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# **Leisure, Poverty and Social Exclusion: An Analysis of Leisure Card Schemes in Great Britain**

**Volume II**

**Christopher R. Kennett**

**Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy  
Department of PE, Sport Science and Recreation Management  
Loughborough University**

**Chapter 6**

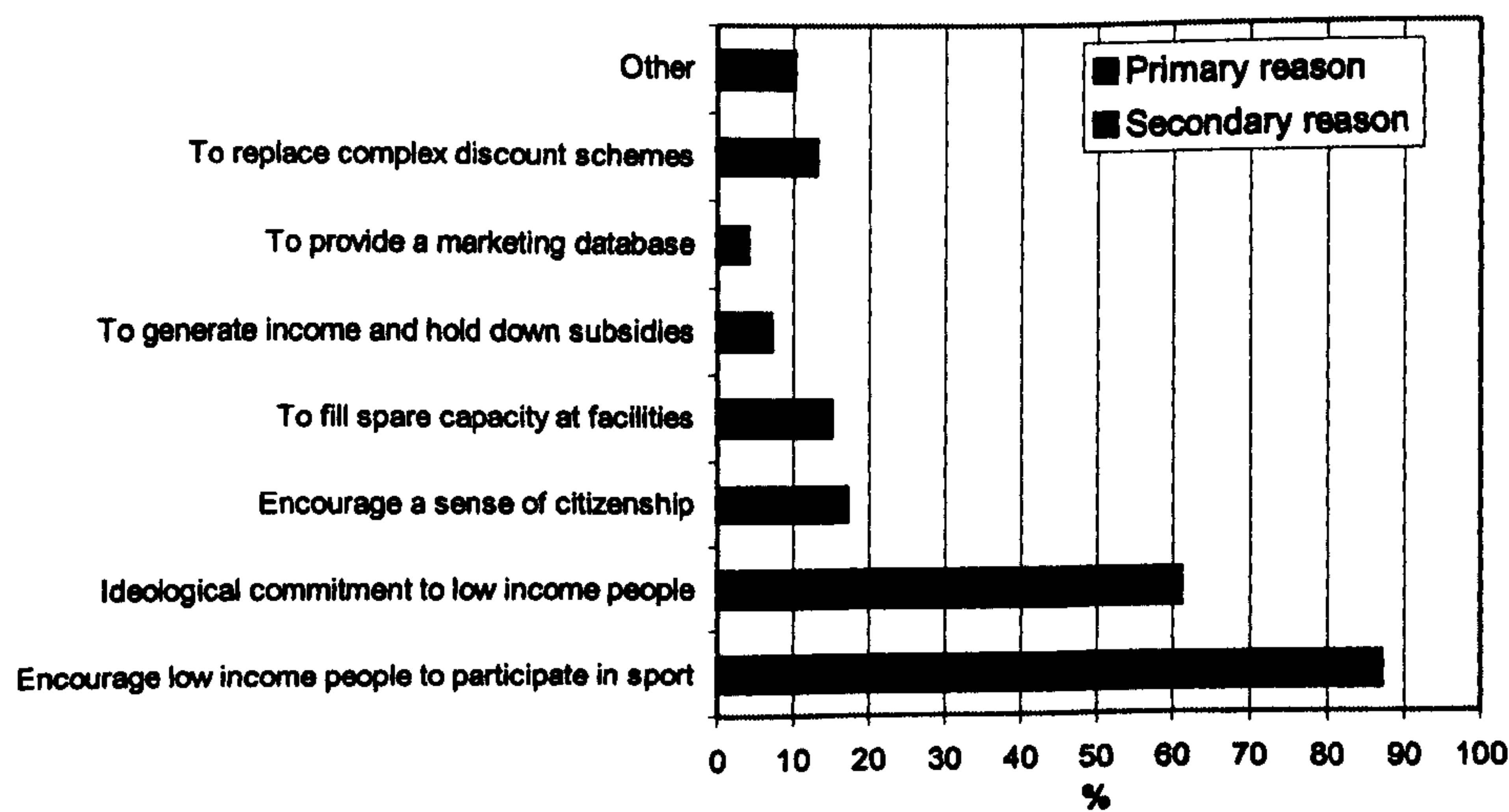
**Reasons and Targets for Leisure Cards**

Drawing on the results from the national survey and case studies, this Chapter aims to establish why Leisure Card Schemes were introduced, what research was undertaken before schemes were established and whether Leisure Card operators had set targets. Detail is also provided on what groups are targeted by Leisure Card operators and why, as well as what activities and facilities are included.

6.1 Reasons for introducing a Leisure Card Scheme and setting objectives

The reasons identified by local authorities for introducing a Leisure Card Scheme were divided between social, economic and managerial objectives. As Figure 6.1 (AT17) shows, and as would be expected from predominantly Labour controlled local authorities, social reasons clearly dominated, with the desire to encourage people from low income groups to participate in sport identified by 56% of authorities as the primary reason for introducing a scheme. A political/ ideological commitment to people from low income groups was also common for a majority of authorities, 24% identifying it as their primary reason and 37% as the secondary reason.

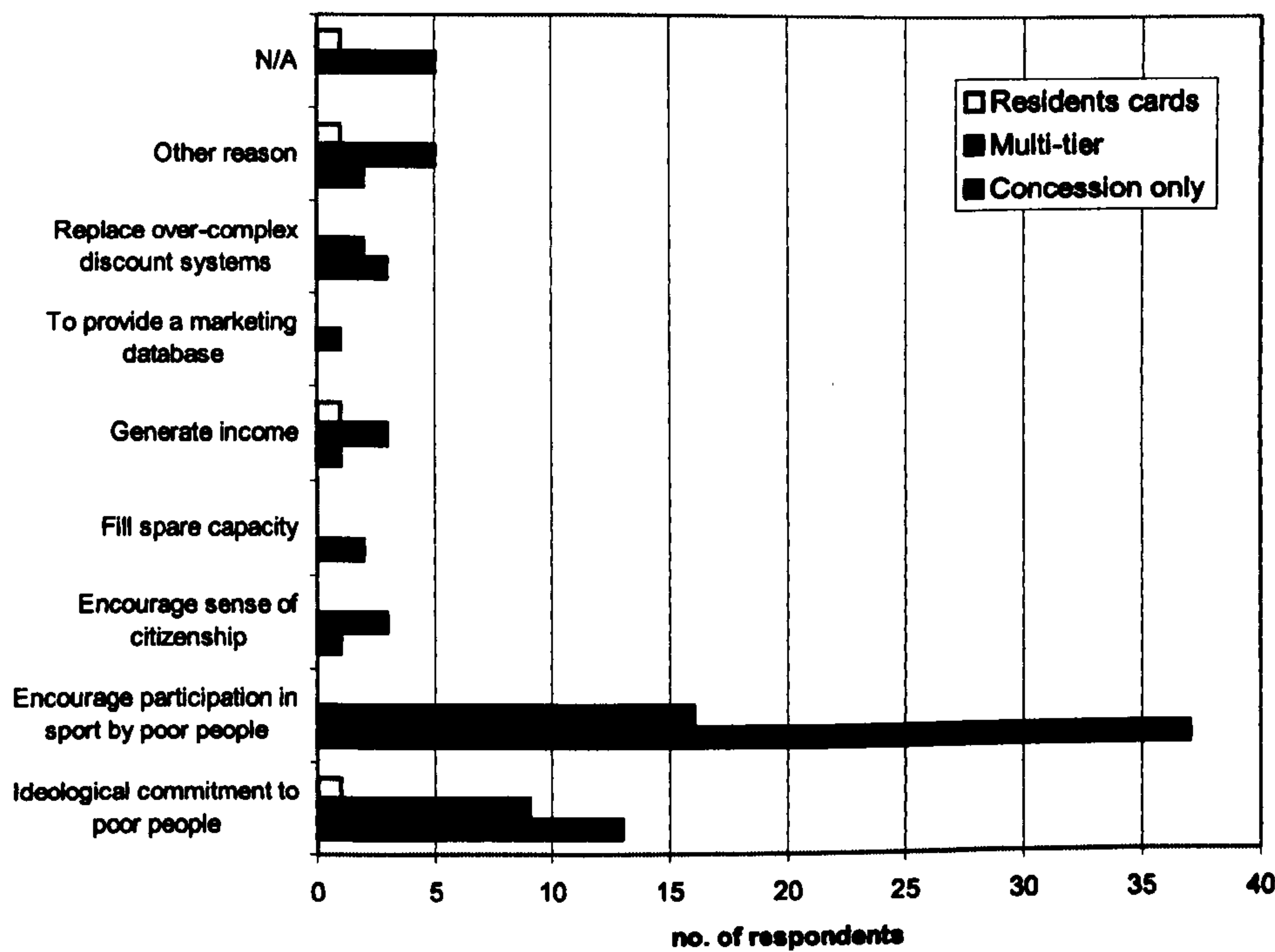
Figure 6.1 Reasons for establishing LCS





Economic reasons, such as filling spare capacity at facilities during off-peak periods (5% primary reason; 2% secondary) and generating income to hold down subsidies (1% and 3% respectively) were shown to be very much secondary reasons, perhaps as a potential side benefit produced by the schemes. The same was true for the more managerial objectives of providing a marketing database (7%; and 6% respectively) and to replace hitherto complex discount schemes (7%; 6%). There was a degree of uncertainty surrounding the reasons identified, due to the political kudos to be gained from being seen to promote social programmes, whilst incorporating economic and managerial objectives. There was further evidence of such a hypothesis from the 33% of Leisure Card operators that indicated that discounted use by card holders was restricted to off-peak times, which other respondents said was another form of discrimination. Figure 6.2 (AT18) shows the primary reasons indicated by card operators for establishing schemes according to card types.

Figure 6.2 Primary reasons for establishing Leisure Card scheme: a comparison of card types



The main reasons stated were social, for both concession-only and multi-tiered schemes, but to different degrees: 63% of concession-only operators stated that encouraging participation in sport by poor people was a primary reason for introducing the card, twice the proportion of multi-tiered operators (36%). However, more detailed analysis of specific cases revealed some variation between card types.

The 'Saver Card' (whose operators will be called City A) provided an example of a former concession-only card which was re-launched as a multi-tier card in 1995. The main commitment was to low income groups, but the Council stated that from its research some very successful card schemes assist the following:

- ❑ marketing- awareness of facilities and services;
- ❑ gaining customer and usage profiles; and
- ❑ developing an investment fund for future leisure provision.

The third point was initially underplayed in the documentation reporting the re-launch of the scheme, but later became a primary objective for the report when the budgeting for the new scheme was considered. The report (City A, 1998) claimed that the authority's charges for leisure were amongst the lowest in the country and that it should utilise "the opportunity within our fees and charges flexibility, whilst maintaining the overall market lead in lower access charges". However, there appeared to be an underlying issue as the report stated that "Leisure in the coming years will need to invest in existing facilities and equipment" (p. 3). Therefore it seems as though this new Leisure Card was designed to generate profit which could be re-invested elsewhere.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead by contrast stated the aims of its residents card for the period 1994-96 to be:

- ❑ reaching 25,000 members;
- ❑ enhancing leisure centre business and encouraging use of facilities
- ❑ enhancing a local resident 'feel good factor'; and
- ❑ reaching a £100k budget.

These aims were clearly management and economically based and only touch on social objectives when referring to enhancing a 'feel good' citizenship effect. The revised objectives for 1996-98 continued this theme:

- ❑ to provide a benefit from the RBWM Council to its residents, thereby enhancing its image of belonging to the borough marketing and information for leisure centres;
- ❑ to 'brand' leisure services; and
- ❑ to support and enhance the Leisure Strategy and the Visitor Management Strategy.

The first and second aims stated here clearly emphasised the marketing role of a Residents Card. The principles of image enhancement for the Council and the branding of leisure services were commercially oriented, and far removed from any social objectives. The last aim emphasised a strategic role for the scheme within a corporate management context. There was no reference to benefiting low income groups.

The aims of Leicester's Passport To Leisure scheme when it was introduced in 1985 were discussed in Chapter 4. However, in 1997/8, all officers interviewed recognised the original objectives of the scheme were to encourage participation in sports activities by low income groups and unify and simplify concession schemes. These remained the continuing objectives of the Leisure Pass. However, at the time of data collection the Leisure Pass was about to undergo a 33% cut in its budget and whether or not these social objectives would suffer as a result of budget cut backs was uncertain (see 8.1), although officers stated that they would like to think they will not.

The Assistant Director, who had been in the Leisure Department since the inception of the scheme, gave a different account of the initial objectives, "developing from originally a marketing tool to increase usage in leisure centres specifically, into a major part of the Council's anti-poverty strategy". At the time of writing (December, 1999), the anti-poverty strategy was still unpublished.

The social objectives of the scheme were identified more broadly as improving access to leisure in general, and in particular to those who wished to participate but could not for one reason or another, financial or physical. Social objectives were closely shadowed by the economic and financial roles of the scheme as the maximisation of resources was identified

as a clear objective, as well as encouraging a wider range of use at facilities. The limits of the scheme were also recognised, especially in terms of solving problems such as juvenile delinquency, and the Assistant Director commented that "no amount of Leisure Passes or facilities will solve the problems of crime". According to the Assistant Director, there was, however, a conscious effort to balance social and economic objectives, especially in the Leisure Department's "increasingly declining budget scenario" whilst trying to meet the priorities and policies of the Council.

At Cardiff, the overriding aim of the Passport To Leisure was clear for all the officers involved in the policy making, management and administration of the scheme, and that was to provide greater opportunities for the economically disadvantaged residents of the city. This was based on policy objectives relating to equality, and also to wider anti-poverty work. The Assistant Director described the philosophy of the Leisure Services Department as "largely about quality of life issues, as well as health and life-styles". There was a definite commitment within this to provide access to people who might be disadvantaged by living on a low income. These sentiments were shared by both the Client and the Direct Service Operator (DSO), both of whose staff emphasised the open access policy of the Department, although they had very little input in setting the scheme's objectives. There was no mention of any managerial or economic motives by any of the officers, and those involved in the operation of the scheme seemed to remain focused on its social role.

The main reasons for introducing a new Leisure Card in Oxford were related to problems with the old Recreation Card which was a multi-tiered scheme. Membership of the card scheme totalled approximately 4,000 in 1997, 58% obtaining the card free because they received state benefits. However, research indicated that too few people knew about the card, since only half of the population claimed to have heard of it, and less than 5% owned one. Those that did own one, 'valued' it, with a 'high' (but unspecified) percentage using the card more than once a week (Oxford City Council, 1997b). Young people (15-25 years old), retired people, and ethnic minorities were under represented amongst card holders. It was also discovered that if the scheme included other benefits such as discounts at cinemas, retail shops, public transport, child care etc. then its image and take-up would be enhanced.



Indeed, 89% of card holders used their old Recreation Cards as swimming season tickets only and there was very little other use. The Client Services Manager stated that the Recreation Card was highly priced at £60 per year, providing a swim at 50p or 60p (depending on the frequency of use) instead of £2 or more full price. However, it did not work with other activities such as badminton, as it only gave half price participation, requiring the cardholder to play almost every day of the week to make equivalent savings. Therefore the card "wasn't really achieving anything in terms of offering discounts and certainly wasn't offering much for the Council's core target groups" (Client Service Manager). The problem appeared to be with the pricing structure of the card, not its concept.

Indeed, the Recreation Card had evolved with categories and discounts added here and there until, according to the Client Service Manager, it was "appallingly unmanageable, complicated (and) nobody could understand its pricing structure", with 4 tiers and eligibility for multiple discounts depending on ownership of cards, age etc. It was realised that a complete review of prices and charges was needed and the option of offering discounts through a new card scheme was considered. It is important to note that the process started from a dissatisfaction with the overall pricing structure which led to a review and the subsequent consideration of a relaunched card scheme. There was no preconceived desire to impose a card scheme regardless of whether or not one was desired for other reasons e.g. because other authorities were introducing them. Moreover, this process was grounded in wider anti-poverty initiatives from the beginning.

In November 1997 a report was submitted to the Oxford City Council Leisure Services Committee detailing the progress made on installing a computerised management system in the city's leisure centres and to launch a revised Leisure Card on 1st April 1998. Specialist companies were invited to make presentations to a working party of officers detailing how their respective management systems would meet the specifications made by the Leisure Services Department. Two companies made presentations, one making a second presentation to leisure centre staff. A firm of private consultants were also commissioned as consultants to develop and implement both the new management system and the Leisure Card.

The following criteria were identified by officers for elected members as important for the success of the new management system, so that it could be used to:

- ❑ maximise access to facilities by the financially disadvantaged;
- ❑ monitor facility use by different types of user;
- ❑ improve customer information and use it to create marketing opportunities;
- ❑ optimise facility use and customer spend; and to
- ❑ generate joint marketing initiatives with the wider leisure market (Oxford City Council, 1997b).

The initial aims of Oxford's Leisure Card were described by the Client Service Manager as providing more substantial benefits for target groups. More specifically, the objectives were outlined as to:

- ❑ increase income opportunities across the whole service in order to subsidise the cost of access for target groups;
- ❑ facilitate accurate monitoring of the use of facilities by different customer categories;
- ❑ target specific groups without discrimination, particularly those on a low income;
- ❑ enable quality of access for all users;
- ❑ increase usage and income for all participating facilities;
- ❑ create opportunities to increase attendance by promoting all services provided by the Council; and to
- ❑ optimise the usage of the current range of services provided by the Council (Oxford City Council, 1997b).

These objectives combined social, economic, managerial and marketing factors common to many schemes identified in this study. More interesting is the corporate perspective expressed in the use of 'Council' rather than 'Department'.

Indeed, a Member/Officer working group was proposed to consider how the new Leisure Card would satisfy the Council's core values "particularly in respect to Anti-Poverty initiatives" (Oxford City Council, 1997a; 1997b). Officers from two leisure divisions and the Chief Executive's department were invited to participate, together with the chairs and



vice-chairs of the Leisure Services Committee and the Anti-Poverty working party. Further consultation was planned with a presentation to the Leisure Committee's annual meeting with the Community Associations and other similar forums.

The Anti-Poverty Committee and the Anti-Poverty Officer played an important role in the establishment of the new leisure card by deciding which benefit categories to include, as the Client Service Manager having decided he did not have the necessary expertise to do so. This demonstrated a need to balance representation of experts from different departments in this process.

Therefore, an important question can be raised at this point as to whether the majority of Leisure Cards were operated as tools to achieve social objectives by local authorities at a time when central government policy focused on improving elite sport performance, whilst neglecting the increasing number of poor people and the expanding gap between the rich and poor. Although the results from the national survey suggested social objectives dominated the operation of Leisure Cards, the case studies of older cards reflect the growing importance of economic and managerial issues, from Leicester's initial objectives in 1985 to Oxford in 1997. The establishment of the Slice Card involved clear objectives with regards to improving monitoring, increasing use and marketing Oxford Council's facilities. Moreover, in terms of social objectives, the Anti-Poverty working party was heavily involved, providing cross-departmental expertise. Overall the Slice Card was established with a more strategic and corporate outlook than either Leicester or Cardiff.

Most Leisure Cards, therefore, primarily had a social orientation, but with secondary managerial and financial objectives such as unifying discounts, filling off-peak capacity and increasing use at facilities. Schemes contained a mix of objectives, although this was not always balanced. Concession-only schemes, which focused on low income groups, placed greater emphasis on social objectives, as demonstrated by Leicester and Cardiff. However, multi-tiered and to a lesser extent, Residents' Cards, retained a social focus but with increased emphasis on managerial and financial factors, and encouraging use amongst other tiers of their schemes, as in the case of Oxford. The case of Oxford also highlighted the objective of relaunching a scheme because of dissatisfaction with its earlier structure,

image and performance, combined with a desire to install a high technology management information system.

Indeed, with the diffusion of Leisure Cards to English non-Metropolitan authorities under the CCT regime and the launch of multi-tiered and Resident Card formats, the balance appeared to be shifting slightly from social preoccupations towards economic and managerial considerations. Therefore, Leisure Cards appeared to be protected from the legal implications of CCT which agreed with Foote's findings (1995), but they were affected by the wider changes in organisational culture, especially in the division of Clients and Contractors, as we shall see in 7.1. The attempt to meet social objectives at any cost was no longer possible amidst widespread spending restrictions and Leisure Cards had to adopt a more efficient approach in order to justify their existence. Whether or not this mix of objectives was being achieved remains the focus of the following sections.

## **6.2 Research and target setting**

It was hypothesised that undertaking research and setting performance targets were key activities in setting up and operating a Leisure Card Scheme. Figure 6.3 (A19) shows the types of research used. The most common form was liaison with other local authorities (indicated by 70% of respondents), which was followed by consultation with municipal facility staff (53%). Conducting a survey of potential customers (26%), consulting residents' associations (24%) and commercial businesses (19%), and focus groups (12%) were less frequently undertaken. Only 3 authorities claimed to have done no research before establishing their schemes, while 11 claimed to have employed some other form(s).



Figure 6.3 Types of research undertaken when establishing Leisure Card Schemes

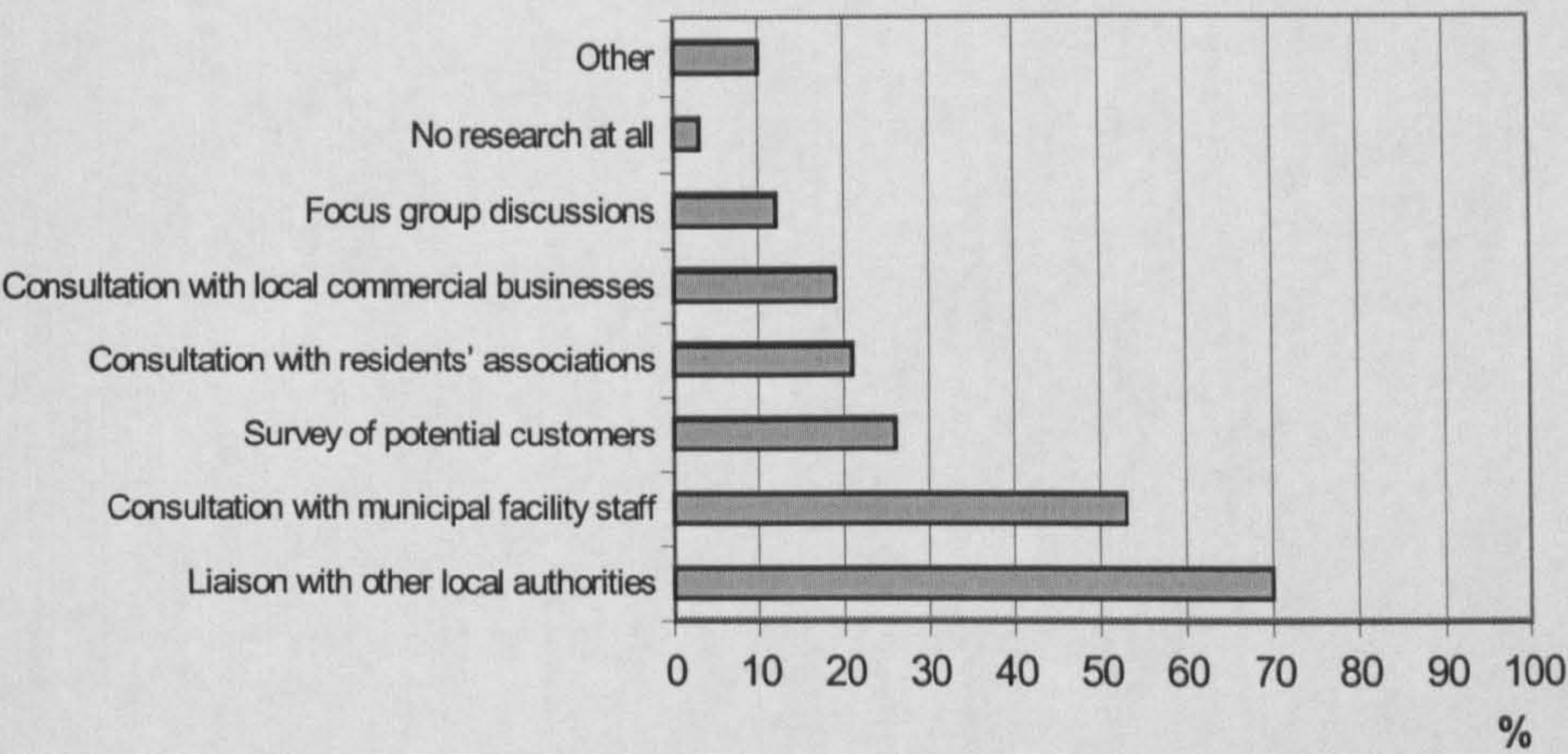
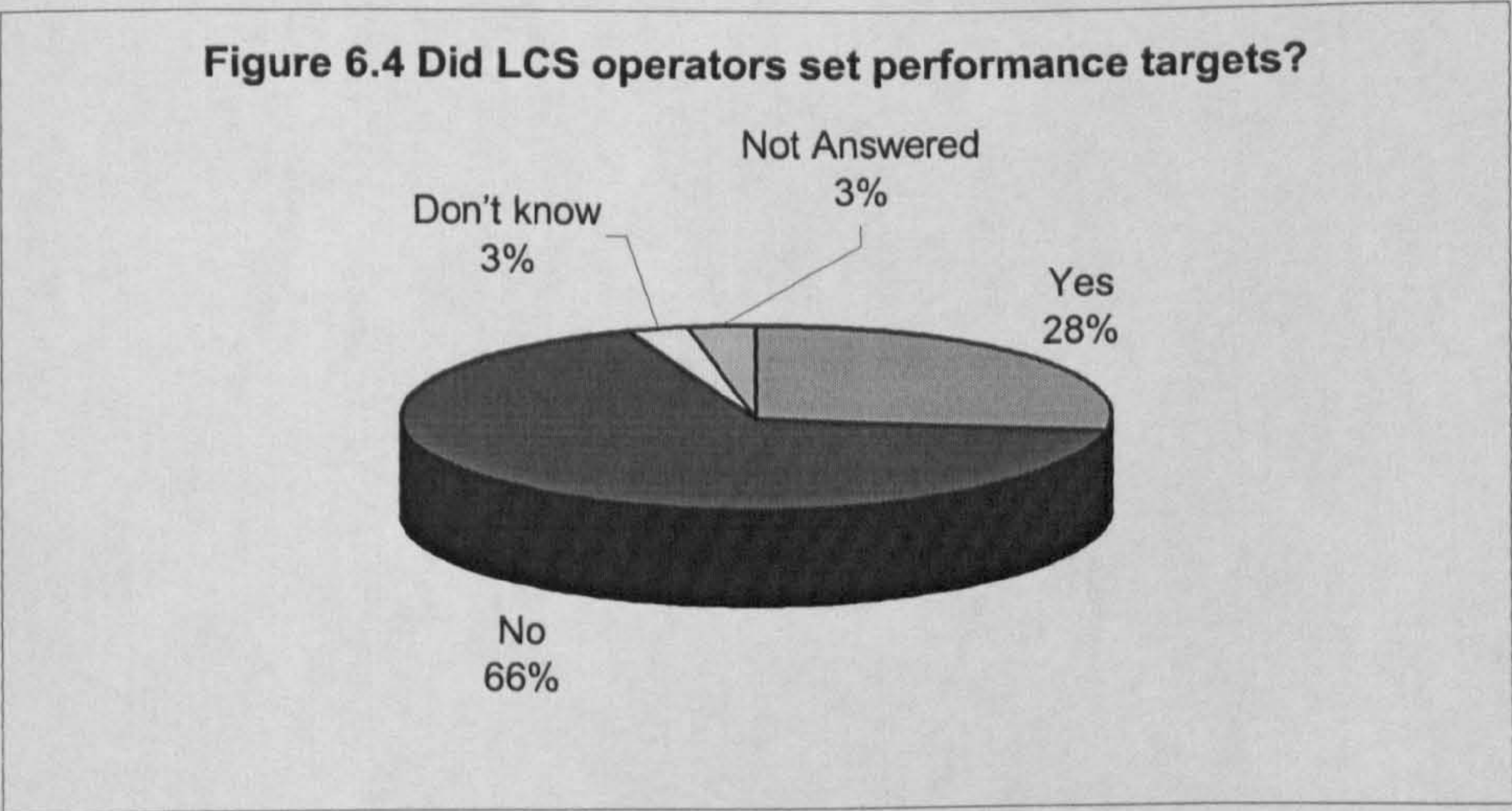


Figure 6.4 (AT20) on the other hand, shows that this research was not translated into targets, as two thirds (66%) of Leisure Card operators did not set performance targets for their schemes. While 28% of Leisure Cards did have performance targets, 3% did not even know if any existed.





Before the introduction of Cardiff's Passport To Leisure, consultants were commissioned to undertake research into similar existing schemes. The study looked at 24 Leisure Cards in large cities, and the results have already been analysed in Chapter 4 (Collins and Randolph, 1993). In addition, an 'on-site' survey of 872 users was conducted at leisure centres to try to establish the proportion of existing users eligible for proposed Leisure Card discounts, and in which activities they were participating in (see section 8.4 for the results). Research was also undertaken into the size of potential target groups using socio-economic data.

The only target subsequently set was that "it would not be unrealistic to expect an approximate take-up of 20% of the eligible group" (Cardiff City Council, 1994). A committee report stated that this number approximated to 10,000 inhabitants of Cardiff, but an estimation from its own statistics shows this number to be closer to 8,000. Indeed, it is also worth noting that the same report stated that "not all of these...would be expected to register within the first year" (*ibid*, 1994) (see section 8.1 for actual take-up).

At the end of 1996, the Oxford Recreation Card underwent a review by commercial consultants and was discussed in a "Tackling Poverty in Oxford" workshop held in January 1997, and the results were presented to the Leisure Services Committee the following month. The establishment of the scheme was left primarily to the company that won the contract to install the management information system, with a separate firm of graphic designers contracted to produce an image for the scheme. A working group of officers was set up to oversee work and establish the scheme's objectives, and included Client, Contract and Anti-Poverty officers who provided expertise on low income groups and areas of deprivation in the city. However, no specific targets were identified in committee reports in respect of take-up or facility use, rather these were to be determined after patterns of membership and use had stabilised.

Therefore, research appeared to be common practice when establishing a Leisure Card Scheme, often involving private consultants. However, evidence from the national survey suggested that research looking at other authorities' schemes often turned into a copy-cattling exercise. The structure, pricing levels and imaging were often reproduced and in one extreme case an authority had simply replicated another card scheme in detail,

including the application forms, only replacing its name in the marketing material. This neglected local socio-demographic profiles and demand, as well as specific issues such as the range of facilities and discounts included in schemes. The use of private consultants with expert knowledge of Leisure Card Scheme seemed logical so long as they were independent, but using companies with vested interests in selling technology hardware and software must call into question their impartiality and also their commitment to the social objectives which are an inherent part of Leisure Card Schemes.

Research into target groups was fundamental, but difficult because of double counting of benefit claimants due to multiple eligibility (see section 7.5). This process was also hampered by a general lack of accurate socio-economic data to identify poor people and areas of deprivation, especially as census data was out of date by the mid-1990s. None of the case studies used the widely available DoE (now DETR) Index of Local Conditions (now Index of Local Deprivation), however, Oxford did include Anti-Poverty officers in the working group co-ordinating the scheme, and made use of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit claimant statistics for the District. Indeed, these statistics are available to all local authorities and are up to date, if the human resources exist to extract and analyse the data. The lack of comprehensive existing research into Leisure Cards and the inability to draw on universally applicable benchmarks from the performance of existing schemes made setting accurate targets even more challenging, not only in terms of take-up and use of cards, but also in the setting of financial objectives and the establishment of target groups.

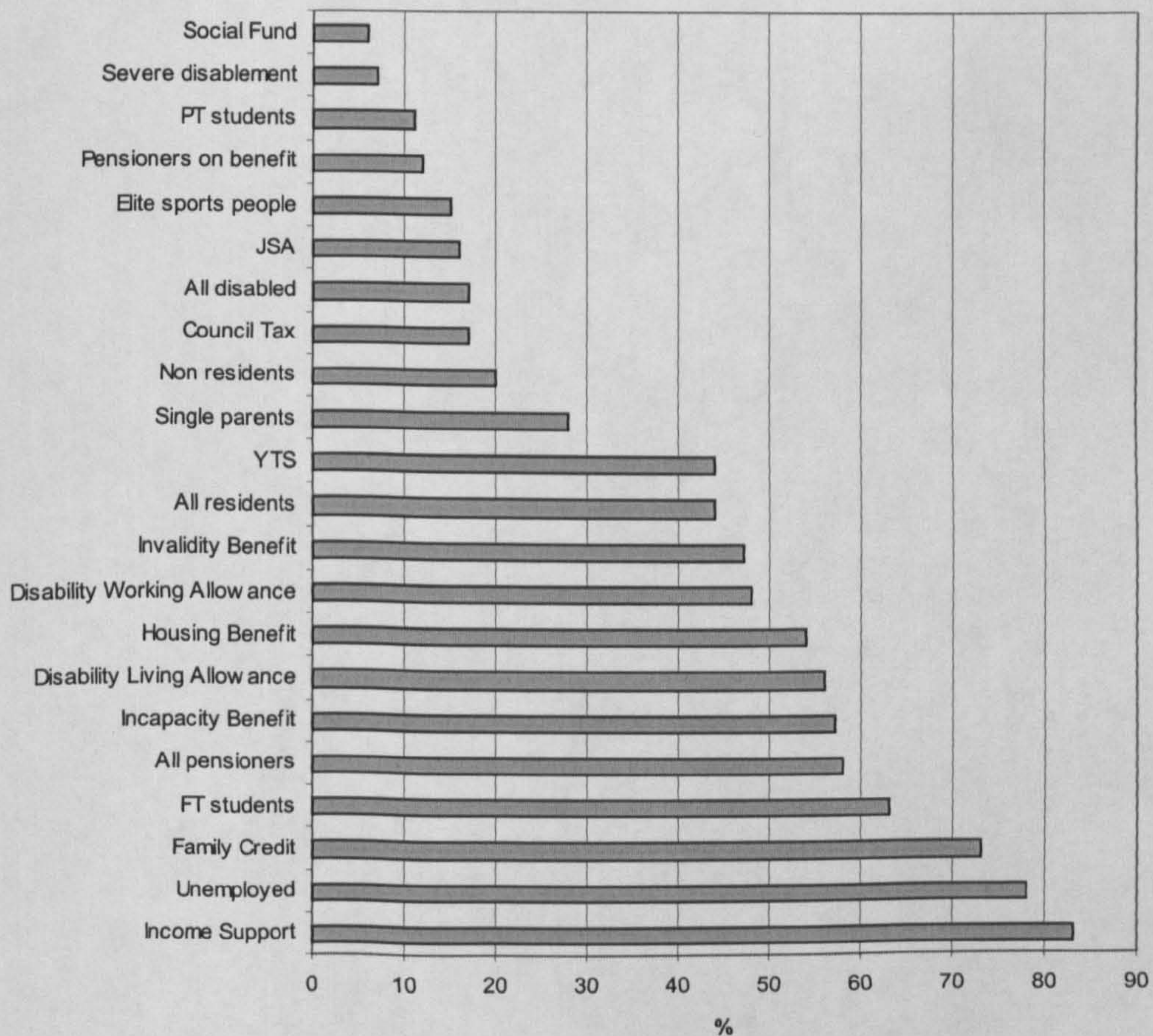
### **6.3 Target groups**

Target groups form the basis of the typology of Leisure Card Schemes described in Chapter 1: concession-only, multi-tier, residents' cards. Due to the small number of residents' cards identified, the analysis hereafter will be restricted to a comparison between concession-only and multi-tiered schemes. The groups targeted by concession-only schemes and concession tiers of multi-tiered schemes were defined predominantly along the lines of social security benefit categories (see Figure 6.5 AT21), because that proved an easy means of identification when residents applied for membership. 89% of schemes



targeted Income Support claimants and 73% Family Credit, 79% targeted unemployed people, 64% full time students and 59% all pensioners (i.e. including those not on state benefits). These last three categories are not means-tested benefit claimants, and included people who were not necessarily having to live on a low income. A significant number of authorities have reviewed their rules and 'tightened up' for example, by excluding old age pensioners not on benefit (who might have substantial savings, investments and index-linked pensions), or defining which students they would permit (full-time or part-time, 16 and over). While these results are broadly consistent with the findings of both Foote (1995) and Collins and Randolph (1993) who identified disabled people, unemployed and low income groups as the main target groups of Leisure Cards, this survey provides more detail on segments within the low income groups and a comparison between different types of card schemes.

**Figure 6.5 Groups targeted by Leisure Card Schemes**





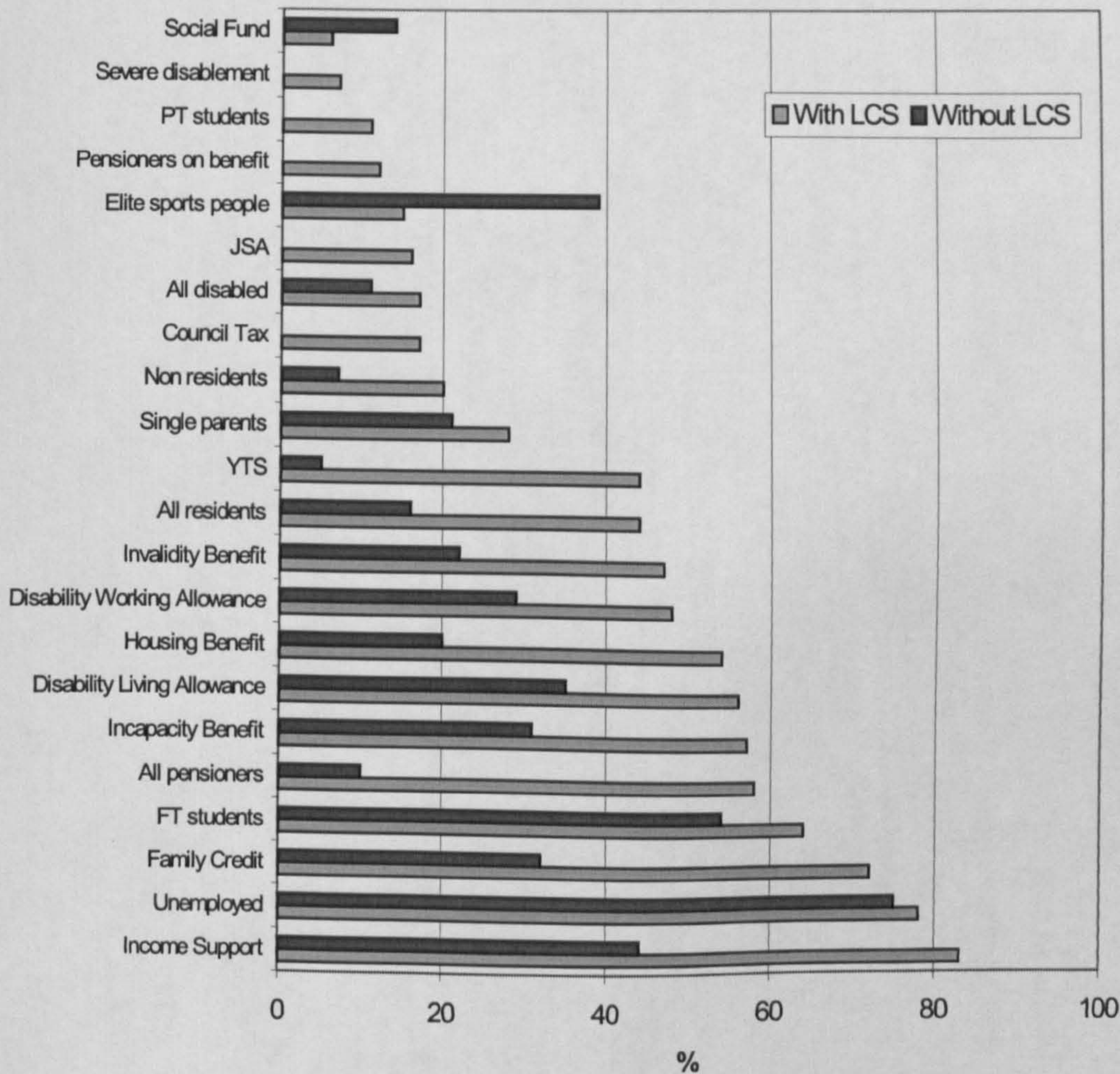
Multi-tiered schemes also had tiers for the population as a whole, particularly focusing on frequent users by offering fixed monthly or annual payments which provide more value for money as frequency of participation increases. Apart from regular guaranteed income for venues, benefits can also be accrued from increased secondary spending. Oxford's Slice Card provides an example of this strategy, and is discussed in more detail below and in section 7.3.

When compared to traditional, standard concession pricing schemes used by authorities without a Leisure Card, it is evident that they enabled authorities to target more disadvantaged groups (see Figure 6.6 overleaf AT21). Only 44% of authorities without a Leisure Card targeted discounts on Income Support claimants, compared to 83% of Leisure Card operators. Indeed, the group most targeted in 'standard' concession schemes after the unemployed (74%) was full-time students (53%), many of whom could not be described as economically disadvantaged relative to other needy groups. Indeed, of the 22 target groups identified, 20 were targeted by more respondents with a Leisure Card than those without.

The criteria for selecting target groups for Leicester's Leisure Pass was based on those previously targeted, although the criteria for eligibility was altered in line with changes to state benefits. Indeed, general reductions in the levels of benefits relative to incomes and the number of people eligible for them had major consequences for card schemes. The first was reducing the disposable income of existing members and therefore their propensity to participate (especially if discounts are reduced), and secondly, reducing the overall numbers eligible to join the scheme, as exemplified by changes to single parent and disabled benefits in 1999. The Assistant Director regarded Leicester's scheme as flexible in terms of responding to changes in state benefits and incorporating new target groups by adjusting membership criteria accordingly.



Figure 6.6 A comparison of groups targeted by authorities with and without Leisure Cards



There were no plans or desire to target new groups in Leicester, but housewives were considered briefly before being ruled out by perceived choice not to work. As mentioned previously, ethnic minorities were an important part of Leicester City Council's equal opportunities policy, and previously were a priority target group of its Leisure Pass. However, despite growing awareness amongst these groups, their proportional over-representation in membership terms and increasing youth membership, there was still a



feeling among Client officers that not many of the facilities or activities included in the scheme appealed to them, although this was not supported by any evidence.

There were several options open to the officers in selecting target groups for Cardiff's Passport To Leisure. To assist this process, a list of potential target groups was drawn up. As Table 6.1 shows, the total target market could have been as big as 120,892 people, or 40% of the city's population.

Table 6.1 Potential target groups for Cardiff's PTL

| Target group                  | Size                                   |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Unemployed                    | 15,500                                 |
| Senior Citizens               | 54,000                                 |
| Full-time students            | 19,000                                 |
| Income Support claimants      | 15,500*                                |
| Registered Disabled           | 5,100*                                 |
| Housing Benefit               | 2,800*                                 |
| Family Credit                 | 2,896*                                 |
| YT/ET                         | 3,200                                  |
| Council Tax Benefit claimants | In receipt of one or more of the above |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>120,892</b>                         |

\* cross-over may exist between people claiming more than one benefit

From the 'on-site' survey, most respondents were regular users (57% of those used facilities twice a week or more and 28% used them once a week), and 34% (298) of them were eligible for the discount scheme (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Existing users of Cardiff Leisure Centres eligible for a PTL card

|                                 | % of users eligible |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unemployed                      | 6%                  |
| Students                        | 7%                  |
| Senior Citizens                 | 8%                  |
| 16-18 year olds in FT education | 6%                  |
| Income Support claimants        | 6%                  |
| Housing Benefit claimants       | 1%                  |
| Disabled                        | 1%                  |
| Care Allowance                  | 1%                  |

The list of options highlighted by officers for the selection of target groups were:

1. include all these groups and their dependants;
2. include all of these groups minus their dependants;
3. reduce the number of groups and include dependants e.g. exclude students, those on youth/employment training schemes; or
4. reduce the above groups minus dependants.

It was recognised that these some groups contained people who were not necessarily living on a low income, such as students, senior citizens, the disabled and even the unemployed, and including dependants would have increased the target market yet further. Therefore, the officers made the decision to take option four and reduce the number of groups and not include their dependants, thus targeting the groups shown in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3 Initial target groups of the Cardiff PTL (1994)**

| Target group  | Size                                   |
|---|--|
| Unemployed  | 15,500                                 |
| Income Support claimants  | 15,500*                                |
| Invalidity Benefit claimants<br>(including those registered disabled) | 5,100*                                 |
| Housing Benefit   | 2,800*                                 |
| Family Credit   | 2,896*                                 |
| Council Tax Benefit claimants   | In receipt of one or more of the above |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>41,796</b>                          |

\* cross-over can exist between people claiming more than one benefit

This reduced the target market by two thirds to 41,796 (13.2%) (see Table 6.3) and concentrated on those most likely to be at risk of living on a low income. Senior Citizens were excluded due to the financial implications of including an additional 55,000 people.

After four years of debate, 16-18 year olds in full-time education and those on government training schemes were included in April 1998. The justification for this was that whilst in full-time education, these people are considered adults but are unable to claim a student grant, and often have to rely on funding from parents who may also have a low income. Those on government training schemes received between £30 and £40 a week and thus fell into the low income category. The officer primarily responsible for the card also indicated



that this might help achieve wider Sports Development objectives in targeting a group with a high drop out rate from sport. One of the DSO officers also claimed the Scheme could aid anti-crime policies. The estimated cost of including these two groups was £4,000 a year, which could be met within the existing budget allocation.

The decision not to include all Senior Citizens in the scheme was upheld, as they continued to receive separate 50% discounts on many leisure activities. This agreement was part of the CCT contract and including this group in the Passport To Leisure would have meant even greater discounts, as well as an increased subsidy by the Client. Those eligible for Income Support could still apply for membership, thus focusing on people living on the lowest incomes in this group. The Direct Service Operator (DSO) officers were aware that not all Senior Citizens were living on a low income, and were satisfied that enough provision was being made for them. One DSO officer described the Passport To Leisure as much more limited than the scheme she had previously been involved in, as it focused on the individual and did not include dependants. Indeed, she described this other scheme as "better from an anti-poverty point of view".

In terms of targeting particular areas within the city with high levels of deprivation and exclusion, the Client officer claimed that door-to-door visits had been made to certain housing estates in an attempt to sign people up for the scheme at no charge. This was apparently very successful, as were road shows at special events in the city.

From a broader corporate perspective, the Assistant Director realised that although "there are areas of deprivation in Cardiff that are amongst the worst in Wales and the UK", the Council was "very mercenary" about this. Its policy was that where there was a government or European grant aid programme which includes deprivation criteria, then the Council had designed strategies for those areas and "went for the money". These, however, were related more to infrastructure than programmes. The Assistant Director also pointed to potential "political jealousy" which might arise if areas were perceived as being favoured by the Council, and that "friction" might result. This did not, however, seem applicable to the Passport To Leisure, as its purpose was to reach those living on the lowest incomes in the City, and these people live in concentrated areas. Targeting these areas made sense, not only in reaching concentrations of potential members, but also in targeting

a geographic area or "social space" which may have become excluded, such as a housing estate. Section 8.3 analyses take-up according to geographic area for all three Leisure Card case studies.

The final format of the Oxford Slice Card effectively involved creating five cards on a multi-tiered basis, distinguished by eligibility criteria, the charge for the card, levels of discount, and facilities and activities discounts. The Cool, Active and Aqua Slices were made available to everyone, including non-residents, as shown below.

**Cool Slice** - Ice skating, swimming and sauna, aerobics and fitness rooms, racket sports, the crèche and more. A monthly fee gives unlimited use of all activities during public sessions.

**Active Slice** - The same as Cool Slice but without the ice skating option.

**Aqua Slice** - Gives unlimited access during public sessions to swimming pools and the sauna at Temple Cowley Pool.

The Bonus Slice and Student Slice were the concession tiers of the scheme and were only made available to certain groups. Eligibility for the Bonus Slice required proof that the applicant was claiming one of the benefits listed below, was registered disabled, or was a partner or child dependent on the applicant:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (job seeker)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Invalid care allowance                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (interim payment) | <input type="checkbox"/> Incapacity benefit                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth training courses       | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability living allowance                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income support               | <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance allowance                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing benefit              | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability working allowance                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council tax rebate           | <input type="checkbox"/> NHS, AG2, AG3, HC2 or HC3 certificate holders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family credit                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time students only      |  |

Therefore, in general, Leisure Card Schemes were targeting a wide range of groups than authorities only using discounts. The main groups targeted were both means tested and non-means tested benefit claimants, the unemployed, pensioners, the disabled and students



(full/part time and aged 16-18 in full-time education). For multi-tiered schemes, all residents must be added.

The large number of groups targeted by Leisure Cards revealed how the broad categorisation of people living on a low income could be broken down into segments. This, however, raised a key question for Leisure Card operators targeting low income groups, which was: which groups should be entitled discounts? The answer to this question lay principally in the objectives of the scheme. If, as identified in section 6.1, most Leisure Card Schemes were committed to encouraging participation in sport and leisure activities among poor people, then it would be necessary to define exactly who the poor were and where they lived. Section 6.2 demonstrated that little activity of this type was undertaken by operators.

Moreover, the decision about who deserved a discount was a moral one and linked to the social exclusion discourses in Chapter 2. Following the redistribution discourse (RED) and the Fabian position, universal discounts available to everyone should underpin Leisure Card Schemes. A moral perspective (MUD) which is partly associated with the reluctant collectivist position, identified certain groups as deserving discounts and others as not. From a social integration perspective (SID), those people deserving discounts would be in paid employment or registered as actively seeking it on 'workfare' benefits.

Leisure Card target groups were largely determined by central government policy because claiming benefit entitled people to the most significant discounts, and so eligibility was subject to wider changes to the benefits system. Whilst relying on benefit claimant categories as eligibility criteria was convenient for operators, the lack of research into local poverty (as highlighted in section 6.2) and copy-cattling, neglected localised differences and an overall insensitivity to target groups. Without detailed research into the size of the different target groups it was very difficult to evaluate if objectives were being achieved (see Chapter 8).

Ineligibility for a state benefit in theory meant ineligibility for Leisure Card discounts. Fortunately for the large number of people moving on and off benefits frequently (Walker, 1997), the annual renewal of membership usually gave people a degree of leeway and the

retention of card privileges. Also, as highlighted in the case studies, operators could make decisions about whether or not to include certain groups, particularly pensioners, school leavers not eligible for benefits and people living just outside authority boundaries.

The literature reviewed in sections 2.1 and 2.2 suggested that the poor and socially excluded consist largely of unemployed people, or households where at least one person was out of work. Therefore, Leisure Cards targeting benefit claimants covered not only those out of work and living on a low income, but those claiming Income Support whilst working part-time and/or on a low wage. Single parents, although at great risk of poverty and social exclusion, were difficult to target if not claiming benefits. This was also true of all those not taking up their benefit entitlements.

The groups which posed problems for Leicester, Cardiff and several respondents to the national survey were pensioners, 16-18 year olds in full-time education, the dependants of those eligible for a card and non-residents whose closest sport and leisure facilities lay within the card operating authority. As discussed above, there is no guarantee that all of these 'problem' groups are poor, but some will be. Oxford decided to include dependants in the Bonus Slice card, something excluded by Leicester and Cardiff as concession-only schemes. This risked giving discounts to people who may not necessarily have been poor themselves, but, as the HBAI statistics showed in Chapter 2, it was not only the unemployed that were living in poverty, it was also their families/partners. It must also be remembered that one third of all children were living in poverty in 1997. Therefore, not only were these dependants eligible for discounts, they could participate in leisure together.

The issue of pensioners depended on the individual authority's commitment to encouraging participation amongst the elderly, not just the sections who were poor. If only the poor elderly were targeted, then eligibility could be restricted to those claiming a means tested benefit. The 16-18 year olds posed a similar question of policy commitment, as this group was not eligible for state benefits and might suffer large drop out rates in sports participation. They were also very easy to target, by making visits to schools, as demonstrated by Leicester and Cardiff.

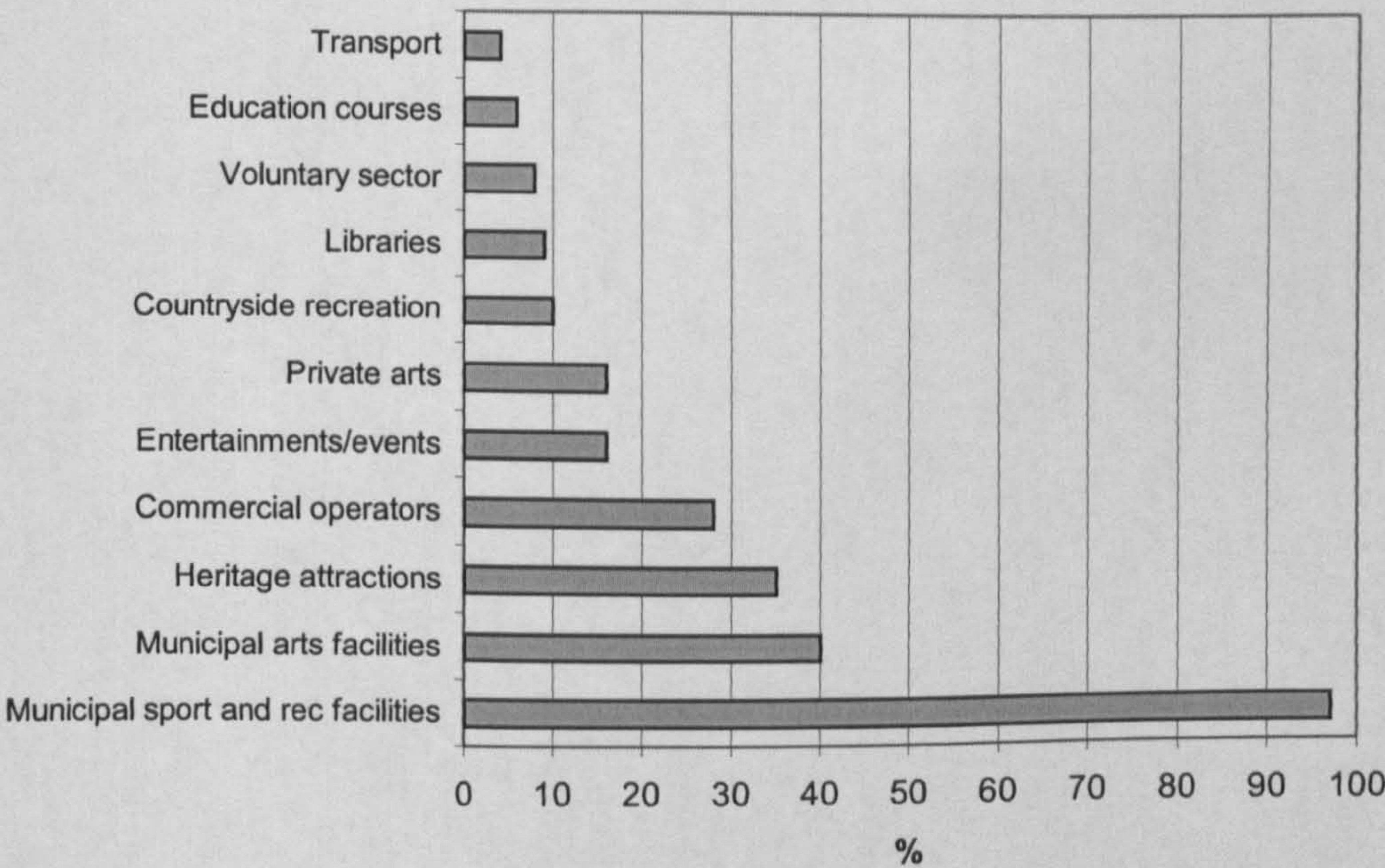


The issue of non-resident benefit claimants living close to facilities being eligible for membership was a matter for agreement between the operator and neighbouring authorities. In the case of Leicester it appeared that responsibility lay with the neighbouring authorities to choose to subsidise the cost of the card. It would be a risk for the operator to allow non-residents to participate unless it was envisaged that the revenue gained from participation would cover all costs.

6.4 Activities and facilities included in Leisure Card schemes

In terms of the services offered to card holders, as expected, municipal sport and recreation facilities were the focus of nearly all Leisure Cards surveyed (97% see Figure 6.7 AT22). 40% of schemes included municipal arts facilities, involving arts centres, discounts on theatre tickets and town hall auditorium activities.

Figure 6.7 Activities and facilities included in Leisure Card Schemes



Commercial sector involvement was still not widespread (28%), despite the fact that several schemes such as Leicester had demonstrated that including a broad range of commercial operators from florists and photographers to 10 pin bowls and cinemas gave a scheme a more attractive image and encourages membership and usage from women, older



people and people not interested in sport; as the Leicester Leisure Card officer said, the range should be "from veg to Verdi." Steam railways, zoos and in one scheme even a cut price initial consultation in a private hospital were benefits of being a cardholder.

Commercial sector involvement by shops, cinemas, restaurants etc., produced the benefit of, on average, a 10% discount for card holders. This involvement can provide an effective marketing tool for card schemes, especially when organisations such as football clubs with league status are involved, providing 'flagship' discounts. Apart from potentially attracting new customers and increasing revenue, commercial operators also receive free advertising and publicity through the scheme (important for small firms), plus the kudos of supporting the local community.

Evidence from the survey suggested there was little involvement by the voluntary sector, or by public transport and parking contractors, which directly affects the ability of low income groups to access sport and leisure facilities, though some schemes included taxi operators.

The range of facilities and activities included in Leicester's Leisure Pass grew from those offered at municipal sports facilities to encompass broader areas, in order to widen choice for members. The facilities, activities and discount levels offered in 1997 included discounts at 95 municipal, commercial and voluntary sector facilities.

However, it was very difficult to ascertain the importance of including commercial sector activities in Leisure Pass, because there was no easy way to monitor use, unless businesses recorded it separately. The Leisure Pass customer survey (Leicester City Council, 1996) indicated that four of the most popular five discounts offered were from the commercial sector. The cinema was the most popular commercial venue amongst card users (see Chapter 8 and Table 8.12 for more detail).

The extension of the scheme to include more discounts of this nature in the commercial sector was described as a "possibility" by Client officers. One of the problems here was that the larger, more popular high street companies had sufficient customers paying full price and rarely shared the same social responsibilities and objectives as the public sector.

The inclusion of public transport would have been welcomed by officers, and some members already expected to use the Leisure Pass as a bus pass. However, there was very strict legislation regulating the ability of bus companies to give discounts and there was "no way these (Leisure Pass and bus passes) can be combined" according to the Assistant Director.

When deciding which activities and facilities to include in Cardiff's Passport To Leisure, three options were considered. The first was to include all adult activities at leisure and amenity venues, excluding team sports, courses and bookable courts which may involve people not eligible for a card participating at a discounted rate if a cardholder paid the hire charge. The second option was to restrict its use by selecting specific activities at selected venues. The third option involved a pilot scheme highlighting one or two activities to monitor their take-up.

The survey of leisure centre users undertaken by Cardiff City Council (1994) revealed that while swimming was popular among people eligible for the proposed Leisure Card (37%), aerobics, badminton, and weight training had much lower participation levels (all below 11%) (Table 6.4). This indicated that although people eligible for a discount were attending the leisure centres in significant numbers, the range of activities they participated in was very narrow, dominated by swimming, the cheapest activity on offer.

**Table 6.4 Activities participated in at Cardiff leisure centres pre-Passport To Leisure**

|                 | Eligible for discount % |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Swimming        | 37                      |
| Aerobics        | 11                      |
| Badminton       | 6                       |
| Weight training | 6                       |

A decision also had to be made about the times discounts were available to cardholders. The most encompassing would have been to offer them at all times facilities were open. The other options were economically motivated, restricting discounted use to off-peak periods. Establishing an off-peak period that was consistent across all venues would have avoided confusion for the customer and provided a more corporate image. However, by its nature, off-peak is the time when many people cannot or do not want to participate,



regardless of their economic circumstances. The final decision was to offer the 50% discount at any time the leisure activities listed below, which did not include the more expensive sports of badminton, squash or tennis. (Cardiff City Council, 1994)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weight training                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor bowls           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Circuit training                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mini golf               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerobics                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing permits         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aqua aerobics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor launch- Rath Park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Centre (Wales Empire Pool) | <input type="checkbox"/> Roath Conservatory      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics training                | <input type="checkbox"/> Taff Trail cycle hire   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling (Maindy Swimming Pool)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Free equipment hire     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor bowls                      | (Cardiff City Council, 1994).                    |

Other non-sporting municipal, commercial and voluntary operators were also identified to be approached to ascertain their interest in participating in the scheme:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> St. David's Hall           | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice rink                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Theatre                | <input type="checkbox"/> Museums                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiff Castle             | <input type="checkbox"/> Channel View & Star Centres  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Superbowl (10 pin bowling) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiff International Arena. |

Considering Cardiff's Passport To Leisure had been in operation for four years by 1998, the range of discounts remained limited compared to those offered by some authorities. Although attempts were being made to bring more commercial operators "on board", the discounts offered included few flagship offers other than the Odeon Cinema and the Welsh National Ice Rink. The scheme only involved eight non-sporting facilities. This must have limited its appeal, and may be a fundamental reason for low take-up (see sections 8.1 and 8.2).

The Assistant Director claimed that, apart from increasing the number of people eligible for a card, a major objective was to increase the use of cards by holders. One way of achieving this had been to include commercial operators, and he believed that the more they could include, the more "sexy" the card would become. He went on to claim that



commercial operators had started to incorporate the Passport To Leisure in their marketing activities as a means of differentiating themselves from competitors. This was certainly the case with the Odeon after the opening of a new multi-screen cinema outside the city centre. Small commercial operators had not been targeted, and the officer responsible for the scheme's operation said it was difficult to get through internal marketing departments of branches of large organisations, because policies are usually centrally driven. There was, however, an expressed desire to include food outlets in the scheme, and a concerted effort was underway to extend it.

Cardiff's Direct Service Operator officers were more limited in their outlook, and when asked whether transport could be included in the scheme, said that "transport is not our function" and that offering discounts to competitors such as private gyms and other sports facilities may cause problems.

The extension of the range of discounts available to members was the key to re-imaging the Passport To Leisure and focusing on leisure activities rather than just sport for the Client officer and the Assistant Director, both of whom were concerned with its limited appeal because it was perceived as a 'passport to sport' rather than to leisure (see section 7.3). There was also potential for it to be extended to other services provided by the Council. This would also encourage corporate ownership of the card, increase cross-Departmental liaison, expand marketing activities.

As in the cases of Leicester and Cardiff, the launch of the Oxford Slice Card focused on municipal sport and recreation facilities. A second phase of the scheme planned to involve the commercial sector more, and a working group including City Centre Management (the inhouse DSO contractors) had already begun meetings to establish partnerships with operators. The leisure centre manager at Temple Cowley Pools realised the "wonderful potential in terms of partnerships", but many questions remained unanswered regarding the administration of this expansion and whether they would rest with the Client or the Contractor- nor indeed if there would be any commercial conflict of interest with the latter. This would be particularly relevant if the scheme underwent another boom in membership.

As part of further working party agreements, off-peak charges were abolished with concessions applying at all times across all facilities including equipment hire. The DSM stated that "it's an appalling assumption that just because people are unemployed that they can only come out between 9 and 5". Moreover, it was proposed to extend the scheme to all aspects of health and fitness including assessments and classes, adult swimming lessons, family swimming and skating tickets, snooker and 'freedom of the park' tickets. It was also recognised that secondary costs such as the *crèche* do influence participation, and Bonus Slice cardholders only had to pay £0.60 per hour (half price) for this service.

Therefore, the survey provided an overview of what activities and facilities were included in Leisure Card Schemes whilst the case of Leicester explained the benefits of including a broad range of discounts and the value of flagship discounts such as cinemas. At the same time, Cardiff's Passport To Leisure demonstrated that a lack of cross-sector involvement can limit the appeal of a scheme and affect its image.

From the case study evidence, two phases of development seemed to take place in including activities and facilities in Leisure Card Schemes. The first phase was offering discounts at municipal sport and recreation venues, focusing on leisure centres and then moving to other leisure services such as libraries and municipal theatres/arts centres. This phase took place during the establishment of schemes and the development of a core membership of regular users. A problem highlighted here related to which activities should be discounted, as individual schemes such as swimming or using the gym were easy to apply the discount to. However, when cardholders wanted to participate in group or team activities such as badminton or squash with a non-cardholder, this presented problems. If an individual charge for court hire could not be established, then these activities were often excluded from schemes.

The majority of schemes had not moved onto the second phase which involved bringing on board commercial venues, offering lower level discounts for a wide variety of goods and services in exchange for free advertising and publicity. The inclusion of commercial sector discounts in a variety of venues was an instrumental factor in the imaging of the Leisure Card, providing wider appeal than just municipal sports and leisure facilities (see section 7.3). Not only did this enable schemes to move away from a sport-orientated, municipal



image, it also encouraged and enabled low income groups to participate in activities or visit venues they would otherwise not have been able to afford. It also offered attractions to older people, women and families. This had the potential to increase opportunities for different income groups to participate together.

Moreover, including discounts in sports shops, for example, provided low income groups with reduced costs when buying clothing and equipment. Other discounts in everyday services such as grocers, hairdressers, newsagents etc., reduced general living costs for low income people. One of the main advantages for the local authority is that it did not have to subsidise these discounts, and that cardholders initially not interested in municipal activities may be tempted to try them when they receive marketing information. However, the survey revealed that extensive cross-sector activity was not widespread and that schemes such as Leicester's Leisure Pass were exceptions, not the rule.

Indeed, there were some disadvantages of including commercial operators, highlighted mainly by Contractors. The main one was including commercial sector operators which were competing directly with municipal facilities like private gyms, health and sports clubs, and even theatres. Also, the authority had no direct control over the quality of service provided by commercial or voluntary operators, and any bad experiences would reflect on the scheme as a whole.

In general there were very few voluntary sector organisations involved in Leisure Card Schemes. A limited number of respondents included sports clubs which offered discounts on membership fees for cardholders, but these examples were few and far between. Another under developed area was cross-departmental activity in Leisure Cards, with limited involvement from other municipal service areas, even theatres. The problem of pricing agreements being bound up by CCT contracts was highlighted as a barrier to this process e.g. bus passes could not be combined with Leicester's Leisure Pass.

Chapter 2 highlighted poverty and social exclusion as multi-dimensional phenomena which in turn require a multi-dimensional policy response (Cars *et al*, 1998). As leisure itself is a multi-dimensional phenomena based on the freedom of choice, leisure card schemes should have the corporate aim to include as wide a range of providers and discounts as

possible to increase choice and the number of opportunities for cardholders to meet their needs.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Therefore, while the objectives of Leisure Cards were specific to individual authorities, there was an overall movement away from a purely Fabian commitment to providing discounts at 'any cost' which seemed to have been a characteristic of pioneering schemes in the 1980s, to a more balanced approach and increases in the adoption of managerial and economic objectives. This occurred in combination with an increase in the number of schemes established in more diverse types of authority, and in particular the relaunch of many concession-only schemes in multi-tiered formats. The inclusion of non-concessionary groups provided the opportunity, and the income, to cross-subsidise discounts to target groups (see chapter 7). Despite this, the domination of social reasons for establishing Leisure Card Schemes was consistent with the ideal-type Fordist model, although the growing importance of managerial and economic objectives indicated ideal post-Fordist tendencies.

Moreover, while the Fabian desire for universal, collective participation shifted to positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups at both national and local policy levels, the selection of Leisure Card target groups was based on central government benefit claimant categorisations. Although some discretion existed in the selection of target groups, many Leisure Cards effectively became an extended part of central government policy, rewarding those who deserved benefits with discounted leisure participation, while the ineligible were excluded.

Indeed, while this demonstrated a movement towards the 'reluctant collectivist' model where social objectives were balanced against concerns for economy and efficiency, which was also broadly consistent with the post-Fordist model, Fordist tendencies remained. Leisure Card Schemes were still largely protected from the CCT process (discussed in detail in chapter 7) and few of the market based practices such as extensive market research (especially relating to local poverty), defined and accurate market segmentation,

or target setting were common place amongst operators. The reliance on benefit claimant categorisations, although practical and convenient, neglected the needs of local markets and the flexible approach characteristic of a post-Fordist Leisure Card Scheme. This was also reflected in the limited role of the commercial sector in Leisure Cards. The Fordist separation of the sectors prevailed and the boundaries between them did not appear to be blurring in the majority of cases, as the post-Fordist model would suggest. The following chapters will determine whether or not these tendencies were reflected in the management and evaluation of Leisure Card Schemes.

**Chapter 7**

**Managing Leisure Cards**

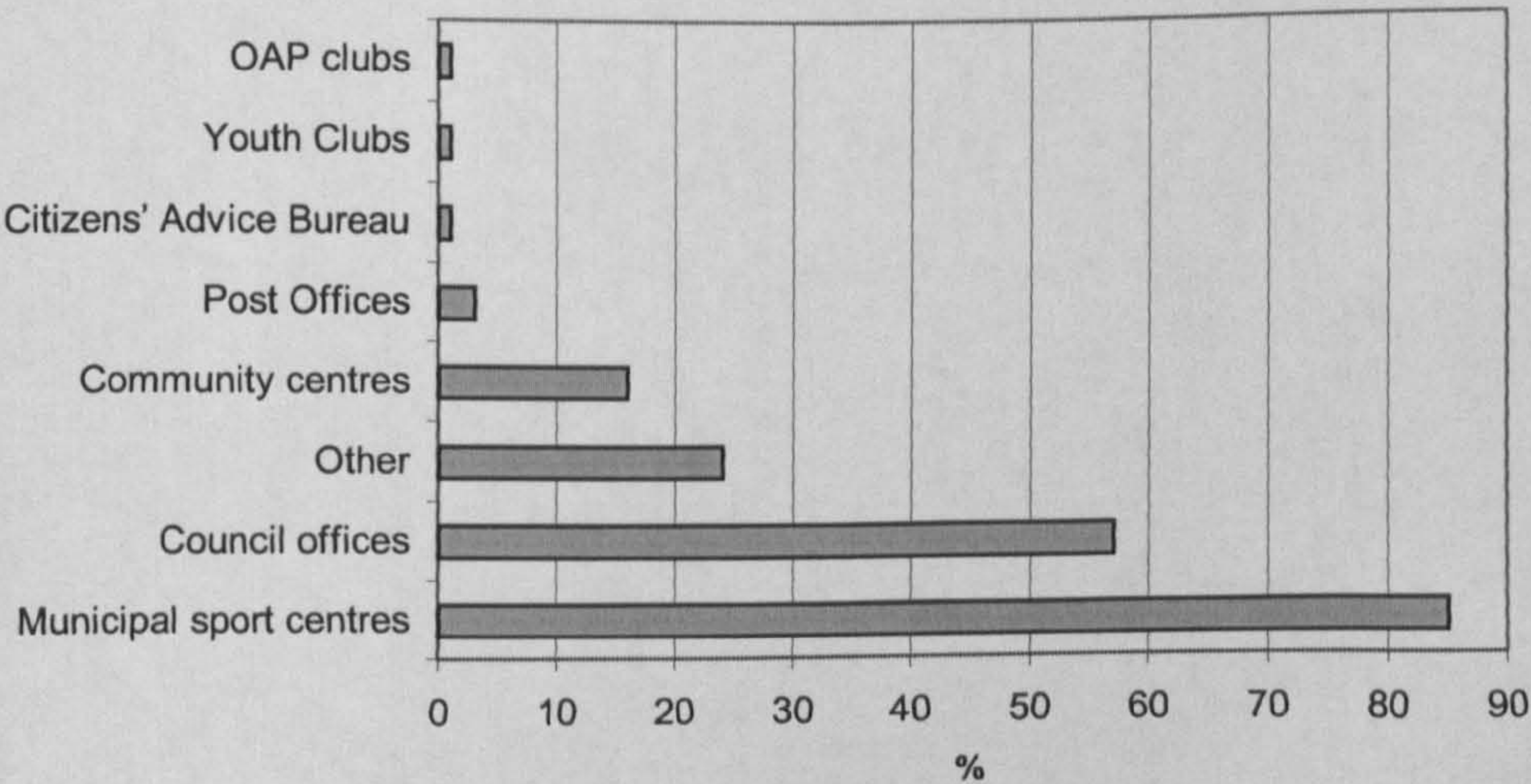


This Chapter continues the analysis of Leisure Cards in 1997/98, shifting the focus onto management issues. Detail is provided on the administration of Leisure Cards i.e. where they can be bought from, what proof of eligibility is required, how long cards are issued for, who administers applications and manages schemes on a day-to-day basis. This is followed by an analysis of schemes' budgets and how prices and discount levels are set for cards. The marketing activities of Leisure Card operators are also analysed, looking towards the most recent developments in targeting marketing towards niche markets. The Chapter concludes with an analysis of how card schemes are monitored and some of the overall problems with managing them.

7.1 Administration

The administration of Leisure Cards focused on the distribution of cards (where people could apply for them), the length of card issue and staff levels. Figure 7.1 (AT23) shows that membership applications were most commonly received at municipal sport and recreation facilities (85%), followed by Council offices (67%), with 48% of authorities using both. A minority of responding authorities used community/ neighbourhood centres (16%), 24% identified other venues such as Tourist Information Offices, but only 3% used

Figure 7.1 Locations where Leisure Card applications were received



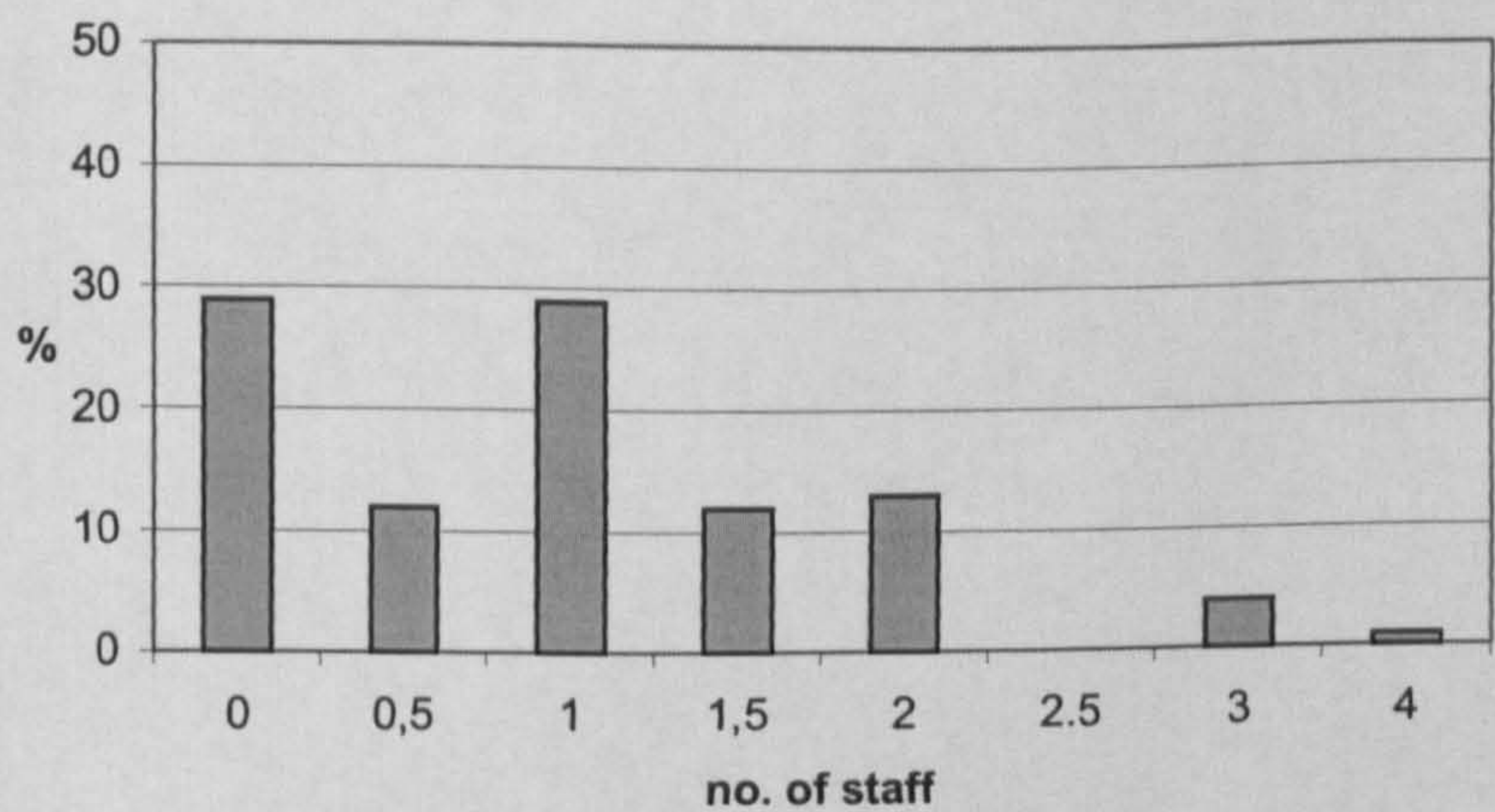


Post Offices (which the majority of benefit claimants would use regularly) and 3% Citizens' Advice Bureaus, youth or OAP clubs.

79% of respondents issued their card for one year, 10% for less than one year and 6% for more than one (see AT24). Only 9 schemes issued cards on a longer basis for the disabled and 10 for pensioners, both groups whose circumstances did not change. The majority of schemes renewed membership on a rolling basis (62%) as opposed to fixed date (30%), while 9% stated another method (see AT25).

Figure 7.2 (AT26) below shows that, although 39% of respondents did not answer this question, 29% of those that did had no staff dedicated to the operation of their Leisure Cards, with a further 12% having only one part-time member of staff. 29% had one member of staff (equivalent to either one full-time or two part-time staff), 12% had one and a half, while 18% had 2 or more, one of which had 4 full-time members of staff. Concession-only schemes were more likely to have less staff than multi-tiered, with 16 of the former having no staff dedicated to them on a full or part-time basis, compared to 3 of the latter.

Figure 7.2 Number of staff working on LCS



Apart from these basic administrative factors, little else by way of detailed day-to-day management data could be obtained from the survey. However, the case studies were more revealing.



As mentioned above, by 1997/8 the Leisure Pass was free to all Leicester city residents who were eligible and it was available from local sports centres, community and neighbourhood centres and theatre box offices. As the section on marketing describes, there have been numerous outreach activities including visits to all secondary schools in the city, in an attempt to make registering for the scheme as easy as possible. Any proof of eligibility was accepted according to the category which the applicant was using, including benefit books, birth certificates, and proof of disability.

The scheme was run from the City Council main offices by a full-time Leisure Pass officer and three part-time staff, although this was set to change with budget cutbacks and the full-time post has ceased to exist. All card applications and renewals were processed in this office using computer hardware including scanners for photographs.

The in-house Direct Service Operator (DSO) was responsible for managing operations at the point of sale in municipal facilities. According to leisure officers, there had been virtually no liaison between facility operators and Leisure Pass officers since the inception of CCT contracts. When asked directly if the Client officers believed the facility operators resented having to operate the scheme as part of their contract for services, the reply was just as direct, "yes". However, they went on to say that this situation had not affected the operation of the scheme because facility operators were used to it because it was in operation before CCT was introduced. If the scheme had been introduced after CCT, the leisure officers were sure that "things would have been different" and it would have been met with resistance.

This was echoed by the Assistant Director, who asserted that the Client set the standards of service provision and part of the contract was to encourage income, but not at the expense of Leisure Pass holders. He went on to claim that there was actually "quite a lot" of liaison between leisure officers and facility operators, conflicting with the opinions of Client officers. Apparently the officers relied on information from centre managers and they co-operated with the promotion of the scheme at the facilities. According to the Assistant Director, the facility staff had "taken the scheme by the scruff of the neck and really promoted it".

There had been little cross-Departmental involvement in the scheme since its establishment, apart from discussions with officers in Health Promotion and informal links with the Benefits Agency who recommended the scheme to their customers. The Assistant Director claimed that there had been no cross-Departmental liaison and that attempts to encourage the participation of other Departments had been met with "reluctance", or it was seen as irrelevant to them.

Moreover, the officers responsible for operating the scheme appeared to feel isolated in the Council's central offices, because liaison with facility operators, other Departments and agencies was limited. Before cross-Departmental links could be established, there was a need for co-ordination between officers *within* the Leisure Department responsible for service delivery.

Three options were presented by the officers for administering Cardiff's Passport To Leisure. The first was to issue at the venues. This had the advantage of availability at the point of sale and ensuring that staff became accustomed to the scheme. However, there could have been a stigma involved when applying for the card, delays would have occurred at reception, and staff would have required extra training. More importantly, there would have been a tendency only to attract existing users, and the estimated costs involved would have been more or less the same as with the Post Office (third option).

Secondly, the cards could have been issued from the Council offices, which would have reduced the stigmatisation of applicants, avoided hold-ups at leisure centres, and in this instance would have increased leisure officers' awareness of the scheme, although extra training would have been required. However, this would have involved customers travelling to a single issue point and not at the points of sale. The location of the offices would also have resulted in transport problems for some applicants.

The Council finally chose to administer the card through the city's sixty Post Offices only, as it was envisaged that this:

- ☐ reduced stigma;
- ☐ involved well trained staff;
- ☐ did not result in hold-ups at leisure centre receptions;



- ❑ used the extensive local network of Post Offices; and
- ❑ Reduced set-up costs (Cardiff City Council, 1994).

The cost involved was to be 99p plus VAT for processing each card on the assumption that a minimum of £5,000 was taken in revenue. It was realised that this meant the card would not be for sale at the venues, the Council Offices were to administer postal applications. The card was valid for one year after which it had to be renewed.

Despite the applications being processed by the Post Office, a recommendation was made for a full-time Leisure Assistant to administer and monitor the scheme, promote the benefits of membership, and to liaise with other organisations with a view to expanding the services available, although this never became a reality. A need was also identified for casual staff to be employed for the immediate promotional period prior to the launch of the scheme and for any subsequent periods deemed necessary. All 'front of house' staff at the leisure venues were to be given training, and there was an intention to provide a manual for this purpose.

This issue of staffing is a key point and the absence of an officer directly responsible for the schemes must have affected its development. The Client officer responsible for the Passport To Leisure as part of other duties stated that during certain periods of the year she could give more time to it, but "the scheme suffers for it". She went on to say that it would be possible to justify a full-time officer as the scheme was effectively neglected for certain periods of the year. Initial plans for a card officer had disappeared and it was administered within an officer's wider role, which the Assistant Director stated "might have stopped the scheme from expanding as fast as it could have done".

In terms of liaison, the leisure centre managers were involved in a monthly marketing meeting where the scheme was discussed and ideas were shared as were usage figures. As well as this there were senior management meetings between Client and Contract officers to discuss Passport To Leisure amongst other issues. This arrangement was driven by the CCT contract, but the commercial operators had no input. There was little cross-departmental liaison except with Education and Cultural Services who directly managed St David's Hall (a large concert venue), the New Theatre, and the libraries. Another link was

with the Economic Development Department which had tourism responsibilities including Cardiff Castle where discounts were available (although local take-up of this was low). There was no relationship with Social Services and no anti-poverty strategy existed for the city at that time.

The effects of CCT regulations had, according to the Client officer, "made the operation of the facilities a lot more accountable and that has helped Passport in terms of target setting and we are always looking to improve the scheme", although, as stated in section 6.2, there appeared to be no detailed targets set for the scheme. The Assistant Director pointed out that the scheme was not a burden for the DSO, as it was reimbursed, which was reinforced by the DSO officer who stated that although the scheme was introduced after CCT it was "basically welcomed" and "made life easier in managing this target group". The pricing system had also been streamlined, which made things easier at the reception areas in the leisure centres (see section 7.2).

The administration of the card by the Post Offices was a point of contention for the DSO officers, who believed that this should be done at the points of sale (the leisure centres). The fact that existing leisure centre users had to make a special trip to apply for the card did not make sense to them, although in establishing the scheme the Post Offices were chosen for their distribution throughout the city, and their packaged offer for administering the cards was simple, and avoided complications at leisure centre receptions. There were problems, however, with the processing system. Originally, applications from all Post Offices were sent to a central sorting office in Newport, but this has moved to Sheffield. They were then sent via Cardiff again to a firm of consultants who put them onto a database and produced management reports for the Council. These applications were travelling half way around Great Britain and delays became inevitable, making monitoring a difficult process.

During the development of Oxford's Slice Card, two officers were used from Temple Cowley Pools to administer it. In the long-term it was proposed that the scheme would be administered by one full-time member of staff, situated at Temple Cowley Pools (the operating base for the scheme), and this was the case when this data was gathered. However, it must be noted that this member of staff only carried out administrative duties



and was not responsible for marketing or any of the other activities of a dedicated leisure card officer.

In terms of the relationship with the contractor, it was stated that "while Slice is a Council scheme...it is essential that City Leisure (in-house contractors) as the operators of the scheme, benefits from income generation towards securing their annual rate of return" (Oxford City Council, 1998b). For this reason a Client-Contract group of officers was formed to develop and manage the future of the scheme.

However, the relationship was not guided strictly by a CCT contract. According to the Direct Service Manager "if this had been undertaken two years ago there would have been a lot more restrictions and barriers regarding income and expenditure...but as CCT takes a backseat, things were made easier". This seemed to have left a slightly grey area between the fading out of CCT and the introduction of Best Value. The centre manager was not clear about the details of the arrangement between the DSO and the Client, and worked on the understanding that "the Client made up the policy and we have implemented it- this hasn't always worked that well because they decide something without our consultation and then it becomes a nightmare or impossible to do". The centre manager believed that the release from CCT will involve the contractor more, but still believed the quarterly meetings were sufficient. The relations between Client and Contractor were obviously changing and the contracts or agreements between them needed to be flexible, but had to be clear, according to both Client and Contract officers.

When the objectives were set for the Slice Card, it was to become the "focal point for the regular users, whatever their income" (Oxford City Council, 1998a). After a consultation process, a company was selected to provide the hardware for the scheme. The computerised management information system was to be the main tool in this process which it was envisaged would:

- ❑ manage and process 'Smart' and 'swipe' cards through integrated databases;
- ❑ collect data about current user trends to facilitate the Council's social objectives;
- ❑ process quickly and efficiently the differing requirements of the various types of customers;

- ❑ manage and monitor payments by direct debits;
- ❑ allow instant access to accurate statistics on customer visits; and
- ❑ improve the security at entry points by integrating entry payments and access (Oxford City Council, 1998a).

The new cards were to be issued on request at the point of sale, with the applicant's details being stored on a central database. The system held a photo of the applicant on the database rather than on the card. The Bonus Slice Cards were issued for one year and six months for Student Slice. All other types of card were issued annually, but also required monthly payments, either by direct debit or cash.

Therefore, there were a number of options available to Leisure Card operators when determining the administration of a scheme. The central decisions involved *where* to sell the cards, *how* to issue them and *how long* to issue them for, *who* and *how many* people were to administer the scheme. While the survey data revealed overall trends across all Leisure Card Schemes regarding where cards were issued from, how long for and by how many staff, the cases provided detail on how these administration decisions were made and who was responsible for operating schemes.

Leicester made its Leisure Pass available at as many locations possible, including outreach visits to schools and community centres. This contrasted with Cardiff which restricted the issue of cards to Post Offices. Oxford used the Council Offices and leisure centres to process applications and produce the cards. All the schemes generally followed yearly renewal procedures, although as we shall see in section 7.5, this was not always a straightforward or successful procedure.

A key issue was the human resources involved in managing and operating card schemes. Cardiff's Passport To Leisure had, on the admission of officers involved, undoubtedly suffered due to a lack of staff dedicated to it. The scheme had only one part-time officer, compared to one full-time officer and three part-time administrative staff at Leicester (although that was to be reduced), and one full-time administrator at Oxford, plus the working party of officers. Adequate staffing was essential for processing applications and



day-to-day administrative activities, but also as we shall see in the following sections, for the marketing and monitoring of Leisure Cards.

The issue of cards and the administration of applications was a primary responsibility for the Client at both Leicester and Cardiff, as opposed to the Contractor at Oxford. From the interviews with Client and Contract officers, there appeared to be no serious problems caused by CCT regulations relating to Leisure Card Schemes. The main area of complexity and tension was Client reimbursement of Contractors for use by cardholders of facilities, and this is dealt with in section 7.2 below. Relations were more tense at Cardiff than anywhere else, and perhaps this was due to the imposition of the card scheme on an existing CCT contract, combined with the lack of Contractor involvement in the scheme. While Leicester's original card scheme pre-dated CCT, Oxford's Slice Card was being introduced as CCT was being phased out in preparation for Best Value, and involved a fundamental overhaul of the Leisure Services' pricing structure.

However, while Client-Contractor relations seemed close, there did not appear to be extensive contact with leisure centre managers or other departments at Leicester and Cardiff regarding the operation and management of the schemes and its delivery at the points of sale. At Oxford, the manager at Temple Cowley Pools was involved in the implementation of the scheme from the outset and had responsibility for the establishment of the hardware and management information systems at the leisure centres.

Indeed, the balance of power and control within the Leisure Card Schemes at Cardiff and Leicester appeared to lie clearly with the Client in terms of both policy making and management and administration of the schemes. This reflected a continuation in the trend of 'protecting' Leisure Cards from CCT regulations, identified by Foote (1995) and in Chapter 5. As described in Chapter 6, varying degrees of involvement by other sectors and local government departments was demonstrated by the cases. Cardiff's Passport To Leisure was operating effectively in isolation with little commercial or voluntary sector collaboration, and no involvement by other Council departments. The commercial sector was heavily involved in Leicester's Leisure Pass and officers worked with various community groups, but not with other Council departments.

At Oxford, there was more of a balance created by the joint working party which established the scheme (and included the Anti-Poverty officer) which steered policy, whilst the Contractor dealt with the day-to-day management, administration and (as section 7.3 describes) the marketing at the point of sale. This signified more of a partnership/relationship approach, looking towards the implementation of Best Value as advised by the Audit Commission in *The Price is Right* (1999). Indeed, the Slice Card was clearly established with a view to the imminent introduction of Best Value, and while it was too early to speculate about the effects of Best Value, the removal of rigid contracts and Client/Contractor divisions seemed to provide an opportunity for the integration of Leisure Cards into the Best Value process rather than protection from it (see Chapter 9 for more discussion).

## 7.2 Budgets and Pricing Policies

The response to the budget questions in the survey was lower than any other. This was possibly due to the perception that this data was commercially sensitive, that this information was not known or not available to the respondent, or that it was not desirable for this data to be made public (possibly due to poor performance). Securing a fixed budget was a problem for Leisure Card Schemes, reflected by the fact that 17 (15%) of schemes were operated with an annual budget (other than staffing) of less than £5,000 a year and a further 26 (24%) claimed that *no budget* was assigned to their schemes *at all*. Of the schemes with no budget, 19 were concession-only and 6 multi-tiered. Therefore, when asked if budgets were adequate to operate the schemes effectively, it is no surprise that 27% of authorities said that it was not, though it must be noted that 37% also declined to answer this question. This left 24% of schemes with no budget and 25% with no staff, indeed, 9 card operators had neither a budget *nor* staff.

The costs and revenue of Leisure Card Schemes varied greatly according to the type of scheme, membership levels, use of facilities by cardholders and various other factors that could not be reflected accurately in responses to a national survey. For example, of 49 responding schemes, 11 received less than £2,000 in revenue from card sales, whilst 15 received £16,000 or more per year. In terms of total revenue, 16 of 54 respondents stated



their cards achieved less than £5,000 a year, while 8 gained more than £40,000 a year. Similarly, administration costs varied from less than £2,000 a year to over £16,000. 29 of 52 respondents claimed to spend less than £4,000 a year on promotion, but three operators spent more than £16,000 a year. Nine operators claimed to be making a profit from their card schemes; seven of these schemes were multi-tiered, one concession-only and one a residents' card.

The survey indicated that the majority of cards were free (37%), cost annually between £1 and £2 (18%), or no more than £2 or £3 (19%) for adults eligible for price concessions. The equivalent non-concession adult price for a multi-tiered card was between £5 and £10 (22%) or over £10 (36%) a year. The initial pricing of the card was very important, because price increases, however small, can dramatically affect renewal rates. Accurate and realistic strategic planning was essential in setting both the price of cards and levels of discount. As low income groups did not have significant amounts of disposable income, discounted prices had to be sustainable in the long-term as price increases could result in a substantial fall in demand. The following examples highlight this fact.

The first example of a respondent to the survey that wished to remain anonymous, was the local authority which operated the Saver Card, and demonstrated the problems incurred by setting inappropriate targets. Cost/revenue calculations estimated a first year profit of £474 after all the costs of establishing the scheme were covered. This was based on a projected take-up of 20,750 members, equating to £89,250 in revenue (City A, 1995). Unfortunately total membership after the first year of operation was only 9,019 generating revenue of £35,595, a shortfall of £42,385 (City A, 1998). Subsequently the price of the card was reduced and by the end of the second year membership had increased to 13,045, but was still 7,000 short of the first year target (City A, 1998).

This example highlights the need for rigorous market research before a scheme is established. The main research undertaken before re-launching this scheme was an analysis of schemes in Camden, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle. The local authority in question had assumed that it would be possible to emulate the success of Sheffield which operated on a self-funding budget of £120,000 a year, and Newcastle which did the same with £110,000. The research needs to focus on the market characteristics of the local population

who will form the various target groups for the scheme. In this case, the price of the cards may have been set unrealistically high as a result of the rise in take-up after the price cut. This shows how important the price of the card is, and how sensitive demand was to price changes.

This issue of the sensitivity to price changes is highlighted more dramatically in the case of a scheme located in the North West of England. The scheme's membership had increased to a sustained peak of 7,938 "when it dropped considerably and... plummeted in 1996/7" (City B, 1997). The 1991/2 membership total of 7,938 was almost halved to 3,767 in 1995/6 (City B, 1993; 1997). The main reason for this highlighted in the scheme's review report had to be the increasing of the price of the card from £1 to £2 at the beginning of 1993. In addition to this, activities that were previously free, received a charge of £0.75 in 1995. However, all target groups were affected equally, as membership composition remained relatively constant.

The case studies provided more detail on the processes behind price setting and the budgets of card schemes. Leicester's Leisure Pass (previously Passport To Leisure) had been offered free to people eligible living within the city since its introduction in 1985. The card provided 50% discounts at all municipal sport and recreation activities without time restrictions, plus a range of commercial and voluntary sector discounts typically offering 10% reductions in price. The prices for County members were dependent on the subsidisation by individual authorities or parish councils and were as follows:

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| ❑ Charnwood Borough Council        | £12   |
| ❑ Harborough District Council      | £4.50 |
| ❑ Oadby & Wigston District Council | £15   |
| ❑ Barlestone Parish Council        | £15   |
| ❑ Enderby Parish Council           | £15   |
| ❑ Glenfield Parish Council         | £15   |
| ❑ Groby Parish Council             | £15   |
| ❑ Markfield Parish Council         | £15   |



The price difference was substantial for people living on the border of Leicester but in another District. For example, people living in Groby Parish, part of Hinckley and Bosworth District Council, live far closer to the municipal sports and recreation facilities in Leicester than to those of Hinckley which is more than a thirty minute car journey away.

The Leisure Pass cost £37,500 per year to administer (1996/7), plus an additional £7,000 for marketing. The only income was £10,142 from the sale of cards to County members. This left a deficit of £34,358, although it is not possible to calculate exact revenue figures from the municipal facilities involved. A very rough estimate using figures for swimming and the average number of visits per year by each member is 6.5 times per year (and that 92% of members used their card to swim), the total number of swims could be as many as 171,417 per year by cardholders. At a rate of £1.20 (as opposed to £2 full-price) for a discounted swim, the revenue from this activity alone could be £205,700. Additional dry-side activities and spending on refreshments increased this figure still further.

According to the Assistant Director, initially the City Council subsidised use by reimbursing the centres directly for lost revenue relative to full price users. Gradually the scheme had become a part of the centres' pricing policy and the Client and facility managers had adopted a marketing role which through increases in attendance has increased their income (see section 8.4). He went on to claim that the style of leisure provision had changed from "a blinkered approach to one of a service which provides what the community want and need".

One of the reasons that activities were not offered free was the perception that people would not go as they would think something was wrong with them, but this did not explain why the card itself was offered free. There was no documentation which explained the reasons for setting this pricing structure, and it must be assumed that, as with the selection of target groups, this was based on the experience of previous discount schemes.

Due to the reduction of the scheme's budget by one third in 1998, the question arose as to whether it would be necessary to start charging for the card. The Client officers hoped that this situation would not occur, as it "would be met with resistance" and "would put people off" and the "consequences could be costly". As demonstrated above, card price increases

can have devastating effects on membership levels. Indeed, offering the card for free had considerable advantages according to the Leicester officers, as people had nothing to lose by signing up. More to the point, it did not involve any extra budgetary commitment from people already on a low income. The perception of getting something for nothing is positive and also improves the image of the City Council. However, as the perceived value of the card may not be high, and charging for the card might reveal those who use and value it compared to the doubtless high proportion of members who register for the card *because* it was free, and then never used it.

However, from the customer survey, 41% of respondents said they would continue to participate without a Leisure Pass, but the question as to whether that would be as frequently was not asked. Amongst low income members there was an indication that more would cease to participate without a Card (31%), compared to those that would continue (20%). Unsurprisingly, the same was true for carers, as many of those participating are only attending to aid or transport the person they are accompanying (Table 7.1). Therefore, a core of cardholders existed who would be prepared to pay full price if the Leisure Pass ceased to exist. However, demand was more sensitive for an almost equal number of cardholders.

**Table 7.1 Members who would continue to participate without a Leisure Pass**

|                | Yes        |                       | No         |                      |
|----------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------------|
|                | n          | % of those saying yes | n          | % of those saying no |
| Low Income     | 26         | 20                    | 45         | 31                   |
| Young people   | 40         | 31                    | 42         | 29                   |
| 60+            | 40         | 31                    | 33         | 23                   |
| Disabled       | 18         | 14                    | 20         | 14                   |
| Carers         | 4          | 3                     | 6          | 13                   |
| Single parents | -          | -                     | -          | -                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>128</b> |                       | <b>146</b> |                      |

The charge for the Cardiff Passport To Leisure card was based on the administrative costs of the Post Office in processing the applications. The cost of £1.08 was estimated to cover the production of the card, application form, folder and promotional activities, plus the



charge of 99p made by the Post Office. The price was therefore set at £2, and added some value to the cards to minimise loss and subsequent renewal costs.

A decision also had to be made about the times of availability of discounts for cardholders. The most encompassing would have been to offer the discounts at all times that facilities are open. The other options were economically motivated, restricting discounted use to off-peak periods. Establishing an off-peak period that was consistent across all venues would have avoided confusion for the customers and provided a more corporate image. However, by its nature, off-peak is the time when many people cannot or do not want to participate, regardless of their economic circumstances. In the end, discounts were offered at all times, regardless of peak/off-peak times.

In terms of prices, people eligible for a Passport To Leisure card in the user survey, and those who were not, shared the same opinion that it was good value for money. However, more of those eligible thought that prices were too expensive. Interestingly, when asked if a price reduction would make any difference to their frequency of participation, 41% of the eligible users said that it would not. However, a quarter of users did indicate that they would participate less often if prices were increased by 10%, although in neither case was the proportion of responses from the eligible group indicated. This reflected the results in Leicester and pointed towards a core of committed users amongst cardholders. Eventually, the initial discount level was set at 50% for certain leisure activities.

A major financial problem evident in any concession arrangement was identified in a report to Cardiff's Leisure and Amenities Committee which recommended the establishment of a pilot scheme, that is "the difficulty in reconciling the desire to give reduced price access to leisure facilities for those on low incomes and on the other hand, the contract pressure on DSOs to maximise income" (Cardiff City Council, 1995a). For this reason, as in Leicester, it was decided that the Client was to reimburse the DSO in order to "relieve the burden of the loss of income generated by the PTL" (Cardiff City Council, 1995a). The estimated cost of offering reduced prices for the selected activities was £68,000 a year, and an allocation of £34,000 was approved for the reimbursement. The employment of staff and the related administration and marketing costs were estimated at

£30,000 a year, and this was included in the Leisure and Amenities revenue budget for 1994/5. Therefore, the total cost was approximately £100,000 for the first year.

The Client reimbursed the DSO for the discounted use of facilities by cardholders at the rate of 50% of the price of admission and this amounted to about £45,000 a year. This was a good deal for the DSO, as the rate of subsidy was based on price and not cost, so it lost nothing from offering discounted use and took maximum benefit from the revenue gained. As far as this was an in-house operation, this arrangement seemed to make little sense for the Client, who paid 50% of the price, not 50% of the cost which may be considerably lower, especially when revenue gained from extra spending on refreshments etc. was considered. This may be an example of a peculiarity of an in-house CCT operation, taking from one hand to give to the other, and would be an unlikely arrangement with a private contractor.

However, the complex scenario that developed put the Client in a difficult position. Price was subsidised at 50% by the Client, who was also responsible for marketing the scheme and ensuring high take-up as well as high use by cardholders. The question arises from a financial and managerialist perspective as to whether it is in the interest of the Client to actually increase use for which it then has to pay half. This provides one of the few clear cut examples of a price being placed on the cost of social provision of sport and leisure services for low income groups.

One DSO officer believed that at the time this worked, but stated that "I never believed it was easy to marry commercial objectives with social objectives, and the meeting of the two is where the crunch lies". This seems true, as it would appear that there must be a pivotal point, or as the Assistant Director called it, a "critical mass" where increased use pays for the subsidised rate.

However, it is not this simple as this, and the other DSO officer cited past debates over solving the problem of a 50% subsidy on, for example, swimming, by doubling the number of swims i.e. increasing use proportional to the discount level. But this simple solution does not consider the extra costs of providing for twice the level of participants, nor whether there is adequate capacity for this use, or whether discounted use is displacing



potential full price paying customers. The calculation of an accurate pivotal point or 'threshold' level would be complex, and would have to be undertaken at each leisure centre according to catchment area, existing use, capacity and specific costing. It is this type of advanced financial calculation that was rarely undertaken in deciding discount levels and card prices which would help ensure that these decisions were sustainable in the long-term, as demonstrated more widely in the *Price is Right* (Audit Commission, 1999).

The Assistant Director believed that the discounts offered were good value for the cardholders, especially as Cardiff's sport and leisure services were already low in price compared to other local authorities in England and Wales. A cardholder could enjoy a swim which usually cost £1.50 for 75p at any time of the day. He also realised that 75p might be a lot of money for some people when extra costs are considered, "but how far can you go?". There was no consideration of a price increase for the card or a reduction in discount levels, and the scheme was affordable for the Client with room for expansion within its budget, but there were pressures on the department's budget. The total sum set aside initially to run the scheme had "shrunk, but it hasn't affected the cardholders, but it has affected the running of the scheme", particularly in terms of human resources dedicated to it.

The final pricing structure of the Oxford Slice Card was markedly different from Leicester and Cardiff, being tiered and involving different levels of discounts. It included various activities free for Cool, Active and Aqua Slice card holders, with discounts for Bonus Slice cardholders ranging from 33% to 70%. In 1998, Bonus Slice cardholders could, for example, enjoy a swim for £0.60, a session in the gym for £1.50, badminton, table tennis and squash for £1 per session, and a skating general session cost £2 plus £0.80 for standard skate hire. Swimming retained a category of its own for target groups as the difference between normal price and the adult concession was deemed too great to close in one year, and the numbers involved also prohibited this. It was envisaged that eventually all discounts would be amalgamated. Initially, prices were simplified and reduced further by the new policy, as exemplified by skating prices shown below.

**Old scheme (per session):**

|                                 |                    |       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| ❑ Adult                         | £3.50+£1.20 (hire) | £4.70 |
| ❑ Recreation Card adult         | £2.45+£1.20 (hire) | £3.65 |
| ❑ Concessionary no card         | £2.40+£1.20 (hire) | £3.60 |
| ❑ Concessionary Recreation Card | £1.68+£1.20 (hire) | £2.88 |

**New scheme (per session):**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| ❑ Adult                         | £4.00 |
| ❑ Leisure Card (non-concession) | £3.00 |
| ❑ Concessionary Leisure Card    | £2.00 |

The CCT contract had different arrangements for amending activity prices, which involved the review of each price in line with those of neighbouring authorities, as well as taking into account inflation. Under the new contract arrangements, the total projected income figure submitted by the successful contractor, was inflated by the R.P.I. for the year to arrive at a new target income figure. Individual prices were then adjusted so that the sum of these increases matched the inflated total income (Oxford City Council, 1998a).

The setting of a pricing policy which encouraged all sections of the community to use municipal sport and leisure facilities was advocated by officers, and as mentioned in Chapter 6, an overhaul of the Leisure Service pricing structure was a fundamental part of launching Oxford Slice. The existing pricing of activities was re-assessed to assure sufficient revenue was generated to fund the social objectives. This was to be achieved through a flexible policy which enhanced "the opportunities for people on low income and offers convenience and advantages to waged customers" (Oxford City Council, 1998a). In turn this was perceived to allow the Council to develop market opportunities that could "underpin the finances of the Sport and Leisure services, leading to an improvement of service" (Oxford City Council, 1998a). Also, off-peak charges were abolished to allow all residents to participate when they desired.

This demonstrated the interplay between social and economic objectives, welfarism and managerialism. Oxford City Council Leisure Services Department were assessing the cost



of achieving objectives (i.e. discounted participation) and adjusting their pricing policy accordingly to ensure the achievement of these objectives could be sustained.

The officers estimated that "a rise in participation across a broad range of activities would result from the implementation of these proposals" (Oxford City Council, 1998a). Reliance was placed on the customers reacting in the same way as those in other authorities had to similar schemes. These customer 'reactions' included an increase in subsequent visits due to the breadth of activities offered, as well as combining activities such as fitness workouts with swimming or a sauna, and the encouragement of secondary spending on refreshments etc. Also, by offering group discounts for swimming and skating as well as including new target markets such as students, it was envisaged that total attendance would increase.

Overall, it was estimated customer use would increase by 50,000 visits, from 870,000 to 920,000 per year at 7 visits per member per month. This translated to a rise in gross income of £497,000 in income per year from £1.5m per annum under the previous CCT contract, to £1.97m under the new one. However, the fact that all the increase in usage would not translate directly into an increase in income was recognised, as the lowering of prices for target groups would reduce it proportionally. The basic overall philosophy of the scheme was to "develop income from the waged to improve the benefits for the disadvantaged" (Oxford City Council, 1998a). This seems to be a form of indirect redistribution of the leisure £ from the traditional 'leisure gainers' to the 'leisure losers', as the Client Services Manager described it- "the Robin Hood principle".

Historically there had been no dedicated budget to operate the former Recreation Card scheme, "as one was not needed" (Oxford City Council, 1997b). Printing the cards and application leaflets was funded by the Leisure Services Department with City Leisure operating the scheme on the Council's behalf as a condition of the first CCT contract. The difference with Slice was that its administration required a permanent member of staff. The promotion of the cards also cost more because they contained 'Smart' technology. Therefore, it was realised that an adequate budget was needed for the Scheme "to be successful and to continue to grow" (Oxford City Council, 1998b). It was also perceived necessary to establish a "sinking fund" to cover the depreciation of computer hardware.

The budget proposed was:

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Administration                     | £15,000        |
| Card purchases                     | £2,000         |
| Marketing and publicity            | £6,000         |
| Annual depreciation of IT hardware | £5,000         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                       | <b>£28,000</b> |

Apart from historical revenue sums to cover card and leaflet production, there was no existing budget to cover the items above. Thus, it was considered appropriate to manage the operation of the Slice Card through a trading account so that operating costs could be offset against income, effectively making it self-financing in the long-term. The Bonus Slice cards (for concession-only groups) cost £1.67 for the contractors to buy, and were sold at £2 to cover all administration costs.

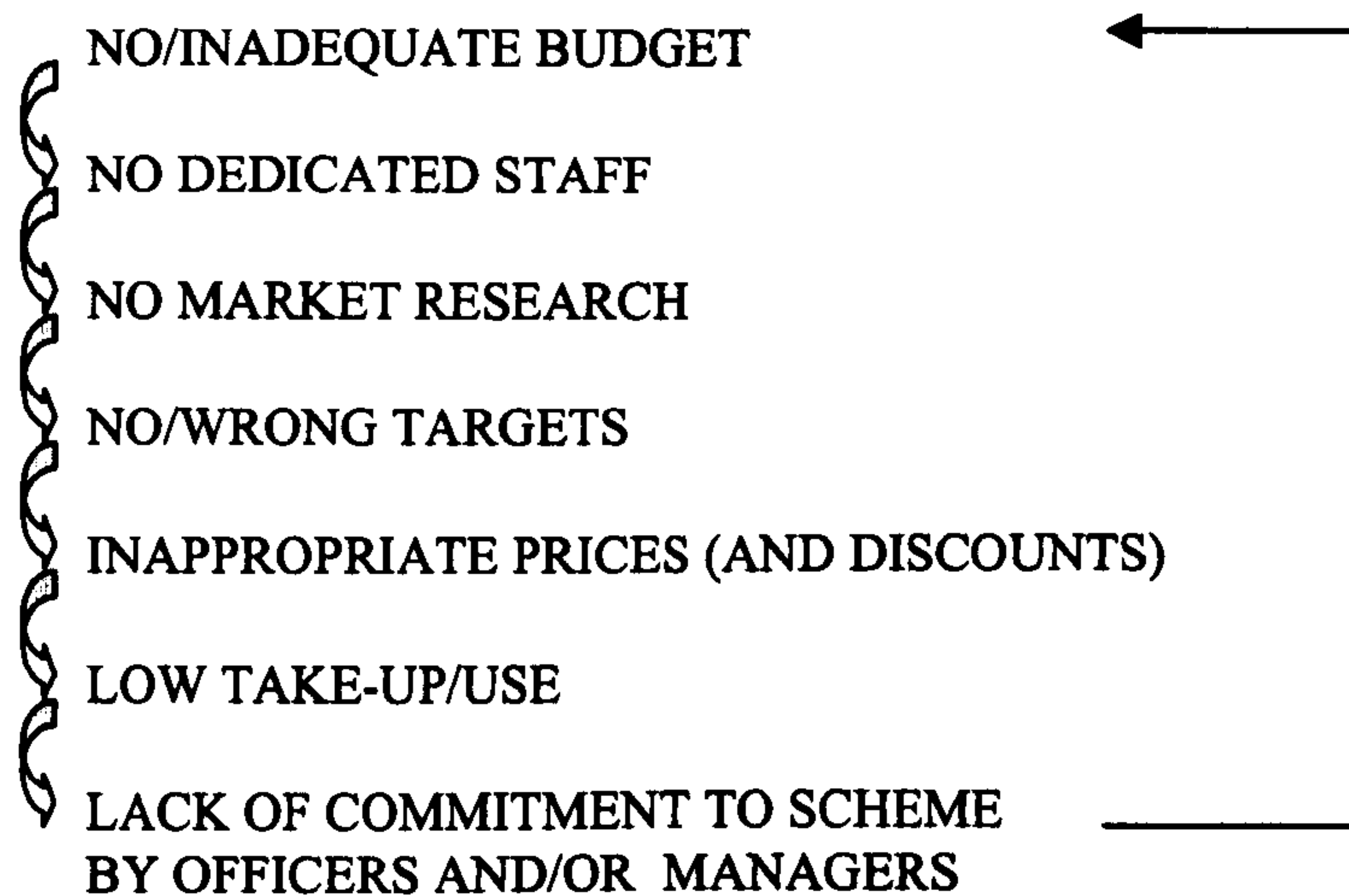
Income revenue from Cool, Active and Aqua Slice was received through monthly direct debit or cash payments. However, this made calculating income/cost per activity impossible as it depended on the frequency of individual visits. For example, an Aqua Slice Card holder who swam five days a week would produce a unit cost of £0.55 per swim, but for someone who only swims twice a week cost £1.38 per swim. From the 'Smart' tills, total usage figures for each activity allowed the total income received from Slice Card sales to be apportioned across each activity according to use.

Therefore, while the survey produced partial data, lacking in detail, the cases revealed the processes involved in making budgetary decisions, and in particular the problems associated with them. Budgets were inadequate for many operators, and simply did not exist for others. Without a fixed budget, it is difficult to envisage how any strategic planning for the management and development of a Leisure Card Scheme could take place. This situation was worsened where there was a lack of human resources, leading to the neglect of pursuing membership renewals and marketing activities to sign-up new members. In other card schemes, where budgets existed, target setting for membership and subsequent income and cost levels either did not happen, or were on occasions unrealistic. The diagnosis links back to section 6.2, and the general lack of detailed research into target markets, potential take-up and use, and the effects this would have on the commitment to,



and financing of the scheme. This vicious cycle is represented in the diagram below (Figure 7.3).

**Figure 7.3 Budget and pricing: a vicious cycle**



A result of this seemed to be the 'reimbursement' situation, where under the rigidity of CCT, the Client was often subsidising the loss in income for Contractors related to the price charged rather than to the costs incurred, thus ignoring secondary spending. This was also a consequence of imposing a percentage discount onto a pricing structure, rather than reviewing all prices as in the case of Oxford. Under these circumstances with a multi-tiered scheme, the Leisure Card effectively becomes the new pricing structure and the concession tier is integrated within that. The use of a management information system based on swipe cards then allows detailed monitoring of use and the calculation of the costs incurred by each type of card. In this way the costs can be allocated accurately and subsidised accordingly by the Client, or profits can be reallocated from revenue from non-concessionary cardholders (e.g. Active Slice) to the concession-tier (e.g. Bonus Slice). These calculations can be built into the budget of the scheme once it has established a consistent membership and a pattern of use. In turn, this enables strategic, longer term decisions to be made about the development of the scheme and also provides accurate, accountable details of costs of providing for particular user groups.

Indeed, when the cases of Oxford and Cardiff are compared in terms of their costs, Cardiff's scheme was costing the Client around £100,000 per year, whereas the projected costs for Oxford were £28,000, although allowance must be made for the initial capital investment in the hardware, while its depreciation was built into the costing. The major cost for the Client at Cardiff was the £45,000 it had to pay the contractor every year by way of reimbursement for use by cardholders. The multi-tiered scheme at Oxford allowed the scheme to be self-funding and Bonus Slice costs to be absorbed without the need for an annual lump sum payment to the contractor. This was also aided by the phasing out of rigid CCT requirements and the adoption of a partnership based approach.

Moreover, accurate and detailed membership, cost and revenue information was also vital in setting prices for the card itself and the level of discount for cardholders. This was demonstrated by the 'Saver Card' where unrealistic take-up and financial projections left the scheme making large, unpredicted losses. The setting of initial prices was crucial as demand for Leisure Cards was sensitive to change, with any increases in the price of a card resulting in potentially substantial loss of members.

Indeed, offering the card and/or activities for free ran the risk of devaluing membership and participation, producing an unattractive or low quality image. Those eligible for discounts appeared willing and able (within their financial limits) to pay for participation and attaching a price not only attached a perception of value, but also generated much needed income for operators.

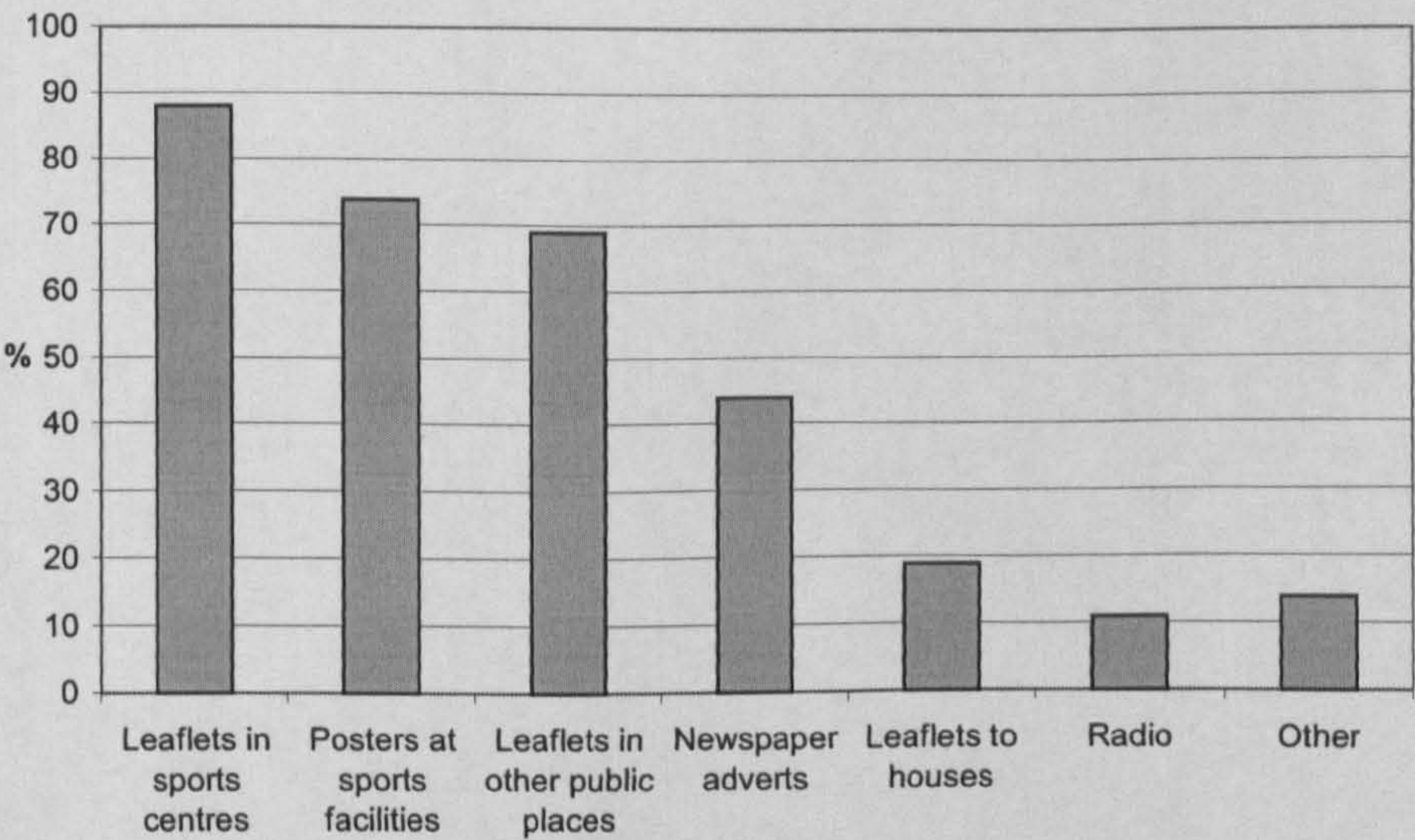
This insight into Leisure Card pricing reflected the findings of the Audit Commission (*The Price is Right?* 1999), often being set inappropriately and without accurate cost/revenue analysis nor market information. Leisure Card Schemes with no accurate management information appeared to be operating closer to the Fordist model of Leisure Cards, taking decisions if not blindly then at least with blinkers, continuously investing and subsidising without knowing if that was the most effective or efficient allocation of resources. While this was the case for the majority of schemes surveyed, post-Fordist Leisure Card characteristics were evident in a minority of examples, including Oxford, where the Slice Card started with the overhaul of existing prices, operated with a dedicated budget, technology to monitor use and allocate costs efficiently and adjust prices appropriately.



7.3 Marketing

As Figure 7.4 (A27) shows, the marketing activities of Leisure Card operators responding to the survey revolved around leisure centres, in the form of leaflets (88%) and posters (74%). Despite the fact that leaflets in other public places (69%) and newspaper advertisements (44%) were the next most common media for marketing, there was little evidence of active outreach activities to encourage non-participants. Exceptional authorities included Leeds and Amber Valley which utilised road shows that travelled to events in their respective communities, and Leicester’s whose officers travelled to all secondary schools, job centres, ethnic and women’s clubs to sign up new members. Numerous Leisure Card Schemes had (mainly quarterly) newspapers to advertise the latest offers and one-off events (like County shows, theatre performances and coaching courses), but most did not have marketing officers, even part-time.

Figure 7.4 Marketing activities of Leisure Card Schemes





The following examples show that although there was little variation between the marketing activities of different types of card, there were some subtle differences worth noting. The Horsham Leisure Access Card was concession-only and used the following marketing media:

- ❑ leaflets;
- ❑ posters;
- ❑ press;
- ❑ bus maps;
- ❑ local radio;
- ❑ leaflets at Job Centre, CAB, 6th form colleges, Social Services and Health Services; and
- ❑ planned mailings with Council Tax bills.

The Leeds card used similar methods for its multi-tiered scheme, although it included activities at special events:

- ❑ existing council circulars (thus sharing costs);
- ❑ the City Information Bus for three weeks to promote the card; and
- ❑ newspaper advertisements, Job Seekers Directory, presence at special events such as Party in the Park, Opera in the Park, and the Leeds Show.

The main forms of marketing for Leicester's Leisure Pass included the standard posters and leaflets in sports centres and other public municipal facilities, but has also included extensive outreach work. Active marketing involving going into communities which would most benefit from membership was one of the most significant means of encouraging membership. The visits to schools at the start of the academic year were described by officers as particularly successful in encouraging school leavers to register, thereby contributing to Sports Development and current Youth Sport Trust objectives of reducing drop out amongst this age group. Enabling registration at neighbourhood centres was also a positive move, targeting pockets of deprivation within the city. Most importantly, this demonstrated active encouragement of non-participants and taking the scheme to the people who needed it the most.



However, the reduction in budget was inevitably going to affect marketing activities. Unfortunately, the newsletter which costs 30p per member and is posted to all cardholders, will be stopped. Despite the apparent membership peak, the scheme cannot be expected to be "self-marketing" as a senior officer suggested.

At the launch of Cardiff's Passport To Leisure, leisure officers realised that "a successful campaign which makes full use of a wide variety of marketing practices will be essential for the successful implementation" (Cardiff City Council, 1994). The focus of marketing activity was at Post Offices, Job Centres, Social Security Offices and at leisure and community venues, as these were deemed to be the sites where target groups were more evident. As part of the marketing campaign, a brochure was provided for information regarding procedures for applying for a card and the benefits the card offered.

Promotion of the scheme included press advertisements in a number of local newspapers, magazines and newsletters including those specifically for disabled people. Promotional material was also spread to all Council owned leisure venues, 30 other Council outlets, 25 libraries and approximately 20 non-Council leisure facilities, various education centres, health agencies, doctor's surgeries, police stations, employment and benefit agencies, and to over 80 disability groups. In addition, awareness exhibition displays toured sites for one week at a time, including all leisure centres, community halls, the City Hall, 8 Area Housing Offices, Unemployment Benefit Offices, the Festival of Sport Caravan, The Benefits Bus and a forum for disability groups. It was recognised that the expansion of the scheme would involve "extensive promotion and marketing" (Cardiff City Council, 1994).

A marketing strategy was developed for Cardiff's Passport To Leisure and a Departmental marketing officer was involved from the Client side. By 1998, marketing activities were focusing on encouraging 16 to 18 year olds to sign up, and visits were being made to schools and colleges to reach students directly. The Client officer believed that the most effective form of marketing (as in Leicester) was "getting out to speak to people", either door to door or on the streets. It was clear that, as mentioned above, the marketing activities of the scheme were restricted by human resources. The DSO had very little input into marketing, and one officer expressed dissatisfaction with this, believing that it was an operational issue.

All officers interviewed expressed concern for the image of Cardiff's Passport To Leisure. Due to the limited number and variety of discounts offered by commercial operators compared to the likes of Leicester, and its focus on municipal sport and recreation activities, the Passport To Leisure was actually a 'Passport To Sport'. As a result, the officers feared that many potential cardholders who were not interested in sport would not be interested in becoming members. The DSO officers also expressed concern over the 'municipal' image of the scheme, using the Council's logo and the name 'Passport'. Indeed, little investment had been made in the design of marketing material, appearing to be more functional in explaining discounts rather than making the concept of owning a card desirable, and as mentioned earlier, this must have had a negative impact on take-up (see section 8.1).

The Oxford Slice Card was launched on 1st May 1998 at the leisure centres in Oxford and an official press launch was held at the Ferry Sports Centre. The marketing of Slice Card took place in the three phases shown below.

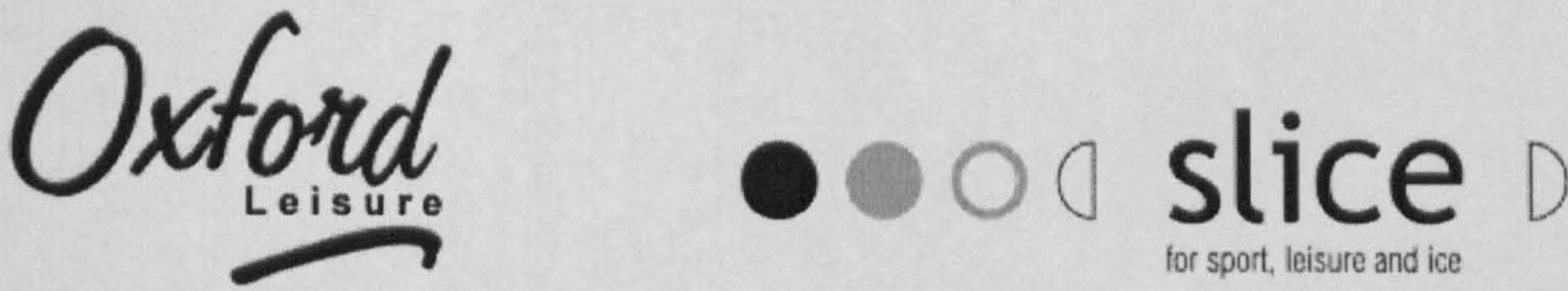
1. Concentrating on ensuring as many existing Recreation Card holders as possible bought a Slice card, by writing to each member.
2. Concentrating on attracting new members to the scheme, through targeting those who qualified for a Bonus Slice, and through extensive marketing at the leisure centres.
3. Enhancing the scheme, by attracting partnerships with external organisations such as retailers and local sports clubs.

It was proposed to take advantage of the detailed management information by producing half yearly reports to Committee, which would also be used for marketing and reviewing leisure centre programmes.

The marketing was very direct and clear (see Figure 7.5), with all information presented to the potential customers in a logical format. Examples were provided of the savings to be made from card membership, explained in terms of pounds and pennies saved, not percentage discounts which the customer had to calculate.



Figure 7.5 Oxford's Slice Card logos



## Save on Sport, Leisure and Ice - Grab a Slice



**Cool Slice**



**Active Slice**



**Aqua Slice**

The graphic design of marketing material and the logos, illustrated in Figure 7.5 above, which produced the image of the card was of paramount importance, and this was stressed by the Client Services Manager as an example of the need for local authorities to take advantage of "late 1990s advertising techniques". The use of 'Slice' is abstract and follows similar credit card advertising (e.g. 'Goldfish') and more recently life insurance policies (e.g. 'Egg'). The graphics are clean and appealing, with an identity independent of the City Council, and no direct sporting or leisure connotations. Labelling the different card types as "Cool", "Active" and "Aqua" and the slogan "Grab a Slice" contributed to this, whilst placing emphasis on broader images of energy and activity rather than focusing on sport itself. The name for the concession tier, "Bonus Slice" had no "passport" connotations and fitted inconspicuously as another tier of the scheme. A menu of cards was presented, from which the customer chooses the one he/she wants, can afford, or which provides best



value. If that customer wants to participate at the lowest cost possible and is eligible, then Bonus is the choice, without stigma.

More basically, it is obvious that investment had been made in developing an image, involving professional graphic designers, with the result being of high quality, reflecting positively on the product being sold. A clear attempt was made to make this card scheme commercially desirable, and move it away from traditional municipal images.

Therefore, the transient nature of people's tastes and circumstances, especially those claiming benefits, and tastes, emphasised the need for sensitive, targeted and continuous marketing. This process was facilitated by detailed data from swipe card technology.

Therefore, as in previous sections, the survey indicated general trends in the type of marketing activities undertaken by operators, while the cases provided more detail on *how* specific schemes were marketed. Moreover, the cases began to reveal the links between different aspects of leisure card management and the processes involved in marketing schemes (see Figure 7.6). The objectives and research determined target markets and the price structure which segmented the market into tiers (in the case of multi-tiered schemes). Activities, facilities and the discounts included schemes formed the product to be marketed and were important in establishing image. The budget and available human resources dictated what types of marketing activities could be undertaken. Who actually undertook the marketing depended on Client/Contractor agreement, but was the responsibility of whoever had overall control of the scheme. Monitoring measured the success of the marketing process through take-up, use and customer satisfaction (see section 7.4 and Chapter 8).



Figure 7.6 Marketing Leisure Card Schemes



However, while the figure above represents links between the different aspects of leisure card management through marketing activities, these links were not always productive. There were clear similarities between the marketing and images of the Leicester and Cardiff Leisure Cards, and these reflected many of the schemes responding to the survey, and particularly concession-only schemes. For these schemes, marketing was Client-side driven and used a ‘municipal’ image while cardholders were making use of both Contractor controlled facilities and commercial sector venues. There was little evidence that there was any stigma attached to owning these cards, and this was echoed by leisure officers, but it was still difficult to prove this. Although the officers were involved in active outreach activities to attract members, the forms of marketing were, on the whole, basic, unoriginal and focused on mass marketing and passive publicity. The lack of targeted marketing related back to the inability to identify defined target groups, a lack of management data on use, and goes down more fundamentally to a lack of resources to market and monitor many Leisure Cards effectively. They simply were not regarded as membership schemes in ways that those in the commercial and voluntary sectors would be.

Moreover, by restricting marketing to the cheapest and most convenient media at sports centres, only existing users were reached, many of whom by their presence, could probably afford to participate anyway. If, as in Leicester's case, the scheme aimed to primarily target low income people, then outreach must include the majority of non-users. Indeed, by focusing on existing users and encouraging them to become members, revenue will suffer unless they are encouraged to participate more, as most users merely continue participating at a reduced price. This neglected the potential to compensate for discounted use with increases in the number of non-users, especially at off-peak times. Indeed, it could be argued that local authorities operating concession-only card schemes also needed to focus on encouraging people paying full price, and the non-concessionary tiers of multi-tiered schemes. This would enable greater cross-subsidisation of discounts and relieve the burden of subsidy by the Client.

Indeed, the case of Leicester's budget reduction and subsequent down scaling of marketing activities will have a significant effect on its scheme. Simply put, there is no such thing as a self-marketing membership scheme. Some members find jobs after a short period whilst others lose theirs and become eligible, more find themselves moving in and out of employment frequently. As described in Chapter 2, although a core of permanently poor people existed, those on the border line were dynamic, moving in and out of poverty (Walker, 1997: Walker and Park, 1998). Others stop studying or leave school, some die. Therefore, some members in all categories will move and others will become eligible and membership naturally atrophies without active marketing, exemplified most graphically in the membership turnover of the private fitness club sector. If the existing policy objective of increasing use among existing members was to be achieved in Leicester, this would involve marketing, as will ensuring renewal rates remain high. Generating awareness and maintaining it are crucial factors for the success of any such scheme, not only for membership and use, but also for raising the profile for Council members.

Therefore, the majority of survey respondents and the cases of Leicester and Cardiff reflected the Fordist model of Leisure Card marketing which lacked detailed market information and focused on mass marketing activities rather than a segmented target market approach. The niche market approach, more characteristic of the post-Fordist model, was adopted at Oxford and a minority of schemes responding to the survey (e.g.



London Borough of Enfield, City of Westminster, London Borough of Richmond) where significant investment had been made in imaging and marketing. Distancing the card from municipal connotations by creating an image that was more commercially orientated and 'sexy' appealed to not only non-concession groups but also those eligible for concessions. The Oxford Bonus Slice was incorporated into the overall image and structure of the Slice scheme, reducing any stigma that may have been associated with owning a discount card based on the owner's economic circumstances.

Moreover, the latter's management information system provided detailed data on membership and usage (see section 8.4), enabling highly targeted, direct marketing and the construction of segmented customer profiles. One of the main advantages of an effective multi-tiered scheme is highlighted here, as both discounted groups and full (or nearly full) price payers are targeted, thereby aiming to increase overall use and the cross-subsidy of discounts. However, at the same time the focus on low income groups of the concession-only cards was lost and the outreach activities used in Cardiff and Leicester were not in the marketing strategy for Oxford.

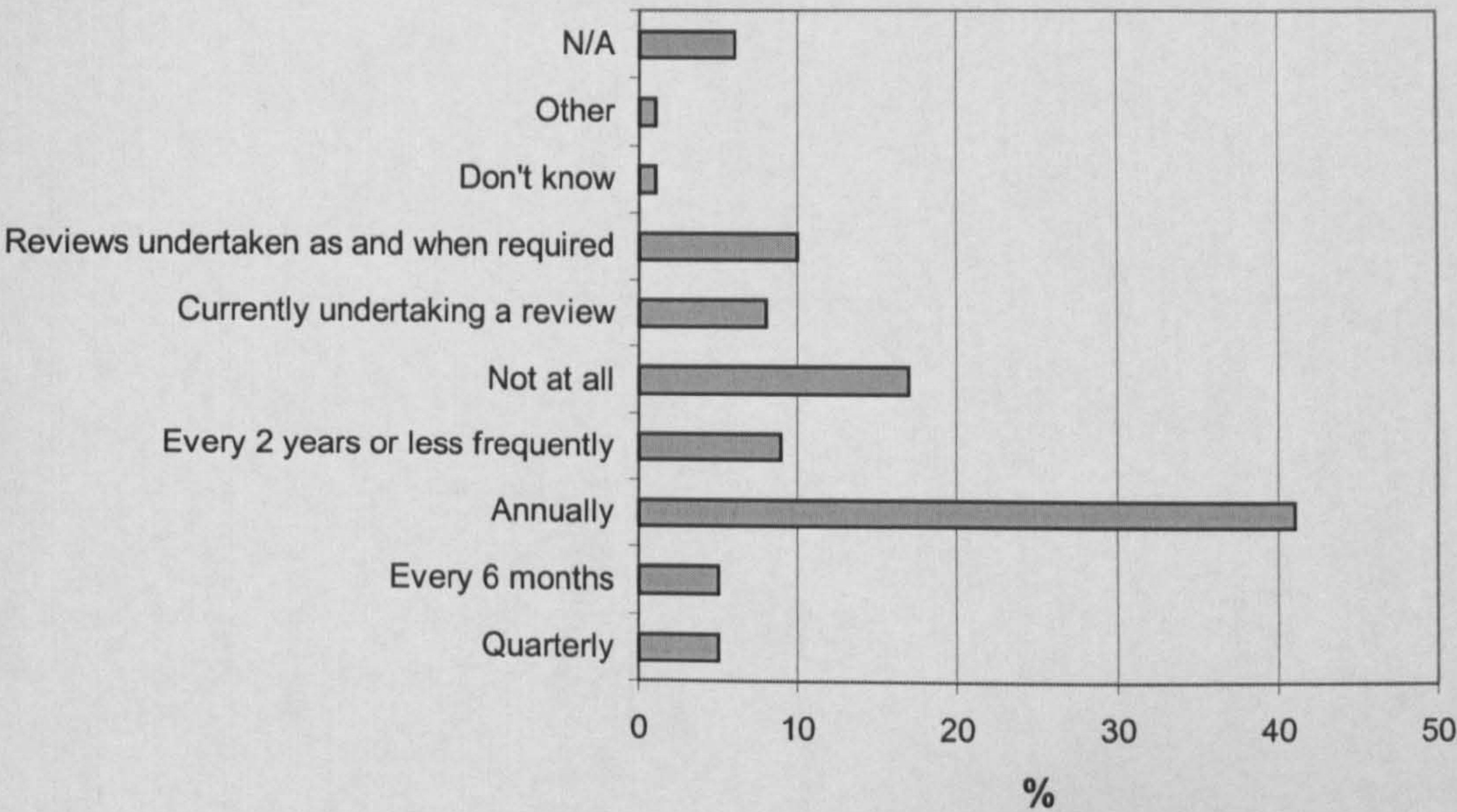
## **7.4 Monitoring Leisure Cards**

This section focuses on what, if any, monitoring was undertaken by Leisure Card operators, and how frequently this occurred. Figure 7.7 (AT28) shows that 41% of operators reviewed their schemes annually, 10% did so more and 9% less frequently. However, 17% of respondents did not monitor their scheme at all, and a further 9% monitored it every 2 years or less often.

Although 75% of local authorities monitored their schemes through a computerised system, this still left 25% using manual records or simply not monitoring at all. Moreover, only 56% of respondents monitored take-up of cards by target groups, and only 39% monitored cardholders' of facilities and activities. A few had commissioned one-off surveys of members and their card use, but these were not undertaken regularly. This is a situation that will not be satisfactory under Best Value regimes.



Figure 7.7 How frequently LCS were reviewed



This lack of monitoring was related to the technology available to monitor card schemes. Apart from the 25% of authorities not keeping computerised membership records, intelligent tills for monitoring cardholders' use were employed by only just over half the authorities responding (57%). Smart cards (as in the case of Oxford), although features of only a minority of authorities (10%), had been growing.

The case for taking advantage of technological developments in leisure management systems was made by Peterborough City Council, which was considering improving and re-launching its multi-tier scheme (Peterborough City Council, 1997). This decision came in the light of its new Unitary status and resultant increases in service provision, as well as a perceived need to address the Council's anti-poverty strategy. The existing system could not cope with the variety of circumstances or needs of customers which the Council were trying to meet. It wished to include new services such as libraries, bereavement services, education, sport and recreation, bus passes, car parks in the scheme. Part of this re-launch was to include the installation of new information technology aimed at reducing the stigma at the point of sale and at providing comprehensive usage information. These systems linked all venues with hardware in place, enabling information from any point of sale to be



accessed from any other point in the network. Peterborough City Council advocated the use of smart cards in the 'age of customer loyalty cards', because it has a number of advantages for the *customer*:

- ❑ adds a perception of belonging and ownership of service;
- ❑ card holders automatically take advantage of discounts;
- ❑ can take advantage of other benefits such as advance booking; and
- ❑ ability to receive personalised mailshots.

Meanwhile, there are considerable advantages to the *operator*:

- ❑ download/transfer times for any information held on card/hardware is 4-6 seconds;
- ❑ card production is 1 minute;
- ❑ immediate renewal on the spot; and
- ❑ highly detailed usage information is available (how many people, from which membership category, played squash between 5 and 6 last Monday evening) (Peterborough City Council, 1997).

Peterborough City Council had the ultimate aim of establishing a wider leisure management system which would handle booking of facilities across all sites, and comprehensive management reporting. The total cost of funding the IT alone was estimated at £140,000, relating to the number of venues the hardware was to be installed at.

Monitoring was made more difficult because to make applications simple, people could bring any/the easiest proof of eligibility (pension books, student cards, certificates of disability etc); people claiming more than one type of benefit could be eligible under a number of categories but were only recorded under one, which blurred what little data was available. Another considerable problem in monitoring was human resources, with many authorities expressing frustration at not having the staff hours and/or the technical knowledge even to retrieve information from databases. The review process was often isolated and potentially meaningless, as 67% of schemes claimed that they had no performance targets for measurement and comparative purposes (see section 6.2).

Leicester's monitoring was based on membership take-up and an annual review of the Leisure Pass scheme. Take-up was monitored according to membership category and

ethnicity, and a breakdown of monthly totals was also available (section 8.2). Use of facilities by card holders was only monitored by total take-up at facilities and not by time of use or activity undertaken (section 8.4). However, smart tills had been installed in the municipal sports facilities which were compatible with the Leisure Pass cards and would enable detailed management reporting similar to that of the information management systems. Despite the fact that these tills were installed in 1997, they were not in use when this research was undertaken, and when asked at the end of 1997 when they were likely to be operational, the answer from leisure officers was "no idea". The operation of the tills was "put on the back burner" while the new CCT contract was being drawn up, according to the Assistant Director. This was desperately bad timing for the Leisure Pass scheme as the information contained within the till regarding use of facilities, could have been influential in the budget decision. One of the most significant problems attached to Leisure Cards in general is their lack of financial accountability related to the use of facilities, so to have the hardware installed but not operational must be extremely frustrating.

Despite this, as Table 7.2 shows, an overwhelming 84% of respondents to the user survey indicated they intended to renew their Leisure Pass, with only 2% definitely not intending to do so. Despite the low response rate, this must be regarded as indicating success in terms of customer satisfaction.

Table 7.2 Leicester’s Leisure Pass members intending to renew their Pass

|                | Yes        |                       | No       |                      |
|----------------|------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|
|                | n          | % of those saying yes | n        | % of those saying no |
| Low Income     | 77         | 30                    | 2        | 1                    |
| Young people   | 42         | 16                    | 2        | 1                    |
| 60+            | 83         | 32                    | 2        | 1                    |
| Disabled       | 47         | 18                    | -        |                      |
| Carers         | 11         | 4                     | -        |                      |
| Single parents | -          |                       | -        |                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>260</b> | <b>84</b>             | <b>6</b> | <b>2</b>             |

However, the operation of the smart tills was described as "not the highest priority" by the Assistant Director, who claimed that they are "struggling to provide what we have got let alone make development in our services. Every development has to be paid for by



something else". Budget management in the Arts and Leisure Department was described as a balancing act.

Cardiff's Passport To Leisure was monitored as often as the consultants produced the database of members and the management report, and a review took place quarterly. The reliance on the consultants was frustrating as up-to-date information was not available and often arrived late, though the information in the reviews was detailed and saved the Client officer a lot of time. The system was very simple and operated on the Microsoft Access software which is widely available and compatible with all personal computers operating the Windows system. The database was easy and quick to operate being based on a spreadsheet containing all the details of the members. It was particularly useful in indicating the expiry dates for memberships and printed the labels for the reminder letters, which could be done on a weekly basis. Use of municipal sports centres by cardholders was only monitored in terms of total use for the purposes of calculating the level of subsidy required. This problem of renewing expiring cards is discussed in section 7.5, and resulted in many people not renewing their cards and thus not being 'live' members.

According to the Direct Services Manager at Oxford, the information management system enabled accurate information and highlighted market penetration, and consequently if/where gaps in the market existed. It will enable more accurate strategic planning and management decisions, e.g. what time to switch off the squash court lights. Moreover, he believed that it helped with all aspects of centre management stating that "you know who your customers are, when they come, what they want, an important aspect of Best Value evaluation".

However, at the point of delivery there was no review procedure other than that which the centre manager at Temple Cowley Pools undertook on a centre by centre basis. Any official review was above his level and for which he provided the data. No "serious evaluation" had taken place because they did not have the time. This was a worrying prospect for the scheme, and one which is fully recognised by the Direct Services Manager who was concerned that they will not manage it to its full potential. Indeed, the Centre Manager at Temple Cowley Pools claimed that they "need to be a lot clearer about exactly what information they want from the scheme", as they were confronted with a vast array of

data. In his job he was clear about what he wanted in terms of information- attendance and income "with regards to card usage, provided its income is good, I'm not really bothered what card they're using". He indicated that this was the responsibility of the Client-Contractor Working Group in terms of reaching its target groups.

The survey, therefore, provided an overview of the monitoring, or seeming lack of it, undertaken by Leisure Card operators in Britain. The cases, however, revealed the process of monitoring a card scheme, and in the cases of Leicester and Cardiff, how this was hampered by a lack of resources – budgetary, human and technological.

**Figure 7.8 Threats to the leisure card monitoring process**

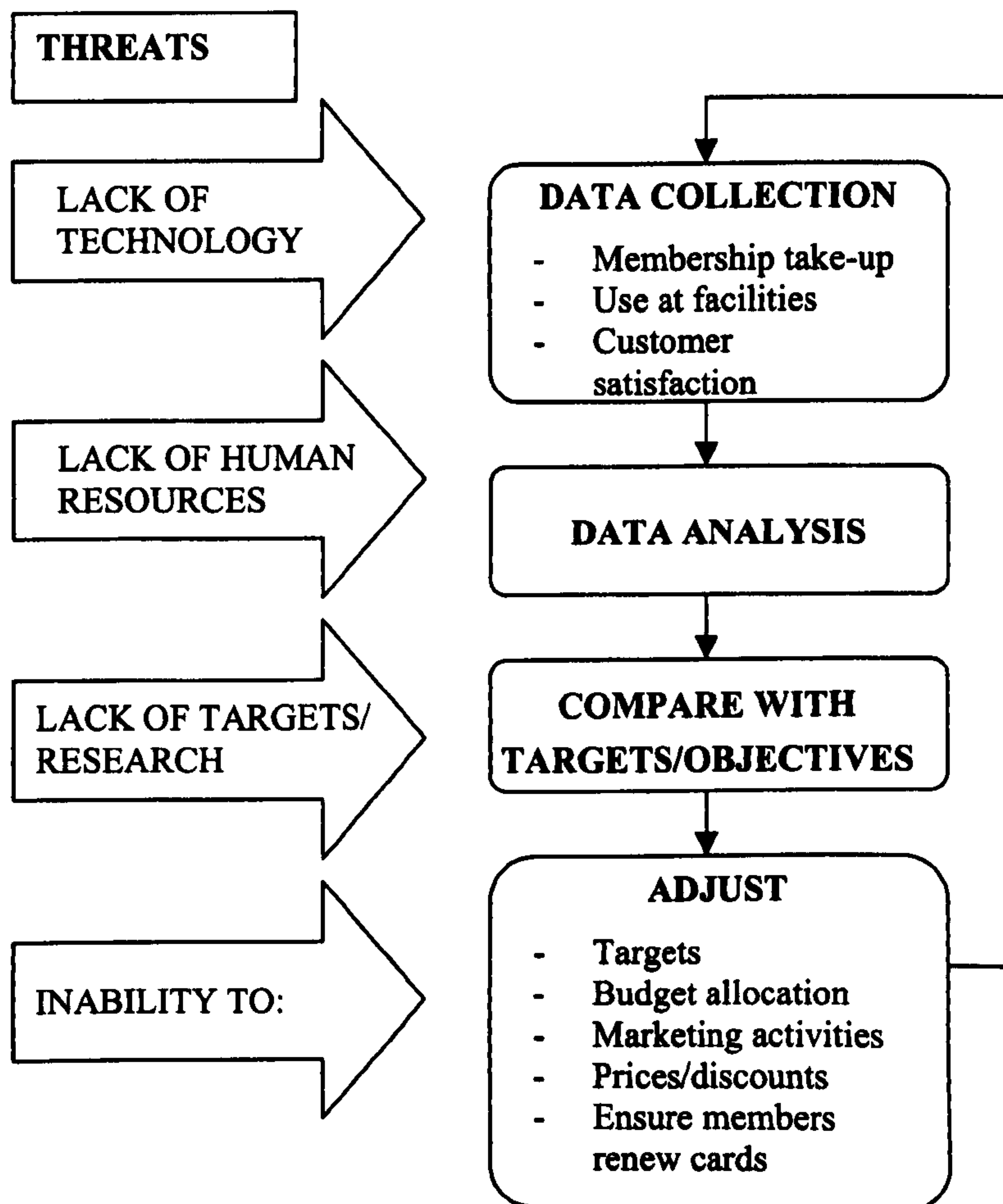




Figure 7.8 shows an ideal monitoring process involving data collection, analysis, comparison with targets and objectives, the readjustment of targets, budget allocation, marketing activities and prices/discounts where necessary, ensuring members existing members renew their cards, and finally a return to the collection of data. This represents a post-Fordist scenario of flexibility and responsiveness to customer needs and demands based on extensive market research in the monitoring process. However, as the diagram shows, the process was under threat by lack of resources at every stage, which ultimately reduced it to an often isolated and redundant exercise. This contributed to the vicious cycle of budget and price setting described in Figure 7.3, where a lack of resources led to under-performance and a subsequent unwillingness to invest further resources.

Indeed, neither Leicester nor Cardiff could accurately monitor use of even their own facilities by cardholders, and only those with intelligent tills or smart card systems were capable of this. These more advanced technological systems produced large amounts of management and marketing information, as in the case of Oxford. While these systems removed the threat of a lack of technology from Figure 7.8, the Oxford Slice Card highlighted the potential problem of not being able to take advantage of this level of detailed data due to limited human resources, by simply not knowing exactly what data was important and devising relevant performance indicators, or by not setting targets in the first place.

## **7.5 Problems**

As the previous sections began to graphically highlight, there were some very real problems related to the operation of Leisure Card Schemes. In response to an open-ended question in the survey, which invited respondents to highlight the problems encountered during the life cycle of their schemes, 75 specific problems were identified. Of these, 25 (33%) related to a lack of resources and 9 were more specifically related to a lack of human resources and three of marketing resources. This corresponds to the 27% of respondents who claimed that the budget allocated to their schemes was inadequate. Many of the problems identified were specific to individual schemes, represented in the 14 (19%) problems classified as 'other' e.g. lack of monitoring and management information was

identified by 9 (12%) authorities as a problem. Again, this may have been closely related to overall lack of resources, including computer hardware and human resources to retrieve data.

Another common problem, identified by 8 (11%) of respondents related to eligibility criteria. The inability to identify whether members were simultaneously eligible under more than one category, such as Income Support and Housing Benefit, was indeterminable. As a result, monitoring market penetration and the effectiveness of a card scheme in penetrating the poorest sectors of the community and even in assessing the extent of the overall market base for a card became increasingly difficult. It may be possible to overcome this by designing application forms which ask applicants to identify all the criteria they are eligible for, rather than just one, while still using the easiest form of evidence.

A further problem involved the determination of target groups to be included in the schemes. A reoccurring debate revolved around the inclusion of OAPs and whether old age is a sufficient criterion, or whether only those receiving state benefits should be included. The inclusion of school or college students caused similar problems and is a sports development issue relating to age and the policy objectives of the authority. If involving the elderly as a whole in sport and leisure is a priority then this is based on age not economic circumstances and all people over a certain age (perhaps 60) can be targeted.

However, if encouraging those on a low income is the primary objective, then this must be more closely linked to income, and so state pension and/or means tested benefit claimants were natural target groups. This problem intensified on the boundaries of an authority where facility catchment areas may cross into neighbouring districts, as in the cases of Tynedale and Leicester. This was a problem for all target groups, but hit the disabled and elderly harder due to their generally decreased levels of mobility, as recognised in the government's 'Planning Policy Note 17 on Sport and Recreation' (DoE, 1989). For multi-tiered schemes these problems could be overcome more easily by including various groups with different price tiers and discount levels.



A problem identified by six authorities was that of a general lack of ownership of the card scheme, not only within the departments directly responsible for administering it, but also amongst facility operators and staff, other local authority departments and amongst the elected members. This may have been a result of the wider problem of inadequate resources, especially the inability to designate a member of staff or team to exclusively operate the scheme, and the low priority which many have within the overall provision of services, as expressed by Derby City Council. The vicious cycle is self-perpetuating, as lack of commitment and under-resourcing lead to under-performance and further disillusionment, a lack of ownership and unwillingness to invest further resources. There was a definite need to promote a scheme both to cardholders *and* staff involved in its operation, other related departments and to Council Members. Indeed, the latter may even be undertaken before the scheme is launched to the public.

Other problems included abuse of the scheme either by members passing cards to people who were not eligible, (although this can be overcome with photos), or those who continued to use their cards after they found employment or their circumstances changed and they had not contacted the Council. The latter problem is difficult to overcome without short term card issues which are costly to administer. In some instances there was a perceived stigma attached to owning the card, whilst others reported low renewal rates. Both of these problems were related to marketing and the image of the scheme, as well as the discount levels offered, types and quality of activities included.

Typically, authorities may experience any combination of these problems at the same time or at different periods during the scheme's life-cycle. For example, Horsham District Council experienced the problems of "winning over all staff to help operate the scheme... agreeing and justifying the definition of low income... dealing with those customers that marginally miss our definition of low income... encouraging regular and repeated use of facilities". Coventry City Council provided more examples with "lack of ownership... reaching those who would benefit most from a PTL (Passport To Leisure)... justifying not including OAPs... having the time and resources to develop the scheme to its full potential". Mansfield District Council's scheme had "unclear objectives... no budget... no designated staff".

The process of reorganisation which Welsh authorities underwent, created certain problems as identified by Denbighshire where the amalgamation of three authorities resulted in the need to combine three different pricing policies under one card scheme (with no budget), and to co-ordinate 13 facilities all with different point of sale and booking systems. This was the situation now facing many new Unitary Authorities in England and already being experienced by North East Lincolnshire who had to merge two card schemes into one. Other Unitaries were facing increased population sizes and the implications of providing extra services in education and social services which require increased cross-departmental liaison.

Indeed, the case studies provided more detail on the mix of problems faced by card schemes, the causes behind them and prospective solutions where they existed. At Leicester, apart from the problems mentioned relating to the inability to monitor use at municipal or commercial facilities, the other major problem was inadequate human resources dedicated to the operation of the scheme. This problem was likely to become significantly worse in the near future with the loss of the scheme's only full-time post. Lack of co-operation from other government agencies was also identified as a problem, especially as Benefits Agencies are not permitted to advertise local government activities. Initial abuse of the scheme, primarily through members passing on their cards to those who are not eligible was overcome by the introduction of photographs on the cards.

More fundamentally, Leicester City Council had not consistently monitored how many people were eligible for membership. This problem was compounded by the fact that it is difficult to ascertain the customer base because of double counting. An inability to gauge market penetration again restricted the ability of the scheme to demonstrate its effectiveness.

The officers at Leicester were in the situation where high membership levels have been sufficient in the past to justify investment. It had always been possible to claim that an inability to monitor use at facilities meant the full impact of the scheme has never been realised. Now, faced with budget cuts, they needed to justify the benefits of the scheme but also face the possibility of revealing that only a core of members might be making regular use of the card. The inevitability of these cuts and the delay in access to



management information makes the outcome almost irrelevant, but highlights a situation which many such schemes must find themselves in. The lack of detailed monitoring means that officers are, to a large extent, operating blindly, marketing and promoting, desperately signing up members without ever knowing if they are reaching target groups or increasing use at facilities. Hopefully the tills will be operational in time for the scheme to assess the achievement of its new objective of turning existing members into regular users of facilities.

From a strategic management perspective, the Leicester's Leisure Pass was "expensive to operate" and had come under increasing pressure year after year when budget setting. The situation has always been to "minimise the costs of the scheme whilst maximising the benefits" (Assistant Director) reflecting the need for efficiency under CCT. The operators of Leicester's Leisure Pass were in a difficult position, symptomatic of many similar card schemes, and indeed other leisure services where the preferred ethos would be the opposite i.e. to maximise the benefits whilst minimising the costs, placing more emphasis on effectiveness and notions of redistribution and egalitarianism, characteristic of the pioneering schemes described in Chapter 4. Amidst wide spread local government budget restraints, restricting costs inevitably seems to come before extending benefits. Overall, the Assistant Director regarded the scheme as "smooth running, well managed and promoted" it also "provides value for money at a relatively modest cost and achieves quite a lot".

Cutting the budget of the scheme was justified as part of more wide-reaching cuts which affect the whole Leisure Services Department. As Leisure Pass "had not been touched in the past five years" it was regarded as inevitable that "it comes round to us all" (Assistant Director). The aim was to "maintain the existing scheme as far as we can" but unfortunately "we won't be able to market it and develop it in the way that we have in the past". This was described as "sad, but not as sad as the alternatives which are the closure of facilities". The remaining budget was described as sizeable, although a "staffing review" was underway which would involve the "reallocation of responsibilities". This referred to the loss of the full-time position.

A fall in take-up was almost accepted as inevitable, and the "best will have to be made of the marketing resources available" (Assistant Director) (see 8.2 for details). However, if

membership started declining at an alarming rate then "we will have to do something about it". This was a daunting possibility for Leisure Pass. Rebuilding a customer base is much harder than sustaining it or building it in the first place. Charging for the card was regarded as time consuming and a combination of charging as well as reducing the budget may be considered.

Monitoring of Cardiff's Passport To Leisure was the most significant problem with the scheme, although this was linked to a more fundamental lack of human resources dedicated to it. There was a backlog of 5,000 people who had not been mailed regarding their lapsed membership. This had been a problem throughout the life-cycle of the scheme and must be regarded as a fundamental factor in the limited 'live membership' totals. Without vigilance, members disappear and if they are not actively approached to renew membership, then the chances are they will not do so. This was a waste of the initial resources spent in gaining their membership in the first place.

Indeed, this lack of human resources also limited the marketing of the scheme as well as its expansion to include commercial operators. It takes significant man hours to manage a scheme with a potential target market of 50,000 which includes: organising marketing activities, designing publicity material, monitoring lapsed memberships and mailing them, persuading commercial operators to join, analysing and producing management information, collating and diffusing information to and from facilities. It is not reasonable to expect a scheme to fulfil its objectives if adequate resources are not invested. The current Client officer at Cardiff was undertaking all of these tasks as only a part of other responsibilities. It was inevitable the scheme was neglected for certain periods. However, the nature of these schemes means that they cannot be left to market themselves, or for memberships to lapse, as they lose momentum rapidly and can only be kick-started with major investment through a re-launch.

Following on from his fears about the future management of the scheme, the Client Services Manager at Oxford was convinced that the creation of a full-time leisure card officer post would "pay for itself twice over". From his point of view there is a clear need for a member of staff dedicated to analysing the huge amount of data that the information system produces and using it for marketing purposes. The centre manager and current



member of staff were not convinced that this was necessary, but claimed that there was too much data to utilise with their current resources as the person dedicated to the scheme is only fulfilling administrative duties. There was a clear danger that one of the primary reasons for establishing the card, that of management information, was in danger of being neglected due to inadequate human resources.

Another problem was highlighted by the Centre Manager who thought they had priced aspects of the scheme too low initially. Although acknowledging it was difficult to ascertain whether this was true or not until the end of the first year, he believed a loss was being made on swimming. This was because the majority of people who swim regularly, swim *very* regularly (Centre Manager). This linked back to the initial launch of the scheme which he believed involved dissemination of poor information. The members of the old Recreation Card were confused; although the Council was aware of not using the term 'membership' with the new scheme because it smacks of elitism, but he believed that this is the only way a scheme such as this could be described to potential customers so that they would understand it. This confusion caused them some "horrendous problems" initially, as people thought they could buy a month here and there, or leave it for a couple of months as they wished. They did not realise it was supposed to be an on-going scheme. This problem was intensified by the lack of people paying by direct debit as some missed or were late with their cash payments, making the number of active members almost impossible to track.

A further problem related to the Bonus Slice, which again the Centre Manager believed was priced too low. His justification for this was the 1,500 unclaimed cards he has in a box at the Centre which people paid £2 for but had not bothered to pick up. As he phrased it, "there is no perceived value to the card", and as a result he suggested that the card price should be increased to £5. This increase could be compensated for by more vouchers for initial visits to the Centre. The Student Slice also faced the same problems, as many students buy a card when they visit to swim in order to take advantage of immediate discounts, but then never come again. In this case a £5 charge was proposed but for the academic year rather than the current 6 monthly renewal period.

One of the problems faced by the facilities was one which most of their counterparts in other authorities would, at first glance, like to have - too many users. The Council was receiving complaints that people could not use facilities because they were full as demand had far outstripped what was expected. The Direct Services Manager was delighted in this respect as it indicated to him that they must have been doing something right! The view from the facility end was more concerned with the cost of handling these extra users and the revenue gained from this increase in use. As indicated earlier, a probable loss was being made on most swimmers due to the high frequency of users at low prices. This was a factor in the decline of squash in the 1980s when too many facilities were chased by too few users, with little secondary spend.

This is a crucial point for the contractors- what the Centre Manager described as "the bottom line"- the break-even point where a balance is struck between price and cost of use (this is discussed in more detail in section 7.2- budget). The bottom line had not been calculated in Oxford and could not be until a substantial period of time had passed and the scheme had settled into a pattern of operation and use. This was made increasingly difficult because it had central overheads and all card income went to a separate account code and was then redistributed back to the facilities on a lump sum basis. It was difficult to re-apportion this money to specific facilities in each Centre and to decide at what rate that should be paid. These were highly technical features of these management information systems which need support from the hardware/software suppliers.

Summarising the problem areas experienced by Leisure Card operators, it was clear that lack of resources was the source of many of them, whether it was lack of a budget, human resources and/or technology. Related to this was a lack of expertise amongst officers responsible for monitoring and analysing data, and a lack of knowledge regarding low income groups within their authorities. Another problem focused on the inability to accurately define target groups and resultant double counting. More fundamentally there was uncertainty about which groups to include in schemes and who should be entitled to a discount. This was linked to another fear of operators that cards were being abused by people lending them to others who were not eligible.

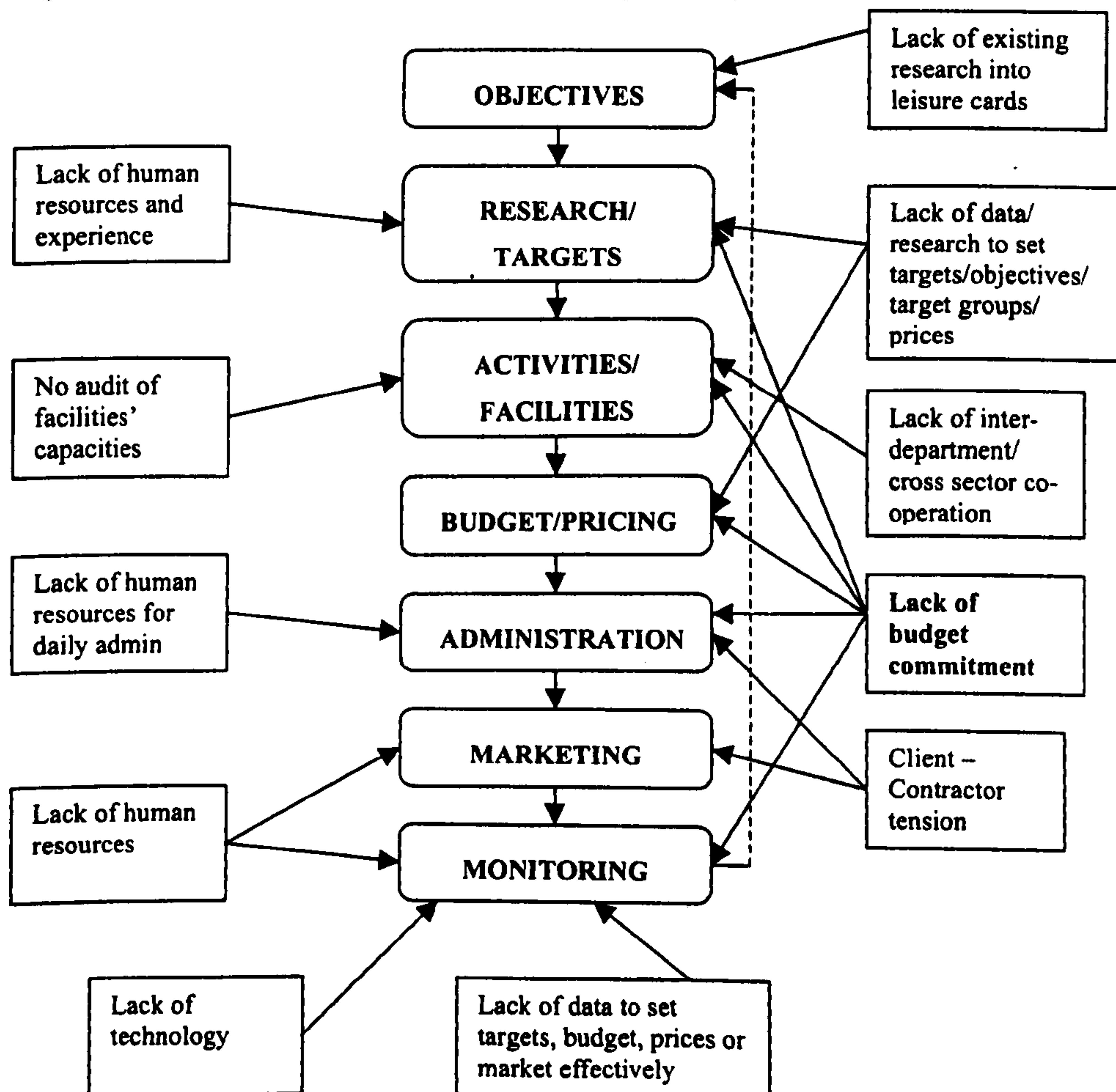


The setting of the initial price of cards and discount levels was also problematic, with prices set too high resulted in low take up and prices set too low giving the card little perceived value. Moreover, discount levels that were set too high led to unsustainable levels of subsidisation and any changes to price or discount level saw take-up and use fall.

## 7.6 Conclusion

Section 7.5 on the problems experienced by Leisure Card operators brought together the different aspects of managing schemes. The cases revealed that the process of establishing and managing a card scheme was threatened at every juncture. Just as Figure 7.8 showed the threats to the monitoring and evaluation process, Figure 7.9 shows the potential threats to an ideal scenario for the whole management process.

**Figure 7.9 Threats to the leisure card management process**



As already identified, a lack of budgetary commitment was the source of many of the problems for Leisure Card Schemes, including inadequate human resources and a lack of technology. This hindered the ability to undertake research when establishing a scheme, the daily administration, marketing and monitoring of many card schemes. In turn, this inhibited the reassessment of targets and objectives, as well the readjustment of prices. It must be stressed at this point that different card schemes encountered different combinations of problems to differing degrees of severity.

To varying degrees, Leisure Card Schemes were attempting to achieve social objectives and targeted groups that could be defined as being at most risk of social exclusion. Therefore, there is no doubt that card operators were swimming against the political tide of the time – CCT, market deregulation, individualism and the one nation conservative concern in sport for national excellence and ‘Raising the Game’ (DNH, 1995). The problems with Leisure Cards demonstrated proximity to the ideal-type Fordist model of operation and perhaps tendencies towards neo-Fordist desires to reinforce some Fabian objectives and management characteristics of the Fordist period, rather than a clear break into what could be identified as an ideal post-Fordist model of operation (see Chapter 9 for more discussion).

Indeed, evidence from the case studies suggested that Leisure Cards had been protected from CCT. However, while they had been protected from the contract legalities, tendering etc., Leisure Cards were still subject to budgetary constraints and relied on ever dwindling Client resources. In turn, the inability to dedicate sufficient resources and invest in rapidly developing information technology systems in the commercial sector (e.g. high street customer loyalty cards) left the majority of schemes with accusations of under performance (Coalter, 1990a; Eady, 1994) but unable to improve. The actual performance of Leisure Cards, which until this study had not been empirically researched, forms the contents of the following chapter.

Therefore, from this analysis of Leisure Card management, the majority of schemes seemed to be like a favourite toy kept into adulthood – fondly and zealously preserved, but out of date. However, the minority of ‘new wave’ card schemes, many of which were re-launches of older-style schemes, indicated a change and a positive trend for the future of



Leisure Card Schemes. Oxford's Slice Card demonstrated a clear break from previous managerial practices and was established to embrace and respond to the introduction of Best Value.

**Chapter 8**

**Leisure Card Performance and Evaluation**



Chapter 7 showed that many Leisure Card operators undertook limited monitoring activities, or none at all. Combined with the lack of target setting identified in Chapter 6, this made the evaluation of Leisure Card performance difficult, not only for the researcher, but also for the operators themselves. While the survey provided limited quantitative and no qualitative data on performance, the case studies proved an invaluable source and enabled the establishment of four performance criteria. Three of the criteria were based on the availability of existing data: how many people held cards (total take-up); which groups held cards (take-up by target groups); and use by cardholders at facilities. An additional criteria was devised by the researcher in order to ascertain whether or not Leisure Card Schemes were penetrating poor areas within local authorities (geographic take-up). The penultimate section takes an alternative perspective in considering the evaluation of Leisure Cards by authorities which did not operate them and the case of Brighton and Hove Borough Council is used to highlight some of the reasons given for this decision.

8.1 Total take-up

Figure 8.1 (AT30) shows total membership of Leisure Card Schemes that responded to the national survey. Although there was considerable variation between membership levels, with some schemes having more than 30,000 members while some had less than one hundred, the majority of schemes had less than 5,000 members (42%).

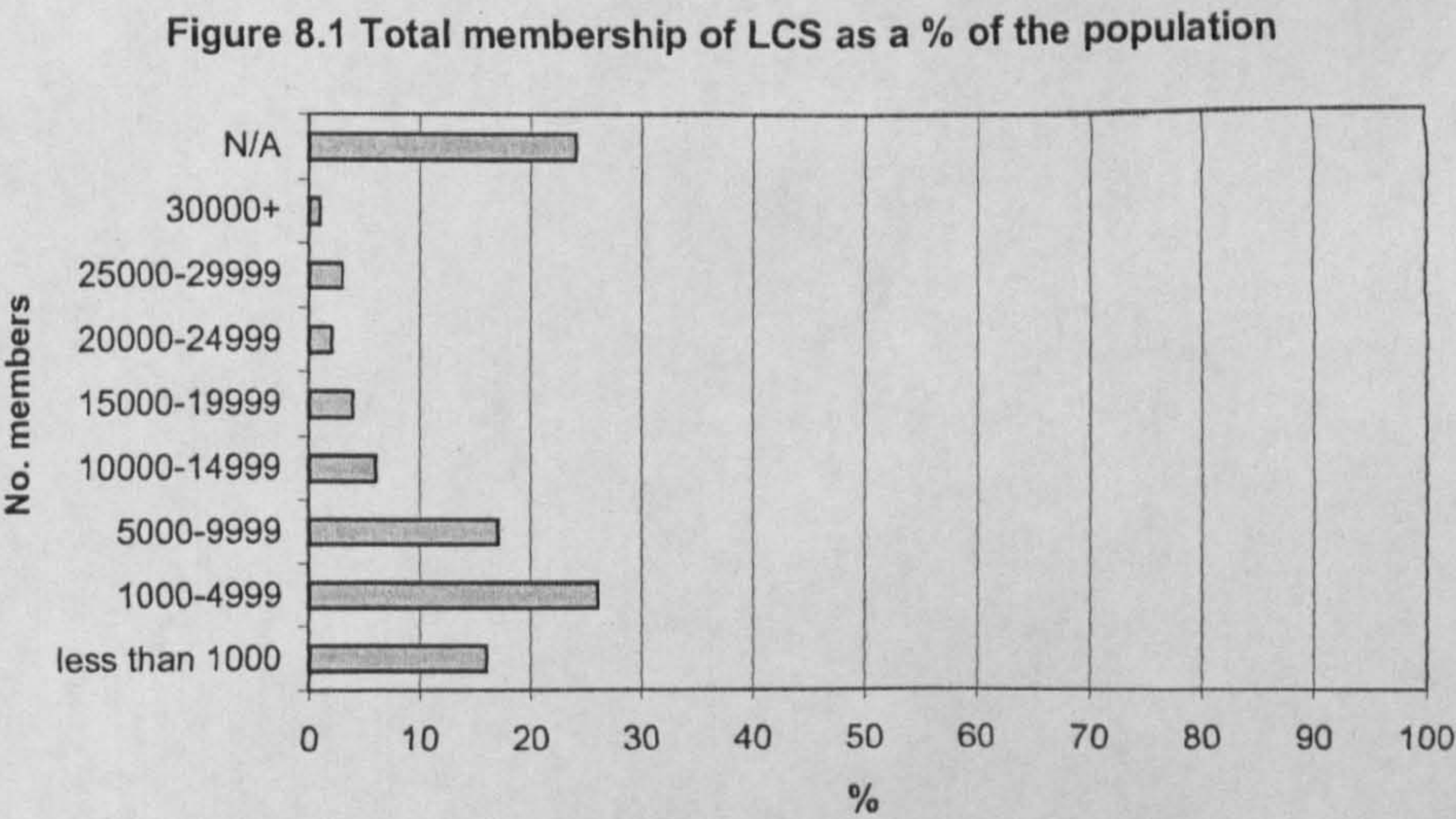
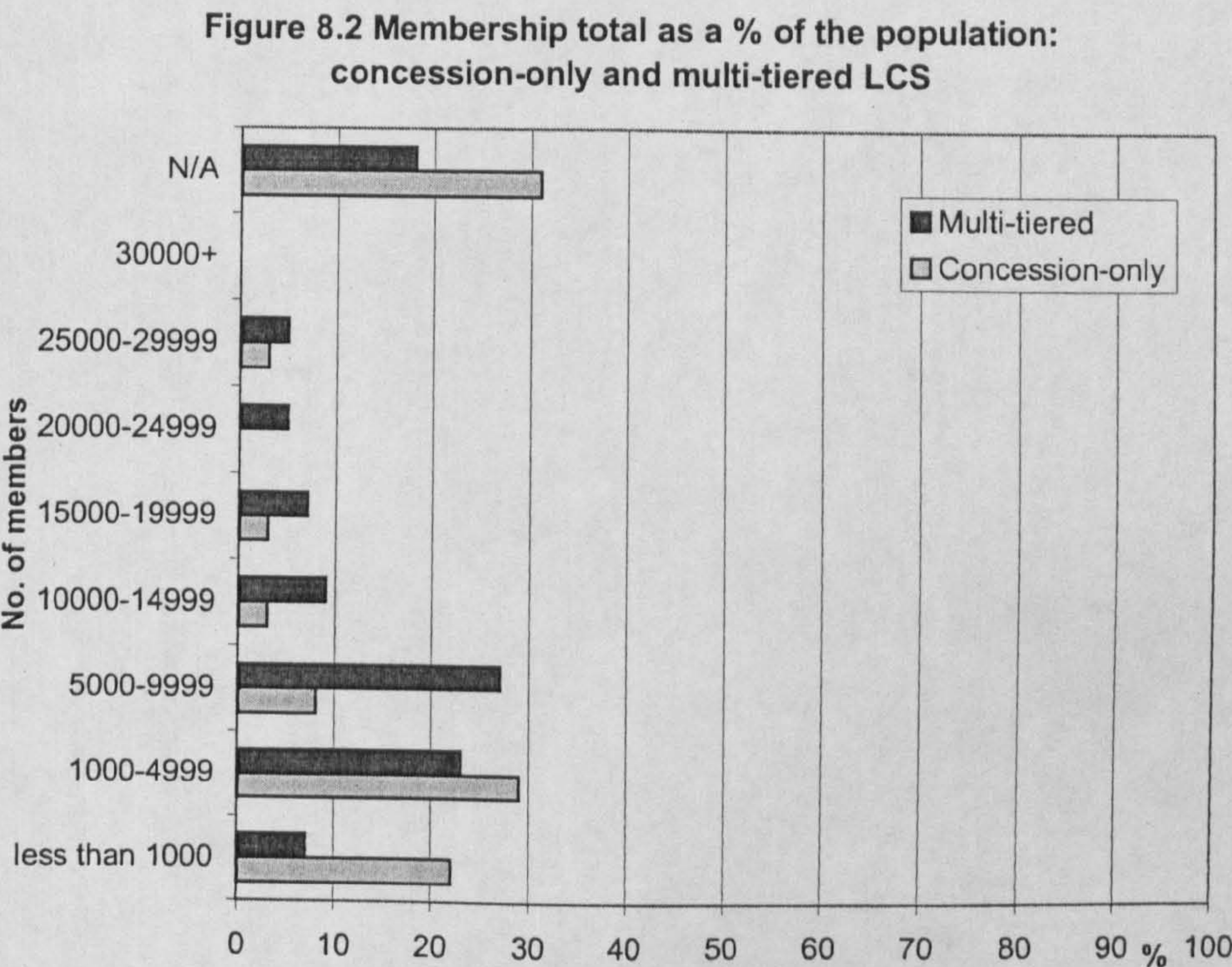




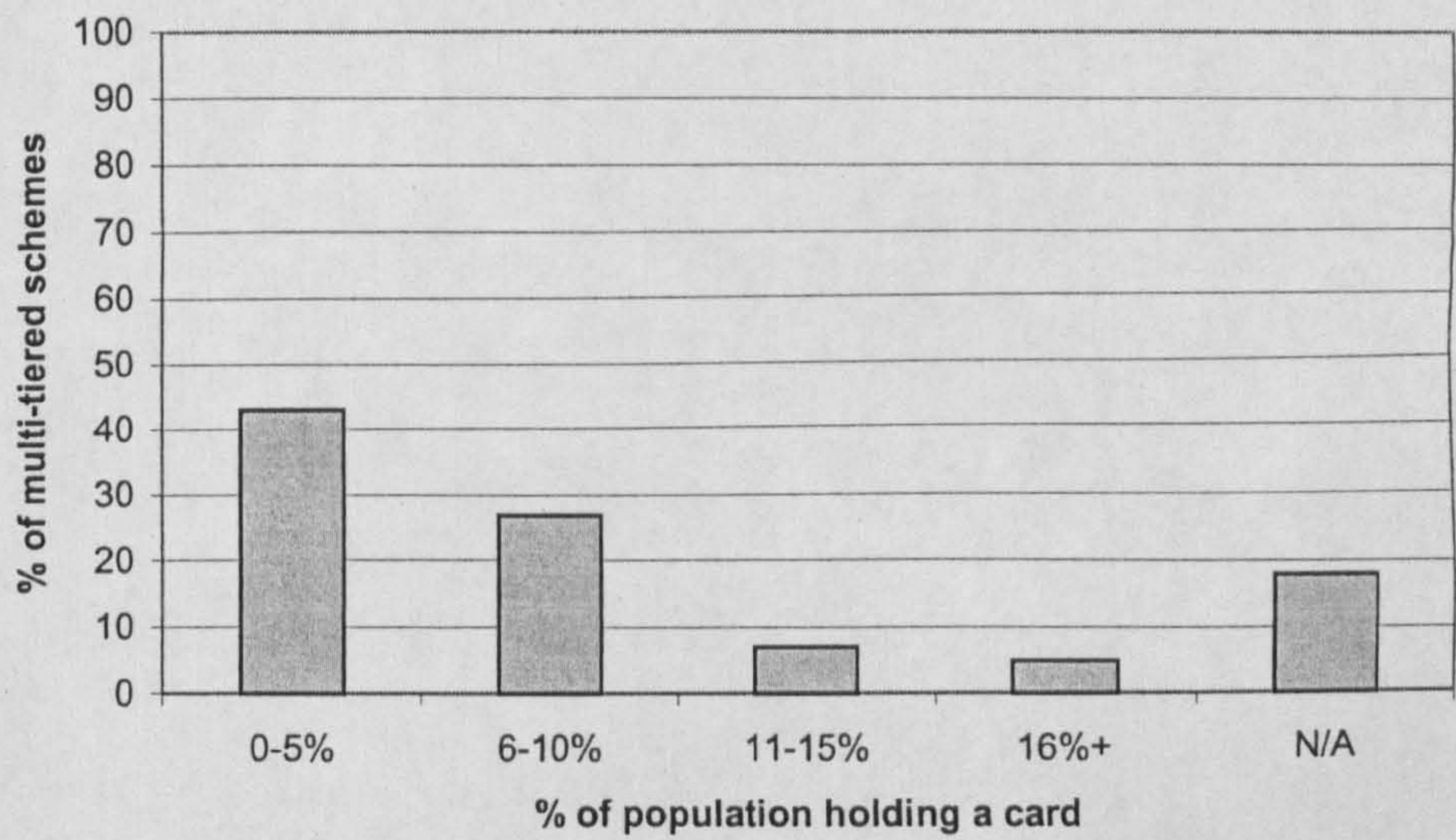
Figure 8.2 (AT31) shows that multi-tiered schemes generally had more members than concession-only, although this would be expected due to the larger target market of the former. 31% of concession-only schemes had less than 1,000 members compared to 8% of multi-tiered, whereas 35% of multi-tiered schemes had more than 10,000 members compared to 15% of concession-only.



However, it is also necessary to take into account the different target markets of multi-tiered and concession-only card types. Figure 8.3 (AT32) shows membership of multi-tiered schemes as a percentage of total population as they are available to all residents, (some may include non-residents but it was impossible to identify how many and so these figures may be slightly inflated). 43% of multi-tiered schemes achieved a penetration rate of less than 5% of the total population (equating to 7,500 members in an authority with a population of 150,000). A further 23% reached 5-10% of the population, and 5% reached more than 16% of the population, with two schemes achieving 21% take-up.



Figure 8.3 Membership of multi-tiered schemes as a % of total population

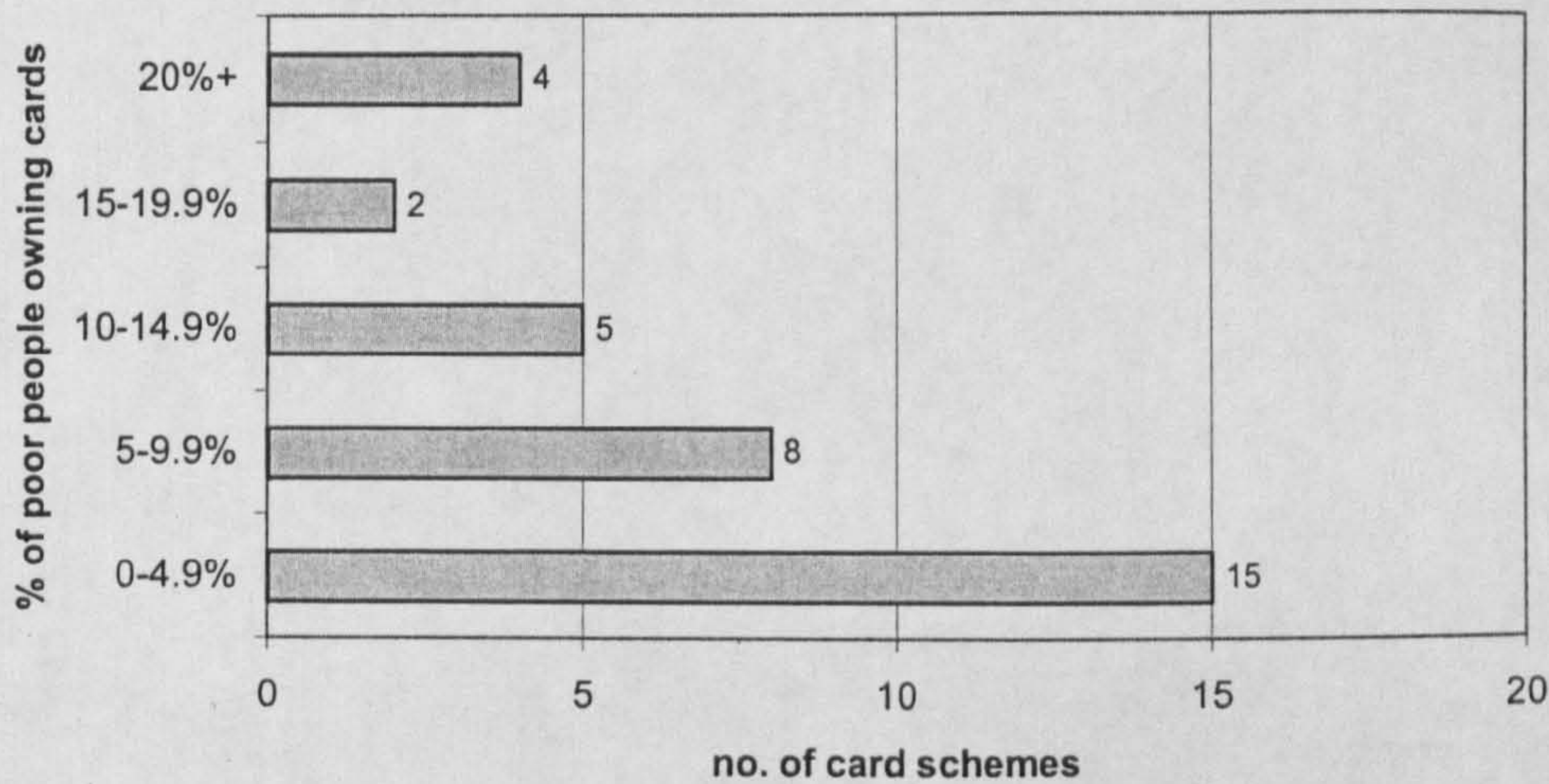


The Gordon and Forrest (1995) index for calculating the percentage of people defined as poor within local authorities (see Chapter 2 and Appendix I) was used to calculate the penetration rate of concession-only card schemes among poor residents. It must be noted that this calculation is by no means 100% accurate and is only designed to give an idea of penetration rates. As discussed in Chapter 2 and in section 6.2, poor people are a particularly difficult group to identify and target. Moreover, some of these schemes included target groups that contained a mix of poor and non-poor people e.g. OAPs.

Figure 8.4 (AT33) shows that 15 concession-only schemes reached less than 5% of poor residents, 8 reached between 5 and 10%, with 11 achieving a penetration rate of over 10%, including 4 schemes with over 20%. This demonstrated the clear potential of Leisure Cards to reach a large proportion of poor residents, but that this potential was not being fulfilled by many schemes. However, a take-up of 10% or more of the target market must be seen as a good achievement considering the sports orientation of many the schemes identified above, and one which any commercial operator would be happy with.



Figure 8.4 Percentage of poor people owning cards in authorities operating concession only schemes



8.2 Take-up by target groups

The macro analysis above is limited and relatively inaccurate, but the data gathered from the cases provided the necessary micro-level detail. In March 1995 membership of the Leicester Leisure Pass was 30,071, which subsequently turned out to be its peak to date. The following year membership fell to 28,665, the first decrease since the scheme began back in 1985 (Figure 8.5 AT34). The breakdown of membership according to category of application is shown in Table 8.1 and Figure 8.6.

Figure 8.5 Total Leicester's Leisure Pass membership  
1987/88 - 1998/99

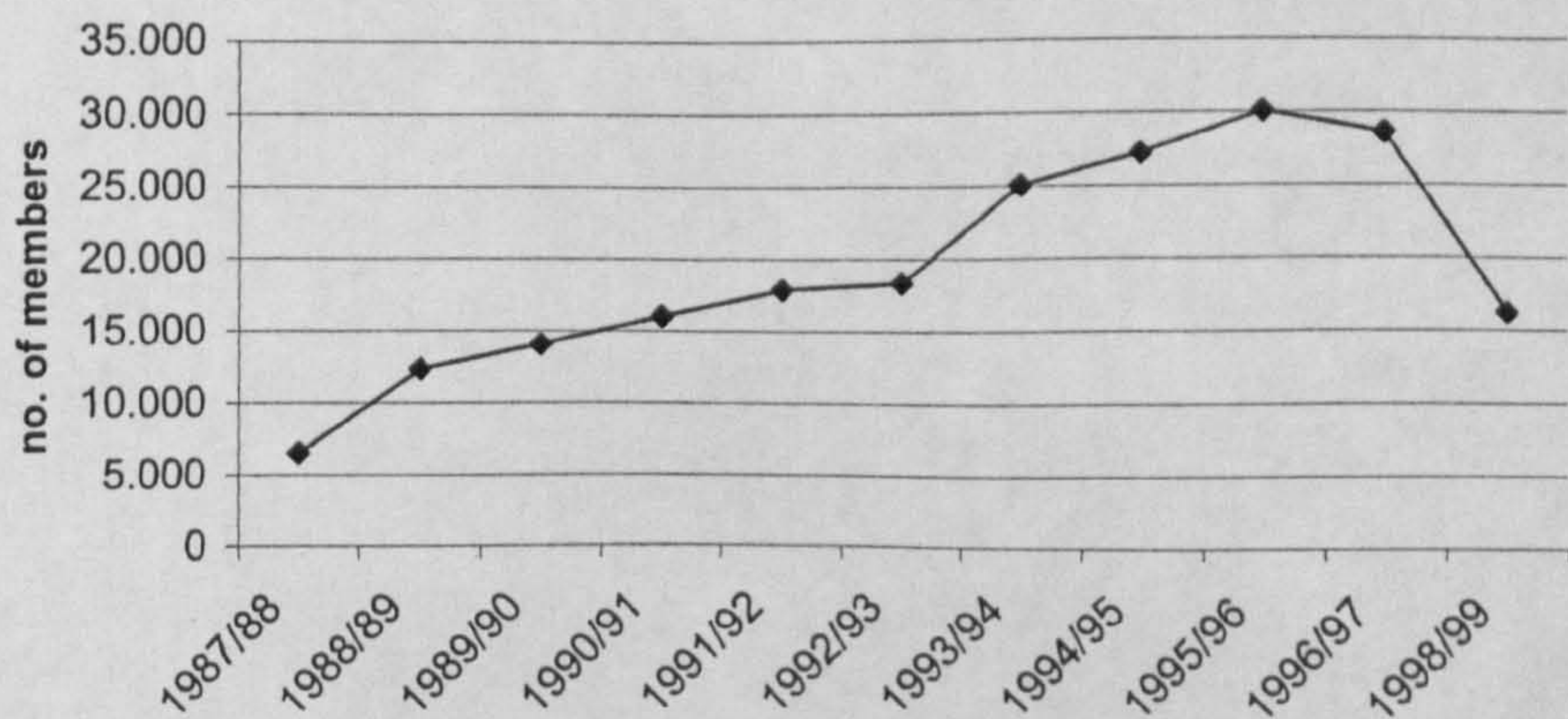
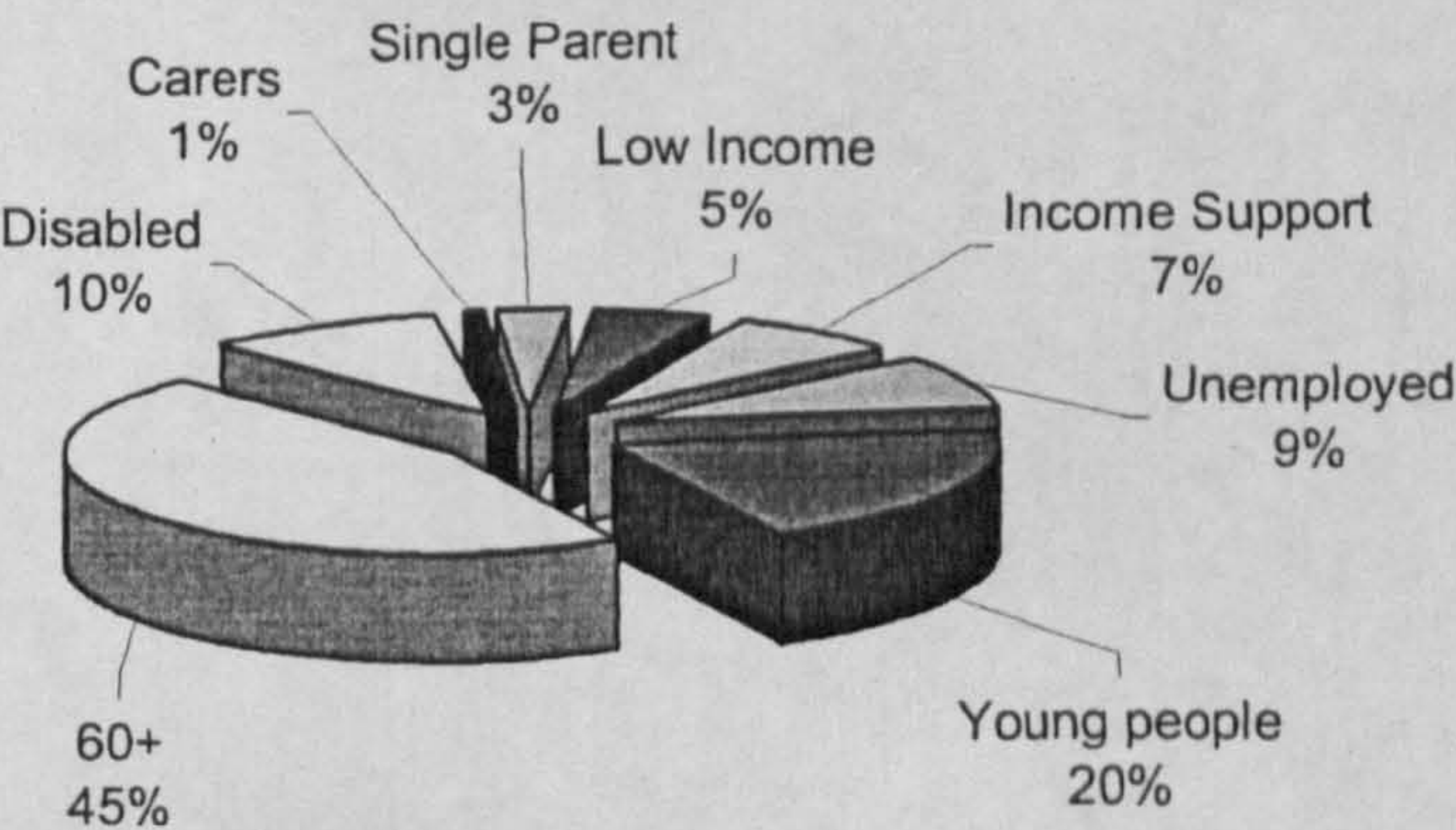




Table 8.1 Breakdown of Leisure Pass membership according to category of application (1996)

| Category       | No. of current members | % of total membership | Actual change since 1994/5 | % change since 1994/5 |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Unemployed     | 2,694                  | 9                     | -483                       | -15                   |
| Young people   | 5,667                  | 20                    | +584                       | -12                   |
| 60+            | 12,898                 | 45                    | -1,001                     | -7.2                  |
| Disabled       | 2,879                  | 10                    | -868                       | -23                   |
| Carers         | 179                    | 1                     | +21                        | +13                   |
| Single Parent  | 856                    | 3                     | +95                        | +12                   |
| Low Income     | 1,423                  | 5                     | +139                       | +11                   |
| Income Support | 2,069                  | 7.2                   | +107                       | +5.5                  |
| TOTAL          | 28,665                 |                       | -1,406                     | -4.7                  |

Figure 8.6 Membership of Leicester Leisure Pass according to category of application



The fall in unemployed members was said to reflect the fall in unemployment suggested in this period by government statistics (Leicester City Council, 1996), but not even government statistics would claim a 15% fall. A problem identified was the overlap between unemployed and Income Support members as it was very difficult to determine whether individuals were eligible under more than one category. An attempt to overcome



this was made by altering the application form to ask Income Support claimants which other categories applied to their circumstances.

The fall in disabled members was described as “puzzling” and explained partly by changes in government benefits (i.e. the replacement of Invalidity Benefit) or the large number of people signed-up through mobile registrations that had not been renewed (Leicester City Council, 1996). Increasing disabled membership was a priority for 1997/8. A high renewal rate was evident among single parents and this may have been due to visits to community centres to register people as well as continued targeted publicity in conjunction with corporate promotions. Overall, the decrease in membership was described as “disappointing following the large number of promotional activities associated with the 10th anniversary of the scheme” (Leicester City Council, 1996).

Although it was not possible to produce an accurate figure with regards to take-up because of double-counting of members eligible for the card under more than one category, an overall approximation can be made. If gross figures are used which equate the target market as the percentage of poor people living in Leicester (according to the Gordon and Forrest 1995 index) as approximately 72,222 (26.7%), then total take-up according to total membership (28,665) was 40%. However, not all those aged 60+ or all young people aged 16 to 18 were poor and so this must be taken into consideration. If it is assumed that 26.7% of people aged 60+ and 16-18 year olds were poor, this reduced the total number of 60+ members who were living on a low income to 3,443 and those classified as young to 1,513. This adjusts overall take-up to 33%:

$$28,665 - 3,443 - 1,513 = 23,709 \text{ (total members defined as poor)}$$

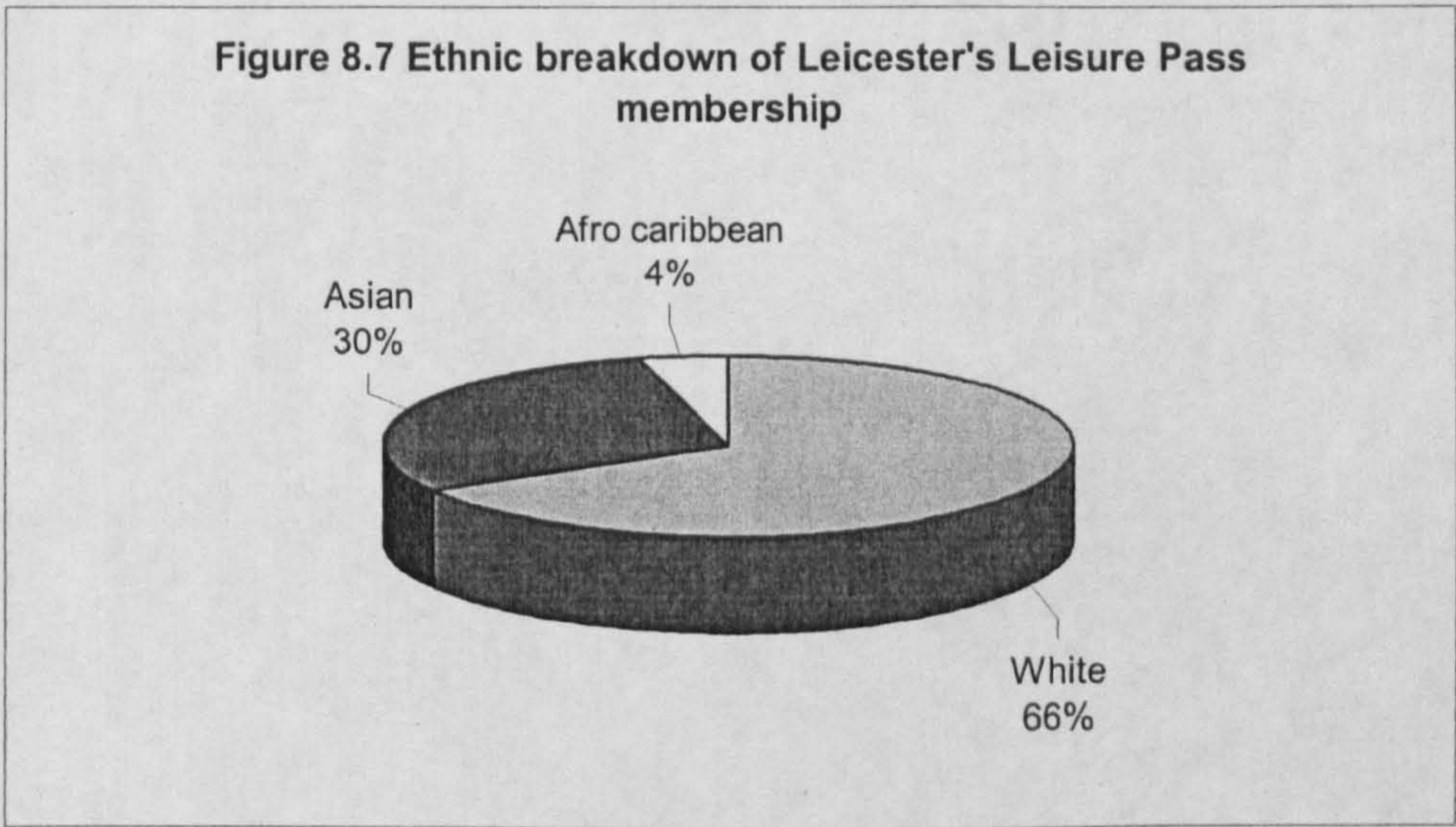
$$23,709 \text{ as a \% of } 72,222 = 33\%$$

Therefore, the Leisure Pass was reaching approximately one third of all people living on a low income in Leicester. These types of crude estimations demonstrate the problems encountered when attempting to measure the performance of Leisure Card Schemes without high-tech management systems. Calculations become increasingly complex when the rapid movement of people on and off of benefits and in and out of low income is considered. This highlighted the need for close liaison with the Economic Development Department which has access to more sensitive and accurate data.

Analysis of membership according to ethnic origin is essential in a city where ethnic minorities account for 29% of the population. Leisure Pass specifically targeted ethnic minorities to encourage their participation in activities, “with a view to having a membership representative of the general population of the city” (Client Officer). The



Asian population was actually over-represented in membership terms, although this varied with age. Asians aged over 60 were under-represented, but this group was “less likely than younger people of Asian origin to participate in leisure activities outside of their community” according to the City Council's leisure officers (Figure 8.7 AT35).



At this time there were also 953 non-City residents as members of the scheme, contributing a considerable £12,402 towards operation costs. The encouragement of county members was a priority for Leisure Pass, and involved an advertising campaign centred on libraries and supermarkets.

However, when membership data was requested to undertake the geographic analysis contained in section 8.3, Leicester's Leisure Pass had lost 10,000 members (see Figure 8.5). This must have been caused by the budget cut and the subsequent loss of the full-time Leisure Card Officer and the decision to stop actively promoting the scheme. This graphically demonstrated the need to constantly market Leisure Cards, as advised in section 7.3.

By way of contrast to Leicester's Leisure Pass membership level, in May 1996 membership of Cardiff's Passport To Leisure stood at 2,413, an increase of only 513 in the previous six months. There were no developments in the scheme until 1998. Indeed, the scheme stagnated during these two years after the initial burst of intense activity during the establishment of the pilot. There were no committee reports during this time, indicating no changes to the scheme, but also that Council Members were not receiving review



information regarding performance. The scheme was monitored internally and the database highlighted the problem of double counting involved in assessing take-up by multiple benefit claimants. Amongst the 2,413 members there were no less than 85 different combinations of benefits which members were claiming. Considering this, Table 8.2 shows that Income Support claimants were the most represented group among members (30%), followed by Housing Benefit claimants (21%), and Unemployment Benefit and Invalidity Benefit claimants (both with 15%).

**Table 8.2 Take-up by membership category of Cardiff's PTL (1996)**

|                              | Number of members | % of total membership |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Income Support               | 714               | 30                    |
| Housing Benefit              | 516               | 21                    |
| Unemployment Benefit         | 371               | 15                    |
| Invalidity Benefit           | 370               | 15                    |
| Family Credit                | 178               | 8                     |
| Incapacity Benefit           | 156               | 6                     |
| Disability Living Allowance  | 57                | 2                     |
| Invalid Care Allowance       | 25                | 1                     |
| Registered disabled          | 19                | 1                     |
| Severe Disablement Allowance | 8                 | 1                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>2413</b>       |                       |

Returning to the original estimation of target populations made in 1994 when the pilot scheme was launched, the scheme was reaching 5% of its target market after 18 months of operation, although this figure was actually slightly higher due to the double counting involved (Cardiff City Council, 1995a). However, closer analysis of the take-up rates reveals greater penetration of Housing Benefit claimants (18%) and those on Invalidity Benefit, registered disabled or claiming a disability related benefit (13%). The take-up rates for Unemployment (3%) and Income Support claimants (5%) were very low but they may have registered for the scheme as Housing Benefit claimants (see Table 8.3).



**Table 8.3 Take-up of Cardiff's PTL according to target group (1996)**

|                                | Target population                      | Take-up      | % of target population |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------|------------------------|
| Unemployed                     | 15,500                                 | 371          | 3                      |
| Income Support claimants       | 15,500*                                | 714          | 5                      |
| Invalidity Benefit claimants † | 5,100*                                 | 635          | 13                     |
| Housing Benefit                | 2,800*                                 | 515          | 18                     |
| Family Credit                  | 2,896*                                 | 178          | 6                      |
| Council Tax Benefit claimants  | In receipt of one or more of the above |              |                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>41,796</b>                          | <b>2,413</b> | <b>5</b>               |

† including those registered disabled and claiming disability related benefits

\* double counting as claimants may be receiving a combination of these benefits.

Just over a year later, in August 1997, the total number of 'live' members (i.e. those who had renewed their cards) actually fell by 260 to 2,153. However, of greater concern was the fact that this figure hid the 1,770 members who had not renewed their card, and the cumulative membership was actually 3,929. The scheme appeared to have been almost entirely neglected in 1995 and early 1996. The figures show that of the 1,439 memberships due to lapse between October 1995 and October 1996, a staggering 99.7% did so. Although some natural membership 'wastage' would be expected, only 5 renewals is extreme. There also appeared to have been no new members in this period.

It was not until February 1997 that renewals began in earnest, and the 'live' membership total of 2,153 then comprised 1,691 new members and the 462 renewals. Therefore, neglecting to ensure lapsed members renewed their cards, denied Cardiff the claim of achieving almost 50% of its target take-up of 10% after three years, albeit two years later than planned. Instead, they were left with the frustrating situation of having reached 3,929 people, but only for half of them to 'count' as live members.

The most recent review report (at the time of writing) presented to the Sports and Leisure Committee in April 1998 reported that "through a variety of advertising and marketing campaigns, the number of PTL members had increased and stood at approximately 2,700". What the report did not go on to say was that the number of members after one year of operation, four years previously was 1,900, only 800 fewer. Figures for December 1998 highlighted continuing problems for the scheme. Although by this point 5,700 people were registered in the database, this only showed the total number of people who had participated in the scheme since 1994. Of these 5,700, only 1,742 were 'live' members



with valid cards, the other 3,570 had lapsed and 388 were in the process of lapsing. Table 8.4 below shows that in terms of membership categories, only invalidity benefit and Family Credit claimants increased between 1996 and the end of 1998. The addition of 16 to 18 year olds in full-time education increased the target market still further, but the overall drop in live membership left the scheme with only a 4% take up rate.

**Table 8.4 Take-up of Cardiff's PTL: a comparison between 1996 and 1998**

| Target Group                   | Target population                      | No. of members 1996 | % Take-up 1996 | No. of members 1998 | % Take-up 1998 |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Unemployed                     | 15,500                                 | 371                 | 3              | 242                 | 2              |
| Income Support claimants       | 15,500*                                | 714                 | 5              | 640                 | 4              |
| Invalidity Benefit claimants † | 5,100*                                 | 635                 | 13             | 899                 | 18             |
| Housing Benefit                | 2,800*                                 | 515                 | 18             | 318                 | 11             |
| Family Credit                  | 2,896*                                 | 178                 | 6              | 214                 | 7              |
| Council Tax Benefit claimants  | In receipt of one or more of the above |                     |                |                     |                |
| 16-18 year olds (1998 only)    | 5,000                                  |                     |                | 124                 |                |
| Other benefit                  |  | 54                  | 2              | 67                  |                |
| <b>TOTAL 1996</b>              | <b>41,796</b>                          | <b>2,413</b>        | <b>6</b>       |                     |                |
| <b>1998</b>                    | <b>46,796</b>                          |                     |                | <b>1,742</b>        | <b>4</b>       |

† including those registered disabled and claiming disability related benefits

\* double counting as claimants may be receiving a combination of these benefits.

This highlighted the need for vigilance and thoroughness with regards to encouraging members to renew their cards. Mailshots seemed to be the most efficient and targeted form of reminder and could have easily been processed through the database system used by Cardiff. Perhaps more fundamental than this was the need to make the renewal process as easy and cheap as possible for members. Unfortunately, the renewal process at Cardiff involved repeating the initial joining procedure: going to the Post Office, taking two passport photos, proof of eligibility and £2. This seemed somewhat arduous, and the need for two more photos was an unnecessary expense. It seemed illogical to spend so much effort in signing up these people only to lose them during the renewal process.



There was general uncertainty over how well the scheme was reaching its target market amongst officers. The Client officer said that these groups were being reached, but was not sure if they were using the card. The Assistant Director indicated that “on a scale of one to ten, we are approximately half way there”. He placed the number eligible for a card at 20,000 (half the estimate made in 1994) and estimated that the scheme was reaching a quarter to a third of those, acknowledging there was “room for growth”. Although the scheme was known throughout the City, it was recognised that membership was “static, if not falling”. These were understatements: total number of eligible residents was in the region of 50,000, and therefore take-up was less than one-tenth of this, and the number of live members less than one-twentieth.

The Assistant Director went on to claim that the scheme did reach people claiming state benefits, but accepted that there were still some being denied access to sport and leisure opportunities on the basis of finance who were not in receipt of state benefits. From the take-up rate it was difficult to justify the first part of this claim, although the recognition that low income extends beyond the boundaries of benefit claimants was important.

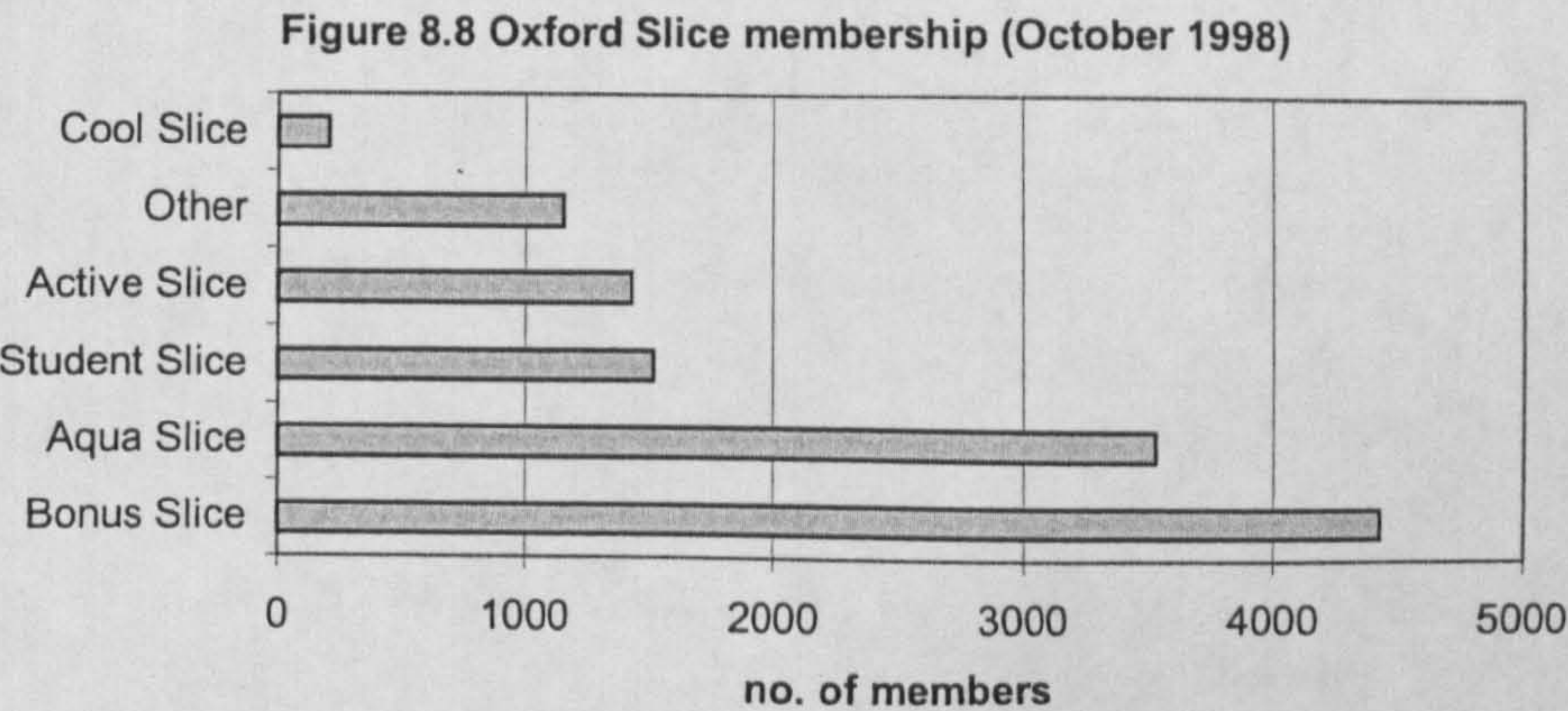
The Direct Service Operator (DSO) officers at Cardiff were more sceptical, and one was not convinced that the scheme was meeting its target market, but realised that this was difficult to prove. The other officer pointed to the fact that the card was not issued from leisure centres as a possible contributory factor to low take-up, as existing customers had to make the trip to a Post Office. More research was called for into which citizens had actually heard of the Passport To Leisure by both officers.

By contrast, and as identified in Chapter 7, Oxford’s computerised management information system made analysis of membership and use in minute detail possible. Take-up of the card exceeded all expectations. By October 1998, more than 12,000 people owned a Slice Card, with 36% of these being Bonus Slice Cards (Table 8.5 and Figure 8.8). The popularity of swimming activities was reflected in the number of Aqua Slice cardholders, comprising 29% of the total sold. Cool Slice was less popular, and the number of Student Slice cards sold was limited due to the summer vacations.



Table 8.5 Oxford Slice membership

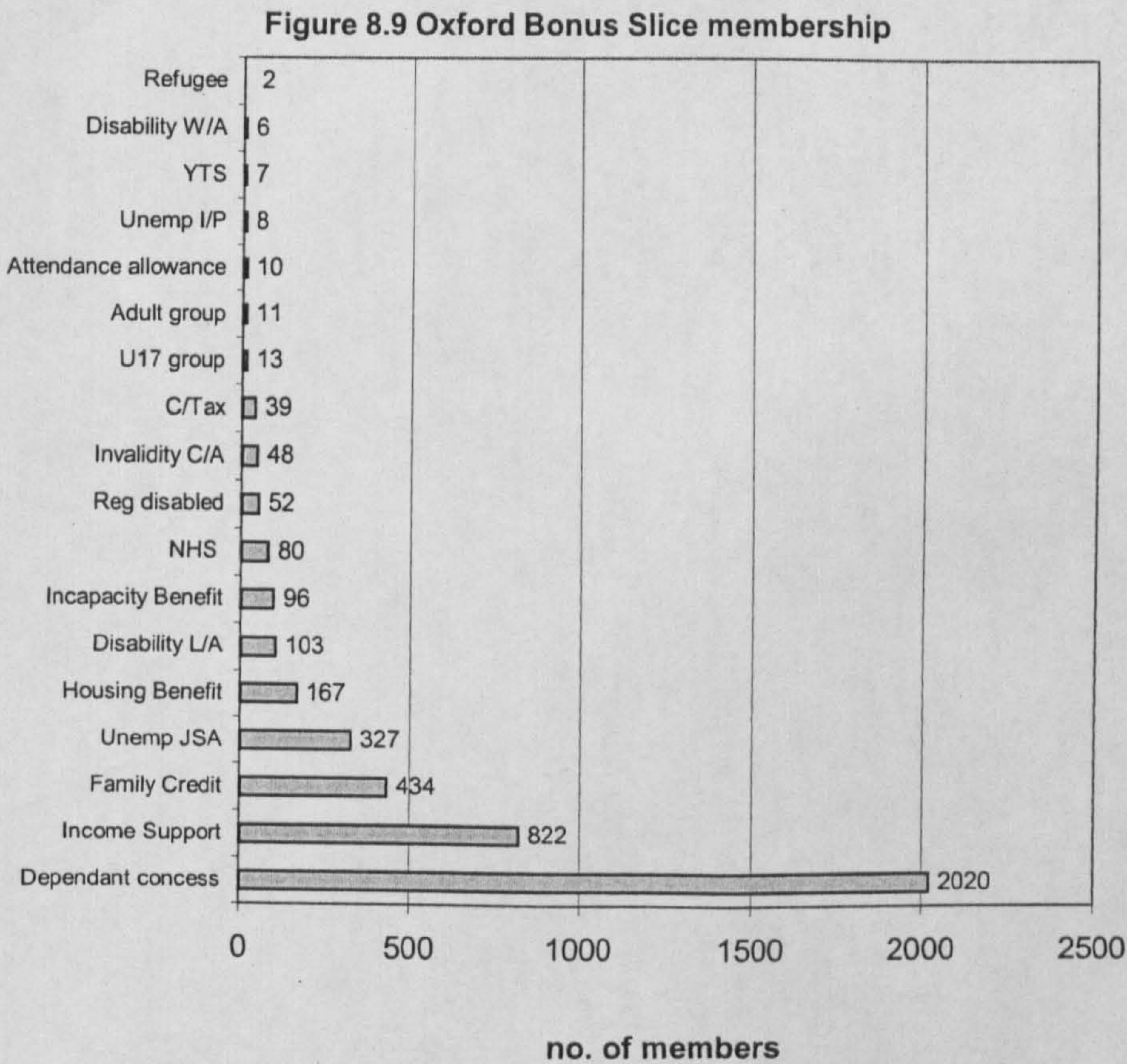
|                         | No. Members   | % Total Slice members |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Bonus Slice             | 4425          | 36                    |
| Aqua Slice              | 3529          | 29                    |
| Student Slice           | 1514          | 12                    |
| Active Slice            | 1423          | 12                    |
| Other                   | 1156          | 9                     |
| Cool Slice              | 201           | 2                     |
| <b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</b> | <b>12,248</b> |                       |



The breakdown of Bonus Slice cardholders according to category of eligibility revealed large take-up amongst dependants of people individually eligible for a card (43% of the sub-total) (Figure 8.9 AT36). Only 5% of Oxford's Income Support claimants owned a card, which was almost twice the next largest group who were Family Credit claimants. There were 161 people either registered disabled or claiming Disability Living or Work Allowance. Even with this advanced technology, there were still problems with identifying target groups due to eligibility to claim more than one benefit. However, from the estimate of 33,842 (23.9%) people in Oxford living on a low income (Gordon and Forrest, 1995), the Bonus Slice Card had already achieved a take-up rate of 13.1% in six months. It is important to re-emphasise the fact that discounts were only on offer at municipal sport and recreation facilities, which when considering national participation rates, makes this level of take-up all the more impressive. This also did not include those who were eligible for Bonus Slice but could afford Aqua or Active Slice, which had occurred relatively frequently according to the Centre Manager.



Although many of the Bonus Slice card holders were previous Recreation Card members, all of them were ‘live’, achieving three times the membership level of Cardiff in only six months.



Within the Active, Aqua and Cool Slice categories, there are various sub-categories of membership according to:

- frequency of renewal (monthly or annual);
- age (different categories for those under 17 and over 60); and
- family membership.

In addition, members aged under 17 and over 60 could renew monthly or annually. Table 8.6 shows the other types of membership (including Student Slice) which comprised specific categories for fitness room users, as well as corporate categories such as Staff Slice (for Oxford City Council staff) and employees of other companies such as the Royal Mail, Rand Information Systems etc. This highlighted a new form of cross-sector co-



operation and one which may be extended to include voluntary sector organisations such as sports clubs and associations for the disabled.

**Table 8.6 Other types of Oxford Slice membership**

|                         | <b>No. Members</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Student Slice           | 1514               |
| Staff Slice family      | 667                |
| Fitness room user U17   | 197                |
| Staff Slice wet and dry | 84                 |
| Royal Mail              | 54                 |
| Rand Info Systems       | 44                 |
| Fitness room user adult | 35                 |
| Sharp Laboratories      | 29                 |
| Sport 2000 U17          | 21                 |
| Staff Slice dry         | 12                 |
| Fitness room user 60+   | 9                  |
| Sport 2000 adult        | 3                  |
| Play scheme user        | 1                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>2670</b>        |

### 8.3 Geographic take-up

This section attempts to establish a new method to assist in the assessment of the performance of Leisure Card Schemes in achieving social objectives, based on geographic take-up of cards. As the previous two sections have shown, measuring take-up by particular groups is difficult due to double counting and uncertainty over the number of people eligible for a Leisure Card. The following method will show how Leisure Cards can demonstrate penetration into areas of deprivation within local authorities.

At the end of 1999, the number of cardholders in sectoral postcodes (e.g. LE1 2AB) was requested from Leicester's Leisure Pass (16,215) and Oxford's Bonus Slice Card (5,449) in order to demonstrate the method of analysis. Cardiff's Passport To Leisure membership was regarded as too low in comparison with the size of the authority to make the analysis worthwhile for this study. In addition, the Welsh Office used a different index which did not go below the ward level to Enumeration Districts (see Appendix I). All of the postcodes for Leicester and Oxford (in excess of 6,000 for each authority) were then entered into the MIMAS database and converted into Enumeration Districts using the



specialised PC2ED program. This was a very labour intensive activity involving the manipulation of thousands of pieces of data. Enumeration Districts, as discussed in Chapter 2, are the smallest geographic areas which Census data is available; there are more than 180,000 in England alone.

Each postcode sector therefore contained a certain number of Enumeration Districts. The DETR 1998 Index of Local Deprivation, which produced an index for every Enumeration District in England, was then used to calculate an index of deprivation for each sectoral postcode (which will be called the Postcode Deprivation Index). An example of this calculation is provided below using Table 8.6. The higher the index score is above zero, the more deprived the area was; the further below zero, the less deprived it was.

**Table 8.6 Calculating the Postcode Deprivation Index**

| <b>POSTCODE: OX3 0</b> |                      |                      |                                    |                              |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>EDs</b>             | <b>WARD</b>          | <b>INDEX<br/>(I)</b> | <b>NO. EDs in<br/>postcode (X)</b> | <b>I multiplied<br/>by X</b> |
| PQFE10                 | Headington           | -4.62                | 9                                  | -41.58                       |
| PQFE12                 | Headington           | -1.33                | 5                                  | -6.65                        |
| PQFE13                 | Headington           | -1.05                | 1                                  | -1.05                        |
| PQFH02                 | Marston              | -3.12                | 5                                  | -15.60                       |
| PQFH04                 | Marston              | 0.74                 | 10                                 | 7.40                         |
| PQFH05                 | Marston              | -2.21                | 13                                 | -28.73                       |
| PQFH06                 | Marston              | -1.67                | 6                                  | -10.02                       |
| PQFH07                 | Marston              | -2.22                | 31                                 | -68.82                       |
| PQFH08                 | Marston              | -0.81                | 11                                 | -8.91                        |
| PQFH09                 | Marston              | -3.28                | 13                                 | -42.64                       |
| PQFH10                 | Marston              | 1.18                 | 10                                 | 11.80                        |
| PQFH11                 | Marston              | -2.61                | 6                                  | -15.66                       |
| PQFH12                 | Marston              | -0.57                | 14                                 | -7.98                        |
| PQFK01                 | Old Marston & Rising | 0.75                 | 11                                 | 8.25                         |
| PQFK02                 | Old Marston & Rising | -0.36                | 10                                 | -3.60                        |
| PQFK03                 | Old Marston & Rising | -4.14                | 13                                 | -53.82                       |
| PQFK04                 | Old Marston & Rising | -5.90                | 13                                 | -76.70                       |
| PQFK05                 | Old Marston & Rising | -6.08                | 15                                 | -91.2                        |
| PQFK06                 | Old Marston & Rising | -0.17                | 12                                 | -2.04                        |
| PQFK07                 | Old Marston & Rising | -4.19                | 17                                 | -71.23                       |
| PQFL01                 | Quarry               | 0.78                 | 2                                  | 1.56                         |
| PQFL06                 | Quarry               | -0.17                | 1                                  | -0.17                        |
| PQFM02                 | St Clement's         | 2.03                 | 6                                  | 12.18                        |
| PQFM18                 | St Clement's         | 4.61                 | 1                                  | 4.61                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           |                      | <b>-34.41</b>        | <b>(ΣX)<br/>235</b>                | <b>(ΣIX)<br/>-500.6</b>      |



| Postcode | Postcode Deprivation Index | No. cardholders |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| OX3 0    | -2.13                      | 202             |

The formula employed to calculate the Postcode Deprivation Index was:  $\frac{\sum (I \times X)}{\sum X}$

All sectoral postcodes for Leicester and Oxford therefore had a PDI and a total number of cardholders (see Table 8.7). The Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient was used to test the level of correlation between level of deprivation and the number of cardholders.

Table 8.7 Postcode Index of Deprivation and number of cardholders: Leicester

| LEICESTER   |       |                 |          |       |                 |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|----------|-------|-----------------|
| Postcode    | PID*  | No. cardholders | Postcode | PID*  | No. cardholders |
| LE1 2       | 7,47  | 159             | LE3 9    | 1,49  | 866             |
| LE1 5,6,7** | 6,23  | 118             | LE4 0    | 0,12  | 902             |
| LE2 0       | 6,07  | 457             | LE4 1    | -1,57 | 273             |
| LE2 1       | 2,56  | 494             | LE4 2    | 2,99  | 624             |
| LE2 2       | -1,90 | 178             | LE4 5    | 2,06  | 683             |
| LE2 3       | -3,44 | 547             | LE4 6    | 3,60  | 1019            |
| LE2 6       | 1,93  | 839             | LE4 7    | -0,82 | 848             |
| LE2 7       | 4,97  | 184             | LE4 9    | -1,9  | 282             |
| LE2 8       | -1,15 | 759             | LE5 0    | 2,98  | 409             |
| LE2 9       | 2,44  | 632             | LE5 1    | -0,96 | 646             |
| LE3 0       | 0,74  | 440             | LE5 2    | -0,19 | 833             |
| LE3 1       | 4,31  | 645             | LE5 3    | 3,52  | 422             |
| LE3 2       | -1,54 | 232             | LE5 4    | 2,05  | 793             |
| LE3 5       | 0,68  | 285             | LE5 5    | 0,57  | 692             |
| LE3 6       | 0,08  | 752             | LE5 6    | -3,53 | 923             |
| LE3 8       | 3,47  | 31              |          |       |                 |

\* Postcode Index of Deprivation

\*\*LE1 5,6,7 were joined due to the overlapping of all three postcodes in one area

Table 8.7, shows the PDI and number of cardholders per sectoral postcode for Leicester. Spearman’s rank produced no correlation with a correlation co-efficient of 0.12 (N=31 indicating that there was no clear distinction between take-up of Leicester’s Leisure Pass in deprived or less deprived areas.

Using the map in Figure 8.10 it was possible to show the deprivation data for wards and the number of cardholders per sectoral postcode. Postcode boundaries were not included in



Figure 8.10 due to the confusion caused by overlapping and the limited size of map that could be fitted onto these pages. Therefore, deprivation is shown according to wards using the DETR Index (1998). Postcodes are indicated on the map according to their approximate location, and the number of cardholders is shown in italics underneath. It must be stressed that Figures 8.10 and 8.11 are designed to provide an overall impression of take-up of Leisure Cards according to areas of deprivation, and as explained below, leisure officers can make more use of the detailed statistics and larger scale maps showing postcode boundaries, PIDs and take-up figures.

Leicester was ranked as the 32<sup>nd</sup> most deprived authority in England on the DETR Index of Local Conditions, achieving positive scores on all twelve indicators (see Appendix I). Oxford was ranked 147<sup>th</sup> on the same index with only three positive indicator scores. According to the percentage of Enumeration Districts in Leicester that were amongst the worst 7% in England, Leicester ranked 35<sup>th</sup> and Oxford leaped to 77<sup>th</sup> indicating pockets of high level deprivation within the authority.

Figure 8.10 shows that the least deprived wards in Leicester were located to the South and South East of the City (Evington, East Knighton, West Knighton and Saffron). The least deprived postcodes were also located in these areas; LE 2 3 in East Knighton and West Knighton, and LE5 6 in Evington. Take-up was high for these two postcodes, as well as in LE2 6 (West Knighton) and LE2 8 (Aylestone/Saffron). Moreover, take-up was high in other areas of relative affluence, particularly in Western Park, Abbey and Rushey Mead (LE3 6; LE3 9; LE4 7). The most deprived areas were in the centre of the city, the North (apart from Rushey Mead) and the outlying Western wards and had lower levels of take-up. LE4 6 which included Latimer and Belgrave had the highest take-up (1,109), and was located in one of the most deprived wards after Wycliffe and North Braunstone. Therefore certain pockets of deprivation were being reached by Leisure Pass. This level of take-up may have been due to the proximity of Cossington Sport Centre and Spence Street Sport Centre. Despite this, the even distribution of facilities across the city meant that no areas especially lacked provision. From this analysis there was a clear need to increase take-up in the more deprived areas, especially Wycliffe and Charnwood in the city centre and the peripheral areas of Beaumont Leys, West Humberstone and Rowley Fields.



Figure 8.10 Geographic take-up of Leicester's Leisure Pass

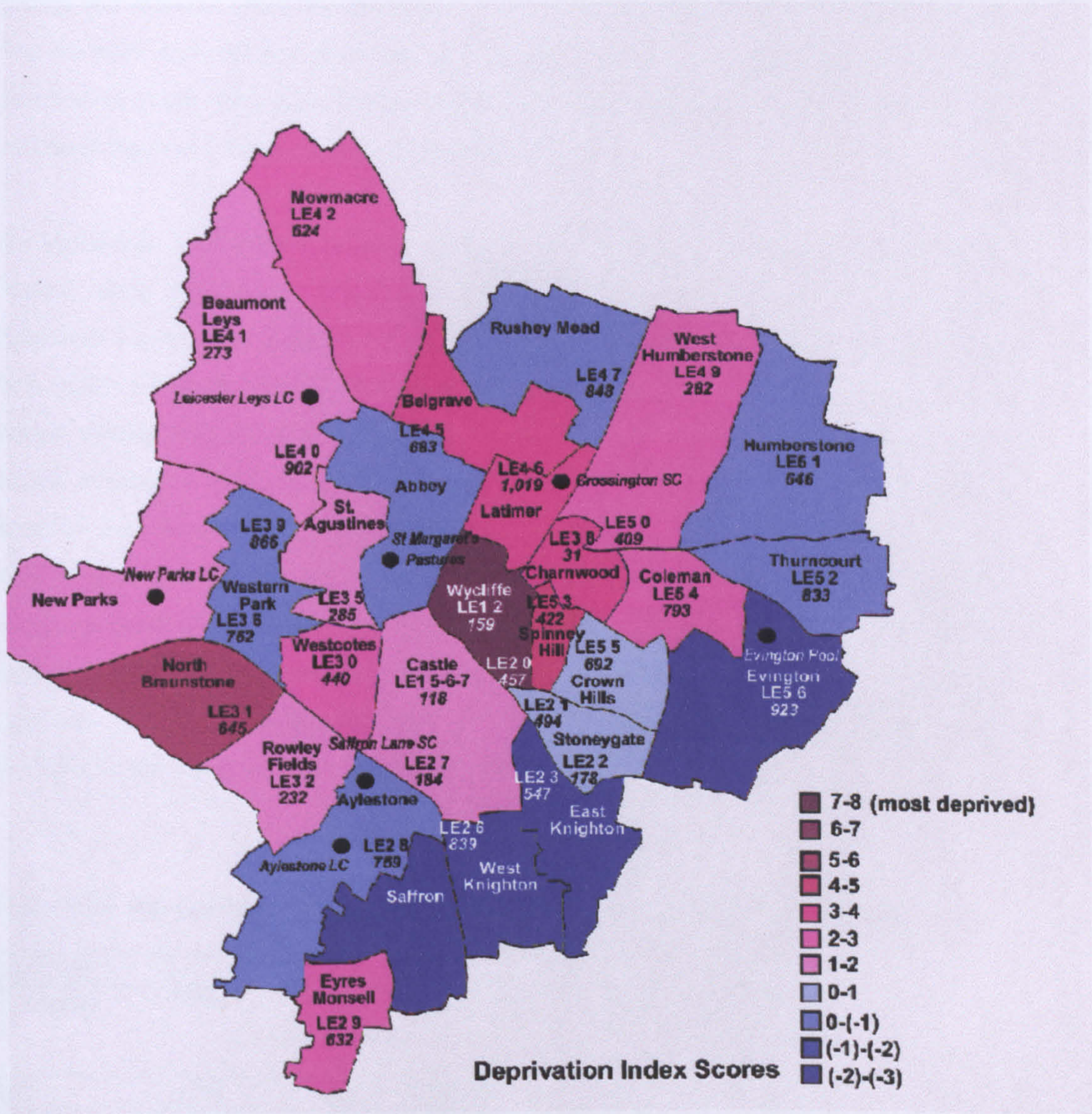




Figure 8.11 shows that the South of Oxford was more deprived than the North, with Old Rising and Marston being the least deprived ward. St. Clements', in the centre of the city, was the most deprived and Blackbird Leys, a large housing estate, represented a pocket of deprivation in the south east of the city. There was less difference between the most (5.03) and least deprived (-2.52) wards in Oxford than Leicester.

No significant correlation was found between the PID and the number of cardholders in Oxford using the data in Table 8.8. A score of -0.13 (N=17) was obtained using Spearman's rank order indicating no correlation between take-up and level of deprivation. The results for Oxford were, however, slightly skewed because of the large proportion of people owning cards in OX4 5, Blackbird Leys (1,344), in the catchment area of the sports centre, although it did have a PID of 3.43 demonstrating high take-up of Bonus Slice in a deprived area. However, the take-up of Bonus Slice cards was very low in the southern wards which were as deprived as Blackbird Leys. The postcodes located in the wards of West and South (OX1 1; OX1 2; OX2 0) only had a total of 181 Bonus Slice cardholders. Indeed, St Clements, the most deprived ward in the City, shared the postcode OX4 1 which only had 367 Bonus Slice cardholders. Therefore, Bonus Slice take-up needed to be increased in the wards of West, South, St Clements, East and Central.

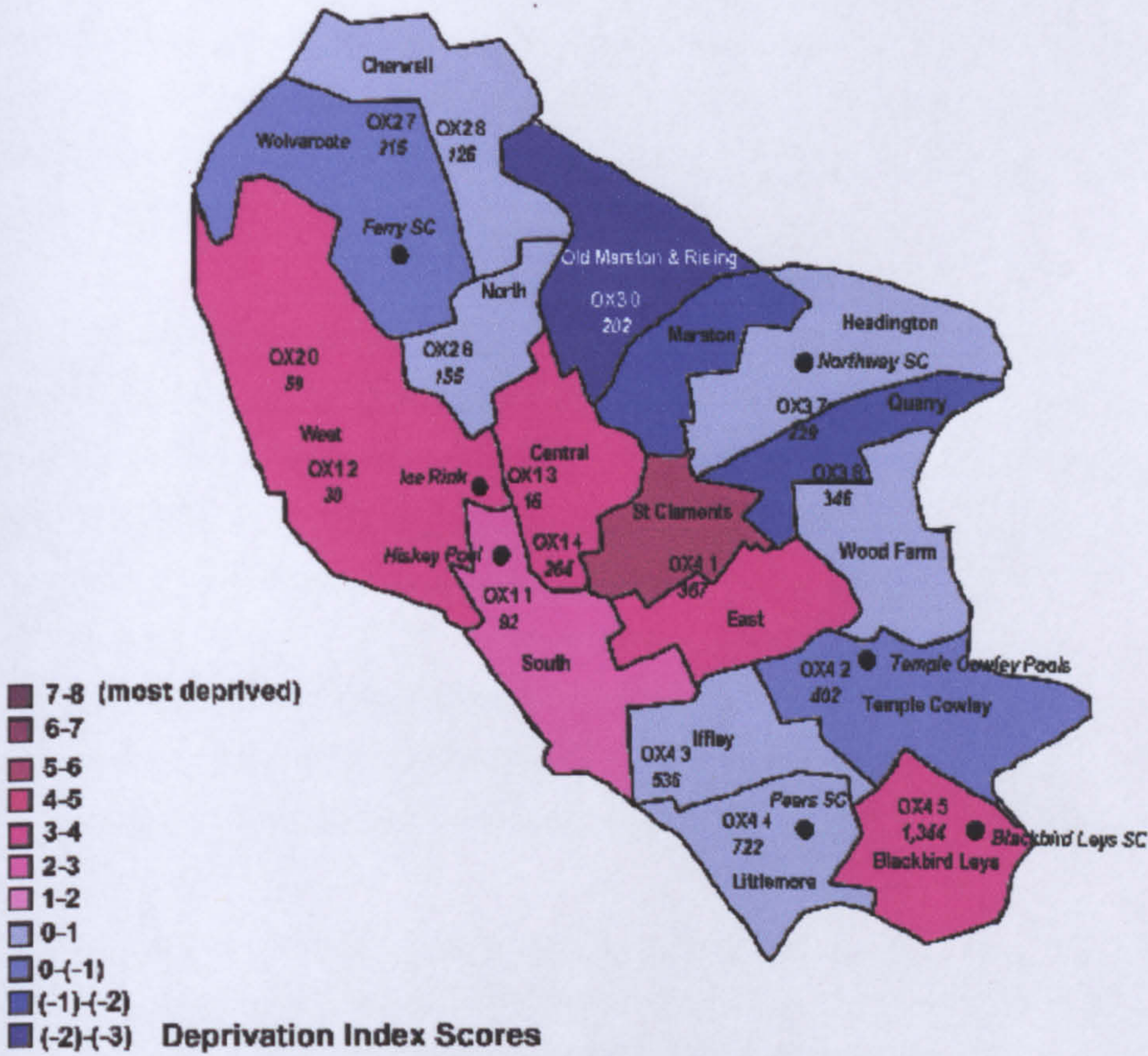
Table 8.8 Postcode Index of Deprivation and number of cardholders: Oxford

| OXFORD   |       |                     |          |       |                     |
|----------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------|---------------------|
| Postcode | PID*  | No. cardholder<br>s | Postcode | PID*  | No. cardholder<br>s |
| OX1 1    | 3,79  | 92                  | OX3 7    | -1,23 | 229                 |
| OX1 2    | 2,95  | 30                  | OX3 8    | -0,62 | 346                 |
| OX1 3    | 4,29  | 16                  | OX3 9    | -0,33 | 344                 |
| OX1 4    | 3,76  | 264                 | OX4 1    | 4,23  | 367                 |
| OX2 0    | 2,61  | 59                  | OX4 2    | -,39  | 402                 |
| OX2 6    | 1,75  | 155                 | OX4 3    | 0,08  | 536                 |
| OX2 7    | -0,51 | 215                 | OX4 4    | 0,76  | 722                 |
| OX2 8    | -1,69 | 126                 | OX4 5    | 3,43  | 1344                |
| OX3 0    | -2,13 | 202                 |          |       |                     |

\* Postcode Index of Deprivation



Figure 8.11 Geographic take-up of Oxford's Bonus Slice Card





However, what is not accurately reflected in these statistics is the acute pockets of deprivation which existed within areas that were not defined as deprived. The maps show to some extent that poor people and more affluent people often lived side by side. For example, the Beaumont Leys ward in Leicester contained an Enumeration District that had one of the lowest DETR deprivation index scores in the City at -6.02, while another Enumeration District in the same ward had one of the highest scores at 7.81. Identifying these small pockets of deprivation could be achieved if officers used detailed maps of Enumeration Districts showing indices of deprivation, postcode boundaries (to show the number of cardholders) and the streets they cover.

Indeed, this measure provides an easily operational (when the conversion of postcodes to Enumeration Districts has been completed) and visible means of showing whether or not Leisure Cards were being taken up in areas of deprivation. Card operators should aim to improve the correlation between PID and number of cardholders which could be achieved by targeting marketing activities in specific areas e.g.:

- ☐ direct mailing;
- ☐ door to door awareness raising and signing-up;
- ☐ one-stop shops for signing-up in neighbourhood/community centres; and
- ☐ market to community groups e.g. for women, ethnic minorities, elderly people.

With more advanced database systems such as Oxford's, monitoring of use of facilities and activities by groups in and outside of catchment areas could also be undertaken. In terms of monitoring customer satisfaction, this geographic analysis could also be used to formulate samples for surveys and focus groups. Indeed, focus groups could also be located in areas with high levels of deprivation. This may lead to area specific initiatives; for example if a deprived neighbourhood is located a long way from a facility, free or low cost transport may be provided. This customer feedback may also provide suggestions for what commercial and voluntary sector discounts should be included in certain locations, especially if the area is isolated on the outskirts of a town or is rural. These are all important considerations for operators under the requirements of Best Value.

Moreover, for multi-tiered schemes this type of geographic analysis can be extended to all user groups e.g. Active Slice, Aqua Slice and Cool Slice for Oxford, especially in areas of low take up, for marketing and monitoring purposes.

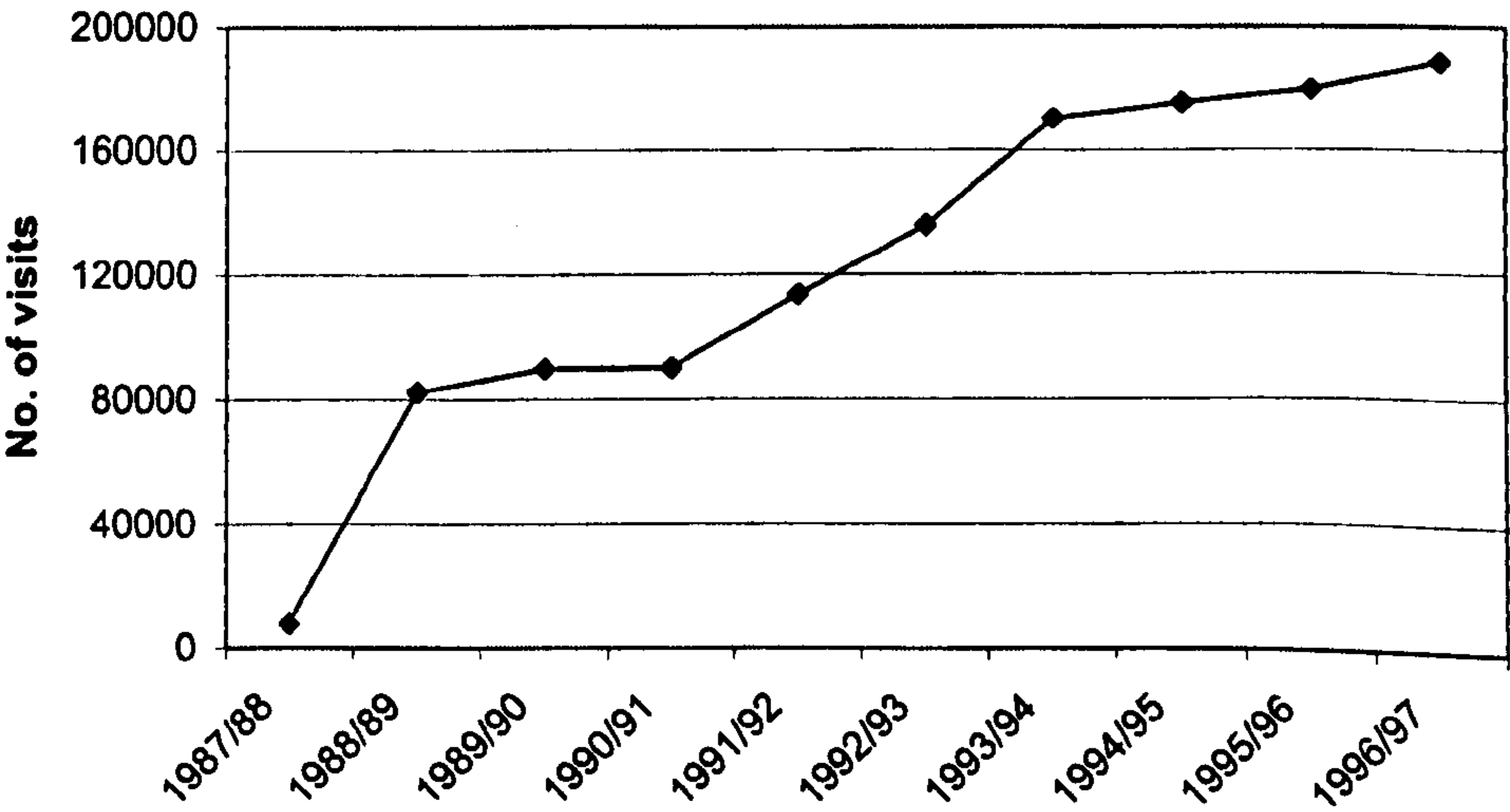


### 8.4 Use of Leisure Cards

Take-up does not equal use; many people may treat their card as an occasional convenience, like the millions of bikes stored in British houses and garden sheds that are not used. From the national survey respondents, only 5,600 of Manchester's 120,000 residents' cards were used regularly but in Swansea 42% of members used their card weekly; cardholders were 68% of Coventry Sports Centre users but 38% of another leisure centre in the city. The case studies provided a more detailed insight into card use.

The Assistant Director believed that Leicester's Leisure Pass was meeting its social objectives through the high level of membership, admitting that it was difficult to translate this into use. According to him, the emphasis of the scheme should now be "not how many people have a Leisure Pass (but) how many people use their Leisure Pass". He was completely willing to accept a drop in membership in exchange for increase in usage, a trend which was already evident within the scheme (Figure 8.11 AT37). After a continuous increase in use inline with growing membership, from 1993/4 use of leisure centres by cardholders levelled out to between 16,000 and 19,000 visits per year.

**Figure 8.11 Use of sports centres by Leicester's Leisure Pass members 1987/88 - 1998/9**



The aim of increasing usage by existing members appeared to have been partly successful, with the average number of visits per member increasing from 5.2 to 6.5 a year (see Table



8.9). Moreover, 26% of respondents to the customer survey had tried a new activity since getting a Leisure Pass.

**Table 8.9 Changing use by Leicester Leisure Pass members according to average number of visits per year 1992/3-1996/7**

|        | % increase on previous year | Average visit per member (annual) |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1996/7 | 5                           | 6.5                               |
| 1995/6 | 2                           | 6                                 |
| 1994/5 | 3                           | 5.5                               |
| 1993/4 | 26                          | 6                                 |
| 1992/3 | 19                          | 5.2                               |

The customer survey also revealed that 60% used municipal sports centres, 77% of those used them at least once a week or 2-3 times a month (Table 8.10). This demonstrated the sport and recreation orientation of the card.

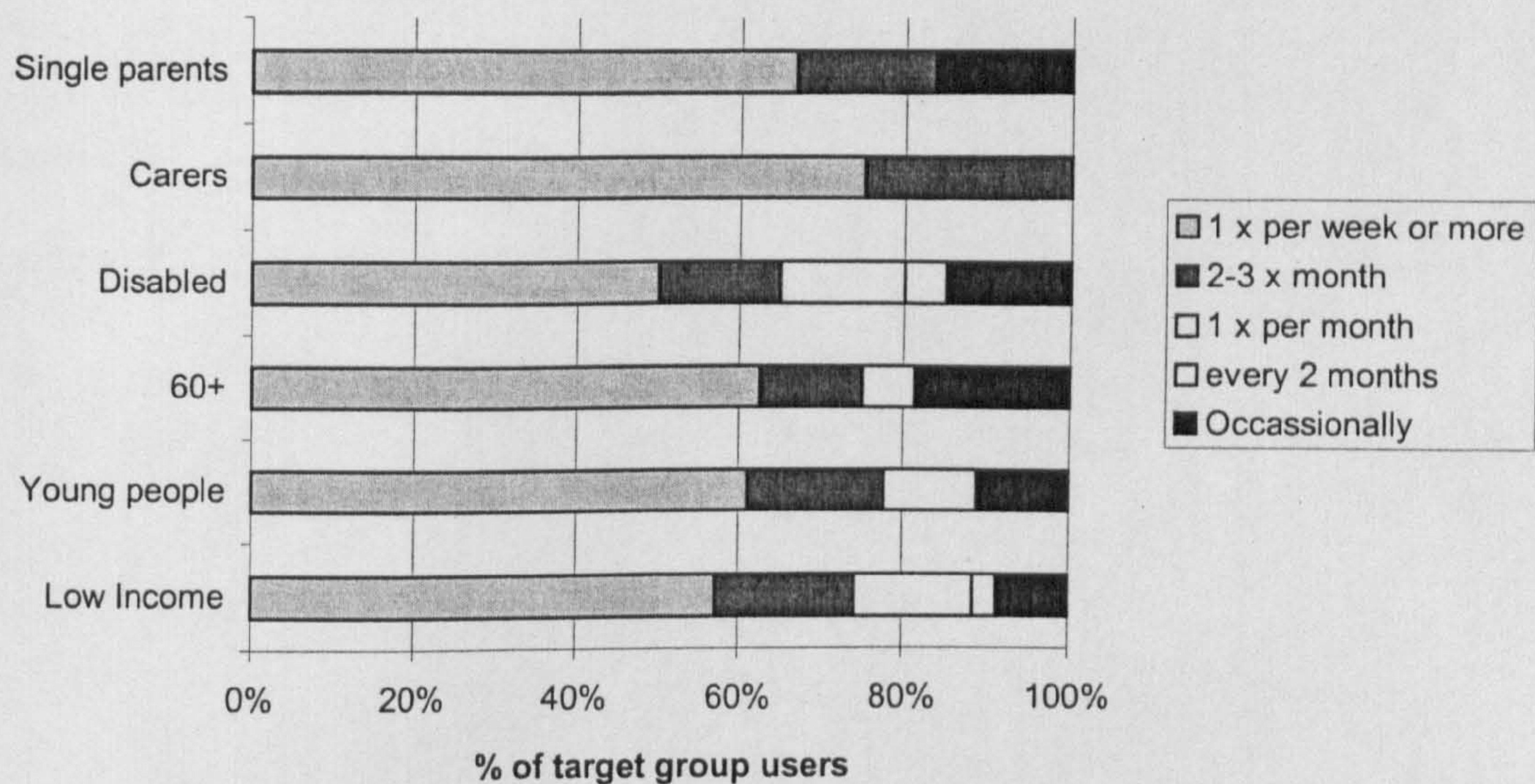
**Table 8.10 Frequency of use of municipal sports facilities according to membership category (Leicester)**

|                | 1 x per week or more |    | 2-3 x month |    | 1 x per month |   | every 2 months |   | Occass- ionally |    |
|----------------|----------------------|----|-------------|----|---------------|---|----------------|---|-----------------|----|
|                | n                    | %  | n           | %  | n             | % | n              | % | n               | %  |
| Low Income     | 39                   | 20 | 11          | 6  | 9             | 5 | 2              | 1 | 6               | 3  |
| Young people   | 21                   | 11 | 5           | 3  | 3             | 2 | -              | - | 4               | 2  |
| 60+            | 19                   | 10 | 3           | 2  | 1             | 1 | -              | - | 5               | 3  |
| Disabled       | 19                   | 10 | 6           | 3  | 5             | 3 | 1              | 1 | 6               | 3  |
| Carers         | 6                    | 3  | 1           | 1  | -             | - | -              | - | -               | -  |
| Single parents | 16                   | 8  | 3           | 2  | -             | - | -              | - | 4               | 2  |
| TOTAL          | 120                  | 62 | 29          | 15 | 18            | 9 | 3              | 2 | 25              | 13 |

Low income members made most frequent use of sports facilities with 20% attending at least once a week (Figure 8.12). Proportional to their domination of overall membership, those aged over 60 used facilities most infrequently. There was an encouraging number of single parents and disabled people using the facilities frequently, both of whom were under-represented in overall membership figures.

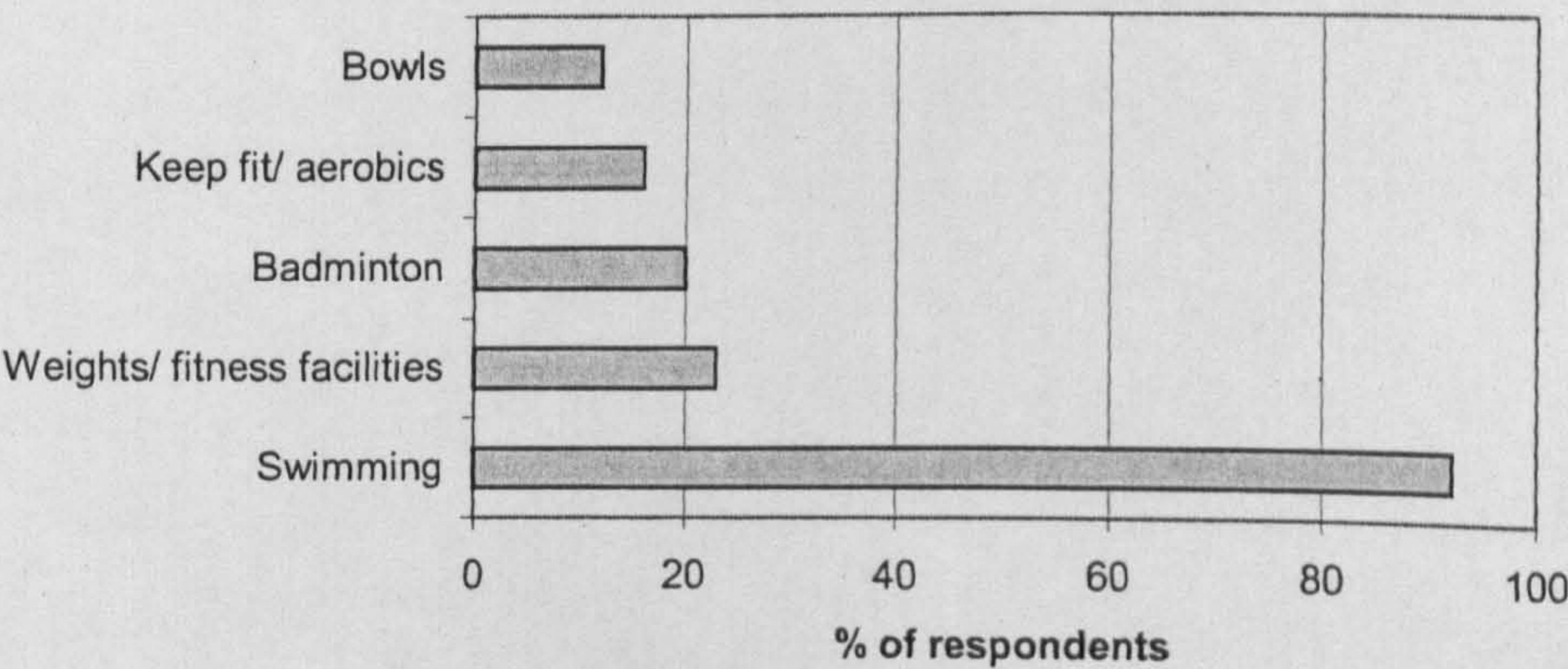


Figure 8.12 Frequency of use of municipal sports facilities according to membership category (Leicester)



As expected, and illustrated in Figure 8.13 (AT38), swimming was the most popular activity for Leisure Pass holders attending municipal sports facilities (92%). Weight training, fitness and badminton were significantly less popular and this may have been due to relative expense of not only the charge for participating, but also the associated costs of equipment.

Figure 8.13 Most popular municipal sports activities participated in by Leicester Leisure Pass holders





Cultural activities and facilities were second to municipal sports facilities in terms of use by Leisure Pass members. Libraries (59%, museums (53%), cinema (43%), the three theatres (40%; 40%; 17%) were all popular activities among members (Table 8.11). Of those using the libraries, 98% borrowed books, 34% borrowed sound recordings, 26% borrowed videos. Of the 52% that visited museums, 90% of these to visit exhibits; 30% to attend events; 14% to attend concerts.

**Table 8.11 Overall use of facilities and activities included in the Leisure Pass scheme**

|                             | % of respondents |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Municipal Sports Facilities | 92%              |
| Libraries                   | 59%              |
| Museums                     | 53%              |
| Odeon Cinema                | 43%              |
| DeMontfort Hall             | 40%              |
| The Haymarket Theatre       | 40%              |
| Bonfire Night (Abbey Park)  | 27%              |
| Twycross Zoo                | 23%              |
| Funfair (summer only)       | 21%              |
| The Little Theatre          | 17%              |
| Farmworld                   | 16%              |
| Leicester City FC           | 12%              |
| Hollywood Bowl              | 11%              |
| Neighbourhood Centres       | 9%               |
| Humberstone Golf Club       | 6%               |
| Western Golf Course         | 3%               |

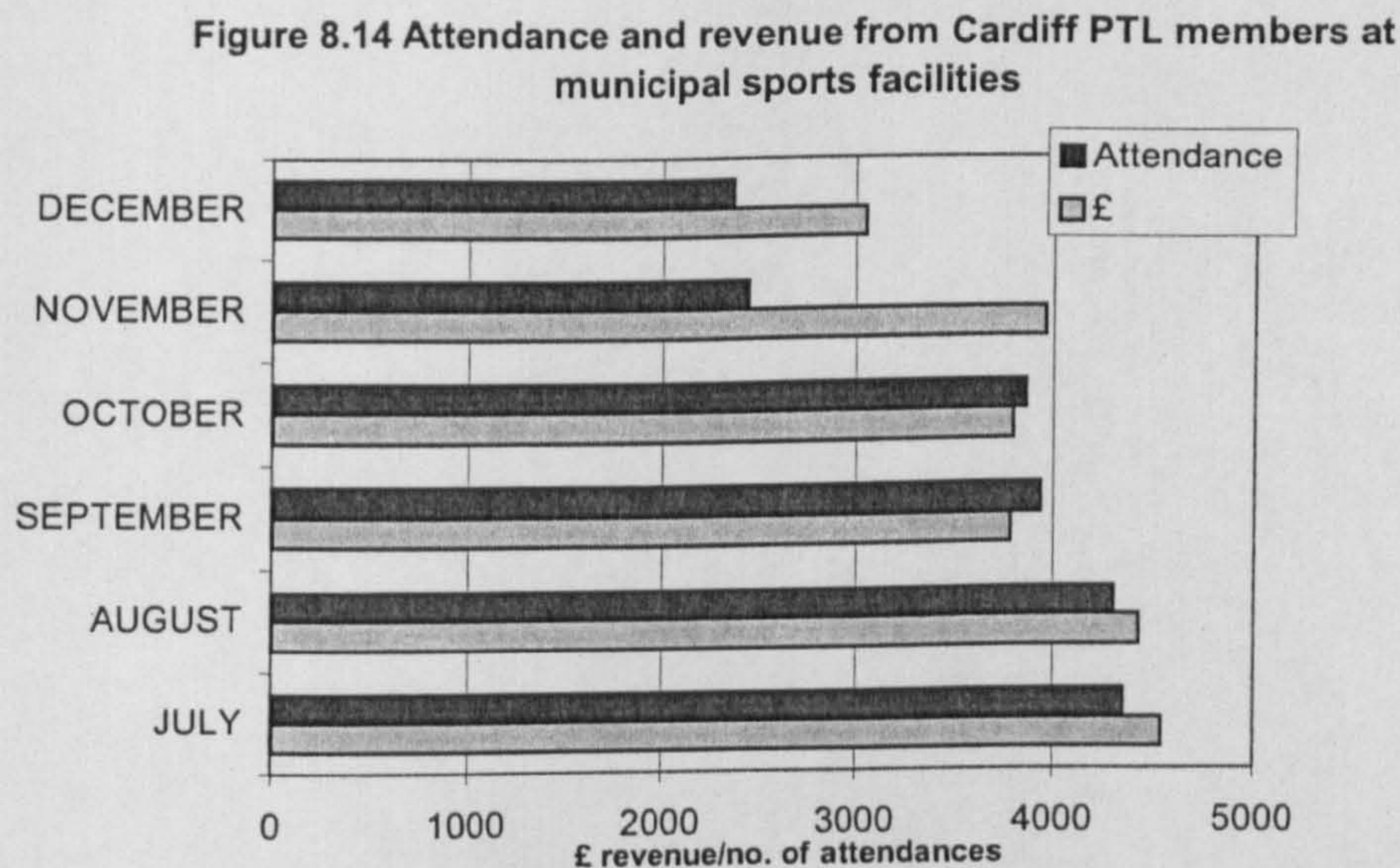
The Odeon cinema was the most popular commercial facility, and when asked which new discounts should be introduced to the scheme, the most popular response was to include other cinemas. The top 5 commercial activities are shown in Table 8.12.

**Table 8.12 Top 5 activities in Leicester' Leisure Pass scheme**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Odeon cinema  | - one showing a week, saving £60 a year |
| 2. Theatres<br>(De Montfort; Haymarket; Little; Phoenix) | - saving £15 a year                     |
| 3. Swimming (all municipal pools)                        | - one swim a week, saving £50 a year    |
| 4. Leicester City FC                                     | - season ticket, saving £125 a year     |
| 5. Twycross Zoo  | - saving £1 per adult ticket            |



Use of facilities by Cardiff Passport To Leisure members was difficult to ascertain and monitoring was done according to the amount of money the Client was required to reimburse the Contractor and limited data was available. There were two contracts and Figure 8.14 (AT39 and AT40) shows attendance and the cost to the Client for the three month period from July to September 1997.



\* attendance calculated from averages from the previous three months for Llanishen Leisure Centre.  
\*\*attendances from October to December calculated from averages from the previous three months for all facilities.

Use at Llanishen Leisure Centre by cardholders was almost double any of the other facilities, whilst use at Heath Sports centre (which is a small hall) and Splott Pool was below 100 visits per month. The total subsidy for six months of use by cardholders was £21,789.55 from 23,006 visits which enables an estimation of the annual cost to be around £45,000 from 45,000 to 50,000 visits at £1 per visit. This was a considerable number of visits from such a small number of card holders, an average of around 20 visits a year per member. It was not possible to identify if this use was off-peak or not, as cardholders could use the facilities at a discounted rate at any time of the day.

However, it would be reasonable to assume that off-peak capacity would be filled to some extent just from the sheer volume of visits. Usage was almost twice as high in August and September as in December, indicating the need for seasonal marketing of activities. Despite these figures, one DSO officer claimed that neither income nor usage have increased, although admitting that this was very hard to judge.



From these figures it is also possible to calculate the average amount spent per visit by PTL holders at each facility, not including additional spending on refreshments, travel etc. Nevertheless, a typical spend of under £1 per visit is very cheap (Table 8.13). The exception is the Wales Empire Pool which was relatively expensive at £1.96 per visit, but now has been demolished as part of the construction of the Millennium Stadium.

**Table 8.13 Average amount spent on activity participation by Cardiff PTL members at municipal sports facilities July-December 1997**

| Average amount spent by PTL holders |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Pentwyn LC                          | £0.93 |
| Llanishen LC                        | £0.94 |
| Fairwater LC                        | £0.92 |
| Western LC                          | £0.96 |
| Eastern LC                          | £0.94 |
| Maindy Pool                         | £0.77 |
| Heath Sports Centre                 | £0.93 |
| Splott Pool                         | £0.81 |
| Wales Empire Pool                   | £1.96 |
| Cardiff Athletics Stadium           | £0.91 |

The management information system at Oxford enabled monitoring of use down to the number of swipes in any hour, in any activity, to identify the exact users, and across any variables contained on the database. Usage data was obtained for August 1998, and aims to provide an demonstration of the capabilities of the database system, as well as giving an overview of usage patterns after three months of operation.

Table 8.14 and Figure 8.15 below show use at four facilities in Oxford segregated according to type of Slice Card. The level of use varied according to the type of facility, for example, the Temple Cowley Pool had no sports hall and so Aqua Slice users obviously dominated, and the same was true of Cool Slice use of the Ice Rink. Blackbird Leys Sports Centre had no pool, therefore Aqua Slice use was virtually non-existent. Bonus Slice cardholders used the sports facilities much less than other card types. Indeed, the total number of swipes by Bonus Slice cardholders was less than half that of Aqua Slice cardholders, and 60 swipes fewer than Active Slice cardholders of whom there were 3,002 fewer members. Indeed, Aqua Slice cardholders averaged 2.6 and Active Slice 3.1 swipes per member, whilst Bonus Slice cardholders averaged 1.0 swipe per member each month.

This indicated that Aqua and Active Slice cardholders were more regular users than their Bonus Slice counterparts. This may indicate that although the prices of the activities themselves were lower, the associated costs of participating such as transport and secondary spending, were still barriers. There was also less use of Blackbird Leys Sports

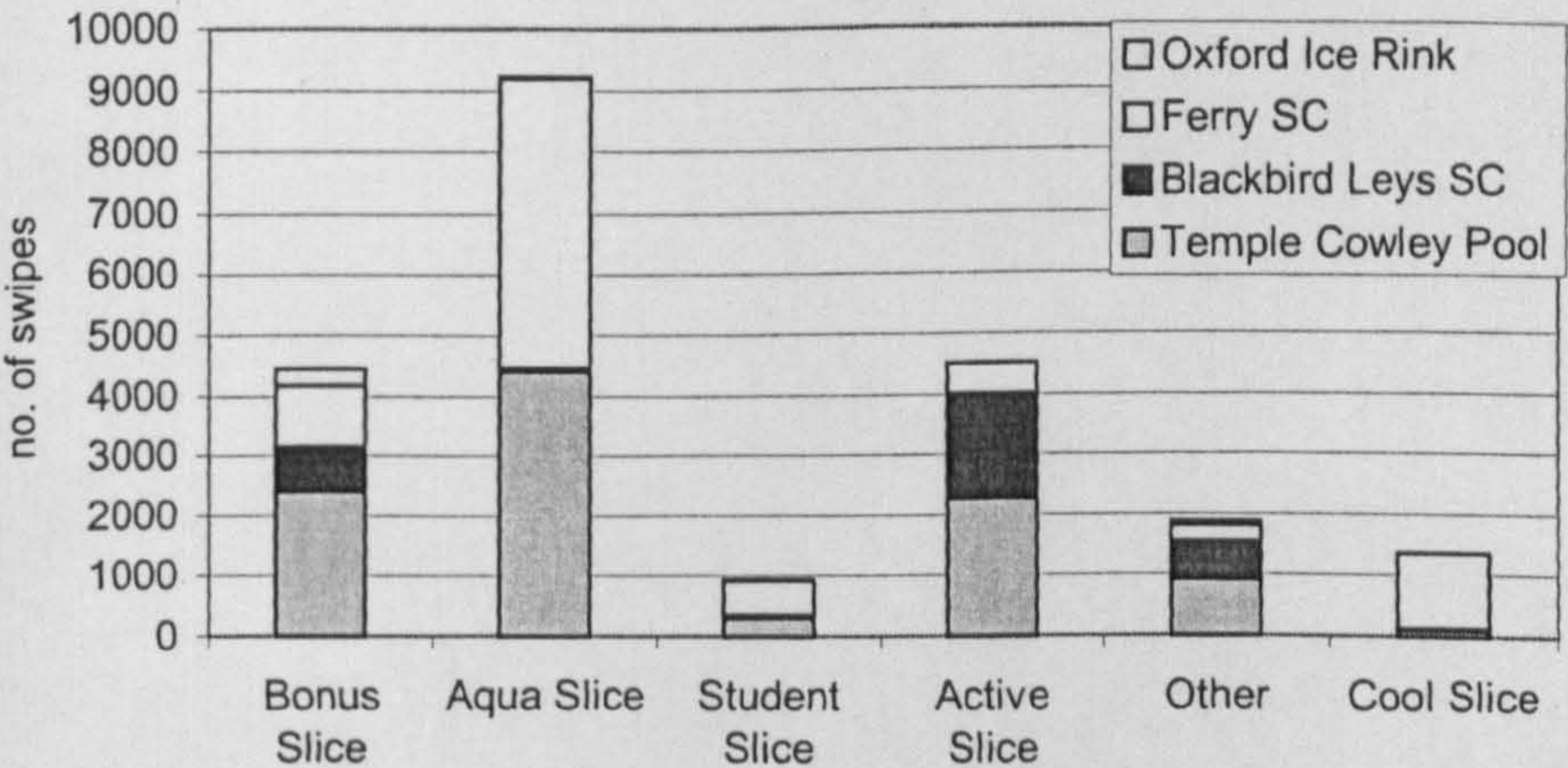


Centre than Ferry Sports Centre by Bonus Slice cardholders, whilst the reverse was true for Active Slice cardholders who used Blackbird Leys three times more often, but this might be related to the lack of a pool there. Section 8.3 revealed that 25% of all Bonus Slice cardholder lived in the Blackbird Leys area, which means that most of them appeared to be travelling to Temple Cowley Pools. This suggested that Bonus Slice cardholders were swimmers.

Table 8.14 Oxford Slice and Non Slice use at four facilities (August 1998)

|                    | Temple<br>Cowley Pool | Blackbird<br>Leys SC | Ferry SC | Oxford Ice<br>Rink | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------|--------------------|-------|
| Bonus Slice        | 2418                  | 740                  | 1012     | 288                | 4458  |
| Aqua Slice         | 4405                  | 73                   | 4728     | 40                 | 9246  |
| Student Slice      | 314                   | 55                   | 559      | 9                  | 937   |
| Active Slice       | 2295                  | 1712                 | 508      | 3                  | 4518  |
| Other              | 923                   | 626                  | 258      | 80                 | 1887  |
| Cool Slice         | 117                   | 15                   | 21       | 1211               | 1364  |
| Total Slice<br>use | 10472                 | 3221                 | 7086     | 1631               | 22410 |
| Non members<br>use | 9121                  | 1176                 | 7551     | 7135               | 24983 |
| Total use          | 19593                 | 4397                 | 14637    | 8766               | 47393 |

Figure 8.15 Oxford Slice use by membership category at 4 facilities (for one month)

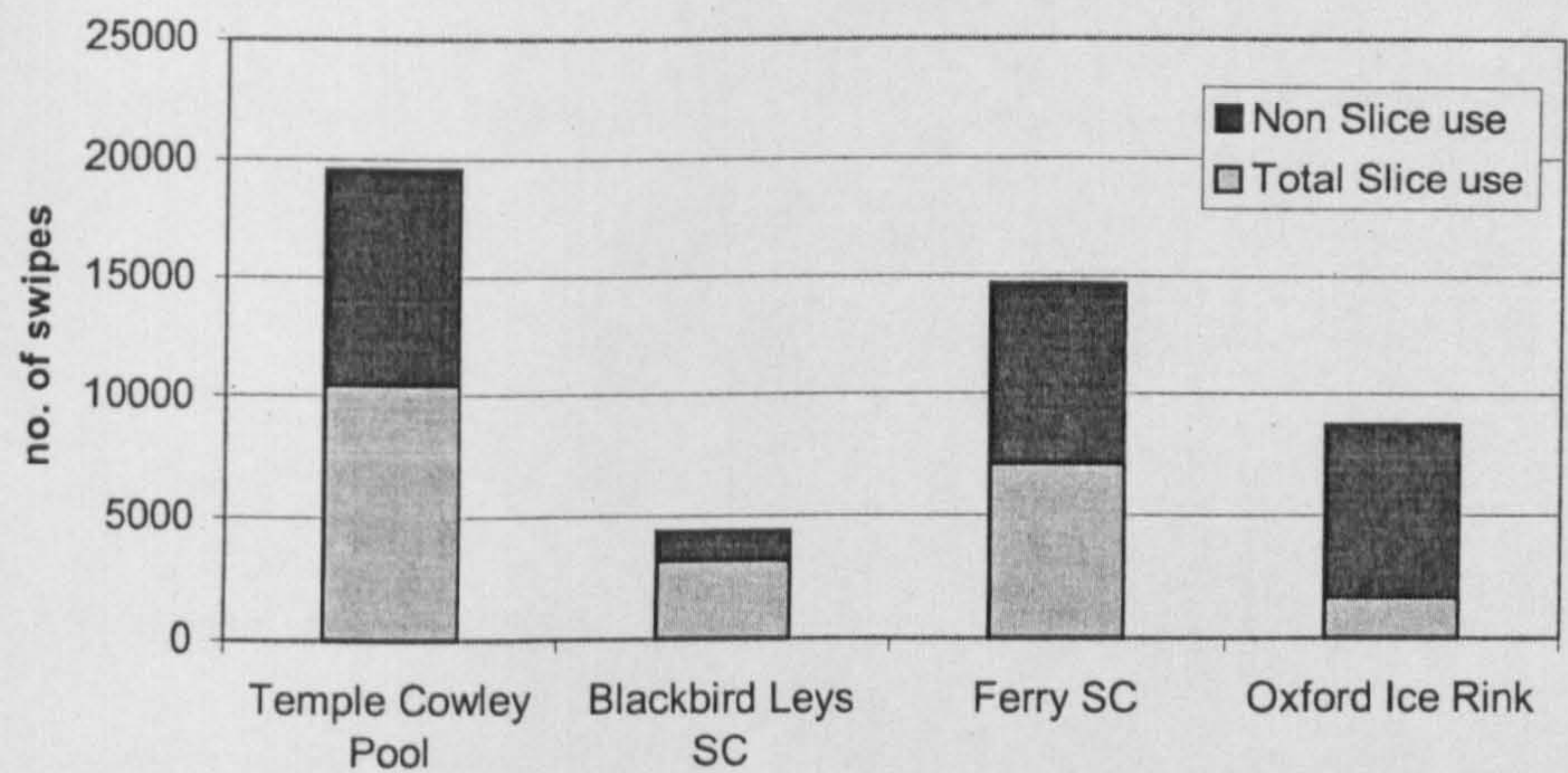


After only 3 months, Slice Card use accounted for 47% of total use at the four facilities. Indeed, at Temple Cowley Pools usage by Slice members was 53% and 73% at Blackbird



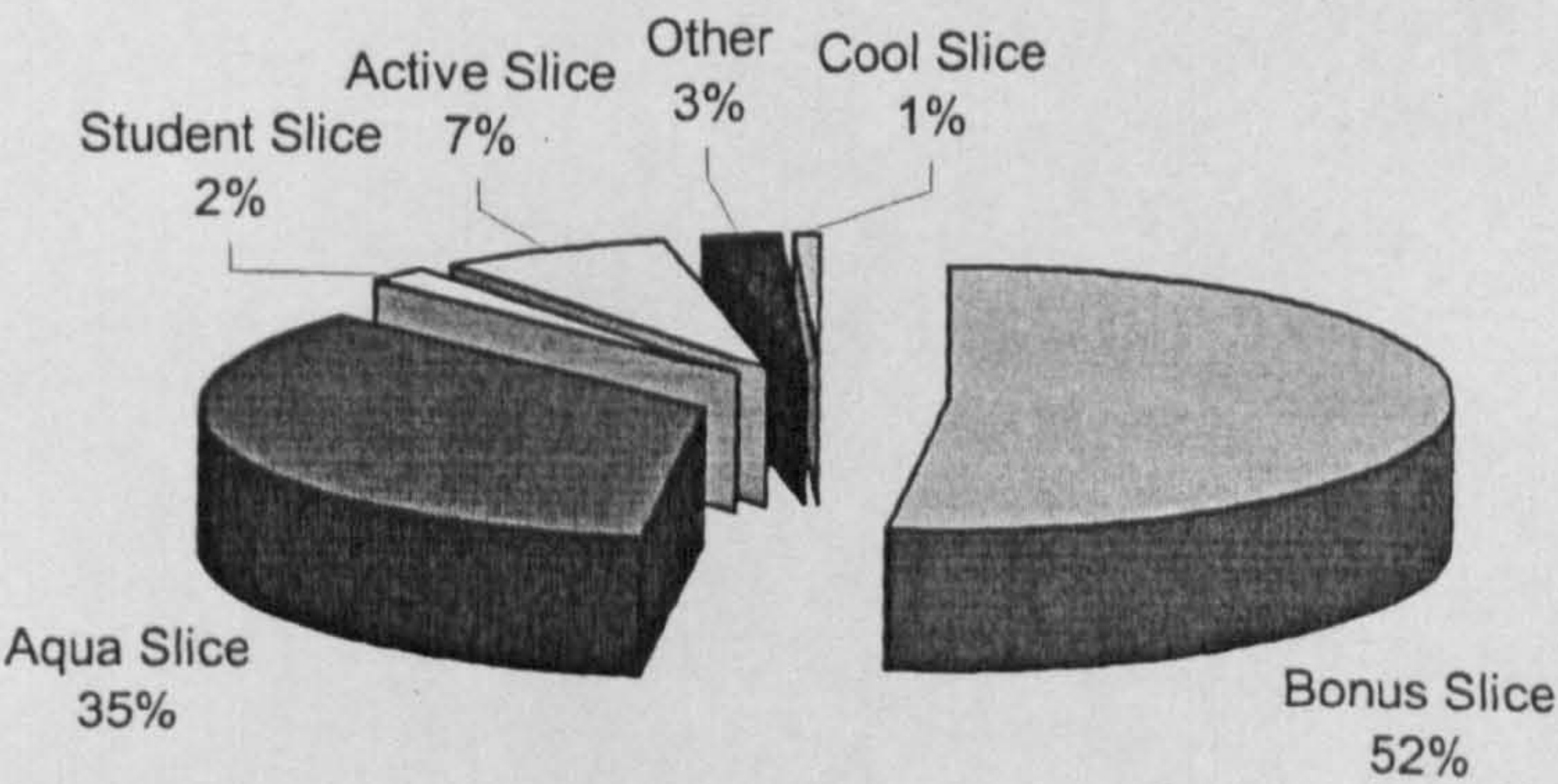
Leys Sports Centre. Non-Slice users only dominated at the Ice Rink, with 83% of overall use (see Figure 8.16 AT41).

Figure 8.16 Slice/Non-Slice use of Oxford municipal facilities (for one month)



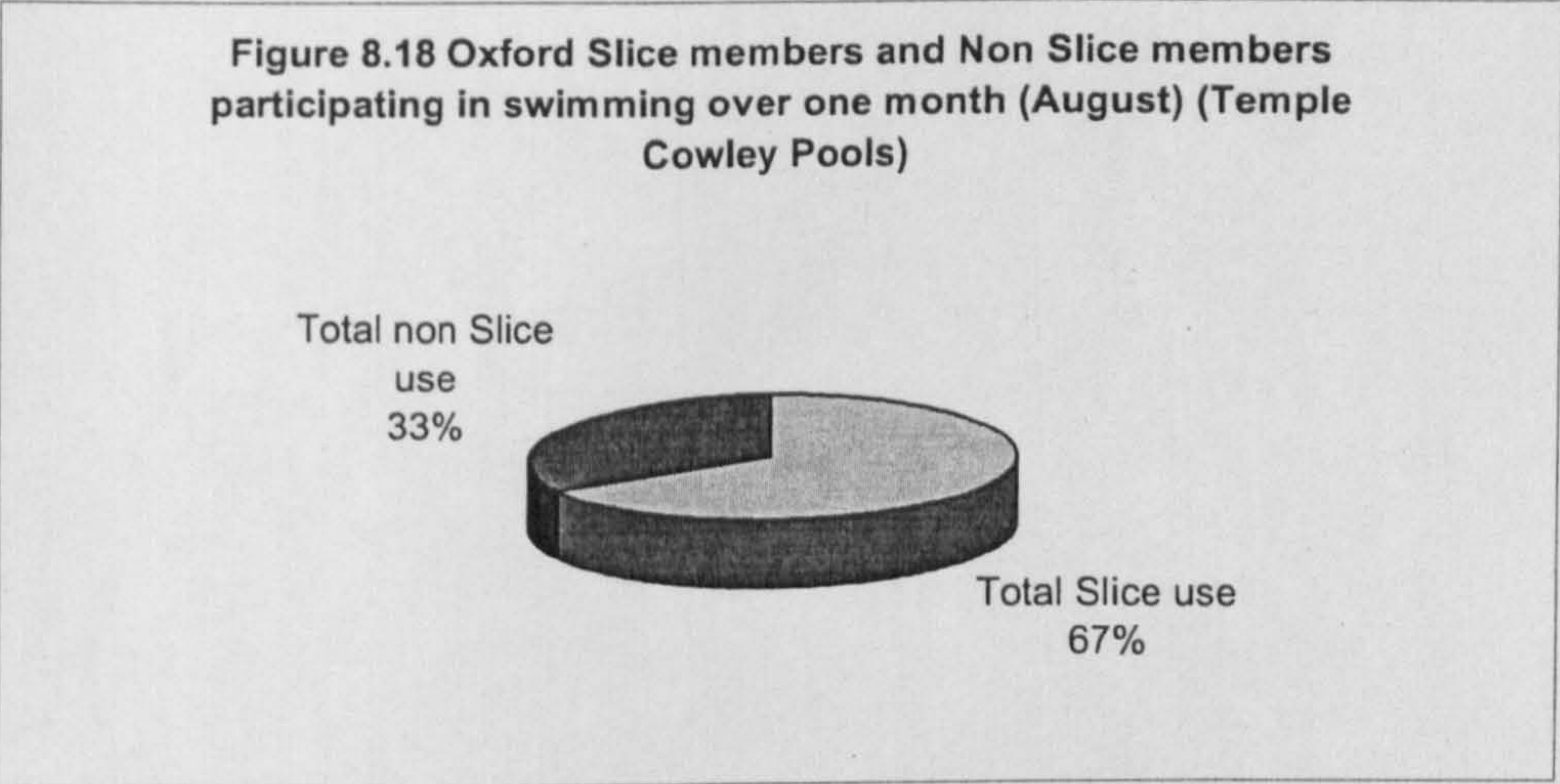
This overall pattern of participation was reflected in the analysis of swimming participation at Temple Cowley Pools. Here, Bonus Slice use dominated with 52% of all Slice use and 35% of overall use (see Figure 8.17 AT42). This also confirmed that Bonus Slice members tended to be swimmers.

Figure 8.17 Oxford Slice members participating in swimming over one month (Temple Cowley Pools)

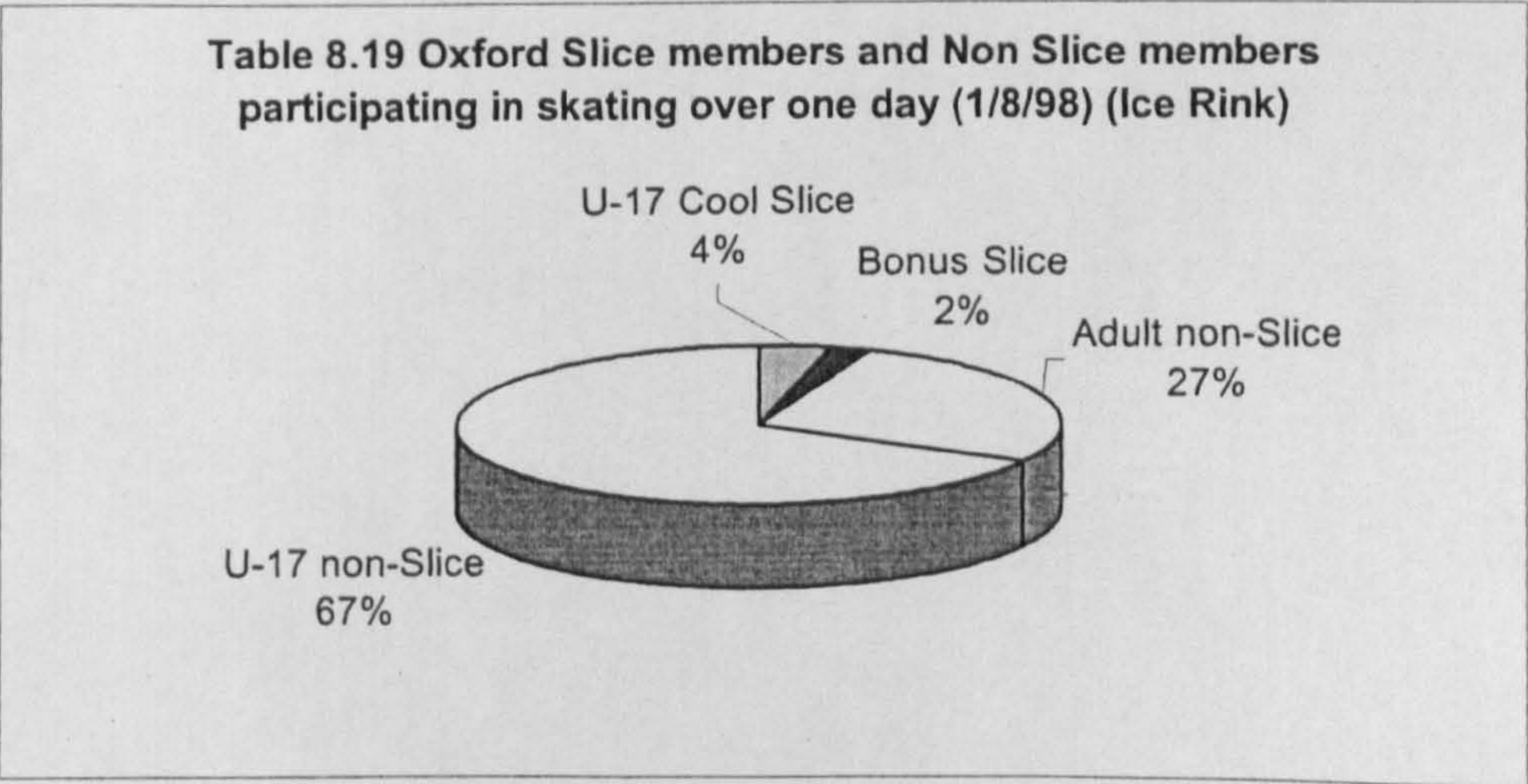




Overall, Slice swims accounted for 67% of total use by Slice cardholders and non-cardholders (Figure 8.18 AT43).



As identified earlier, patterns of use at the Ice Rink were different. Reducing analysis to a daily level, Figure 8.19 (AT44) shows the number and type of users on 1st August 1998. Non-Slice use dominated, with those under 17 accounting for 67% of total use. Indeed, even U-17 Cool Slice use was very low, with only 16 swipes.



This type of micro-analysis enables precise usage patterns to be established and the monitoring of individual activities and programmes; likewise, for swimming (or for any activity), at any given hour of the day, it is possible to identify how many people in the



pool are Bonus, Active, Aqua, Student, Cool Slice cardholders. In marketing terms, this enables identification of highly defined target groups and even provides their addresses for mailing and geographic analysis.

Both the Client Services Manager and the manager at Temple Cowley Pool agreed that the scheme was reaching its target market in terms of the proportion of cards sold and the proportion of Bonus Slice holders. The centre manager questioned whether cardholders were actually using them or not, stating that: "the Active Slice cards are well used because people were paying £22 a month for them, and those who have only paid £2 don't perceive the same value". Active and Aqua Slice members were participating more to get more value for money from their subscription rates. This was reflected to some extent in the lower use by Bonus Slice holders identified earlier. However, the Client Service Manager was pleased with the overall performance of the Slice Card and stated that it had demonstrated it could achieve multiple goals. According to him, this had been achieved through "increased availability to target groups, increased revenue and raised awareness of leisure facilities, (and) increased participation across the board".

Data from Leicester, Cardiff and Oxford indicated that a core of frequent users existed amongst cardholders at municipal sport and recreation venues, and that the main activity participated in was swimming. This complied with Coalter's findings (1999) which highlighted the national growth of activities participated in individually, and the 1.3m (more than double the number of visits to a sports hall) weekly visits made to a swimming pool in 1997, of which 67% were made by a core of 31% of users (Sport England, 1999). Indeed, swimming appeared to be more popular among low income groups than other users, reinforcing the findings from Scotland (CLR, 1993) of 76% of concessionary users being swimmers.

However, while data from Leicester revealed an increase in the frequency of use by Leisure Pass holders over a ten year period, cardholders at Leicester and Bonus Slice members at Oxford participated less frequently than other users. Oxford and Cardiff both demonstrated similar participation among low income groups, averaging approximately one visit per month, taking into account all those not using their cards regularly. As shown in the case of Leicester, gross figures hide underlying trends, as the average number of visits per card holder per year was 6.5, but the customer survey revealed a core of users who visited 2-3 times per month. Therefore, Leisure Card operators could expect an



average of one visit per month from cardholders, but that the majority of those visits were made by a core group, consisting mainly of swimmers. This agreed with findings for Scotland (CLR, 1993) which revealed a highly committed set of regular users amongst concessionary groups, and that this was reflected in national trends for all sports hall and swimming pool users (Sport England, 1999). Unfortunately none of the cases provided data on the number of new participants created by the schemes, but research in Scotland indicated approximately one in five concessionary users had not participated prior to qualifying for discounted access (CLR, 1993).

While data was not available for Leicester or Cardiff, Oxford's Slice Card revealed the percentage of overall use by cardholders as 67%, and 35% by concessionary Bonus Slice members and one swimming pool. This compared favourably to national trends which indicated that 28% of swimming pool users held a discount card (Sport England, 1999).

Cardiff highlighted the importance of seasonal variations in participation, doubling from summer to winter. As mentioned earlier, this is important in terms of marketing and the calculation of cost and revenue. Indeed, usage data is of vital importance to contract arrangements and the subsidisation and reimbursement of the Contractor by the Client (discussed in section 7.2). As demonstrated above, the level of data available from the Oxford swipe card data base was far more detailed than that of Leicester or Cardiff, and this would inform future management decisions and enable more targeted marketing activities to be undertaken. This computerised data was also far more reliable in methodological terms than self-completion questionnaires used in the CLR survey (1993) where respondents may not accurately remember participation habits, or may embellish them. It is important to note, however, that no information was available for secondary spending by cardholders from any of the cases, a factor seemingly neglected in the reimbursement of Contractors.

## **8.5 SWOT analysis**

By way of a brief summary, drawing together the results from the case research, an example is provided below of how Leisure Card operators might use a simple SWOT



analysis to evaluate the existing internal strengths and weaknesses of schemes and to highlight any future, external opportunities and threats to their development. Undertaking such an activity would be more consistent with the ideal post-Fordist model of Leisure Card operation, involving a more strategic approach to managing schemes rather than the *ad hoc* approach which had been adopted by many operators (including Leicester and Cardiff) identified in Chapter 7.

Figure 8.20 below shows a SWOT diagram for Leicester's Leisure Pass. The strengths of the scheme were based around its established nature and the large (but diminishing) membership level. From the analysis in the above sections, in attracting a high level of members across all target groups and geographic areas, as well as increasing use at facilities, the scheme was achieving its objective of providing access to economically disadvantaged groups. Moreover, the scheme had also unified and simplified discounts.

However, one of the main weaknesses of the scheme was the limited management information produced to inform decision making. This was caused by a lack of detailed monitoring of use by cardholders, infrequent customer surveys and the absence of set monitoring and evaluation criteria to measure performance. In turn this led to an inability of the scheme to demonstrate the achievement of its objectives and might threaten the long-term future of the scheme in terms of further budget cuts. In addition, if the scheme is not actively marketed, members will not renew their cards, and new members will not be signed up. This could result in a continued fall in membership and use, which might undermine support for the scheme both from within the Council and from commercial partners.

The biggest opportunity for Leicester's Leisure Pass was the installation of the smart tills which could produce this missing performance information. Another, longer-term opportunity might be a re-launch of the scheme into a multi-tiered format, using a networked information management system. In the light of the recent budget cut, this seemed an unlikely eventuality for the scheme.



Figure 8.20 SWOT analysis for Leicester's Leisure Pass

| STRENGTHS  | WEAKNESSES   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Large membership base</li><li>❑ Established operating system</li><li>❑ Established image in the city</li><li>❑ Commitment from leisure officers and facility staff</li><li>❑ Unified/simple pricing structure</li><li>❑ Strong links with the commercial sector</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Lack of detailed monitoring of use by cardholders</li><li>❑ Infrequent customer satisfaction surveys</li><li>❑ Lack of set monitoring criteria and review procedure</li><li>❑ The above factors result in a lack of management information to inform decisions</li></ul> |
| OPPORTUNITIES  | THREATS  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Installation of smart tills at facilities</li><li>❑ Use of membership database and data from tills to target marketing and increase use amongst existing members</li><li>❑ Use the above data to prove the achievement of objectives and attract more funding</li><li>❑ Re-launch the scheme in a new, possibly multi-tier format (but this would require financial commitment that seems unrealistic at present).</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Inability to demonstrate accurately the achievement of objectives</li><li>❑ The budget cut may lead to a further drop in membership if marketing is not undertaken.</li><li>❑ This could undermine overall commitment to the scheme and threaten its future.</li></ul>   |

The SWOT for Cardiff's Passport To Leisure is shown in Figure 8.21, below, and contains many more weaknesses and threats than strengths and opportunities. Despite evidence that the scheme had attracted a core of frequent low income users at municipal facilities, take-up was still very low in relation to the target market. The scheme was hampered by a lack of human resources dedicated to it, which in turn limited marketing and monitoring activities (see section 7.5). The lack of technology for monitoring use compounded this situation still further. Lack of investment in marketing and the image of the scheme, as well as the limited number of commercial partnerships involved, limited the attractiveness of the scheme which had a sport orientated, municipal image.

Therefore, the main threat to the scheme was a cut in budget if take-up did not improve, as experienced at Leicester. However, the strong commitment to the scheme by the Council might alternatively provide a prime opportunity to invest in technology and re-launch in a new format, perhaps in the style of Oxford's Slice Card. A further opportunity lay in the expansion of the scheme into the commercial sector, including more 'flagship' discounts.



Figure 8.21 SWOT analysis for Cardiff's PTL

| STRENGTHS  | WEAKNESSES   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Core membership of frequent users</li><li>□ Unified/simple pricing structure</li><li>□ Generous discounts</li><li>□ Departmental/corporate commitment to the scheme</li><li>□ The scheme was established at facilities</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Lack of staff dedicated to the scheme</li><li>□ Low take-up</li><li>□ Rigid reimbursement agreement between Client and Contractor</li><li>□ Operated at a distance from point of sale and customers, with little involvement of Contractors</li><li>□ Sporting and municipal image</li><li>□ Inefficient card production system and database management</li><li>□ Inability to demonstrate use by cardholders at facilities accurately</li><li>□ Lack of set monitoring criteria and review procedure</li><li>□ Subsequent lack of management information for decision making</li><li>□ Limited links with the commercial sector</li></ul> |
| OPPORTUNITIES  | THREATS  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Re-launch the scheme and try to find investment for a networked information system</li><li>□ Provided the scheme with a new image</li><li>□ Establish links with the commercial sector.</li></ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Possible budget cut if take-up does not improve</li><li>□ If effective monitoring procedures are not established the scheme will never be able to demonstrate effectiveness</li><li>□ Best Value will require the scheme to justify its existence.</li></ul>   |

Although at the time of data collection the Oxford Slice Card was relatively new, it had already built up a strong membership base, had a successful image and could draw on highly detailed and readily available data (see Figure 8.22). The main weaknesses related to not realising the potential of the data produced, because of its large volume and/or a lack of trained staff to analyse it. This could threaten the ability of the scheme to demonstrate the achievement of its objectives, especially in terms of attracting target groups without stigma. Alternatively, if analysed and managed effectively, the database system could, in combination with customer satisfaction research, enable the accurate measurement of performance and inform future management decisions.



Figure 8.22 SWOT analysis for Oxford's Slice Card

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Established membership base</li><li>❑ Successful image</li><li>❑ High levels of readily available data</li><li>❑ Simplified and unified pricing structure</li><li>❑ The Scheme was self-funding through cross-subsidisation</li></ul> | <b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Too much data to cope with</li><li>❑ Lack of trained staff to analyse data</li></ul>         |
| <b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Expansion to include commercial sector discounts</li><li>❑ Use of management data and customer satisfaction research to accurately measure performance</li></ul>  | <b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Not using the management information to its potential and letting the scheme stagnate</li></ul> |

8.6 Why do authorities *not* operate Leisure Cards?

The sections above and Chapters 6 and 7 have considered the establishment, management and operation of Leisure Card Schemes from the perspective of the local authorities operating them. This next section looks at Leisure Cards from the other side, considering the evaluation of local authorities that did not operate them. Data from the open ended questions used in the national survey (questionnaire to non-operators) will be used, along with additional data gathered from interviews and documentary analysis at Brighton and Hove Borough Council.

It was hypothesised that authorities without cards would give as reasons either lack of physical facilities to make a reasonable offer or ideological/policy reasons. In fact, they gave the answers shown in Table 8.15.



**Figure 8.15 Reasons local authorities did not operate LCS**

| Reason for not operating a LCS         | %  |
|--|----|
| Estimated cost of administration       | 31 |
| Estimated cost of subsidy              | 30 |
| Lack of human resources                | 20 |
| Belief the there is no need for a Card | 20 |
| Perception of Cards a ineffective      | 12 |
| Political reasons                      | 9  |
| CCT-related problems                   | 6  |
| Other                                  | 40 |

As, mentioned earlier, lack of facilities was not cited by a significant number of authorities, but human resources were, as were political reasons and the belief that a Leisure Card was not needed locally. Perhaps that is why as many as 35% said they intended to introduce a card in the next 2 years and a further 13% in the following three, as such barriers are overcome.

At Newark and Sherwood District Council joint use agreement with the Local Education Authority caused problems for the introduction of a Leisure Card as public use was more concentrated into peak times, "any concessions would reduce income as little extra capacity is available at these times". As prices had not been increased for three years there was a belief that prices were lower for all users. Their philosophy was: "One person's price reduction is another person's price increase". With restrictions on their budget and resources, they had to maximise income. The authority also believed it was "unfair on working people if they are unable to hire facilities because they are booked by concession customers during their free time". Therefore, people who qualified for these schemes could access the facilities at off-peak times and benefit from the reduced fees. This view seemed to imply that concession groups should fill off-peak capacity and restrict their use of facilities to times when working people do not want to use them. This was socially divisive, and did not encourage integration between user groups.



The CCT contract at Newbury District Council involved the sports facilities being managed by four different contractors. This made using a district-wide concession scheme logistically very difficult. Each contractor had its own approach to concession prices and to overall management and operational practice. In other local authorities, the scope of facilities was limited e.g. the Corporation of London only had one small sports centre.

Indeed, certain circumstances were specific to individual authorities, for example, at East Cambridgeshire District Council all sport facilities were run as community voluntary trusts and offered individual concessions/discounts. The local authority had no authority to enforce a pricing structure; it could only advise. Therefore, a Leisure Card could not be run by the local authority. Harborough District Council claimed there was a "lack of demand" for such a scheme, whereas Epping Forest District Council stated that "our research...indicates that just reducing the cost does not increase participation. Other factors - access to transport, perceptions, having someone to go with are equal, if not greater." This highlights awareness of other influential factors on non-participation, but did not account for the potential of well-managed schemes to overcome these barriers.

Extra research was undertaken at Brighton and Hove Borough Council in the form of interviews with the Client Contracts Manager, the Projects Manager for Leisure and the Arts Development Officer, as well as documentary analysis of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and its recently written (but unpublished) sport and recreation strategy. Analysis of this additional data provided more detail into some of the reasons why authorities did not operate a Leisure Card Scheme.

Brighton and Hove had 245,000 residents with an additional 20,000 students during term times. The proportion of ethnic residents was below the national average at 3%, but this was not dominated by any single racial group. Brighton and Hove also received an estimated five million visitors every year, making tourism an important industry in terms of both income generation and employment.

According to the DETR Index of Local Deprivation, Brighton was ranked as the 60<sup>th</sup> most deprived authority in England. 34% of the authority's population lived in a ward that was in the 10% most deprived in England. This meant that the intensity of deprivation was acute



and this was reflected in the authority's rank as the 39<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward according to intensity.

Brighton and Hove Borough Council's Anti-Poverty Team defined poverty as "persons, families and groups whose resources (material, cultural, social and educational) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in Brighton and Hove" (Brighton and Hove Borough Council, 1997). This was an adaptation of Townsend's definition of deprivation and used the concept of exclusion. Overcoming poverty and exclusion were also recognised as "much as a drive for citizenship as for material means", broadening its definition still further. The anti-poverty strategy was developed soon after Brighton and Hove merged to become a Unitary authority "with more resources, more powers and more opportunities to work in partnership with others" (Brighton and Hove Borough Council, 1997).

Indeed, developing partnerships both within the Council and with external organisations was identified as the main means to overcoming both the causes and effects of poverty. Brighton and Hove Borough Council subsequently identified the reduction of poverty as one of its five key strategic priorities for 1999-2002.

There was, however, no direct reference to the role of sport and the arts in the strategy. This was rectified slightly in the more recent sport and recreation strategy. Overcoming poverty and social inclusion were clearly identified as one of the values of sport and recreation, but the report was vague in explaining exactly what that meant, stating "where there are areas of deprivation and people on a low income, sport and recreation can make an important contribution to quality of life and community development" (Brighton and Hove Borough Council, unpublished). Increasing participation by people on a low income was a priority of the strategy, as was the inclusion of young people and other socially excluded groups. Yet the only recommendation was that the Council should be "particularly supportive of the development of sports facilities and opportunities in identified areas of deprivation and where...(the) value of sport...will have the most impact in the development of an inclusive society" (*ibid*). The language was clearly borrowed from the Sport England publications reviewed in Chapter 5, and this was made more evident by the contents of the proposed action plan for achieving these 'inclusive'



objectives. The plan focused almost entirely on partnership development across all sectors with a further need to undertake research to identify how fees and charges influence accessibility for young people and low income groups.

There was no direct mention of investigating the feasibility of introducing a Leisure Card in the sport and recreation strategy. The Client Contract Manager stated that introducing one had been considered, but was rejected, in his opinion, because it was too much of a "scatter gun approach" that benefited people who did not need it. The merger between Brighton and Hove was also identified as a distraction, as it involved a great deal of reorganisation. Another criticism of Leisure Cards from the Client Contract Manager were that they were "bureaucratic nightmares" becoming too complicated to manage. Leisure Cards were also regarded as stigmatising, relying on "people saying here I am, I'm poor" and were problematic in identifying who was poor or socially disadvantaged and whether or not they should be included in the scheme.

The Project Manager also criticised Leisure Cards, but on the basis that it would cost the Council more than they would receive from it, and she was not convinced that it would increase participation. Neither officer, however, was aware of any of the potential benefits from operating a successful card scheme.

The merger of Brighton and Hove presented a major potential barrier to the introduction of a Leisure Card Scheme. The impression given by all officers interviewed was that the Brighton had effectively 'taken over' Hove, as the smaller of the previous two authorities. This was reflected in sport and recreation terms by Hove's one and only sport centre. This was operated by a DSO, and according to the Project Manager was of a poor quality compared to the two centres that were operated by separate private contractors in Brighton. This meant that three different contractors were operating the sports centres, a situation the Project Manager described as "not ideal", who went on to say that the merger and restructuring meant that cross-departmental liaison was limited, as networks between officers had not yet been established. There were, however, some links with the Education Department through the national Active Schools campaign, and the Environment and Planning Department in planning facility development. Despite this, virtually no liaison occurred with the Anti-Poverty Team.



Price discounts at municipal leisure centres were available to means tested benefit claimants, disabled people, over 60s, under 18 year olds, and to under 21 year olds at the two municipal golf courses. Discounts varied according to facility, activity and time of use. One sport centre, which did not have a pool, had its own pricing policy which was written into its CCT contract because it had been deliberately built in an area of deprivation in Brighton. People living in the local area could become members for £3.40 per year as opposed to £12 for non-locals, and receive discounts on all activities e.g. badminton court hire for £1.25 off-peak and £2.20 peak. Local members also did not have to pay the standard 65p admission fee. The price of concessionary membership at another centre was £3 per quarter, and the price of a swim was £1.20 for benefit claimants, OAPs and children (under 18), but proof of eligibility (e.g. UB40 or benefit book) was still required at each visit. The price of a swim at a second pool was £1.70 for concessionary groups, and again proof of eligibility had to be produced for every visit. All prices varied according to time of use, with after six in the evening being the start of the peak period and higher prices.

With respect to whether these concessions were effective, the Project Manager admitted that the Council "have never been particularly good at doing the background research to justify what we do" and the Client Contracts Manager stated that investigations were "hit and miss". Although sport and recreation was included in the Council's overall community consultancy involving interviews with 1,000 residents, there was no evidence of recent departmental research into customer satisfaction or non-users. Officers could only speculate why more people did not participate in sport as the usual reasons of lack of time and that "sport was not for them". While acknowledging that the Department may not have successfully attracted people to facilities and activities, the blame was placed by the Client Contracts Manager on wider causes such as the image of sport as being for those who were young, wore the right clothes and were already fit and health that were used by the media.

Marketing activities were primarily the responsibility of contractors with specific agreements to target certain target groups established in the contracts and guidelines laid down by the Client. Other forms of marketing by the Client included the Council's free newspaper, the Citizen's Guide and the 'Handbook', but consisted of general publicity of venues rather than targeted marketing to specific user groups. The Project Manager also



admitted that “we don’t do very much marketing”, while the Client Contracts Manager was “reasonably satisfied” with the marketing activities of contractors and the Client, speculating that residents were quite well informed about activities and events.

Monitoring of use at facilities included the number of users for various activities and overall financial performance reports which were produced for the Client Contracts Manager on request. However, he stated that he tried to keep this process as simple as possible. While smart tills were in place at nearly all venues, the hardware used was slightly different in each case. Also, as the absence of market research meant that target groups were not identified either in terms of how many people were included or where they lived, it was not possible to measure the overall take-up, take-up by target groups or geographic take-up of discounts in the Borough. Moreover, as no record could be kept of users’ personal details, direct marketing was also not possible. Other than at the leisure centre built in an area of known deprivation, Brighton and Hove officers could not identify exactly who their concessionary users were. It therefore appeared difficult for Brighton and Hove Borough Council to encourage use of leisure facilities by deprived groups, as stated in the sport and recreation strategy.

In terms of arts and cultural provision, the Arts Development Officer described the relationship between the Council and the voluntary and commercial sectors as very close. For example, Brighton and Hove Borough Council manage the Brighton Centre conference and events venue, as well as the annual Brighton Festival which involves participation from a host of independent and commercial performers. While some performances at certain venues offered discounts to students, unemployed people and group bookings, there was no clear agreements which enforced this. Indeed, the Council already received complaints from commercial venues when ticket prices were subsidised at public or independent venues.

As with sport and recreation, very little detailed monitoring or market research was undertaken into audiences, although this was set to change at the Brighton Festival in 2000 where customer surveys were planned. However, the Arts Development Officer had no real idea why people might not attend performances other than a lack of knowledge about them. The Arts Development Officer recognised that a cultural venues could be included in



a Leisure Card, but that this would have to involve extremely close liaison with the commercial and voluntary sectors.

Overall, the officers were sceptical of Leisure Cards, but more notably were not informed about their potential advantages e.g. in harmonising pricing policies, targeting marketing, identifying user groups, monitoring use and demonstrating the achievement of social objectives, none of which Brighton and Hove Borough Council appeared to be doing. The issues of social inclusion and poverty were also increasingly important, highlighted by their inclusion in the new sport and recreation strategy. This was undoubtedly due to the lack of up-to-date research into Leisure Card Schemes, and a lack of awareness of the latest developments in this area. The Client Contracts Manager was, however, aware of the London Borough of Westminster's card, which was similar in design and image to Oxford's, and estimated that Brighton and Hove would have a card of this type before the year 2002. He maintained, however, that this card would have to be "different" and in some way "new" as "that is how Brighton is". The Project Manager could not see how a Leisure Card could be introduced with three different contractors and unless it could generate significant economic benefits.

Therefore, local authorities did not operate Leisure Cards for a mix of reasons, many of which were related to the unique circumstances of individual authorities. Apart from the perceived cost of operating a card schemes, local government reorganisation involving mergers in Wales and the creation of Unitary Authorities in England was an important factor. Moreover, as Brighton and Hove Borough Council demonstrated, this situation was compounded where contracts had been won by private companies. It also appeared that the Client had become distanced from the delivery of services, with individual facilities operating independently from one another with different pricing policies. However, leisure officers still believed that a Leisure Card would be introduced in Brighton and Hove as almost inevitable. From the number of not operating authorities responding to the survey who intended to introduce a card within the following three years, Leisure Cards would be features of 85% of local authorities by 2001. As described in the following chapter, this was not far from the truth.



## 8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted four basic criteria which can be used to measure the performance of Leisure Card Schemes. A fifth may be added which had only been undertaken by Leicester and has been drawn upon in Chapter 7, that of customer satisfaction. It was beyond the scope of this study to undertake customer satisfaction surveys and/or focus groups, but these should be included in the overall evaluation of a scheme's performance to compliment quantitative data and provide depth of understanding as to the customers' needs, wants and obtaining suggestions for the improvement of not only the scheme, but the facilities, activities and services it provides discounts for. This is especially important when considering frustrated demand amongst target groups and gaining an understanding of constraints that reach beyond the cost of participation e.g. transport, time, stigma of using a card (Centre for Leisure Research, 1993). This more qualitative research should also be extended to non-cardholders in order to gain an understanding of why they do not own a card and if they are non-participants, why they do not participate.

The data from the national survey and the cases highlighted the huge variation in Leisure Card membership levels and take-up. It is important to note that in terms of benchmarking and comparison between card schemes for the purposes of Best Value, that it was not possible to judge schemes on take-up and use alone. As we have seen in Chapter 7, many schemes had no budget or staff and thus cannot be compared to schemes which have received more investment. However, most Leisure Cards achieved a penetration rate of between 5% and 10% of the target market, regardless of the type of scheme, and the most successful reached 20% or more of their target market.

However, the geographic analysis showed that neither Leicester or Oxford's schemes had penetrated areas of deprivation to the point where a significant difference between membership in these areas and less deprived areas occurred. This indicated that card operators needed to target pockets of deprivation and could do so using the methodology described in section 8.3.



Use by cardholders reflected existing research and national trends, being dominated by a core of regular swimmers. However, Leicester revealed continued growth in the frequency of use by members and Oxford's Slice card demonstrated domination of overall use by cardholders and an above average proportion of discounted users after only six months of operation.

Indeed, the process of evaluating the performance of a card scheme was made easier with a high-tech management information system, providing large amounts of micro-level usage data. However, as mentioned in Chapter 7, without the trained human resources to extract and analyse this data, it remains obsolete on the database, being constantly replaced and often resulting in membership lapses as in the case of Cardiff. The type of analysis undertaken in this chapter highlights the potential of Leisure Card Schemes to follow the ideal-type post-Fordist model and demonstrate the achievement of their objectives, shown below.

- ❑ Social objectives – through take-up by target groups, geographic take-up according to areas of deprivation and usage by target groups. Use of membership database to distribute customer satisfaction questionnaires/invitations to focus groups.
- ❑ Managerial – take-up and usage data can be used to inform management decisions, especially relating to setting pricing levels and programming activities. In turn this can be used to target marketing activities.
- ❑ Economic – micro-level data usage data can provide accurate information on the financial performance of a Leisure Card, allocating costs and revenue to activities and facilities.

However, if objectives and performance targets are not set which are measurable and have a time span (i.e. a deadline for their achievement) and a typically Fordist model is used, then comparison with performance data is not possible and schemes cannot develop strategically. These performance indicators must also be measured over the long term following perhaps the five year evaluation periods of Best Value in order to assess the outcomes of participation and the achievement of social objectives (Centre for Leisure Research, 1993; Walker, 1997; Sport England, 2000). Taking snapshots of take-up and use



does not indicate whether socially excluded people are included in leisure and recreation opportunities for sustained periods or what the long term benefits of this might be.

Moreover, and perhaps more fundamentally, without sufficient resources (as identified in Chapter 7), operators cannot undertake extensive outreach marketing activities or invest in an attractive image for a scheme in order to encourage non-participants to take-up cards and then use them (i.e. become participants). Without this type of investment, marketing activities become restricted to leisure centres and involve unoriginal, mass advertising activities such as posters and pamphlets. Therefore membership and use will be limited to the core of high frequency users and schemes will continue to be trapped in the vicious cycle of under performance and lack of investment. The perception of these negative aspects of Leisure Card operation and the individual circumstances of local authorities were fundamental reasons for not operating a card scheme.

As stated above, measuring performance will become increasingly important under the new Best Value regime where the performance of local authority leisure services will come under increased scrutiny in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and economy. The role of Leisure Card Schemes in the measurement of the performance indicators that have been produced for sports halls and pools by Sport England (2000) (discussed in Chapter 5) forms the immediate future for the development of these schemes and will be discussed in the concluding chapter.



## **Chapter 9**

## **Conclusions**



The aims of this concluding chapter are fivefold. Firstly, the emergence and growth of Leisure Card Schemes is considered in the context of leisure and social policy development in the 1980s and early 1990s after the crises of Fordism. Attention is given to changing perspectives on the provision of public leisure services and social exclusion discourses within the framework of regulation theory. This is extended to an analysis of the management and operation of Leisure Cards during the period in which this study was undertaken, drawing comparisons with ideal typical Fordist and post-Fordist models of Leisure Card Schemes. Secondly, a clear link is made between the objectives, targets and performance of Leisure Card Schemes and the concepts of poverty, social exclusion and leisure discussed in Chapter 2.

The following two aims of this chapter are concerned with evaluating the methodological approach adopted in this study. An assessment is made as to the utility of regulation theory in the analysis of Leisure Card Schemes in terms of its underlying theoretical principles, temporal framework of historical blocks and in the selection of research methods. This is complemented by considering the contribution of this study to the development of regulation theory. Finally, recommendations for future research into Leisure Cards and the wider relationship between the concepts of poverty, social exclusion and leisure are made.

## **9.1. Leisure Card Schemes in the context of leisure and social policy development**

### ***The emergence of Leisure Card Schemes in the 1980s***

Leisure Card schemes emerged in the mid-1980s in Labour controlled Metropolitan local authorities with the initial objective of encouraging sport and recreation participation amongst disadvantaged groups by removing the barrier of price and the stigma of producing a benefit book or UB40 for every visit to a facility. This Fabian concern for subsidised participation was an attempt to maintain public spending on discounts and redress the imbalance of higher socio-economic groups represented at facilities evident since the explosion in facility construction in the 1970s.



Leisure had already become an accepted criterion in relative definitions of poverty and deprivation (Townsend, 1979) reflecting its importance in a consumer-based society and a general acceptance amongst those supporting the redistributionalist (RED) perspective that leisure and recreation were a part of the community's everyday needs (DoE, 1975). These early leisure cards tried to ensure that the leisure and recreation needs of the most disadvantaged members of the community were met.

However, these pioneering schemes were swimming against the political tide of the time. Conservative central government policies during the 1980s focused on the restriction of public spending which had created a 'nanny state'. Amidst the broad spectrum of policies described in Chapter 4, public utilities were privatised and high spending local authorities were capped. Leisure and recreation spending continued, but often targeted to control unrest in the inner cities, prevent crime and to regenerate areas where traditional industries were declining. Unemployment and inequality were accepted as inevitable by the New Right and welfare benefits were restricted as emphasis shifted to individual responsibility for personal circumstances. Talk of a morally corrupt underclass (MUD) comprising feckless, idle individuals dependant on an over generous welfare state grew under the influence of US authors such as Charles Murray. In a country where, according to Mrs Thatcher, 'society' did not exist, the underclass were responsible for their own poverty and deserved no help. It was precisely these groups of people – the most disadvantaged – that leisure card schemes were trying to encourage to participate, principally in sport and recreation activities. Providing perceived luxuries such as leisure opportunities as part of the welfare state went against the anti-collectivist position of neo-liberalism and certainly ran contrary to Conservative central policies in the late 1980s, designed to break welfare dependency and cut spending.

Moreover, the imposition of CCT on local leisure services shifted the policy focus further away from social objectives to efficiency and economy. With their predominantly social objectives, requiring heavy subsidy and investment in terms of administration and promotion, leisure cards did not fit easily with the requirements of CCT contracts. Thus it was no surprise that the majority of card schemes were protected



from the CCT process and remained the responsibility of Clients determined to maintain discounts for disadvantaged groups (Foote, 1995).

During this period Leisure Cards were characterised by municipal 'passport' images, offering discounts to public sport and recreation facilities. This removed the stigma described above and provided price discounts for those eligible, but due to a lack of technological development provided little else for the operators in terms of management information, nor for the users in terms of variety of discounts available.

Moreover, as leisure card schemes were operated by Clients, they were subsequently subject to leisure services' ever diminishing budgets. With limited resources, in particular budgets and staff, and an overall lack of research into leisure card schemes, their development was *ad hoc*, sporadic and pragmatic, occurring in isolation – both internally from other departments and externally from other operators. Despite these factors, schemes such as Leicester's demonstrated success in attracting large and constantly increasing membership levels.

Therefore, as stated in Chapter 4, these pioneering Leisure Card Schemes that emerged during the mid-1980s demonstrated predominantly Fordist characteristics. However, they emerged contrary to wider political, social, cultural and economic structural shifts of the times. While central government attempted restructuring, leisure card schemes were features of resistant local authorities seeking to maintain public spending and redistributionalist policies (RED). Therefore the emergence of Leisure Cards could be interpreted as an example of neo-Fordism, a deepening and extension of Fordism (Aglietta, 1982).

### ***The growth of Leisure Card Schemes in the 1990s***

By the end of the 1980s, Henry's (1993) identification of a two-tiered welfare state was reflected in the leisure 'gainers' and 'losers' described by Ravenscroft (1993) and by the two distinct sports markets identified by the Sports Council (1988). Leisure 'losers', who had to rely on public provision and the price increases brought about by CCT were further marginalised at the periphery and distanced from the core of leisure 'gainers' as



part of the core workforce who had benefited from the Thatcherite hegemonic project. Indeed, neither the universal benefits of the 1970s nor the more targeted discounts (including Leisure Card Schemes) of the 1980s had redressed the imbalance in the representation of socio-economic groups at sport and recreation facilities (Gratton and Taylor, 1985; 1991; Audit Commission, 1988). 72% of municipal sports centre users were from the ABC1 groups in the 1980s (Sport England, 1999c). CCT had failed to measure performance on social objectives and, as stated previously, leisure card schemes remained largely outside the requirements of contracts (Corrigan et al., 1988).

Despite the change in Conservative leadership there was a high degree of central government policy continuity under the different leadership style of John Major during the early 1990s. Sport policy was distinctly neo-conservative in character, focusing on improving the performance of national teams in 'Raising the Game' (DNH, 1995) and on facility provision through National Lottery funding. This left a policy vacuum relating to disadvantaged groups (apart from disabled people) at a time when more recognition was being given to the increases in poverty and inequality described above, particularly through publications by supporters of the redistributionist perspective (RED).

Indeed, the lack of wider central government policy action to counteract the problems of poverty and deprivation, concentrating instead on workfare policies designed to wean people off welfare dependency, led to increased intervention at the local level, principally through the introduction of anti-poverty strategies. 33% of the respondents to the survey included in this study had an anti-poverty strategies which were characterised by cross-departmental co-operation and corporate ownership, and attempted to identify poor people in local communities and tackle the problems faced by them. While leisure card scheme introduction increased at the same time, only 35% of local authorities operating a Leisure Card and an anti-poverty strategy integrated the former with the latter, leaving the majority of schemes still isolated in leisure services departments.

However, this period also saw increased research into Leisure Card Schemes (Collins and Randolph, 1993; CLR, 1993; Eady, 1994; Foote, 1995). These studies, and the case



of Leicester's Leisure Pass, revealed that Leisure Card operators had increasingly been adopting commercial and managerial objectives for their schemes, particularly since the introduction of CCT. In addition, an increasing number of concession-only schemes had been re-launched in multi-tiered pricing formats and began to include commercial sector discounts. This research also demonstrated the success of certain schemes in attracting large numbers of members. These factors, in combination with improvements in information technology and the introduction of swipe card systems began to change the traditional municipal discount sport and recreation image of Leisure Card Schemes and highlighted their potential to achieve managerial as well as social objectives.

The combination of factors described above and those relating to the circumstances of individual local authorities, resulted in the boom in Leisure Card introductions in Great Britain between 1993 and 1997/8, which by 1999 were features of 76% of all local authorities (CIPFA, 2000). As Chapter 5 revealed, Leisure Cards had diffused from the pioneering metropolitan authorities out to the smaller English non-metropolitan districts.

#### *Leisure Card Schemes in 1997/98*

Although it was not possible to identify concretely, a further important factor in the diffusion of Leisure Card Schemes was the emergence of a 'new' Labour Party and their local election victories in 1993. Whether or not the 'third way' of New Labour constitutes a new political position between social democracy and neo-liberalism or is merely a diluted version of both remains to be seen. However, social policies will continue to affect the operation and management of Leisure Card Schemes. As discussed in Chapter 5, the current debate on this topic revolves around those who believe the Blair administration and its claims for a 'third way' demonstrate a clear break from their predecessors' and those who believe Labour's policies are largely a continuation of them.

The replacement of Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution, as described in Chapter 5, demonstrated an acceptance that there could never be a return to social democracy underpinned by Keynesian demand side economics, full-employment, the welfare state and nationalised industries. The free international movement of capital has been



accepted by New Labour and the Government has clearly committed itself to strive to retain Britain's (and especially London's) place as a centre of world finance.

Moreover, the commitment to what could be described as 'workfare' policies such as means-tested benefits and restrictions on claimant eligibility, the refusal to increase income tax and the commitment to spending limits set by their predecessors, has made New Labour's opposition to direct income redistribution evident. Within leisure policy, for example, Best Value will remove the rigidity of CCT contracts and place more emphasis on equity, but still demonstrates clear continuities in the acceptance of competition in public services (Boyne et al, 1999).

This has prompted some critics to claim that New Labour policies represent neo-Liberalism with a social face. However, the issue of devolution with the establishment of a parliament in Scotland, and national assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as plans for greater regionalisation in England, runs directly counter to the one-nation conservative rhetoric which underpinned much of the political ideology of its Conservative predecessors. Moreover, the clear policy commitment to social inclusion with the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit and its cross-departmental remit, and the goal to overcome child poverty also provided a policy contrast with the previous Conservative governments.

Leisure and sport policy has been included as part of this concern for social cohesion and inclusion. The recognition of the value of sport and the arts in developing individuals and communities has been combined with a belief that they can improve social control, reduce crime and regenerate areas (DCMS, 1999; Sport England, 1999a). This dualistic approach to leisure policy, which harks back to the one-nation conservatism identified by Glyptis (1989), contains elements of the moral underclass discourse (MUD), and appears to demonstrate little advance in policy terms. Social exclusion has replaced terms such as inner city deprivation and been applied as a blanket term for recreationally disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, ethnic minorities, disabled people, the elderly and youth at risk. As section 9.4 will discuss, the lack of new empirical research into social exclusion and leisure has resulted in a hasty union of the terms, (but see Collins, 2002 for a first step in this direction).



***Comparison between the empirical results and models of Fordism and post-Fordism***

The empirical results in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 enabled comparisons to be made with a post-Fordist model of how Leisure Card Schemes might operate including policy objectives, research undertaken when establishing them, management and administration, marketing, and monitoring and evaluation. Analysis was also undertaken of any problems encountered in managing Leisure Card Schemes, and possible future policy directions.

***a) Objectives***

In terms of Leisure Card Scheme policy objectives, the survey revealed the dominance of social objectives over economic. However, 33% of respondents restricted card use to off-peak times, protecting full-price users. A clear difference was highlighted between concession-only and multi-tiered schemes, with the former more than twice as likely to have social objectives as a priority.

The case studies provided more detail regarding the historical development of schemes; for example, Leicester's Leisure Pass was established with social objectives, characteristic of the ideal-type Fordist model of Leisure Card operation, and later incorporated more economic and managerial objectives, such as maximising the use of resources. In 1998 Cardiff's card scheme was reaching a crisis point where social objectives still dominated, but the scheme's poor performance in terms of take-up and use (see Chapter 8), along with increasing pressure from the DSO Contractors to take over running it, meant that adopting objectives related to increased efficiency were highly likely as part of a re-launch. This was very similar to the situation in Oxford where the old Recreation Card had under-performed. By launching the new Slice Card, Oxford City Council clearly attempted to break away from the ways in which the Recreation Card had been managed and marketed, reflecting aspects of post-Fordist tendencies. However, while the Slice Card clearly had economic objectives to improve overall service income, the social objectives of the scheme remained, and increased in importance with local anti-poverty officers involved in its establishment.

Thus, Leisure Card Schemes were characterised by a mix of social and economic objectives. However, there was no clear indication as to whether overall social or



economic objectives were predominant, and so this mix did not clearly reflect either the ideal-type Fordist or post-Fordist models of operation. Even in the case of Oxford's Slice Card where ideal-type post-Fordist tendencies were evident in a multi-tiered scheme clearly aimed at full-price paying customers, the social objectives were retained and reinforced.

***b) Research***

The survey revealed that the main forms of research undertaken by intending card operators were consultations with other local authorities with card schemes, and with staff at municipal facilities. Combined with the fact that research findings were not translated into measurable targets, this highlighted Fordist ideal-type practice. In Cardiff, the City Council contracted consultants to undertake market research before introducing the Passport to Leisure, an act more typical of ideal-type post-Fordist practice, but the results were still not translated into targets. In Oxford, more extensive research had been undertaken before launching the scheme, but operators were waiting for a pattern of card use to be established before defining any targets.

***c) Target groups***

Target groups were adopted predominantly on the basis of central government benefit claimant categories for socially disadvantaged groups. This method of target group selection was easy and very cheap to undertake, but limited card operators' flexibility in for adapting eligibility to local needs. Indeed, the cases of Leicester and Cardiff highlighted card operators' fears of 'free-riding' (people obtaining cards who were not poor or socially excluded). More flexibility was evident in Oxford where dependants of benefit claimants could obtain the Bonus Slice Card. Again, this mix of management practice fell between the Fordist and post-Fordist ideal-type models. As stated above, although social objectives dominated Leisure Card management to varying degrees, these were not founded on extensive research into the needs of poor or socially excluded people, besides not being turned into measurable targets.

***d) Activities and facilities***

Moreover, the limited research undertaken by potential card operators also affected the selection of facilities and activities eventually included in schemes. The survey revealed



the dominance of municipal discounts offered by card operators, with only 28% of schemes including commercial facilities. The Passport to Leisure scheme in Cardiff demonstrated the municipal focus of many card schemes, although a few attempts had been made to include commercial discounts. This reflected the Fordist model of Leisure Card operation, where a public sector focus with discounts provided in a paternalistic way, with little consideration for customer needs. By contrast, Leicester's Leisure Pass included a wide range of commercial discounts which were the most popular among cardholders, according to the local user survey discussed in Chapter 8. This reflected a post-Fordist model in terms of promoting commercial as well as municipal offers, and including a wide range of choice of services in order to meet the diverse needs and wants of cardholders. The Oxford Slice Card, still in its first stage of development, only involved municipal discounts, but the second phase intended to bring on board commercial operators.

Thus, while the majority of schemes appeared to demonstrate predominantly ideal-type Fordist tendencies according to the survey data, the cases revealed more of a mix, with post-Fordist characteristics emerging by including commercial sector discounts.

*e) Management and administration*

In Chapter 7 the management and administration of Leisure Card Schemes was analysed in terms of where cards could be obtained, how they were staffed, Client and Contractor relationships under CCT arrangements, the imminent implementation of Best Value, cross-departmental and cross-sector actions, budgeting and pricing, marketing, monitoring and evaluation, as well as any problems encountered by card operators.

In terms of where Leisure Cards could be obtained, the survey and the cases, except for Cardiff's Passport to Leisure, revealed municipal control of the process. The two most common venues were municipal sport centres and council offices. This reflected Fordist practice in the very rare inclusion of commercial and voluntary outlets, but also reinforced the already clear municipal image of many schemes (a point which is discussed below). In Cardiff, however, Post Offices were used to administer card applications, reflecting post-Fordist tendencies in contracting out a service. The policy



of using the Post Offices was rarely adopted, even though it made applying easy and accessible, especially for pension and benefit recipients, and avoiding any potential stigma of applying in a sport centre.

With regards to staffing, the survey highlighted the fact that Leisure Card Schemes were operated with very limited dedicated human resources: some schemes having no staff at all. This could be interpreted as the use of a flexible, polyvalent workforce as described in the post-Fordist model, where multi-skilled workers are assigned to schemes as and when required. However, responses to open-ended questions and the case of Cardiff suggested that schemes were simply under-staffed and had to be neglected for periods of the year. This directly contributed to the problems discussed below, and demonstrated a clear need for constant monitoring and development of schemes, especially in ensuring memberships were renewed. The staffing of Oxford's Slice Card seemed to reflect using a more flexible approach. The Slice Card was driven at policy level by a cross-departmental working group, and at the day-to-day practical level, by the Contractor's staff at municipal facilities. This resulted in greater proximity to the customer at the point of purchase and consumption, and consequently increased responsiveness to customer needs.

Indeed, the issue of Client-Contractor relationships was an important factor in managing Leisure Card Schemes, as identified in the case studies. In the cases of Leicester and in particular Cardiff, there was evidence of conflicting objectives held by Clients and Contractors. Clients were more preoccupied with achieving social objectives, whereas Contractors focused more on pursuing economic objectives, a situation characteristic of the Fordist model. In the case of Cardiff, the Contractors were pressing to take over the management and operation of the scheme as they viewed Client control and decision making processes as being too distant from the customer. This had already occurred in Oxford, as mentioned above, and not only reflected the partnership approach advocated under Best Value, but also the ideal-type Fordist model.

Thus, the Leicester Leisure Pass and Cardiff's Passport to Leisure were operated in relative isolation by the Clients, both in terms of their limited or non-existent cross-departmental and cross-sector involvement. As discussed in Chapter 7, this supported



the findings of Foote (1995), who stated that Leisure Card Schemes had generally been protected from the CCT process by Clients.

*f) Marketing*

As stated in section 7.3, the theme of marketing brought together many of the issues relating to the management and operation of Leisure Card Schemes. The survey indicated that the main forms of advertising were leaflets and posters in municipal sport centres, as well as adverts in local newspapers. This reflected the ideal Fordist model of Leisure Card operation where mass marketing techniques are employed, without specific targeting beyond existing sport centre users. The case of Leicester demonstrated that the operator had adopted more targeted approaches such as advertising in job centres, visiting schools and community centres, as well as undertaking door-to-door visits in poorer areas to sign up members. Similar activities were undertaken in Cardiff, including advertising in Post Offices and Department of Social Security offices.

However, these marketing activities were characterised by perpetuating an essentially municipal image for the respective schemes, in Cardiff, for example, one of the main causes for concern among Contractors was the municipal sport image of the scheme. These Fordist tendencies could be contrasted with the post-Fordist ideal-type marketing activities adopted at Oxford for the Slice Card. In this case contemporary advertising techniques were employed to give the scheme an attractive image, using the names Cool, Aqua, Active and Bonus. Whereas many schemes in the survey and at Leicester and Cardiff struggled to find resources to dedicate to marketing, Oxford City Council had clearly invested in the image of the scheme to make it attractive to certain market segments, including poor and socially excluded people, without risk of stigma. The technological advantages of the swipe card system would also facilitate this process in the future, as discussed in section 7.4 and Chapter 8.

Therefore, again a mix existed between the ideal Fordist and post-Fordist models. While most schemes were characterised by predominantly Fordist marketing activities, some had adopted techniques clearly more akin to post-Fordism. Others, such as Leicester's Leisure Pass, utilised a mix of Fordist and post-Fordist marketing activities.



***g) Monitoring and evaluation***

The monitoring and evaluation of Leisure Card Scheme performance was discussed in section 7.4, and analysed further in Chapter 8. The aim of the following section is to compare the empirical evidence gathered in the research process to the ideal models, while section 9.2 relates the performance of Leisure Cards to the concepts of poverty and social exclusion.

The survey revealed that half of Leisure Card operators monitored their schemes annually or less frequently, and that 17% did not monitor them at all. 56% of operators monitored membership by target group, usually on the basis of benefit claimant categories, while only 39% monitored cardholder use at facilities. In addition, one in four schemes did not have a computerised database management system for membership records, and less than one in ten had swipe card systems. Moreover, just over two thirds of schemes had no targets to which to compare performance. Overall, this reflected what could be expected of a Fordist model of operation, especially in terms of the lack of technology employed to evaluate not only take-up and card use, but also marketing activities and wider management decisions regarding programming and pricing, for example.

The cases of Leicester and Cardiff reinforced this, although both schemes did have computerised databases for managing membership and analysing take-up by target groups. Leicester City Council had installed smart tills which were capable of monitoring use by cardholders in detail, but these were not operational before the scheme received a cut of one third in its budget. As in the case of Cardiff, operators were not able to identify exactly how often, when and in what activities cardholders were participating. This, in turn, created problems when assessing the cost of running the scheme and was a source of some of the tension between Clients and Contractors discussed above. At Cardiff the situation was far worse as memberships were lapsing without renewal because of the lack of human resources dedicated to the scheme.

However, a minority of schemes (less than 10%) had introduced high technology information management systems in the form of swipe cards. Chapter 8 provided an in-depth insight into the benefits of operating such a system at Oxford, which have been



discussed briefly above and are expanded upon in section 9.2 below. These systems reflected the ideal-type post-Fordist model of Leisure Card operation in adopting technological advances for managing schemes, enabling managers to monitor schemes in detail on a frequent basis. This was particularly important when attempting to ensure flexibility and meeting the changing needs of customers.

Therefore, in terms of monitoring and evaluating Leisure Card Schemes, a mix between the ideal Fordist and post-Fordist models was again evident, although the latter was clearly in the minority. It appeared that card operators had adopted information technology to varying degrees between the extremes of manual record keeping and no monitoring, to high-tech management systems networked between facilities which could produce usage data on an hourly basis.

#### *h) Problems*

Many of the problems encountered by card operators could have inhibited the development of either the Fordist or post-Fordist models. The survey and the case studies of Leicester and Cardiff highlighted the fundamental problem of inadequate resources dedicated to schemes, in particular finance, human resources and technology. These problems combined to create what was identified in Chapters 7 and 8 as a vicious circle whereby without adequate resources card schemes could not achieve their objectives. Perceived under-performance in turn led to a reluctance by Councillors and senior managers to dedicate more resources to schemes, a problem which intensified as tightening of Leisure Service budgets increased. The increasing adoption of more post-Fordist objectives related to efficiency also contributed to this vicious circle. Many operators were faced with achieving these objectives through managerial structures that were characteristic of the Fordist model of Leisure Card operation, and in particular, without the necessary investment in marketing and technology to operate schemes effectively. Leicester's Leisure Pass received a 33% cut in its budget, and Cardiff's Passport to Leisure reached a crossroads where it was about to suffer a budget cut, or be re-launched in the Oxford Slice Card mould.

Indeed, Oxford's Slice Card had received the investment necessary to replace the old Recreation Card, in the form of a networked swipe card system with a modern image.



Perhaps most importantly, the re-launch involved an overhaul of the pricing of leisure services to make the scheme self-funding through cross-subsidy. Thus the scheme was not imposed on Contractors who faced losing income from discounts, but rather it was an example of a 'bottom-up' approach, originating from the leisure facilities. The main problem facing the managers at Oxford was a post-Fordist one, of managing the large amount of data produced by the swipe card system and making appropriate use of it. Again this potential problem for a scheme links back to the issue of resources, in this case of staff trained in data management, and the consequent budget and human resources necessary to make use of the data in marketing the scheme.

*i) Future considerations*

The case studies highlighted the unique particularity of card schemes, and so when considering their future, individual circumstances will play an important role. As mentioned above, the consequences of the budget cut for Leicester's Leisure Pass shaped the immediate future for the scheme: its new objectives were to increase use amongst cardholders and to accept falling membership due to reduced marketing activities. There was little evidence that the Pass would follow the ideal-Fordist model in changing management, marketing and monitoring processes, and the budget cut meant that further investment in technology for the scheme was highly unlikely in the near future. The crossroads at which Cardiff's Passport To Leisure stood was equally crucial.

The future of Oxford's Slice Card was more positive, as it appeared to have established a solid membership base, and the next phase of the scheme was bringing on board commercial operators. As discussed above, the main challenge for the scheme was making use of the information produced by the swipe card system in order to develop it and maintain responsiveness to changing customer needs.

In more general terms, the immediate prospect facing all Leisure Card Schemes in Great Britain, was Best Value. There appeared to be opportunities for authorities to employ Leisure Card Schemes to their advantage in measuring the achievement of social objectives under the new Best Value regime. Leisure Card Schemes could play an important part of the 'third way' in local government if operated efficiently and



effectively. The achievement of a mix of social, economic and managerial goals appeared to be compliant with Best Value concepts and 'third way' notions of a mixed economy, joined-up government, pragmatism and partnership between sectors. Leisure Card Schemes may have a potentially vital role in ensuring social objectives are measured and success demonstrated under Best Value. Table 9.1 shows how Leisure Card Schemes have the potential to contribute to the Best Value.

Table 9.1 Potential contribution of Leisure Cards to Best Value

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>CONSULT</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ As a vehicle for speaking to customers and non-users (customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups)</li><li>□ To identify potential customers and target them</li><li>□ To involve consultants in market research</li></ul>  |
| <b>COMPARE</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Produce data on membership, use, geographic take-up for comparison with other authorities and commercial schemes i.e. performance (perhaps differentiating schemes by budget levels). This would provide benchmarks for the achievement of social and economic objectives.</li></ul>                                    |
| <b>CHALLENGE</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ As part of the review procedure for the Leisure Card itself and the 5 yearly departmental reviews to inform management decisions on why the scheme and other activities are provided</li><li>□ To ascertain whether the scheme should be expanded into a multi-tiered scheme (or possibly a Residents' Card).</li></ul> |
| <b>COMPETE</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Constant process of review and continuous improvement to ensure the best service is provided to the customers</li><li>□ Linked to 'compare', to check if best value is achieved in relation to other authorities.</li></ul>   |

However, to achieve this, card schemes would have to embrace the Best Value process and not be protected or separated from it, as had been the case under CCT. This would involve the development of performance indicators such as those identified in Chapter 8, designed specifically for Leisure Cards to ensure schemes were monitored and to enable comparisons to take place between local authorities. Reliance on the performance indicators for sports halls and pools devised by Sport England (2000) (outlined in Chapter 5) would not be sufficient for evaluation of Leisure Card Schemes. As highlighted in Chapters 4 to 7, and particularly in Chapter 8, Leisure Card Schemes are a complex phenomenon and required sophisticated evaluation methods.



Moreover, the danger existed that if New Labour continued to mix moral underclass and social insertion discourses, Leisure Cards may be employed as a tool for social control, not only in terms of seeking to reduce crime and achieve other externalities, but also in determining which groups 'deserve' discounts at leisure facilities. Moreover, should such decisions increasingly become the responsibility of non-elected 'working groups' of cross-sector representatives, this may call into question the 'democracy' of Leisure Card Schemes.

Indeed, multi-tiered schemes demonstrated the potential for social objectives to be forced into the background as concessionary groups become just another tier of the scheme, and a heavily subsidised one at that. The growth in the introduction of Residents' Cards, now constituting almost one third of all Leisure Cards in GB (CIPFA, 1999), increased the probability that social objectives will be downgraded as the majority of customers will not be from disadvantaged groups.

By way of conclusion to the comparison between the empirical evidence analysed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 and the ideal-type Fordist and post-Fordist models constructed in Chapter 3, it was not possible to identify Leisure Card Schemes in GB as either ideal-type Fordist or post-Fordist. A mix between the two models existed, not only across Leisure Card Schemes, but also within them. Across the schemes, the survey revealed that many demonstrated Fordist tendencies relating to objectives, management and administration, marketing and monitoring, whilst at the same time, a minority had begun to adopt objectives and practices that reflected the post-Fordist model.

However, the more in-depth analysis undertaken in the case study research, highlighted certain inconsistencies and ambiguities when compared to the ideal-type models. This revealed a mix of the Fordist and post-Fordist models within individual schemes. In Leicester, for example, managerial objectives had been adopted, some targeted outreach marketing activities had been undertaken, and technology had been employed to manage memberships and monitor the scheme. Despite this, the scheme was still operated in isolation by the Client in an organisational structure that was not particularly flexible or responsive to customer needs, and that had not employed sufficient



technology or evaluation processes to be able to demonstrate the achievement of the scheme's objectives.

In contrast, Oxford's Slice Card had adopted practices more comparable to the post-Fordist model, especially in terms of the use of the swipe card system, image oriented marketing techniques, cross-departmental action and the use of the Contractor to operate the scheme closer to the customers, whilst retaining social objectives and reinforcing them. Moreover, it was not possible to identify sufficient discontinuity from other card schemes that could justify any claim that a 'new' post-Fordist form of Leisure Card had emerged exemplified by schemes such as Oxford's. The schemes still shared very similar objectives, structures, activities and discounts. While this may reflect the timing of the study during a period of transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, further research into Leisure Card Schemes would be required to determine if a post-Fordist model of operation had emerged or not.

## **9.2. Leisure Card Scheme Performance and concepts of poverty, social exclusion and leisure**

Chapters 7 and 8 highlighted the difficulties encountered when attempting to evaluate the performance of Leisure Card Schemes, not only in terms of the lack of technology and resources (particularly staff), but also in the failure of most Leisure Card operators to set measurable targets for schemes, or more fundamentally the absence of market research to identify target market segments. Indeed, the selection of target groups and the performance of card schemes in attempting to meet their social objectives provides a clear link back to Chapter 2 and the consideration of the concepts of poverty, social exclusion and leisure.

The selection of target groups was based around benefit claimant categories which produced the problem of double counting in the monitoring phase due to the fact that many people claimed more than one benefit, but was a convenient means of identifying and grouping people with readily available proof of eligibility. While this ran the risk of blindly following central government policy and changes to benefit eligibility, Leisure Card operators demonstrated a commitment to including groups which contained people



who were not necessarily living on a low income. Groups such as unemployed people, pensioners, lone parents, people aged 16-18 in full or part-time education and in particular dependants of all those eligible for membership, contained those most at risk of living in poverty according to national statistics.

As in the cases of Leicester and Cardiff, the decision of whether or not to target these groups involved assessing economic viability due to the fear of inefficiently and ineffectively allocating resources (in the form of discounts) to potential 'free riders' who did not deserve them. However, without targeting these groups, schemes ran the risk of not including people who were on the border line of poverty and social exclusion, many of whom were constantly falling in and out of poverty. Therefore, perhaps the most important group to include was dependants, as in the case of Oxford, enabling poor and socially excluded households to participate in leisure opportunities together.

Moreover, the case studies revealed that, while targeting neighbourhoods within local authorities was not a stated objective of most Leisure Card Schemes, certain areas were targeted on the basis of officers' local knowledge, as part of marketing initiatives involving door to door visits. The method for measuring geographic take-up developed as part of this study, revealed that neither Leicester nor Oxford had significantly penetrated poor neighbourhoods. The geographic distribution of poverty and deprivation undertaken principally by the DETR (1998) focused on inner cities and in particular 'sink estates', whilst rural poverty was identified as a problem by other studies (RDC, 1998). These neighbourhoods were spaces that had been excluded due to high levels of poverty and crime, as well as a lack of amenities and were being abandoned by occupants at the first opportunity (SEU, 1998; Healey, 1998). Chapter 8 demonstrated the ability of Leisure Card operators to identify poor post codes down to the ED level for targeting and marketing activities, also providing a quantifiable measure for the achievement of social objectives.

Indeed, analysis of the most commonly used performance measures by Leisure Card operators emphasised the need to realise that targeting disadvantaged groups as a mass market was not enough – segmented target groups had to be reached and then



encouraged to use their cards. The incomplete and relatively inaccurate estimations of target market penetration from the survey did serve to highlight varying performance of card schemes from the norm of less than 5% to exceptional schemes such as Leicester's which reached 20% or more. As stated above, double counting made analysis of take-up by target groups difficult, but the cases revealed the popularity of Leisure Cards amongst pensioners in Leicester and dependants in Oxford, groups that did not necessarily include poor people.

In terms of use, the analysis in Chapter 8 had to focus on municipal sport and recreation facilities as little or no data was available for schemes incorporating commercial discounts. The customer survey in Leicester did, however, reveal the popularity of flagship discounts such as cinemas and bowling alleys. However, as such data was rarely collected, reliance was placed on data from leisure centres which was easier and cheaper to obtain. This data revealed a relatively small minority of high frequency users, mainly swimmers, many of whom would have continued to participate at a higher price. These trends were echoed in the cases of Cardiff and Oxford, and also fitted with national participation statistics described in 9.1 concerning the imbalance in the over-representation of higher socio-economic groups compared to lower groups. In the two-tiered welfare state (Henry, 1993) and the dual sport and recreation markets described by the Sports Council (1988), it should have been the exact opposite, with the lower socio-economic groups using the public facilities and the higher groups using the private sector.

Concession-only schemes that had failed to penetrate target markets to attract new users were potentially providing nothing more than discounts for existing users, thus doing little to redress imbalances between socio-economic groups. The same could be said to be true of multi-tiered schemes which used the revenue from full (or nearly full) price paying tiers to subsidise the discounts of concessionary tiers, creating dependency of the latter on the former. Unless new users were attracted to the concession tier, the *status quo* was maintained. This imbalance was therefore necessary in achieving the objectives of economy and efficiency that were given increased salience under CCT, whilst simultaneously attempting to achieve social objectives established as part of a Leisure Card Scheme.



However, it is necessary to look beyond leisure centre participation statistics in order to consider the wider benefits of operating a Leisure Card Scheme. One of these benefits was the provision of management information. The majority of card schemes had computerised databases with details of members from different target groups enabling them to be reached directly, as well as varying degrees of detailed data on usage. These were not only invaluable marketing tools, they also provided evidence of Leisure Service Departments' attempts to achieve social objectives, a task identified as one of the major challenges to the public provision of sport and recreation (Gratton & Taylor, 1985; 1991). Oxford's Slice Card provided an example of another level of management information made possible through networked swipe card systems which produced micro-usage data. This perhaps revealed the potential of Leisure Card Schemes and provided an insight into the 'next generation' of schemes which would enable operators to undertake detailed long-term monitoring of both financial performance and the achievement of social objectives. Such information would also enable constant monitoring of price structures in line with Audit Commission (1999) recommendations.

Moreover, a further benefit of operating a Leisure Card was demonstrated by the national survey which revealed that over a third of schemes included commercial sector discounts as well as discounts on other municipal services. This cross-sector and cross-departmental approach provided a wider range of choice to cardholders, stretching beyond sport and recreation facilities and avoiding the municipal 'passport to sport' image that the majority of other schemes had. This reflected the fact that most leisure spending took place in the commercial sector and that only a relatively small proportion was on sport and recreation participation (FES, 1996/7).

Indeed, this was of particular importance due to the fact that considerable inequality existed in the ability of different groups to consume leisure goods and services (McCabe, 1993), confirming Alcock's (1993) assertion that leisure was a site of inequality. Higher income facilitated participation in leisure and the types of activities and products that could be 'purchased' which became social signifiers (Baudrillard, 1970; 1975) that emphasised differences in social status. These social signifiers formed



part of how people 'recognise' or identify each other in social and economic terms (SEDEC, 1998). Thus leisure was also a source of inequality (Alcock, 1997).

Moreover, needs change and have extended beyond the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation at the local leisure centre – people from all income groups expect to be able to consume the latest and most widely available leisure goods and services. This was proved by both the relatively high proportion of low income families' budget spent on leisure and the behaviour of poor families described by Kempson (1994; 1996). Kempson (1994; 1996) described how parents, often mothers, would forgo more basic needs in order to provide their children with fashion items/toys in order to avoid bullying at school.

Thus, consuming leisure goods and experiences signified a lifestyle which Dean and Melrose (1999) highlighted as paradoxically both differentiating and universalising. Poor people sought the fulfilment of what Maslow classified as higher needs, or what Dean and Melrose (1999) identified as simply seeking fun in order to be included in the boundaries of 'normal' citizenship.

The concept of citizenship is useful in considering the role of Leisure Card Schemes within the broader context of poverty, inequality and inclusion, and is fundamental in the understanding of social exclusion as incomplete citizenship (Lister, 1991). Marshall's model of citizenship had four pillars which were used by Commins (1993) and the SEDEC (1998) in their interpretations of social exclusion: civil, social, economic and political. Disassociation from all of these elements led to social exclusion according to Commins (1993). Leisure consumption, although increasingly important in family expenditure terms, forms only one small part of this wider framework as a social right as it is not as fundamentally necessary as, for example, a civil right such as education.

Indeed, the two factors which underpinned social exclusion were firstly its multi-dimensional nature described above and reflected in the multiple indicators employed by the Social Exclusion Unit (1997), and secondly the notion that it is a process. In terms of overcoming the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, the more choice



Leisure Cards provided (i.e. the more discounts) the more likely it was that cardholders would meet their leisure needs – both by receiving a discount on existing activities they participated in, but also perhaps realising frustrated demand by trying something new. Leisure Cards could therefore enable target groups to realise higher needs, or have fun and feel a ‘normal’ citizen by consuming everyday goods and services. Participation brings potential benefits such as social interaction with other people at the point of purchase and/or consumption (which is often simultaneous in the case of leisure experiences), as well as economic benefits in terms of reduced costs. Discounts to sport and recreation added the benefits identified by Sport England (1999) of improved health, physical and psychological well-being for the individual, plus wider benefits to the local community and economy through regeneration, employment generation and crime reduction. In this sense cardholders could exercise the right to participate and fulfil their obligation to contribute to the wider community as full citizenship requires (Lister, 1990; Giddens, 1998).

However, as stated previously, leisure participation was only one aspect of the multi-dimensional problems of social exclusion which needed to be overcome. As low income is at the heart of social exclusion (see Figure 2.5), Leisure Cards can reduce the cost of participation and increase people’s awareness of leisure opportunities available to them. However, Leisure Cards cannot overcome all of the barriers to participation such as time (Kay and Jackson, 1991; CLR, 1993; Coalter, 1999), or wider social and economic factors that contribute to social exclusion such as unemployment, low educational achievement, poor skills, poor housing, family breakdown and bad health (Robinson & Oppenheim, 1998). Nor can they overcome social signifiers when these are applied in a discriminatory fashion through age, gender, race, disability etc.

Indeed, there is no suggestion that leisure and sporting opportunities can in any way solve the problems of poverty and social exclusion single-handedly. But, as Cars et al (1998) stated "it is possible to design a mix of measures which both improve the physical environment and develop the provision of those educational, employment, health, cultural and leisure activities which underpin creating the kinds of social, economic, political and cultural relationships necessary to combat social exclusion"



(1998 p286). The justification for this is simple: social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon which requires multidimensional policy responses.

However, the lack of research into target market needs and wants by Leisure Card operators, mainly caused by insufficient resources, resulted in a paternalistic approach where discounts were provided 'for' target groups rather than 'with' them. This revealed a more fundamental gap in wider research into the leisure participation and consumption patterns of poor and socially excluded people, and more importantly into their frustrated demand. Customer satisfaction surveys were not common practice amongst Leisure Card operators, and as stated in Chapter 8 should play a key role in the monitoring and development of schemes.

The second underlying factor of social exclusion was that it is a process which involved the failure of social, civil, economic and political systems for individuals and households. Walker (1997) revealed that this process was long-term in nature, leaving a relatively small number of permanently excluded people, whilst others moved in and out of poverty. This had two main consequences for Leisure Card operators.

Firstly, this minority of socially excluded people needed to be identified, perhaps through collaboration with social services and in combination with targeting geographic areas such as sink estates. Once identified, these people needed to be reached through outreach marketing techniques. Secondly, operators needed to monitor the long-term outcomes of Leisure Card membership to evaluate whether or not it was really making a positive difference to the lives of its target groups. The more advanced management information systems enabled the detailed monitoring of use by individuals which could be used to establish daily, weekly, monthly and annual participation patterns using quantitative data. Qualitative methods could also be employed such as participation diaries, in-depth personal interviews and focus group discussions. Such research, which could not be undertaken by local authorities with already stretched resources, but would be of significant academic interest in the understanding of what leisure means to socially excluded people and what role it plays in their everyday lives. This would also improve Leisure Card operators' understanding of target market needs.



However, even if local authorities invest sufficient resources into Leisure Card Schemes, these schemes will still have certain fundamental limitations apart from the level of resources invested in them. It must be realised that the success of a Leisure Card Scheme will largely depend on the quality of the facilities (leisure and social) and experiences for which discounts are offered. If the quality of the leisure facilities and the activities they provide is poor, leisure cards can do no more than offer a reduced price to them and attempt to encourage more people to use them more often. Indeed, the reality may be that before local authorities can introduce or re-launch a Leisure Card, it may first be necessary to invest in facilities and activities, otherwise the expectation generated by images and marketing may not be met when the cards are used.

Therefore, Leisure Cards can enable poor and socially excluded people to participate in a wide range of leisure activities by helping to remove the barrier of price and by increasing awareness and encouraging participation. However, the outcome of their participation will lie in the quality of their experience in the activity participated in and at the facilities used. Thus, Leisure Cards must be combined with well maintained facilities, high levels of customer care and a range of attractive, high quality activities in the authority and with a variety of partners. Essentially Leisure Card Schemes form the beginning and end of the equation: encouraging people to use the facilities, and monitoring what they do there. The middle part is providing the overall quality of service delivery at the facilities. Clients and contractors must work in partnership to ensure the quality of service is high and that leisure cardholders return. This increases the importance of close partnerships with the voluntary and commercial sectors in ensuring that cardholders' experiences are of a consistently high standard.

### **9.3. Methodological evaluation of the regulation approach in the study of Leisure Card Schemes**

Chapter 3 described the advantages of using the regulation approach (Peck and Tickell, 1994) in providing a more flexible theoretical framework for the analysis of Leisure Card Schemes than the structuralist Marxist versions of Regulation Theory, which itself had become fragmented into different schools. The aim of this section is to evaluate



these perceived advantages in the light of the research process undertaken in this study and, overall, to determine what the contribution of the regulation approach to the analysis of Leisure Cards has been.

As shown in 9.1, the regulation approach provided an historical framework based around broad structural shifts in society. This framework formed the context in which Henry (1993) analysed leisure policy development, and which in turn was used in this study to chart the development of Leisure Card Schemes. In addition to leisure policy shifts, perspectives on public leisure provision (Coalter, 1990) and wider discourses on social policy development (Levitas, 1999) were also considered. This provided a structure for the review of literature and research into poverty, social exclusion, leisure policy and more specifically Leisure Cards. It enabled these distinct but partially overlapping matters to be considered together in analysing Leisure Card Schemes.

The chronological/conceptual distinction between periods of Fordism and post-Fordism enabled ideal type models to be constructed so as to compare them with the empirical findings. These ideal models were built around the measurable research constructs identified in Chapter 3 from the review of research into Leisure Cards, and formed a framework for the data collection methods employed. While it is recognised that this use of Weberian ideal types was not intended in the original (Marxist) form of regulation theory, nevertheless in the context of this study in terms of providing a theoretical background, research framework, and structuring the literature review, the regulation approach was very effective.

The broad structural basis of Regulation Theory comprised economic, political, cultural and social dimensions, enabling the diverse concepts of poverty, social exclusion and leisure to be analysed together. In addition to these concepts, the focus of Regulation Theory on organisational structures, management practices and state policy (especially at a local level) was directly applicable to the analysis of Leisure Card Schemes. The ideal type models of Fordist and post-Fordist Cards allowed an evaluation, not only of broader structural shifts, but also changing leisure and social policy discourses, as well as the operational characteristics of card schemes (i.e. objectives, research, administration, marketing and monitoring).



Indeed, the relative flexibility of the regulation approach in its non-structuralist Marxist form, invites empirical investigation and is consistent with the range of research methods adopted. In order to achieve the research objectives, and in particular to gain a full understanding of Leisure Card Schemes, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 all demonstrated that the combination of the postal survey and detailed case studies was essential for measuring the constructs established in Chapter 3. This allowed consideration of the extent to which both outputs of card schemes, and explanations of motives for operating them could be characterised as Fordist or post-Fordist. The national survey provided the macro picture of Leisure Card developments and patterns of provision in 1997/98. It highlighted trends in management practice (objectives, target groups, activities and facilities, research, budgets and pricing), administration (where and how cards could be obtained) common marketing and monitoring practices, as well as a crude indication of how schemes were performing according to membership enrolments. For local authorities without Leisure Cards, a limited comparison was possible in terms of groups targeted, as well as an insight into why they were not operated.

Clearly a postal survey would not provide details about how card schemes were established, the processes, stakeholders and decisions involved in their everyday management, marketing and monitoring. The cases provided the necessary depth of understanding, with the semi-structured interviews revealing conflicts between officers, and the development of new issues and themes that had not been explored in the survey. Valuable data was also provided on the performance of Leisure Card Schemes, including membership take-up and use by cardholders, as demonstrated in Chapter 8. The cases also highlighted how it was important to consider the history of a scheme, its objectives, and especially the resources invested in it, when evaluating it.

Indeed, the three case studies provided an insight into different types of schemes. Leicester's concession-only Leisure Pass was a pioneering scheme from the mid-1980s which showed how such schemes had developed in terms of increased membership (up to 1998/9), widening the range of discounts included, absorbing the impact of CCT, adopting different marketing techniques and information technology, as well as the



effects of budget cuts. Cardiff's concession-only Passport To Leisure typified how many schemes suffered due to a lack of resources and investment in its image. Membership had stagnated, the range of discounts had not been extended and the scheme had lost all its momentum, having been neglected for long periods.

By contrast, Oxford City Council had re-launched its flagging leisure card in a multi-tiered format with a revised pricing structure, and invested in a high-tech IT management system and a modern image which had attracted a large membership after only a short period of operation. The brief case analysis of Brighton and Hove Borough Council, that did not operate a Leisure Card, highlighted a traditional discount system and revealed the problems of not being able to clearly demonstrate the achievement of social objectives, since its disadvantaged users could not be identified, marketed to, nor their use of facilities monitored.

Thus, the combination of national survey and case studies provided a comprehensive insight into the provision of Leisure Cards in Great Britain which had not been undertaken by previous studies. The research constructs were measured effectively which enabled a comparison between the reality of Leisure Card Scheme development and management and the ideal typical Fordist and post-Fordist models.

Therefore, as discussed in 9.1, the empirical research undertaken in this study demonstrated that whilst Leisure Card Scheme management practice was, in general, closer to the Fordist model, in reality a mix of the Fordist and post-Fordist models existed, both across schemes and within them, as discussed in 9.1. The Leisure Card Schemes of the 1980s were a relatively new phenomenon, replacing Fabian universal discounts and the discount systems that required proof of identification at every visit. The management, marketing and monitoring of the majority of schemes in 1997/98 still reflected the ideal typical Fordist model, as identified in 9.1.

Leisure Card Schemes, especially during the mid/late-1980s, were sites and sources of conflict. As section 9.1 and Chapter 4 highlighted, pioneering Leisure Cards were features of Labour-controlled Metropolitan local authorities, many of which were in direct conflict with the Conservative central government and its neo-Liberal policies.



The schemes formed part of what Levitas (1999) identified as the redistributionalist discourse (RED) in attempting to open leisure opportunities to disadvantaged groups. This directly conflicted with the ideas of market freedom associated with anti-collectivism and the moral discourse (MUD), which chastised a corrupt underclass deserving of its plight. The second wave of Leisure Card start-ups in the 1990s which accompanied the introduction of anti-poverty strategies, the rising popularity of New Labour, and emerging social insertion discourses (SID), contrasted with the elitist sports White Paper 'Raising the Game' and the inactivity of John Major's Conservative central government in tackling the effects of poverty and inequality. The ability of Leisure Card operators to select target groups for eligibility gave them the freedom to pursue their own policy objectives locally. This, however, could work in both ways if operators relied on central benefit categorisations because of administrative convenience rather than researching their local markets.

Moreover, Leisure Card Schemes were a site of conflict, especially with introduction of CCT. Most schemes were protected from contracts by Clients, again conflicting with central government policy, and the division with Contractors often produced tensions. Clients, as the operators of card schemes, wished to pursue social objectives in encouraging membership and use amongst disadvantaged groups, whilst Contractors were focussed on economy and efficiency at their facility sites. Although Contractors were reimbursed for lost revenue, they were not always involved in decision making or operational processes.

However, more recent developments in Leisure Card management showed tendencies comparable to those of the ideal post-Fordist model. The Leisure Card Schemes of the mid/late-1990s analysed in this study had changed compared to earlier schemes by: adopting more managerial and economic objectives; a tendency to relaunch concession-only schemes in multi-tiered formats; and in gradually adopting information technology in administration and monitoring procedures. Despite these changes, the lack of resources invested in most schemes left them operating with little or no target market information, limited and unoriginal marketing activities, and an inability to monitor performance effectively.



However, the case of Oxford's Slice Card revealed the potential of Leisure Cards if investment was made, especially in management information systems and an attractive image. This type of scheme was closer to the post-Fordist ideal model in terms of how it was established through corporate agreement, involved collaboration with anti-poverty officers, and the restructuring of pricing structures. The scheme was also operated by the Contractor in liaison with the Client and at close proximity to the customers.

From the more flexible regulation approach (Peck and Tickell, 1994) adopted in this study, the mix of Fordist/post-Fordist ideal management practices described above would be expected in a period of experimentation after crises of Fordism. It is important to emphasise the rejection of the structuralist Marxist version of Regulation Theory with its teleological pitfalls and prescriptive accounts of post-Fordism. The fact that the empirical research revealed a mixed version of Fordist and post-Fordist rationales and outcomes meant that, in retaining aspects of both models, Leisure Card Schemes, in general did not conform to the 'pure' post-Fordist model.

This, therefore, reflected the value of using the ideal-type models of Fordism and post-Fordism in order to compare how the 'reality' of the empirical data differed from the set of relations described in the ideal-type models. Predictive, teleological assumptions regarding the inevitability of a new historical block of time as a successor to Fordism are therefore avoided, and the critical approach of Regulation Theory as *post hoc* rationalisation is retained.

Indeed, one of the underpinning principles of Regulation Theory is that a historical block of time cannot be identified until it has reached its crisis point. While a crisis point has not yet been reached as with Fordism, crisis tendencies have arisen and been responded to. Leisure Cards were originally a response to social crisis tendencies with the Keynesian Welfare State under strain, and attempts to provide leisure opportunities for disadvantaged people through positive discrimination. Later, card schemes had to respond to economic crisis tendencies as part of a restructured welfare state, with increasing emphasis on generating revenue, increasing efficiency, operating more economically and achieving managerialist objectives. Leisure Card Schemes could be interpreted as a policy response to the increased gap between the rich and the poor and



the growing number of people who did not benefit from Thatcherite and neo-Liberal reforms, nor from the growth in leisure choice and consumption enjoyed by the rest of the population. These people included those negatively affected by changes in the labour process, i.e. the growing number of unemployed, people on the insecure periphery of the workforce in 'flexible' low paid, part-time or temporary jobs with poor working conditions – and, of course, their families.

#### **9.4. Future research**

This study has revealed the dramatic growth of Leisure Card Schemes in GB, their distribution and management practices. An attempt has also been made to assess the effectiveness of these schemes, or at least demonstrate how this may be undertaken. However, at the same time a host of new questions and areas for future research have arisen. These will be dealt with in three stages, the first relating to the need for continued research into Leisure Cards, the second into wider research into leisure, poverty and social exclusion, and thirdly the potential for comparative research with other countries.

Firstly, in order to monitor the development of Leisure Cards the national survey should be repeated periodically and more case studies undertaken into various types of schemes, and in particular Residents' Cards, which have grown in number since the time of writing. This research should be conducted in the context of continually developing leisure and wider social policy, taking into consideration new research in the field of poverty and social exclusion.

It is the author's intention to continue to realise the potential of Leisure Card Schemes in research terms. Swipe and smart card technology continually produce millions of bites of data detailing use of public leisure facilities at a microscopic level. Without trained staff or hardware with the capacity to store all this data, the information will be lost as it is constantly replaced by the next day's swipes. This information is not only invaluable to leisure managers and officers, it is a potential gold mine for researchers. If data can be processed before it is replaced, and enough schemes are willing to open



access to their databases, there is a huge source of empirical data ready to be analysed. There is potential for complex behavioural patterns to be mapped out for not only poor and socially excluded groups, but all user groups in the case of multi-tiered schemes.

Moreover, while this study has presented mainly the provision side of Leisure Card Schemes, there is a need for more detailed research into the experiences of cardholders when using their cards. This could take the form of quantitative customer surveys and qualitative methods such as focus groups, personal interviews and participation diaries. Moreover, if these were conducted over a lengthy period, longitudinal data would reveal the long-term outcomes of not only owning a Leisure Card, but also of leisure participation amongst poor and socially excluded groups. This, in combination with the usage data, demonstrates how leisure card schemes represent a vehicle through which leisure participation amongst poor and socially excluded people could be researched. This research would not only contribute to the more effective management of Leisure Card Schemes by identifying cardholders' needs and wants, it would contribute to the understanding of what leisure means in the daily lives of poor and socially excluded people.

Secondly, at the national level, there is little quantitative data on leisure and income and there is a clear need for surveys such as the proposed British Leisure Survey to include questions that may enable data on the participation of poor and socially excluded people to be gathered. It is encouraging that DCMS has funded a pilot study (Coalter et al, 1999). Such moves, however, should be extended to the GHS and the Family Expenditure Survey, both in their content, but also in more accurately representing poor and socially excluded people in their samples. More fundamentally, this may involve a reassessment of using socio-economic groups as an inadequate surrogate.

Finally, there is also potential to undertake comparative research involving other European cities, using Esping Anderson's (1990) classification of welfare systems, or further afield to North America, Australia, New Zealand and Asia. The author has already gathered information on similar schemes in the Netherlands and Singapore, and where schemes do not exist the potential for implementation could be evaluated.



Following the ideas and suggestions above would considerably advance our understanding of the conceptual relationship between poverty, social exclusion and leisure and the role of Leisure Card Schemes which has been embarked upon in this study.



## **Appendix I**

# **Deprivation Indices Methodologies**



## **THE TOWNSEND DEPRIVATION INDEX**

Calculated by summing the standardised score from four variables:

- ❑ The percentage of households without access to a car (which is a proxy indicator of income)
- ❑ The percentage of households not in owner-occupied accommodation (which is a proxy indicator for wealth)
- ❑ The percentage of households in overcrowded accommodation i.e. more than one person per room (which is a direct indicator of material living conditions)
- ❑ Unemployment as a percentage of the economically active population (which is a measure of a general lack of material resources).

The z-scores are calculated by standardising each variable to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. This is done by subtracting the mean of the variable the local authorities in England from the mean of each district and then dividing by the standard deviation of all the districts. Before the z-scores for unemployment and overcrowding are calculated these variables are first transformed to reduce their skewness using the log transformation  $y = \ln(x+1)$  where  $x$  is the untransformed variable. The means and standard deviations for all the authorities in England are shown in Gordon and Forrest (1995).

## **PERCENTAGE OF POOR PEOPLE**

Gordon and Forrest (1995) attempted to overcome the problem of representing poverty and deprivation with z-scores by estimating the proportion of poor households in a district using the results of the Breadline Britain in the 1990s Survey to produce a weighted index. Six variables were used:

- ❑ Number of unemployed people
- ❑ Number of households containing a person with a limiting long-term illness
- ❑ Number of unskilled workers
- ❑ Number of households with no access to a car



- ❑ Number of households not in owner occupied accommodation
- ❑ Number of loan parent households

The number of poor households was calculated as:

21.7% of the number of households with no car + 20.3% of the number of households not in owner occupied accommodation + 16% of the number of loan parent households + 15.9% of the number of workers in social classes IV and V + 10.8% of the number of households containing a person with a limiting long-term illness + 9.4% of unemployed workers (see Gordon and Forrest, 1995 for more details).

## **WELSH OFFICE INDEX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

The index is calculated for every electoral ward in Wales. It is based on the following variables:

- ❑ Unemployment
- ❑ The economically active population
- ❑ Low socio-economic groups in the population
- ❑ Population loss in the 20 to 59 years age group
- ❑ The permanently sick
- ❑ Overcrowding in housing
- ❑ Basic housing amenities
- ❑ Standard mortality rate

Raw data for each variable is standardised by producing z-scores. First the mean and standard deviation of all values for each variable in the ward is calculated. The difference between every individual value and its respective mean is measured in terms of the standard deviation of that mean. This produces the z-score (for more detail contact the Welsh Office direct on 01222 823652).



The methodology for the DETR 1998 Index of Local Deprivation was taken directly from the DETR web site:

<http://www.detr.gov.uk/regeneration/98ild/annexc.htm>

**Department of the Environment,  
Transport and the Regions**

**1998 INDEX OF LOCAL DEPRIVATION**

**METHODOLOGY**

The statistical steps used to combine the individual indicators into an index are:

**a. Standardisation**

If indicators are to be combined, account has to be taken of the fact that, for example 15% is a high proportion on some of the indicators but is a low or medium proportion on others. Standardisation alters the values to make them statistically comparable. Signed Chi-square is the standardisation method used, principally because it takes account of the robustness of data where small numbers are involved and reflects absolute levels of deprivation.

**b. Transformation**

Indicators with a great range will tend to have a disproportionately high impact on the overall index. Therefore, the indicators must be transformed so that their distributions are as similar as possible. A logarithmic transformation was applied which has the effect of producing a distribution closer to the normal curve and dampening the impact of extreme values.

**c. The standardised mortality ratio and insurance premium indicators**

The SMR and insurance premium indicators are already expressed in an index form with respect to the England average. The procedures to get them in a suitable form to be combined with the other indicators are therefore different than for the other indicators. First, they have been converted to a scale where the national value is zero and the appropriate negative or plus sign added to indicate whether an area is above or below the national average on the indicator. However, as the chi-square methodology is not used this results in standardised values that are significantly smaller than for the other indicators, e.g. the highest value on the SMR indicator is 1.41, whereas on the other indicators it tends to be in the range from 3.0 - 4.0. If, as in the 1991 Index the values for these two indicators were simply included in the index in this form then they would have considerably less influence on the overall index than the other indicators. Therefore, their values have been multiplied by two to give them a similar level of influence in the overall index.



#### **d. Summing the indicators**

The standardisation and transformation procedure produces a signed chi-square value for each of the indicators. A positive value shows that the area has a higher value than the norm (in this case England) on that particular indicator and a negative value, that it has lower value than the national average. The indicators then need to be combined to give the overall index score. In the 1991 Index, the values of each indicator were simply added together to produce either a positive or negative overall index score with zero interpretable as the average level of deprivation in England.

However, as the index is an index of deprivation rather than an index of affluence it is counterintuitive that positive values, i.e. deprived, on some indicators are cancelled out by good conditions, i.e. negative scores, on other indicators. This point was broadly supported by the majority of responses to the external consultation. Therefore, only the positive values, i.e. those greater than the England average, have been summed to give the overall index score for each area.

### **Annex B**

#### **DEFINITIONS OF THE INDICATORS FROM THE 1991 CENSUS OF POPULATION**

The 6 indicators from the 1991 Census of Population data are calculated from the following SAS cell numbers:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Unemployed</i>  | S080078+S080232   |
| <i>Economically Active</i>   | S080012+S080166   |
| <i>Children in low earning households</i> - with no earner or with only one parent in part-time employment                             | S360012+S360018+S360030+S360036+S360048+S400064+S400071 |
| <i>Dependent children</i>  | S360066   |
| <i>Overcrowded Households</i> - with more than one person per room   | S230003+S230004   |
| <i>(Total) Households</i>  | S230001   |
| <i>Residents in Households lacking basic amenities</i> - lacking or sharing a bath/shower and/or WC, or in non-permanent accommodation | S200181+S200149   |
| <i>Residents in Households</i>   | S200141+S200149   |
| <i>Households with no car</i>  | S200131   |
| <i>Households</i>  | S200001   |
| <i>17 year olds (no longer) in full time education</i>   | S370041+S370042   |
| <i>17 year olds</i>  | S370029+S370030   |



## **Appendix II**

**A Questionnaire to Leisure Card Operators**

**B Questionnaire to Authorities Not Operating  
Leisure Card Operators**



## **Appendix III**

### **Interview Schedule**



## **INTERVIEW- LEISURE CARD OFFICER CARDIFF 15.9.98**

### **Background**

- ☐ In your view, why was there a need for a LC in Cardiff?
- ☐ Apart from the research project undertaken by LU, was any other research carried out before the launch of the scheme?

### **Aims and objectives**

- ☐ What were the aims of the LC when it was established?
- ☐ Have these aims changed since then?
- ☐ Do you see the LC as a means of socialising as well as for sport and recreation?

### **Budget**

- ☐ In your view, do you think the scheme has been financially viable?
- ☐ Do you believe the cost of running the scheme is excessive?
- ☐ Is the number of staff working on the scheme adequate?

### **Target groups**

- ☐ Have the criteria for selecting target groups changed from when the scheme was introduced?
- ☐ Are there any target groups you would like to include in the scheme that you have not already?
- ☐ Are ethnic minorities priority target groups?
- ☐ Do you give any specific consideration to targeting specifically low income areas eg council estates?



### **Facilities/Activities**

- ☐ How was it decided which facilities/activities would be included in the scheme?
- ☐ Are there any you would like to see included?
- ☐ When considering the facilities to offer, was there any liaison with the medical profession?
- ☐ Are there any restrictions on time of use for LC holders?  
If yes, what is the reason for this?
- ☐ Is there any liaison between facilities offering the LC to discuss the policy, provision and management of the scheme?
- ☐ Is there any liaison between the leisure officers and facility operators?  
is the relationship guided by the CCT contract?  
is this relationship positive? and why?  
if no, how could this be improved?
- ☐ How important is the issue of including transport to enable card holders to get to the facilities on offer?  
If no, do you feel this sort of service should be provided?
- ☐ Do you operate smart cards? How effective are they?

### **Application details/procedure**

- ☐ How was the price of the card determined?
- ☐ Has the price of the card changed or will it change?
- ☐ Why is the card issued for this amount of time?
- ☐ How effective is the system of renewal?



### **Impact of the scheme**

- ☐ What other benefits have there been from the scheme?
- ☐ Do you believe that the LC is reaching its target groups?

### **Marketing**

- ☐ Please describe the marketing strategy for the scheme?
- ☐ What are the most effective forms of marketing?

### **Monitoring**

- ☐ How was it decided what criteria to use to determine whether or not the aims of the scheme had been achieved?
- ☐ Why did you decide to monitor the scheme every x months?
  - what does this involve?
  - is this frequent enough?
  - if not, what else could be done?
- ☐ Has the monitoring of the scheme contributed to the scheme's performance?

### **Problems**

- ☐ What were the major problems you encountered when running the scheme?
- ☐ Do you perceive any future problems?
- ☐ Do you think there is a stigma attached to owning a LC?

### **Future**

- ☐ Are there any aspects of the scheme you would like to see improved?
- ☐ What does the future hold for the scheme under Best Value?



## **INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN**

### **Leicester City Council**

Leisure Card Officer

Assistant to Leisure Card Officer

Contracts Manger

Assistant Director of Leisure Services

### **Oxford City Council**

Client Service Manager

Centre Manger, Temple Cowley Pools

Leisure Card Assistant

Former Contracts Service Manager

### **Cardiff City Council**

Leisure Officer (partly responsible for the card scheme)

Contracts Managers (there were two)

Assistant Director of Leisure Services

### **Brighton & Hove Borough Council**

Client Contracts Manager

Leisure Projects Manager

Arts Development Officer

### **Additional interview:**

Leisure Card Officer at Coventry City Council



**Appendix IV**

**Tables for Figures in Chapters 4 to 8**



**Table AT1 The introduction of Leisure Cards 1980-1997**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>n</b> |
|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| 1980        | 1        | 1990        | 5        |
| 1981        | 2        | 1991        | 8        |
| 1982        | 2        | 1992        | 6        |
| 1984        | 1        | 1993        | 7        |
| 1985        | 3        | 1994        | 9        |
| 1986        | 7        | 1995        | 9        |
| 1987        | 4        | 1996        | 8        |
| 1988        | 8        | 1997        | 16       |
| 1989        | 5        |             |          |

**Table AT2 Political control of local authorities when LCS were introduced 1980-1989**

| <b>Political Party</b> | <b>n</b> |
|------------------------|----------|
| Conservative           | 1        |
| Labour                 | 27       |
| Liberal Democrat       | 5        |

**Table AT3 Introduction of LCS by local authority type**

|                           | <b>1980-1989</b> | <b>1990-1997</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| London Borough            | 6                | 6                |
| Scotland                  | 2                | 7                |
| Metropolitan Districts    | 7                | 8                |
| Unitary Authority         | 6                | 8                |
| English Non-Met Districts | 10               | 42               |
| Wales                     | 2                | 4                |

**Table AT4 Political control of LAs when LCS were introduced 1990-97**

|                  | <b>n</b> |
|------------------|----------|
| Conservative     | 3        |
| Labour           | 55       |
| Liberal Democrat | 8        |
| Independent      | 3        |
| Hung             | 6        |
| Total            | 75       |



**Table AT5 Representativeness of response to the national survey**

|                           | All GB LAs |    | Respondents |    |
|---------------------------|------------|----|-------------|----|
|                           | n          | %  | n           | %  |
| London Borough            | 33         | 8  | 17          | 8  |
| Metropolitan Districts    | 36         | 9  | 19          | 9  |
| Unitary Authorities       | 27         | 7  | 19          | 9  |
| English Non-Met Districts | 261        | 64 | 130         | 60 |
| Wales                     | 22         | 5  | 12          | 6  |
| Scotland                  | 32         | 8  | 18          | 8  |

**Table AT6 Local authority status: a comparison between all LAs, those with and those without LCs (UK)**

|                           | All UK LAs |    | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|---------------------------|------------|----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|                           | n          | %  | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| London Borough            | 33         | 8  | 12           | 10 | 5               | 5  |
| Metropolitan Districts    | 36         | 9  | 16           | 14 | 3               | 3  |
| Unitary Authorities       | 27         | 7  | 14           | 12 | 5               | 5  |
| English Non-Met Districts | 261        | 64 | 57           | 49 | 73              | 74 |
| Wales                     | 22         | 5  | 6            | 5  | 6               | 6  |
| Scotland                  | 32         | 8  | 11           | 10 | 7               | 7  |

**Table AT7 Local authority status: a comparison between LC types (UK)**

|                           | Concession only<br>(n) | Multi-tier<br>(n) | Residents cards<br>(n) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| London Borough            | 6                      | 6                 | 0                      |
| Metropolitan Districts    | 8                      | 6                 | 1                      |
| Unitary Authorities       | 7                      | 6                 | 0                      |
| English Non-Met Districts | 27                     | 21                | 4                      |
| Wales                     | 5                      | 1                 | 0                      |
| Scotland                  | 6                      | 4                 | 0                      |



**Table AT8 Population: a comparison between all UK local authorities, those with and those without LCS**

| '000s       | All UK LAs |    | LAs with LCS |    | LAs without LCS |    |
|-------------|------------|----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|             | n          | %  | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| 0-49,000    | 17         | 4  | 2            | 2  | 7               | 7  |
| 50-99,000   | 148        | 36 | 28           | 25 | 38              | 37 |
| 100-149,000 | 127        | 31 | 35           | 30 | 39              | 39 |
| 150-199,000 | 47         | 11 | 18           | 16 | 10              | 10 |
| 200-249,000 | 31         | 8  | 10           | 9  | 5               | 5  |
| 250-299,000 | 19         | 5  | 8            | 7  | 1               | 1  |
| 300-349,000 | 11         | 3  | 6            | 5  | 0               | 0  |
| 350,000+    | 11         | 3  | 8            | 7  | 0               | 0  |

**Table A9 Population of local authorities operating LCS: a comparison of LC types**

| '000s       | Concession only | Multi-tier | Residents cards |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|
|             | (n)             | (n)        | (n)             |
| 0-49,999    | 0               | 0          | 0               |
| 50-99,999   | 14              | 8          | 2               |
| 100-149,999 | 18              | 15         | 2               |
| 150-199,999 | 9               | 7          | 0               |
| 200-249,999 | 6               | 4          | 0               |
| 250-299,999 | 3               | 5          | 0               |
| 300-349,999 | 4               | 2          | 0               |
| 350,000+    | 4               | 3          | 1               |

**Table AT10 Net Expenditure per capita on leisure (1997/98): a comparison between all LAs, those with and those without LCS (UK)**

| £ per capita | All UK LAs |     | LAs with LCS |    | LAs without LCS |    |
|--------------|------------|-----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|              | n          | %   | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| £0-5         | 1          | 0.2 | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| £5,01-10     | 4          | 1   | 1            | 1  | 2               | 2  |
| £10,01-15    | 16         | 4   | 3            | 3  | 7               | 7  |
| £15,01-20    | 32         | 8   | 5            | 4  | 10              | 10 |
| £20,01-25    | 33         | 8   | 6            | 5  | 13              | 13 |
| £25,01-30    | 46         | 11  | 8            | 7  | 13              | 13 |
| £30,01-35    | 35         | 9   | 14           | 12 | 5               | 5  |
| £35,01-40    | 26         | 6   | 8            | 7  | 4               | 4  |
| £40,01-45    | 25         | 6   | 6            | 5  | 7               | 7  |
| £45,01-50    | 11         | 3   | 3            | 3  | 4               | 4  |
| £50,01-55    | 10         | 2   | 5            | 4  | 3               | 3  |
| £55,01-60    | 10         | 2   | 4            | 3  | 1               | 1  |
| £60,01-65    | 6          | 2   | 3            | 3  | 0               | 0  |
| £65,01+      | 28         | 7   | 11           | 3  | 4               | 4  |
| N/A          | 128        | 31  | 39           | 10 | 26              | 26 |

(CIPFA, 1997)



**Table AT11 Net Expenditure per capita on leisure (1997/98): a comparison between LCS types**

| <i>£ per capita</i> | Concession only (n) | Multi-tier (n) | Residents cards (n) |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| £0-5                | 0                   | 0              | 0                   |
| £5,01-10            | 0                   | 1              | 0                   |
| £10,01-15           | 2                   | 1              | 0                   |
| £15,01-20           | 4                   | 0              | 0                   |
| £20,10-25           | 4                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £25,01-30           | 4                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £30,01-35           | 7                   | 6              | 0                   |
| £35,01-40           | 4                   | 3              | 1                   |
| £40,01-45           | 4                   | 1              | 1                   |
| £45,01-50           | 1                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £50,01-55           | 3                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £55,01-60           | 2                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £60,01-65           | 0                   | 2              | 0                   |
| £65,01+             | 5                   | 2              | 1                   |
| N/A                 | 19                  | 5              | 2                   |

(CIPFA, 1997)

**Table AT12 Change in political control of local authorities: a comparison between all UK LAs, those with and those without LCs**

|                 | All UK LAs |     | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|-----------------|------------|-----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|                 | n          | %   | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| Con-Lab         | 26         | 7   | 9            | 8  | 7               | 8  |
| Con-LD          | 6          | 2   | 2            | 2  | 1               | 1  |
| Con-Independent | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Con-Hung        | 39         | 10  | 6            | 5  | 20              | 20 |
| Lab-Con         | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 1               | 1  |
| Lab-LD          | 2          | 1   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Lab-Independent | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Lab-Hung        | 2          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 0               | 0  |
| LD-Con          | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| LD-Lab          | 2          | 1   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| LD-Independent  | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| LD-Hung         | 1          | 0,2 | 0            | 0  | 1               | 1  |
| Inde-Con        | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Inde-Lab        | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Inde-LD         | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 2               | 2  |
| Inde-Hung       | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Hung-Con        | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Hung-Lab        | 43         | 11  | 16           | 14 | 6               | 6  |
| Hung-LD         | 14         | 3   | 4            | 3  | 4               | 4  |
| Hung-Inde       | 1          | 0,2 | 0            | 0  | 1               | 1  |
| No change       | 226        | 55  | 68           | 59 | 46              | 47 |
| Other           | 5          | 1   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| N/A             | 37         | 9   | 10           | 9  | 8               | 8  |



**Table AT13 Income Support beneficiaries as a % of local authority population: a comparison between all LAs, those with and those without LCs (England only)**

| %       | All UK LAs |     | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|---------|------------|-----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|         | n          | %   | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| 0-4,9   | 1          | 0,3 | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 5-9,9   | 114        | 32  | 19           | 19 | 41              | 48 |
| 10-14,9 | 123        | 35  | 32           | 33 | 28              | 33 |
| 15-19,9 | 73         | 21  | 28           | 29 | 9               | 11 |
| 20-24,9 | 20         | 6   | 8            | 8  | 5               | 6  |
| 25-29,9 | 6          | 2   | 3            | 3  | 0               | 0  |
| 30-34,9 | 5          | 1   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 35-39,9 | 1          | 0,3 | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| N/A     | 13         | 4   | 7            | 7  | 3               | 4  |

(Regional Trends, 1997)

**Table AT14 Percentage of local authority populations defined as poor: a comparison between all LAs, those with and those without LCs (England only)**

| %       | All UK LAs |     | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|---------|------------|-----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|         | n          | %   | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| 0-4,9   | 1          | 0,3 | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| 5-9,9   | 5          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 2               | 2  |
| 10-14,9 | 72         | 21  | 12           | 13 | 28              | 34 |
| 15-19,9 | 160        | 46  | 38           | 40 | 40              | 49 |
| 20-24,9 | 68         | 20  | 28           | 30 | 8               | 9  |
| 25-29,9 | 28         | 8   | 10           | 11 | 4               | 5  |
| 30-34,9 | 8          | 2   | 2            | 2  | 0               | 0  |
| 35-39,9 | 4          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 0               | 0  |

(Gordon and Forrest, 1995)



**Table AT15 Unemployment ('000s) for UK local Authorities: a comparison between all local authorities, those with and those without LCs (UK)**

| %       | All UK LAs |     | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|---------|------------|-----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|         | n          | %   | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| 0-0,9   | 26         | 6   | 3            | 3  | 11              | 11 |
| 1-1,9   | 102        | 25  | 18           | 16 | 30              | 30 |
| 2-2,9   | 87         | 21  | 18           | 16 | 23              | 23 |
| 3-3,9   | 52         | 13  | 17           | 15 | 13              | 13 |
| 4-4,9   | 28         | 7   | 11           | 10 | 5               | 5  |
| 5-5,9   | 25         | 6   | 6            | 5  | 8               | 8  |
| 6-6,9   | 11         | 3   | 7            | 6  | 2               | 2  |
| 7-7,9   | 18         | 4   | 9            | 8  | 2               | 2  |
| 8-8,9   | 7          | 2   | 1            | 1  | 1               | 1  |
| 9-9,9   | 7          | 2   | 2            | 2  | 1               | 1  |
| 10-10,9 | 7          | 2   | 4            | 3  | 0               | 0  |
| 11-11,9 | 8          | 2   | 6            | 5  | 0               | 0  |
| 12-12,9 | 7          | 2   | 3            | 3  | 2               | 2  |
| 13-13,9 | 3          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 0               | 0  |
| 14-14,9 | 4          | 1   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 15-15,9 | 5          | 1   | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| 16-16,9 | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 17-17,9 | 2          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 0               | 0  |
| 18-18,9 | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 19-19,9 | 1          | 0,2 | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 20-20,9 | 0          | 0   | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 21+     | 6          | 2   | 4            | 4  | 0               | 0  |
| N/A     | 5          | 1   | 2            | 2  | 1               | 1  |

(Regional Trends, 1997)

**Table AT16 - Households receiving Housing Benefit as a % of total households: a comparison between all LAs, those with and those without LCs (England only)**

| %       | All UK LAs |    | LAs with LCs |    | LAs without LCs |    |
|---------|------------|----|--------------|----|-----------------|----|
|         | n          | %  | n            | %  | n               | %  |
| 0-4,9   | 1          | ,3 | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| 5-9,9   | 35         | 10 | 5            | 5  | 12              | 14 |
| 10-14,9 | 129        | 36 | 28           | 29 | 48              | 56 |
| 15-19,9 | 80         | 23 | 23           | 24 | 8               | 9  |
| 20-24,9 | 49         | 14 | 23           | 24 | 5               | 6  |
| 25-29,9 | 23         | 7  | 8            | 8  | 5               | 6  |
| 30-34,9 | 14         | 4  | 4            | 4  | 4               | 5  |
| 35-39,9 | 4          | 1  | 0            | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| 40-44,9 | 3          | 1  | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| 45-49,9 | 5          | 1  | 1            | 1  | 1               | 1  |
| 50+     | 2          | 1  | 1            | 1  | 0               | 0  |
| N/A     | 11         | 3  | 3            | 3  | 3               | 4  |

(Regional Trends, 1997)

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**Table AT17 Reasons for establishing LCS**

|   | Primary reason<br>n | Secondary reason<br>n | Third reason<br>n |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Encourage low income people to participate in sport | 56                  | 31                    | 9                 |
| Ideological commitment to low income people         | 24                  | 37                    | 12                |
| Encourage a sense of citizenship                    | 4                   | 12                    | 29                |
| To fill spare capacity at facilities                | 2                   | 13                    | 18                |
| To generate income and hold down subsidies          | 5                   | 2                     | 10                |
| To provide a marketing database                     | 1                   | 3                     | 6                 |
| To replace complex discount schemes                 | 7                   | 6                     | 10                |
| Other   | 9                   | 1                     | 6                 |

**Table AT18 Primary reason for introducing a LCS: a comparison of LCS types**

|   | Concession only<br>(n) | Multi-tier<br>(n) | Residents cards<br>(n) |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Ideological commitment to poor people           | 13                     | 9                 | 1                      |
| Encourage participation in sport by poor people | 37                     | 16                | 0                      |
| Encourage sense of citizenship                  | 1                      | 3                 | 0                      |
| Fill spare capacity                             | 2                      | 0                 | 0                      |
| Generate income                                 | 1                      | 3                 | 1                      |
| To provide a marketing database                 | 0                      | 1                 | 0                      |
| Replace over-complex discount systems           | 3                      | 2                 | 0                      |
| Other reason                                    | 2                      | 5                 | 1                      |
| N/A   | 0                      | 5                 | 1                      |

**Table AT19 Types of research undertaken when establishing a LCS**

| Types of research undertaken                  | No. | %  |
|---|-----|----|
| Liaison with other local authorities          | 80  | 70 |
| Consultation with municipal facility staff    | 61  | 53 |
| Survey of potential customers                 | 30  | 26 |
| Consultation with residents' associations     | 24  | 21 |
| Consultation with local commercial businesses | 22  | 19 |
| Focus group discussions                       | 14  | 12 |
| No research at all                            | 3   | 3  |
| Other   | 11  | 10 |



**Table AT20 Do LCS operators set performance targets?**

| <b>Were performance targets set for LCS?</b> |            |          |
|--|------------|----------|
|  | <b>No,</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Yes  | 32         | 28       |
| No   | 77         | 67       |
| Don't know                                   | 3          | 3        |
| Not Answered                                 | 3          | 3        |

**Table AT21 A comparison between groups targeted by LCS operators and non operators**

|                              | <b>LCS operators</b> |          | <b>Non-operators</b> |          |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
|                              | <b>n</b>             | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b>             | <b>%</b> |
| Income Support               | 96                   | 83       | 44                   | 44       |
| Unemployed                   | 91                   | 79       | 74                   | 74       |
| Family Credit                | 85                   | 73       | 32                   | 32       |
| FT students                  | 73                   | 64       | 53                   | 53       |
| All pensioners               | 67                   | 59       | 9                    | 9        |
| Incapacity Benefit           | 66                   | 57       | 30                   | 30       |
| Disability Living Allowance  | 64                   | 56       | 35                   | 35       |
| Housing Benefit              | 63                   | 54       | 20                   | 20       |
| Disability Working Allowance | 55                   | 48       | 29                   | 29       |
| Invalidity Benefit           | 54                   | 47       | 22                   | 22       |
| All residents                | 50                   | 44       | 16                   | 16       |
| YTS                          | 51                   | 44       | 5                    | 5        |
| Single parents               | 32                   | 28       | 21                   | 21       |
| Non residents                | 22                   | 20       | 7                    | 7        |
| Council Tax                  | 20                   | 17       | 0                    | 0        |
| All disabled                 | 20                   | 17       | 11                   | 0        |
| JSA                          | 19                   | 16       | 0                    | 0        |
| Elite sports people          | 17                   | 15       | 39                   | 39       |
| Pensioners on benefit only   | 14                   | 12       | 0                    | 0        |
| PT students                  | 13                   | 11       | 0                    | 0        |
| Severe disablement           | 8                    | 7        | 0                    | 0        |
| Social Fund                  | 7                    | 6        | 14                   | 14       |

**Table AT22 Activities/facilities included in LCS**

|                                    | n   | %  |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Municipal sport and rec facilities | 111 | 97 |
| Municipal arts facilities          | 46  | 40 |
| Heritage attractions               | 40  | 35 |
| Commercial operators               | 33  | 28 |
| Entertainments/events              | 19  | 16 |
| Private arts                       | 18  | 16 |
| Countryside recreation             | 11  | 10 |
| Libraries                          | 10  | 9  |
| Voluntary sector                   | 9   | 8  |
| Education courses                  | 7   | 6  |
| Transport                          | 5   | 4  |

**Table AT23 Locations where Leisure Card applications were received**

|  | No, | %  |
|--|-----|----|
| Municipal sport and recreation centres | 98  | 85 |
| Council offices                        | 67  | 57 |
| Other                                  | 27  | 24 |
| Community/neighbourhood centres        | 18  | 16 |
| Post Offices                           | 3   | 3  |
| Citizens' Advice Bureau                | 1   | 1  |
| Youth Clubs                            | 1   | 1  |
| OAP clubs                              | 1   | 1  |

**Table AT24 Length of Leisure Card issue**

|                    | No, | %  |
|--------------------|-----|----|
| Less than 1 year   | 12  | 10 |
| 1 year             | 91  | 79 |
| More than one year | 5   | 5  |
| Other              | 1   | 1  |
| N/A                | 6   | 5  |

**Table AT25 Method of LCS membership renewal**

|            | No, | %  |
|------------|-----|----|
| Rolling    | 71  | 62 |
| Fixed date | 34  | 30 |
| Other      | 10  | 9  |



**Table AT26 Number of staff working on LCS**

| No, of staff | n  | %  |
|--------------|----|----|
| 0            | 22 | 19 |
| 0,5          | 9  | 8  |
| 1            | 22 | 19 |
| 1,5          | 9  | 8  |
| 2            | 10 | 9  |
| 2,5          | 0  | 0  |
| 3            | 3  | 3  |
| 4            | 1  | 1  |
| N/A          | 39 | 34 |

**Table AT27 Marketing activities of LCs**

|                                 | n   | %  |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|
| Leaflets in sports centres      | 102 | 88 |
| Posters at sports facilities    | 83  | 74 |
| Leaflets in other public places | 80  | 69 |
| Newspaper adverts               | 50  | 44 |
| Leaflets to houses              | 22  | 19 |
| Radio                           | 13  | 11 |
| Other                           | 16  | 14 |

**Table AT28 How frequently LCS are reviewed**

|   | % of Respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Quarterly                               | 5                |
| Every 6 months                          | 5                |
| Annually                                | 41               |
| Every 2 years or less frequently        | 9                |
| Not at all                              | 17               |
| Currently undertaking a review          | 8                |
| Reviews undertaken as and when required | 10               |
| Don't know                              | 1                |
| Other                                   | 1                |
| N/A                                     | 6                |

**Table AT29 Monitoring by LCs**

|                                 | n  | %  |
|---------------------------------|----|----|
| Computer records                | 86 | 75 |
| Intelli tills                   | 65 | 57 |
| Smart cards                     | 11 | 10 |
| Take-up by particular groups    | 65 | 56 |
| Take-up by groups at facilities | 45 | 39 |

**Table AT30 LCS membership as a % of the population**

| No, of members | n  | %  |
|----------------|----|----|
| Less than 1000 | 18 | 16 |
| 1000-4999      | 30 | 26 |
| 5000-9999      | 19 | 17 |
| 10000-14999    | 7  | 6  |
| 15000-19999    | 5  | 4  |
| 20000-24999    | 3  | 2  |
| 25000-29999    | 4  | 3  |
| 30000+         | 1  | 1  |
| N/A            | 28 | 24 |

**Table AT31 Membership total as a % of the population: concession-only and multi-tiered LCS**

| No, of members | Concession-only (n) | Multi-tiered (n) |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Less than 1000 | 22                  | 7                |
| 1000-4999      | 29                  | 23               |
| 5000-9999      | 8                   | 27               |
| 10000-14999    | 3                   | 9                |
| 15000-19999    | 3                   | 7                |
| 20000-24999    | 0                   | 5                |
| 25000-29999    | 3                   | 5                |
| 30000+         | 0                   | 0                |
| N/A            | 31                  | 18               |

**Table AT32 Membership of multi-tiered schemes as a % of total population**

| % with multi-tiered LCS | n  | %  |
|-------------------------|----|----|
| 0-5%                    | 19 | 43 |
| 6-10%                   | 12 | 27 |
| 11-15%                  | 3  | 7  |
| 16%+                    | 2  | 5  |
| N/A                     | 8  | 18 |

**Table AT33 Percentage of poor people owning cards in authorities operating concession only schemes**

| % poor people with LCS | n  |
|------------------------|----|
| 0-4,9%                 | 15 |
| 5-9,9%                 | 8  |
| 10-14,9%               | 5  |
| 15-19,9%               | 2  |
| 20%+                   | 4  |

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**Table AT34 Total Leicester Leisure Pass membership 1987/88-1998/99**

|         | <b>No. of members</b> |
|---------|-----------------------|
| 1987/88 | 6,519                 |
| 1988/89 | 12,317                |
| 1989/90 | 14,098                |
| 1990/91 | 16,026                |
| 1991/92 | 17,865                |
| 1992/93 | 18,341                |
| 1993/94 | 25,069                |
| 1994/95 | 27,263                |
| 1995/96 | 30,071                |
| 1996/97 | 28,665                |
| 1998/99 | 16,215                |

**Table AT35 Ethnic breakdown of Leicester Leisure Pass membership 1996/97**

|            | <b>No. members</b> | <b>%</b> |
|------------|--------------------|----------|
| White      | 18,632             | 65       |
| Asian      | 8,313              | 29       |
| Afro carib | 1,147              | 4        |

**Table AT36 Oxford's Bonus Slice membership**

| <b>Eligibility category</b> | <b>No. members</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Dependant                   | 2020               |
| Income Support              | 822                |
| Family Credit               | 434                |
| Unemp JSA                   | 327                |
| Housing Benefit             | 167                |
| Disability L/A              | 103                |
| Incapacity Benefit          | 96                 |
| NHS                         | 80                 |
| Reg disabled                | 52                 |
| Invalidity C/A              | 48                 |
| C/Tax                       | 39                 |
| U17 group                   | 13                 |
| Adult group                 | 11                 |
| Attendance allowance        | 10                 |
| Unemp I/P                   | 8                  |
| YTS                         | 7                  |
| Disability W/A              | 6                  |
| Refugee                     | 2                  |

**Table AT37 Use of sports centres by Leicester's Leisure Pass members 1987-1997**

|         | No.visits |
|---------|-----------|
| 1987/88 | 7,926     |
| 1988/89 | 82,317    |
| 1989/90 | 89,933    |
| 1990/91 | 90,233    |
| 1991/92 | 113,578   |
| 1992/93 | 135,607   |
| 1993/94 | 170,332   |
| 1994/95 | 175,325   |
| 1995/96 | 179,562   |
| 1996/97 | 188,268   |

**Table AT38 Most popular sports activities participated in by Leicester's Leisure Pass members**

|                             | % respondents to user survey |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Swimming                    | 92                           |
| Weights/ fitness facilities | 23                           |
| Badminton                   | 20                           |
| Keep fit/ aerobics          | 16                           |
| Bowls                       | 12                           |

**Table AT39 Attendance and revenue from Cardiff PTL members at municipal sports facilities July-September 1997**

|                           | JULY |         | AUGUST |           | SEPTEMBER |         |
|---------------------------|------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|
|                           | ATT  | £       | ATT    | £         | ATT       | £       |
| Pentwyn LC                | 665  | 619.90  | 566    | 522.25    | 589       | 559.20  |
| Llanishen LC*             | 1077 | 1012.70 | 914    | 972.60    | 984       | 925.20  |
| Fairwater LC              | 724  | 685.05  | 560    | 517.05    | 613       | 567.80  |
| Western LC                | 630  | 604.60  | 479    | 453.10    | 625       | 610.75  |
| Eastern LC                | 477  | 464.65  | 418    | 383.80    | 492       | 453.15  |
| Maindy Pool               | 408  | 314.00  | 346    | 267.25    | 352       | 272.25  |
| Heath Sports Centre       | 28   | 26.55   | 17     | 16.20     | 16        | 14.55   |
| Splott Pool               | 61   | 50.50   | 56     | 46.00     | 84        | 66.20   |
| Wales Empire Pool         | 254  | 455.40  | 289    | 484.35    | 195       | 467.20  |
| Cardiff Athletics Stadium | 212  | 191.30  | 147    | 132.95    | 10        | 9.25    |
| SUB-TOTALS                | 4536 | 4424.65 | 3782   | 3795.30   | 3960      | 3045.55 |
| TOTAL                     |      |         |        | 11,265.50 |           |         |

\* figures in italics were missing and have been calculated proportionally as averages from the other centres.

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**Table AT40 Attendance and revenue from Cardiff PTL members at municipal sports facilities October-December 1997**

|                           | OCTOBER |         | NOVEMBER |           | DECEMBER |         |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|
|                           | ATT*    | £       | ATT*     | £         | ATT*     | £       |
| Pentwyn LC                | 646     | 600.55  | 649      | 603.45    | 337      | 313.55  |
| Llanishen LC              | 1024    | 962.80  | 954      | 896.70    | 784      | 736.75  |
| Fairwater LC              | 624     | 574.35  | 575      | 528.75    | 153      | 140.45  |
| Western LC                | 706     | 677.75  | 573      | 549.45    | 411      | 394.75  |
| Eastern LC                | 512     | 481.45  | 387      | 347.45    | 181      | 170.45  |
| Maindy Pool               | 293     | 225.75  | 319      | 245.40    | 239      | 184.15  |
| Heath Sports Centre       | 34      | 31.80   | 35       | 32.40     | 18       | 17.10   |
| Splott Pool               | 67      | 53.95   | 47       | 39.10     | 36       | 30.10   |
| Wales Empire Pool         | 275     | 539.10  | 239      | 469.35    | 142      | 279.00  |
| Cardiff Athletics Stadium | 169     | 153.45  | 160      | 145.50    | 139      | 126.25  |
| SUB-TOTAL                 | 4350    | 4300.95 | 3938     | 3857.55   | 2440     | 2365.55 |
| TOTAL                     |         |         |          | 10,524.05 |          |         |

\* attendance calculated from averages from the previous three months.

**Table AT41 Slice/Non-Slice use of Oxford municipal facilities (August 1998)**

|                 | Temple Cowley Pool | Blackbird Leys SC | Ferry SC | Oxford Ice Rink |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Total Slice use | 10472              | 3221              | 7086     | 1631            |
| Non Slice use   | 9121               | 1176              | 7551     | 7135            |
| Total use       | 19593              | 4397              | 14637    | 8766            |

**Table AT42 Oxford Slice members participating in swimming over one month (Temple Cowley Pools, August 1998)**

| Temple Cowley Pool- swimming only |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
|                                   | No. visits |
| Bonus Slice                       | 5420       |
| Aqua Slice                        | 3650       |
| Student Slice                     | 227        |
| Active Slice                      | 763        |
| Other                             | 281        |
| Cool Slice                        | 74         |
| Total Slice use                   | 10415      |
| Adult non Slice                   | 4799       |
| U-17 non Slice                    | 2          |
| 60+ non Slice                     | 270        |
| Total non Slice use               | 5071       |
| Total use                         | 15486      |

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**Table AT43 Oxford Slice members and Non Slice members participating in swimming over one month (August) (Temple Cowley Pools)**

|                     | <b>No. visits</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Total Slice use     | 10415             |
| Total non Slice use | 5071              |

**Table AT44 Oxford Slice members and Non Slice members participating in skating over one day (1/8/98) (Ice Rink)**

| <b>Oxford Ice Rink</b> |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
|                        | <b>No. visits</b> |
| U-17 Cool Slice        | 16                |
| Bonus Slice            | 10                |
| Adult non-Slice        | 114               |
| U-17 non-Slice         | 285               |



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