

Review of the Access to Leisure Scheme (A2L)

Aberdeen City Council

Final Report

December 2013

Prepared by Strategic Leisure Limited

Strategic Leisure

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Glossary

A2L – Access to Leisure

ACC – Aberdeen City Council

ALEO – Arms Length External Organisation

CHP – Community Health Partnership

DWP – Department of Work and Pensions

ESA – Employment Support Allowance

JSA – Job Seekers Allowance

RDS – Residents' Discount Scheme

SAM - Sport Aberdeen Membership

SIMD – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

SOA – Single Outcome Agreement

SWF – Scottish Welfare Fund

UC – Universal Credit

1. Executive Summary

The Project

- 1.1 Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) was appointed by Aberdeen City Council (ACC) in December 2012 to undertake a Review of the Access to Leisure Scheme (A2L). This scheme, which began in 1990, falls within the remit of the Education, Culture and Sport directorate who set the terms and conditions for the scheme eligibility.
- 1.2 The aim of undertaking the review of the A2L Scheme is to provide the required information to enable ACC to objectively justify and direct the level of subsidy necessary for the scheme, the eligibility criteria, and the scope of the current and any future offer including the option to withdraw the scheme.
- 1.3 The review will also identify the rationale for the continuation/cessation and/or development of the A2L Scheme.
- 1.4 This A2L Review was commissioned, and has been undertaken, in the context of significant cuts in public sector spending, particularly in relation to non-statutory services, of which leisure is one. It is highlighted that the review in Aberdeen is not linked to any specific identified budget reductions.

The Current A2L Scheme

- 1.5 The Access to Leisure (A2L) scheme, which is carried on the Council's Accord Card offers a discount to Aberdeen City Residents or pre-authorized groups/ organisations who are aged 60 years and over, and those who have either a disability, low income, or certain other categories, to all Sport Aberdeen facilities, Garthdee Alpine Sports Centre and the Aberdeen Sports Village.
- 1.6 A2L also offers a discount on Aberdeen City Council's childcare services for children under 12, including crèches, playgroups, after school and holiday clubs. In addition discounts can be obtained at the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Provost Skene's, and Maritime Museum Coffee Shops at certain times of the day. These facilities are managed internally as part of the City Council's portfolio of Cultural Services. In addition, residents with A2L cards are entitled to 10% discount on food and coffee in His Majesty's Theatre coffee shop, the Music Hall Coffee shop which are managed by Aberdeen Performing Arts.

Analysis of the Current A2L Scheme

- 1.7 Given that the existing A2L Scheme is taken up by approximately 57,500 residents, it is interesting to consider the breakdown of the current scheme take up:
 - 50,000 Aberdeen city residents automatically qualify for the Scheme, given that they are 60 years or over
 - All other users of the Scheme receive entitlement either for 3 months, 6 months or 12 months, dependent on which category of entitlement is appropriate
 - There are approximately 55,000 uses (ie not users, but individual use of the card for an eligible activity), of Access to Leisure entitlement per year across the City.
 - 4.3% of the current A2L usage is by those aged under 20 years; the majority of this usage is through children who are part of a family membership
 - 12% of the current A2L usage is by those aged 20-59 years; the majority of this usage relates to those who are eligible for A2L on a 'standard' basis ie those on a low income/in receipt of low income related benefits, or those with some form of disability. Of this usage, 18.63% is by families, and 67.65% is by other users.
 - 84% of the current A2L usage is from those aged over 60 ie 42,083 transactions. There is very low usage by those who require one to one assistance to use the sports and recreation facilities in the city (A2L assistance category).

- The take-up of the card from families on a low income tends to be higher in wards where a high incidence of disadvantage related to income has been identified ie the data zones discussed in paragraphs 3.18.
- 1.8 The current usage profile of the current A2L Scheme highlights that it is predominantly used by older people and families. It is clear that there is some usage by those with very significant disadvantages, but in the main the card appears to be financially benefitting those aged 60+ (by providing reduced access to activities such as golf), and those on a low income (which of course can relate to a myriad of different categories and timescales in itself). Whilst there is nothing at all wrong with this, there is potential to better target the subsidies provided to reach others living with disadvantage in the city, particularly given the changes to the national benefits system, which are being implemented from 1 April 2013.
- 1.9 There are some critical questions which are relevant to be asked, given that the cost of subsidy for the A2L Scheme usage is significantly more than the cost of its implementation. The questions this situation, and the overall user/usage analysis raises, include:
- Is the current A2L Scheme targeting the right people?
 - Are some of those entitled to A2L actually able to pay full price for the activities they access?
 - Should the ability to use A2L at both peak and off peak times for all activities be retained?
 - Are the eligibility criteria for A2L too wide?
 - Is continued implementation of the current Scheme actually sustainable given its cost?
 - Given the fact that the population is ageing, and the numbers of older people are rising, is 60 the right age to become automatically eligible for the A2L Scheme? This is already an issue in relation to eg golf, where the cost of providing subsidised golf is already the largest cost to the Scheme, and in 5 years, 50% of current golfers who pay full price will be eligible for the A2L Scheme, based on current criteria.
 - How can monitoring of the Scheme be improved, so that the correlation between user, activity and frequency can be better measured?
 - Could £100k per annum (provided to Sport Aberdeen) be more effectively used to facilitate participation in regular physical activity?
 - How much does ACC want to commit per annum to providing subsidised access to leisure?
 - What should the scope ie which activities of A2L be moving forward?
 - What level of subsidy should the A2L Scheme provide? (current saving to the individual is 50% on the full price, and swimming is free)
 - Is provision of the A2L Scheme actually increasing participation, or improving health at the moment?
 - Do those entitled to A2L maintain their participation in activities once their membership ceases?
 - Is there potential to target A2L usage more effectively to both generate additional revenue, whilst increasing participation, and addressing the barriers of cost?
- 1.10 ACC needs to be clear whether the aim of the A2L is simply to provide subsidised access to a range of leisure activities for those who otherwise might not be able to afford them, ie those in receipt of specific benefits, or whether the aim of A2L is to be more pro-active in terms of facilitating and encouraging regular participation in active recreation to address health issues ie more of an intervention in line with the new corporate and SOA priorities. The latter approach does not necessarily exclude those in receipt of benefits.
- 1.11 Moving forwards, the A2L Scheme would benefit from a clearer focus linked to defined outcomes, which themselves are better aligned to the new corporate and SOA priorities. The above analysis is not meant in any way as a criticism of the current A2L Scheme, which has clearly served, and is serving a purpose. However, the world has moved again since the current Scheme was established in 1990; in particular, the current financial challenges facing local government and the wholesale changes to the UK benefit system, plus the new strategic priorities for ACC mean that there is now an opportunity to re-visit A2L and ensure it is a Scheme 'fit for purpose', with tangible outcomes linked to local needs of city residents.
- 1.12 Other related points that are considered in this report include how, and where, an A2L Scheme would/should be marketed in the future? Some current users appear to be confused about what the

A2L Scheme is, and how it works, and there are clearly eligible individuals in the city who, for whatever reason, do not have/use their card.

- 1.13 Equally, the process of applying for A2L, and specifically, the format of existing forms needs to be reviewed, given their level of detail and complexity, and the fact that the eligibility criteria may change. If possible, forms should be shorter and simpler, with clearer requirements for the nature and level of information required. The detail and complexity of the existing forms could actually present a barrier to accessing A2L for those most in need.

A2L – Options for Future Scheme

- 1.14 It is clear from the analysis of the current A2L Scheme, and the other issues/factors looked at, as well as ACC's stated wish to review the current Scheme, that there are a number of options and opportunities for the A2L Scheme moving forward. This is a consequence of the changing circumstances in the DWP Benefits System, the new strategic priorities emerging for ACC, and the clear opportunity to align the A2L Scheme more closely to health improvement and increasing regular participation in active recreation.
- 1.15 The options for the A2L Scheme therefore are:

Table 1 A2L Options

OPTION	ACTION
OPTION 1	STATUS QUO
OPTION 2	CEASE OPERATION OF ANY ACC A2L SCHEME
OPTION 3	RETAIN A2L BUT CHANGE THE SCOPE OF THE SCHEME
OPTION 4	RETAIN A2L BUT CHANGE THE SCHEME SCOPE, AND TARGET THE SUBSIDY INSTEAD OF IT BEING A UNIVERSAL BENEFIT

- 1.16 Changing the focus of A2L as suggested could also have the benefit of promoting increased day time use of facilities, (except for families where children are at school), which could both increase participation, and generate income at times where facilities are not as busy as in the evenings. Clearly, there does need to be some access at peak times also eg swimming at facilities at family friendly times.
- 1.17 A further important issue that this report considers is how the A2L Scheme can contribute to health improvement across the city. Sadly, some older people, and those who have a low, or insufficient income are also likely to experience health issues due to poor or inadequate diets, and there may also be others in the city who would benefit from regular participation in physical activity to improve health. This review also considers of how the A2L Scheme can best help people with poor health, and/or long term health limiting conditions. This requires both specific criteria and careful consideration of eligibility criteria, given the national changes that have been implemented. It will also need close monitoring to enable assessment of whether outcomes are being achieved.
- 1.18 Some access to leisure schemes have achieved this dimension by linking to GP Referral Schemes, and this could also be an option for ACC.
- 1.19 Changing the scope and focus of the ACC A2L Scheme will require a shift in both marketing and administration. Making the Scheme more targeted means that its existence, benefits and use need to be promoted very clearly to those who are eligible for it, together with an explanation of how, where and for what it can be used.
- 1.20 The application process for a more targeted card is likely to need to change too; there may be potential to simplify the process and link it to the actual benefit system, in that once an individual has been assessed and given eg low income support under one of the new categories, he/she is automatically also given

A2L entitlement. This would send a clear message about the purpose and aim of the A2L Scheme as opposed to it being predominantly an age related benefit.

- 1.21 Given that politically it will not be simple to change the A2L Scheme and some resistance is to be expected, particularly from those aged 60 plus, it might be prudent not to change the range of activities which can currently be accessed. However, over time it may be that it is access to participation in active leisure that becomes the focus of the Scheme, as opposed to discounted drinks. However, there is potential to provide activities, followed by refreshment which would deliver both health and social interaction benefits, and again would help to re-enforce the fact that the A2L Scheme is about facilitating access to regular activity, not just providing discounted coffee.
- 1.22 Retaining access to discounted childcare to facilitate participation in regular physical/training/learning/work activity is important as that will help improve both an individual's and the general community's health and economic position.
- 1.23 The cost to ACC of operating the new A2L Scheme will not necessarily change, but these changes are likely to make the overall Scheme more sustainable in the long run, because the number of participants receiving discounts will reduce if the age entitlement is removed. This means ACC can be seen to be clearly targeting its resources in line with its corporate and strategic priorities, to address and tackle inequalities, whilst facilitating improved quality of life and health improvement in its community. There should be a reduced operational cost to the scheme, which also means that ACC's partners, Sport Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Sports Village should be able to focus on developing more targeted activities, appropriate to the participants being supported, in line with the Scheme's aims, as opposed to simply implementing discounts on existing activities.
- 1.24 Based on the review of the current A2L Scheme, the consultation, comparison and analysis undertaken, it is clear that there is significant opportunity to change the focus and scope of the card, not because it is not working, but because ACC's corporate and strategic priorities have changed, and the Scheme therefore needs to re-aligned, to ensure it contributes to the agreed way forward.
- 1.25 The national change in the benefit system provides a further driver for change, to ensure that the A2L Scheme supports those most in need. There are a number of recommendations for a new A2L Scheme, which reflect these changes. These are:

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (R1) – To confirm the requirement to have a scheme in Aberdeen that seeks to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities in Aberdeen.

Recommendation 2 (R2) – The ACC A2L Scheme is re-aligned to fit with, reflect and contribute to, appropriate corporate, strategic and SOA priorities, linked to reducing health and wellbeing inequalities within the city.

Recommendation 3 (R3) – Eligibility for discounted tea and coffee should be removed from A2L;

Recommendation 4 (R4) – The aim of the new A2L Scheme should be to facilitate access to increased regular participation in health and well-being for those for whom affordability, or disability is a barrier.

Recommendation 5 (R5) – The current A2L Scheme is revised and re-launched as a more focussed and targeted subsidy, based on re-dressing inequalities, improving quality of life and community health. ie implement Option 4.

Recommendation 6 (R6) - The new A2L Scheme criteria should reflect the Welfare Reform (due to be implemented from 2017) and the new benefit system to support those on a low income, in job training schemes, or on tax credits, plus local priorities to

support those on low incomes/out of work. The recommended eligibility criteria are:

- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA),
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA),
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group,
- PIP
- Job Training Programmes and Tax Credits,
- Individuals in receipt of Council Tax Reductions,
- Individuals in receipt of Housing Benefit,
- Individuals in receipt of the Guarantee Element of Pension Credit,
- Young People on Passported Benefits eg free school meals, educational grants

Recommendation 7 (R7) – The new A2L Scheme should retain provision of subsidised childcare.

Recommendation 8 (R8) – The new A2L Scheme should also facilitate access to regular participation in physical activity for all those with a physical or learning disability. Evidence of disability must be provided eg written confirmation of disability support.

Recommendation 9 (R9) - The new A2L Scheme should be linked to a GP Referral Scheme, but registration for this is a separate process, reflecting a health need, as opposed to the need for financial support (although it is recognised the two may not be mutually exclusive), supported by a GP's signed medical assessment.

Recommendation 10 (R10) – The A2L Scheme is no longer a universal benefit at 60; consideration is given to link the entitlement age to the national retirement age, which is due to increase over time.

Recommendation 11 (R11) – Prior to implementation of the above changes, ACC undertakes detailed work on the impact of the changes; this report cannot cover them due to data protection issues on individuals' information. An alternative would be use the comparative data collated as part of this work on other existing access to leisure schemes.

Recommendation 12 (R12) – A new, more targeted and integrated approach to marketing is adopted, focussing on those who will be entitled to A2L membership, with clear explanations of what the card is for, when and where. If possible, A2L should be offered as part of overall/one stop shop approach to supporting individuals requiring benefits.

Recommendation 13 (R13) – The application and administrative process for the A2L Scheme is simplified and if possible, directly linked, at local level, to the benefit assessment process, to assist in both implementation and Scheme use, but also to help change the perception of what A2L is about.

Recommendation 14 (R14) – A new monitoring approach is developed for the new A2L Scheme so that the outcomes achieved can be clearly understood. Critically, a means of correlating the individual user with the activity in which they participate, and the frequency thereof, is required if health and quality of life benefits are to be tangible.

Recommendation 15 (R15) – In implementing the new A2L Scheme, consideration is given to the times at which the activities are available. It is recommended that provision of A2L should be at off peak times only, to focus the benefits on those to whom they are targeted. The one exception to this should be family swimming which should be available to A2L car holders at specific times during peak periods.

Recommendation 16 (R16) -Equally the range of activities offered, and the level of subsidy offered also need further consideration eg Free swimming should be changed to the introduction of a minimal charge. The aim should be to encourage regular participation in physical activity, to maintain the positive benefits of social interaction, alongside physical activity.

Recommendation 17 (R17) – A2L should be available at all ACC leisure facilities in the City, including Learning Centres, Sport Aberdeen Facilities, the Aberdeen Sports Village, and Garthdee Alpine Sports Facility; its usage should be consistent across all these facilities in terms of user eligibility, times of access, available activities etc.

Recommendation 18 (R18) -Implement the new scheme on a phased basis, taking into consideration individuals who have a current entitlement, but who would not be entitled under the new scheme criteria.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) was appointed by Aberdeen City Council (ACC) in December 2012 to undertake a Review of the Access to Leisure Scheme (A2L). This scheme, which began in 1990, falls within the remit of the Education, Culture and Sport directorate who set the terms and conditions for the scheme eligibility.
- 2.2 This A2L Review was commissioned, and has been undertaken, in the context of significant cuts in public sector spending, particularly in relation to non-statutory services, of which leisure is one. It is noted that Aberdeen City Council did not commission the review as part of any specific identified planned budget reduction.

Project Background - The A2L Scheme

- 2.3 Aberdeen District Council originally approved the A2L Scheme in January 1990, with an implementation date of April 1st 1990. The A2L Scheme widened the categories of groups eligible for concessions at District Council leisure facilities, and at the same time extended the concessions available to these groups. It built on the previous and original A2L Scheme developed with a very specific focus, to provide reduced cost access to swimming for the unemployed.
- 2.4 The 1990 scheme was devised in line with the recommendations outlined by the Audit Commission's report and the Scottish Sports Council's "Sports 2000" Strategy.
- 2.5 The main aims and objectives of the 1990 Scheme were:
- to eliminate the cost barrier to participation in sport and leisure activities
 - designed to encourage greater participation in sport and leisure by specific groups other than those with a disability, at a reduced cost
 - to provide equal opportunities and encourage greater participation in recreation by specific target groups within the City of Aberdeen
- 2.6 Scheme eligibility in 1990 included:
- Financially Disadvantaged Groups and those with a Disability
 - Original scheme Applicants be resident in Aberdeen City, and in receipt of one of the following benefits:
 - Income Support (Individual or family) Unemployment Benefit
 - Family Credit Invalidity Benefit
 - Disability Benefit
 - Reduced Earnings Allowance
 - Severe Disablement Allowance Mobility and Disablement Allowance Invalid Care Allowance
 - Senior Citizen
 - Widows' Benefit/Widowed Mothers Allowance
- 2.7 The original A2L Scheme Card Holder Entitlement 1990 - 1991 (Source: Arts and Recreation (Sports) Sub Committee 2nd November 1990 Appendix II) allowed for discounted access to the following activities:
1. **Swimming** - Free at all times - Reduced rates for: Jacuzzi, Bath/Shower Turkish/Sauna and Fitness Suite.
 2. **Sports Centres** - 50% reduction between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday
 3. **Golf/Bowling/Tennis** - Monday to Friday up to 5 p.m. 75% reduction
Monday to Friday July/August up to 5 p.m. 50% reduction
All other times including Local Public Holidays Normal Charge

Season Ticket Holders 50% reduction

- 4. **Park Facilities** - 50% reduction
 - 5. **Bon Accord Centre** Indoor Bowling - 50% reduction
- 2.8 The cost of membership for the 1990 A2L Scheme was Adult £1, Family £2.50 ie 2 adults, 2 children.
- 2.9 Following implementation of the 1990 A2L Scheme, the Council developed its Accord Card. This card, which covers a number of services including free bus passes, is an entitlement of all Aberdeen City Council area residents. The AC Accord Scheme Operational Progress Report, 17 June 2008 stated:
- “ It has long been the intention of the Council to move Access to Leisure entitlement from a paper based system to an electronic system utilising the Accord card.”
- 2.10 This aim was discussed and implemented and at the same time as transferring Access to Leisure entitlement to the Accord/National Entitlement Card, the opportunity was taken to review some of the policies governing the Access to Leisure Scheme. The key changes were that all charges associated with the scheme were abolished, and those people aged 60 years and over were given entitlement to lifetime membership.
- 2.11 Access to reduced cost childcare in the Council’s Community Learning Centres was introduced from 1 April 2012 (prior to this date reduced costs childcare was only available for crèches in sports centres). The discounted coffee is available at a number of different outlets in Aberdeen city, including leisure facilities. This option was introduced prior to 2011.
- 2.12 Since the A2L Scheme was first introduced, it has facilitated access to activities at both peak and off peak times.

The Current A2L Scheme

- 2.13 The day-to-day operation and administration of the A2L Scheme falls within the scope of the Accord Card team. The Accord/National Entitlement Card is the Aberdeen City Council smartcard scheme which delivers a variety of local and national services, including the Residents’ Discount Scheme, cashless catering and vending at secondary schools, Sport Aberdeen SAM fitness membership, Sport Aberdeen Golf Membership, access and membership card to the Aberdeen Sports Village, Scotland-wide free bus travel for the elderly and disabled people, Young Scot, concessionary travel for 16-18 year olds, library membership, A2L and e-money purse delivered with sQuidcard Ltd.
- 2.14 The Access to Leisure (A2L) scheme offers a discount to Aberdeen City Residents or pre-authorised groups/ organisations to all Sport Aberdeen facilities and the Aberdeen Sports Village for those aged 60 years and over, and those who have either a disability, low income, or certain other categories.
- 2.15 A2L also offers a discount on Aberdeen City Council’s childcare services for children under 12, including crèches, playgroups, after school and holiday clubs. In addition discounts can be obtained at the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Provost Skene’s, and Maritime Museum Coffee Shops at certain times of the day. These facilities are managed internally as part of the City Council’s portfolio of Cultural Services. The ability to purchase discounted coffee is particularly favoured by older people entitled to A2L, and the social dimension afforded by this discount is important. In addition, as residents, those with A2L are entitled to a 10% discount on food and coffee in His Majesty’s Theatre coffee shop, and the Music Hall Coffee shop.
- 2.16 At present, ACC has a number of agreements with delivery partners to offer Access to Leisure. These agreements outline the Council’s expectations relating to A2L. One organisation receives a specific

subsidy in addition to their core grant funding which helps to offset the cost of the implementation of the scheme.

- 2.17 Sport Aberdeen and Garthdee Alpine Sports are both ALEOs (Arms Length External Organisation) of Aberdeen City Council, and Aberdeen Sports Village is a Joint venture Partnership with the University of Aberdeen.
- 2.18 There are approximately 57,500 citizens with Access to Leisure entitlement, with 50,000 qualifying as they are 60 years or over. The entitlement is securely carried electronically on the Accord Card, with entitlement being displayed when the card is placed on a card reader.
- 2.19 Customers can apply for A2L at libraries, customer access points and the Customer Service Centre at Aberdeen City Council's headquarters, Marischal College. Those 60 years of age and over receive Access to Leisure entitlement for life, whilst those under 60 receive entitlement either for 3 months, 6 months or 12 months, dependent on which category of entitlement is appropriate. Group A2L is also available to eligible groups, as is a family membership.
- 2.20 There are approximately 55,000 uses of Access to Leisure entitlement per year across the City.

Aim of A2L Review

- 2.21 The aim of undertaking the review of the A2L Scheme is to provide the required information to enable ACC to objectively justify and direct the level of subsidy necessary for the scheme, the eligibility criteria, and the scope of the current and any future offer including the option to withdraw the scheme.
- 2.22 The review will also identify the rationale for the continuation/cessation and/or development of the A2L Scheme.

Scope of A2L Review

- 2.23 The scope of the A2L review is summarised below:
- A comparative assessment/benchmark of the scheme in relation to the offers provided by other schemes of a similar nature within the United Kingdom, in particular highlighting areas of good practice
 - Analysis of and comment on the eligibility criteria and the pricing/subsidy levels of the current scheme
 - A consideration of potential to expand the scheme, where appropriate, with an analysis of the cost implications
 - A consideration of the impacts upon the current service agreements held by A2L delivery partners and any financial implications of changes to the scheme

Our Approach

- 2.25 The approach taken to undertaking the A2L review has included the following tasks:
- Review of the existing A2L Scheme
 - Consultation with internal ie ACC Stakeholders
 - Consultation with external stakeholders
 - Consultation with a sample of A2L users
 - A comparative analysis of other relevant and similar access to leisure schemes
 - Identification of the key issues and opportunities for the ACC A2L Scheme
 - Development of recommendations for the way forward for the future A2L Scheme

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 In order to appreciate the development of the A2L Scheme, its current focus and operation, and critically what its future role might be, it is important to understand the local context, and in particular the priorities of ACC and its partners, and the demographic profile of Aberdeen. Clearly, any scheme aimed at benefiting local residents should be aligned with identified priorities for that community, to ensure that a future A2L contributes to desired outcomes.
- 3.2 The key strategic priorities for the City and its wider area are summarised below.

Draft Five Year Business Plan - Aberdeen City Council 2013/14 - 2017/18

Vision and Strategy

- 3.3 Aberdeen City Council (ACC) and its community planning partners are committed to improving the City for the people who live and work there, and visit it. The Aberdeen 2022 Vision for the City has been tried and tested by a wide section of civic Aberdeen and its communities. The vision is seen as highly aspirational and challenging, but because of this it will act as a real catalyst for change.

‘Aberdeen 2022, the City we all love to live in’

- 3.4 This vision has been jointly developed by the Council and:

- NHS Grampian
- Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Grampian Fire and Rescue Service
- Grampian Police
- Aberdeen Civic Forum
- Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future

- 3.5 One of the central strands of this vision is the need to address inequalities, including health, and to focus interventions on prevention. This is clearly a key priority to which the A2L Scheme should be aligned in the future.

- 3.6 The Council’s Vision is:

“Aberdeen - the smarter city”

- 3.7 Aberdeen City Council is working to support:

An ambitious achieving, smart city, which:

- Develops an economy based on knowledge and innovation,
- Encourages more efficient use of greener resource which generates a competitive economy,
- Uses technology and data to enable informed decisions to be taken,
- Enables citizens to interact in a city where there is a sense of place; and
- Encourages a form of governance which engages its citizens

- 3.8 ACC wants its citizens to recognise this and play their part in taking it forward. ACC will ensure all citizens are encouraged and appropriately supported to make their full contribution.

- 3.9 The key strategic priority under which the A2L Scheme sits is:

Smarter Living Quality of Life - Challenging inequality and positively promoting wellbeing; building on cultural and physical activity.

- 3.10 The priority theme objectives are met by the service provided and the priorities under Smarter Living Quality of Life are:
- Enhancing the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self esteem
 - Seeking to reduce the levels of inequality in the city and planning with key partners to try to ensure welfare reform does not increase the inequality gap
 - Improving access to, and increasing participation in, arts and culture by providing opportunities for citizens and visitors to experience a broad range of high quality arts and cultural activities
 - Aspiring to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality and diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.
 - Promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's visitors and citizens to lead more active healthier lives

New Community Plan and new Single Outcome Agreement April 2013

- 3.11 ACC and its partners are currently developing both a new Community Plan, and a new Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), which will become policy in 2013.
- 3.12 The key focus of both these strategic documents is equality, and the implementation of preventative actions related to health and the ageing population, to reduce the future cost to the public purse.
- 3.13 The new Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) has a 10 year Vision, a 5 year Action Plan, and Outcomes which need to be achieved by agreed deadlines. The SOA is reviewed annually.
- 3.14 Amongst the key challenges identified are:
- A projected increase in the numbers and proportion of the population over 65;
 - Areas of multiple deprivation which correlate to negative personal outcomes in:-
 - economic activity;
 - health;
 - offending;
 - substance mis-use.
 - A projected skills and labour shortage;
 - Increasing traffic on strategic routes and increasing congestion.
- 3.15 Community Planning Aberdeen recognises that these challenges are complex and, in many cases, the solutions are interrelated. These cannot be tackled by one organisation alone. Shared responsibility and shared action is needed to improve these outcomes.
- 3.16 The focus of the SOA for the next 5 years has been identified as follows:
- Whilst the economic health of the city is good, future growth is key to creating communities which aspire to, and can achieve, an increased quality of life;
 - Whilst the city is successful at creating jobs, a significant shortage of skilled workers is projected. At the same time, sections of the city's population remain outside the jobs market;
 - Inequalities exist across the city and evidence shows correlation between circumstances (both geographic and demographic) and negative outcomes including in:-
 - economic activity;
 - health;
 - offending;
 - substance mis-use;
- 3.17 In tackling the priorities set out in this SOA, collaborative work will be required to target resource and activity in ways which reduce these inequalities;

- Whilst the causes and manifestations of inequality are complex, addressing these through targeted support in the early years of children's lives can help improve outcomes;
- With projected increases in population, an effective and balanced transport infrastructure will make the city easy to get around, whilst underpinning economic growth and supporting healthy living;
- The city, in common with the rest of the UK, will face significant challenges in managing projected increases in the proportion of the population over 65, 75 and 85 years of age.

3.18 The SOA relate directly to the existing, and any future A2L Scheme. These are:

- Active ageing
- Positive change through health improvement
- Increasing participation in physical activity
- Improving life chances of young people by giving them a better start in life

The Welfare Reform Act 2012

3.19 The UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 will introduce significant changes to the welfare system. Although welfare is a reserved matter for UK Government, some measures impact on devolved services delivered by the Scottish Government and local authorities such as Health, Social Care and Housing. The Scottish Government is working with our stakeholders, partners and the UK Government to understand the impact of these reforms on people and services in Scotland.

3.20 The UK Government introduced the Welfare Reform Act 2012 in April 2013; this will see significant changes to the welfare system which will impact on people and policies in Scotland. The Act, amongst other measures:

- Introduces **Universal Credit (UC)**, a new, integrated, working age benefit that will replace a number of existing benefits including Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and Tax Credits.

- Abolishes **Council Tax Benefit** from April 2013. Funding for this support will instead be given to the Scottish Government and administered by local authorities.

- Abolishes discretionary **Social Fund** payments. Funding for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses will instead be transferred to the Scottish Government from April 2013.

3.21 On 22 December 2011, the Scottish Parliament took the unprecedented step of partially refusing legislative consent for those parts of the UK Welfare Reform Bill relating to elements of UC and PIP. This resulted in the Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Act 2012 which was introduced in March 2012 and gives Scottish Ministers powers to make changes to Scottish legislation relating to passported benefits, so that these could operate under the new benefits regime.

3.22 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is abolishing the discretionary social fund and transferring funding for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses to the Scottish Government from April 2013. The successor arrangements to Crisis Loans for Living Expenses and Community Care Grants will be a national scheme delivered through Local Authorities called the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF). The SWF will run for a period of around 2 years from April 2013. A longer term arrangement will be informed by a review of the interim arrangements. The intention is to set out the permanent scheme in legislation.

3.23 The SWF is intended to:

- provide a safety net in an emergency when there is an immediate threat to health and safety (Crisis Grants)

- enable independent living or continued independent living, preventing the need for institutional care (Community Care Grants).

Demographics

3.24 Understanding the demographic profile of the City, now and in the future is also relevant to any future A2L Scheme, given that the initiative is aimed at increasing participation in active recreation by reducing the barrier of cost for a number of identified disadvantaged groups. Clearly a scheme targeting specific groups and disadvantages should be relevant to the issues there are at local level, and should be able to demonstrate in relation to the City's population, how it is helping to address these.

3.25 Table 1 below shows the estimated Aberdeen City Population by age group, as at 2011:

Table 1 Estimated population of Aberdeen City, by age group, 2011

Age group	Male pop. Aberdeen	Female pop.	Total pop. of Aberdeen	% of total pop. of
0-15	17,883	16,833	34,716	15.7%
16-29	25,273	26,620	51,893	23.5%
30-44	25,161	21,624	46,785	21.2%
45-59	21,104	21,278	42,382	19.2%
60-74	13,730	14,935	28,665	13.0%
All ages	109,253	111,167	220,420	100.0%

(Source: Aberdeen City Council Demographic Fact Sheet 2012)

3.26 Table 2 shows the estimated population projections by age group to 2035:

Table 2 Projected population, by age group, in Aberdeen City, 2010-2035

Age group	Base year	Projected years				
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
0-15	34,036	37,040	41,022	43,021	43,155	42,362
16-29	50,573	49,760	45,358	44,996	47,847	51,525
30-49	61,210	66,735	73,723	78,654	79,666	77,112
50-64	39,196	40,852	42,487	42,263	43,689	48,889
65-74	16,217	18,827	21,324	22,762	24,641	24,915
All ages	217,120	229,935	241,391	252,347	262,361	271,705

(Source: Aberdeen City Council Demographic Fact Sheet 2012)

Deprivation

3.27 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland. It is based on the small area geography known as *data zones*, which enables users to compare relative deprivation at a small area level. There are 6,505 data zones in Scotland and 267 in Aberdeen, with an average population of around 815 per data zone.

3.28 Despite Aberdeen being a relatively affluent City, there are small but very significant areas of deprivation. The SIMD 2012 results show that:

- 22 Aberdeen data zones are among the most deprived 15% of all Scottish data zones.
- Aberdeen's 22 deprived data zones account for 2.3% of all deprived data zones in Scotland.
- Based on population, Aberdeen has the 16th highest rate of deprivation in Scotland, equivalent to 1.01 deprived data zones per 10,000 residents.
- Aberdeen's 22 deprived data zones have a population of 16,723, 7.7% of the city's total population.
- The most deprived data zone in Aberdeen is S01000060, which is in the Torry neighbourhood. It is ranked 221st out of Scotland's 6,505 data zones.

- Most of the deprived data zones are located in the seven priority neighbourhoods, – Tillydrone, Middlefield, Torry, Woodside, Seaton, Cummings Park and Northfield, although there are also two in Mastrick and one in Stockethill.
 - The domains with the most deprived data zones are Crime (49 Aberdeen data zones in the most deprived 15% in Scotland), Health (48) and Housing (41).
- 3.29 The changes between the SIMD 2009 and 2012 show the largest decreases were in the Employment and Income domains. In Employment, the number of deprived data zones was down from 24 to 14 between SIMD 2009 and SIMD 2012, a fall of 42%. While in Income, the decrease was 33%, down from 18 to 12 data zones. Because these two domains are highly-weighted, they had a significant impact on the overall reduction in deprivation in Aberdeen. There were also decreases in the Crime and Education, Skills & Training domains.
- 3.30 The largest increase was in Health, where the number of deprived data zones rose from 44 to 48 in SIMD. Along with North Ayrshire and East Ayrshire, Aberdeen had one of the highest increases in deprived data zones in this domain between SIMD 2009 and SIMD 2012. There are 10,000 people living in the City area who are on health-related benefits.
- 3.30 The overall level of deprivation in Aberdeen remains much lower than many Council areas, particularly those in the Central Belt. However, 22 data zones in Aberdeen are among the most deprived in the whole of Scotland, and these data zones have a total population of almost 17,000.
- 3.31 21 of Aberdeen's most deprived data zones were also in the most deprived 15% of Scottish data zones in SIMD 2009. This indicates a significant core of multiple deprivation in the City.
- 3.32 The main changes between SIMD 2009 and SIMD 2012 are the decreased number of deprived data zones in the Employment and Income domains, which could indicate a degree of resilience in the local economy to the economic downturn compared to most other areas. The only noteworthy negative change was in the Health domain.
- 3.33 It should be noted that the SIMD identifies **areas** of multiple deprivation. However, not everyone living in a deprived area is deprived, and not all deprived people live in deprived areas. Even in the least deprived parts of Aberdeen, some households will have levels of relative deprivation that are comparable with households in areas that are among the most deprived in Scotland.

Gender Audit of Statistics in Aberdeen - Comparing the position of men and women (Aberdeen City Council June 2012)

- 3.34 The following is a summary of the Gender Audit of Statistics in Aberdeen - Comparing the position of men and women (Aberdeen City Council 2012); the findings of this study should be reflected in any future Access to Leisure Scheme:
- In 1991, the female population was 6.3% greater than the male population, however by 2010 that had decreased to 2.0%.
 - Life expectancy at birth in Aberdeen is 76.3 years for males and 80.9 years for females, based on 2008-2010 data.
 - At the time of the school census in 2011, there were 21,204 pupils attending local authority primary and secondary schools in Aberdeen. Girls account for 48% and boys account for 52% of the school population.
 - The earnings gap between full-time male and female employees in Aberdeen was £1.90 per hour in 2011 with men earning £15.46 per hour.
 - In Aberdeen, employment rates for males are significantly higher than for females. In the year ending March 2011, the rates were 81.3% for males compared to 71.6% for females.

- Women made up the majority of those in receipt of Income Support (61%), while men were the majority of Jobseeker's Allowance recipients (69%).

Aberdeen Community Health Partnership Report 2008

Mortality

- 3.35 Rates of all-cause mortality (all ages) and mortality from stroke (under-75s) in Aberdeen are significantly better than Scotland as a whole. Early mortality rates from heart disease and cancer are not significantly different to Scotland as a whole.

Substance Use

- 3.36 An estimated 26.5% of adults smoke, compared to 27.3% in Scotland as a whole. There have been 206 alcohol related deaths in the last five years, a death rate significantly better than (below) the Scottish average, whilst the proportion of the population hospitalised for alcohol related and attributable causes is significantly worse than average. The proportion of the population hospitalised for drug related conditions is also worse than average, with 949 patients discharged from hospital over the last three years.

III Health & Injury and Mental Health & Function

- 3.37 For patients with heart disease and stroke, the proportions of the population hospitalised are significantly better (lower) than the Scottish average. However, for emergency admission patients, road traffic accident casualties, and unintentional injuries in the home for patients aged 65 and over, the CHP is significantly worse (higher) than average. Expected years of life in good health are 67.8 for males and 72.1 for females (Scotland 66.3 and 70.2 respectively). With the exception of the death rate from suicide, which is not significantly different to the Scottish average, Aberdeen CHP is significantly better than the Scottish average for all mental health and function indicators.

Population of Older People in Aberdeen (August 2012 Aberdeen City Council)

- 3.38 The following is a summary of the profile of older people in Aberdeen:
- In June 2011, an estimated 32,354 people in Aberdeen were aged 65+, representing 14.6% of the city's total population
 - The proportion of Aberdeen's population aged 65+ is the fourth lowest in Scotland, after Glasgow, West Lothian and Edinburgh
 - Women account for 58% of Aberdeen's 65+ population
 - There are twice as many women than men aged 85+
 - In the 10 years from 2001 and 2011, Aberdeen's 65+ population is estimated to have fallen by 88, from 32,442 to 32,354, however, the 85+ population grew by 13% - three times the rate of growth seen in the city's total population
 - The city's 65+ population has been very stable for many years. Since 1981, it has fluctuated between 30,500 and 32,500
 - Although the overall 65+ population has remained stable, there has been a growth in the number of people aged 85+ within that wider age group
 - At neighbourhood-level, the 65+ population ranges from 6.1% of the total population in George Street to 23.6% in Hazlehead
 - Projections produced by National Records of Scotland show Aberdeen's 65+ population rising by almost 20,000, from 32,105 in 2010 to 51,817 in 2035
 - Aberdeen's 85+ population is projected to increase by 120% over the same period

- The number of males aged 65+ in Aberdeen will increase by more than three-quarters by 2035, compared with the female growth rate of just under 50%
- Based on projections by National Records of Scotland, there will be 16,600 single person households in Aberdeen in 2035 where the householder is aged 65+
- There will be just over 5,000 single person households where the householder is 85+, more than double the 2010 total
- Life expectancy for people in Aberdeen aged 65 is 16.96 years for males and 19.31 years for females.

Fit for the Future 2009 - 2015 (Aberdeen City Council)

3.39 The vision for sport and physical activity in Aberdeen is:

“More People More Active More Often”

Fit for the Future has five key areas of activity and sets objectives to:

1. Promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Aberdeen.
2. Provide a comprehensive and high quality range of sports facilities in Aberdeen.
3. Maximise the social, educational, health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity in Aberdeen.
4. Develop and sustain pathways which nurture local, regional and national sporting people to reach their potential.
5. Raise the profile of sport in Aberdeen.

Fit for the Future acknowledges that there are a number of challenges in getting more people to be more active more often.

The challenges for increasing participation in sport and physical activity are as follows:

- Technological advances have led to a shift towards sedentary recreational activities such as home computing and game stations.
- Inactivity and a poor diet are leading to increased levels of obesity; this and the associated health problems is a disincentive to start a more physically active lifestyle.
- Preventing participation drop off amongst young people, especially young women, who statistically tend not to sustain their participation into adulthood
- Encouraging all communities to participate involves catering for physical and cultural access needs of very diverse communities including: older people; children and young people; areas of social and economic deprivation; black and ethnic minority communities; women; lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual communities; and people with disabilities and health issues.

3.40 Building on current initiatives to address the above barriers to participation will involve supporting emerging forms of participation, supporting grassroots sports clubs, ensuring the programming of facilities maximises access by as many communities as possible and training specialist coaches to deliver sporting activities to residents with a variety of different needs.

Public Equalities and Access Questions Aberdeen City Council 2012

3.41 The Equalities Strategists at Aberdeen City Council undertook public consultation on equalities and access issues in 2012. The results from respondents that impact directly on leisure facilities and services, and therefore are potentially areas to be addressed through an A2L Scheme are:

- Leisure centres are prohibitively expensive
- I was disappointed that there weren't any facilities for women only sessions with a female lifeguard. When I asked if this could be organised, there was no sympathy or willingness to do so!
- More accessibility for leisure activities

- Providing unisex changing facilities (and/or advertising these if they already exist) at sport and leisure centres.
- Need positive role models in sport
- They do not advertise whether a disability can be accommodated. We are a huge group of society and although we may be disabled we still want to be able to enjoy our lives. The idea of being able to take a carer in without them having to pay (as in both the cinema, football etc) would be ideal. This way the staff are able to go about their normal duties without having to help me. Facilities for disabled - I am on crutches and therefore cannot access the pool, if they were more accessible to people with disabilities. There are no fully accessible changing rooms in swimming pools in the City. There is a lack of disabled sports such as SOMA or accessible Boccia for people with disabilities in the leisure centres Better public access Ease of access them being more accessible to NON regular users without making them feel as incomers to the sport or facility.
- It is not just the cost of getting into these places but also purchasing the necessary clothing/footwear that might be needed. I would love to become fitter by going to the gym, swimming pool or attended fitness classes but financially it is impossible. Cheaper Can be expensive Cheaper costs cheaper entrance (discount for police employees etc) & Cheaper access to university facilities for people in the local community cost less, or there were discounts available. They are too expensive. I have moved from Edinburgh where I could book a hall in the community centre for £15 to play five a side football. No additional fees were charged above this i.e. no membership fees, discounted sessions, Better deals for those living within the city, more corporate offers ie Westhill pool is my closest pool if Grampian Police were offered corporate deal I would buy a yearly pass! Special offers giving money of the entry price, BETTER FACILITIES, CHEAPER ENTRY Cheaper prices.
- Cheaper prices cheaper Lower entry fees for families; cheaper prices and more public opening times cheaper price for swimming. Lower prices. Very keen on tennis but only play outdoor over the summer. Indoor prices are excessive cheaper swimming lesser admission fee keeping the prices low, so that they are not a luxury but part of every day life more affordable prices for those on low incomes. Taster sessions for those less athletic/sporty without feeling so self conscious If they were cheaper prices and flexible times as I work 4 days a week.
- better advertisement of what is available in the local community centre better advertised activities better publicised programmes Better publicity of class times, More information available more information was readily available to let you know what is going on at these leisure centres I am never certain when the pools are open, knowing what is available More information about ,intend to start swimming - finding pool timetable easily would help and info on that about changing rooms and lockers More readily available information about activities and services If Aberdeen actually made some effort, as much as they do for football, to promote other sporting events such as the Union Street mile THIS would encourage society to engage in sport, even watching it to increase a community understanding of sport and competition. Aberdeen's small slice of the hype that was created from the Olympics.
- More accessible classes. Everything is geared towards hearing people with little regard for deaf people. Deaf people need communication support to take part in some sports/leisure activities - BSL/English Interpreters, Electronic Note takers, etc. The North East Sensory Service in John St, Aberdeen can advise on how to make organised sports/leisure classes and activities more accessible for deaf people. Information about these things needs to be accessible too and advertised in the places that deaf people get their information from. More classes
- More adults only sessions more adults only/public sessions at times that are suitable to me would encourage me to use these facilities more there should be times when the entrance is for adults and other times when children are allowed, too. Adult only sessions before work and in the evening, Sessions for over 50s only.
- MORE disabled sports in the evening within Aberdeen city would be great. Apart for football and boccia there are very few sports that encourage people with learning disabilities ,,,,seems to be more geared up towards people with physical disabilities
- More Women only sessions - with a lady lifeguard (particularly for Muslim females), at gyms/ swimming pools women, during the daytime whilst my kids are at school
- Tailored activities: Activities more suited to people with limited mobility; any for my age group similar Age group classes More Group Sessions for older people more time allocation for access by seniors more classes for older working lady The equivalent of classes for the terrified for beginners

or people with disabilities in my case. Private sessions for people with disabilities I'm disabled and don't have a lot of use for the type of services provided. I have limited mobility so less able to access

- Timings of activities Swim sessions that tie in with finishing work. Sports/activities available at times I could manage single parent so it is very important that I can have activities during school day rather than evenings or weekends review of opening times convenient times better opening times/availability, I have researched some recently but find the time tables for some facilities quite restrictive. Greater options out of working hours more convenient times for full time workers. Times to suit me the local pool doesn't open to the public until 8am which is no use for those who work during the week. Open for longer hours opening hours for shift pattern workers. Many organised activities this I would like to participate in are held during the day. I work full-time. Indoor facilities that are open later family friendly hours less time was allocated to clubs etc, it's difficult to fit in the time when hours available at the pool are limited. And if they are, they often have private classes in the evenings. More open timetables for public use More sessions for public swimming throughout the daytime Swimming pools have only a few hours during the day for adult swimming flexible opening times of swimming pool. ie weekends more varied opening times

Charges for Sports Facilities: Scotland 2011/12 **sportscotland** research digest 110

3.42 A questionnaire relating to concessionary charging schemes was introduced to the 1995 Charges Review and has been repeated by **sportscotland** each year since. Building upon the success of previous years, when respondents representing all 32 local authority areas provided information on these schemes, the 2011/12 survey once again ensured that Scotland-wide coverage was attained.

3.43 The survey identified three main types of scheme, as follows, at least one of which is offered in each local authority area in Scotland:

- concession charges;
- concession card scheme; and
- passport card scheme

3.44 A brief description of the nature and extent of each of these concessionary charging schemes is set out below:

- **Concession charges**

This scheme is directed at individuals from financially, or socially disadvantaged groups and involves the application of reduced charges for, or the free use of various activities and facilities. Of the 32 responding local authority areas, 25 (78%) offer this type of scheme.

- **Concession card scheme**

This scheme involves the provision of a concession card solely to individuals from financially, or socially disadvantaged groups, where use of the card affords access to a range of reduced, or zero prices. It is offered in 11 (34%) of the responding local authority areas.

- **Passport access scheme**

This scheme makes concession cards, for which a charge is levied, available to general users. It is offered by 12 (38%) of the Charges Review respondents.

In addition to the above, five respondents (16%) operate a concession card scheme relative to a range of specific beneficiaries, such as talented athletes.

Table 3, overleaf, details the different types of user groups that are eligible to use at least one of the three main categories of concessionary charging schemes available in the 32 responding local authority areas:

- 3.45 The tables below show the results of the **sportscotland** survey, based on the responses from the 32 local authorities.

Table 3: Eligibility of different user groups		
User Group	Inclusion in schemes	
	No.	%
People with disabilities	28	88
Elite athletes	28	88
People on income support	28	88
Senior citizens	30	94
Students	29	91
Unemployed persons	30	94
Single parents	12	38
Under 18s	27	84
Adults	11	34
Families	12	38

- 3.46 Table 4 shows the discounts offered in terms of free use or reduced charges for each eligible user group and the restrictions related to the timing of uptake:

Table 4: Discounts and restrictions for each user group								
User group	Peak time				Off-peak only			
	Free		Reduced		Free		Reduced	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
People with disabilities	3	11	25	89	0	0	0	0
Elite athletes	15	54	13	46	0	0	0	0
People on income support	0	0	25	89	1	4	1	4
Senior citizens	1	3	27	90	1	3	1	3
Students	0	0	26	90	1	3	1	3
	0	0	27	90	1	3	1	3

Table 4: Discounts and restrictions for each user group								
User group	Peak time				Off-peak only			
	Free		Reduced		Free		Reduced	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Unemployed persons	0	0	11	92	0	0	0	0
Single parents	2	7	24	89	0	0	0	0
Adults	0	0	10	91	0	0	0	0
Families	0	0	11	92	0	0	0	0

3.47 Concessionary charging schemes are made available in some form to customers from other local authority areas by 16 (50%) of the Charges Review respondents. Of these, Passport Access Schemes are the most accessible, with 58% open to non-residents. Concession charges schemes and Concession Cards are made available to non-residents by 56% and 36%, respectively, of the respondents operating such schemes.

3.48 The range of facilities offered under concessionary charging schemes is shown in Table 5, below:

Table 5: Facilities included in concessionary charging schemes		
Facility	Schemes	
	No.	%
Swimming pool	31	97
Sports centre	28	88
Leisure centre	14	44
Golf course	11	34
Tennis courts	27	84
Bowling green	13	41
Indoor bowling	9	28
Library	4	13
Theatre/Cinema	4	13
	0	0

3.49 Of the 21 respondents that operate the main card based concessions, 11 (52%) do not offer any associated benefits of scheme participation in addition to discounted or free admission. In the other 10 cases, the most common benefit made available is the advanced booking privilege, extended by 7 (33%) respondents.

Comparison with 2010 sportscotland Survey

3.50 The position with concessionary charges schemes have changed since that observed in 2010.

- 3.51 There is now more access to reduced charges at peak times for seven of the beneficiary groups. The groups benefiting most from these changes are senior citizens, elite athletes and those on income support. Senior citizens now can take advantage of reduced peak charges in 27 (97%) local authority areas offering a concession scheme. In contrast there have been some small reductions in the access to reduced off-peak charges for some groups.
- 3.52 Clearly the information summarised above provides useful context for the ACC A2L scheme, and some indicative trends that ACC may wish any future scheme to reflect.

4. Analysis of Current A2L Scheme, Key Issues (including consultation)

Profile of Card Holders

- 4.1 The current Access to Leisure Scheme (A2L) is, as previously stated, operated by ACC, through the Accord Card (ACC Smartcard scheme).
- 4.2 The Access to Leisure (A2L) scheme offers a discount to Aberdeen City Residents or pre-authorized groups/ organisations to all Sport Aberdeen facilities and the Aberdeen Sports Village for those aged 60 years and over, and those who have either a disability, low income, or certain other categories.
- 4.3 A2L also offers a discount on Aberdeen City Council's childcare services for children under 12, including crèches, playgroups, after school and holiday clubs. In addition discounts can be obtained at the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Provost Skene's, and Maritime Museum Coffee Shops at certain times of the day. These facilities are managed internally as part of the City Council's portfolio of Cultural Services. The ability to purchase discounted coffee is particularly favoured by older people with an entitlement to A2L, and the social dimension afforded by this discount is important.
- 4.4 The facility operators ie Sport Aberdeen, Garthdee Alpine Sports and the Aberdeen Sports Village have discretion over when A2L is available in identified facilities, through the programme of activities offered.
- 4.5 Given that the A2L Scheme is available to approximately 57,500 citizens, it is interesting to consider the breakdown of the current scheme take up:
- 50,000 Aberdeen city residents automatically qualify for the Scheme, given that they are 60 years or over
 - All other users of the Scheme receive entitlement either for 3 months, 6 months or 12 months, dependent on which category of entitlement is appropriate
 - There are approximately 55,000 uses (ie not users, but individual use of the card for an eligible activity), of Access to Leisure entitlement per year across the City.

Analysis of current A2L Take-up and Usage

- 4.6 The analysis of the current A2L Scheme take-up is summarised below in Table 6. The take-up figures were provided by the A2L Scheme Manager, ACC, (March 2013).

Table 6 Summary of Current A2L Scheme Take-up

Demographic	Number	Percentage	Number A2L Holders	Percentage
Total Population	220,420	100%	52,648	24%
Gender	109,253	50%	23,513	45%
☐ Male				
☐ Female	111,167	50%	29,135	55%

Demographic	Number	Percentage	Number A2L Holders	Percentage
Age				
<input type="checkbox"/> 0-15	34,716	16%	1,472	3%
<input type="checkbox"/> 16-74	169,725	77%	32,972	62%
N.B <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	15,979 (included in 16-74 figures)	7%(included in 16-74 figures)	18,204	35%
<input type="checkbox"/> 75+	15,979	7%	0	0
Disability Limiting Long Term Illness	Data not available			

- 4.7 Based on the above analysis, it is clear that almost a quarter of the Aberdeen city population take up A2L (if they are 60, they are given the card automatically). Of this 24% of those taking up A2L, 45% are women and 55% are men.
- 4.8 In relation to age groups, the highest card take up is for those aged between 16 -74, which is unsurprising, given that automatic entitlement to A2L is at 60 years of age.
- 4.9 27.2% of the population in Aberdeen city are over the age of 60 ie 50,000 people. The above figures therefore suggest there is reasonable take-up of the scheme by those who are automatically eligible for it. This is also borne out by records of usage for activities such as golf.
- 4.10 There is a significantly lower level of take up by children under 15, (despite family membership being available). This could be due to the fact that there are also junior rates available for activities at sports facilities, which provide lower cost access than adult rates. As it is not possible to identify the activities undertaken by individual A2L cardholders (usage information simply relates to the overall number of A2L uses at a centre/for an activity, and this in itself is not necessarily accurate as the recording of A2L usage is dependent on the A2L card holder swiping the card every time they access a facility), nor where they undertake them, it is not possible to state the take up level of A2L against eligibility rates.
- 4.11 Information on the number of people using Access to Leisure who have a long term disability and/or other entitlements is unavailable.
- 4.12 The above analysis is further evidenced, by looking in more detail at the actual usage of A2L. Table 7 shows the break down of the A2L Scheme in terms of eligibility category. This information has been collated from Appendix 3, which tracks A2L membership by ward and eligibility basis.

Table 7 Comparison Information transactions

Eligibility Basis on which A2L was issued	Use of the A2L by Age Categories							
	Usage by those aged under 20 years	%	Usage by those aged 20 - 59 years	%	Usage by those aged 60+ years	%	Total	%
Assistance (A2L)	31	1.45	51	0.85	2	0.004	84	0.17
Assistance (A2L)	31	1.45	51	0.85	2	0.004	84	0.17
Assistance x Two (A2L)	2	0.09	7	0.12	0	0	9	0.018
A2L (ACE)	1	0.05	2	0.03	1	0.004	4	0.008

Family	1,486	69.53	1,117	18.63	20	0.05	2,623	5.2
Group	8	0.37	416	6.9	0	0	424	0.84
Restricted	10	0.46	346	5.77	3	0.007	359	0.71
Standard	599	0.28	4,056	67.65	42,057	99.93	46,712	92.8
Total A2L entitlement issued	2,137	4.3%	5,995	12%	42,083	84%	50,315	100%

4.12 The breakdown of A2 is as follows:

Users Aged Under 20 years

4.13 The total number of those under 20 using A2L is 2,137 and the majority of these entitlements are issued as Family (1,486) followed by Standard (599). Those aged under 20 years make up 4.3% of the overall A2L users. . It is not possible to identify the activities undertaken by individual A2L cardholders (usage information simply relates to the overall number of A2L uses at a centre/for an activity, and this in itself is not necessarily accurate as the recording of A2L usage is dependent on the A2L card holder swiping the card every time they access a facility), nor where they undertake them.

Users Aged 20 - 59 years

- 5,995 users are aged 20-59 years; the majority of these have Standard entitlement (4,056) and family entitlement (1,117). Those aged 20 - 59 years make up 12% of the overall A2L users.

Users Aged 60 years Plus

- The total number of users is 42,083 of which 4,083 have standard entitlement. Those aged 60 years plus make up 84% of the overall A2L users.

4.13 Table 4 evidences the following usage profile of A2L:

- 4.3% of the current A2L usage is by those aged under 20 years; the majority of this usage is through children who are part of a family membership
- 12% of the current A2L usage is by those aged 20-59 years; the majority of this usage relates to those who are eligible for A2L on a 'standard' basis ie those on a low income/in receipt of low income related benefits, or those with some form of disability. Of this usage, 18.63% is by families, and 67.65% is by other users.
- 84% of the current A2L usage is from those aged over 60 ie 42,083 transactions. Of this usage, 99.03% is by those who are eligible for A2L purely on the basis of being 60, or being 60 with a low income/in receipt of low income related benefits, not 60 plus a disability or other specific disadvantage.
- There is very low usage by those who require one to one assistance to use the sports and recreation facilities in the city (A2L assistance category).
- The take-up of A2L from families on a low income tends to be higher in wards where a high incidence of disadvantage related to income has been identified ie the data zones discussed in paragraphs 3.18.

4.14 The usage profile of the current A2L Scheme highlights that it is predominantly used by older people, and families. It is clear that there is some usage by those with very significant disadvantages, but in the main the card appears to be benefitting those aged 60+, and those on a low income (which of course can relate to a myriad of different categories and timescales in itself). Whilst there is nothing at all wrong with this, there is potential to better target the subsidies provided to reach others living with disadvantage in the city, particularly given the changes to the national benefits system, which are being implemented from 1 April 2013.

4.15 ACC needs to be clear whether the aim of the A2L is simply to provide subsidised access to a range of leisure activities for those who otherwise might not be able to afford them, ie those in receipt of specific

benefits, or whether the aim of A2L is to be more pro-active in terms of facilitating and encouraging regular participation in active recreation to address health issues ie more of an intervention in line with the new corporate and SOA priorities. The latter approach does necessarily not exclude those in receipt of benefits.

- 4.16 What the above analysis does not show is what activities A2L is used for, and by whom. We can say which card is used at which facility, and how often, (See Appendix 6), but it is not possible to link individual card usage to a specific activity, or a person, other than by gender. Even this usage is unlikely to be completely accurate, as the data can only be collected if the A2L card is swiped by the holder, on entering the facility where they will participate. There is no means of correlating age activity and frequency, and therefore identifying whether the provision of subsidised recreational activities is actually benefitting A2L users, as it is encouraging more regular participation. Clearly this is a tangible outcome, which could be linked to health benefits.
- 4.17 The corollary to this is that it is possible that significant usage of A2L is related to the purchase of discounted childcare and coffee; again whilst in principle there is absolutely nothing wrong with this, if this is what ACC wishes to achieve from its A2L Scheme, and there are clear social benefits from the interaction facilitated by such use, it is hard to argue the tangible physical health benefits of such use.
- 4.18 Linking the provision of discounted childcare and coffee to an activity could help to address this eg carpet bowls followed by a coffee, or childcare sessions timed to facilitate participation in a group class.

Use of A2L at Aberdeen Sports Village

- 4.19 Information relating to use of the current A2L Scheme is available from two of ACC's partners, Aberdeen Sports Village and Sport Aberdeen. This data tracks the individual uses of the A2L Scheme in relation to specific activities, but it does not evidence who, or what category of user, each use relates to, given the obvious data protection issues involved.
- 4.20 Table 8 overleaf shows the range of activities for which A2L was used between August 2011-July 2012 in Aberdeen Sports Village.

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Table 8 A2L Usage August 2011 to July 2012 – Aberdeen Sports Village

Transaction	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Total
Booking													
Badminton Peak	4	2	10	6	2	4	5	4	10	16	4	4	71
Badminton Off Peak	23	13	12	16	10	32	19	20	22	26	21	28	242
Squash Peak	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7
Squash Off Peak	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
Table Tennis Off Peak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	4	12
Ticket													
Athletics Ind & Out Drop In Peak	21	18	7	18	10	17	16	19	10	14	14	8	172
Athletics Ind & Out Drop In Off Peak	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Athletics Outdoor Drop In Peak	0	0	0	6	2	0	2	7	5	9	5	0	36
Early Morning Gym Off Peak	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Energy Zone Peak	115	60	50	47	31	84	59	60	44	73	62	60	745
Energy Zone Off Peak	209	216	194	146	122	201	191	194	205	209	193	174	2254
Squash Guest Fee Peak	2	1	3	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Squash Guest Fee Off Peak	2	1	3	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	14

- 4.21 Table 8 clearly shows that the majority of use of A2L at the Aberdeen Sports Village is in the Energy Zone (fitness suite) for both peak and off peak times. This type of usage is less likely to relate to older people or families (based on the typical age profile of fitness suite users), and more likely to be benefitting younger adults who are on a low wage/income support benefits. The available data does not, however, provide this usage to user correlation. It is likely that this usage profile will change if the A2L Scheme is retained in its present form, once the new swimming pool is open, as family use will increase.

Sport Aberdeen

- 4.22 Usage data from Sport Aberdeen shows the extent of A2L usage at the sport and leisure facilities they operate on behalf of ACC. Sport Aberdeen is paid an annual management fee to operate these facilities by ACC.

Table 9 Sport Aberdeen user per activity January 2012 - December 2012

Activity	Uses Per Activity
Bowls	2,844
Coaching	7,446
Climbing Wall	2
Fitness Studio	4,925
Golf	2,623
Sport Aberdeen Membership	94
Golf Adult Membership A2L	328
Golf Adult Membership Weekday Only A2L	289
Golf Junior Membership A2L	6
Sports Hall Activities	1,364
Skating	3,484
Spectator	656
Squash	171
Swimming	38,778
Swimming lessons	7,543
Tennis	2,071

N.B It is important to note that the above figures reflect facility availability during 2012 eg Beach Leisure Centre climbing wall was closed for the majority of this time.

- 4.23 The above data clearly demonstrates that the main uses of the A2L Scheme are for subsidised swimming, fitness, and bowls, plus bowls coaching and swimming lessons. In broad terms, these activities reflect the profile of the current A2L users. Usage figures were unavailable for some facilities.
- 4.24 It is clear from the data at Aberdeen Sports Village and from Sport Aberdeen facilities, that A2L is well-used by at least some of the current holders, and that a large proportion of use is for participation in sport and physical activity. The 'gap' in the data is the correlation between the eligibility of an individual and the use to which his/her A2L entitlement is then put.
- 4.25 The consequence of this 'gap' is that it is unclear how many times A2L is used by each individual, where, and for what. Therefore it is very difficult to assess how those experiencing disadvantage are benefitting; is A2L actually enabling a single parent on a low income to take his/her children swimming

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on a regular basis, or is A2L simply facilitating access to activities by older people who might actually be able to afford to pay full price eg golf, golf coaching, and how does any participation facilitated by the A2L Scheme actually relate to long term health improvement? Actual 2012/13 usage of A2L collected by ACC is summarised below:

Site Description	No Of A2L Transactions	No Of Card Transactions
Beach Leisure Centre	4429	16222
Beach Leisure Centre	2101	4434
Beach Leisure Centre	1979	1856
Beach Leisure Centre	117	3657
Beach Leisure Centre	113	3929
Beach Leisure Centre	73	3027
Beacon Centre	784	3078
Beacon Centre	161	400
Jesmond Centre	112	2607
Jesmond Centre	2	210
Kincorth Indoor Sports Centre	244	979
Kincorth Indoor Sports Centre	1	59
Linx Ice Arena	346	723
Linx Ice Arena	53	208
Linx Ice Arena	1	NULL
Linx Ice Arena	33	7
Linx Ice Arena	22	763
Linx Ice Arena	6	370
Linx Ice Arena	2	2
Alex Collie Indoor S/C	585	4616
Alex Collie Indoor S/C	71	271
Peter Culter Indoor S/C	450	1619
Sheddocksley Indoor S/C	558	5912
Torry Indoor S/C	52	340
Torry Indoor S/C	7	91
Westburn Park Indoor Tennis CS	332	274
Westburn Park Indoor Tennis CS	3	210
Albury Outdoor Sports Centre	14	NULL
Kaimhill Outdoor Sports Centre	14	6
Bridge Of Don Swimming Pool	678	2344
Bridge Of Don Swimming Pool	1147	2217
Bucksburn Swimming Pool	1906	6075
Bucksburn Swimming Pool	8674	14891
Cults Academy Swimming Pool	187	538
Cults Academy Swimming Pool	359	949
Hazelhead Academy Swimming P	340	448
Hazelhead Academy Swimming P	167	1859
Kincorth Academy Swimming Pool	2729	2676
Kincorth Academy Swimming Pool	567	2231
Northfield Academy Swimming P	568	1181
Northfield Academy Swimming P	168	1854

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Aberdeen Box Office	121	279
Art Gallery - Coffee Shop	7476	8002
Maritime Museum - Coffee Shop	1090	1120
Provost Skene's House- Kitchen	14818	8510
Aberdeen Sports Village	20	600
Jo Stewart	21	191
Kings Pavilion	4	22
Mastrick Community Centre	88	262
Leaping Leopards Creche	37	1952
Cornhill Community Centre	3	191
Mile End After School Club	3	35
Sunnybank Community Centre	6	21
Tullos Community Centre	2	10
Beacn Crech	1	4
Northfield Community Centre	102	157
Deeside Family Centre	23	55
Sports Village Creche	71	143
Total Sports Transactions		
A2L	Card Use	
30155	93133	
Total Coffee Transactions		
A2L	Card Use	
23384	17632	
Creche Transactions		
A2L	Card Use	
336	2830	

- 4.26 Shown in the above are two transactions totals per site and some sites which have more than one total (as they have more than one EPOS). The ACC software that records A2L pass use is separate from the EPOS system and an Accord Card can hold multiple passes. When an operator presents a card to a reader, the passes are displayed on screen and the operator is prompted to select a pass for recording the "use of" any pass held on the card. We also record separately when a card has been presented to the software. The first total is the total number of times an operator has selected an A2L pass and recorded the "use of" said pass, the second total is the number of times a card has been presented to the software. Operators are happy to see that someone has a valid A2L pass on their card but and then fail to record that it has been used. For instance Leaping Leopards Creche has 37 A2L transactions but 1952 card transactions. It appears that 1952 cards for A2L entitlement were shown/checked, but usage has only been recorded for 37. Therefore it is the second column of figures which is key in terms of A2L usage. These totals are not the number of cardholders but the number of transactions. A cardholder could therefore be using their card more than once at individual sites.
- 4.27 The above clearly shows a total of 93,133 A2L uses for sport, 17,632 for the purchase of discounted coffee, and 2,830 for crèche usage. It is therefore clear that the majority of usage of A2L is for sports usage, but what we do not know is who is using their card for what sport, and where.

Consultation with Current A2L Users

- 4.27 Consultation was undertaken with existing A2L Users as part of the review to ascertain a sample of views on the scheme now and how people use it, and what they would like to see it cover in the future. A total of 93 responses were received and analysed. The detailed analysis of this study specific survey is in Appendix 1. The main issues raised through this consultation exercise, by those who responded, are summarised below:
- There is high awareness of A2L (72.5%)
 - The majority of respondents heard about A2L through non-formal advertising (43.2%), or via the ACC website (34.6%)
 - Of those who responded, only 50% have used A2L, and 30% of respondents have never taken up A2L entitlement, despite the high awareness of it
 - The reasons for respondents having A2L were given as:
 - Use of Sport Aberdeen facilities 69.4%
 - Coffee Shops 30.6%
 - Art Galleries 22.6%
 - Provost Skene's 22.6%
 - Other 19.4%
 - Maritime Museum 17.4%
 - Aberdeen Sports Village 16.1%
 - 33.3% of respondents never use their A2L entitlement to obtain a discount; 22.2% of respondents use their A2L entitlement once a week
 - Respondents like the fact that there is no initial cost to A2L
 - There is obvious confusion over what A2L covers and is for and whether it is more than a bus pass; this is exemplified by the fact that some respondents stated they do not know how it could be improved as they are unsure of what it covers now, and others effectively suggested it could be used for discount shopping.
 - Access to the discounts provided by A2L for those not living in Aberdeen city area, and specifically those with a disability has been raised as an issue in relation to use of the sports facilities operated by Aberdeenshire Council. A2L is only available to those living within Aberdeen City Council area for discounts on Aberdeen City Council services.
- 4.28 Clearly the feedback from the consultation will need careful consideration in assessing the role of, and rationale for, and A2L Scheme in the future. The consultation feedback does not suggest an awareness of the actual aims of the A2L scheme, nor, critically that these are actually being achieved.
- 4.29 This is where, moving forwards, the A2L Scheme would benefit from a clearer focus linked to defined outcomes, which themselves are better aligned to the new corporate and SOA priorities. The above analysis is not meant in any way as a criticism of the current A2L Scheme, which has clearly served, and is serving a purpose. However, the world has moved again since the current Scheme was established in 1990; in particular, the current financial challenges facing local government and the wholesale changes to the UK benefit system, plus the new strategic priorities for ACC mean that there is now an opportunity to re-visit A2L and ensure it is a Scheme 'fit for purpose', with tangible outcomes linked to local needs of city residents.
- 4.30 Based on the review, analysis and consultation with existing A2L users, (undertaken specifically for this review), the key factors to be considered in relation to the current A2L Scheme are:
- There is an ageing population in the ACC area, and this trend is likely to continue
 - There are more older women than men
 - Men are more likely to be employed, and earn more while in employment than women
 - There are small, but very significant areas of deprivation across the ACC area, despite it being a relatively affluent area
 - 10,000 people in the ACC area are on health-related benefits
 - The existing A2L Scheme is linked to, and reflects, the national ie Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit system, not the actual local priorities in Aberdeen City

- 11,000 people in the ACC area apply for crisis grants every year
- The majority of those in receipt of Income Support are women
- There is a high incidence of drug abuse, and alcohol related hospitalisation in Aberdeen city, compared to national figures
- The range of activities covered by the existing A2L is very wide
- There remain a range of access issues which the current A2L does not appear to address eg some relating to disability, cost of activities, programming (nature and timing), women only activities,
- A2L appears to be considered as a universal benefit, yet is supposed to be targeted; as the city's population continues to age the percentage of those automatically eligible for A2L, based on current criteria, will increase. This could present a potential affordability issue in relation to sport and leisure activities.
- There is evident confusion about what A2L is, what it does and does not cover
- Although many residents have heard of A2L, they have not necessarily taken up their entitlement, and even if they have, they do not always use it
- Some feedback suggests that current older A2L users benefit in relation to more social activities, as opposed to participation in active recreation
- There appears to be some uncertainty about whether A2L should just be about sport and recreation or include wider leisure activities eg art galleries
- Although aimed at reducing barriers to access sport and leisure activities, for those who are disadvantaged, there is potential to further extend this targeting, and therefore increase participation and improve residents' health
- The purchase of discounted coffee represents a high percentage of the current use of A2L by those who responded to the survey undertaken for this study
- The existing A2L entitlement needs to be re-aligned with the new Community Plan and SOA priorities for the City and its communities
- Given the wholesale review of the UK benefits system, the current eligibility criteria for A2L need to be reviewed and changed to align with the new system as a minimum, but this also provides an opportunity to link into more local and specific social need in the ACC area
- There is a need for improved correlation of A2L data between users and usage, to enable future monitoring and analysis of the provision to be clear about the outcomes being achieved

4.31 These options, set out in the following section, will form the basis of the assessment of the options for A2L moving forward.

5. Comparison of A2L with Other Access Schemes

- 5.1 As part of the assessment and analysis of A2L, as currently operated by ACC, a comparison of other existing schemes has been undertaken.
- 5.2 This comparison is summarised in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 From the comparison, it is clear that:
- other access to leisure schemes have much more targeted aims eg socially disadvantaged/socially excluded, under-represented, targeting social need
 - other access to leisure schemes clearly state that the initiative is aimed at increasing participation
 - although the framework for other schemes as for A2L, is the national DWP benefits system, they specifically interpret this at local level
 - the scope of each access to leisure scheme is different given the variation in local authority location, scale and the facilities/services they offer
 - access is targeted to maximise use of the facilities available
 - there appears to be consistency in not charging for an access scheme
 - other initiatives such as eg GP Referral Schemes are frequently linked into the access scheme
- 5.4 These issues provide further context for the assessment of the options for the A2L Scheme in the future, as it is clear that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to the development and implementation of these type of schemes.

6. Assessment of Key Issues and Options for Future A2L Scheme

- 6.1 In addition to the key issues identified with the A2L Scheme in relation to usage and users, a further point to consider is the cost of the current Scheme to ACC, and whether this represents good value in relation to the benefits delivered through the Scheme.
- 6.2 ACC currently pays Sport Aberdeen £100,000 per annum towards the cost of implementing A2L in the facilities they operate. This payment is in addition to the operational management fee agreed between the two parties. Table 10 shows the actual costs of implementing the A2L Scheme in facilities operated by Sport Aberdeen.

Table 10 Sport Aberdeen - the Cost to Sport Aberdeen of A2L for each facility and Cost per activity and user per activity January 2012 - December 2012

Centre	Subsidy Value of A2L
Alex Collie Sports Centre	£2,931.95
Balnagask Golf Course	£5,668.80
Beach Leisure Centre	£34,642.89
Beacon Centre	£6,343.15
Bridge of Don Swim Pool	£12,893.99
Bucksburn Swim pool	£76,702.38
CITYWIDE	£4,512.00
Dyce Primary Pool	£1,614.86
Grammar School Pool	£3,784.00
Hazlehead Golf Course	£5,604.50
Hazlehead Swim Pool	£12,776.35
Hazlewood School Pool	£2,828.57
Jesmond Centre	£2,033.40
Kincorth Sports Centre	£5,168.40
Kincorth Swim Pool	£3,166.54
Kings Links Golf Course	£6,452.55
Linx Ice Arena	£6,732.00
Northfield Outdoor Centre	£1,200.55
Northfield Swim Pool	£1,8379.49
Peterculter Sports Centre	£2,218.60
Sheddocksley Sports Centre	£3,029.75
Torry Sports Centre	£754.90
Westburn Outdoor Centre	£3,480.10
Westburn Tennis Centre	£12,798.20
CITYWIDE Golf	£54,144.78
Total	£289,862.70

Table 11 Sport Aberdeen - User per activity January 2012 - December 2012

Users Per Activity	Activity	Subsidy Value Per Activity
2844	Bowls	£4,680.65
7446	Coaching	£20,620.05
2	Climbing Wall	£5.60
4925	Fitness Studio	£13,528.85
2623	Golf	£17,725.85
94	Sport Aberdeen Membership	£4,512.00
328	Golf Adult Membership A2L	£43,840.48

Users Per Activity	Activity	Subsidy Value Per Activity
289	Golf Adult Membership Weekday Only A2L	£9,664.16
6	Golf Junior Membership A2L	£640.14
1364	Sports Hall Activities	£5,882.55
3484	Skating	£6732.00
656	Spectator	£622.00
171	Squash	£534.65
38778	Swimming	£149,238.95
7543	Swimming lessons	£7543.00
2071	Tennis	£12,533.20
		298,304.13

N.B There is a discrepancy in the information shown in Tables 10 and 11

6.3 It is clear from the above that whilst there is some data collected on current A2L use and users, it is not comprehensive and does not provide details of who is doing what activity when, how often etc so that the true cost of A2L can be analysed.

6.4The questions this situation, and the analysis undertaken for this report raises include:

- Is the current A2L Scheme targeting the right people?
- Are some of those entitled to A2L actually able to pay full price for the activities they access?
- Should the ability to use A2L at both peak and off peak times for all activities be retained?
- Are the eligibility criteria for A2L too wide?
- Is continued implementation of the current Scheme actually sustainable given its cost?
- Given the fact that the population is ageing, and the numbers of older people are rising, is 60 the right age to become automatically eligible for the A2L Scheme? This is already an issue in relation to eg golf, where the cost of providing subsidised golf is already the largest cost to the Scheme, and in 5 years, 50% of current golfers who pay full price will be eligible for the A2L Scheme, based on current criteria.
- How can monitoring of the Scheme be improved, so that the correlation between user, activity and frequency can be better measured?
- Could £100k per annum be more effectively used to facilitate participation in regular physical activity?
- How much does ACC want to commit per annum to providing subsidised access to leisure, without being able to demonstrate whether A2L actually increases the number of admissions (ie increased participation), and income, in some cases? e.g. would sports centres be quieter at off peak times if there were no A2L?
- If the scheme were to change, would this negatively impact on the no of users and overall income of Sport Aberdeen facilities – e.g. some users may use a private golf course or health club if A2L was not available which would result in a drop in overall income. (This was experienced a number of years ago when the Council introduced increased golf membership costs for non city residents.)
- What should the scope ie which activities of A2L be moving forward?

- What level of subsidy should the A2L Scheme provide? (current saving to the individual is 50% on the full price)
- Is provision of the A2L Scheme actually increasing participation, or improving health at the moment?
- Do A2L users maintain their participation in activities once their membership ceases?
- Is there potential to target A2L usage more effectively to both generate additional revenue, whilst increasing participation, and addressing the barriers of cost?

6.5 The above are fundamental questions and cover what ACC should consider in relation to the future of an A2L subsidy.

A2L - Options for Future Operation

6.6 It is clear from the analysis of the current A2L Scheme, and the other issues/factors looked at, as well as ACC's stated wish to review the current Scheme, that there are a number of options and opportunities for the A2L Scheme moving forward. This is a consequence of the changing circumstances in the DWP Benefits System, the new strategic priorities emerging for ACC, and the clear opportunity to align the A2L Scheme more closely to health improvement and increasing regular participation in active recreation.

6.7 The options for the A2L Scheme therefore are:

Table 12 A2L Options

OPTION	ACTION
OPTION 1	STATUS QUO
OPTION 2	CEASE OPERATION OF ANY ACC A2L SCHEME
OPTION 3	RETAIN A2L BUT CHANGE THE SCOPE OF THE SCHEME
OPTION 4	RETAIN A2L BUT CHANGE THE SCHEME SCOPE, AND TARGET THE SUBSIDY INSTEAD OF IT BEING A UNIVERSAL BENEFIT

Option 1 – Status Quo

6.8 Given the changes being implemented in terms of ACC strategic priorities through the SOA and Corporate Plan, Option 1 is not realistic. The Aberdeen SOA is about a partnership approach to achieve common goals, and the key focus of both the SOA and the Corporate Plan is equality, and the implementation of preventative actions related to health and the ageing population, to reduce the future cost to the public purse.

6.9 Irrespective of how an A2L is funded in the future (the Common Good Fund is a protected fund and will not be affected by revenue cuts), provision of such a key element in addressing inequality should be aligned to agreed corporate and strategic priorities, with clear and agreed outcomes. Maintaining the existing Scheme as it is will not actually contribute to new strategic priorities, as the health outcomes and benefits are not clear, despite the fact it is known that the card is used for a range of sport and leisure activities on a regular basis. What is not known is which users, are participating in which activities, and how often.

Option 2 – Cessation of an ACC A2L Scheme

6.10 Given the identified priority for ACC of:

Smarter Living Quality of Life - Challenging inequality and positively promoting wellbeing; building on cultural and physical activity.

6.11 The priorities under Smarter Living Quality of Life are:

- Enhancing the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self esteem
- Seeking to reduce the levels of inequality in the city and planning with key partners to try to ensure welfare reform does not increase the inequality gap
- Improving access to, and increasing participation in, arts and culture by providing opportunities for citizens and visitors to experience a broad range of high quality arts and cultural activities
- Aspiring to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality and diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.
- Promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's visitors and citizens to lead more active healthier lives

it is not a realistic option not to provide an access to leisure scheme of some description, given the potential contribution such a 'tool' could make in terms of increased participation and health improvement.

6.12 If ACC ceased the current scheme, and did not implement an alternative one, it would be the only local authority in Scotland not to offer some form of concession or passport to leisure activities. Politically and strategically, ACC would be unlikely to support Option 2, not least because a decision to cease provision of an access to leisure scheme could not be justified, given the known disadvantage issues in the city. Equally, stopping provision of such a Scheme altogether would not contribute to new corporate and strategic priorities.

Option 3 – Retain A2L but change the Scheme Scope

6.13 Changing the scope of the current A2L Scheme is definitely an option for consideration, given that the existing initiative is so wide in terms of its usage parameters. For example the range of eligible activities could be reduced, and use of the Scheme could be targeted at off peak use only. Discounted coaching could only be available for those under 16. It is not, however, practical to offer the Scheme only from certain sport and leisure facilities, as this is confusing for the public.

6.14 Various criteria could be employed to change existing Scheme parameters eg time, activities that have a tangible health benefit, age specific, etc.

6.15 There is potential to consider possible links between A2L and a GP Referral Scheme, if a future Scheme has a clear health focus and outcomes to be achieved.

6.16 There is also potential to consider extending the range of activities that can currently be accessed through A2L, possibly to include arts and cultural facilities, and sports development programmes etc. Whilst the latter has some merit, stakeholder consultation with a number of art and cultural providers identified that a discounted access scheme is more problematic in the arts. Performances, for example, are all negotiated separately with agents/performers, so offering a universal level of discount is not as simple.

6.17 Stakeholder consultation also identified that arts organisations eg the company running His Majesty's Theatre, the Lemon Tree and the Music Halls already run outreach programmes targeted at disadvantaged young people to get them involved in arts activities. Part of this also includes offering some free annual pantomime tickets.

6.18 Given that the activities for which the A2L Scheme is actually used for now, based on figures from both Sport Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Sports Village, and the feedback from current users, it might be better to focus on a reduced range of activities for which there is a discount. However, it will always be

hard, on that basis to decide which activities are included, and which are not, and there is always likely to be one sport/activity which is excluded where there is suddenly significant interest in participating.

6.19 In reality, the scope of A2L needs to be defined by three elements:

- the target beneficiary/ies – who are they and why?
- **the times the Scheme can be accessed** – this should give the flexibility not just to encourage users to be active, but should be used as a means to increase participation, particularly at times when facilities are traditionally less busy eg Mon – Fri during the day, some weekend time
- the level and nature of discount provided

6.20 Therefore a future ACC A2L Scheme really needs to be both more targeted, based on re-aligned aims, and priorities.

Option 4 Retain A2L but Change the Scheme Scope, and Target the Subsidy instead of it being a Universal Benefit

6.21 Option 4 represents the most realistic approach moving forward, and the one which most closely ‘fits’ with the new ACC strategic priorities, in terms of promoting equality and addressing disadvantage. Option 4 would retain the A2L Scheme but change both its scope and focus to make it less of a universal benefit based on eg age, and focus it as a tool to address disadvantage, and in so doing, also improve health. People who have low incomes, for whatever reason, are also amongst those who are less likely to participate in physical activity on a regular basis, due to cost. This future approach could make A2L an access scheme reflecting real local need whilst also being linked to national, or core principles regarding disadvantage (including disability, which is a permanent disadvantage).

6.22 In this context, an A2L Scheme should be one that aims to facilitate access to sport and physical activity, on a regular basis, for those people for whom cost is a real barrier (on a long or short term basis) ie people on a low wage. Families of those on a low wage should also benefit from an access scheme. This approach would reflect local priorities for Aberdeen.

6.23 An A2L Scheme should also facilitate access to sport and physical activities on a regular basis for those who have a recognised disability (physical or learning), irrespective of where they live, because this disability affects both the quality of their life, and their income, if they are unable to work full time. This would also mean young people with disabilities would be able to benefit from participating in activities, irrespective of where they live. This would reflect national access principles.

6.24 Removing the universal age entitlement to A2L might seem drastic, but if an older person is on a low income they would still benefit from the Scheme and so would not lose out; what the change in scope would do is ensure that those that can afford to pay do so, and those that cannot, are given at least some support.

6.25 A revised ACC A2L Scheme should be aligned to the new national benefit system to ensure it is offered to all those categorised as being on a low income.

6.26 The new benefit categories would include Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group, and PIP. In addition, it is suggested that the new A2L is linked to Job Training Programmes and Tax Credits, as individuals in the situation where they are on a training programme (these are short term), or in receipt of tax credits are also on a low income. (Given that the new national benefit system has only just been introduced (1 April 2013), it is not possible at this time, to be accurate about how many people will benefit from/be affected by the changes).

6.27 It is also suggested that individuals in receipt of Council Tax Reductions, Housing Benefit, and the Guarantee Element of Pension Credit, should also be eligible for A2L.

- 6.28 In addition, there are 11k people a year in the city who apply for crisis grants for one reason or another and their entitlement to A2L should also be considered.
- 6.29 Childcare is a relatively recent addition to A2L but this is considered to be crucial for the future. The ability to access quality, but affordable, childcare is critical for those seeking work, and therefore removing/reducing this barrier will support those wishing to get into work, and increase their income. Retaining access to discounted childcare to facilitate participation in regular physical activity/work is important as that will help improve both an individual's health and economic position.
- 6.30 It is important to stress that there are many people in Aberdeen who live on a low income, but receive no, or very few benefits/support, as their income level is just over the benefit threshold. The inclusion of the categories above, which are not all part of the new national benefit system will help to address some of the financial challenges faced by such individuals/families, and ensure that A2L has a local focus.
- 6.31 Changing the focus of A2L as suggested could also have the benefit of promoting increased day time use of facilities, (except for families where children are at school), which could both increase participation, and generate income at times where facilities are not as busy as in the evenings. Clearly, given the family situation, there does need to be some access to eg swimming at facilities at family friendly times too. ACC might want to consider giving A2L at specific times eg off peak to certain categories of user, or limiting times when A2L can be used overall. Whichever option is chosen, it should be clear and easy to understand, and critically, consistent across all facilities.
- 6.32 A further important issue to consider is how the A2L Scheme can contribute to health improvement across the city. Sadly, some older people, and those who have a low, or insufficient income are also likely to experience health issues due to poor or inadequate diets, but there may also be others in the city who would benefit from regular participation in physical activity to improve health. There should be some consideration of how the A2L Scheme can best help people with poor health, and/or long term health limiting conditions. This will need both specific criteria and careful consideration of eligibility criteria, given the national changes that have been implemented. It will also need close monitoring to enable assessment of whether outcomes are being achieved.
- 6.33 Some access to leisure schemes have achieved this dimension by linking to GP Referral Schemes, and it is suggested that this be considered for A2L, albeit with a separate registration process, to control access to its benefits, and monitor its outcomes.
- 6.34 Changing the scope and focus of the ACC A2L Scheme will require a shift in both marketing and administration. Making the Scheme more targeted means that its existence, benefits and use need to be promoted very clearly to those who are eligible for it, together with an explanation of how, where and for what it can be used. Promoting local awareness of A2L through the application of the new benefit system will be important, as will clear and simple messages about A2L, what it is and what it provides within local communities where there are people on financially-related benefits.
- 6.35 The application process for a more targeted card is likely to need to change too; there may be potential to simplify the process and link it to the actual benefit system, in that once an individual has been assessed and given eg low income support under one of the new categories, he/she is automatically also given entitlement to A2L. This would send a clear message about the purpose and aim of the A2L Scheme as opposed to it being an age related benefit. Effecting further change in the administration of A2L through better inter-service links, will be critical in promoting awareness of A2L to those who will be eligible in the future. Giving A2L to those eligible in the future at the same time as registering them for their other benefit entitlements is crucial to ensure future of A2L is by those at whom it is targeted.
- 6.36 Given that politically it will not be simple to change A2L and some resistance is to be expected, particularly from those aged 60 plus, it might be prudent not to change the range of activities which can currently be accessed. However, over time it may be that it is access to participation in active leisure that becomes the focus of the Scheme, as opposed to discounted food and drinks. However, there is potential to provide activities, followed by refreshment which would deliver both health and social

interaction benefits, and again would help to re-enforce the fact that the A2L Scheme is about facilitating access to regular activity, not just providing discounted coffee.

- 6.37 The cost to ACC of operating the new A2L Scheme will not necessarily change, but the re-focussing of A2L is likely to make the overall Scheme more sustainable in the long run, because the number of participants receiving discounts will reduce if the age entitlement is removed. This means ACC can be seen to be clearly targeting its resources in line with its corporate and strategic priorities, to address and tackle inequalities, whilst facilitating improved quality of life and health improvement in its community. There should, however, be a reduced operational cost to the scheme as a result of removing/increasing the age at which the universal entitlement becomes available, which also means that ACC's partners, Sport Aberdeen and the Aberdeen Sports Village should be able to focus on developing more targeted activities, appropriate to the participants being supported, in line with the Scheme's aims, as opposed to simply implementing discounts on existing activities.

Implementation of a new A2L

- 6.38 It is important to consider the implications of the changes discussed above to A2L and how they might best be introduced. Clearly, ACC has a number of options to consider:
- **Option A** - Cease the existing A2L and re-launch a new one immediately, or after a period of time; this assumes no retention of existing users or their current eligibility ie a completely new start to A2L
 - **Option B** - Announce the end of the current A2L Scheme within an agreed time period to give warning to existing users, and particularly those eligible on the basis of universal age entitlement ie a completely new start to A2L but over a long period of time eg 12 months
 - **Option C** - Announce the end of the current A2L Scheme within an agreed time period to give warning to existing users, and particularly those eligible on the basis of universal age entitlement; give a cut off point for when the current universal age entitlement will no longer apply ie a completely new start to A2L but over a long period of time eg 12 months, and stop eligibility to A2L on the basis of universal age entitlement within the stated timescale
 - **Option D** - Announce the end of the current A2L Scheme within an agreed time period to give warning to existing users, and particularly those eligible on the basis of universal age entitlement; give a cut off point for when the current universal age entitlement will no longer apply, but retain eligibility for existing A2L members ie implementation of a new A2L based on new eligibility criteria, but allow existing users of 60+ to retain their eligibility
 - **Option E** – announce the cessation of the current A2L and phase in the new A2L, based on identified eligibility criteria; this approach could also be coupled with any of the above options in relation to universal age entitlement
- 6.39 It is accepted that all of the above options have advantages and disadvantages, and none will be particularly easy to implement, politically. However, as part of a citywide, strategic approach to tackling inequalities and inactivity, the new approach to A2L has a rationale, and role as part of the overall picture. A2L's future focus of addressing financial barriers to participation, to facilitate more people being active more often has real merit, and will be understood, if promoted and presented effectively. Disability is an important element to include as part of the re-focus, because this is a consistent, and often permanent), barrier to participation, wherever the person with the disability is at any given time.
- 6.40 The process and timing of implementing the new A2L has to be a political decision given its implications. A combination of phasing and complete change is probably the way to proceed ie Option E, supported by very effective and sensitive communication. There are always 'winners and losers' as a result of change; the important thing in relation to A2L that the short term pain of the change will result in significant gain for ACC, and those eligible for the future targeted subsidy.

- 6.41 As part of the change in A2L focus, there will be a need to identify the people who will be eligible for the new A2L; because the welfare system itself is new no-one yet knows how it will work and what the impact will be in terms of individuals and families. It is therefore hard, at this moment in time, to identify the number of people who will qualify for the new A2L. This, in itself, could be a justification for announcing the end of the existing A2L, and winding that down over a 12 month period, whilst developing the re-focussed new A2L.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Based on the review of the current A2L Scheme, the consultation, comparison and analysis undertaken, it is clear that there is significant opportunity to change the focus and scope of the card, not because it is not working, but because ACC's corporate and strategic priorities have changed, and the Scheme therefore needs to be re-aligned, to ensure it contributes to the agreed way forward.
- 7.2 The national change in the benefit system provides a further driver for change, to ensure that the A2L Scheme supports those most in need.
- 7.3 There are a number of recommendations for a new A2L Scheme, which reflect these changes. These are:

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (R1) – To confirm the requirement to have a scheme in Aberdeen that seeks to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities in Aberdeen.

Recommendation 2 (R2) – The ACC A2L Scheme is re-aligned to fit with, reflect and contribute to, appropriate corporate, strategic and SOA priorities, linked to reducing health and wellbeing inequalities within the city.

Recommendation 3 (R3) – Eligibility for discounted tea and coffee should be removed from A2L [Neil to develop further];

Recommendation 4 (R4) – The aim of the new A2L Scheme should be to facilitate access to increased regular participation in health and well-being for those for whom affordability, or disability is a barrier.

Recommendation 5 (R5) – The current A2L Scheme is revised and re-launched as a more focused and targeted subsidy, based on re-dressing inequalities, improving quality of life and community health. ie implement Option 4.

Recommendation 6 (R6) - The new A2L Scheme criteria should reflect the Welfare Reform (due to be implemented from 2017) and the new benefit system to support those on a low income, in job training schemes, or on tax credits, plus local priorities to support those on low incomes/out of work. The recommended eligibility criteria are:

- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA),
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA),
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group,
- PIP
- Job Training Programmes and Tax Credits,
- Individuals in receipt of Council Tax Reductions,
- Individuals in receipt of Housing Benefit,
- Individuals in receipt of the Guarantee Element of Pension Credit,
- Young People on Passport Benefits eg free school meals, educational grants

Recommendation 7 (R7) – The new A2L Scheme should retain provision of subsidised childcare.

Recommendation 8 (R8) – The new A2L Scheme should also facilitate access to regular participation in physical activity for all those with a physical or learning disability. Evidence of disability must be provided eg written confirmation of disability support.

- Recommendation 9 (R9)** - The new A2L Scheme should be linked to a GP Referral Scheme, but registration for this is a separate process, reflecting a health need, as opposed to the need for financial support (although it is recognised the two may not be mutually exclusive), supported by a GP's signed medical assessment.
- Recommendation 10 (R10)** – The A2L Scheme is no longer a universal benefit at 60; consideration is given to link the entitlement age to the national retirement age, which is due to increase over time.
- Recommendation 11 (R11)** – Prior to implementation of the above changes, ACC undertakes detailed work on the impact of the changes; this report cannot cover them due to data protection issues on individuals' information. An alternative would be use the comparative data collated as part of this work on other existing access to leisure schemes.
- Recommendation 12 (R12)** – A new, more targeted and integrated approach to marketing is adopted, focussing on those who will be entitled to A2L membership, with clear explanations of what the card is for, when and where. If possible, A2L should be offered as part of overall/one stop shop approach to supporting individuals requiring benefits.
- Recommendation 13 (R13)** – The application and administrative process for the A2L Scheme is simplified and if possible, directly linked, at local level, to the benefit assessment process, to assist in both implementation and Scheme use, but also to help change the perception of what A2L is about.
- Recommendation 14 (R14)** – A new monitoring approach is developed for the new A2L Scheme so that the outcomes achieved can be clearly understood. Critically, a means of correlating the individual user with the activity in which they participate, and the frequency thereof, is required if health and quality of life benefits are to be tangible.
- Recommendation 15 (R15)** – In implementing the new A2L Scheme, consideration is given to the times at which the activities are available. It is recommended that provision of A2L should be at off peak times only, to focus the benefits on those to whom they are targeted. The one exception to this should be family swimming which should be available to A2L car holders at specific times during peak periods.
- Recommendation 16 (R16)** -Equally the range of activities offered, and the level of subsidy offered also need further consideration eg Free swimming should be changed to the introduction of a minimal charge. The aim should be to encourage regular participation in physical activity, to maintain the positive benefits of social interaction, alongside physical activity.
- Recommendation 17 (R17)** – A2L should be available at all ACC leisure facilities in the City, including Learning Centres, Sport Aberdeen Facilities, the Aberdeen Sports Village, and Garthdee Alpine Sports Facility; its usage should be consistent across all these facilities in terms of user eligibility, times of access, available activities etc.
- Recommendation 18 (R18)** -Implement the new scheme on a phased basis, taking into consideration individuals who have a current entitlement, but who would not be entitled under the new scheme criteria.

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