising utility costs, the service that we deliver continues to offer a significant amount of social return on investment. Our services can be directly linked to reducing the amount spent by the NHS on medication, surgery, cancer care and post operative surgery alone.

Any increase in memberships, exercise referrals via a GP, self-referrals for Obesity, Cardiac Rehabilitation, walkers, children undertaking physical activity, increases the social return on investment and reduces the public subsidy.

However, our commitment to working with the Council to reduce public subsidy does not stop at just operating a leisure service on behalf of the Council. We believe that we can reduce the public subsidy by undertaking significant support work for the Council, that is often not seen as part of our role.

As mentioned earlier in this document, the role that we were able to undertake to support the Civil Contingencies team and the emergency services by providing rest and welfare facilities for our residents during the January storms, would have saved the taxpayer should the Council have had to pay for private businesses to offer this support in these areas.

We continue to work with the Council with their review of Leisure Services and are in dialogue around a potential new partnership agreement to run concurrently from when the current extension to the agreement ends in March 2023.

Q1

We have reduced our subsidy in Q1 through the transfer of Prudhoe Sporting Club and Pegasus Riding Centre to the relevant educational trusts and continue to work with NCC as part the wider leisure service review.

Q1 operating for the new Berwick Leisure Centre has seen increased income, led by a substantial increase in new memberships and an increased demand for public swimming (the first 6 months usage at the new centre has seen a 113% increase in gym usage, 75% increase in fitness class usage and 34% increase in public swim usage).

Q2

Although we would have reduced our subsidy through the transfer of Bedlington Sporting Club to the Northeast Learning Trust in Q2, this amount of saving pales into insignificance with the exponential energy costs that the Company now faces.

We have undertaken significant costing exercises with our Finance Manager to understand the significant impact that energy costs will increase by the end of the year and are working closely with NCC to reduce our energy costs wherever possible (see Environmental Impact section for detail).

At the other end of energy savings, comes our community responsibility and during Q2 we offered our sites up to NCC as Warm Places for the coming winter months, where residents can use our facilities to keep warm and have a hot drink/meal /shower without having to worry about their own utility costs.

This, of course, could impact upon our ability to reduce our subsidy through increased demand for warm areas and hot water.

Q3

Although we have not been providing management arrangements for the Sporting Club Bedlington, we have been unable to finalise the accounts due to the inability of the school to provide utility information and outstanding costs.

The specific programmes that we have created for sufferers of MS, Parkinson's, and Dementia in Berwick and Willowburn will ultimately reduce demands on the NHS through increased mobility and improved mental health of the participants and their carers.

We have implemented our energy reduction plan in a bid to reduce our energy usage and ultimately our energy costs, thereby reducing our subsidy.

Despite the cost-of-living crisis, direct debit membership at the end of Q3 remains higher than the beginning of the financial year. We have forecast for our membership to grow further during Q4 with strong sales expected in January and February. We will continue to closely monitor the number of cancellations related to financial reasons.

Due to our Christmas promotion the number of annual payment members has increased at the end of Q3. 316 customers purchased either a 7- or 12-month membership to one of our facilities with the promotion as a whole generating over £80k in income.

Q4

Despite cost-of-living pressures, we have achieved over 5% growth in the number of direct debit members at our facilities from the start of the year. In addition, due to the success of our Christmas promotion and the addition of a one-month upfront membership, the number of our annual payment members has increased by 50%. We have also seen growth within our Learn 2 Swim programme.

Over the last year we have continued to optimise our operating costs through reducing our energy and water consumption, as well as recycling more of our waste. We have also reviewed our suppliers to ensure we are getting the best value for our members. Our aim is always to make our services as accessible as we can but the unprecedented pressure on costs means we now find it necessary to review our pricing. However, as a not-for-profit charity we have aimed to keep any increase as low as possible. Pricing changes will come into effect in April 2023. There will be no increase in price for the following memberships:

- Junior members
- Armed forces
- Concessions members that are linked to qualifying income support / benefits

Summary

Throughout the year we have transferred management of a number of facilities out of our portfolio and therefore reduced our operating costs. We have implemented our energy reduction plan in order to reduce our energy usage and as a result reduce our energy costs and subsidy. Despite cost-of-living pressures, we achieved over 5% growth in the number of direct debit members at our facilities from the start of the year, increasing income as a result. We continue to strive to ensure our services are as accessible as possible, however unprecedented pressures on costs have resulted in a small pricing increase to be implemented in 23/24. We continue to be rigorous with our competitor analysis, ensuring we provide the best possible service for our users at a competitive price point.

Growing revenue

Q1

Through the proposed changes to the learn to swim scheme, we should grow our revenue in line with the increased number of weeks that we will deliver the scheme. The risk of cancellation from customers is mitigated by the fact that our learn to swim scheme continues to grow across the board, with an average occupancy rate of 93% (against a target of 85%) and an average increase in the number of participants of around 33% compared with pre-pandemic figures.

- April - Participants 6299 - 34% increase on March 2020 with an Occupancy of 92%
- May - Participants 6352 - 35% increase on March 2020 with an Occupancy of 95%
- June - Participants 6190 - 32% increase on March 2020 with an Occupancy of 91%

To support our plan to grow revenue in this area, we launched our aquatics helpers programme, where 12 candidates volunteered 30 hours of shadowing alongside our Level 2 Instructors and have successfully now passed their SEQ Level 1 course. 8 are ready to move onto their SEQ Level 2.

By the end of Q2, we hope these 8 candidates are successful in passing the SEQ Level 2 course and with an additional 30 hours of supported delivery will be ready to start delivering.

Q2

The scheme reopened on the 22nd of August

- July – Participants 5858-Occupancy of 87%
- August - Participants 6021-Occupancy of 90%
- September - Participants 6450-Occupancy of 94%

During Q2 we have had 11 candidates successfully pass their Swim England Level 2 qualification, they are now delivering lessons and helping to maintain Learn 2 Swim Scheme.

In conjunction with the Institute of Swimming, we also commenced recruitment to our next academy intake, commencing in September. Our initial advert attracted 28 hopefuls, and the IOS successfully identified the 12 candidates who will commence their level 1 course in September, hopefully then progressing onto level 2 by the end of Q3.

We are pleased to also report that our number of monthly fitness direct debits has grown 2.4% from the start of the financial year to the end of Q1 and that our membership yield has increased since the start of the financial year, as those on an NCC offer membership are now starting to pay.

We are balancing cancellations against sales to ensure we maintain an overall growth; this is certainly challenging at this time of year however we feel with the intervention from the MEA's this will really help retention.

We do, however, continue to face significant challenges whilst growing revenue due to the current economic climate and the financial pressures facing both businesses and individuals, which could be greatly increased in the Autumn when both heating costs and usage will increase.

Increased transport and fuel costs is already having an impact on some school's bookings for the 2022 - 2023 academic year with some schools, especially those in outlying areas, reducing their bookings by 50%.

The number of monthly direct debits has increased 3.89% from the end of Q1 to the end of Q2. This is despite an increase in membership turnover driven by an increase in cancellations. The proportion of memberships that are being cancelled due to financial reasons has increased in Q2.

During Q2 we have had 11 candidates successfully pass their Swim England Level 2 qualification, they are now delivering lessons and helping to maintain Learn 2 Swim Scheme.

In conjunction with the Institute of Swimming, we also commenced recruitment to our next academy intake, commencing in September. Our initial advert attracted 28 hopefuls, and the IOS successfully identified the 12 candidates who will commence their level 1 course in September, hopefully then progressing onto level 2 by the end of Q3.

Q3

We continue to make changes to the learn to swim scheme, based on the demand for middle stage classes and the workforce pressures. We have witnessed a drop in numbers for this quarter, which goes with the trend of dipping before Christmas. Maybe owing to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. We will monitor this closely over Q4. Trends would suggest that there is normally an increase in numbers during Q4.

- October – Participants 6391 -Occupancy of 92%
- November - Participants 6350-Occupancy of 91%
- December - Participants 6101-Occupancy of 87%

However, our plans to increase our learn to swim programme to 50 weeks moved one step closer as we commenced consultation with our swim workforce. During the initial consultation period, we held meetings with both contracted and non-contracted colleagues, with initial feedback being very positive.

During Q3 we have been working with the IOS to organise and plan courses to train and qualify new swimming instructors for 2023 with the apprentices looking to complete their SEQ Level1 course in February.

Q4

We continue to make changes to the learn to swim scheme, based on the demand for middle stage classes we have adjusted the programme to help with the bottlenecks within the Stage 4 & 5/6 classes. The Recruitment Academy and the Aquatic helper programmes have helped with the stability of the workforce pressures. We will continue to drive recruitment to help expand the North, Central and Southeast areas. We haven't significant witnessed a drop in numbers for this quarter, which goes against the trend of Q3. Maybe owing to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. We will monitor this closely over Q4. Q4 has proven the normal increase in numbers during Q4.

- January – Participants 6358 -Occupancy of 92%
- February - Participants 6418-Occupancy of 91%
- March - Participants 6470-Occupancy of 90%

We have successfully implemented the plans to increase the Learn 2 Swim programme to 50 weeks. With the completion of the consultation with our swim workforce.

During Q4 we have launched round three of the Recruitment Academy. A staggering 22 applicant were shorted listed from 48, the largest number of applicants to date. The implementation of the MFA, increasing the hourly rate to £17 per hour has help attract those looking for a change of career. We continue to grow our own Aquatic Helper programme, successfully helping six through their SEQ Level 1 qualification.

We have a series of job adverts on Indeed, Northeast Jobs and our careers page of our website to help attract qualified swimming teachers to our facilities. We have seen an increase in applications since the hourly rate increase and since we have made the adverts site specific.

We have seen strong sales performance in Q4. As expected, there was an increase in direct debit sales in January, however, sales in February and March have also been above target. Despite the strong sales performance, the overall number of direct debit members has only increased by 3.7% from Q3. The opening of a Puregym in Blyth has had an impact on the number of direct debit members at the facility, with a number of male members 18-35 cancelling their memberships. Despite this, in anticipation of the opening of the new Morpeth Sports and Leisure Centre the number of members at this facility has increased, with further increases forecast for Q1 next year.

Summary

Despite cost-of-living pressures, we have seen over 5% growth in direct debit members since the start of the year. With the new Morpeth Sports and Leisure Centre opening in 23/24, it is hoped that the overall number of direct debit members will increase in 23/24. Alongside cost-of-living pressures, we have also seen the introduction of some budget competitors in some areas of the County. We will continue to monitor the impact of this on our membership and penetration in the relevant areas. Despite trying to ensure services are as accessible as possible, we have taken the decision to implement a small price increase in 23/24 which will generate further income. The Learn to Swim programme has continued to grow and as a result generate more income. Work is underway to redevelop and rebrand our party offering across our facilities. 'Active Parties' will ensure a consistent approach across sites to party delivery and will ensure enhanced capacity to deliver, generating more income as a result.

Ensuring performance against budget profile

Our Senior Executive team continue to meet with our Finance Manager from NCC on a monthly basis to receive a detailed budget report that is then presented bi-monthly to our finance and audit committee.

Our Senior Management team have re-commenced monthly finance meetings with the NCC Accounts Team to discuss their budget in detail in order that they fully understand their performance and forecasted budget position.

Although current fitness direct debit membership forecasts suggest that income will exceed the budget figure at the end of the financial year, the potential impact of the cost-of-living crisis could have the potential to alter this projection.

To achieve the fitness direct debit budget this year the number of cancellations each month should not exceed the number of joiners. This has been achieved so far and future months will be closely monitored.

Q1

At the end of Q1 the current budget position on fitness direct debits forecasts additional income of circa 50K compared to budget at the end of the financial year.

The current Learn to Swim forecasts also suggest overperformance compared to budget. This is despite the current suspension on enrolment of new learners into the scheme. To reflect this, forecasts will be monitored and amended as required each month to assess the financial impact.

One area which is currently performing under budget is casual fitness class income. Due to the high occupancy rates of our classes and the number of direct debit and annual payment members attending, there are a limited number of spaces for casual users to attend. This reduction in income will be offset by the increase in direct debit income. This will continue to be monitored monthly.

As previously mentioned, Increased transport and fuel costs is already having an impact on some school's bookings for the 2022 - 2023 academic year with some schools, especially those in outlying areas, reducing their bookings by 50%. The financial impact of this will continue to be monitored.

Q2

We continued to overperform in fitness direct debit sales during Q2 at all nine large facilities, resulting in us now forecasting additional income of circa 185k compared to budget at the end of the financial year. However, despite strong sales performance we did see an increase in fitness direct debit cancellations at the end of Q2 which we will monitor closely during Q3.

We reopened enrolment to our learn2swim program during Q2 and have continued to see continuous growth in income. We are now forecasting additional income of circa 215k against

budget by the end of the financial year. However, by the end of Q2 we were once again achieving maximum occupancy levels for the program resulting in very few opportunities to grow the scheme.

Q3

During Q2 we began to see an increase in the number of cancellations. This has continued throughout Q3 no doubt in part due to the cost-of-living crisis. We are continuing to monitor our cancellation reasons closely to assess any increase in proportion cancelling for financial reasons. We are also monitoring cancellations by index of multiple deprivation to monitor whether a higher proportion of members from the most deprived quintiles are cancelling their memberships. Despite the challenges we are facing with cancellations the number of direct debit memberships at the end of Q3 was higher than the beginning of the financial year, and with growth scheduled for January and February we remain confident of achieving against budget.

At the end of Q3 the current forecast for health and fitness direct debits indicates additional income of 338k against budget by the end of the financial year. The Learn 2 Swim scheme forecast indicates additional income of 287k against budget.

Q4

We have seen strong sales performance in Q4. As expected, there was an increase in direct debit sales in January, however, sales in February and March have also been above target. The number of direct debit memberships increased by 3.7% from Q3. As a result, the direct debit income received in Q4 so far has increased from Q3. At the end of Q4, the current forecast for health and fitness direct debits indicates additional income of 500k against budget. A successful Christmas promotion over the festive period and the New Year saw an increase in annual payment income in January. At the end of Q4 the current forecast for pre-payment memberships indicates additional income of 170k against budget. Increases in casual gym usage in Q4 has seen an increase in PAYG gym income in January and February. PAYG income for fitness classes has also increased in Q4, however, due to limited availability throughout the year due to classes being occupied by members, overall PAYG fitness income is set to underperform against budget. The Learn to Swim scheme continues to perform strongly and forecasts indicate additional income of 306k against budget for the financial year.

Summary

Despite cost-of-living pressures and an increase in the number of cancellations throughout the year, forecasts suggest an improved position against budget for the majority health and fitness departments. Alongside financial pressures facing service users, we have also seen competition increase for their service with budget competitors opening in the Southeast of the County. Notwithstanding these challenges, the end of the financial year will see us perform above budget expectations. With the opening of the new Morpeth Sports and Leisure Centre

early in Q1 next year, it is hoped we can further increase income and memberships as a result.

Attracting external grant support

Although not an external grant, as such, the apprenticeship levy is a form of taxation designed to help companies offer more apprenticeships.

During Q1 we undertook a review of the amount that was held within our fund and devised the 2022/23 plan as to how to use the funds to best suit the needs of the business.

The plan has already been mentioned in several sections within the document.

Capital Investment

The continued capital investment in a number of leisure facilities has progressed well and work continues to move in the right direction. Since the completed refurbishment of Blyth Sports Centre in October 2021, investment works have continued to take place across three main developments at Newbiggin, Berwick and Morpeth as part of the agreed investment programme.

Refurbishment of Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre

We see Newbiggin Sports, and Community centre open, which has been a welcome boost for the community.

As part of the wider development £250k Football Foundation funding was secured to complete works to the external football pitches. The pitch maintenance works have now been completed during quarter 1 however due to the bedding in of the new pitches they will be out of use until summer 2023.

Berwick Sports and Leisure Centre New Build

The external works to the car park and landscaping as well as the demolition of the old centre are projected to be fully completed by Summer 2023. We have started to decant the old site ready for closure.

Morpeth Leisure Centre New Build

During the first quarter construction works have continued to progress well on site at the new site on Gas House Lane. No significant issues have been identified which could disrupt the building program and therefore the development continues to be on track for a Spring 2023 opening.

The new centre will contain a spa facility, a new gym and fitness area, a dedicated cycling (spinning) studio and two other fitness studios, a cafe area and soft play.

The development on Gas House Lane will also incorporate the town's library, a council customer service centre and Northumberland Skills' new learning facility for school leavers and adults.

Work has continued throughout Q4 to ensure the facility is ready to open early in Q1 next year.

Leisure Remedial Programme

Active Northumberland continue to work closely with the Council's Property Services department and Capital delivery team to implement a Planned Preventative Maintenance programme (PPM) which in the first instance address es key remedial works identified in leisure site condition surveys. The programme priorities have identified a number of key remedial works following a review of both condition survey priorities and on-site operational input where any backlog maintenance issues could have a significant impact on key operational and financial aspirations, reduced levels of customer satisfaction and unplanned closures.

By the end of quarter 1 progress continues to be made on a number of major leisure remedial projects including;

The appointment of Malones as the chosen contractor to undertake the Air Handling Unit replacement work servicing the pool hall area at Concordia Leisure Centre. During quarter 1 preparation works have been taking place with regards to the roof reinforcement works with onsite works due to take place between September-December 2022.

Proposal and costings exercise completed for the replacement of a new sports hall floor at Concordia Leisure Centre. The floor has been subject to ongoing maintenance over the 45-year period and although the sub floor is structurally sound the top finish is now in a poor state of repair. The most cost-effective option is to replace the current floor (Granwood) with a specialist sports floor finish laid on top of the existing floor. The new product proposed is Tarkett Omnisport's Active Loose Lay.

Phase 1 proposal completed for the refurbishment and installation of a Hive café and Softplay area at Wentworth Leisure Centre. The scheme will now be subject to a full tender process for the appointment of a contractor to undertake the works later in the year.

A review of the current 22/23 and the proposed 23/24 Leisure Remedial programme is planned for quarter 2.