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## **Birmingham's ALTA Sports Club for the Disabled receives the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**

ALTA sports club has been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. The Club supports disabled swimmers from the local community to participate in recreational and coached swimming sessions at the University of Birmingham's Sport & Fitness club.

ALTA sports club was formed in the mid-1970s by members of the physical education teaching staff at the University of Birmingham, including Club President Charles Jenkins and Vice Chancellor Edward Marsland. Its aim was to promote sport, wellbeing and health for disabled members of the community, and initially opened for UoB students with disabilities. The group used the Munrow Sports Centre for over 40 years, providing pool sessions and a selection of dry sport activities on a Sunday afternoon.

Almost half a century later the group has transferred to the new Sport & Fitness 50m pool for its Sunday afternoon sessions, enabling them to host over 40 members in a facility which has been purposefully designed to be accessible to a wide range of disabilities. The number of nominations and awards has increased year on year since the awards were introduced in 2002, showing that the voluntary sector is thriving and full of innovative ideas to improve the quality of life for those around them. The ALTA Club has provided a sanctuary in Birmingham where the weekly aquatics session is very highly valued by the group it serves; both as an exercise session and for the social network it gives people who can be quite isolated due to their disabilities.

The volunteers who run the Club include Commonwealth and Olympic discus and shot-put athlete Rosemary Chrimes, Bill O'Sullivan, Tony Craythorne and John Russell. The sessions comprises both teaching swimming and improving general health. John Russell said he was delighted the group has been recognised by this prestigious award.

*'It's a great honour and achievement for the club and members, for the duration of the club, the twin cities competitions we took part in, the local competitions, the social activities – has all lead to this fantastic achievement. We are so proud, and hope that this award will help us recruit even more members.'*

The University of Birmingham has facilitated the continued running of the ALTA sports club by the continued provision of the weekly pool time since the opening of the new facility. Not only does this show a clear commitment from the University to support its local community, but more importantly, provides the ALTA Club with a secure home and high quality experience to ensure the Club can thrive and attract new members and volunteers.

Representatives of ALTA sports club will receive the award from John Crabtree, OBE, Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands later this summer.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to the editor:**

- University of Birmingham Sport & Fitness Club opened in May 2017, it features Birmingham's first 50m pool, six glass back squash courts, 200+ station gym, five activity studios, an indoor sports arena, 10m climbing wall and more.
- Lord Lieutenants represent the monarch in each of the UK's ceremonial counties.
- This year there were 281 winners of The Queen's Award Voluntary Service from across the UK. More information on the winners and the Award can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/queens-award-for-voluntary-service>
- Any group of two or more people that has participated in voluntary work for more than three years can be nominated for the award. Full details on how to nominate are available at <http://qavs.direct.gov.uk/>
- Nominations for the 2020 awards close on 13 September 2019.
- The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by volunteer groups to benefit their local communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Winners are announced each year on 2 June – the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation.