

Developing a leisure brand that's fit for market.



Before:



After:



Design consultancy:
WPA Pinfold

Client company:
Barnsley Premier Leisure

Project:
Developing a leisure brand
that's fit for market

For publication

Executive summary

Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL) are a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides affordable, value for money health, sport and leisure facilities and activities in South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire; and we were approached by them to rebrand their fitness proposition.

Their existing fitness offering brand, 'Fitness Flex', was no longer fit for purpose; it did not position them uniquely in the market and did not portray the company core values that they pride themselves on. The brand image was generic, and the brand name gave the wrong connotations of a body building gym. The brand required revitalisation and repositioning, moving away from the value gym marketplace and focusing firmly on their purpose, to help enrich people's lives within their community, through fitness.

The pressure on BPL's Fitness Flex brand was increasing from all angles: Budget gyms have eroded the price of memberships down to a commodity, competing solely on price. Mid-market gyms are defining their audiences with younger targeted brands such as JD Gyms entering the market; and boutique gyms are focusing on enhanced service levels and customer experience, premiumising the market for specialist offers.

In addition to this, as out-of-gym fitness equipment improves drastically, and technology continues to evolve, more people are choosing to get fit at home. This provides a true alternative to gym memberships, resulting in the need for a brand which provides a compelling offer to attract, retain and grow membership.

We defined the key target audience and developed a new brand proposition and positioning, emphasising the focus on the brands' local communities, their members and personal fitness goals, and the not-for-profit nature of the operations.

From this positioning we created a connective 'big thought' at the centre of the brand, to guide the creative thinking and give a reason to believe in the brand's message – we expressed this externally for customers with a strapline and internally for employees with a rally call.

This thinking communicated the good that the not-for-profit operation did for the community, the good that it did for its employees and ultimately the good that exercise and fitness does for your body and mind.



Executive summary

We renamed the gym chain to 'Your Space', placing the members at the heart of the brand, making it your space to do what you want, and your space to feel good. We created a vibrant brand identity, a friendly tone-of-voice and new imagery featuring real people, rather than models, enjoying getting fitter and healthier. The brand identity was supported by experiential applications, both externally and internally.

The result was a totally reinvigorated offering:

- Enriching more people lives – **Member usage up by 85%, where target was 50%**
- Retaining membership against increased competition – **Attrition rates at 3.2% (the industry standard is 5.5%)**

- Increased satisfaction and recommendations – **Increased Net Promoter Score since rebrand from 58%–82%, where BPL had hoped for 69%**
- Increased membership – **100% increase on membership sales based on previous year, Annual sales target reached in first 3 months (a net gain of 500 members for the first site)**
- Increased employee engagement and understanding of core values – **Staff sickness has decreased from 3.8% to 1.6% and staff retention has increased from 65% to 100%.**
- Brand roll-out – The brand is being rolled out across all 10 venues with a total of 4 sites complete to date. **The brand is now planned to embrace aquatics, bowling and golf.**

9.7m

Over 9.7 million fitness club members in the UK

1 in 7

people in the UK are members of a gym

Retention

Clubs lose around 50% of their members each year

...clubs need a sense of community and belonging...

Mintel UK Health and Fitness Club report

+500

Over 500 low cost clubs in the UK

40%

less likely to leave if they have made a friend at the gym

Staff

Half of UK gym members experience staff that don't speak to them

...a friendly environment is important for member retention.

Mintel UK Health and Fitness Club report

Context and overview

Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL) are a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides affordable, value for money health, sport and leisure facilities and activities in South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire. They operate a fitness provision within a diverse portfolio of sports and leisure facilities, including multi-use leisure centres and stand-alone health and fitness facilities.

It was important for BPL that their fitness provision was proud of its locality, as their venues are at the heart of their communities. Not only for fitness, but also swimming, children's parties, local events, weddings, functions, and other entertainment, enabling members of the community to develop strong relationships with their local leisure venue.

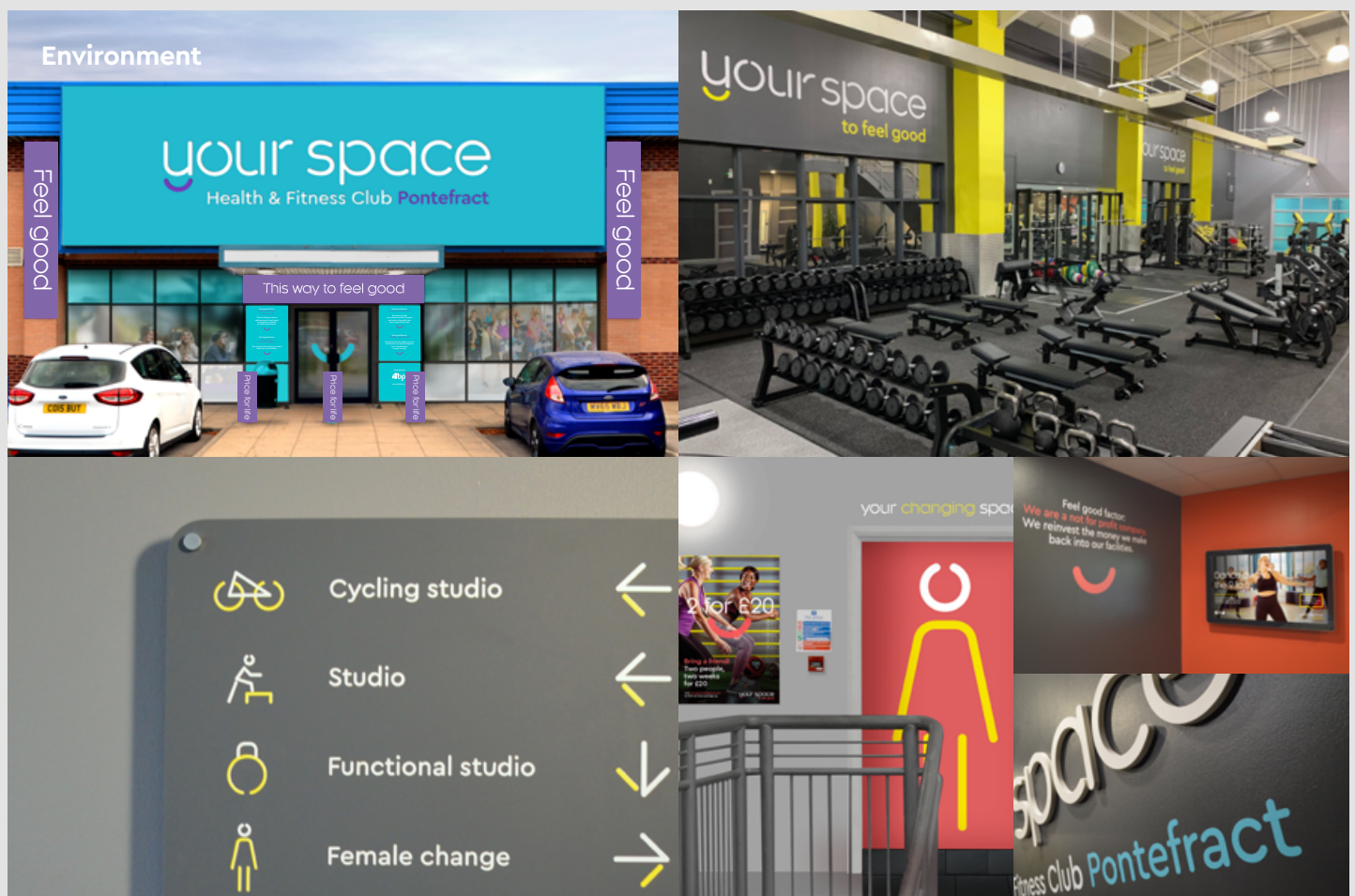
As a charitable trust, all of their profits are reinvested back into their venues and the greater good of the

local communities, meaning the brand needed to reinforce these relationships.

BPL are investing in the refurbishment of their fitness facilities, ensuring that each gym offers the most innovative and up-to-date fitness products and services on the market. From unique equipment and tailored fitness opportunities, BPL wanted their brand to support this investment.

The key business objectives were:

- To rename, rebrand and reposition the fitness provision brand, 'Fitness Flex', to a defined audience, reflecting the unique nature of the social enterprise aspect of the operation.
- To increase membership, attendance and to create healthier lives whilst reducing attrition, in order to build a sustainable model for the reinvestment of profits into new equipment and facilities.



The key business objectives continued:

- To create a unique positioning in the market to allow the brand to stand out in a crowded middle market that is under pressure from both budget gyms and premium boutiques.
- To build a brand that both communities and employees are proud of – which clearly reflects their core values in order for external and internal buy-in and for both to understand the purpose of the brand.

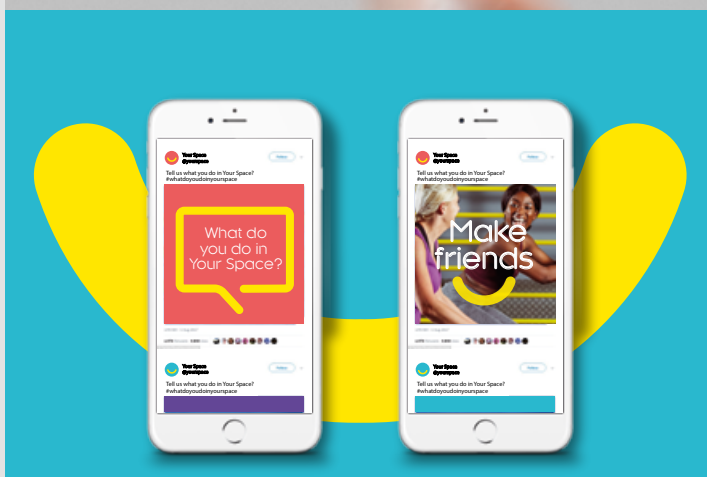
The Fitness Flex brand was not delivering a unique positioning in the market, the fitness provision had some strong USP's that were not being communicated:

- **Not-for-profit**
- **Price for life**
- **Local community involvement**
- **Everyone's welcome**

Fitness Flex was positioned in the value-for-money, low to middle market, where competition was increasing. At the low-price end, budget gyms had made gym memberships a commodity competing on price, whilst boutique fitness brands at the premium end were picking off the more affluent market with specific high-end offers. The middle market is dominated by big names such as Virgin, Nuffield Health and Bannatynes, all with large marketing budgets, whilst new entrants such as JD Gyms were appealing to a younger demographic.

Another threat was the increased use of technology such as Fitbits and smart watches, giving consumers access to activity data, enhancing the out of gym exercise experience, with products such as Peloton allowing exercise at home to become more communal. All of which reduces the need for gym membership.

Marketing communications



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The scope of work included:

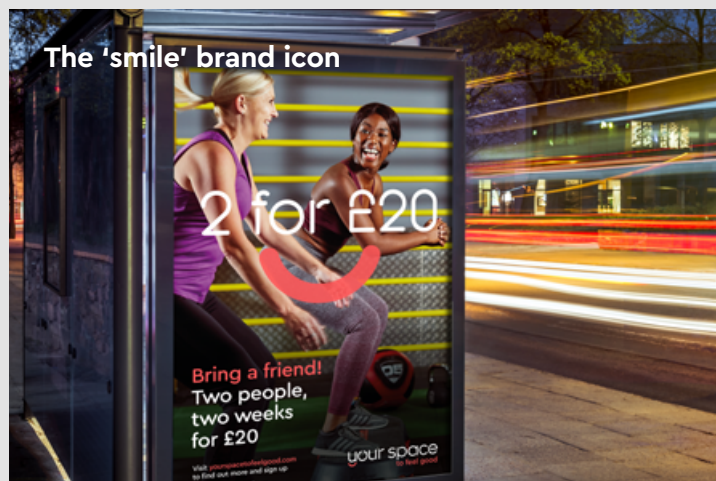
- Planning and strategy – including a brand audit, market review and insights, consumer analysis (by category), competition analysis and benchmarking, brand architecture and hierarchy, SWOT analysis, value proposition and positioning, brand mapping, new brand thought and new brand proposition.
- Brand articulation – name generation, brand visual identity, tone of voice, brand world, brand film.
- Brand activation – brand management guidelines, brand assets and imagery.
- Brand application – application to external signage scheme, interior scheme, uniforms, merchandise, digital marketing, social media, website, printed marketing and membership cards.

During the planning and strategic phases, it was critical for us to build a new brand platform that

created an authentic brand positioning which differentiated itself from the rest of the market place. It was at this stage that we drilled down into the purposeful nature of the operation – the core values being to enrich peoples' lives through fitness and health, and the fact that this is an inclusive environment where everyone is made to feel welcome, whilst the profits are reinvested into the facilities and the local community. This resulted in the strategic idea that the brand would create good and be good for its members' health and the communities that it operates within.

We identified the core target audiences:

- Aspiring homemakers – Younger families aged 26–35, income £40k–49k
- Suburban stability – Mature suburban owners living in mid-range housing, aged 56–65, income £40k–49k



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Target exceeded

Annual sales target reached
in first three months.

We developed the brand values:

Local...

A sense of belonging, membership that means you are a member in the true sense of the word; that it is your fitness facility and run for the benefit of the whole community.

Innovative...

The facilities have the latest equipment, great classes and knowledgeable trainers – delivering the best service to its members.

Fun and friendly...

It is open to all, it is not intimidating, but a place to have fun, learn new skills and reach your fitness goals, whatever they may be. Where every member counts and is a person not a number.

The scope included:

The new brand and brand world was completely rebuilt:

- New name
- Brand identity
- Brand language and tone of voice
- Brand iconography
- Signage scheme
- Interior scheme including digital signage
- Communications
- Digital marketing and social media
- Uniforms
- Key visual assets
- Motion graphics/brand film.

Tone of voice

Your goals
are my goals



I have a giggle
while I wiggle



Stress? Let it
wash over you



Swimming is a great way to
reduce stress and unwind.
If you enjoy swimming, why not
become a member and reduce
the cost of your swim sessions.
Join at yourspaceofthegood.com

Now that's
something to feel
good about

yourspace
to feel good

Wake up
and smell
the coffee



Cool
down

Catch
up

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To help focus the brand, we developed a 'big thought' and an internal 'rally call':

– **Big thought:**

Good for you, good for me, good for all

– **Internal rally call:**

Make someone feel good today

The articulation of the brand continued this thinking; the name suggested the inclusive nature of the brand, and the visual articulation positioned the new brand as friendly, warm and contemporary.

We renamed the gym chain 'your space', based on the fact it should be the members' space – your space to join in with a class, your space to reach your goals and your space to relax. We then combined the name with a tagline 'to feel good', resulting in the communication of the core brand message, **your space to feel good.**

The brand logo was created out of a contemporary friendly lower-case stencil font, with the bottom of the descending 'y' creating a smile. The smile is an iconic device we then used in the visual language of the brand, communicating friendliness, enjoyment and the feel-good factor of fitness. As the brand was going to be applied across a diverse portfolio of facilities from standalone gyms, leisure centres, health clubs and large destination leisure venues, we adopted a core palette of colours that would give us flexibility in application.

We also did not want to lose the local aspect of the venues, so for signage application, we integrated the place name into the description (e.g. Hoyland Leisure Centre).

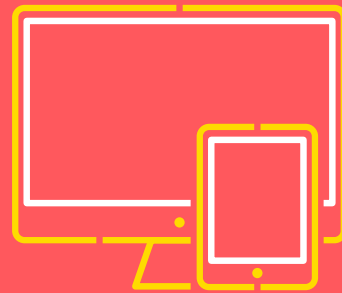
The language of the brand was also a key aspect in delivering the personality and the idea of inclusiveness, creating a space where you can be yourself and not worry about being judged by others. The clubs are very social with warm and friendly staff – so we wanted to make sure that the way the brand communicates reflected this. Every visitor is different, they all have their own individual reasons for joining and all have different levels of fitness ability, so we wanted to communicate in an inclusive way, that is appropriate to all customers.

 **560**
new members

Improved footfall/
attendance

 **90%**

Improvements in
customer experience



Efficiency/cost benefits



Rollout of design solution;
uptake of model by other
departments

We wanted to be positive and passionate; sound knowledgeable without appearing bossy; sound fun and friendly, without being silly or over familiar; and honest without being blunt. We also wanted to come across as encouraging without sounding patronising or fake. Within this tone of voice, we created core brand messages that were used in marketing materials, with loud and proud messaging within venues, consisting of super graphics on the walls of the gym.

The images we used for the brand say as much about the brand as the tone of voice does. We produced a series of images and video clips that were bright, optimistic, energetic and real. We wanted to capture the heart of Your Space, sweaty t-shirts and all. The images show people from all walks of life, all ages and ethnicities, all abilities and all levels of fitness. They were shot on location with bright and natural lighting, using models selected to reflect real people. All scenarios and expressions were natural, and not overly posed. They all have a sense of vitality and life – whether they're exercising, chatting or having a cup of coffee. Your Space is full of life and activity, so we wanted to make sure we captured this.

The fitness industry landscape

- Over 9.7 million fitness members in the UK with a market value of £4.9bn, with 1 in 7 people in the UK members of a gym (State of the UK fitness industry report 2018)
- Over 500 low cost clubs in the UK this is the budget end where Fitness Flex was positioned (State of the UK fitness industry report 2018)
- Clubs lose around 50% of their members each year so it is a vicious circle of recruiting new members each year. Members are 40% less likely to leave if they have made a friend at the gym.
- Half of UK gym members experience staff that don't speak to them
- 84% of the total UK population live within 2 miles of a public gym (State of the UK fitness industry report 2018)
- To help clubs retain members an industry report says "clubs need a sense of community and belonging that keeps people hooked...", "a friendly environment is important for member retention..." (Mintel UK Health and Fitness Club report).

Tone of voice examples:

Zumba class –

Let's dance off the 9 to 5

Body combat class –

**I have a giggle
while I wiggle**

Lane swimming –

**Life in the fast lane (or
just a leisurely swim)**

Swimming classes –

**Different strokes for
different folks**

Boxing class –

**I make friends (and then
punch them!)**

Spin class –

Spin to win



Increased engagement
with internal audiences

 **+2,560**

Increased patronage



A sense of pride

For publication



Increased awareness/
profile, positive shift in
perception



An increase in digital
growth/engagement

"Working with WPA Pinfold was an extremely enjoyable experience – they have the ability to understand your needs by creating a strong visual concept. Their professionalism and support throughout the process was amazing and I would strongly recommend them to all businesses."
Barnsley Premier Leisure

Results:

Increase membership and retention – Commercial

- Increased retention – Attrition rates at 3.2%, previously 4.5% (industry standard 5.5%).
- Increased membership – Annual sales target reached in first three months (net gain 500 members for first site).
- Secondary spend has seen a 55% increase in sales.
- Increased investment – Following the rebrand, with increased confidence in the brand through member numbers and retention, the profits have been reinvested into the facilities with new equipment, leases on facilities extended, additional sites sought with further expansion planned. Continued roll out of the rebrand from the initial 4 sites across 10 venues and the stretch of the brand to take in aquatics, bowling, golf and retail sales.
- Efficiency savings – with the implementation of digital screens within the clubs we have reduced print costs and increased engagement with interactive timetables and personal trainer information, marketing resource can now remote access the screens to update real time marketing offers.

- The Brand guidelines have helped reduce design time for their internal studio as they have clear templates and guidance. The guidelines have also delivered a clear scheme specification for future venue fit outs allowing BPL to procure and tender signage contracts, uniform and merchandise requirements, which allowed them to get best value on agreed specifications, quantities, and warranty.

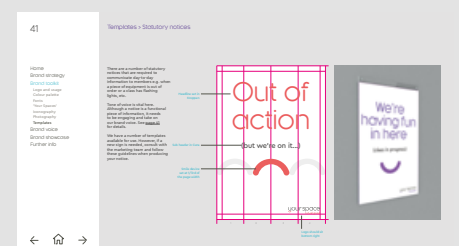
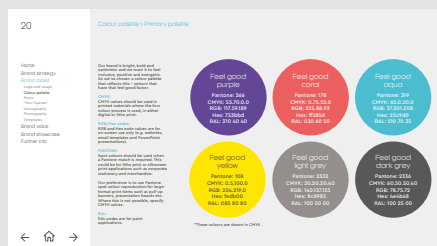
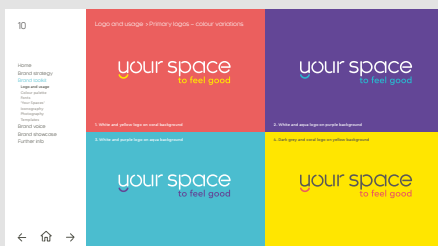
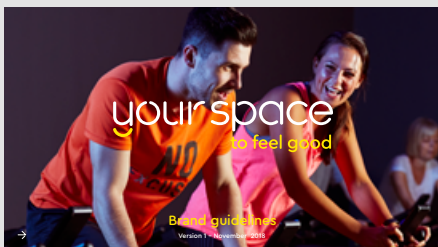
Positioning in the market – Marketing

- Price positioning retained against increased price competition from budget sector.
- Change in demographics attracting new members from private hotel gyms for example.
- Proof of customer devotion – Member usage up by 85% where target was 50%, an increased Net Promoter Score since rebrand from 58%–82%.
- Customer satisfaction shown through surveys before and after the rebrand, which shows great improvement and feedback, including online reviews of the venues – pre brand this was 79% and now customer satisfaction is at 95%.
- Unique website views have seen a 260% increase for the same period last year, bounce rates have decreased by 15% and online joining sales through direct click-throughs on the website have increased by 120%.

Building a brand to be proud of – Employees

- The employees were taken along the rebrand journey and have a clear understanding of the core values. They also understand the importance of their attitude and behaviour in order to communicate these values to the customer. Employees have a much clearer definition of their role is within the bigger picture and are now measured on "how many people they make feel good" which is the brand's rally call, as opposed to how many sales they generate
- Working practices, KPI frameworks and internal reward/recognition schemes have all been brought in line with the new brand values.
- Highest average length of stay as of Sep 2019 was 17 months, as opposed to Dec 2018 being 10 months.
- Increased volume of job applicants since the rebrand – within 2 weeks of opening they attracted 2 new personal trainers.

Brand guidelines



**Launch date: First
venue rebranded
January 2019**



**38% Increase of likes
on social media**



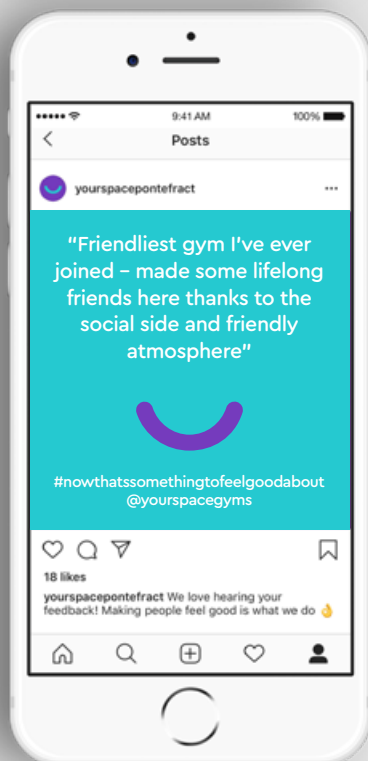
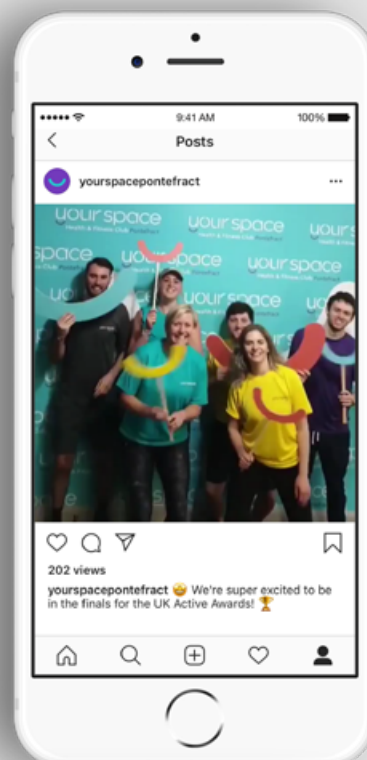
**6.9% Increase in
daily engagement**



**26.1% Increase in social
media reach**

Social media

Posts in support of the new brand rollout and focused around core brand values and behaviours.



Your Space Pontefract:
Members give their feedback
on the new brand

Your Space Pontefract:
Feeling good about being finalists
at the UK Active Awards