

## Case study

**Project:** North Birmingham Community Gymnastics  
**Type:** Industrial unit conversion (blended finance)  
**Cost:** £268,243



### Introduction

North Birmingham Community Gymnastics (previously Erdington Gymnastics Club) was formed in 1890. In 2014 the club was open three nights a week in a school hall with a membership of 200 gymnasts, but had learnt that their current site was due to be redeveloped.

### Project overview

The club was offered space in the redevelopment but with lack of storage and reduced access it did not fit with their plans to grow and to offer Disability Gymnastics. In 2016 the club started to look at sites to convert and came across a unit which was outside of their ideal catchment area and over budget. After working through detailed financial projections based on a revised pricing structure, the club decided to push forward with a conversion project in early 2017.

### The project

In anticipation of a project, the club had converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2016 and by March 2017 they had submitted a change of use planning application they had developed themselves, negotiated heads of terms for a lease, applied for Sport England's Community Asset Fund (CAF) and a social finance loan through Key Fund. In June, change of use was granted and conversion works took place over the summer holidays. The unit had a range of rooms which were converted into a foyer, a preschool area, a community viewing area and office, and the main

gym. Most of the work was completed by the club and its supporters. Classes started in September 2017, and shortly after the CAF agreement was finalised. This allowed the accessible podium work to take place, which included a floor level trampoline, fast track and pit. In June 2018 a new heating system was installed which meant all classes could now be offered in a warm welcoming environment.

### Project finance

The project used 'blended finance' from several sources including club funds, fundraising, social finance, asset finance, grant funds, and corporate sponsorship.

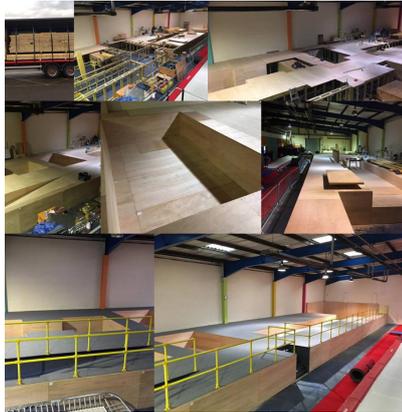
Club funds and fundraising - £49,757  
Social finance - £34,125  
Asset finance - £46,994  
Community Asset Fund - £50,000  
Miscellaneous grants - £72,229  
Corporate sponsorship - £15,138

This was spent on:

Legal fees - £7,875  
Quarter rent and deposit - £26,456  
Disability accessible podium and pits - £78,000  
Equipment (including sensory equipment) - £113,523  
Heating system - £22,640  
Building works - £19,747



Unit 1



Pits



Track

- **Running costs monthly**  
 Accountancy: - £346.00  
 Administration Management System: - £720.00  
 Staff costs including PAYE and Pensions: - £13,500.00  
 Rent: - £5,700.00  
 Utilities: - £2,358.88  
 Business rates: - £269.18  
 Loan repayments: - £2,681.83

## Impact

The club has grown from 200 to 970 members in 12 months. Sessions are more inclusive due to the accessible layout. More focus is given to quality progressive Gymnastics for All (GfA) sessions with a reduction in competition squads; however a pathway to competitive clubs is in place. The workforce has tripled to include a diverse coaching team and a management team of three. The facility is used for courses and hired to external groups including freestyle and cheer.

## The future

The disability gymnastics programme and leadership academy launched in September 2018 followed by a schools programme to support GCSE PE. Remodelling internally will allow for a disability 'Changing Places' facility. The club hopes to be able to cater for profound disabilities by September 2019.

- Do your research when submitting change of use applications, and make sure you know the area and planning policies. It is possible to submit your own planning application, but it is a lot of work. You can never have enough parking and public support will add value.
- Speak to local schools, community groups and councillors. Find out what is needed in your area. You are not likely to secure any funding unless you can prove there is a need for your facility and the programmes you intend to run.
- Do not have an idealistic approach – facility projects can easily take over your lives. Expect to do many voluntary hours and experience lots of setbacks.
- Make sure you have health and safety policies and procedures in place.
- Investigate management systems to assist with administration as when your numbers grow, you can get overwhelmed if you don't have the administration sorted.
- Use the knowledge and service resources available to you through contacts. You will often get a better deal on materials and services, and often advice and work carried out for free if you are not-for-profit organisation.

**Do you require support with Disability Gymnastics?**

Contact us at: [participation@british-gymnastics.org](mailto:participation@british-gymnastics.org)