



Subject:	GLL community engagement and underrepresented target groups update
Date:	Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Paul McLoughlin, Partnership Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
	To provide members with the annual update for 2025 on community engagement and underrepresented group focused promotional activity.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Members are requested:
2.1	To note and record receipt of the information provide below.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<u>Background</u>

Under the terms of the leisure contract between Belfast City Council (BCC) and GLL, the organisation is required to submit an annual report detailing community engagement initiatives from the previous year. These annual service reports are presented to the People and Communities Committee.

As a leading social enterprise, GLL prioritises ensuring full access for all members of the community, with the goal of encouraging more people to become more active, more often. CNS works in collaboration with GLL to promote community outreach and increase regular participation among traditionally underrepresented groups.

GLL employs a Regional Business Manager (RBM) whose primary focus is to drive participation and facility usage. The RBM ensures that individuals from all backgrounds are actively engaged in sports and physical activity.

To support this mission, the RBM oversees a team comprising three Community Sport Officers and ten Health Officers. Each team member follows a work programme aligned with strategic objectives, aiming to boost participation among both mainstream and underrepresented groups.

GLL remains committed to fostering community access by offering a range of opportunities within centres that are accessible, affordable, and welcoming.

Additionally, GLL reinvests in talent development through the GLL Sport Foundation, which provides ongoing support to talented individuals.

Notably, 64.7% of Belfast Pre-Paid GLL members benefit from discounted charges, helping to reduce affordability barriers and promote inclusivity in participation.

3.2

### Outcomes and Proposals

#### **Sport National Governing Body (NGB) and Club Programmes**

GLL continues to support a range of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in delivering holiday programmes, grassroots initiatives, and performance programmes. Over the summer months, GLL collaborated Northern Ireland Fencing, Liverpool Football Club Foundation, Basketball NI, Ulster Rugby and Ulster Boxing to provide coaching workshops.

Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre regularly hosts All-Ireland Water Polo League events and has also been the venue for several Ulster Swimming Galas. Ulster Boxing competitions are frequently held at centres such as Girdwood Community Hub, Ballysillan Leisure Centre, Brook Leisure Centre, and Whiterock Leisure Centre. Shankill Leisure Centre accommodates the Northern Ireland Futsal Federation League for both male and female participants and, in the autumn, began hosting Northern Ireland Fencing competitions. Additionally, BCC leisure centres to conduct coach education courses such as Swimming Pickleball and Diving.

BCC leisure centres, managed by GLL, are home to over 200 local sports clubs and performance squads. These centres provide essential training facilities for clubs and performance programmes, as well as hosting a wide variety of local and regional competitions. Sports supported include Gaelic games, boxing, fencing, football, futsal, tennis, table tennis, cricket, basketball, baseball, netball, softball, dodgeball, swimming, water polo, and martial arts.

#### **School & Youth programmes**

GLL collaborates with local Primary and Post Primary schools to provide facilities that support physical education programs. Belfast is home to 116 Primary Schools, 34 Post Primary Schools, and 13 Special Schools. Over the past year, GLL has facilitated school swimming lessons for 96 schools, comprising 84 Primary, 7 Post Primary, and 5 Special Schools.

The GLL Holiday Scheme operates during Easter, Summer, and Halloween, with 96 supervisors and instructors recruited to deliver these programmes. Across 13 centres, the scheme catered to 3,502 children during the three holiday periods, achieving 96.1% occupancy of the available spaces.

GLL's lessons and courses programme currently focuses on swimming, gymnastics, tennis, and climbing. In 2025, enrolment numbers included over 6,400 children for swimming lessons, 55 for diving, 154 junior participants for tennis, 263 for gymnastics, 116 for football and 293 for climbing lessons. In 2025, GLL plans to expand its swimming programme to accommodate 6,750 children weekly, alongside increased participation goals: 75 for diving, 175 for tennis, over 275 for gymnastics, 150 for football and over 200 junior participants for climbing.

GLL delivered our first Active and Able Camps, specifically aimed at children and young people who would typically require one-to-one support. A total of 56 participants attended five camps throughout the year at Avoniel, Belvoir Activity Centre, and Brook Leisure Centre. Feedback from parents and guardians was overwhelmingly positive, praising the attentiveness of the coaches and highlighting the important role these camps play in providing families with respite from their caring responsibilities.

### **Community Outreach**

In 2022, GLL introduced community engagement leads in each centre to spearhead local projects and support citywide initiatives. During December, 14 centres participated in the Cash for Kids Mission Christmas campaign, collecting over 1,000 gifts valued at approximately £15,000.

The organisation has also supported various mental health charities and initiatives through awareness campaigns and fundraising efforts. Additional staff were provided with mental health and disability awareness training throughout the year.

Brook Leisure Centre hosts the Colin Autism Support Group, offering a space for parents of children with autism and other learning disabilities.

Additionally, Avoniel, Templemore, and Andersonstown centres organised open days, welcoming community organisations to showcase their work to centre visitors.

In October, the Belfast Community Sport team conducted an outreach event at Girdwood Community Hub for Ulster University Sports Studies students. Over 70 students participated in a range of sports and activities during the event. GLL also used the occasion to highlight employment opportunities in Belfast, including student placements and its trainee manager scheme.

### **Older Participant Programmes**

By the end of 2025, more than 90% of Belfast's Pay and Play and Pre-Paid members were aged 60+, accounting for over 8,500 members. The Council continues to offer free access for individuals aged over 60 before 11:00 AM from Monday to Friday.

GLL provides a daily programme of activities tailored to older adults, with offerings expanding steadily throughout 2025. The citywide pool programme ensures that Swim for Fitness (lane swimming) and Swim for All (casual family swimming) options are available daily across Belfast. In addition, GLL runs an introductory physical activity programme designed for members seeking low-intensity, low-impact workouts.

Active ageing activities, such as Danderball, Aqua Aerobics, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Boccia, and Water Polo, are delivered across several centres, including Avoniel Leisure Centre, Brook Leisure Centre, Templemore Baths, Falls Leisure Centre, Girdwood Community Hub, Grove Wellbeing Centre, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Olympia Leisure Centre, Ozone, and Shankill Leisure Centre. Plans are already in place to further expand the programme in 2026.

Throughout the year, GLL Belfast actively participated in the PHA Active Aging partnership, promoting physical activity and well-being for older adults. Community outreach initiatives were also undertaken, with active mornings delivered weekly at Girdwood, Belvoir and Brook. These sessions engaged over 50 participants each week led by GLL Belfast Community Sport Coaches.

Belfast's flagship Active Ageing event, the Better Belfast Club Games, took place on Monday 20th October 2025 at Girdwood Community Hub. The event welcomed over 50 participants aged 60 and above from various centres across the city, who took part in a range of sports activities. The event was widely enjoyed, with overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting its success as a celebration of sport, community, and wellbeing for older adults.

GLL delivers specialised rehabilitation programmes for chronic conditions, including Cancer, Cardiac, Pulmonary, and MSK. Additionally, Diabetes and Strength & Balance programmes are hosted and supported, with many referrals being older adults.

Strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts are well-established between CNS, GLL, and key organisations such as the Public Health Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, and charitable partners, ensuring effective pathways for chronic condition management.

Girdwood Community Hub also collaborates with the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, offering weekly low-intensity exercise sessions paired with arts and crafts activities.

### **People with Disabilities**

Belvoir Activity Centre, in collaboration with Disability Sport NI, serves as a dedicated disability sports hub, offering a variety of wheelchair-based sports and activities, including Wheelchair Basketball, Boccia, and New Age Curling.

The GLL Sport Foundation in Belfast currently supports four disabled and Paralympic athletes, providing them with facility access and physiotherapy assistance valued at £1,200 per year.

Brook Leisure Centre features a swimming pool specifically designed to accommodate sensory needs and a wide range of disabilities. The centre runs weekly 'quiet swims,' attracting approximately 20 to 30 participants per session. Belfast Leisure Centres are also introducing quiet gym sessions to support customers with neurodiversity.

GLL partners with Swimming Buddies, an organisation specialising in autism-friendly swimming lessons. These sessions are offered throughout the week at both Brook Leisure

Centre and Templemore Baths. Additionally, Brook Leisure Centre facilitates inclusive Air Venture sessions tailored to meet the sensory needs of participants.

2025 saw the launch of GLL's SEND swimming lessons. These lessons were made available across 7 of the centres in Belfast. (Ballysillan, Brook, Lisnasharragh, Olympia, Shankill, Templemore and Whiterock). In total 62 participants were enrolled in the programme and it is envisaged this will further increase in 2026.

GLL's Holiday Schemes are designed to be inclusive for everyone, including children with physical and learning disabilities. Historically, our ability to support individuals requiring one-to-one assistance has been limited due to constraints in staff resources, experience, and qualifications. This year, GLL established a partnership with Active Youth NI, a local Community Interest Company specialising in programmes for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities.

### **Women & Girls**

Women represent 48.2% of current Belfast members, totalling 19,872 individuals.

GLL has collaborated with Netball NI to deliver their social netball programme and has also hosted competitions at Lisnasharragh, Shankill and Olympia Leisure Centres.

Through the GLL Sport Foundation (GSF) programme, GLL supports 75 female athletes, accounting for 47.5% of all supported athletes. These women are empowered to compete at both national and international levels in their respective sports. Shirley McCay, Ireland's most capped sportsperson of all time, serves as the Legacy Ambassador for the GSF programme.

In partnership with WISPA, GLL delivers female-only fitness classes, including aqua aerobics, yoga, Pilates, and circuits. These sessions are offered at Avoniel Leisure Centre, Belvoir Activity Centre, Brook Leisure Centre, Olympia Leisure Centre, Shankill Leisure Centre, and Whiterock Leisure Centre.

### **Family Programming**

GLL has developed a well-rounded programme of activities across its centres to encourage family participation. For instance, a 'basic group exercise offering' allows junior members to join in with older family members.

Junior group exercise classes have been added to the timetable, with plans to expand this programme in 2026. Junior gym sessions are also available at all gym centres during after-school hours and school holiday periods. 207 hours of junior gym spaces were offered each week and in total over 48,000 junior attendances were recorded.

Family-friendly products such as water slides, Surf Belfast and the Aqua Play at Andersonstown Leisure Centre, Air Venture at Brook Leisure Centre, and Aqua Splash at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre continue to attract families, especially during weekends and holiday periods.

All centres offer birthday party packages, which are both affordable and varied, including bouncy castles, climbing walls, laser quest, and sports (both indoor and outdoor), as well as the aforementioned products. In 2025, GLL enhanced party room spaces at Lisnasharragh and Brook Leisure Centres to improve the overall service and quality. Plans are in place to further enhance spaces and offerings in 2026.

3.3	<p>Wet centres provide weekly family fun pool sessions, featuring floats and inflatables, to add to the enjoyment.</p> <p>Since launching the citywide family membership in August 2021, GLL has seen continued interest. By the end of December 2025, there were over 627 family memberships in Belfast, encompassing a total of 3,144 members.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>To consider and record receipt of the information provide above. CNS officers will be in attendance to respond to any queries raised by members.</p> <p><u>Communications &amp; Public Relations</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	None