

Lack of teachers leads to cancellation of swimming lessons

Edinburgh pools have cut the number of weekly swimming lessons amid challenges hiring new instructors.

A councillor said he was concerned about the impact it would have the development of young people who already missed out on lessons during the pandemic – and called for the cuts not to be “concentrated in one particular area”.

Edinburgh Leisure confirmed that all classes at Glenogle Swim Centre and some at Dalry’s local pool – including all that run on a Friday – have been cancelled until further notice.

Glenogle’s manager Wendy Avinou apologised and blamed a “shortfall in swim teachers,” adding the decision was “difficult but essential”.

She said the coaching programme at the Inverleith pool would not resume until at least the end of June next year.

Ross McKenzie, councillor for Sighthill and Gorgie, said parents have reached out to him following news about cancellations at Dalry Swim Centre.

“They’re concerned that this has followed disruption during Covid and they now won’t be able to get them to go when the time comes,” he said.



Ross McKenzie, Labour councillor. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Cllr McKenzie said there is a “cohort” of children “who missed out on swimming lessons during Covid and who face further disruption and delay to their development”.

“If you’ve got a kid who’s missed out on swimming lessons between the ages of six and nine then it’s going to be much more difficult to get that kid to go – that’s my experience as a parent which I’m happy to share – and it’s going to be especially difficult to get them to go to beginners lessons with smaller children.”

The Labour councillor added the pool is the only one in his ward.

He said: “I’m particularly concerned that Dalry pool is being hit here because it serves a large area in my ward which has no other pools.

“It’s important that cuts aren’t concentrated in one

particular area, especially my area, and also that parents are given a bit more certainty about how long this disruption is going to last.

“Swimming is an incredibly important skill to have and this could mean there are a handful or more of kids that end up either not having that or having it to a lesser extent than they would have done.”

A spokesperson for Edinburgh Leisure stressed that no centres will be closing and pool, gym, and fitness classes are open to customers.

They said a review is underway to look at running a ‘swimming club or open swimming time’ that can be offered in place of the swim programme “while it is on pause”.

Wendy Avinou, Manager at Glenogle Swim Centre, said: “Many industries are facing a recruitment challenge and Edinburgh Leisure is no exception. There are several external factors – Brexit and Covid-19 in particular – that have led to a large reduction in the labour workforce across the country leading in turn to increased competition from employers to find good candidates to fill their roles.

“As a result of the pandemic, we’re also discovering that many young people are lacking the skills, experiences and most importantly the confidence to apply for vacant roles.

“Consequently, we are currently experiencing a short fall in swim teachers required to deliver our coaching programme. Therefore, after a lengthy review, we have made the difficult but essential decision to remove the swim coaching programme at Glenogle to ease pressures on site and across Edinburgh Leisure and our swim programme at Dalry will be reduced.

“The wet coaching programme at Glenogle came to an end at the end of October and lessons have not been delivered from November 2022, which will continue until the end of June 2023.

“This will allow us time corporately to hopefully appoint and train new swim teachers. Edinburgh Leisure has adapted the way we recruit, and have developed an Open Day format, which will be the primary recruitment process for coaching recruitment going forward.

“As the availability of alternative classes is extremely limited, we are encouraging customers to visit our coaching portal to see available live place and book new sessions online in the usual manner.

“We apologise profusely – this decision hasn’t been taken lightly and we realise that many of our customers will be disappointed. In the meantime, we are working tirelessly improve the situation for the future.”

In addition to the cancellation of all classes at Glenogle Swim Centre, the following weekly lessons at Dalry Swim Centre are now no longer running:

Wednesday

- 16.00 Swim Pre-School
- 16.35 Swim Skills 1
- 17.55 Swim Club Ready

Friday

- All classes

Saturday

- 08.00 Swim Pre-School
- 08.35 Swim Skills 3
- 09.10 Swim Skills 1+
- 09.45 Swim Skills 1
- 10.20 Swim Skills 1

- 10.55 Swim Skills 3
- 11.30 Swim Skills 1

by Donald Turvill

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency: funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.