



Developing Northern Ireland's flagship £35m leisure facility

Case Study



South Lake Leisure Centre is the latest completion for V4 Services in the leisure sector and is the largest project in the council's ambitious capital investment programme. Located overlooking the stunning Craigavon Lake, the new state-of-the-art facility offers a 50-metre pool, the largest gym in Northern Ireland (over 150 stations), an 8-court sports hall, multiple studios, a health and wellbeing suite with vitality pool, a children's leisure pool, a soft play zone and café.

THE CHALLENGE

One of the most significant recent investments in health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland, the £35m facility development needed to:

- Meet the needs of a growing population.
- Provide for increased demand for a range of world class sport and leisure facilities to cater for the needs of the local community as well and the needs of elite athletes from across the region.
- Ensure that the new centre is affordable and costs less to run than the three older facilities that it replaces.

The V4 Services specialist leisure team was selected by the council to provide consultancy advice and support throughout the entire project lifecycle, from preliminary concept and master planning to design, implementation, and aftercare. Led by Steve Laird, the multidisciplinary team combined experience across leisure, financial, procurement and sales and marketing to ensure the project was delivered efficiently and that any challenges were quickly and effectively overcome.

Mark Parkinson, Strategic Director People at ABC council - "V4 provided total commitment to achieving our project objectives and have been very hands-on, applying their wide-ranging sector knowledge across all aspects of the project and creating a real culture change in how people behave. The team were dedicated to the project and the timeline and wholly supported the council during the pandemic, ensuring safe and controlled management and support. I would have no hesitation in recommending the V4S team to any other authority that needs to turn their vision into reality".

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THE SOLUTION

Over the course of the project, the V4 team delivered a number of services including:

- Early-stage affordability.
- Economic appraisal / business case.
- Needs analysis.
- Business planning support.
- Procurement support and advice.
- Service-wide transformation to deliver improvements utilising evidence-based practices to drive all decision making throughout the process.

The business case developed by V4 Services was predicated on a rationalisation plan that involved the replacement of three older facilities in the Craigavon area with this world-class facility. Whole life savings were generated to fund the capital costs and to reduce dependency on council funding in the longer term.

After completing the business case and developing the investment strategy, the team also provided the strategic advice and support initially around the various options to implement the decision. The team completed a comprehensive Options Appraisal to consider the full range of management options including outsourcing, deployment of a local authority trading company and in-house management (supported by major transformation programme).

OUTCOMES

In a project of this size, issues naturally arise but, when addressed constructively and with new approaches, the V4S team assisted in:

- Breaking down the barriers to transformation through regular review meetings held across the council, allowing new relationships to develop and different departments to highlight areas that needed consideration based on their specific expertise. This progress has linked significantly into the successful development of the SLAs.
- Developing the project board's understanding and increase their commercial approach to operations by using evidence to base decisions on.
- Establishing and improving working relationships with the three main trade unions within the council by fully integrating representatives in the design stage of work and the implementation of new working practices, including regular workshops and weekly meetings.
- Quick and more agile method of working i.e. HR.
- Increased use of technology i.e. Gladstone, Listen 360, CoursePro.

Start your journey with V4 Services.