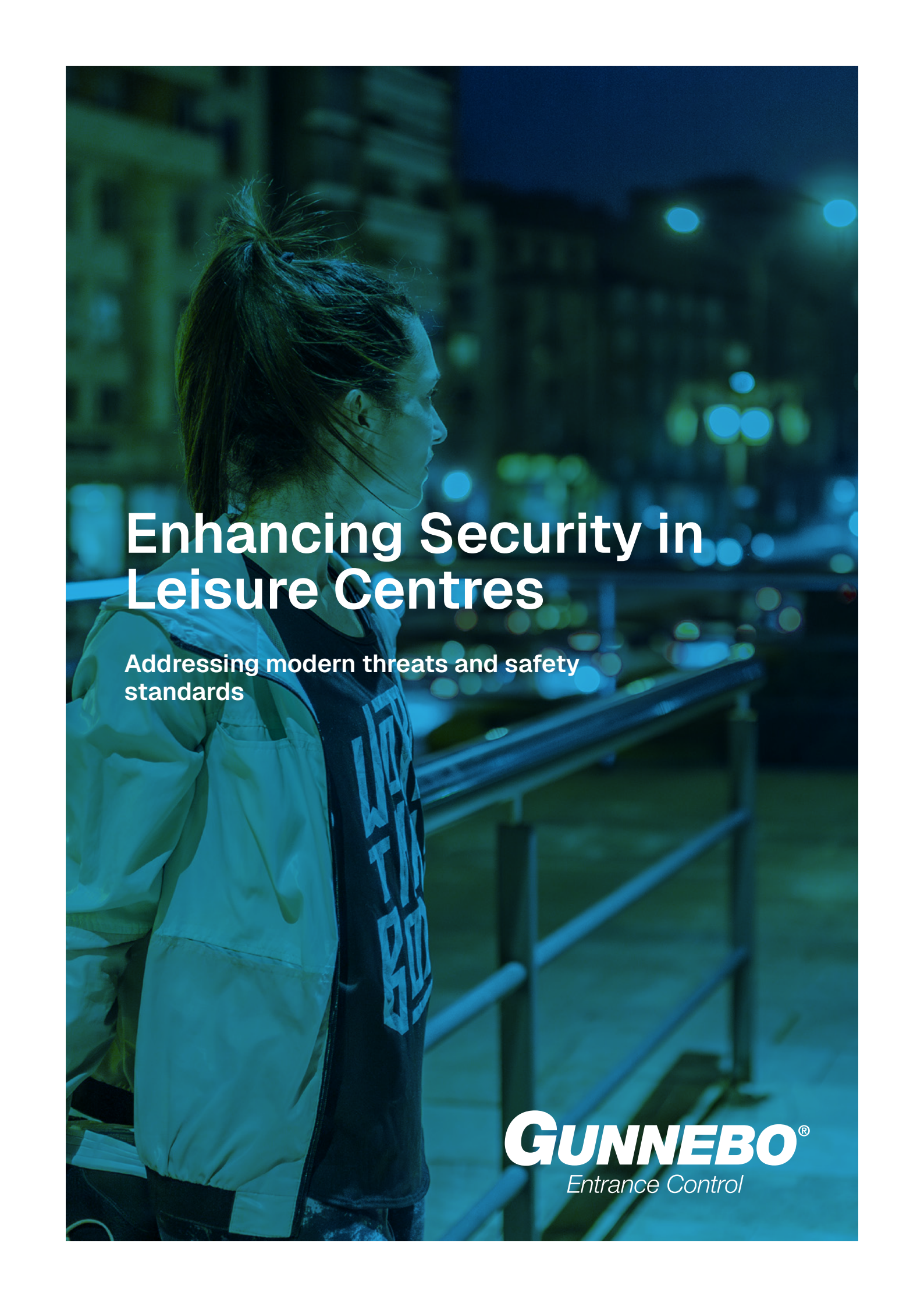


A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a high-visibility yellow vest over a dark t-shirt, stands on a balcony or walkway at night. She is looking out over a city with blurred lights in the background. The entire image has a blue color cast.

Enhancing Security in Leisure Centres

Addressing modern threats and safety
standards

GUNNEBO®
Entrance Control

Enhancing Security in Leisure Centres

Addressing modern threats and safety Standards

The global fitness industry, once regarded simply as a hobby or discretionary spending, has continued to expand its role as an essential part of public health and the economy.

The 2025 Health & Fitness Association highlights how gym memberships have reached historic highs, memberships climbed 6% year-over-year, revenue increased an average of 8%, and the number of fitness facilities expanded nearly 4%¹.

These gains confirm what operators and investors have long anticipated: fitness is a core part of today's connected health (mentally and physically,) wellness and lifestyle spending. And it shows no sign of abating, with a market value projected to reach over \$202 billion by 2030².

Currently there are 205,180 fitness clubs worldwide and 184.59 million gym memberships³. Within this, the number of women attending gyms is growing, comprising most gym memberships (approximately 57% of gym-goers⁴) in many global regions and showing a significant increase in participation over the past decade.

In addition, leisure centres and gyms by their very nature attract a lot of younger or vulnerable people so 'safeguarding' is an essential aspect of the overall security architecture.

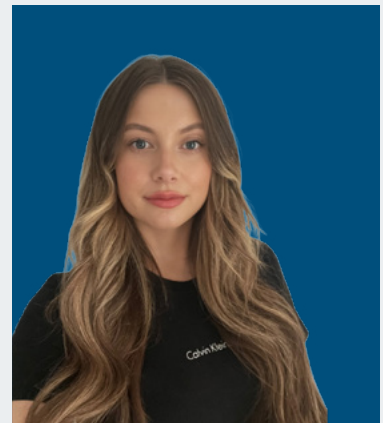
Current Protective Security Profile

Leisure centres are designed to be open and accessible to the public, and increasingly must accommodate accessible design, ensuring entrances and facilities are physically accessible to people with disabilities. But this openness can make them vulnerable to street crime and other threats if entrances are not properly secured.

As popularity grows and time frames change to 24/7 operations, leisure centres, gyms, and pools face unique challenges, to keep users, staff and visitors safe and secure, whilst ensuring compliance with new safety standards.

Globally, there is concern of gang recruitment in gyms and opportunistic crime is prevalent, which is attractive to criminals due to the presence of valuable items in changing rooms and lockers. Criminals may enter legally as members and target personal belongings, leading to significant

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Elly is a marketing professional with a broad background in product, event and service marketing across the security and architectural sectors.

Elly is a studying member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and certified in Carbon Literacy. She is currently Global Product & Service Marketing Manager at Gunnebo Entrance Control, where she leads global product launches and marketing campaigns that shape the future of entrance control solutions.



The number of women attending gyms is growing, comprising 57% of gym memberships

revenue losses and reputational risks for facility operators.

Tailgating is one of the most common security breaches faced by gyms and leisure facilities as unauthorised individuals can gain access to secure

“Tailgating is one of the most common security breaches faced by gyms and leisure facilities as unauthorised individuals can gain access to secure areas by following others.”

areas by following others. Pedestrian security solutions, such as speed gates and turnstiles, help control access by limiting it to paying members and staff, reducing losses and enhancing overall security.

Addressing these vulnerabilities requires focused interventions, community engagement, and policies. Accommodations to make a difference include the addition of a well-lit entry to offer a welcoming environment and promote safe access to sport and physical activity for all.

Security Culture and Training

To meet these needs, security technology must be carefully integrated. It should operate remotely with real-time monitoring, remain unobtrusive and blend seamlessly into its surroundings.

This is particularly important for unmanned facilities and during peak global gym hours, from 5am to 9am in the morning and 8pm to 11pm in the evening, when vigilance is essential.

The security culture in leisure centres primarily emphasises safeguarding vulnerable users rather than preventing crime. ACT Awareness training, originally designed for counter-terrorism and internationally recognised is available to help staff recognise general criminal behaviours.

There is a need for a comprehensive understanding across the supply chain of the responsibilities tied to implementing these security solutions into leisure centres, with every party involved, from suppliers to end-users, accountable for ensuring safety and compliance.

To adapt to the growing demand for leisure facilities and evolving security risks, a proactive approach to security and monitoring is required.

The question is posed: “As leisure facilities face rising demand and evolving security risks, how can they integrate entrance controls that maintain a welcoming atmosphere while ensuring strict guest safety standards?”

By creating this discussion, Gunnebo Entrance Control wishes to stimulate debate and encourage contributions from many voices. We look forward to engaging with you and your colleagues in this dialogue and would be pleased

to share additional points of view and insights. Feel free to contact your Gunnebo Entrance Control representative to start the conversation.

Setting the Scene

Leisure Centres are playing an increasingly important role in their global communities. The Moving Communities Impact Report highlights the significant achievements of leisure facilities and the people who run them in creating community engagement despite a variety of challenges.

To this effect, the global leisure centres market value for 2025 is projected to be between \$150 billion and over \$1.37 trillion.⁵ Asia-Pacific is the region experiencing the most rapid growth in the leisure centres market.⁶

The report reveals participation and throughput to leisure centres have both increased, with the average number of participants per site up by almost a thousand people (7%) and overall visits growing by over 10,000 per year (5%).⁷

The impact leisure centres can have on our attitudes towards fitness and activity is also seen, with 86% of respondents saying they preferred exercising in leisure centres to in a more informal setting.

And while young adults ages 18 – 34 (31%) as well as adult ages 35 – 54 (31%) make up the biggest populations at the gym, the next largest age population are children ages 6 – 17 (16%).⁸

Whilst the value of these facilities for communities “cannot be overstated,” providing essential security involves more than the best choice of products and services. It also requires best

practice and an integrated approach to ensure security, safety and convenience for staff and guests.

It considers how leisure centre facilities are in constant demand as people look to improve their fitness and wellbeing. With lifestyles increasingly moving away from traditional routines, customers are demanding longer, more flexible opening hours and multiple locations, all to be kept safe and secure as standard.

A Prime Target Environment

Analysing threats using historical data, crime reports, and practical experience ensures security measures can be prioritised accordingly. Opportunistic crime is one of the most frequent threats facing leisure centres.

Given these facilities naturally attract younger and more vulnerable individuals, safeguarding measures are a critical part of the security framework.

It is crucial to understand what aspects might make a leisure centre more appealing to potential offenders. One issue is tailgating, which highlights the importance of pedestrian security solutions that restrict access to authorised users, such as paying members and staff. Although tailgating is largely opportunistic, it can lead to significant revenue losses, making it a vital factor when selecting the appropriate security measures.

The potential for high rewards is another consideration, as leisure centres commonly feature changing rooms and lockers, which can present a “prime target” for criminals.

Parents might leave belongings unattended while watching their

SpeedStile FLs



Intelligent features include single person detection, card controlled passage, crawl protection, wrong way and tailgating alarms.

Gunnebo SpeedStile FLs is a highly customisable speed gate that brings gyms and leisure centres a no-compromise approach to access and security.

SpeedStile FLs provides fast, reliable access control for gyms and leisure centres. High flow rates, sleek design and robust build quality mean security and safety come with style and convenience. Designed to blend seamlessly with the interior of modern entrances, SpeedStile FLs comes with these benefits:

- Ability to detect unauthorised users and attempt to stop them
- Suitable for a wide range of reader devices
- Customisable materials and finishes
- Optional way-mode indicators to visually confirm or deny passage
- Standard and wide lanes to accommodate requirements
- Bi-directional passage so the gate can be used for entry and exit
- Behaviour can be adjusted to optimise flow and user experience



With the total value of items stored in lockers substantial and comprising much more than just mobiles and keys, lockers are easy targets for criminals

visual verification systems primarily to record incidents for evidence collection rather than for live monitoring, which limits their ability to provide real-time responses to suspicious activity.

More advanced technologies, such as facial recognition and fingerprint scanning, have previously been considered for monitoring attendance or preventing unauthorised access. Guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has restricted the use of these tools in response to privacy concerns, curbing the deployment of biometric security.

Facilities must look to alternative methods to strengthen security without infringing on privacy rights. The overall security culture is designed towards 'safeguarding', not preventing crime, but the lack of a proactive security culture limits staff's ability to respond to suspicious behaviours effectively.

Implementing targeted training programs, creating greater situational awareness, and developing a more comprehensive security strategy. This is right from the perimeter of a leisure facility, including the entrance and exit control to balance the need for a welcoming atmosphere with the importance of maintaining a high level of security.

Examples include high-security controlled entry systems that provide an effective means of managing access. By allowing only one person to pass at a time, they prevent tailgating and ensure every entry is verified, especially supportive for unmanned 24/7 facilities. Well-lit, secure entrances further enhance user confidence, especially during late or low-traffic hours.

children, and professionals may store valuable items in lockers before or after work. The total value of items stored in lockers can be substantial and comprise much more than mobiles and keys.

Rather than breaking into a facility, a criminal may enter as a paying visitor and proceed to commit crimes, such as forcing open lockers or even assaulting individuals. London's Met Police recorded 92 offences in 2023 – with 65 women harassed, 12 assaulted and eight stalked. Forces in Northamptonshire and Cleveland came close behind, with a combined 36 reports in the same year⁹.

The risk-to-reward ratio is favourable for offenders: with minimal time and effort to pry open a locker. Any noise generated would likely go unnoticed amidst the general sounds of a pool, gym, or background music.

A criminal could access multiple lockers and gain substantial rewards, perhaps by casually observing visitors

and waiting for an opportune moment to act. Leisure centres are often inexpensive to access, with many allowing free entry to certain areas. Exits are generally accessible enabling quick escapes if needed.

With well-documented stretched resources in Police departments, opportunists are also developing a culture of complacency. There is a need for Leisure centres to be focused on proactive security protocols, training, and procedures that must be robust enough to identify and manage incidents in real-time.

Security Response

Many leisure centres primarily focus on protecting personal items through lockers, conducting DBS checks for lifeguards and other key personnel, and securing potentially hazardous chemicals like chlorine. These measures are not always sufficient for addressing the range of threats present in today's environment.

Leisure centres utilise smart CCTV and

Billbergia Sports Centre

With the rising demand for secure, efficient, and technologically advanced access management, facilities like Billbergia Sports Centre upgraded its entrance control solutions to enhance safety, streamline operations and elevate the user experience.

Opened in September 2022, Billbergia Sports Centre is a state-of-the-art indoor venue located in Camellia, NSW, boasting 7,000 square meters of space across two levels¹⁰. It includes 10 basketball courts, four indoor soccer courts and accommodates a range of activities, from indoor rugby to wheelchair basketball and dance.

With a restaurant, licensed bar and facilities for parties and conferences, it's a dynamic, high-traffic environment where the need for efficient and secure access management is critical.

Being a member-only facility, controlling and monitoring the flow of over 2,700 members is crucial. Billbergia Sports Centre sought an entrance control solution that could support smooth access for members while preventing unauthorised entry.

In collaboration with Gunnebo Entrance Control, the centre installed the SpeedStyle FLs 1200 EV Entrance Gates, chosen for their sleek design, robust functionality, and ability to integrate with the centre's membership CRM system.

Venue Manager Daniel Gatt remarked on the positive impact these gates



Billbergia Sports Centre is a state-of-the-art indoor venue with over 2,700 members that uses Gunnebo SpeedStyle FLs 1200 to control access

have had: "They are part of our aesthetics, our business, and our building," he said, highlighting how the gates have become integral to the centre's identity. He further noted, "the gates are something

"The gates are something we are proud of as they elevate our entire facility entrance."

Daniel Gatt
Venue Manager

we are proud of as they elevate our entire facility entrance," showing the importance of the gates in creating an impressive first impression for members and visitors alike.

The SpeedStyle gates, equipped with RFID scanning capabilities, allow members to enter simply by swiping their membership cards. If

a membership isn't active, the gates remain closed and prompt the user to check in at reception. It has also minimised attempted tailgating for the safety of members of staff.

This setup has provided Billbergia with invaluable data, allowing them to monitor memberships, understand peak usage times, and optimise operations accordingly. "The installation of the additional RFID scanners created a seamless experience for members and staff alike," Gatt explained.

With a focus on user-friendliness, the gates allow for continuous passage at a rate of up to 40 people per minute, accommodating high traffic flows while ensuring security for all users, including those needing wheelchair access.

Since the installation, the SpeedStile gates have delivered on all expectations, creating a more secure, efficient, and visually impressive entry experience.

Evening guests comment on the dynamic lighting of the gates. Not only to enhance the ambience but also act as a significant security and safety feature. The seamless integration with the membership system and smooth, reliable operation makes the gates an essential part of the facility's success. Gatt expressed satisfaction with the gates, noting that "they operate without issue, and the consensus from clients is how

easy the gates operate day to day."

The entrance control solution at Billbergia Sports Centre showcases how entrance control technology can transform access management for modern leisure facilities, ensuring that security, functionality, and aesthetics work hand in hand to create a safe and harmonious experience.

"They operate without issue, and the consensus from clients is how easy the gates operate day to day."

Daniel Gatt
Venue Manager

Summary

"They are more than just places to exercise; they are lifelines in offering crucial social connection, mental health support, and physical health benefits."¹¹

As leisure centres play a growing role in global communities and across all ages, with membership rates projected to rise significantly, ensuring these spaces remain safe and secure is essential.

These centres, including gyms, swimming pools, and other fitness facilities, face unique security challenges. They must provide a welcoming environment while protecting visitors from various risks, from opportunistic crimes to personal safety threats.

Leisure centres are increasingly targeted for petty theft, harassment, and even physical assaults, particularly in areas like changing rooms and locker facilities where people may leave valuables unattended.

The open nature of these spaces makes them accessible to a broad public, creating opportunities for unauthorised access and tailgating. This lack of controlled access can lead to both financial losses for facility operators and a negative impact on the visitor experience.

The rising security concerns in leisure facilities have prompted a push for improved safety standards. New guidelines emphasise the need for facilities to assess and address risks to different groups, including vulnerable individuals and children. These standards are part of a broader trend toward integrating security features that protect users while maintaining the open, inviting atmosphere essential to leisure centres.

Traditionally, security efforts in leisure centres have focused on safeguarding rather than crime prevention. There is a growing awareness that proactive measures, such as staff training to recognise suspicious behaviours, can

help create a safer environment.

Developing a security-conscious culture among staff and visitors is essential to tackling the full range of threats faced by these facilities. Training and awareness programs can equip employees to respond effectively to incidents and help prevent them before they escalate. Having the security tools available is essential to this success.

The biggest challenge is balancing this need for security with the desire to be inclusive and welcoming. While measures like entry gates, CCTV, and secure lockers can significantly reduce risks, they must be implemented thoughtfully to avoid creating a fortress-like atmosphere.

Strategically designed entrance control solutions can blend seamlessly into the facility's layout, providing unobtrusive protection without detracting from the user experience.

By addressing current threats while preparing for future challenges, leisure centres can continue to offer a safe, supportive environment for community engagement, physical fitness, and overall wellbeing.

Improving security in leisure centres requires more than just investing in the latest technology; it demands a holistic approach that integrates tailored entrance control measures, community-friendly designs, and a strong security culture.

In doing so, leisure centres can maintain their role as vital community spaces that promote health, connection, and safety for all.

Contact us for more information on our solutions for leisure.

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gunneboentrancecontrol.com



By ensuring a holistic approach to security, leisure centres can maintain their role as vital community spaces that promote health, connection, and safety for all

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¹¹[Quote by Emma Bernstein, Strategic Projects Lead Sport England](#)

Creating Safe, Inclusive Spaces: Tailored Entrance Control Solutions for Leisure Centres

Gunnebo Entrance Control is dedicated to supporting leisure centres in creating secure, welcoming spaces by offering customised entrance control solutions that meet the specific needs and unique challenges of these facilities.

Leisure centres play an essential role in global communities by providing a place for fitness, social interaction, and mental well-being. As visitor numbers grow, the need for enhanced security to address both safety and operational demands becomes increasingly critical.

Gunnebo Entrance Control's approach focuses on working closely to tailor solutions that balance security with accessibility, ensuring centres remain safe while preserving their open, inclusive atmosphere.

A central part is its consultative approach. Recognising that each facility has distinct requirements based on its size, layout, and user demographics, Gunnebo Entrance Control works directly with facility managers to assess the specific security risks and needs.

This partnership enables Gunnebo Entrance Control to design and implement entrance control systems that align with the centre's operational objectives, providing a highly personalised security strategy.

One of the core security concerns in leisure centres is controlling who has access to various parts of the facility, such as changing rooms, locker areas, and staff-only sections. Gunnebo Entrance Control addresses this through advanced entrance control technologies, including RFID-enabled gates, security portals, speed gates, and turnstiles to allow only authorised individuals to enter restricted areas.

These systems prevent tailgating and unauthorised entry with smart technology seamlessly integrated with membership management systems, allowing facilities to effectively manage access in real time based on user status, even on a remote basis at any time.

Gunnebo Entrance Control helps leisure centres respond to the specific security challenges posed by opportunistic theft. Creating a visible security barrier at entrances and strategic points within the facility deters potential thieves by limiting their access and providing controlled pathways.

Effective security in leisure centres is designed to enhance rather than hinder the visitor experience. The sleek, modern design of gates and turnstiles complements the welcoming atmosphere of leisure centres, ensuring security measures do not detract from the environment. With customisable features, such as dynamic lighting and smooth operation for darker nights, Gunnebo's products are well-suited to high-traffic areas, providing an efficient and seamless experience for visitors.

Through this partnership-driven approach, Gunnebo Entrance Control helps leisure centres on a global scale achieve a secure, user-friendly environment that prioritises the safety of all visitors and staff while enhancing the overall experience.

For more information:
gunneboentrancecontrol.com

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