

Vale briefing on the activities delivered by the Participation Team

When referring to leisure, many people only associate this with the facilities side of the team and the leisure centres that they are responsible for. The Participation team is the part of leisure dealing directly with the public, offering opportunities for all our residents to take part in sport and physical activity. Outlined below are some of the key areas of our work.

Sportivate is a £56 million Lottery funded London 2012 legacy project that gives more young people the chance to discover a sport that they love.

The programme started by giving 14-25 year-olds, who are not particularly sporty, access to six-to-eight weeks' of free or subsidised coaching in a range of sports. From September 2013, Sportivate extended its age group so that 11-13 year-olds can also take part.

During the six-to-eight weeks those taking part can work towards an event or personal challenge and when the free or low-cost coaching has finished they will be supported to continue playing sport.

Sportivate launched in June 2011 as a four-year programme but, due to its success, additional funding of £10m per year has been invested allowing the programme to run until March 2017. In Vale of White Horse this year we have engaged 153 youngsters in sports including water sports, tennis, self-defence, rowing, volleyball and gymfit.

In partnership with local clubs and our leisure provider, GLL, we have delivered holiday activities for youngsters aged 5 – 18, enabling them to stay active throughout the school holidays, trying new sports and hopefully going on to join the clubs and take part regularly in the sport of their choice.

The GO Active, Get Healthy project in the Vale has a varied programme of activities for all adults (16+) to try including short tennis, Pilates and ballroom basics. We try to reduce the barriers to participation as much as possible whether that is reducing the cost, providing local venues or like our Slacklining sessions that allow the whole family to attend. Sessions specifically for our target audience of sedentary adults include Short Mat Bowls, Boccia and Pickleball which has grown to three sessions in Abingdon and recently added a new group in Wantage.

Over the last year we have held campaigns in swimming and golf along with the Annual Football Tournament and Fun Run events. Our jogging programme has proved to be successful with the top three largest recreational jogging groups in Oxfordshire all in the Vale district.

Our Active Women team have run a variety of sessions for either mums to do with their children or on their own (eg badminton, powerhoop, yoga, boxfit). We have set up new activities such as mum and toddler dance, zumba, baby yoga and now have a new 'New Mums' exercise group starting as a result of a successful pilot we did involving exercise sessions, pedometers and home exercise DVDs. Many of our activities have continued as regular sessions and popular activities such as netball groups and boxfit sessions, initially set up by Active Women are now being led by the leisure centres.

Our main success projects have been our involvement in a swimming campaign across both Districts (in Vale 138 ladies with children under 16 took part); a cardio badminton taster sessions at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre in Abingdon where 14 ladies attended (picture attached) and a boxfit session in Faringdon, where 11 women attended – both sessions have continued as regular sessions.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have been awarded £227,000 by Sport England for Go Active Gold, a three year project offering a range of sports and classes in rural areas for people aged 60 plus.

Go Active Gold will target different villages each year to encourage people to do 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week. Sessions start in January and will be delivered by Go Active Gold 'activators' and local sports and activity coaches.

Members of the local community will also be encouraged to volunteer to help spread the message about what's on offer and set up and deliver some sessions.

Activities will begin in January and will include dance, tai chi, table tennis, golf, bowls, pilates, yoga, Nordic walking and fitness.

Taster sessions in the above will initially be held in Kingston Bagpuize, Steventon, Woodcote, Watlington, Chalgrove, Sutton Courtney and Shiplake.

Through increasing physical activity levels we will improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of older people, encourage social interaction and create lifelong habits and role models for younger generations.

Another area that falls within the remit of the participation team is The Beacon in Wantage. This is a community building run by members of our team that offers great opportunities for local people to get involved in a variety of activities, including dance classes, fitness classes, weight watchers groups, tea dances and martial arts.

These are run in addition to the cultural and community activities such as concerts, shows and cinema, which also take place regularly.