# Building a Sustainable Future for Community Leisure with £400M

4 August 2025



**The UK Government's £400 million investment in sports facilities presents a vital opportunity to modernize and safeguard essential community assets such as leisure centres, sports halls, changing rooms, and pavilions—many of which are outdated or at risk due to rising costs.**

With over 60% of facilities beyond their intended lifespans and hundreds already closed in recent years, urgent action is needed to maintain access to safe, inclusive spaces that support physical activity and wellbeing. Modular construction offers a fast, affordable, and sustainable solution to deliver new and refurbished facilities at scale, making it key to the success of the Government's Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, which is already transforming over 2,400 sites across the UK

**Using Modular Construction?**

Modular buildings, constructed off-site and assembled on location, offer a revolutionary approach to building community facilities. Unlike traditional construction, which can be slow and costly, modular methods reduce build times by up to 50% and costs by up to 30%, making them a perfect fit for the £400 million budget. These buildings are also highly customizable, sustainable, and designed to meet modern accessibility and energy-efficiency standards, aligning with the Government's 10 Year Health Plan and net-zero ambitions.

Here’s how modular construction can transform eligible communities with targeted investments:

1. *Rapid Delivery of Changing Rooms and Pavilions*

Changing rooms and pavilions are critical for grassroots sports, supporting activities from football to gymnastics. The funding programme has already supported projects like Hadley Woods Sports Trust (£200,000 for a floodlit pitch and changing rooms) and Bonnyrigg Rose Community Football Club, demonstrating demand for these facilities.

- Solution: Modular construction can deliver pre-fabricated changing rooms and pavilions in weeks, not months. These structures can be tailored for multi-sport use, with accessible designs for women, girls, and disabled users, as prioritized by the programme.
- Benefits: A modular pavilion or changing room can cost £100,000–£300,000, significantly less than traditional builds, allowing councils to stretch the £400 million further. Quick installation minimizes disruption, ensuring facilities remain open during upgrades.
- Community Impact: Modern, inclusive changing facilities encourage participation, particularly among underrepresented groups, addressing the coalition’s call to tackle health inequalities.

Case Study: In 2024, a modular changing room facility was installed at a community sports ground in Wales for £150,000, funded through the programme. Completed in just eight weeks, it now supports football and rugby clubs, boosting local participation by 20%.

2. *Expanding Community Hubs in Deprived Areas*

The funding prioritizes deprived areas, with 50% of investments targeting communities with high health inequalities. Modular construction is well-suited to deliver multi-purpose community hubs that serve as social and sporting centres.

- Solution: Build modular community buildings that combine changing facilities, small gyms, or meeting spaces. These can be constructed using sustainable materials like timber frames and integrated with energy-efficient features like solar panels or insulation, as highlighted in Newscast 24’s energy efficiency article.

- Benefits: Modular hubs cost 20–30% less than traditional construction and can be delivered in 3–6 months. Their flexibility allows councils to adapt designs to local needs, such as adding spaces for fitness classes or youth programs.
- Community Impact: These hubs increase access to physical activity for underserved groups, supporting the 11.5 million UK fitness club members and reducing the projected 35% rise in physical inactivity by 2030.

Case Study: A modular community hub in a deprived area of Manchester, funded in 2024, cost £250,000 and now hosts fitness classes, swim programs, and community events, directly addressing local health disparities.

3. *Supporting Small-Scale Leisure Centres and Pool Facilities*

While large leisure centres may require traditional construction, smaller facilities—like poolside changing rooms or gym extensions—are ideal for modular solutions, especially in rural or budget-constrained areas.

- Solution: Use modular units to expand or replace aging poolside facilities or create compact leisure centres. These can include accessible changing areas, small fitness suites, or administrative spaces, all built to high energy-efficiency standards.
- Benefits: Modular units can be installed for £100,000–£500,000, depending on size, and completed in under six months. Their scalability allows councils to address specific gaps, such as the 500 pool closures since 2010.
- Community Impact: Enhanced facilities ensure pools and gyms remain accessible, particularly for older adults and those with health conditions, as emphasized by Swim England and ukactive.

Case Study: A rural council in Scotland used £200,000 from the programme in 2024 to install a modular poolside changing facility, preserving a community pool at risk of closure and increasing usage by 15%.

### *A Place-Based Approach: Empowering Local Authorities*

The coalition’s call to channel funds through local authorities ensures investments are tailored to community needs. Modular construction enhances this approach by offering flexible, cost-effective solutions that can be deployed in urban, rural,

or deprived areas:

- Urban Areas: Modular pavilions or changing rooms can support high-traffic multi-sport facilities, maximizing space efficiency.
- Rural Areas: Compact modular hubs or pool facilities can address access gaps where traditional construction is cost-prohibitive.
- Deprived Areas: Affordable modular builds ensure funds reach communities with the greatest health and social needs.

By partnering with councils and delivery partners like the Football Foundation or Cymru Football Foundation, modular builders can ensure projects align with local priorities, such as supporting underrepresented groups or multi-sport activities (40% of funded projects).

### *The Bigger Picture: Health, Equity, and Sustainability*

Modular construction offers a cost-effective, sustainable, and future-ready solution to the UK's ageing leisure infrastructure. By cutting construction costs and timelines, councils can redirect savings into vital community programs that support national health goals. These modern, energy-efficient facilities—often built with timber frames and designed to meet net-zero standards—help ensure long-term access to inclusive, high-quality spaces. As leaders like Cllr Liz Green and Huw Edwards emphasize, strategic investment in modular leisure centres reinforces the Government's commitment to promoting physical activity and protecting essential community services from closure.