

Audit of Physical Activity Opportunities in Gloucester City: Summary Report



This audit was undertaken by Corey Harris, supervised by Dr Diane Crone and Dr Mary Mahoney at the Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care, University of Gloucestershire, October 2008- September 2009.

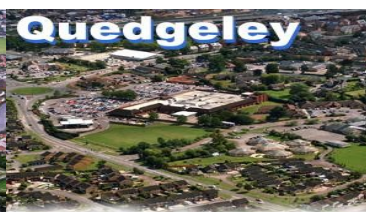
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Contents

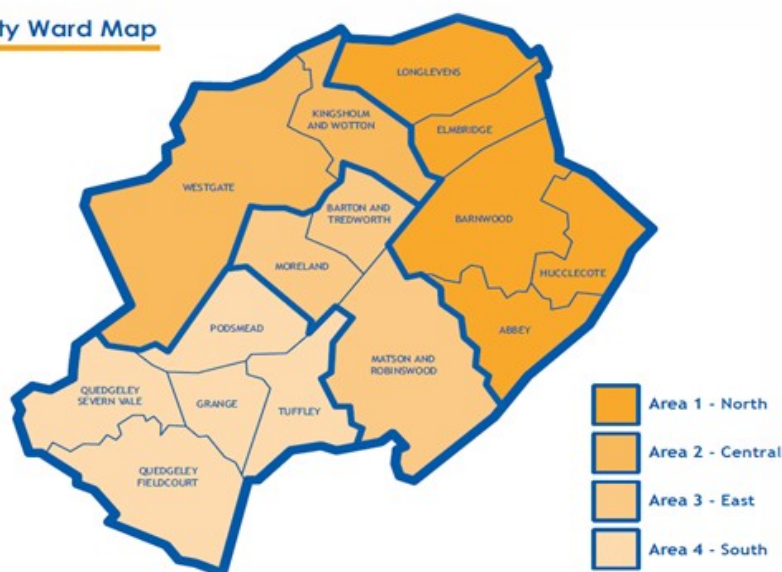
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Aim of project.....	4
3. Methods.....	4
Semi Structured Interviews.....	4
Questionnaire.....	4
Demographic Profile.....	5
4. Results.....	5
Physical Activity Opportunity.....	5
Geographical Distribution of Activities.....	6
Targeting Activities and Concessionary Rates.....	8
5. Conclusion.....	9
6. Actions taken.....	11
7. Recommendations.....	12



1. Introduction

Gloucester City is a district authority whose services are provided by the City Council. Gloucester City is demarcated by 4 areas, (North, South, East and Central) and 15 wards. Four of the 15 wards (Barton, Westgate, Matson and Podsmead), are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the South West. Barton and Westgate are also ranked amongst the 10% most deprived wards in England (Bramley, 2006). Compared to the other districts in the Gloucestershire County Gloucester City has the highest unemployment rate, pays the lowest wage, and has the highest percentage of people who believe their health is “Not Good” (ONS, 2009; ONS(a), 2009; Bramley, 2006).

Gloucester City Ward Map



International and national evidence from Jones *et al.*, (1998) and the Department of Health (2004) show how influential physical activity is in improving health and encouraging social inclusion. Low participation in physical activity has been recognised as an area of extreme importance by national Government. Their response through the release of reports such as *Choosing Activity: A Physical Activity Action Plan* Department of Health (2005) signals the need for urgent action at all levels within the community. Initiatives are required to create innovative and sustainable change within the community. Distribution of the physical activity opportunities available within Gloucester City will assist health and physical activity promoters in developing strategies and practices that can focus on the gaps in provisions. This knowledge could also assist in addressing health and social inequalities with a view to improving community health.

As a consequence an audit of the physical activity opportunities available within Gloucester City was carried out to provide Gloucester City Council with accurate and thorough data that can be used to



further develop physical activity opportunities to enhance community health and contribute to strategies and initiatives that combat health and social issues. The audit was organised to identify existing physical activity opportunities in Gloucester City highlighting the exclusive groups some activities were targeted at and review the economic composition of these activities i.e. costs, concessions, and incentives.

2. Aim of project

To undertake an audit of the physical activity opportunities available in Gloucester City, to assess what activities were currently offered, and to compare demographic factors from each area. Findings were contextualised and mapped with the current demography of the areas and wards within the city. As a consequence evidence-based recommendations were developed for health and physical activity promoters in Gloucester to further enhance physical activity opportunities.

3. Methods

From the variety of data collection methods available to gather and examine data, the following methods were employed.

Semi Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview guided by predetermined themes was used to ascertain information regarding the people who deliver physical activity opportunities. Interviews were conducted with key individuals within Gloucester City Council and relevant people employed within Gloucester City Council's key partnerships e.g. Health Improvement Facilitators, Positive Futures Project Manager, and Falls Pathway Facilitator for Gloucestershire County. These interviews were used to identify non-government organisations, voluntary organisations, neighbourhood initiatives or private sector organisations that have access to the facilitators who deliver physical activity opportunities in Gloucester City. This information was then transferred onto a database which formed the contact details for the data analysis for the audit, via a questionnaire.

Questionnaire

A factual and relatively brief questionnaire was designed and used to collect the research data. Sections within the questionnaire gathered information about the times, frequency, payment schedule and concessions of activities, the qualifications and insurance required by facilitators, and the screening/monitoring of participant's physical abilities to participate in the activity. The questionnaire was distributed via a number of mediums including post, email or by hand. Information from each



opportunity identified was standardised as much as possible, as data was inputted into a database for the purposes of analysis.

Demographic Profile

To contextualise the findings, the audit required the collection and summary of existing socioeconomic data from Gloucester City to construct a demographic profile of the areas and wards in the catchment area. This data was collected using an extensive literature search which identified documents from various sources such as the Office of National Statistics (ONS), Multi Agency Information Database for Neighbourhoods (Maiden), and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This information was used to illustrate the level of deprivation experienced by residents within the areas and wards in the city. The information was also used to compare, contrast and identify anomalies between the demographic makeup of an area/ward and the physical activity opportunities available within the area.

4. Results

Physical activity opportunities

The audit identified 374 physical activity opportunities provided within Gloucester City with potential participants having a choice of five categories of activities i.e. team based, exercise classes, martial arts, dance, and activities predominantly for individuals or pairs.

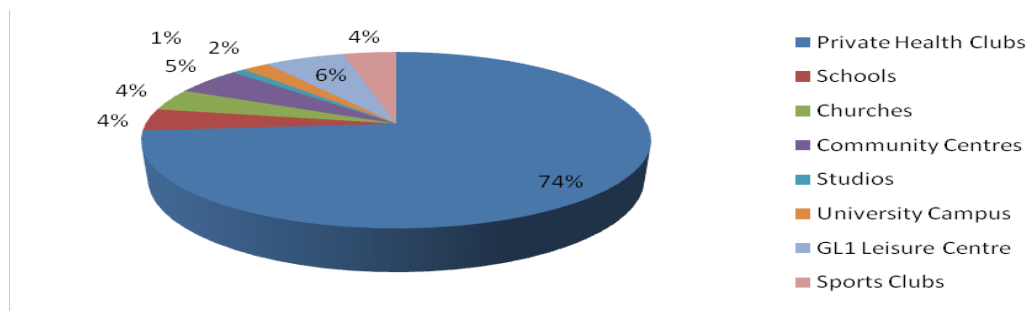
Example of activity types within categories

Category	Activity types	Percentage identified	share
Team based	hockey, cricket, korfbal	7%	
Exercise class	aerobics, spin, step	70%	
Martial arts	aikido, karate, kung fu	5%	
Dance	salsa, ballroom, line	7%	
Individual or pairs	archery, skateboarding, tennis	11%	

Within these types were 48 different activities to choose from. These activities were located within a variety of venues such as churches, schools, community centres and sports clubs, but private health and fitness clubs were by far the most popular venues hosting the identified activities.

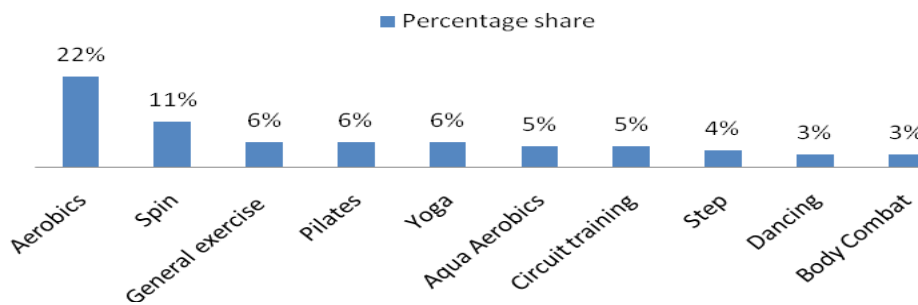


Venues where activities are delivered



Aerobics was the most prominent physical activity opportunity identified in the city. The second highest provision of activity was spinning (a class based exercise that utilise exercise bikes) with both activities mostly located within private health and fitness clubs.

Top ten physical activity opportunities in Gloucester City

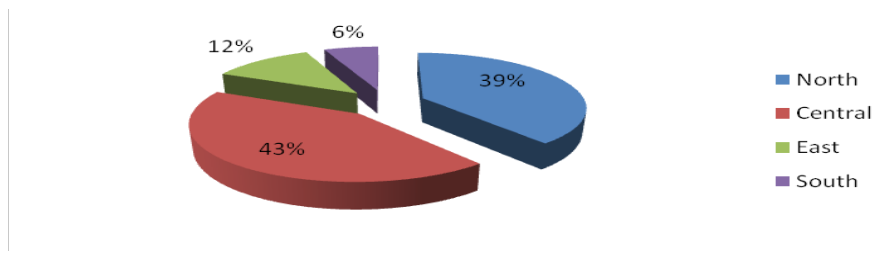


Geographical distribution of activities

The physical activity opportunities identified through the audit were not evenly spread geographically within the areas of Gloucester City, with North and Central Gloucester providing the majority of activities identified.

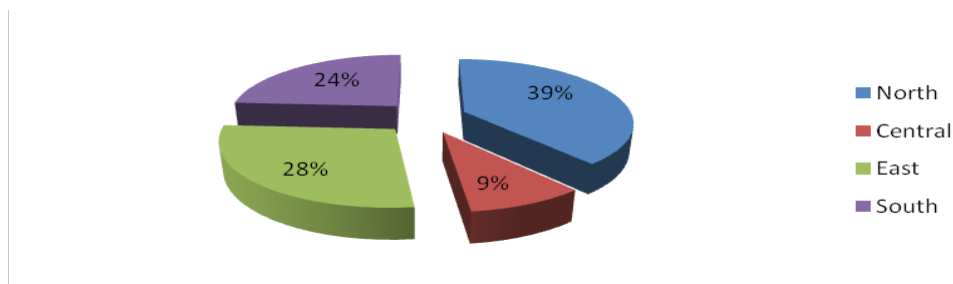


Percentage split of activities Identified in the regions of Gloucester City



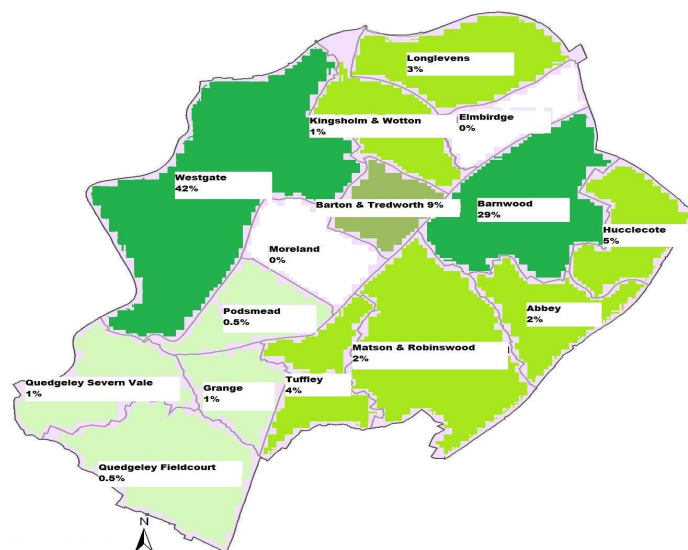
Central Gloucester provided the most physical activity opportunities despite being the least populated area in the City.

Population split within the areas of Gloucester City



The map below shows the geographical distribution of physical activity opportunities identified in the wards of Gloucester City. The darker shaded areas indicate a higher percentage of activities discovered.

Percentage of activities identified located within the wards of Gloucester City



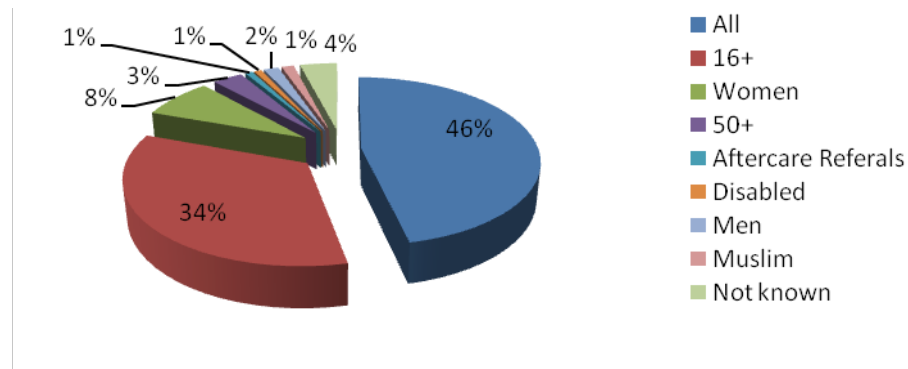
The majority of activities are located in Westgate and Barnwood with no activities identified in Elmbridge and Moreland.



Targeting activities and concessionary rates

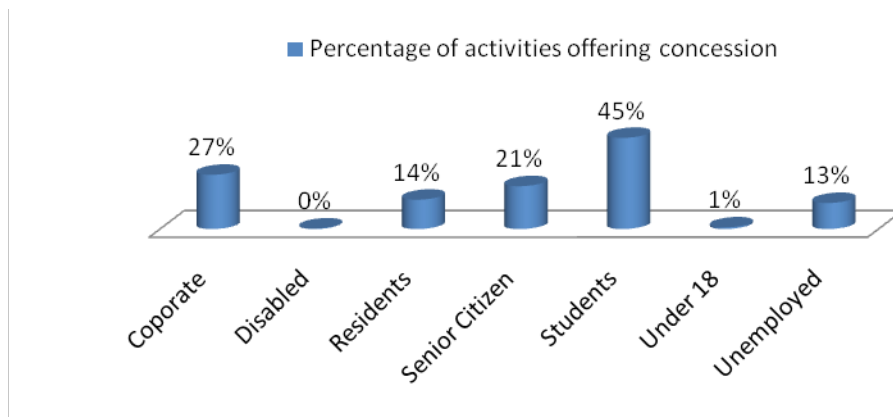
The audit also illustrated which groups the physical activity opportunities identified were targeted at. This is shown below:

Percentage of activities targeted at specific groups



Concessions were offered to attract people to some activities, with students and the corporate sector the groups most concessionary prices were offered to.

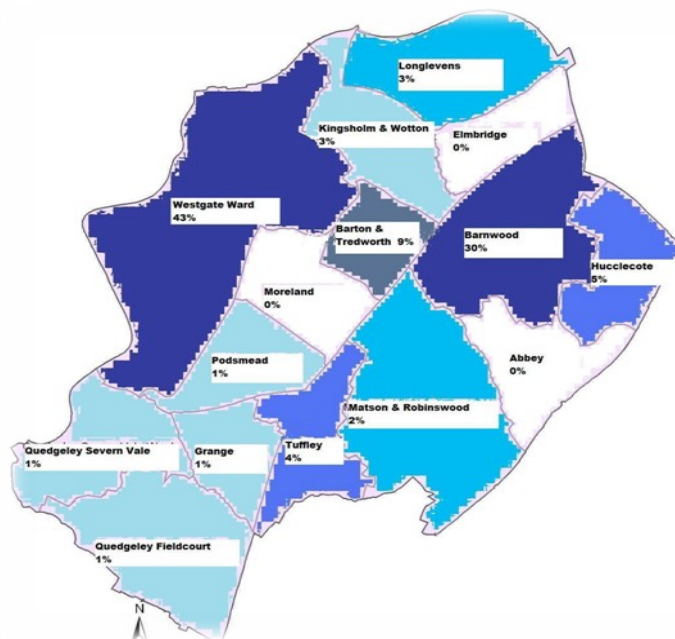
Groups benefiting from concessionary price rates



The map below illustrates the wards where these concessionary activities were located. The darker shaded areas indicate a higher percentage of concessionary activities. Westgate and Barnwood had the most physical activity opportunities that offered concessionary priced rates.



Location of activities offering concessionary price rates



The two maps illustrated in this report seem to indicate a link between the number of physical activity opportunities identified in a ward and the number of concessionary price offers available. There appears no explicit link between the level of deprivation in a ward and the quantity of activities with concessionary price offers available. The cost of participating in activities has been recognised as a major barrier for groups such as the elderly, unemployed and people living within deprived areas. Flexible payment methods and concessionary price offers are recognised by Neergaard et al., (2005) and Wan et al., (1996) as tangible forms of support that can be used to increase participation in physical activity and assist people to maintain their physical activity levels.

5. Conclusion

The audit identified that major private health and fitness clubs were the main providers of physical activity opportunities within Gloucester City. The audit found that venues such as churches, schools and community centres were underutilised when providing physical activity opportunities in Gloucester City. Coatler (2007) categorises churches, schools and community centres as ‘connected’ venues as they provide physical activity opportunities as an additional function to their principal responsibility within the community. Coatler (2007) research also found that physical activity opportunities provided from these ‘connected’ venues had a more positive effect on a community than those delivered from ‘isolated organisations’ i.e. private health and fitness clubs. So there is the potential to utilise more ‘connected’ venues in Gloucester City to deliver physical activity opportunities to generate a more inclusive community.



The main private health and fitness clubs in Gloucester City targeted most of their concessionary price offers to encourage participation in their activities at students and corporate groups. People with disabilities, older people, the unemployed and people of black & minority ethnicity are priority groups the Department of Health and Gloucester City Council suggest activities and concessions should be targeted at, and this audit has found these groups have only a small number of activities and concessions targeted to them.

The prominent private health and fitness clubs in Gloucester were located in the North and Central areas which consequently meant the majority of physical activity opportunities identified were located within these areas. Gloucester City centre is also located in the Central area which accounted for the concentration of private health and fitness clubs (along with businesses, retail shops, bars, and restaurants) in this area and also for it being the least populated. The number of physical activity opportunities in the South and East of Gloucester was small compared to those provided in the North and Central areas, but the activities provided in the South and East were more diverse. Targeted and concessionary priced activities for priority groups were mostly concentrated in the Central area highlighting the scarcity of these activities in the other areas of Gloucester. Furthermore the ethnic diversity and unemployment rates within Central and East Gloucester were higher than in the North and South areas.

An assessment of the audit indicates an opportunity for local Government to provide appropriate training to the unemployed and other priority groups to deliver concessionary priced physical activity opportunities to residents in the North, East and South areas of Gloucester City. Negotiations for the location of these activities could be conducted with 'connected' organisations identified previously, with people from all ethnic backgrounds given the opportunity to deliver these activities in the various areas and wards of Gloucester City. The Government's policies and initiatives to address physical inactivity are based on an ideology where activities can be used to create a civically engaged environment that empowers communities. Currently the physical activity opportunities in Gloucester are mostly provided by private health and fitness clubs who are profit driven. Activities that local Government develop or promote that are conducive with the national Governments ideology would find it difficult to compete with those offered by the private sector but they could complement them by targeting those priority groups whom the private sector may deem unprofitable.

Nationally, numerous bodies, for example Skills Active, Sport England and the National Skills Academy have been striving to raise standards and ensure that activity providers for physical activity programmes have the relevant qualifications and insurance to deliver these programmes. This effort appears to have been successful in Gloucester City as a large majority of providers delivering the activities identified had the relevant qualifications.



Activity leaders with relevant qualifications and Insurance cover

	Percentage		
	Yes	No	Not known
Activity leaders qualified	92%	1%	6%
First aid qualification held by activity leader or venue	91%	2%	7%
Activities with insurance cover	95%	0%	5%

Providers who may deliver physical activity opportunities for Gloucester City Council or are endorsed by them will need to be appropriately qualified to ensure the activity is acceptable for potential participants.

6. Actions taken

- An activity database has been created using the data gathered from the audit. The information within the database is accessible via the Gloucester City Council website. This has provided local residents and visitors to Gloucester City with details of what physical activity opportunities are available in the city.
- The physical activity questionnaire has been made available online making it accessible to future activity leaders, physical activity providers and private health clubs who wish to add their physical activity opportunity onto the database. A paper copy of the questionnaire is also available for those who do not have access to the Internet, with updates and amendments to activities available through the completion of the paper questionnaire.
- The physical activity database is being promoted extensively throughout Gloucester City. The promotion has two objectives; firstly to promote the database, its location, what details it provides, how the database can benefit residents of Gloucester City, and how people can use the facility free to locate any of the variety of physical activity opportunities available in Gloucester City. The next objective promotes the advantages of uploading a physical activity opportunity onto the database to activity providers, venues and organisations. These benefits include free online advertising for their activity and the opportunity for them to manage the details of the activity themselves, giving them a certain level of autonomy.

7. Recommendations

- Develop or promote physical activity opportunities and initiatives that offer concessionary price offers to people from priority group's i.e. older people, people with a disability or the unemployed.



For example providing or promoting Tai Chi classes located within 'connected' venues that are, where possible financially accessible for people on benefits.

- Coordinated media campaign and press releases to promote the opportunities within traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, leaflets & posters but also contemporary media such as the internet, facebook, twitter and blogs.
- Encourage the sharing of findings from this and other similar audits of physical activity opportunities, projects or programmes. All of these can be located on one website i.e. via the Department of Health or the British Health Foundation National Centre websites.
- The activity leaders, physical activity providers and private health clubs already identified during the audit could be supplied with a username and password that provides them with access to update their physical activity opportunity details online.
- A web-link from Gloucester City Councils website could be created making the database available through different websites i.e. Gloucester City Council, other Gloucestershire Borough/District Councils, Active Gloucestershire, University of Gloucestershire, Aspire Sport & Cultural Trust Ltd. etc.
- Future initiatives could attempt to address the lack of targeted activities and concessionary price offers (tangible support) within the North, East and South areas of Gloucester for the priority groups identified by the Department of Health and Gloucester City Council.



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