

## Sportability 2022 (Community Services, Anthony Jones)

### Synopsis of report:

The Sportability Festival is in its 6<sup>th</sup> year at Royal Holloway University of London. This reports on the 2022 event held on 17 March.

### Recommendation(s):

None. This report is for information.

1. **Context and background of report**
- 1.1 In 2016 the Community Development Team along with key stakeholders such as Enabled Not Disabled highlighted that young people and their families living in Runnymede were unaware of the sport and physical activity offer available to them across the borough.
- 1.2 The Sportability Festival was created to engage with young people with a disability, highlighting the sporting opportunities available to them and giving a positive experience when taking part in a new sport for the first time.
- 1.3 The first Sportability Festival was held in 2017; the annual festival is held at Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) in March from 9:30am – 2.30pm. RHUL waives any venue hire for the event allowing full use of the indoor sports hall, Multi Use Games Area, Tennis Courts and 3G pitches.
- 1.4 Between 8 and 10 Primary and Secondary schools are invited to attend the festival where they take part in a range of taster sessions provided by local sports clubs. Schools must register each child's impairment as part of the application process so clubs can cater to individual needs. Registrations are on a first come first served basis.
- 1.5 Taster sessions can include Rugby, Boccia, Polybat, Cage Cricket, Wheelchair Basketball, Judo, Boxing, Golf, Archery and Football. Each session averages 40 minutes in length.
- 1.6 Local clubs were used to make it easier for young people to transition from the taster session to attending weekly sessions in the community.
- 1.7 Each participant receives an information booklet that contains a list of sports and physical activity offers around the borough, a certificate, and a medal. This would be presented to them at the awards ceremony at the end of day.
- 1.8 The core event is funded by Runnymede Borough Council. There is a small budget of £1,000 that covers the cost of hiring wheelchairs, refreshments, medals, and information booklets. Providers volunteer their time for the event and receive a free lunch.
- 1.9 Local businesses can sponsor the event in return for promotional space in the informational booklet. RHUL provides volunteers and refreshments on the day of the festival.

1.10 Historically, the event saw between 8 and 10 schools engaging on average 110+ young people. Owing to the Covid pandemic the festival was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 experienced a drastic reduction in attendance as confidence to engage was very low.

## 2. **Report**

2.1 Planning for the 2022 Sportability Festival started in November 2021, following confirmation of an event date with the venue. A risk assessment was undertaken, site plan developed, and sports providers were confirmed.

2.2 Promotional flyers to 'save the date' and register their interest for the event were emailed to all schools December 2021. Registration for the event opened in January 2022. The event was held on 17 March from 9.30am – 3pm.

2.3 Eight taster sessions were on offer for 2022: Cage Cricket (Community Cricket), Boccia (Spelthorne Leisure Centre), Tennis (RBX Tennis), Boxing (Knowle Green Boxing Club), Rugby (Harlequins Rugby Foundation), Dance (Chartered Dance), Wheelchair Basketball (Enabled Not Disabled/Runnymede Raptors) and Judo (Core Judo).

2.4 Six schools attended: Salesian School, Ottershaw C of E, Hythe Community Primary School, Pycroft Grange Primary School, Manorcroft Primary School, and Phillip Southcote School.

2.5 Due to the provider capacity per activity and space at the venue a cap of 10 students per school was put in place. Some schools were able to bring additional students as not all schools filled their spaces.

2.6 72 registered young people attended, 46% registered as Autistic, 30% had a moderate learning difficulty, and 8% registered as having a physical impairment. 16% of students had a range of other impairments.

2.7 The event day was well received with positive comments from the children and teachers on the day. The event received positive feedback back from teachers:

- "I just wanted to touch base and thank you and your team for organising this event. Our pupils had an amazing time." Teacher, Hythe Community School.

Feedback in relation to the organisation of the event included:

- "Less sports at the event and more breaks to have a rest as young people were tired".
- "Aim for the event to finish at 2.30pm as children need to get taxis/school bus home".

2.8 Other feedback was that due to the event being in the daytime, some clubs fed back that their staff members had full time jobs or weren't willing to volunteer their time. Also, the event did not secure any additional funding, although Specsavers Addlestone have said they will support the 2023 event.

2.9 As a result of feedback received, future considerations include providing less physical activity on the day as young people were tired and to add some activities that could improve young people's mental health and healthy eating. Two schools wanted to attend after registration had closed. Therefore, potentially we could run the event across two days to allow more schools to attend. However, this would require an increase to the budget to fund more providers/staff to attend.

2.10 Other options include themed funding to assist clubs in improving their inclusive offer to the community and training opportunities for teachers/support staff to better cater for young people with a disability.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

3.1 This event supports local people by improving the quality of their lives through developing healthier and safer communities, improving life chances, as well as listening to and representing local people. It also opens up opportunities to enhance the quality of lives of vulnerable/deprived individuals through continued participation in sports.

### **4. Resource implications/Value for Money**

4.1 A total of £841 was spent on the event leaving an underspend of £159.

### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 This event complied with requirements regarding health and safety, first aid, and safeguarding.

### **6. Equality implications**

6.1 The event complies with the Council's Equalities Policy and supports marginalised groups.

6.2 There are positive outcomes for young people, particularly engaging the protected characteristics of age and disability.

### **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 In delivering the event, environmental factors were considered. For example, the use of single use plastic packaging.

### **9. Conclusions**

9.1 The Sportability Festival has a positive impact on young people in Runnymede, the event inspires attendees to be more active whilst taking part in sport with likeminded peers without judgement.

9.2 However, there is a desire amongst Officers to develop such opportunities further, and to increase the impact to young people, including the community and its local sports organisations having better understanding and being better equipped to cater to individual needs. More engagement is also needed throughout the year to ensure opportunities to be more active are not missed.

- 9.3 Further developments to the Sportability Festival, including the potential to increase capacity, spread over more than one day etc. are possible, and feedback from, and evaluation of, this year's event identifies demand etc. However, the ability to do so depends on the budget available to support both the development work and the event itself.

**(For Information)**

**Background Papers**

None stated.