

Case study

Project: Waveney Gymnastics Club
Type: Dedicated Disability
Gymnastics sessions



What are we?

Waveney Gymnastics Club is a large gymnastics club in a dedicated facility in Lowestoft, Suffolk. The club offers a wide range of gymnastics disciplines and activities for people of all ages and abilities, and has grown from having 85 members in 2002 to over 1000 in 2015. Our club's aspiration is to increase participation in gymnastics, promote healthy living and support all gymnasts to achieve to the best of their ability, and our Disability Gymnastics programme forms a key part of this.

How did the club start offering Disability Gymnastics?

To start with, the club ensured that our mainstream classes were inclusive and some disabled gymnasts participated within these classes. However, due to the nature of our busy classes, many of the disabled gymnasts had difficulty integrating with other gymnasts, understanding instructions and learning new skills. To support these gymnasts, we began to offer specific dedicated Disability Gymnastics classes in 2004 – one in trampolining and one in gymnastics. Initially, we had 10-15 gymnasts within our dedicated sessions; mostly with learning disabilities, Autism and Downs Syndrome.

How did the club start offering Disability Gymnastics?

Since we started, interest in dedicated Disability Gymnastics sessions has grown and we now offer 5 trampoline and 5 gymnastics sessions specifically for disabled members, and have a Disability Gymnastics Development Squad. We offer some 1 to 1 sessions for individuals with more complex needs, and also offer a 'Disability and me' class for disabled gymnasts to burn off energy in the gym with their parents. Within our dedicated Disability Gymnastics programme, we now have 50 disabled members, as well as more disabled people visiting the club with schools and daycare centres. By offering a dedicated Disability session we are

able to cater for more individual needs and now have gymnasts with impairments ranging from cerebral palsy and dwarfism (physical disabilities) to hearing and visual impairments, as well as people with learning disabilities and autism.



What do our Disability Gymnastics sessions look like?

Our Disability Gymnastics sessions take place in the gym at the same time as mainstream recreational and elite classes, but run slightly differently to ensure we are able to support the individual needs of our members. Classes are slightly smaller than other recreational sessions, with 4-7 children in a class, and at least one coach and 1 volunteer helper.

Do you require support with disability gymnastics?

Contact us at: participation@british-gymnastics.org



Why do dedicated Disability Gymnastics sessions work for us and our members?

By providing dedicated Disability Gymnastics sessions, we are able to welcome disabled members who have difficulties participating within a mainstream class. We've found that by having a separate disability class, we've been able to adapt to the needs of each individual more effectively; coaches have more time so they can work at the pace of each gymnast and ensure they understand. We're also able to adapt equipment set-ups more easily where a gymnast needs to learn a skill in a different way, and we tend to keep time on each apparatus slightly shorter to keep gymnasts with learning or attentional disabilities interested and focused.

Many of our disabled participants have developed extremely well in confidence, skills, language development and self-esteem by attending our sessions, and 2 of our disabled gymnasts have recently completed their first coaching qualification. One of our parents said her son was anxious and had difficulty learning in a mainstream class, but has come on leaps and bounds in his dedicated disability gymnastics class:

'The smaller group means more time is spent supporting each individual and they spend less time waiting to go on the apparatus. The coach can relate much better to each gymnast, giving them the time they need to learn a specific skill. This dedicated class is vital to allow Adam to do something he loves'.

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

Our advice to other clubs would be to offer the type of session that will best support your disabled members. If they need some additional support to fulfil their potential in gymnastics then a dedicated Disability Gymnastics programme may be the best way forwards. For us, Disability Gymnastics is just as enjoyable and rewarding for the coaches as it is for the gymnasts!

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