

Case study

Project: Rowan Gymnastics Club
Type: Disability Gymnastics as part of mainstream sessions



Who are we?

Rowan Gymnastics Club is an established gymnastics club based in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Having previously trained in school halls, we recently moved into a dedicated facility and now have approximately 700 members; girls and boys of all ages and abilities. We are committed to providing opportunities for everyone within gymnastics, and excited to continue growing and support even more people to take part.



How did the club start offering Disability Gymnastics?

In 2001, the club started offering its first opportunities for disabled members. At the time, we had 4 disabled members who were all pre-school aged and had physical impairments including spina bifida and cerebral palsy. In order to support their needs, we offered a dedicated disability gymnastics class and were able to coach these gymnasts for a number of years.

How has our Disability Gymnastics programme developed?

Over time, we received more interest from other disabled people who wanted to try gymnastics. With a very busy club timetable and limited space, we found that we were no longer able to offer a dedicated session for disabled members, but we also found that this was not what they needed and all of the disabled members were able to integrate well into our mainstream sessions with a little support. Now, we have around 20 disabled members, with a range of disabilities including both learning and physical impairments.

What do our inclusive gymnastics sessions look like?

All of our disabled members take part in inclusive mainstream sessions alongside non-disabled participants. All of our gymnasts are taught depending on their ability (whether they are disabled or not). We regularly speak to parents to understand how we can support each individual's needs and to check if they are happy with how they are being taught gymnastics. Some of our gymnasts need a little extra support in order to take part in mainstream sessions, for instance one gymnast who can only walk a short distance unaided and another with a learning disability who needs more supervision to ensure he understands instructions and does not miss his turn. Where additional needs are identified, we are able to provide some 1 to 1 help, and the local council has provided us with some funding to support coaching costs of doing so.

Why do inclusive gymnastics sessions work for us and our members?

For us, it's really important that all of our members are treated the same and can access the same opportunities. We've found that our disabled members have integrated really well into mainstream classes and enjoy feeling part of the group, making friends with non-disabled peers. Our disabled members are able to access the same opportunities as other people within their classes, including taking part in competitions. We're really pleased that some of our physically disabled members recently took part in an I'M IN Competition with great success; using the confidence they've developed within our classes to perform with very little support from us. Another of our disabled gymnasts with ADHD recently competed against non-disabled gymnasts to become the South West Tumbling Champion for his age.

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

We would encourage other clubs not to be frightened – it is much easier than you think to include disabled gymnasts in your existing sessions. My top tip would be to get support from parents, as they are usually the best people to let you know how you can adapt activities and where the gymnast may need a little additional support. Keep talking to parents and the gymnasts themselves to get their feedback on what you are doing; after all, they want their child to enjoy Disability Gymnastics as much as you do!

Do you require support with disability gymnastics?

Contact us at: participation@british-gymnastics.org