



Award-winning GM pays tribute to 'most important person in centre'

THE general manager of North Herts Leisure Centre says he was shocked to receive the highest scores for satisfaction and the highest scores overall in the latest National Benchmarking Service (NBS) Report.

The NBS benchmarks report, managed by Leisure-net Solutions, shows how core facilities in public sport and leisure services are performing, how this performance is changing over time, and how it varies between different types of centres.

"I was completely surprised when my line manager informed me of the email saying we'd won. We undertook the NBS to find out how our customers felt; I never expected us to win anything," says Robbie Di Rubbo.

Located in Hertfordshire's Letchworth Garden City, the centre has approximately 2,500 members and caters for some 2,300 children and adults in one of the largest learn-to-swim programmes in the country.

Its wide range of community services include a successful exercise referral scheme run by a full time member of staff, free use of facilities for those at retirement age on Mondays, cardiac and pulmonary

rehab sessions and a new wheelchair dance class.

Di Rubbo puts the centre's NBS success down to its philosophy of putting the customer first.

"I believe leisure is all about people and that the customer comes first. If you can get your staff to believe that too, it will reflect in the service you provide," he says.

The team works hard to engage with its customers. Examples include calling people rather than sending an email and encouraging regular customer feedback. Digital screens have been installed in the centre, allowing people to leave comments about anything they may have an opinion on. These messages are sent directly to the duty manager, who can act on them within minutes if required.

In addition, the centre has introduced a He Said, She Said, We Did board; a simple, but effective way of communicating with customers.

"Once a month, we have a team meeting to go through all the customer comments we receive and decide how we are going to respond. We then display our responses on the board. So, if a customer had asked

for more kettlebells for a particular class, we leave a message on the board explaining that we've ordered the kettlebells and when they are due to arrive," explains Di Rubbo. "It lets our customers know we are listening to them. If a customer leaves their contact details, we will call to discuss their comments, but they can post anonymous feedback if they choose."

It's important to display negative as well as positive comments says Di Rubbo.

"Someone might complain that the changing rooms were dirty at 4pm on Wednesday. We will post this comment on the board and explain what we will do to avoid this in future. Sometimes we get it wrong, but customers appreciate that we are being open and honest with them and putting measures in place to improve the service in the future."

Di Rubbo has a close working relationship with the local authority partner, North Herts. District Council, which he describes as very supportive. He meets his contract manager formally once a month and they speak on the phone every other day.

"We are all on the same page; we

want to provide the best service for the community," he says.

But what has contributed most to the centre's success is the workforce, which is no doubt aided by Di Rubbo's unpretentious management approach.

"I don't believe in sitting in an office, I'm always walking around the centre, talking to people and staff. The first thing I do every day is say good morning to every member of staff on site – we employ 180 people here so it takes time, but I think it's important. We are one team here – from the cleaners to the lifeguards to the café staff – there's no sense of hierarchy. In fact, the most important person is the cleaner because cleanliness is the most important factor of a customer's visit. We work together as a team and we have each other's backs – and that comes across in our dealings with our customers.

"Our customers know they will be listened to and as a result they support what we do. We are not always perfect, but we do the best we can, always looking to improve every area and our customers are happy with that."

Fitness brand launches post-lockdown training program

AS gyms across the country reopen, Fitness Savvy will help those who have lost their pre-lockdown physiques regain their fitness levels with the launch of a free physical training program, developed with the aid of scientific DEXA body scans.

The fitness routine has been carefully constructed to aid in weight loss while building muscle, and is being offered at no cost to help the nation get fighting fit under the 'new normal'. The help comes just as Prime Minister Boris Johnson launches an anti-obesity campaign to help Britons lower their risk of illness in the face of COVID-19.

With all gyms forced to close in March as the coronavirus pandemic hit, a lack of physical activity and extra time at home during the stay-at-home orders has hit the nation's waistline hard. The prices of weightlifting, fitness and other gym apparatus skyrocketed due to high demand when lockdown kicked in, and only the lucky few were able to secure worthwhile equipment.

As a result, both mental and physical fitness has

suffered around the country – something many will be keen to address as the nationwide lockdown is gradually lifted.

Fitness Savvy is the only dedicated fitness equipment comparison brand in the UK. It is committed to supporting gym-goers recover pre-pandemic fitness levels and newcomers to get moving. As part of this effort, it has produced a series of unique training guides designed to help those piling on the pounds during lockdown to get back on their feet, lose weight and rebuild lost muscle in the shortest time possible.

The brand's free fitness routine focuses on body composition and details how to train and diet to achieve dramatic, positive changes quickly and sustainably.

Fitness Savvy's CEO, Robin Young has been working with DEXA Bodyscans to develop the program. As Fitness Savvy is built on delivering price comparison, discount codes and offers for various gym and fitness equipment, the brand is not burdened

by a need to charge customers for training programs and advice.

"Instead, it is able to offer specialist advice and fitness resources at no cost.

Young said: "Those who were not lucky enough to get their hands on weights and weight lifting equipment will have found it almost impossible to continue their standard workout routine at home.

"When we stop lifting weights, it doesn't take long for our muscle to break down. This problem, combined with eating more, means people's body composition will have suffered.

"I've personally spent the past three years experimenting with body re-composition and as a brand we're happy to offer a complete programme which people can use to get back in shape."

The Fitness Savvy programs include exercise tutorials, rep by rep instruction and macro breakdown nutritional advice. To find out more, visit: <https://www.fitness-savvy.co.uk/body-recomposition-lose-fat-gain-muscle/>