



# 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 2024 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

**4**  
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 9 years in Belfast and continues to deliver an extensive leisure programme on behalf of Belfast City Council. In 2024 the £650k was spent on projects across the city such as gym and studio refurbishments which is another strong example of the strength of this partnership.
- Prepaid membership increased by 297 in 2024 which represents a 1.3% improvement as prepaid membership broke beyond 23,500 for the first time in Belfast.
- Over 2,983 customers participated in our annual user survey which was up by 24.3% from the previous year. Belfast recorded 4.1 satisfaction rate out of 5, which we will continue to work to increase. Net Promoter Score was 34.8% in 2024 compared to 33.8% in 2023.
- 14 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.
- Templemore Baths hosted a range of conference and launch events. It now competes with established and versatile venues across the region.
- Top Team Lifeguard competition was hosted at Grove Wellbeing Centre.

**4.1**  
SATISFACATION  
RATE

**1.3%**  
IMPROVEMENT  
IN PREPAID  
MEMBERSHIPS

**14**  
CENTRES  
ACHIEVED  
QUEST

**TEMPLEMORE**  
HOSTED A  
NUMBER OF  
LARGE-SCALE  
CONFERENCES  
IN 2024

## RESPECTING THE PLANET

- The Partnership reduced energy consumption by a further 1% 2023 > 2024 through focused energy management plans and investment in energy efficient technology
- The partnership completed LED lighting conversion at Falls, Shankill and Ozone which makes the city fully LED across the 16 sites. These energy investments are anticipated to reduce GLLs carbon emissions by 69 tons of CO2 per year.
- Further EV car charging points have been installed at Whiterock Leisure Centre.
- GLL have signed up to and gained member status to Belfast Business Promise. GLL are committed to deliver on pledge 3 of the promise; Protect our environment by working together to tackle the global challenge of climate change and protect our environment for future generations. GLL have signed up to the climate essentials platform to assist with lowering carbon emissions and develop a roadmap to net zero.
- The Belfast Partnership will continue to sit on the Belfast City Councils Climate projects team in 2025 along with other key stake holder, identifying co-operative projects for reducing carbon emissions and creating a greener Belfast.





Members at Girdwood enjoying a fitness class at the Summer Open Weekend



Group Exercise Studio refresh project completed in Grove Wellbeing Centre



Time for recovery in the cold-water plunge at Olympia Spa



400 Belfast staff attended the Annual Communications Day at the Europa Hotel



Crowd enjoying the GSF Awards Event at Belfast City Hall



Junior participant plays dodgeball at the Summer Celebration of Sport event

## 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.
- £2m of internal reinvestment projects have been delivered to date across the partnership since 2015.
- £650K comprehensive small project schedule was delivered in 2024 including reception remodels, gym and studio upgrades, spa upgrades and R&M projects. Please see some highlighted below:
  - £150K investment in LED lighting at Falls, Shankill and Ozone
  - £74K Spa Experience upgrades at Olympia Leisure Centre
  - £70K gym refurbishment at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre
  - £80K gym refurbishment at Falls Leisure Centre
  - £41K investment in studio refurbishment at Whiterock Leisure Centre
  - £30K investment in adding a Hyrox training area at Better Gym Belfast
  - £40K of gym upgrades at Andersonstown Leisure Centre
  - £14K reception area upgrades at Grove Wellbeing Centre
  - £60K on repair and maintenance projects across the city
- Digital innovation helped attract new customers and compete with other operators in leisure with over 95% 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. Average daily reach exceeded 10,200 and in total over 125,000 video views were achieved on Facebook.





Staff at Templemore Baths celebrate one year of opening



ukactive visit Belfast to learn about the various Health & Fitness initiatives in the city



140 Athletes celebrate their GLL Sport Foundation Award at City Hall



Aquatics for Health launched across the city in 2024



50 stakeholders attended the Tackling Health Inequalities event at Templemore



Community Sport Student Placements organise a Pickleball Tournament at Shankill



## MORE THAN A JOB

- We employ over 1,000 staff with over 80% living in the Belfast area. We have worked to create an environment where our staff understand the importance of our social enterprise message.
- GLL is an accredited Investor in People Gold organisation and one of only 132 companies in Northern Ireland to implement the Real Living Wage.
- 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.
- A coaching and mentoring programme was created to support teamwork and motivation among staff across the city.
- We recruited 84 Children's Activity staff to deliver Holiday Schemes at 12 centres.
- Our 2-year Trainee Manager Development Programme is in its 30<sup>th</sup> 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 slightly increased from 87.4% in 2023 to 88.0% in 2024, with an ongoing focus on the management of absence levels.
- We have been shortlisted in various awards in 2024. We were recognised as the Social Enterprise of the Year in the Belfast Business Awards and Templemore Baths was highly commended in the New Build of the Year category in the ukactive Awards.
- The importance of providing fully qualified staff was again championed at the Top Team Lifeguard event with participation from 48 staff from Belfast centres and observers from other Northern Ireland Local Authorities.
- We recognised the contribution of our teams at the GLL Communications Day with over 190 nominations for local staff awards. Held in the Europa Hotel this year we had a record 400 in attendance.



Templemore Baths host the launch of the Eastside Awards



Customer enjoying the Spa Experience at Olympia Leisure Centre



Clubs Games participants play a game of Table Tennis at Girdwood



Hyrox Training Club installed at Better Gym Belfast



The 'Dug Out' Coffee Hut opens at Avoniel



Flying high at the Gymnastics Showcase Event at 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 39,209.
- Spa Experience, our award-winning day spa is accessible and affordable for the whole community. It received a refresh in 2024 with the inclusion of a Pedi Spa and cold-water plunge tank.
- Our GLL Sports Foundation supported 140 local athletes with over £88,400 bursaries, injury rehabilitation, education assistance and free memberships to all 17 centres.
- Over 6,000 children take part in swimming lessons every week learning a key life skill. This represents a 16% increase from the previous year.
- 3,111 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 over 70 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.
- ukactive visited Belfast in October to understand more about programmes that are ensuring more people are more active in Belfast and how we are tackling health inequalities across the city. GLL also facilitated an engagement event with 16 Sporting National Governing Bodies and organisations at Templemore Baths.
- Over 18,500 people participated in Pickleball activities throughout the year. Over 80% of these participants were ages 50 and over.





Belfast Giants take part in a sports day themed team building day



Community Sport & Health team provide smoothies for participants of the Belfast Half Marathon



Inclusive climbing summer programme at Ozone



Combined team of Shankill and Ballysillan winning the 2024 Top Team Event



Active Reality comes to Shankill Leisure Centre



The Minor Pool Hall at Templemore hosted numerous events in 2024

# TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

- Our 12-week Healthwise exercise referral programme helped 1,266 people referred through their GP or other NHS services to increase physical activity and rehabilitate from cardiac, cancer, obesity and other health related issues.
- 932 came through the Physical Activity Referral Scheme and 334 through the Chronic Conditions pathways.
- We deliver several 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.
- GLL welcomed 50 stakeholders to Templemore Baths to attend our first Tackling Health Inequalities event. The event was designed to bring key stakeholders together to discuss the pivot to health within the leisure sector and further highlight how community initiatives can play an important role in tackling the health inequalities within society.
- 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 Pool pods. 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 'Sign Video' via our concierge teams that assists customers who are deaf to communicate effectively with staff members.





Child in Need Swimming Challenge filmed at  
Templemore Baths



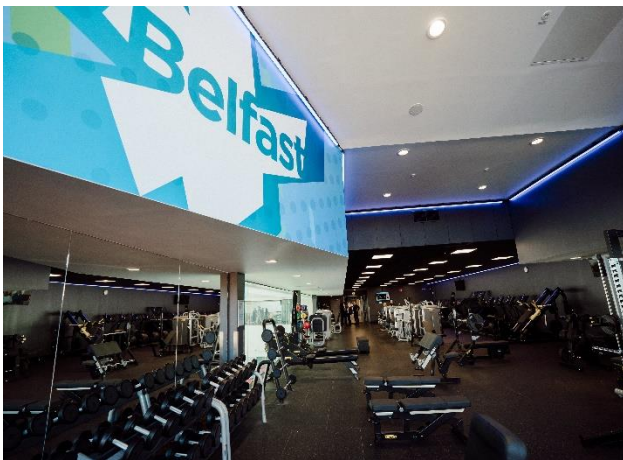
Gym refresh project completed at  
Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre



Members of the Avoniel/Templemore  
Summer Scheme



Athletes celebrate their success at the GLL  
Sports Foundation Awards



Gym refurbishments at  
Falls Leisure Centre



Junior Gymnast celebrates completing her  
'Discover' level in Rise Gymnastics

## LOOKING FORWARD IN 2025

- **Partner of Choice** – What truly sets us apart is the strength of our relationships. We bring both the capability and commitment to support the wider objectives of our partners. As we continue our work, we remain dedicated to advancing not only the Belfast Agenda but also the many health and wellbeing strategies for both the city and Northern Ireland. Looking ahead to 2025, we are eager to seize new opportunities to grow and enrich our partnerships further.
- **Respecting the Planet** – We are dedicated to minimizing our environmental impact through practical actions, such as reducing waste, transitioning to a complete LED lighting solution, and collaborating with partners to identify more efficient heating solutions for our facilities. Working hand in hand with Belfast City Council, we will pursue joint initiatives to achieve these shared sustainability goals.
- **A Better way of doing Business** – We remain committed to operating high-quality facilities that integrate technology and adapt to the evolving needs of our customers. Beyond the Leisure Transformation Programme, we will continue investing in centres to ensure they meet the needs of local communities. Additionally, we will offer a diverse range of membership options and programmes, making physical activity accessible to everyone in our community.
- **More than a Job** – We are dedicated to ensuring our staff are well-trained, customer-focused, and continually growing in their professional journeys. We will continue to provide exciting development pathways within the company, empowering our employees to build rewarding careers. As we expand our services in 2025, we are committed to growing our team and enhancing our expertise to meet the evolving needs of our community.
- **Customers and Communities at our Heart** – We remain committed to providing clean, welcoming, and modern facilities that leverage technology and innovation for the benefit of our customers. Our group exercise programme will continue to grow, offering an expanded range of activities to cater to everyone, from juniors to senior participants. We are committed to providing more opportunities for people with disabilities to access and benefit from leisure services, ensuring inclusivity remains a key element of what we do. The GLL Sports Foundation continues to thrive, with plans to support over 145 local athletes. Additionally, we will focus on holiday schemes aimed at encouraging children, including those with disabilities, to explore new sports and activities, helping everyone discover the joy of movement.

- **Tackling Health Inequalities** – Our commitment remains steadfast in encouraging the less active members of our community to participate in physical activity. We will focus our initiatives on engaging juniors, over-55s, women, and people with disabilities. Our health programmes will continue to expand as we explore opportunities within musculoskeletal (MSK) care, diabetes management, neurological conditions, and weight management initiatives. In collaboration with Belfast City Council’s Disability Advisory Panel, we aim to challenge and enhance the accessibility of our facilities and programmes. To support these efforts, we will invest in extensive staff training on disability inclusion, ensuring that our team is equipped to deliver a truly inclusive experience for all.