

Inspired Facilities



The Reach

CASE STUDY THEMES

- Climbing
- Added additional climbing walls
- Improved safety features
- Increased options for beginners
- Improved transition for novice climbers
- Increased variety of climbs for more accomplished climbers

PROJECT SUMMARY

Summary

The project has expanded the number of climbing opportunities available by building an additional wall on the north side of the building. In addition, the safety matting around the walls was increased to ensure the majority of the facility was covered.

Facility name	The Reach
Lead organisation	Leap Training
Organisation type	Social enterprise
Location	London Borough of Greenwich, South East London
Sport	Climbing
Total project cost	£47,885
Inspired facilities funding	£43,305 (90% of total)
Other funding sources	Remaining 10% was self-funded
Tender process	n/a
Contract type	n/a
Start and end date	July 2012 to August 2012
Duration of capital works	Eight weeks in total, done in two blocks of four weeks

Achieved outcomes

- Increased usage, higher membership, increased income.
- Facility is open for longer than before.
- Greater number of young people and adult beginners enrolling on courses.



Introduction

Leap Training is a social enterprise, constituted as a company limited by guarantee, that operates The Reach climbing wall located in south east London. The facility originally opened in January 2010 although there was considerable unused wall space prior to the Inspired Facilities funding application which left parts of the facility looking sparse. The level of use, feedback from customers and the look of the facility meant additional space was an important development area to improve participation opportunities for beginners and increase customer satisfaction. The funding application was supported with evidence from customer consultation around the perceived and actual quantity and quality of provision at the time of the application.

The Project

The project had two main aims: firstly, to increase the coverage of safety matting throughout the facility (only 60% of the floor area was previously covered before the award); secondly, to complete the installation of a climbing surface on the north wall of the building (which was only 50% complete). The work included an additional 100m² of capacity with 3 top-roped bays with faceted and angled walls to provide 18 additional climbing lines. Expanding both the flooring and the wall space was also designed to:

- Upgrade the facility as a whole.
- Give greater variety of climbing to increase frequency of use for existing members.
- Help the facility become more attractive to elite climbers with increased competitive climbing options.
- Create a larger area that is suitable for beginners, aiming to attract more local people new to the sport.



Outcomes

The Facility

The main motivation for the application was to improve the look of the facility, as it looked "half finished" in terms of what was on offer to customers. Inside it looked like a big warehouse rather than an inspiring facility, and needed an easier "lead wall" (i.e. lower wall) and an easier vertical wall to increase the space allocated for beginners and intermediates. Having a completed wall is a big selling point to customers as, despite not having reached full capacity before the work was undertaken, the increasing level of participation meant the amount of space available would soon not have been able to accommodate everyone who wanted to climb, particularly at weekends.

Sports Participation

The throughput data for The Reach has been really positive, building steadily since opening four years ago, and the addition of wall space has had a noticeable impact on participation and membership. The facility was operating at three-quarters capacity before the additional wall space was built, and the subsequent upsurge in participation is felt to be attributable to the improvements.

"The new wall has really helped us accommodate additional users and the time they spend in the facility has increased" Facility manager

THROUGHPUT	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Target	-	20,000	25,000	30,000	35,000	40,000
Actual	41,000	47,500	No data	No data	No data	No data

The overall throughput figure for the year prior to the award of Inspired Facilities investment (baseline) was 41,000 visits. The number of visits recorded in the first year after the work was completed was 47,500, an increase of 6,500 visits on the previous year, well in excess of the 20,000 target. One quarter of all visits to the centre are made by those aged 7-17, with almost 12,000 visits by young people recorded in 2012-13. The Reach's membership has increased from 5,791 to 7,984 in the year since the work was completed, an increase of 38%. On average, 50 new adults have been signing up for a beginners course every week over the winter since the work was completed, and the number of adults attending beginner/taster courses have increased by 43% from the previous year. Furthermore, enrolments for private tuition by young people (aged 7-17) have increased by 118% compared to the previous year, alongside an 8% increase in the number of young people attending the 'Kids Club' course. Increases in participation levels have also had a positive impact on income, with a 14% increase in income from membership and equipment hire compared to the previous year.

"It has opened up more space and it is much better, as there is greater variety. It (the new walls) makes you want to keep coming back, particularly as they regularly re-set the routes". Male climber

Lead Organisation and Partners

Leap Training undertook the work themselves without any partner involvement. They used "in-kind" help from a group of volunteers, and this was really important to ensuring all the work was completed on time and to budget.

Local Community

The facility has good links with the local community and a range of different external organisations use the climbing wall on a regular basis, for example the facility works with Charlton Athletic Community Trust. The amount of use from different community groups has increased since the additional walls were put in as there is more space and more suitable walls for beginners. Other benefits for the local community include the following:

- The new wall increases accessibility for some groups, particularly those with a disability, and attendance by disability groups has increased.
- The Reach works with schools and youth groups where the ethnic mix is much more diverse than at adult level in the borough, which is demonstrated through the relatively high level of engagement of young people from BME groups.
- The Reach ran a successful Sport England Sportivate session using a local instructor to recruit and target young people.
- The number of volunteers has increased slightly, particularly young people. As climbing has a number of important safety aspects all beginner sessions need a qualified instructor. Existing climbers wanting to gain a climbing qualification form a lot of the volunteers.
- The Reach links with educational institutions, with almost every school in Greenwich using the facility, and GCSE sessions being hosted there. The University of Greenwich also has a climbing club that uses the facility.
- A link with the Oxleas National Health Trust has enabled a mental health group and an obesity group to use the facility. As these participants are beginners the new wall increases the accessibility of the facility for such groups. They are not experienced climbers, so starting off on the new easier routes is a positive addition to enable participation.

"We bring community groups to The Reach and the new beginner wall is great (to enable people to get into climbing), because it makes it more accessible and is great for improving self-esteem and confidence". Community worker

Key Findings

The key outcomes from adding additional climbing walls and extending the safety matting have been:

- Increased throughput by both adults and young people (aged 7-17) compared to the year before the funding was awarded (increased by 6,500 visits).
- Increased membership levels, up by 38% on the previous year.
- Better opportunities for beginners to use the facility, and an easier transition from beginner to intermediate level due to the greater range of wall space. This is a key part of retaining new customers, as they can build up their climbing skills on a wall that is suitable for each stage of their development.
- Increased income (up by 14%) due to the greater number of users.
- High level of customer satisfaction - 100% of participants who took part in the user survey reported being satisfied. The main reasons for this satisfaction increase was "increased range of activities available", "more space for taking part" and "improved quality of the surfaces".
- Increased use – 80% of users responding to the survey reported that they now use the facility more than they did before. The main motivations for attending The Reach more frequently were "the quality of the facility" and "the facility improvements".

