

**Report to:** Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum  
**Subject:** Facilities and Activities Report  
**From:** Operational Delivery Team  
**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025



## **Centre Improvements and Membership Challenges**

The Leisure Team has implemented several improvements to enhance the customer experience for our members. Over the past three months, we have faced challenges due to increased competition in Exmouth and Honiton, including the opening of a new gym in Exmouth scheduled to open later in September and the expansion of a gym in Honiton, where the operator has taken over the lease of a neighbouring facility. We are already witnessing the initial impact of this, with further significant challenges forecast for the coming months. Our aging facilities, along with the size limitations of our existing gyms, have made it difficult for us to compete with these newer facilities. As a result, since the last forum, membership numbers have declined from 9,046 in May to 8,741 at the end of August. Membership yield has remained constant throughout this period, with just a £0.02 negative variance.

## **Key Achievements and Performance Highlights**

- All sites are working diligently to attract new hirers and utilise spaces during off-peak times. This initiative has been particularly successful at the Tennis Centre, where we are also providing consultation spaces for private physiotherapists. We have established links with Osteo Physio to develop an exercise prescription pathway and membership option, building on our successful partnership with the NHS to support individuals with long-term health conditions.
- The Learn-to-Swim program has experienced a slight decline over the past three months, especially in Exmouth. The team is working hard to promote this program in September to attract new swimmers.
- Gymnastics at Sidmouth and Exmouth continues to grow, with more volunteers being trained to support its expansion. Led by Somer Manly, the program offers basic gymnastics through to performance sessions, as well as adult sessions.
- The team developed an off-peak summer holiday model to drive usage in our indoor sports halls and outdoor pitches.
- The new Summer Pickleball League was successful at Ottery Leisure Centre, and best practices will be shared across the EDDC Leisure portfolio.
- A new running group has been launched at Ottery, with plans to expand this initiative throughout the estate.
- Exmouth Tennis Centre has been collaborating with the LTA to review the tennis program. We are managing the fair use policy, which has caused some dissatisfaction among members, but with effective communication and discussions, we are making progress. Events have been scheduled through the end of the year, and the café is being upgraded to offer more options. Additionally, a new Tennis Ladders League is being established. The functional fitness area outside has been painted, and the railing has been refreshed. Property services have completed hedge and grass cutting, significantly improving the appearance.
- EDDC has made several facility improvements over the summer, including exterior painting and squash court upgrades.

## **Marketing and Digital Service Expansion**

The marketing team has enhanced the app to provide members with a better customer experience. The app now includes blogs, on-demand classes, and improved communications through pop-up messaging.

The team also launched our "Jump into Summer" campaign, promoting all activities across the group over the summer. We collaborated with the Primary Times to drive awareness.

Additionally, we have updated the branding across the sites. This includes renewing internal branding and removing old posters as we develop digital TV screens.



## Recommendations and Future Focus

- Continue to monitor membership trends and implement strategies to enhance member retention, particularly in areas facing increased competition.
- Further evaluate and optimize the self-access model to maximise facility utilisation, with a focus on Honiton planned for November.
- Develop customer-engaging programs and review systems and processes to drive member engagement.
- Continue facility upgrades across all sites with support from EDDC, particularly addressing the condition of changing rooms, which are a significant source of our NPS detractor scores.

## Active Communities Activities Update

As the school term concluded in mid-July, so did our direct engagement with partner schools, marking an energetic and productive period. A comprehensive Schools Reflection report will follow in September, providing deeper insights into outcomes and impact.

## School Partnerships and Feedback

Throughout the academic year, we maintained regular involvement with Exeter Road Primary, Littleham Primary, Cranbrook Primary and Secondary Education Campus, and Exmouth Community College. The feedback received from teachers has been particularly heartening, reflecting the positive influence of our multi-skills and sports sessions.

One notable comment came from Guy Orridge, a teacher at Exeter Road Primary, regarding the sessions for Years 3–6 (September 2024–July 2025):

*"The multi-skills sessions this year have been amazing! The children have loved spending time with Laura and Becky, and their enthusiasm has made every session enjoyable and engaging. Through multi-sports, the children have not only had fun and stayed active, but they have also learnt about the importance of regular exercise and looking after their mental health."*

This feedback underscores our commitment to delivering enjoyable, engaging activities that promote both physical and mental well-being. Looking ahead, we are actively liaising and planning with partner schools to commence activities again in September.

## Special Events and Initiatives

- **Swim to Sea:** In June, the Swim to Sea programme returned to Exmouth beach, working with two groups from Exeter Road and Littleham Primary. The initiative focused on educating children about swimming in the sea and enhancing confidence for those who may not otherwise have such opportunities.
- **Engage and Connect Event:** We participated at Clyst Vale Community College, operating an information stall that offered support to both teachers and parents.
- **Kings School Project Week:** At Kings School, Ottery, we were invited to engage students who were struggling to participate in regular activities. Our team delivered a variety of sessions, receiving excellent feedback and an invitation to return next year.

## Community Health and Wellbeing

- **Health Checks:** Supported by the DCC Public Health team, our team conducted health checks for manual workers, including blood pressure assessments, nutritional advice, and in-body analysis.
- **Walk Leader Training:** We provided Walk Leader training to Sidmouth memory café volunteers, assisting them to launch a new monthly walk for people living with dementia and their carers.
- **Wellbeing Walk Programme:** New evening summer walks were introduced alongside ongoing support for volunteers and regular participants district-wide.
- **LIRF Courses:** Funding enabled two Leadership in Running Fitness (LIRF) courses to start new 'Couch to 5k' groups. The Honiton group is already underway, aiming to participate in a local park run.
- **Football Coaching:** Funding was provided for a team member at Honiton to complete a girls' football coaching course, enabling delivery just in time for the summer holidays.

## Partnerships and Collaborative Events

- Collaboration with AGE UK Devon to support the Santa Run to Exmouth in December.
- Participation in local events and meetings, including the Healthy Ageing Partnership, Sid Valley Help, New Exmouth Health and Wellbeing Group, volunteer training (CLUK), and the FAME stakeholder meeting.
- Supported Community Leisure UK by helping facilitate their Volunteer Special Interest Group for Leisure Trust members.
- Continued physical activity sessions for the Exmouth Stroke Survivors Club.

## Looking Forward

As we reflect on this term's achievements and prepare for the upcoming academic year, our commitment to fostering health, inclusion, and engagement across schools and the broader community remains steadfast. We look forward to building on this momentum and sharing a detailed Schools Reflection report in September.

