

Westway – safety in sport

Driving along London's Westway in North Kensington, the attractive Westway Sports Centre stands out as a small oasis among the garages and yards that cover much of the land beneath the elevated urban highway. Keep your eyes open for a beautifully groomed dressage horse going through its paces in the riding centre's sand school, and a game of Eton Fives on one of the four outdoor courts.

It's that contradiction that underlines the success story of the Westway Sports Centre. As a community sports centre located at the north of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea it attracts its visitors from all across the borough. As a result, wards that run from the least deprived to the most deprived in England are provided with top-quality sports facilities to both entice the beginner and stretch the expert.



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The Westway Sports Centre is run by the Westway Development Trust, a registered charity with goals including: 'Develop initiatives aimed at those in the local community who are least resourced' and 'Improve the health of local people and foster their physical well-being and talents'. The Sports Centre is one of the key means by which these goals are achieved.

Facilities

The 18-month-old building, a replacement for the original Westway Sports Centre building that opened in 1993, boasts a breadth of sports facilities that reflects the breadth of vision of the centre. As well as the riding centre and the Fives (handball) courts, the sports facilities include:

- 6 artificial football pitches
- disabled-access gym
- fitness centre, with fitness machines and free weights
- basketball court and hoops
- netball court
- outdoor climbing wall
- 8 indoor tennis courts
- 4 outdoor clay tennis courts
- 4 Eton Fives courts
- Britain's largest indoor climbing centre

To ensure the maximum benefit from the facilities, a team of some 50 full and part-time coaches is employed.

Who uses the Centre?

The objective of the centre is to serve the whole community, attracting visitors regardless of income. The Trust is specifically charged with serving the borough 'without distinction of colour, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, political, religious or other opinions'.



John O'Brien, Associate Director of Sport and Recreation, explains: "Our target is to serve the entire community and at the same time to be self funding on our £1.5 million annual turnover. We consistently achieve that, charging commercial rates to those who can afford it, and allowing other groups to use the centre for less. For schools, local refugee groups, and in other specific cases we may charge at the cost of

instruction only, make other special charging arrangements, or even subsidise particular groups. We have an outreach programme that actively promotes our services to all sections of the community, and our aim is to make the Centre affordable to all our users. "

The success of this policy shows in the high level of activity in the more unusual sports. North Kensington is an unlikely location for a centre of excellence for lawn tennis, but the home-grown talent on the courts at Westway is outstanding, with many county players and strong links with the Lawn Tennis Association's player development programme. The excellent climbing wall attracts dedicated climbers from afar, alongside many local climbers who found the sport solely through the centre. Eton Fives is introduced as part of a junior development course that is run for hundreds of children, and its popularity is growing.

The security system

Given its somewhat oppressive location, it is essential that the Centre maintains a good level of security, and conveys to all its visitors that this is the case.

The reception area is the visitor's first clear view that a sophisticated security system is in operation throughout the centre. The images from three Vista VFD4V9C Colour dome cameras near reception are displayed on public view monitors, reminding all visitors that the system is capturing good images of everyone who enters the building. These cameras are complemented by three Dennard D2050



colour/monochrome dome cameras outside, plus 24 Vista VPCMX colour/monochrome fixed cameras at strategic points all around the centre for 24 hour day/night surveillance. The external dome cameras are linked to Optex Redwall PIR sensors to automatically go to a preset PTZ location on activation.

The cameras all link to two Dedicated Micros Sprite DVRs, each of which takes the image streams from 16 cameras. The 160 gigabyte storage of each of the Sprites is designed to store some 2 weeks of recording, but as they work on automatic event-triggered recording, it is not possible to be as specific on the number of days of recording held as it is with time-lapse VCRs.



The Sprite is designed to reside on a computer LAN (Local Area Network), thus making the images available wherever the LAN connects. At present this is limited to the Centre itself. But the Westway Development Trust holds 23 acres of land along the Westway and an office suite just off the nearby Portobello Road, and when the LAN developments throughout the Trust are completed a total of 80 cameras will be viewable from anywhere on the network.

The equipment was installed by CCTV UK Ltd, highly experienced in configuring systems around DM Sprites linked to LANs. Paul Konec, Managing Director of CCTV UK said, "this was a very exciting project to be associated with, and the system has performed exactly as planned. The cameras deliver excellent images, and we find the DM Sprite is always very popular with users, being much easier to use than VCRs. For our equipment we used Norbain - our preferred supplier because they provide the best combination of price, delivery, service and technical backup."

The management benefits

The CCTV system brings more than just security benefits. It is also a valuable aid to management supervision in a fast moving operation like a sports centre. Checks can be made from the management offices that coaching staff members are present on time and supervising in all areas, and that no group is breaking the strict safety code of the climbing walls. In addition, members of staff feel that they have support as required when they undertake their outside duties alone, gaining a further health and safety advantage from the system.



We leave the last word to John O'Brien.

"The new building has been a demonstrable success. In the old building we were attracting 3,500 user visits per week. That figure has now more than doubled to 7,500. Many of these are women and children, often attending after dark. Our security is effective, and is known to be effective by the visitors we want to attract and the people we want to discourage. We've had a few incidents, but - considering the location and the attractive and open design of the building - very few. For example, although the structure is predominantly glass all around the entrance, we've had only two windows broken in eighteen months. With the Sprite we find it very easy and reliable to search for any incidents, and it enables me to email an image to the police if I need to, or to burn a CD".

"The security system has proved to be an essential factor in our success"

John O'Brien

"To sum up, my job is to run a community sports centre in a very mixed inner city area, and the security system has proved to be an essential factor in our success in achieving that goal."