

Dear [Applicant],

Freedom of Information request reference

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 13 January 2020, reference K/20/026

Your request read:

“In light of Sexual Discrimination Act of 1975 and the Equalities Act of 2010, how does the edge justify excluding males from the swimming pool during certain periods of the day?

How does the edge justify charging males the same as females, despite having less access to the gym?”

The University of Leeds holds this information.

Prior to the Edge opening in 2010, a detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken in relation to the swimming pool programme with the aims of;

- Improving physical activity and wellbeing
- Raising our performance in sport
- Engaging our community
- Developing our students and staff through sport
- Improving our effectiveness through financial sustainability

We were cognisant of the barriers to participation in physical activity including cultural and equity issues and wished to employ a proactive approach to responding to these where appropriate.

Detailed consultations were held with Leeds University Union, current customers including students, staff and members of the public, SPA staff, Leeds City Council and representatives from the Inclusive Fitness Initiative. Feedback during these sessions indicated concerns over the management of privacy for users of the pool, partly in response to body image issues for female users and additionally for faith groups. User data was also measured such as gender, disability, age, religion and ethnicity.

The programming process also used University research and in addition to issues such as availability of facilities and time, the research also indicated that confidence and the lack of single sex activities were barriers particularly for female users. There was also substantial evidence supporting the premise that specific faith groups find open swimming sessions a barrier to participation in sport and indeed that the lack of privacy and specifically body image issues can restrict participation in sport by the wider female population. At a local level it was established that a large proportion of Leeds Council's swimming pools ran at least one closed female only session per week and a range of national case studies also supported the concept of a mixed programme that accommodated sports group bookings, casual lane swimming and closed female only sessions.

The evidence considered reports by Sport England, Sport Scotland (the two national sporting agencies), Sporting Equals (which seeks to promote ethnic diversity across sport) and the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation which works to widen opportunities for females in sport. Indeed there are a number of case studies by the organisations listed which highlight the use of the female only sessions within a leisure environment as positive action.

This wealth of information, research and consultation led to the development of the pool programme which included two female only sessions each week. The EIA is reviewed on an annual basis and subsequent updates have continued to support the inclusion of female only sessions as part of the pool programme.

With regard to the gym, following requests from LUU and University faith groups we trialled opening the facility earlier on a Sunday morning to have a "Ladies Only Swimming" session. As this was an addition to the opening times, male users did not have a reduction in the times they could use the facility and so were not negatively affected; therefore we didn't offer a reduction to their membership fee. The "Ladies Only Swimming" did not achieve the attendance that we were expecting and the additional hour on a Sunday was subsequently opened up to everyone, extending the opening times for both male and female users.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle
Deputy Secretary
The University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University's response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Sincerely

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer
University of Leeds