

Case study

Project: GymStarz
Type: One of British Gymnastics' INCLUSIVE clubs



Who are we?

GymStarz Provisions C.I.C. is based within the Newark and Sherwood District of Nottinghamshire. The main club is based within the Village of Rainworth and was originally set-up by the local secondary school to deliver recreational weekend sessions for local people. Having been running for 5 years, GymStarz now runs Recreational, Artistic, GymFit and FreeG sessions all from a school hall. Our sessions have always been inclusive and we had a few disabled members with more minimal impairments attending mainstream sessions, but we wanted to encourage more disabled people with more profound impairments to take part too.

What did we aim to do?

As a club, we had 3 goals in mind:

- To give more disabled people the opportunity to take part in gymnastics locally, in a safe friendly environment.
- To provide more opportunities for disabled gymnasts, including involvement in local, county and regional level competitions, and taking part in festivals, displays and GymChallenge events.
- To support each of our disabled members to fulfil their potential as a gymnast or coach.

What did we do?

To help us to get started, we looked into British Gymnastics' I'M IN Programme, at a time when the programme was still very new. After an initial meeting with our British Gymnastics Coordinator, we decided that the programme was just what we needed to help us to develop inclusivity in the areas that we work. The Coordinator helped us to get involved and introduced the Inclusive Club Development Guide; including all the information we could need about administrating an inclusive club and delivering disability gymnastics sessions. Using the guide, we were able to compile a plan of inclusive actions very easily.

The biggest action for us (and one that we are still working on!) was being able to communicate to disability organisations, local and national, to tell them what we offer to disabled people and to encourage more people to get involved. We planned to speak to the school in which we train to discuss accessibility, and found that they already had some great facilities to support disabled members. As part of our action plan, we also introduced a new role for one of our coaches to become Disability Liaison Officer, to be the first point of contact for any new disabled members (to answer any questions they may have and to work with them to identify which of our sessions would best meet their needs).



What did we achieve?

Once our action plan was in place, we were able to start our inclusion of disabled participants almost straight away. Initially, classes were quite small but as new disabled members joined the club they told their friends about what we offer and 'spread the word' to disabled people's organisations they were a part of. We now have 25 disabled members participating within our club, with impairments including Down's Syndrome (Learning) and Cerebral Palsy (Physical).

Our FreeG sessions seem to have been the most popular, giving individuals the opportunity explore equipment at their own pace, and take part in low level movement and activity. These sessions have grown, and we're now able to allocate some of the floor area and the support of one coach to specially offer sensory, balance and coordination activities.

We have been able to offer more opportunities to our disabled members, including attending an I'M IN Disability Gymnastics Floor, Vault and Trampolining competition – the first competitive experience for many of our members and one where they all came away with medals!

Having developed our action plan and made some great steps towards inclusivity, British Gymnastics have recognised us as an 'INCLUSIVE' club, and we're now able to use the INCLUSIVE logo to promote our Disability Gymnastics programme even further.



What next?

We're keen to encourage even more disabled people locally to get involved in our inclusive sessions, and are therefore hosting an I'M IN Disability Gymnastics Taster session in January 2016. Through the I'M IN Programme, British Gymnastics have been able to provide some funding to support this session and encourage even more people to attend. We hope that we will receive enough interest at the Taster, to start up a new inclusive handheld (rhythmic) and fundamentals of movement session on a regular basis.

We have already started to look into further development opportunities for our coaches and club staff to ensure we can continue to support disabled participants. We're really pleased that three of our disabled members have signed up to take part in our new Leadership Academy starting early 2016, and we hope they will go on to develop coaching or volunteering roles within gymnastics.

What I would tell other clubs hoping to get started in Disability Gymnastics?

Getting started in Disability Gymnastics doesn't seem easy at first, but you can get involved by taking small steps and it can be just as (or more!) rewarding as developing your mainstream classes. Our advice would be to get everyone within your club on board for the right reasons – work together towards the same aims and it will be a great opportunity to develop as a coach/club manager.

Do you require support with disability gymnastics?

Contact us at: participation@british-gymnastics.org