

Press Release: South Lanarkshire Lifestyles, Fairhill-First Excellent IFI Accreditation Mark

The IFI Mark Accreditation is the nationally recognised standard of inclusion within the fitness industry for facilities that are inclusive of both disabled and non-disabled people. It is awarded at three levels: Provisional, Registered or Excellent. South Lanarkshire Lifestyles, Fairhill, is the first leisure facility in the UK to achieve the 'Excellent' standard in the scheme.

The Centre features generous floor space for users with wheelchairs and walking aids. The operating Trust worked with three IFI Accredited Suppliers; Cybex, HUR and Power Plate to provide inclusive gym equipment which caters for people with a range of disabilities as well as non-disabled people. Centre staff undertook initial training to cater for a wide-range of needs which has since been updated to ensure disabled people are provided with safe and effective exercise programmes.

Curling Paralympian, Aileen Neilson from Hamilton presented the award to Councillor Gerry Convery, Chair of the Board of South Lanarkshire Leisure Ltd who manage and operate leisure facilities on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council. She commented: "Fairhill is a fantastic facility which I have used since it opened in April 2008 as part of my preparation for the Paralympic Games in Vancouver in March. It focuses on people's abilities rather than disabilities and all the staff are extremely helpful and encouraging. I look forward to using the facility for years to come."

Councillor Gerry Convery said: "This award is a great accolade for South Lanarkshire Lifestyles Fairhill and a really fantastic achievement for all of the staff who have focused their efforts on achieving the highest standard of disability inclusion. This excellent facility caters for all members of the community wishing to increase their physical activity levels with the guidance of the highly qualified and experienced staff. The Centre has demonstrated the importance of partnership working with the Council's Social Work Resources, NHS Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Leisure Ltd by increasing usage by disabled people.

Over 30,000 people have attended the Centre in the last year 5,000 were users who would otherwise not be able to access leisure facilities. 200 gym inductions have been carried out for clients with disabilities ranging from Cerebral Palsy, Spinabifida and amputations.

Customer Bill Munn who suffers from Guillain Barrie Syndrome said: "I love this place and have been coming to use the equipment since it opened. It has helped me get my muscles built back up to make them work as they should. The staff here are absolutely marvellous."

Sue Catton, IFI National Director, of the Inclusive Fitness Initiative said: 'South Lanarkshire Leisure Ltd is to be congratulated on achieving the first Excellent Level IFI Mark Accreditation in the UK at the Lifestyles Fairhill Centre. They have demonstrated their strength of commitment to inclusion, ensuring that the needs of all their customers are met. Disabled people in the area will benefit from an excellent level of service provision and advice enabling them to make genuine healthy lifestyle choices. Lifestyles Fairhill have raised the IFI Mark bar not just in Scotland but for the whole of the UK.'