



myplace
support team

Indoor MUGA

Introduction

Good facilities offering a variety of sporting experiences for young people in safe, well-equipped surroundings are very much part of the **myplace** mix. If you're thinking of including such a sports hall in your **myplace** centre this briefing will provide some helpful pointers and advice.

How to plan and use an indoor multi use games area

It is estimated that there are some 4,000 multi-sport halls in England, about half operating on a pay to play basis, with the remainder split between memberships/clubs and private use. This equates to about 2.7 million square metres of floor space – an awful lot of badminton courts (the vast majority of sports halls are about the size of four badminton courts and badminton is often the sport which has the most influence over design as, as well as being one of the most popular activities, the size and shape of a court make it a convenient space for adopting a modular approach).

But sports halls offer far more than badminton, popular though that is. An A to Z of activities would include archery; boxing; dodgeball; fencing; indoor golf; roller hockey; tchoukball (an indoor team sport developed in the 1970s by Swiss biologist Hermann Brandt, who believed that “The objective of all physical activities is not to make champions, but make a contribution to building a harmonious society”); keep fit/aerobics/step/yoga; indoor five-a-side football/futsal; martial arts; carpet/mat/short bowls; gymnastics; basketball; netball; table tennis; dance; trampolining; indoor hockey; tennis/short tennis; roller skating/roller blading; indoor cricket; racquetball and volleyball, to name the major ones.

It's unlikely that there will be scope to include all, or indeed most of these, in your **myplace** centre. Consider then which are likely to be played most often and which are popular with the young people who will use the centre. What is already available elsewhere in the community, either at private clubs or local authority run centres? How popular are these activities and is there an unmet demand? What will the forthcoming London 2012 Olympics create a demand for? You will also need to consider if the centre will be made available to wider community groups and, if so, what activities they are looking for? An audit of existing provision and an analysis of what demand there is, therefore, are good places to start.

Strong design to create a visually appealing space that people will want to use needs to be incorporated in your plans from the outset and young people should be fully involved in this, working with designers and other professionals on ideas and helping to work these up into detailed specifications. A thorough assessment of the proposed management and operational arrangements of the centre should also be built in to these early stages. Recent trends in the education sector for example have seen the management of sports centres outsourced.

Space and the dimensions that create it are critical assessments too. Each sport has its own rules on playing areas, allowing for safety for players, spectators and other facility users. For some sports (badminton, volleyball and trampolining, for example) the clear internal height can be vital. A single badminton court space is regarded as the smallest practical multi sport space, but a configuration of four courts is required for virtually all sports that need to be played along the length of the space and provides better value for money.

Each project will have its own requirements, but they will all need to consider safe and secure access, whether there is a separate foyer and reception area, refreshment area, changing and toilet accommodation to include clothes storage lockers and showers (one to every six changing spaces), facilities for disabled people, provision for first aid and cleaners and equipment storage (up to 12.5 per cent of the hall floor area is required for sports equipment storage).

A fitness equipment gym is a valuable complementary space to a sports hall. It allows a range of general fitness and conditioning activities to take place on a more casual basis than the main sports activities.

Heating, lighting and ventilation services can account for a significant proportion of construction costs. It has been estimated that energy can account for about 25 per cent of the overall operating cost and it is often the next largest item to staff cost. Natural lighting, most probably from a roof source, will help create a pleasant atmosphere. Adequate artificial lighting is an essential element and should be integrated into the design from the outset, rather than be added in later. Internal acoustic conditions within a sports hall should be appropriate for its intended use. It will be beneficial to all users that the ambient noise levels are low and that verbal communication is easy.

Climbing walls (see separate briefing) should not be located in a sports hall. For safety and operational reasons they require a separate dedicated space.

Sports halls can be open for long hours, seven days a week and take heavy wear as a result. It is therefore important to aim for durable and high quality buildings with good, attractive and easily maintained finishes. Strong colours add to a bright and clean appearance. They are also large capital investments that require commitment, energy, drive and determination to ensure they are successful, as a component within a larger centre.

“Getting involved in sport when the school day is over is an important step towards continuing participation into adulthood.”

Jennie Price, Chief Executive, Sport England

Action planning

Young People

Which sports do young people play and which do they want to play? Get them involved in surveying what different groups would like to see included.

Making a Difference

You don't have to be world class to enjoy sport. Encouraging participation in more physical activity and exercise can have a profound impact on health, fitness, lifestyle and happiness.

Vision and Values

Is there a wider vision for sport in the centre? Are there targets for the numbers of young people involved, the numbers of sessions run or the revenue raised from these activities, for example?

Practicality

Be realistic about what you can offer and what hours you are open for. Be flexible and offer new activities on a regular basis to retain interest.

Links and Further Guidance

Sport England is the government agency responsible for building the foundations of sporting success by creating a world-leading community sport environment of clubs, coaches, facilities and volunteers. It seeks to create a vibrant sporting culture working in partnership with national governing bodies, national partners, the HE/FE sector, local government and community organisations. Its focus is around three outcomes – growing and sustaining the numbers of people taking part in sport and improving talent development to help more people excel. See the website at www.sportengland.org

Sport England provides best practice design advice and requirements for building types and sporting activities covering a range of sports. These design guidance notes are free to download from its website at www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/design_guidance_notes.aspx One of the areas covered is Multi Use Games Areas but there are also detailed requirements on layout, finishes, accommodation and support requirements for, for example, badminton centres; floors for indoor sports; and indoor bowls, as well as updated and combined guidance for Sports Halls Design and Layouts. The notes aim to increase awareness of good design in sports facilities; help key building professions, clients, user representatives and other stakeholders to follow best practice; and encourage well designed sports facilities that meet the needs of sports and are a pleasure to use.

Through its website you will also find links to the National Governing Bodies of (most) sports where further information on specifications can be found. Lots of private contractors design, build and install MUGAs. A quick internet search is a good way of checking the range that is available and distilling ideas for your own facility.

See also the Sports and Play Construction Association website at www.sapca.org.uk

The Youth Sport Trust is focused on creating a world-leading PE and sport system that reaches, inspires and engages all young people – whatever their age or ability. It has a number of programmes and initiatives that can help include all young people in sport and has also developed a network of 14-19 year old Young Ambassadors who advocate the benefits of sport and health to their peers. See www.youthsporttrust.org

Read the Youth Active Toolkit from UK Youth and Youth Active. They have worked together to produce this resource to help encourage young people to take up sport and physical activity. This toolkit can either be used in its own right or can be used to recognise the learning and participation skills through the Youth Achievement Awards (YAA). This toolkit sets appropriate challenges and targets through sports, in games and activities, cycling, swimming, basketball, football, athletics, cricket, racquet sports, dance, action sports, circuit training and fitness. It also goes through the benefits of sport; how to introduce sports and physical activities to young people; 14 sample worksheets, ideas for workers, peer leaders and volunteers and progression in sports and fitness.

Available from stores.lulu.com/ukyouth