



JIGSAW

Northern Ireland

Annual Report

2024-2025



Office 4b
Townsend Enterprise Park
28 Townsend Street
BELFAST
BT13 2ES

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Company Information

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Company Register Number
Northern Ireland Charity Number
Recognised as a Charity by HMRC

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XR 29513*

Jigsaw (Northern Ireland) is a company limited by guarantee

Board of Directors

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Honorary Secretary
Treasurer
Director
Director
Director
Director

*George Briggs
Sharon Gillespie
Alison Moss
Nora Harte
Fionnuala McCaughley
Terry Woodside
Mairéad O'Halloran
Anita Deery*

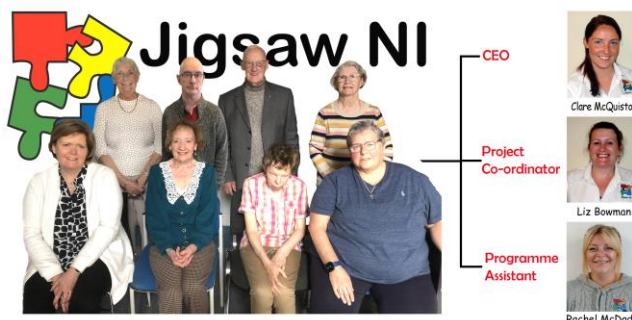
Employees

Chief Executive Officer
Programme Co-ordinator
Programme Assistant

*Clare McQuiston
Liz Bowman
Rachel McDade*

Accountant

Daniel G Walsh
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28 Townsend Street,
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Introduction

Jigsaw NI began working as ACORN in 1990, providing a range of services to its service users who are adults with varying disabilities including brain injury, sensory impairment, physical disability etc. Quite often, our service users have experienced social exclusion and may have spent many years at home with little or no daytime activity outside the house. ACORN became Jigsaw NI, a company limited by guarantee with charitable status accorded by the Inland Revenue in February 1999. In 2002 the work of Jigsaw NI was recognised with an MBE for its manager at that time, in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Jigsaw NI's range of services for its users are: Community Art and Physical Activity classes, including Exercise in water, Fitness, Boccia and Swimming. Most service users live in the greater Belfast and North Down area. The activities are held in local leisure centres and community centres. Many of our activities take place in areas of urban deprivation.

We currently have 11 groups running throughout Belfast and 2 groups running in the North Down area on a weekly basis over forty weeks of the year. Jigsaw NI groups are made up of 8-14 members (depending on ability/assistance required) with different forms of disabilities and each activity is accompanied by a communal lunch/tea break. We feel that this "personal touch" distinguishes Jigsaw NI from many other providers in this field. Physical Activity classes are provided for approximately 110 people every week. Approx 55 service users currently participate in Community Art classes on a weekly basis.

Jigsaw NI places great importance on the quality of relationship between Jigsaw NI staff and our service users. Service users are contacted before the class they attend, to remind them of their upcoming class and to confirm travel arrangements. Conversations very often develop and give service users the opportunity to talk about matters of importance to them. A sense of group belonging is always encouraged, and Jigsaw NI emphasise the need for social inclusion as well as the need for activity.

Service users have reported the following benefits from participating in Jigsaw NI's activities:

- Greater social inclusion and the chance to participate in local community life
- Learning new skills
- Increased self esteem
- Forming friendships
- Improvement in physical and mental health
- Feeling valued and listened to
- Sense of isolation is reduced by feeling part of a group
- Respite for carers and forming relationships between carers

Mission Statement, Aims & Objectives

Mission Statement:

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

Aims:

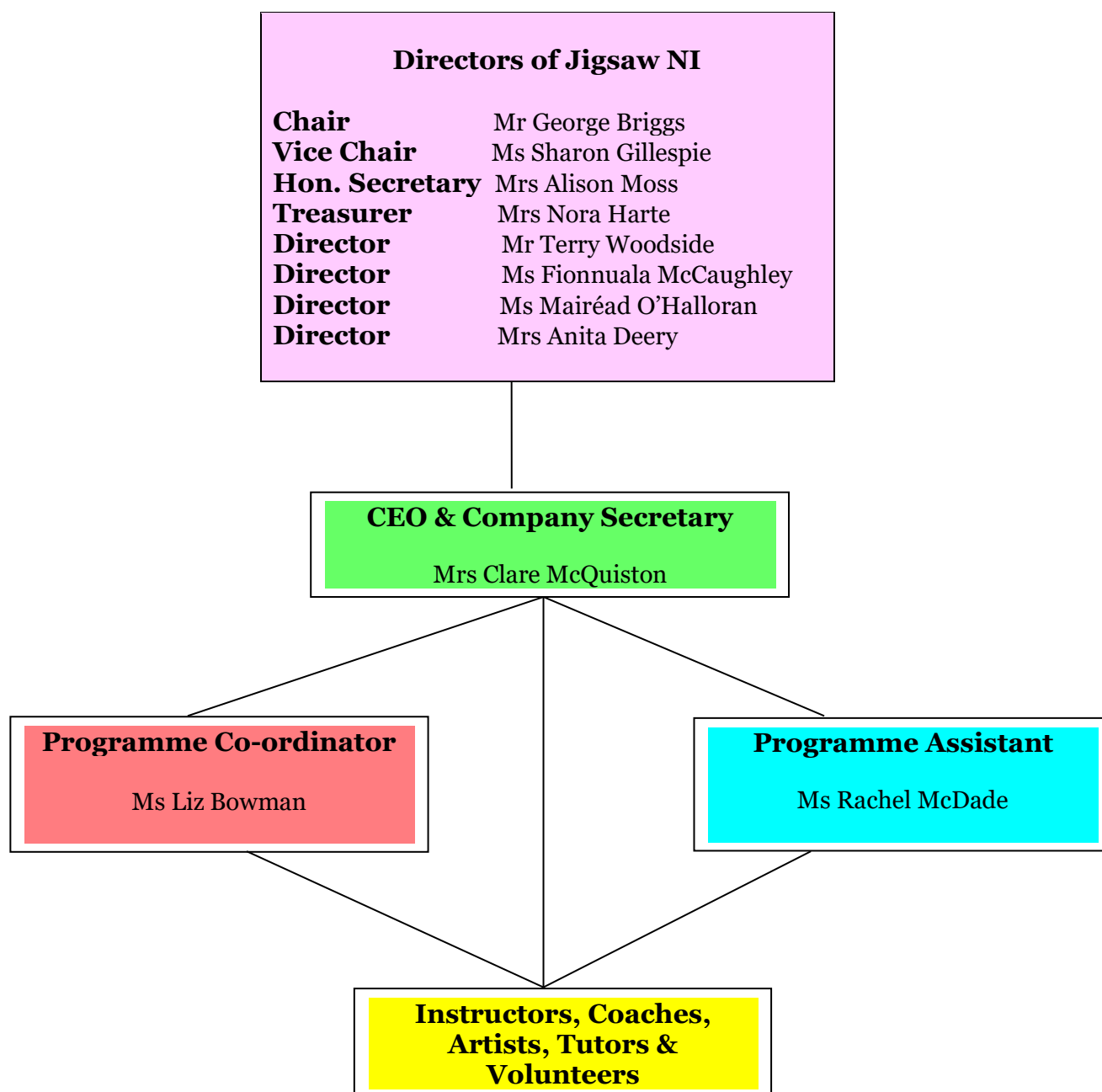
- To build self confidence
- To learn new skills
- To get people with disabilities out of their homes
- To meet and make new friends
- To provide carers with support

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 art groups are very popular with many of our service users. Our artists have been working with Jigsaw NI groups for several years and have an understanding of what our service users want to get from the class. Every service user is unique and goes to the class for different reasons. We currently have 5 art groups running, 4 of which run in areas of urban deprivation where it is often more difficult for people with disabilities to access services:

- 1 group in Skipperstone Community Centre, Bangor
- 1 group in Divis Community Centre
- 1 group in Glen Community Centre
- 2 groups in Connswater Community Centre



*One of our service users working hard at our Bangor group

The art activities aim to provide a consistent source of social outlet and artistic opportunity by running workshops on a weekly basis for forty weeks of the year. The group dynamic is of great importance to Jigsaw NI and we aim to create a socially inclusive environment, whereby everyone is included, respected and feels comfortable. Having created the correct environment, we then concentrate on the practical aspect of the art class. Programmes are constructed with the direction of the group, considering the preferences and specific needs of the group service users. The community artists role is to be supportive and facilitative and so the service users have much control of their own experiences in the workshop and so gain a sense of ownership of their own class. This year our groups worked on various individual pieces using various mediums and themes to produce some lovely pieces of work. Pictured below are some photos of the quality pieces produced by our service users.

It is evident within the Jigsaw NI groups that the service users are always gaining in self-esteem, through the support available from other service users, artists and volunteers.



*A service user showing off his work



*Service users from Glen art group doing some art at Uni of Atypical on trip out

SWIMMING & EXERCISE IN WATER

Jigsaw NI have two swimming groups and two exercise in water groups that meet weekly for forty weeks of the year. One of the swimming groups is held in Olympia LC and the other swimming group and exercise in water groups are held in Lisnasharragh LC. Qualified leaders are present to encourage and support our service users, to give them advice and exercises to do and if appropriate, to encourage them to learn to swim. There are also lifeguards in attendance at all times. A hoist/pool pod is provided in the centres we use, which helps service users with complex mobility problems to enter the pool.



*Photos of service users taking part in Exercise in the Water and Swimming sessions

These sessions have taken place for several years and are very popular with service users. Groups attending are made up of both genders. The benefits derived from using the pool include exercising the whole body with support from the water, being able to mobilise joints, increased self-esteem and confidence in the water, improved mood, being able to feel and move parts of the body that they can't out of the water and learning specific skills.

Boccia

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.

Weekly sessions of boccia take place in Divis CC, Glen CC and Connswater CC in Belfast and in Skipperstone CC, Bangor. The boccia groups are very popular with our service users. The boccia sessions are good fun with a lot of playful banter with service users really enjoying the activity, which is shown by the great attendance records throughout the year.



*Service users enjoying games of boccia.

We held our annual boccia tournament in June 2025 and we had 9 teams competing in it. It was a great day's fun, and we had teams from all four of our groups competing on the day with 'Mary's Mates' from Glen CC group coming out on top to win the coveted shield, making it two in a row.



*Winning Team – Mary's Mates



*Runner up Team- Divis Robin Hoods

We also had teams that entered The Andy & Nessie Ross Memorial tournament, The Dedication tournament, and the Sam Hunter Memorial boccia tournament organised by Boccia NI. One of our teams (Attrington Stanley) came runners up in the A&N Ross tournament and this year the Dedication tournament was dedicated to one of our past service users Paul McCluskey, who sadly passed away in Oct 2024 and one of our teams (Mary's Mates) won the tournament, which was so fitting as they were good friends with Paul who played in the same weekly group. The teams unfortunately didn't get into the final but made the semi-final in the Sam Hunter Memorial boccia tournament. These are great achievements as teams come from all over Belfast, Newtownabbey and Antrim to participate in these tournaments and they are always competitive. The consistency and improvement of the service users is evident. The groups are coached by a qualified boccia leader on a weekly basis and service users really enjoy this activity.



*Dedication tournament winners & Family of Paul

Fitness/Boccia Class

The Bangor boccia/fitness class which takes place in Skipperstone CC is very much a user-led group, with the group discussing ideas of what activities they will do. This year the group mostly played boccia, board games, chair-based activity, arts n' crafts, baking, quizzes and circuits. The weekly class is on a Tuesday and is enjoyed by all the participants. It is hoped that this class will continue to grow, and more people will benefit from this group.



Outings and Extra Activities

As we do every year, we had Christmas celebrations with all our groups, but this year was the first year all our groups went out for Christmas lunch and was very much enjoyed by all our service users, carers, volunteers, facilitators and staff that attended. We brought 2 or 3 groups together for each Christmas lunch to increase the atmosphere, while also being mindful of the practicalities and support required. Each group had Christmas celebrations during their group session also.



Following our questionnaire in early 2024 where we asked our service users, carers, referral agents etc how we could enhance our service, the number one on the list was outings and lunch. During the year we held some extra activities with our groups to enhance their experience. Some of our art groups went to the Ulster Museum to view the various exhibitions on offer. One art group went to the University of Atypical in Belfast, which is a disabled-led art organisation to see their exhibition gallery and have a go themselves. Some of our groups were treated to a music session with lunch within their own setting, which was very much enjoyed by our service users. See below some photos from these events:



Awards

This year, we (Jigsaw NI) were nominated and shortlisted for the Belfast Sports Awards in the Healthy Lifestyle category, which recognises the contribution of an individual or group going the extra mile in the promotion of a healthy city, making a positive impact on raising the profile and increasing awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of an active lifestyle. Also, one of our coaches was nominated and shortlisted in the Disability coach category, but unfortunately on this occasion we did not win the awards but what an achievement to be nominated and shortlisted.



2025 Summer Activities

We provided a four-week summer scheme again this year for our service users in Belfast and in Bangor. We are very grateful again to have received funding from the “Black Santa sit-out fund” to help cover the costs of the summer scheme this year.

The Belfast summer schemes consisted of all South and East Belfast groups coming together on a Tuesday in Connswater Community Centre, North and West Belfast groups coming together on a Wednesday in Divis Community Centre and Bangor groups coming together on a Thursday in Skipperstone Community Centre to participate in a range of different activities, i.e. bingo, quiz, warm ups, boccia, target games etc. The summer scheme was a great success, with those attending enjoying the activities and a day out of the house. There was very positive feedback from service users at the end of the summer schemes.

The second priority from the enhancement questionnaire was to have extra sessions of swimming / exercise in the water during the summer months. We were able to facilitate this around the summer scheme so that service users could attend both if they so wished. These sessions were very much enjoyed by those that could attend, and the feedback was very positive.



Comments

'Everyone has welcomed me and I feel as if I am part of a big family who all have the same interest. I really look forward to coming each week, thank you'

Jim (Service user)

'I would like to thank everyone. I have really loved being a volunteer and being part of the group that Paul enjoyed so much. It has really helped me since Paul's passing and can see why Paul loved coming to the Boccia every week'

Lynn (Volunteer)

'I really enjoyed the extra summer swim sessions with Martina and Jenny and my swimming has greatly improved because of them'

Coleen (Service user)

'Thank you so much, everyone is really lovely and have made me very welcome. I haven't done any art for a number of years, and I am so pleased to get back into it and I hope I will continue with it at home as I find it very relaxing. Thank you very much'

Carol (Service user)

'This Boccia club is very good for Pauls mental health'

Kate (Relative of Service user)

'I have very much enjoyed the summer swim sessions and have learned so much from swimming coach, Martina. I was able to swim lengths for the first time in a lot of years and really loved it and it was lovely to break up the summer as I missed everyone'

Alison (Service user)

'Really look forward to coming to the Boccia each week. People are so friendly, and I have made some lovely friends. Hate to miss it'

Paddy (Service user)

'Daniel has been with Jigsaw since his recovery after his head injury. It's an invaluable service as otherwise he would be isolated with no friends. The social aspect is even more important than the art which he loves'

Margaret (Relative of Service user)

'I really enjoyed the summer scheme, with Boccia, Quizzes and Bingo, thank you to everyone involved, I really look forward to it'

Harry (Service user)

This year has been a good success with a total of 157 individual participants (72 male 45.9% and 85 female 54.1%) taking part in 520 sessions (1'040 hrs). Jigsaw NI activities are held throughout Greater Belfast and North Down and Ards areas.

Through continuous monitoring and evaluation, we continue to improve our services, giving our service users, working partners and funders the opportunity to contribute their observations and ideas for improvement of our existing programmes and possible suggestions for future activities that may enhance the work of Jigsaw NI.

Acknowledgements

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

Belfast HSCT



South Eastern HSCT



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 and Townsend Enterprise Park for their on-going support and assistance and for any donations received throughout the year.