



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.

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.

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.

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



4. Easy access for families

Over:

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

Families value predictability more than facilities.

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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

One-line philosophy

Use what you have.
Keep costs low.
Build relationships.
Stay flexible.
Make the space feel like home.