



## Hartlepool Sport Toolkit – Facilities & Spaces

*Finding, using and caring for the places that make your club possible — simply, affordably and locally — in Hartlepool*

Most people think you need a perfect facility to run a great club.

You don't.

Some of the strongest, longest-running community groups meet in:

- borrowed halls
- parks
- school gyms
- church rooms
- car parks
- beaches
- prom spaces

Because here's the truth:

**People return for relationships, not buildings.**

Your space just needs to be:

- safe
- affordable
- reliable
- welcoming

This guide helps you use facilities wisely — without getting trapped by cost, contracts or complexity.

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### 1. Start With “Good Enough”, Not Perfect

Waiting for the ideal venue delays everything.

Start where you can.

Ask:

- Is it safe?
- Is it accessible?
- Can we afford it weekly?



- Is it available consistently?

If yes → it's good enough.

Shiny venues don't build clubs.

Consistency does.

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## 2. Common Local Options

In Hartlepool, most clubs successfully use:

### Indoor

- community centres
- church halls
- school halls/gyms
- social clubs
- shared spaces with other groups

### Outdoor

- parks
- greenspaces
- playgrounds
- prom/marina areas
- MUGAs
- school fields

Don't assume spaces are "not allowed".

Most places are open to conversation.

A polite ask often works.

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## 3. Pick for Stability First

Your biggest risk isn't quality — it's losing your slot.

### Prioritise:

1. Same time every week
2. Affordable price
3. Friendly relationship

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#### 4. Easy access for families

Over:

- ✗ perfect flooring
- ✗ newest kit
- ✗ biggest space

Families value predictability more than facilities.

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#### 4. Keep Costs Low (always)

Facilities are usually your biggest expense.

If rent is too high, everything becomes stressful.

##### Healthy rule of thumb

Venue cost should feel:

“easy to cover”

Not:

“we need funding to survive”

##### Tips

- negotiate off-peak rates
- ask for community discounts
- block book for cheaper rates
- share space with another club
- use outdoor spaces when possible
- avoid long contracts early

If a venue locks you into debt or stress, it's the wrong venue.

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#### 5. Build Relationships With Venue Staff

This matters more than anything.

Caretakers and managers can:

- unlock early
- store kit
- adjust times
- reduce costs



- help in emergencies
- recommend you to others

Or make life difficult.

**Do:**

- be friendly
- leave tidy
- communicate clearly
- pay on time
- say thank you
- invite them to events

A trusted group gets flexibility.

A difficult group gets rules.

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## **6. Make Spaces Feel Welcoming**

Even basic spaces can feel great.

Atmosphere beats architecture.

### **Small touches**

- music on arrival
- chairs for parents
- tea/coffee
- clear signage
- tidy setup
- friendly greeting
- photos or certificates on walls (if allowed)

If families feel comfortable hanging around, your club gets stronger.

If they rush off, you lose connection.

Belonging happens in the margins.

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## **7. Safety & Suitability Checks (simple)**

Don't overcomplicate this.

Just do a quick scan each session.

### **Look for:**

- slips/trips
- broken equipment
- wet floors
- sharp edges
- safe exits
- toilets accessible
- lighting adequate
- weather risks outdoors

Fix what you can.

Report what you can't.

Common sense goes a long way.

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## **8. Plan for Weather (especially outdoors)**

Outdoor delivery is brilliant:

- free
- visible
- accessible
- relaxed

But weather matters.

### **Have:**

- wet weather backup plan
- alternative venue option
- layered kit
- clear cancellation message system
- realistic expectations



Don't cancel too easily though.

Light rain rarely stops kids enjoying themselves.

Flexibility beats perfection.

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## 9. Storage & Equipment

You don't need loads of kit.

Too much equipment:

- costs money
- needs storage
- adds setup time
- creates stress

Start minimal.

### Smart habits

- multi-use equipment
- borrow/share
- second-hand buys
- small mobile kit bags
- avoid heavy storage needs

If you can set up in 10 minutes, you're doing it right.

Mobility gives you options.

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## 10. Think Like a Guest

Unless you own the building, treat it with care.

### Always:

- leave cleaner than you found it
- stack chairs
- wipe floors if needed
- turn off lights
- lock properly



- report damage

You want venue managers thinking:

“They’re the easiest group we have”

That protects your slot long-term.

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## **11. Sharing Space Works**

You don’t have to “own” anything.

Many sustainable clubs:

- share halls
- rotate times
- co-deliver sessions
- partner with schools
- piggyback onto existing groups

Sharing:

- lowers cost
- builds relationships
- increases referrals
- reduces isolation

Collaboration beats territorial thinking.

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## **12. Grow Facilities Slowly**

A common trap:

“We need our own building”

Often that creates:

- huge costs
- maintenance stress
- admin burden
- funding pressure

Only consider dedicated premises if:

- you’re full



- finances stable
- leadership shared
- long-term demand proven

Otherwise, flexibility is safer.

Owning space isn't always progress.

Sometimes it's a liability.

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### **13. See Spaces as Place-Making**

In Hartlepool, using local spaces does more than host sport.

It:

- activates parks
- increases safety
- builds pride
- brings families together
- shows positive activity

Your presence improves the area.

Visible activity creates safer, happier neighbourhoods.

You're not just hiring a space — you're animating place.

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### **Facilities Health Check**

#### **Weekly**

- ☐ safe
- ☐ affordable
- ☐ available
- ☐ welcoming

#### **Ongoing**

- ☐ good relationship with venue
- ☐ setup simple
- ☐ costs manageable
- ☐ backup options
- ☐ no stress about rent





If yes → your facility setup is sustainable.

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**One-line philosophy**

**Use what you have.**

**Keep costs low.**

**Build relationships.**

**Stay flexible.**

**Make the space feel like home.**