



JIGSAW

Northern Ireland

Annual Report

2025-2026



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Company Information

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Jigsaw (Northern Ireland) is a company limited by guarantee

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Introduction

Our History

Jigsaw NI began operating as ACORN in 1990, providing a range of services to adults with disabilities, including people living with brain injury, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.

From the outset, our work has focused on supporting people who may have experienced social exclusion and limited opportunities to participate in activities beyond their homes. Many of the people we support have spent significant periods isolated at home, with little or no access to meaningful daytime activities and opportunities for social engagement.

In February 1999, ACORN became Jigsaw NI, a company limited by guarantee with charitable status recognised by the Inland Revenue. This marked an important milestone in the organisation's development and reflected our continued commitment to providing inclusive, person-centred services.

In recognition of the organisation's contribution to supporting people with disabilities, the work of Jigsaw NI was further acknowledged in 2002 when our manager at the time was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Today, Jigsaw NI continues to build on this strong foundation, working to create opportunities for inclusion, participation, independence and improved quality of life for the people we support.

Our Services and Impact

Jigsaw NI provides a range of inclusive community-based activities for adults with disabilities across the Greater Belfast and North Down areas. Our programme includes Community Art and Physical Activity classes, with activities such as exercise in water, boccia and swimming.

Most of the people who use our services live in the Greater Belfast and North Down areas. Activities take place in local leisure centres and community centres, with many of our programmes operating in areas of urban deprivation. This community-based approach helps people to access opportunities close to home and supports their participation in local community life.

We currently operate 11 weekly groups across Belfast and two groups in North Down, providing activities over 40 weeks of the year. Each group typically consists of 8–14 members, depending on individual abilities and the level of assistance required. Groups bring together people with a range of disabilities and are designed to encourage participation, friendship and a strong sense of belonging.

A key feature of the Jigsaw NI approach is the opportunity to share a communal tea break as part of each session. These informal opportunities to socialise are an important

part of our service and help to build relationships, reduce isolation and strengthen connections between group members.

Our Physical Activity programme currently supports approximately 100 people each week, while around 50 service users participate in Community Art classes each week.

Person-Centred Support

At Jigsaw NI, we place great importance on the quality of the relationships between our staff and the people we support. Before each class, service users are contacted by a member of staff to remind them about the upcoming session and confirm their travel arrangements. These conversations often develop into an opportunity for people to talk about issues that are important to them.

This regular contact helps staff to understand the individual needs and circumstances of the people we support and reinforces the sense that each person is valued and listened to. We actively encourage a strong sense of group belonging, recognising that social inclusion is just as important as participation in the activity itself.

Benefits for Service Users

Feedback from our service users demonstrates the positive impact that participation in Jigsaw NI activities can have on individuals and their wider support networks. Reported benefits include:

- Greater social inclusion and increased opportunities to participate in local community life.
- Opportunities to learn new skills and develop existing abilities.
- Increased self-esteem, confidence and sense of achievement.
- The opportunity to form and maintain friendships.
- Improvements in physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Feeling valued, supported and listened to.
- Reduced feelings of isolation through being part of a regular group.
- Respite for carers and opportunities for carers to develop supportive relationships with one another.

Through our programme of activities, Jigsaw NI continues to provide more than simply opportunities for exercise or creative expression. We create welcoming, supportive spaces where people can build relationships, develop confidence, participate in their communities and experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Mission Statement, Aims & Objectives

Mission Statement:

“Jigsaw NI encourages and supports adults with disabilities to participate in activities and learn new skills in a fun and supportive environment.”

Aims:

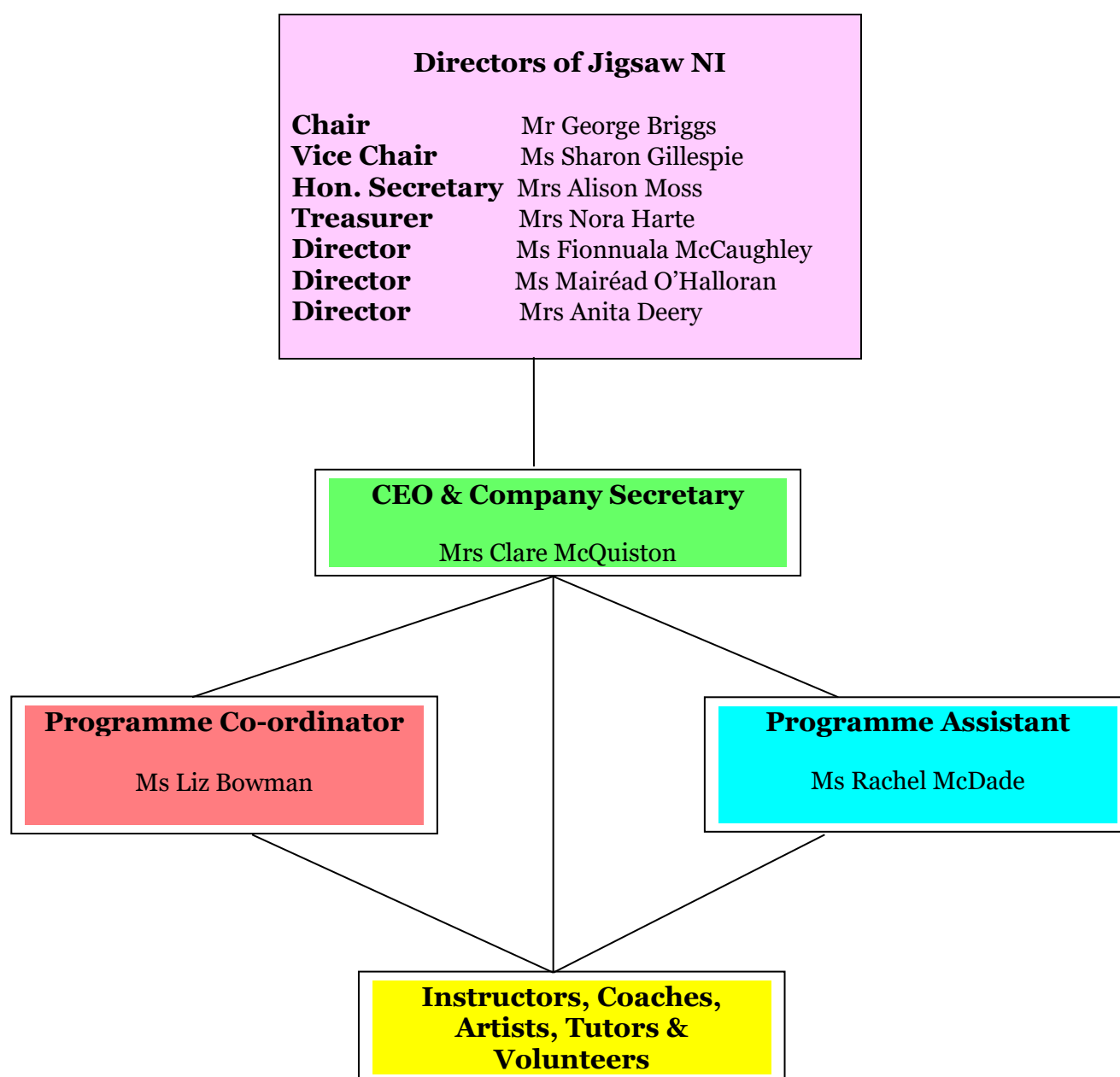
- To build self confidence
- To learn new skills
- To get people with disabilities out of their homes
- To meet and make new friends
- To provide carers with support

Objectives:

- A personal contact
- To provide a listening ear
- Assistance with transport
- Carry out Risk Assessments
- Provision of Instructors & venue suitable for the various programmes
- Support individuals
- Provision of ‘training’
- Continue to develop services
- Monitoring and evaluation of groups (ongoing)

Structure of Jigsaw NI

Management Structure



Jigsaw NI Arts

Jigsaw NI's Community Art groups continue to be very popular with our service users, providing opportunities for creativity, self-expression, social interaction and the development of new skills.

Our experienced artists have worked with Jigsaw NI groups for several years and have developed a strong understanding of the needs, interests and aspirations of the people who attend. We recognise that every service user is unique, with different reasons for attending and different outcomes they hope to achieve. Our approach therefore allows individuals to participate at their own pace and in ways that are meaningful to them.

We currently operate five Community Art groups, four of which are based in areas of urban deprivation where people with disabilities can face greater barriers in accessing community services and activities.

Our current groups are:

- Skipperstone Community Centre, Bangor – 1 group
- Divis Community Centre – 1 group
- Glen Community Centre – 1 group
- Inverary Community Centre – 2 groups

By bringing our art programme into local communities, Jigsaw NI helps to reduce barriers to participation and provides accessible opportunities for adults with disabilities to develop their creativity, build confidence and connect with others in a welcoming environment.



*Some of our service users working hard at their art class

The art programme aims to provide service users with a consistent opportunity for social engagement, creative expression and personal development. Weekly workshops are delivered over a period of forty weeks each year, providing a structured and

supportive environment in which participants can develop their artistic skills while building meaningful social connections.

The group dynamic is central to the ethos of Jigsaw NI. Considerable emphasis is placed on creating a socially inclusive environment in which all service users feel welcomed, valued, respected and comfortable. Establishing a positive and supportive atmosphere enables participants to engage fully in the creative process and to benefit from the social interaction that the programme provides.

Workshops and activities are developed collaboratively, with service users encouraged to contribute to the planning and direction of the programme. Their individual preferences, interests and specific needs are taken into consideration when developing activities and projects. The community artist adopts a supportive and facilitative role, enabling service users to exercise a significant degree of choice and control over their own experiences within the workshops. This approach encourages participation, independence and creativity, while promoting a strong sense of ownership and achievement among participants.

Throughout the year, service users explored a wide range of artistic mediums, themes and techniques, producing a variety of individual pieces of artwork. The completed work demonstrated the creativity, commitment and developing skills of participants, while providing opportunities for self-expression and personal achievement. Examples of the high-quality work produced by our service users are pictured below.



The positive impact of the art programme is evident through the continued development of service users' confidence and self-esteem. The encouragement and support provided by fellow service users, community artists and volunteers contributes significantly to creating a positive learning environment and enables participants to recognise and celebrate their own abilities and achievements.

Overall, the art activities continue to provide an important combination of creative, social and personal development opportunities for Jigsaw NI service users, supporting inclusion, participation and improved confidence within a welcoming and supportive community setting.

SWIMMING & EXERCISE IN WATER

Jigsaw NI currently provides two swimming groups and two exercise-in-water groups, with sessions taking place weekly over a forty-week period each year. One swimming group is delivered at Olympia Leisure Centre, while the second swimming group and both exercise-in-water groups are held at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre.

Qualified leaders are present at each session to provide guidance, encouragement and support to service users. They offer advice on appropriate exercises and activities and, where suitable, encourage participants to develop their swimming skills and confidence in the water. Lifeguards are also in attendance at all sessions, ensuring that appropriate safety measures are maintained throughout.

Hoist and pool pod facilities are available at the leisure centres used by Jigsaw NI. These facilities provide essential support for service users with complex mobility needs, enabling them to access and participate in activities within the pool.

The swimming and exercise-in-water sessions have been established for several years and continue to be highly valued and well attended by service users. The groups are inclusive and are attended by people of all genders, providing opportunities for social interaction and participation in a supportive environment.



Participation in aquatic activities provides a wide range of physical, emotional and social benefits. Exercising in water enables service users to engage and strengthen the whole body while benefiting from the support and buoyancy provided by the water. Sessions can also assist with joint mobility and provide opportunities for participants to move and experience parts of their bodies in ways that may not be possible outside of the pool.

In addition to the physical benefits, participation can contribute to improved mood, increased self-esteem and greater confidence in the water. Service users are also able to develop and practise specific skills at their own pace, supported by qualified staff and fellow participants.

Overall, the swimming and exercise-in-water programmes provide valuable opportunities for physical activity, skill development, social participation and improved wellbeing. The continued popularity of these sessions demonstrates their importance to Jigsaw NI service users and their contribution to supporting active and inclusive participation.



Boccia

Boccia is an inclusive and adaptable sport that can be enjoyed by children and adults of all abilities. As a Paralympic sport, boccia provides an accessible opportunity for physical activity and participation and shares some similarities with indoor bowls. The objective of the game is for players or teams to propel their boccia balls as close as possible to the white target ball, known as the jack, with the team closest to the jack scoring points.

Boccia provides an enjoyable way for service users to participate in physical activity while also introducing an element of friendly competition. The sport can be adapted to meet individual abilities and needs, allowing participants to engage at a level that is appropriate for them.

Jigsaw NI delivers weekly boccia sessions at Divis Community Centre, Glen Community Centre and Inverary Community Centre in Belfast, as well as Skipperstone Community Centre in Bangor. These sessions provide regular opportunities for service users to participate in a structured and inclusive sporting activity within a supportive social environment.

The boccia groups continue to be extremely popular with Jigsaw NI service users. Sessions provide an opportunity for participants to be active, develop and practise skills, and engage socially with others. The friendly atmosphere, good humour and playful

banter contribute to the enjoyment of the sessions and help to foster positive relationships between participants.

The strong attendance levels throughout the year demonstrate the continued popularity and value of the boccia programme. The activity provides not only physical and recreational benefits but also opportunities for social interaction, confidence building, teamwork and participation, contributing positively to the overall wellbeing of service users.

Boccia is an inclusive sport that can be tailored to suit children and adults of all abilities. It is a Paralympic sport and has some similarities with indoor bowls. The aim of the game is for each team to propel and land their boccia balls closer to the white jack than their opposing team. Boccia is a great way of getting people active, while adding a little competitive edge when playing games.



*Service users enjoying games of boccia.

Jigsaw NI held its annual boccia tournament in June 2026, with nine teams taking part from across all four of our weekly boccia groups. The event provided an enjoyable opportunity for service users to come together, demonstrate the skills they have developed throughout the year and participate in some friendly competition.

It was a highly enjoyable and successful day, with a great atmosphere and plenty of encouragement and good-natured banter between the participating teams. The competition was closely contested, with 'The Losers' from the Skipperstone Community Centre group ultimately coming out on top and taking home the coveted Jigsaw NI Boccia Shield.

The tournament was a great celebration of the enthusiasm, commitment and sporting ability of our service users, while also providing an important opportunity for social interaction and inclusion across all four groups.



*Winning Team – The Loser's



*Runner up Team- The Beach Boys

In addition to the weekly boccia sessions, Jigsaw NI teams also participated in a number of Boccia NI tournaments throughout the year, including the Andy & Nessie Ross Memorial Tournament, the Dedication Tournament and the Sam Hunter Memorial Boccia Tournament.

Jigsaw NI achieved some excellent results across these competitions. At the Andy & Nessie Ross Memorial Tournament, two of our teams progressed to the semi-finals, narrowly missing out on a place in the final and, ultimately, a trophy.

The Dedication Tournament held particular significance this year, as it was dedicated to the memory of two former members of the Jigsaw NI community, Glynis and Davey Kincaid, who sadly passed away within two weeks of each other in February 2025. Two Jigsaw NI teams progressed to the final, ensuring that the tournament shield would return to Jigsaw NI. The Dolly Mixtures team ultimately defeated Robin Hoods to win the tournament. This was a particularly fitting achievement, as members of the Dolly Mixtures team had been good friends with Glynis and Davey and had participated alongside them in the same weekly boccia group. Their success provided a meaningful tribute to the couple and was a very special moment for everyone involved.



*Winning Team – Dolly Mixtures

At the Sam Hunter Memorial Boccia Tournament, our Mary's Mates team reached the final. Although they were ultimately defeated by a team from Newtownabbey, reaching the final represented another significant achievement for the team.

These results are particularly noteworthy given the high level of competition at Boccia NI tournaments, which attract teams from across Belfast, Newtownabbey and Antrim. The strong performances achieved by Jigsaw NI teams demonstrate the commitment, consistency and continued development of our service users.

The teams are coached on a weekly basis by a qualified boccia leader, who provides ongoing guidance and support to help participants develop their skills and confidence. The continued enjoyment and enthusiasm demonstrated by service users, together with their improving performance in competitive events, highlights the significant value of boccia as both a recreational and developmental activity within Jigsaw NI.

Activity/Boccia Class

The Bangor Boccia and Activity Group, based at Skipperstone Community Centre, continues to operate as a strongly user-led group. Participants are encouraged to contribute ideas and have an active role in deciding which activities they would like to undertake each week. This approach promotes choice, independence and ownership, while ensuring that the programme reflects the interests and preferences of those attending.

Throughout the year, the group participated in a diverse range of activities, including boccia, board games, arts and crafts, baking and quizzes. This variety provides opportunities for participants to develop and maintain physical, creative and social skills, while also promoting enjoyment and positive social interaction.

The group meets weekly on a Tuesday and continues to be well received by all participants. Attendance has steadily increased during the year, enabling more service users to benefit from the opportunities provided through the group. The continued growth in participation demonstrates the value of this inclusive, user-led programme and its positive contribution to the social engagement and wellbeing of those attending.

Christmas Celebrations

As part of our annual programme of social activities, Jigsaw NI held Christmas celebrations across all of our groups, which was greatly enjoyed by our service users, carers, volunteers, facilitators and staff.

To create a lively and inclusive atmosphere, two or three groups were brought together for each Christmas lunch. Careful consideration was given to the practical arrangements and the level of support required to ensure that all service users could participate comfortably and safely.

In addition to the Christmas lunches, each group held its own Christmas celebration as part of their regular group session. These provided further opportunities for service

users to come together, socialise and celebrate the festive season within their own group environment.

The Christmas celebrations were a great success and provided valuable opportunities for social interaction, friendship and community participation. The enthusiasm and enjoyment demonstrated by everyone who attended highlighted the importance of these shared social experiences and the positive contribution they make to the overall wellbeing of our service users.



2026 Summer Activities

Jigsaw NI once again provided a four-week summer scheme for service users across Belfast and Bangor. We are extremely grateful to have received funding from the Black Santa Sit-Out Fund, which contributed towards the costs of delivering the summer programme this year. This funding enabled us to provide a varied programme of activities and additional opportunities for service users to socialise, participate and remain active during the summer months.

In Belfast, the summer scheme brought together groups from across South and East Belfast on Tuesdays at Inverary Community Centre, while groups from North and West Belfast came together on Wednesdays at Divis Community Centre. In Bangor, groups met on Thursdays at Skipperstone Community Centre.

Each session offered a range of enjoyable and accessible activities, including bingo, quizzes, warm-up exercises, boccia and target games. Bringing groups together provided

service users with an opportunity to meet and socialise with people from other Jigsaw NI groups, while also benefiting from a change of environment and a structured day away from home.

The summer scheme was a great success, with service users engaging enthusiastically in the activities provided. Feedback received at the conclusion of the programme was very positive, with participants highlighting how much they had enjoyed the activities and the opportunity to spend time with others in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

Jigsaw NI was able to facilitate additional aquatic activity alongside the summer scheme programme. The scheduling of these sessions was carefully coordinated to enable service users to attend both the summer scheme and the additional swimming or exercise-in-water sessions, should they wish to do so. This provided greater choice and flexibility for participants and enabled them to benefit from additional opportunities for physical activity and social engagement.

The additional sessions were very well received by those who were able to attend, with participants reporting positive experiences and enjoyment of the activities. The strong feedback demonstrates the positive impact that additional opportunities for physical activity and participation can have on wellbeing.



Participation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The past year has been a successful year for Jigsaw NI, with a total of 155 individual participants engaging in our programmes. This comprised of 88 females (56.8%) and 67 males (43.2%), who collectively participated in 520 sessions, providing a total of 1,040 hours of activity.

Jigsaw NI continues to deliver a diverse range of activities across the Greater Belfast and North Down and Ards areas, providing opportunities for service users to participate in meaningful and enjoyable programmes within their local communities.

We remain committed to the continuous monitoring and evaluation of our services to ensure that our programmes continue to meet the needs of our service users. Feedback from service users, working partners and funders plays an important role in this process, providing valuable observations, ideas and suggestions for the development and improvement of our existing programmes.

Comments

'I am learning so much from our art tutor Tricia, she is brilliant. I really look forward to coming each week, thank you'

Jim (Service user)

'I love my group. I have made some lovely friends and enjoy being able to help by making the tea/coffee at the group. We all have a great laugh, and it helps me mentally.'

Patrick (Volunteer)

'I really enjoyed the extra summer swim sessions, and it was nice to meet some new people also'

Alison (Service user)

'I love coming to our art class to see everyone and try out different projects and styles of art'

Fiona (Service user)

'Thank you to everyone involved with Jigsaw NI boccia group who always go above and beyond to help us all and it doesn't go unnoticed.'

Mary (Relative of Service user)

'Jigsaw NI has really helped me both physically and mentally. Getting to the exercise in the water group gives me the opportunity to get out of the house to meet like-minded people and enjoy an activity that I not only enjoy but improves both my physical and mental health'

Brigid (Service user)

'I love the friends and all the banter, artwork makes me feel good. I enjoy painting on canvas'

Jennifer (Service user)

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following organisations for their help and support throughout the year.

Belfast HSC



South Eastern HSC



Black Santa sit-out Fund



BCC – Support for Sport



*National Lottery Community Fund
People and Communities*



Jigsaw NI also wishes to thank Connswater Community Centre, Glen Community Centre, Divis Community Centre, Inverary Community Centre and Townsend Enterprise Park for their on-going support and assistance and for any donations received throughout the year.