



# Strategic Plan for Gymnastics in Northern Ireland

June 2024



British  
Gymnastics

What this document means for GNI

Who we have consulted

Where GNI has come from

Where GNI is going

What this means for our community

**As Chair of Gymnastics Northern Ireland, our ongoing commitment is to provide opportunities, funding support, and events that elevate the profile and prospects of our gymnastics community. After listening to our members, it became clear that changes were necessary to reflect our evolving community and ensure that your voices are heard and your needs are met.**

Our new strategy is focused on providing clarity in roles and responsibilities, ensuring the community has a platform for their voices to be heard, and demonstrating the successful relationship between Gymnastics Northern Ireland and British Gymnastics. Our collaborative partnership is key to achieving these goals.

This plan has been informed by several key strategies and consultations, including the Active Living: The New Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland,

Sport Northern Ireland: Power of Sport Corporate Plan 2021-2026, and the British Gymnastics Reform '25 Action Plan. Additionally, community consultation and research has been conducted to develop a deeper understanding of the current state of gymnastics in Northern Ireland and to identify our priorities moving forward.

The success of this plan relies on the cooperation of the many partners involved in the sport. By sharing a common set of goals and working together, we can realise the vision for gymnastics in Northern Ireland as outlined in this plan.



**Robyn Hastings**  
Chair Gymnastics Northern Ireland

## I am delighted to be providing an opening statement, alongside Robyn the Chair of Gymnastics Northern Ireland, as part of your new strategic plan.

We believe this strategic plan is the first step forward in this partnership and provides the clarity, focus and collective commitment to action to make our vision of 'An Uplifting Gymnastics Experience for All' a reality. We can already see the impact of the incredible work happening in Northern Ireland, but we also recognise there is so much more potential to further grow the sport, celebrate your achievements and tell the stories of those involved.

We recognise that not all of this will happen overnight, but we are committed to this partnership for the long term and in working with you to further strengthen the overall governance and workforce across the island.

We now need to harness the passion, dedication and ambition of you, the Gymnastics Northern Ireland community, to make this a reality.



**Sarah Powell**  
CEO British Gymnastics



## OUR BACKGROUND

Originally formed in 1895 as the Ulster Gymnastics Association, Gymnastics Northern Ireland ensures that Northern Ireland are represented in the Commonwealth Games and other international events. Gymnastics Northern Ireland affiliates to British Gymnastics, the national governing body for the sport throughout the UK. Together we work to create a safe, positive and fair experience for all in gymnastics.



## OUR FUNDERS

Sport Northern Ireland and British Gymnastics.

## OUR UNITED VISION – ‘LEAP WITHOUT LIMITS’

Our vision sees British Gymnastics, Gymnastics Northern Ireland, English Gymnastics, Scottish Gymnastics and Welsh Gymnastics united in committing to a single clear goal – to deliver an uplifting gymnastics experience for all.



## OUR PURPOSE

Our shared purpose is to ensure that gymnastics provides a safe, positive and fair experience for all.

## OUR COMMITMENT

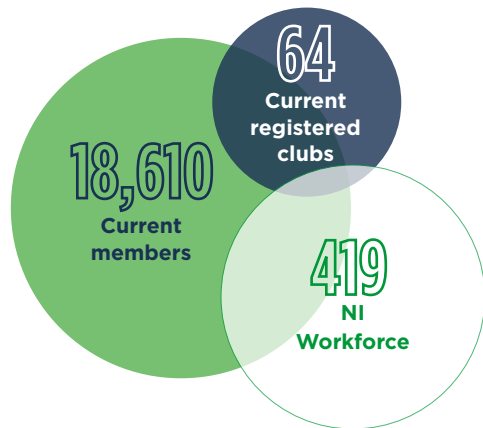
Our commitment to sustaining positive inclusive participation, encouraging lifelong wellness and well-being, and upholding a duty of care to all members, will achieve a new era of gymnastics that is united across all Home Nations.

## OUR VALUES

We have three collective values - Being inclusive, supportive and safe.

## CURRENT PROFILE OF OUR SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Clubs in Northern Ireland primarily affiliate to British Gymnastics, and in turn automatically affiliate to GNI. To accurately determine membership numbers GNI has obtained reports from the British Gymnastics Membership System; a summary of the reports are found below.



## NORTHERN IRELAND REPRESENTATION

Gymnasts are eligible for consideration to represent Gymnastics Northern Ireland provided they are:

- Born in Northern Ireland or
- Parent/s were born in Northern Ireland or
- Have had residency for 3 years and
- Hold an Irish or British passport

## BRITISH AND IRISH REPRESENTATION

Northern Ireland gymnasts can choose to represent either British Gymnastics (BG) or Gymnastics Ireland (GI) if they meet the representation and selection criteria as laid out by the governing body for squads and events.

Northern Ireland gymnasts can represent Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Games, and Commonwealth Youth Games. These occur every 4 years. Selection is made by the relevant Technical Committee. These nominations are then put forward to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council which is responsible for selecting the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Team. Gymnasts may represent Northern Ireland at multi-sport events and in invitational internationals. We are committed to ensuring that all GNI kit is consistent across the disciplines.





## COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING GYMNASTICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

As the leadership team, we are dedicated to enhancing gymnastics in Northern Ireland. Our role is to facilitate progress and support our community, building on the excellent work already happening to ensure the sport benefits everyone involved.

Reviewing our partnership approach and collaboration was crucial. Historically, Gymnastics Northern Ireland and British Gymnastics have worked side by side, which sometimes caused confusion about leadership roles and contact points. Our priority is to clarify these roles and unite our efforts under one collaborative umbrella - Gymnastics Northern Ireland.

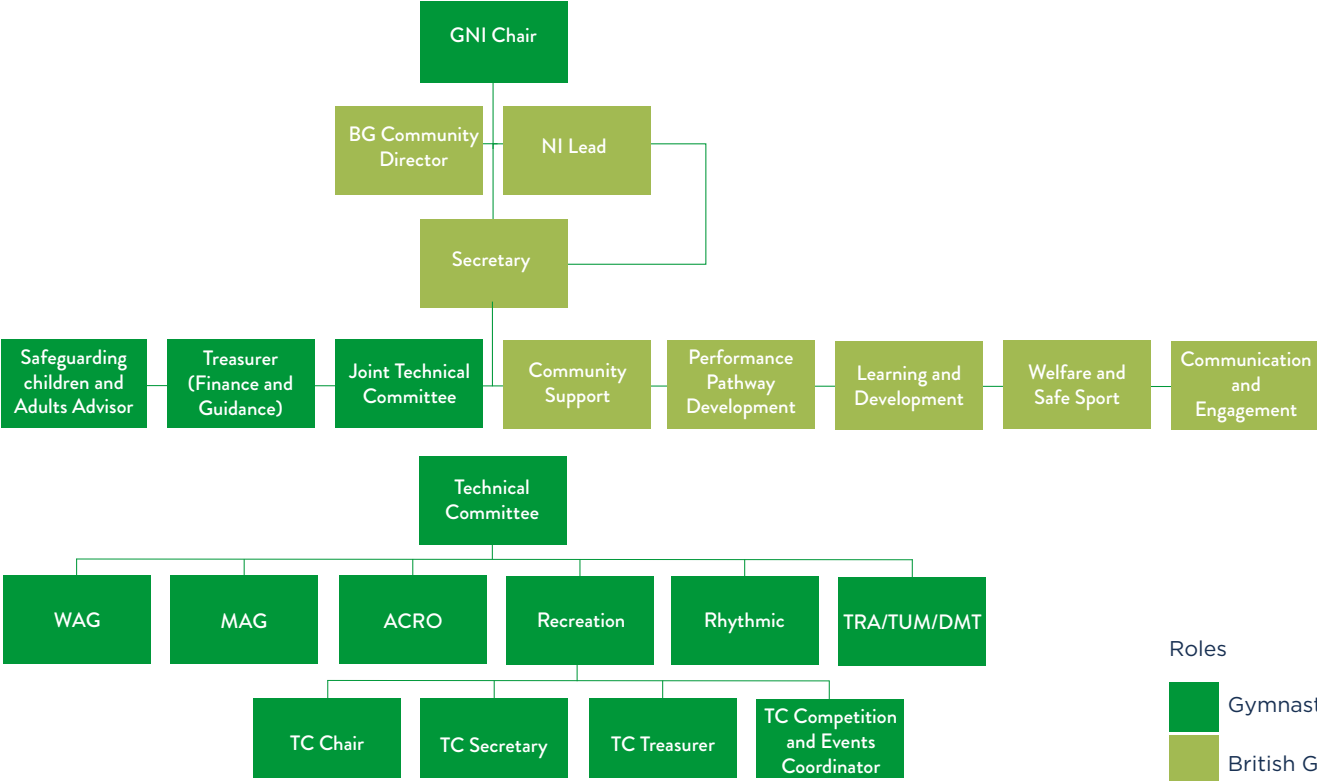
Gymnastics Northern Ireland (GNI) and British Gymnastics (BG) are committed to supporting our entire community and advancing gymnastics. We appreciate the feedback and recommendations provided during the consultation process, which have guided us in the right direction. The community's desire for improvement and modernisation is clear.

We have an outstanding community of clubs and coaches, and we are committed to ensuring they feel supported by these changes. Our comprehensive delivery plan, developed in collaboration with the community and experts, addresses

specific challenges in Northern Ireland. Our approach is rooted in transparency, collaboration, and continuous learning. We acknowledge that change takes time and that different priorities will progress at different rates.

This plan marks the beginning of our movement. We will regularly update the community as we implement changes, share stories, and celebrate successes together.

# WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT GYMNASTICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND



- Roles
- Gymnastics Northern Ireland
  - British Gymnastics

## OUR COLLABORATIVE WORKING PARTNERSHIP

### OUR GOVERNANCE

We will review and ensure a clear and effective governance structure, led by the Gymnastics Northern Ireland Leadership Team. This team is collectively responsible for the long-term success of the committee, overseeing strategic and operational plans, rules, policies, and procedures to support affiliated clubs and ensure their safe and effective operation.

The Northern Ireland Leadership Team delegates responsibility to Discipline Technical Committees, which manage

their specific activities. These committees handle competitions, performance pathways, development plans, rules, squad selection, and other technical areas. The Joint Technical Committee serves as a collaborative platform for these committees to work together and develop gymnastics in Northern Ireland cohesively. All these committees are composed of dedicated volunteers.

### OUR FINANCE

British Gymnastics (BG) manages the Sport Northern Ireland grant submissions and awards to support our sport's key investment areas and Sport Northern Ireland strategic priorities. BG and GNI will collaboratively establish a detailed operating plan for various GNI activities, supported by an annual operating budget provided to GNI based on Northern Ireland membership as part of our partnership. This will be reviewed annually.

The NI Leadership Team oversees the funds, using them as they deem best for the sport. The GNI Treasurer and NI Administrator (Secretary), supported by the BG Finance Team, will maintain accurate financial records. They will present regular financial reports to the committees and provide an annual report with an audited statement of accounts. The Management Committee will authorise in writing the GNI Treasurer and one other committee member to sign cheques on behalf of GNI. We will always follow the organisation's financial regulations and procedures.

## WELFARE AND SAFE SPORT

Safeguarding and safe sport are central to our mission. We are committed to ensuring everyone in gymnastics feels safe and supported. For people to be inspired they must be safe and feel safe; we are committed to achieving this. We will work with British Gymnastics' Welfare and Safe Sport Team to ensure our community knows how to raise concerns and feels confident they will be addressed effectively.

Gymnastics Northern Ireland will have a dedicated Welfare and Safe Sport officer based locally to handle welfare issues. Our focus is on responsibility, accountability, and a relentless drive to ensure everyone can have an uplifting experience in gymnastics in

NI, free from harm or abuse. We will foster a safe culture, empowering children, young people, and adults to thrive in a secure environment through effective leadership and governance.

We will endeavour to create safe operations ensuring gymnastics members, parents/ carers and our community have the right policies, procedures, processes, and practices to keep children, young people and adults safe.

Welfare and Safe Sport principles will be guiding our actions and inform our decisions. They ensure our work is:

**Consistent:** Across all levels, ensuring fairness, accessibility, and reliability.

**Clear:** Transparent and reasonable for all.

**Connected:** Inclusive and engaging, ensuring that all members feel part of the community and its safeguarding purpose.

**Compassionate:** Treat people with respect and kindness.

We are committed to creating an open, fair, and healthy culture of safeguarding that underpins everything we do. To do this we have a robust framework to achieve the following:

- **Prevent** harm and abuse.
- **Protect** participants.
- **Promote** welfare and safe practice in sport.
- **Resolve** and manage concerns effectively.



**TOGETHER GNI AND BRITISH  
GYMNASTICS WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:**



Learning and being informed by the past, to take clear and considered action, whilst also challenging the status quo.

Supporting the gymnastics community to understand welfare, safe sport and safeguarding responsibilities, accountability, and expectations.

Developing and embedding safe practice and striving for excellence.

Ensuring everyone feels supported and confident that they can seek guidance from the welfare and safe sport team at British Gymnastics with openness and transparency.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We will work together to better support, recognise, and celebrate our NI workforce (everyone that supports the delivery of gymnastics). With the support of British Gymnastics' Learning and Development Team we will offer learning and development opportunities that accommodate the needs of our community, specifically to best support our NI gymnastics workforce. We have a Course Programming Co-Ordinator supporting NI on a part-time basis, they will be responsible for delivering a robust programme of activity to support the development of coaches and clubs. Their initial priority will be to re-engage our workforce and clubs through regular activity with the aim of delivering circa 25 courses throughout the year and reaching 230+ learners.

We will be monitoring the demand of specific disciplines in NI and in particular feeding this into the roll out of new course content, e.g. DMT Development Coach, to recognise

and, where possible, meet the demand within the region.

Our current insight suggests that clubs across the region (particularly those in rural areas) struggle to meet participation demand due to a lack of active coaches in their area. Additionally, our insight suggests that cost is a barrier to our learning and development programme. Therefore, we have streamlined our funding support streams in NI to ensure that financial support is available to those in need. For example, we recognise that as a smaller region, NI struggles to meet minimum capacity for courses to run, therefore we are committed to utilising our grant to subsidise some course costs. We will contribute towards informal social learning events, formal education courses, non-formal workshops and other CPD training opportunities, to have a greater impact in providing a better, more accessible, inclusive, and desirable educational programme in NI.

## PERFORMANCE PATHWAYS

We aim to create a smooth, seamless journey for a gymnast from club to Northern Irish, British or Irish representation; moreover, we want this pathway to be available to all gymnasts from all backgrounds, and will endeavour to remove barriers wherever possible. In this endeavour, we have a pathway which has recreation at its heart and extends into late childhood, giving the option for gymnasts to progress to senior competition or switch back to recreational gymnastics.

We recognise that we play a vital part in the development of a child, not just in terms of their gymnastic ability but in their physical, social, mental, and emotional well-being. Therefore, our primary aim is that every gymnast, whatever their background, who is a part of our pathway feels enriched by the process, having had the

opportunity to develop skills that will help them throughout their life. Specifically, we will run Pathway Programmes for the Olympic disciplines (Men's and Women's Artistic, and Trampoline) with the aim to align these programmes with the British Pathway, creating the opportunity for gymnasts from Northern Ireland to achieve the standard required for British squads. As part of these programmes, we will also provide coach development opportunities through supporting coaches in camps and at coaching conferences. We will work with our partners, Working with Parents in Sport, to support parents/guardians through online workshops.

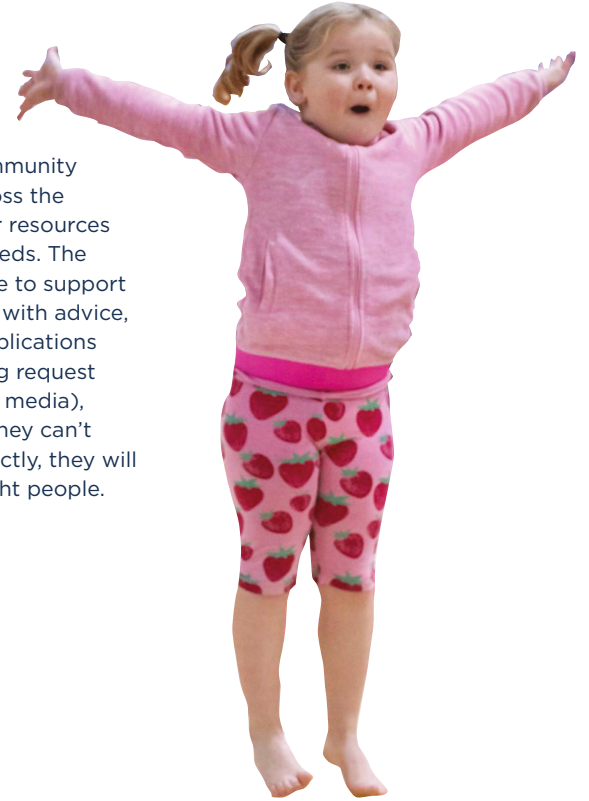


## COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with the NI community is a key part of our plan. We aim to make real changes by listening to and working with our gymnasts, coaches, clubs, parents, and volunteers.

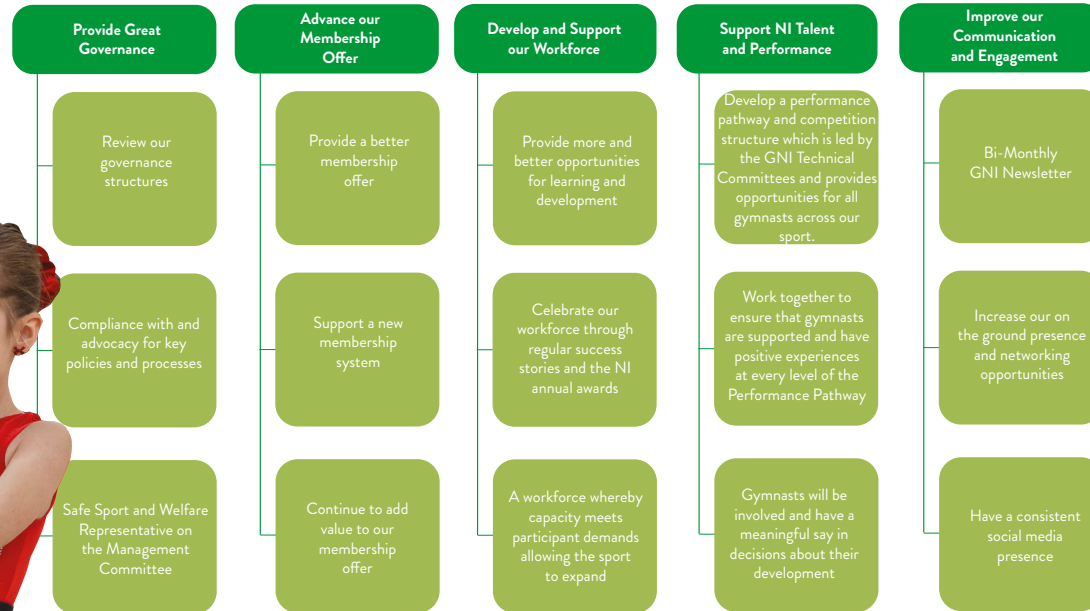
To meet the high demand for our sport, we will create more opportunities for participation. Currently, 93% of our members are recreational, mainly female children and young people. We recognise the importance of providing positive, quality experiences to foster a lifelong love of sport and physical activity. Promoting fun, inclusive recreational gymnastics is essential.

We will host various community engagement events across the province to prioritise our resources and meet community needs. The BG team in NI is available to support clubs and the workforce with advice, support, and funding applications through our new booking request form (available on social media), email and telephone. If they can't answer your queries directly, they will connect you with the right people.



## OUR 5 INTERCONNECTED FOCUS AREAS

This delivery will be led by the **Gymnastics Northern Ireland Leadership Team** who will oversee, facilitate, and drive forward the actions identified across the five interconnected focus areas.



## WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE

### Aim 1 Modernisation/Governance

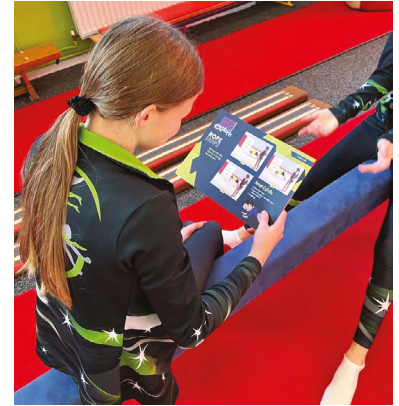
Align to British Gymnastics strategic initiative on Good Leadership Governance, which aims to cascade the highest standards of governance across the wider sport, setting a benchmark for integrity and accountability. Our governance review will: clarify the purpose of our gymnastics structures, ensuring they are inclusive and accessible; ensure that our decision-making groups have the skills and diversity needed to operate effectively; welcome diverse, and appropriately skilled and experienced people to our committee; ensure that we are properly constituted and have the appropriate financial procedures in place.

### Aim 2 Membership Offer

The introduction of the new system and change in membership structure in 2024 is just the first part of the journey to improve the membership experience for our community. The launch of our system is complemented by a detailed onboarding and communication strategy to elevate user experience and engagement. We are committed to working together to ensure our community is heard and that feedback is used to improve both our membership process and our value proposition to both clubs and members as we progress over the coming years.

### Aim 3 Workforce Development

Together we will provide a consistent and coherent learning and development offer for our people (our Workforce), including formal education courses, non-formal workshops and other CPD opportunities and informal social learning events, that bring people together and provides important networking and learning opportunities. Thus, creating a community of coaches that can filter our positive, safe, and inclusive messages through their clubs, and mentor support. We will celebrate the contribution our workforce makes through regular success stories and the NI annual awards. In doing so, we must understand and address the barriers to our coach and judge workforce. We will strive to ensure that our delivery workforce is representative of our community, helping it to grow and further diversify, and that coaches are supported to ensure they have a positive experience whilst delivering.



## Aim 4 Talent Development

Success rests on a demonstration of excellence across all aspects of a Performance Pathway, not solely on medal hauls. Thus, we will strive for an environment whereby all gymnasts feel supported and have positive experiences at every level of the Performance Pathway. Additionally, we will continue to deliver a competition structure which is led by the GNI Technical Committees and provides opportunities for all gymnasts across our sport. Our community will be one that fosters a culture centred on values, a people first focus, strong relationships, and cross-discipline learning. By 2026, we will have full programmes of activity for Men's and Women's artistic for the gymnasts, but also a systematic coach development

programme which is able to support a broad range of coaches whilst also being adaptable enough to identify those with greatest potential and link them seamlessly into the British programme.



## Aim 5 Community Engagement

We will continue to deliver programmes to promote participation in gymnastics and working with key partners to improve gymnastics opportunities. A significant initiative here is our Rise Gymnastics Programme and Award Scheme and newly established Competition Framework. We are committed to increasing the provision for recreational gymnasts to participate in events. We have introduced a Northern Ireland Rise Gymnastics Competition and also reintroduced the Northern Ireland Gymnastics Festival, providing an uplifting experience for all to showcase their talents in a fun and safe way. This empowers and celebrates gymnasts of all levels, enabling holistic development alongside skill progression. We believe that these opportunities generate considerable benefits, stimulating

positive change and creating opportunities for sustainable participation. We will establish baselines for participation for those with a disability and those within rural areas, to ensure that we continually strive for a more active population and standardised quality participant experiences across NI. We are committed to maintaining an 80-85% female membership base and being advocates for female representation in sport.





British  
Gymnastics