



LEISURE IN BELFAST



Belfast
City Council

GLL
better for everyone

BETTER

GLL operate Belfast City Council owned leisure centres under the Better Brand

INTRODUCTION

GLL is a charitable social enterprise operating under the Better brand. We work to provide the best leisure services available. Our mission is to get more people, more active, more often, in our 17 leisure centres and gyms across Belfast.

GLL is proud to continue its work with Belfast City Council, helping transform leisure facilities across the city. To ensure our growth, we deliver a successful social business focusing on our customer's needs. As a Not for Profit organisation, we reinvest all our surplus back into the community by developing staff, investing in our centres, supporting young athletes and increasing junior and senior participation.

GLL manage 17 leisure facilities across Belfast.



This document highlights our key successes and challenges in 2023 focusing on the six guiding values that sit at the heart of our business.

- [Partner of Choice](#)
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- [A Better way of doing Business](#)
- [More than a Job](#)
- [Customers and Communities at our Heart](#)
- [Tackling Health Inequalities](#)

DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE...

WAVE
MACHINE

6
GROUP CYCLE
STUDIOS

**INDOOR
INFLATABLE**

SOFT PLAY
AREA

11
SWIMMING
POOLS

3
HIGH SPEED
WATERSLIDES

41
BADMINTON
COURTS

CLIMBING
WALL

5
STEAM
ROOMS

LASER
QUEST

8
3G PITCHES

3
CAFES

**OVER
1,000
GYM
STATIONS**

4
AUSTRALIAN OPEN
STANDARD TENNIS
COURTS

SURF
SIMULATOR

CONFERENCE
FACILITIES

10
SAUNAS

**WATER
BASED
INFLATABLE**

14
5-A-SIDE
PITCHES

18
GROUP EXERCISE STUDIOS

1
7-A-SIDE PITCH

PARTNER OF CHOICE

- GLL has completed 7 years in Belfast and continues to deliver an extensive leisure programme on behalf of Belfast City Council. In 2023 the newly renovated Templemore Baths opened and is another strong example of the strength of this partnership.
- Prepaid membership increased by 1,513 in 2023 which represents a 7% improvement as prepaid membership broke beyond 22,000 for the first time in Belfast.
- Over 2,000 customers participated in our annual user survey which was up by 131% from the previous year. Belfast recorded 4.1 satisfaction rate out of 5, which we will continue to work to increase.
- 13 centres achieved Quest – The UK Quality Accreditation for Sport and Leisure and is a tool to help us offer 5 star service every time.
- Increased professional profile through memberships and award applications of business networks including Social Enterprise NI, Women in Business, NI Chamber of Commerce, Belfast Chamber of Commerce and Chief Executive Officers of the Third Sector.
- GLL support the Belfast Giants in providing training spaces for their athletes. In return we can reward our staff with tickets for matches as well as have the opportunity to raise the profile of our centre and activate memberships via Giants fans on match nights.
- Girdwood Community Hub hosted a range of conference, theatrical and sporting events. It now completes with established and versatile venues across the region.
- Top Team Life Guard competition was hosted at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre.

4.1
SATISFICATION
RATE

7%
IMPROVEMENT
IN PREPAID
MEMBERSHIPS

13
CENTRES
ACHIEVED
QUEST

GIRDWOOD
A TOP EVENTS
AND
CONFERENCING
SPACE FOR THE
CITY

RESPECTING THE PLANET

- The Partnership reduced energy consumption 2022 > 2023 through focused energy management plans and investment in energy efficient technology
 - o Electricity -9%
 - o Gas -5%
- The partnership completed LED lighting conversion at Belvoir and Ballysillan. Whiterock and Grove. Pitch LED lighting investment was also completed at Whiterock. 82% of Partnership lighting has been upgraded to full LED provision. In 2024 we will be looking to work with our partner on investment in more energy efficient technologies including PV solar panels, EV charging points and further conversion to LED lighting.
- EV car charging points have been installed at Girdwood, Grove, Lisnasharragh, Ballysillan and Brook Leisure Centre.
- The Belfast Partnership are currently developing proposal for the one million trees project in partnership with Belfast City Council. The project allows partners to support in identifying potential tree planting sites on both council and programme partners' land, developing community engagement and identifying sponsorship opportunities. Currently site surveys are being conducted for Andersonstown Leisure Centre and Whiterock Leisure Centre.
- GLL attended the NI Sports Forum All Party Group at Stormont Parliament Buildings in March and delivered a briefing on the impact on energy crisis and escalating costs on the Leisure Sector.
- The Belfast Partnership will sit on the Belfast City Councils Climate projects team in 2024 along with other key stake holder, identifying co-operative projects for reducing carbon emissions and creating a greener Belfast.



GLL Customer Service Centre located in the heart of the city and servicing the UK



Large crowd at the GLL Communications Day



Time to relax in the health suite at Templemore Baths



Team Lisnasharragh competing at the Top Team Lifeguard event



GSF Ambassador Shirley McCay with Belfast athletes at the GSF Awards Event



Children take part in a touch rugby session at Summer Holiday Scheme

A BETTER WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

- Our continued social impact is only possible through sound business practice. We grew our memberships and usage while continuing to offer a variety of concessionary options for everyone.
- £1.95m of internal reinvestment projects have been delivered to date across the partnership since 2015.
- £504k comprehensive small project schedule was delivered in 2023 including reception remodels, changing room upgrades, outdoor fitness provision and R&M projects. Please see some highlighted below:
 - £165K reception and changing room refurbishment at Ozone
 - £24K reception and lighting refurbishment at Falls
 - £22K studio refurbishment at Girdwood
 - £8K investment in social space at Whiterock
 - £39K investment in adding a strength and conditioning area and boxing space at Brook
 - £77K investment in an outdoor gym space at Ozone
 - £52K changing room and steam room refurbishment at Better Gym Connswater
 - £67K on repair and maintenance projects across the city
- Digital innovation helped attract new customers and compete with other operators in leisure with over 90% of bookings being made online and the same joining online.
- Over 60,000 people engaged with the Better brand across social media sites such as X, Facebook and Instagram.

MORE THAN A JOB

- We employ 948 staff with over 85% living in the Belfast area. In 2023 we had over 30 internal promotions across the Belfast Partnership.
- We have worked to create an environment where our staff understand the important of our social enterprise message.
- We continue to invest in our staff with a comprehensive internal and external training and development programme delivering various courses from National Pool Lifeguarding, Pool Plant Operator and Swimming Teaching Qualifications and an array of online training courses. We delivered 2 Leisure Employment Academies in partnership with Council and Workforce Training Services.
- A coaching and mentoring programme was created to support team work and motivation among staff across the city.
- We recruited 80 Children's Activity staff to deliver Holiday Schemes at 12 centres.
- Our 2 year Trainee Manager Development Programme is in its 29th year, with 4 new recruits joining us each year to gain experience across all areas of the business.
- We recruited 3 student coach placements to work within our Community Sport team, delivering a variety of young and senior sport and physical activity programmes.
- Absentee rates remained a focal point and whilst sitting slightly above the Company average, we are actively working with management teams to reduce high sickness levels.
- We made improvements to our self-service Human Resources management and payroll system continuing to give staff more control and access to their personal information.
- Staff to income ratio continued to reduce from 94.7% in 2022 to 87.4% in 2023, with an ongoing focus on the management of absence levels.
- We have been shortlisted in various awards in 2023 from the Social Enterprise NI Awards, Women in Business Awards to UK Active Awards.
- The importance of providing fully qualified staff was again championed at the Top Team Lifeguard event with participation from 40 staff from across Northern Ireland.
- We recognised the contribution of our teams at the GLL Communications Day with over 150 nominations for local staff awards. Held in the Europa Hotel this year we had a record 370 in attendance.



Opening day at the newly restored
Templemore Baths



Health Referral Manager Victoria Irving
working with a Healthwise participant



Participants play a game of indoor bowls at
the Club Games at Girdwood Community



Jonny Davis from British Fencing delivers a
session at the Summer Scheme Sports Day



Enjoying a swim at Andersonstown Leisure
Centre



Junior participants and their coach at the
Tom Daley Diving Academy in Lisnasharragh

CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES AT OUR HEART

- We continued to offer our services to all user groups and actively promoted people getting involved in physical activity.
- Putting the customer at the heart of our business helped us increase our memberships to 35,571.
- Spa Experience, our award-winning day spa is accessible and affordable for the whole community.
- Our GLL Sports Foundation supported 125 local athletes with over £70,000 bursaries, injury rehabilitation, education assistance and free memberships to all 17 centres.
- Over 5,500 children take part in swimming lessons every week learning a key life skill. This represents a 10% increase from the previous year.
- 2,766 children from across the city enjoyed our Holiday Schemes, taking part in activities such as football, swimming, dodge ball, tennis, basketball, pickleball and arts and crafts.
- The Club Games saw 50 participants from 6 teams of over 55s competing in a range of sports and activities including pickleball, table tennis, badminton, bowls, boccia and a collection of physical challenges.
- Warm Places and Winter Wellness programmes delivered in 6 centres and engaging with over 100 residents aged 40 and over.
- We delivered winter activity sessions in local community centres with over 400 people aged 50 and over taking part.

TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

- Our 12-week Healthwise exercise referral programme helped 1,600 people referred through their GP or other NHS services to increase physical activity and rehabilitate from cardiac, cancer, obesity and other health related issues.
- Our Move More programme in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support worked with 186 people who survived or are living with cancer.
- We deliver a number of active aging mornings across the city which include activities such as danderball, pickleball, table tennis, boccia and water polo.
- Concessionary membership options across all centres offered more affordable access to leisure for all sectors of the community.
- Belvoir Activity Centre serves as a disability sports hub in partnership with Belfast City Council and Disability Sports NI.
- We partner with Autism Swimming organisation Swimming Buddies to deliver autism specific swimming lessons at Brook Leisure Centre and Templemore Baths
- We offer an inclusive UK wide membership for people with a disability. This offers access to gyms, swimming pools and fitness classes at a discounted rate. Currently over 300 people in Belfast access this membership option.
- GLL grant free of charge admission to centres for all carers when accompanying the person in their care.
- We operate a JAM card scheme which allows people with a hidden disability or communication barrier to tell others that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way.
- All new LTP leisure facilities are equipped with Changing Places facilities. These accessible toilet and showering facilities were created to meet the needs of disabled children and adults with complex care needs who require appropriate equipment and more space.
- Currently 8 pools across the city provide Poolpods. These pool platform lifts are transforming pool access and are used by wheelchair users and other customers with mobility issues to access the water.
- In partnership with Belfast City Council, we offer a digital sign language service via our concierge teams that assists customers who are deaf to communication effectively with staff members.



Feeding the animals at the Avoniel Family Fun Day



Table tennis at an Active Morning at Girdwood Community Hub



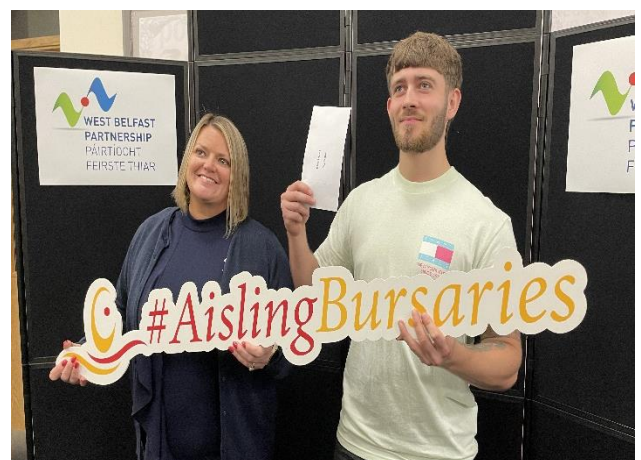
Young participants and their coach at a RISE Gymnastics session at Lisnasharragh



Laser Quest fun at the Indoor Tennis Centre and Ozone Complex



Gym refurbishments at Belvoir Activity Centre



Belfast Head of Service Jacqui Pope at the Aisling Bursaries

LOOKING FORWARD IN 2024

- **Partner of Choice** – Our difference really comes through in the quality of our relationships. We have a capability and willingness to support our partners' broader agendas and we will continue to deliver on not only the Belfast Agenda but the numerous health and wellbeing strategies for the city and Northern Ireland. We will continue to explore further opportunities to expand our partnerships in 2024.
- **Respecting the Planet** – We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment through actions such as minimising waste, moving towards a full LED lighting solution, and working with partners to find more efficient ways to heat the facilities. We will work closely on joint actions with Belfast City Council to achieve these collective aims.
- **A Better way of doing Business** – We will continue to operate high quality facilities that embrace technology and meet our customer's needs. We will continue to invest in centres outside the Leisure Transformation Programme ensuring they continue to cater for the needs of the local community. We will continue to offer a range of membership options suitable for all members of our community to help them become involved in physical activity.
- **More than a Job** – We will ensure that our staff are well trained and customer focused, while continuing to better themselves. We will continue to offer staff exciting pathways to develop within the company and build a career. We will continue to expand our team and expertise as we expand the service in 2024.
- **Customers and Communities at our Heart** – We continue to offer clean, friendly and modern facilities, using technology and innovation to benefit our customers. We will continue to expand our group exercise programme bringing a wider range of activities to suit everyone from juniors to senior participants. Our GLL Sports Foundation continues to grow and we will support over 125 local athletes. We will develop a wide variety of holiday schemes to encourage more children to try new sports and activities.
- **Tackling Health Inequalities** – Our focus remains on encouraging those in our community who are less active to become involved in physical activity. These initiatives will target juniors, over 55s, women and people with a disability. Our health programmes will continue to grow as we explore opportunities within MSK, diabetes, neuro and weight management initiatives. We will work with Belfast City Councils Disability Advisory Panel to challenge the accessibility of our facilities and programmes. In line with this we will commit to extensive training of staff in the area of disability inclusion.