The Background
The Pulse Group was appointed strategic leisure development partner for Suffolk Coastal District Council in March 2015. The twenty-year contract incorporates the redevelopment, equipment supply and operational support of multiple facilities within four local authority areas, including Bolsover District Council.

In February 2016 Pulse Design & Build - was tasked by Bolsover District Council to design and build a new £4m leisure facility.

The facility now boasts a new 100 station state-of-the-art gym, a 25m swimming pool, a children’s pool and flume, a play kingdom, new village changing rooms, a “changing places” accessible changing facility, a thermal suite complete with steam room, sauna, ice fountain and snail shower, as well as a café, alongside the existing four badminton court sports hall and outdoor pitches. The facility opened officially January 2017.

The Brief
As well as building the facility, the council were also looking for a partner that could provide them with a suite of operational solutions including all IT infrastructure, marketing and sales as well as ongoing operational and member management support over the next five years, with the option to extend for a further 10.

Pulse’s dedicated business support division - Pulse Solutions - was awarded a separate contract with the council to do exactly that.

The Challenge
The biggest challenge the partnership between Bolsover District Council and Pulse Solutions faced was the need to create and operate a facility that is both a fully sustainable and commercially viable, whilst also remaining in line with the council’s vision and abiding by their policies.

The council received a dedicated account manager to help advise and support on sales and marketing as well as the overall performance of the facility to ensure Go! Active @ The Arc reached its expected targets. It was agreed that the council would also receive ongoing specialist support from Pulse’s Group Marketing Manager and Director of IT Services.

Following the official opening of the new Go! Active @ The Arc leisure facility in Clowne, Derbyshire, Bolsover District Council and the Pulse Group have already exceeded membership expectation by 527% within the first three months.

GO! ACTIVE @ THE ARC
Pulse Solutions deliver robust operational support for new £4m leisure facility

Seamless member management software
The ‘Go! Active’ brand management
Delivering a marketing and sales plan
Membership join online website solution
Providing a tailored business plan

Bolsover District Council had already developed the strong Go! Active @ The Arc brand, but as the strategic leisure development partner Pulse’s in-house marketing team was tasked with supporting the on-going development of the brand. They also liaised closely with the Pulse Design & Build division who were responsible for proposing the bright and welcoming interior design. This included creating all internal signage, wall art throughout the facility, as well as motivational quotes.

The Go! Active @ The Arc brand

Using their 35 years’ expertise in not only designing facilities but also operating them, the Pulse Solutions team supported the council to devise and develop a clear business plan prior to the development commencing. Working with the Council, Pulse carried out a full latent demand report to ensure there would be sufficient interest in a new facility within the area as well as providing expected income, costs, programming, staffing and pricing. The partnership also established various membership options and a range of packages the facility would offer at varying price points.

The partnership agreed to implement the Pulse signature, and a highly successful household membership offer which provides up to six residents from one address fully inclusive access to the facility for just £365 for the entire year. Household members gain access to general swimming and aqua fun sessions in the 25m swimming pool, the teacher pool, the fume, the 10g station Pulse Fitness gym, all group exercise classes (except swimming lessons), the luxurious sauna and steam room, children’s soft play zone, sports hall inflatable sessions and children’s activity camps.

This offer was particularly favoured by the council as it helped to remove some of the barriers to participation and varying price points.

Creating an integrated marketing and sales campaign

Four months prior to opening all marketing for the new facility commenced and the Pulse Solutions’ marketing team were tasked with supporting the council’s own marketing division to develop and design all-branded materials for Go! Active @ The Arc.

In order to ensure a collaborative approach was maintained, a full marketing strategy was developed which included all print and digital designs for Go! Active @ The Arc’s pre-sales campaign, posters, banners, newspaper adverts, online adverts, local radio campaigns and a full social media strategy.

In November 2016, once both the marketing and sales strategies were in place the team kicked off their pre-sales campaign. As part of this strategy a dedicated area was set up which allowed members of the public to find out more information about the new facility. The Pulse Solutions team created a video which explained all the benefits of joining as well as featuring 3D visuals of how the new facility would look. The video received well over 3,000 views. The council were responsible for building a temporary website which was used during pre-sales as well as the centre’s full website. The Go! Active @ The Arc website received 1,500 registrations prior to the facility even opening for their household membership offer.

To support an all registration and pre-sales activity Pulse developed and implemented a specific CRM strategy. This involved the team contacting all those that had registered their interest, advising them on when and how to join as well as inviting them to share the membership offer with their friends and family. Pulse were then able to plot postcodes, which enabled them to understand and determine specific areas within the local community where they had penetration and interest. This then allowed the team to target specific areas within the local area. Pulse were responsible for arranging a leaflet drop to over 40,000 households.

In March 2017, a final close-out digital marketing campaign was created to give the household membership one last push. This received a phenomenal response, gaining over 1,800 likes on Facebook and an average response of 37% on the dedicated email marketing campaign.

In paper media campaign

Over 40,000 direct marketing distribution

In social media campaign

Dedicated app to book fitness classes

Over 40,000 direct marketing distribution
Operational and IT solutions to support the day-to-day running of Go! Active

The Pulse Solutions team also provided a whole range of operational solutions to ensure the smooth running of the facility.

The facility has been fitted with the latest modern technology and all members use an radio frequency identification (RFID) wristband which gives them access to the facilities - creating a seamless access controlled entry solution. The new access barrier control system also ensures child protection and member security whilst enabling staff to monitor member activity.

Any casual visitors coming to the facility will be given a printed receipt with a QR access code which can be scanned at the barriers to allow them access to the facilities.

To ease pressure on staff, Pulse has installed booking kiosks within reception as well as creating a dedicated class booking app. The app has received fantastic feedback and is used by 80% of members whilst a further 15% use the kiosk, reducing demand on reception staff. Members can also book classes online via the Go! Active @ The Arc website.

To ensure the facility met the council’s requirements, Pulse Solutions installed their proven membership management Exerp software. The Exerp system allows staff to manage all DDI, member activity and EPOS from one easy solution. Pulse had to create a bespoke system to ensure they were compliant with the council’s stringent data protection policies and procedures.

Pulse’s intelligent tracking software PulseMove, has also been installed across all fitness equipment in the new 100 station gym. The software comprises of an in-gym kiosk, website and mobile app which will allow members’ data to be collected both in and outside the gym and synced in real time across all devices. PulseMove supports the gym team by creating programmes and automatically configuring equipment for each individual member. The use of all this technology combined has made the site more efficient and improved service delivery of all operations. PulseMove will also aid retention by connecting equipment, staff and management with members. All staff were given intensive training across PulseMove and Exerp in order to ensure they could use each system correctly. This training was vital for the council as it allows staff to become more independent and less reliant on Pulse on a day-to-day basis going forward.

Produced great results over the first 6 weeks!

- **1000** Targeted memberships met
- **+600** Target exceeded
- **5000+** Live members in 6 weeks!
- **6000+** Visitors at the open weekend!

Don’t take our word for it

“We’re delighted with the outcome. We have an amazing facility that is the envy of others for miles around and look forward to continuing our working relationship with the Pulse Solutions team. Not only do we have a modern facility that appeals to all sections of our community, but we have the right staff, tools and support solutions in place to ensure that the facility is sustainable for the future.”

Councilor Mary Dooley, Cabinet Member for Leisure at Bolsover District Council

What could we do for you? Let’s start the conversation today.

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