

ULSTER HOCKEY

INSPIRE | BUILD | SUSTAIN

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24





Chair's Welcome - George Wilson

On behalf of all Ulster Hockey Board members and Ulster Hockey employees, I have pleasure in presenting the 2024 Annual Report. The report should give the Ulster Hockey family confidence that we are meeting our planned objectives across key areas of activity and continuing to develop an organisation appropriate to the needs of hockey in the province.

We appreciate all clubs have their particular concerns and, of course, there are always challenges, such as funding, ensuring competitive league structure and cup structures are in place, and increasing the profile of the game, but there has been progress to recognise, both on and off the pitch.

From a playing perspective, overall participation levels have increased, the number of players achieving representative honours remains strong and the performance of Ulster schools and Clubs in Irish competitions has been exemplary. Ulster Senior and Junior Age Groups players in the Elite Athlete Pathway continue to thrive in the Ireland Squads, with congratulations extended to all these players, coaches, managers, umpires, and officials who are progressing in the Ireland International arena.

The continued increase in numbers actively engaged and involved in the sport is attributable to several factors. The number of clubs impacted by the workforce and club development programmes has resulted in yet further levels of engagement. Positive media coverage at local and national level has increased commercial interest, with the Club 1896 initiative representing an opportunity to enhance the reputation and profile of hockey.

The Schools and Club Youth Programmes, the Good Relations and Outreach Programmes, the Community Camp Programme, the Further Education Participation Programme, the Talent Coach Programme, and the Talent Development Programmes at U13, U15, U16, U18, U21 have all contributed to increased participation.

Equally important is the development of a coaching philosophy and sporting ethos to support the increased levels of participation. We continue to appeal to all Members, Clubs and Schools to continue to highlight the **RESPECT TO UMPIRES AND OFFICIALS** initiative.

The progress made on the field of play requires an organisational structure to support continued development. The recent diversification of income streams and the appropriate levels of financial reserves being maintained provides a solid base on which to build. The pursuit of best practice governance structures and continuous monitoring of satisfaction through stakeholder feedback and membership consultation is also essential in sustaining progress.

The UH Team has made further exciting advances this past year and, on your behalf, I would like to thank our employees, Board members and all those volunteers involved in our extensive range of activity for their diligence, enthusiasm, and professionalism.

We also take the opportunity to formally thank all our 2023/2024 sponsors. Sport NI for their continued core funding and all those Funding Partners detailed in the Report. Their continued support is greatly appreciated, and we have enhanced our partnership reach through local authorities to realise further community opportunities.

Thank you to Margaret McCormack for her commitment to the role of President in the last year and we wish our incoming President Mervyn Logan a most enjoyable tenure.

Finally, thank you to all the devoted Committee Members, Umpires, Mentors, Coaches, and volunteers from all our Clubs whose committed efforts are very much appreciated and continue to make hockey the success that it is.

Yours in hockey and best wishes for the incoming season.

George Wilson
Chairperson - Ulster Hockey Board

About Ulster Hockey

Ulster Hockey is one of four affiliated branches that together form Hockey Ireland. Hockey Ireland, as the overall governing body for the sport across the island, is the principal body responsible for the development of hockey at all levels. In its relationship with Hockey Ireland, Ulster Hockey has responsibility for the administration, development, and delivery of hockey within Ulster.

Ulster Hockey currently supports the efforts of 27 men's and 50 women's clubs (Men & Women) and 13,000 members and players across the Province.

Ulster Hockey works with a range of public bodies to deliver on its key strategic objectives. Core to this work is providing support and services to clubs, members and players which strengthens the ongoing development and delivery of sport within Ulster.

Office Bearers 2023/24

President - Margaret McCormack (Ards Ladies Hockey Club)

Vice-President - Mervyn Logan (Lisnagarvey Hockey Club)

The Board of Ulster Hockey Ltd:

Chair - George Wilson

Vice-Chair - Peter Kelly

Finance Director - Adrian Murphy

Director of Participation & Development - Christine Aiken

Director of Coaching & Pathways - Tim Cockram

Director of Welfare & Inclusion - Chloe Gillard

Director of Communications & Marketing - Sarah Little

Independent Director - Neal Lucas

Independent Director - Gareth Herron

Boardroom Apprentice - Shannon Booth

Ulster Hockey Staff

Chief Executive - Marc Scott

Talent Manager - Shirley McCay

Talent Officer - VACANT

Finance & Administration Officer - Nicki Bayes

Club Development Officer - Ian Hughes

Inclusion & Diversity Officer - Eamonn McFerran

Workforce Development Officer - Jonathan McMeekin

Youth Development Officer - Amanda Morton

Communications Officer - Andy Morrison

Development Coordinator - Harry Templeton

Schools Outreach Officer - Jack Kyle

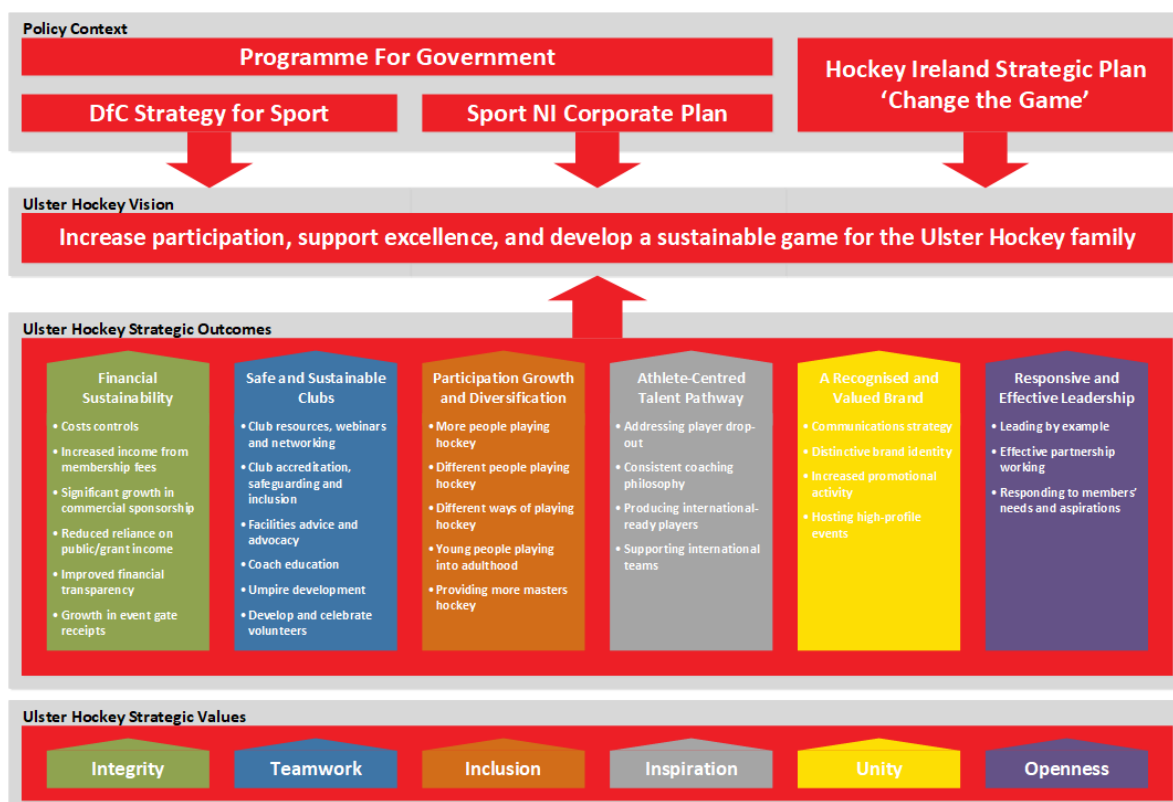
Designated Safeguarding Children Officer - Hilary Reid

Strategic Framework

In 2021/22, Ulster Hockey consulted extensively with Board members, staff, volunteers and players - young and old - to identify the key issues and challenges facing the organisation as well as the priorities that need to be addressed in the short, medium, and longer-term. Throughout the process, it was clear that stakeholders' concerns were centred on sustaining the expectations associated with modern club activities, including administration, coaching, umpiring and increasingly, statutory obligations.

This process resulted in a Strategic Plan, adopted in August 2021 and launched in November 2021 at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, designed to establish outcomes, objectives and related actions for the development of Hockey in Ulster over the period 2021 to 2026. It aims to ensure sustainability amongst all clubs and provide targeted growth in those priority areas identified in the plan. The emphasis on creating sustainable clubs and offering focused support for key initiatives over the duration of this plan emerged from a detailed engagement and consultation process.

As we meet the mid-way point of the Strategy, the Ulster Hockey Board is committed to an in-depth review of the strategy to determine its success to date and any targets which would require amendments.



Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Through our strategic plan we want to inspire more people to get involved in hockey and more people to stay involved in all aspects of the game. Our Vision is therefore to:

**Increase participation, support excellence
and develop a sustainable game for the Ulster Hockey family.**

Mission

Ulster Hockey is responsible for the promotion and development of lifelong participation, delivering a quality experience and supporting clubs that allow both individuals and teams to enjoy, engage and excel at all levels in the sport. Our plan is to keep working towards this Mission Statement:

INSPIRE involvement, **BUILD** capacity and **SUSTAIN** Clubs

Values

We have set ourselves a challenging and stretching vision. As momentum builds it will be increasingly important to draw upon values that build unity and purpose. With our people as our richest asset, our values will set the standard for how we work together in delivering the vision.

Our values will help the organisation grow as a hockey family and will set us apart. Bringing our plan to fruition through respectful engagement also ensures that we stay true to our founding values as we build our future vision together.

We Identified the values that best capture the spirit and culture of Ulster Hockey following in-depth consultation with our Board and Staff. Six broad areas emerged as important and distinctive to Ulster Hockey.

These are encapsulated within our values and articulated as:

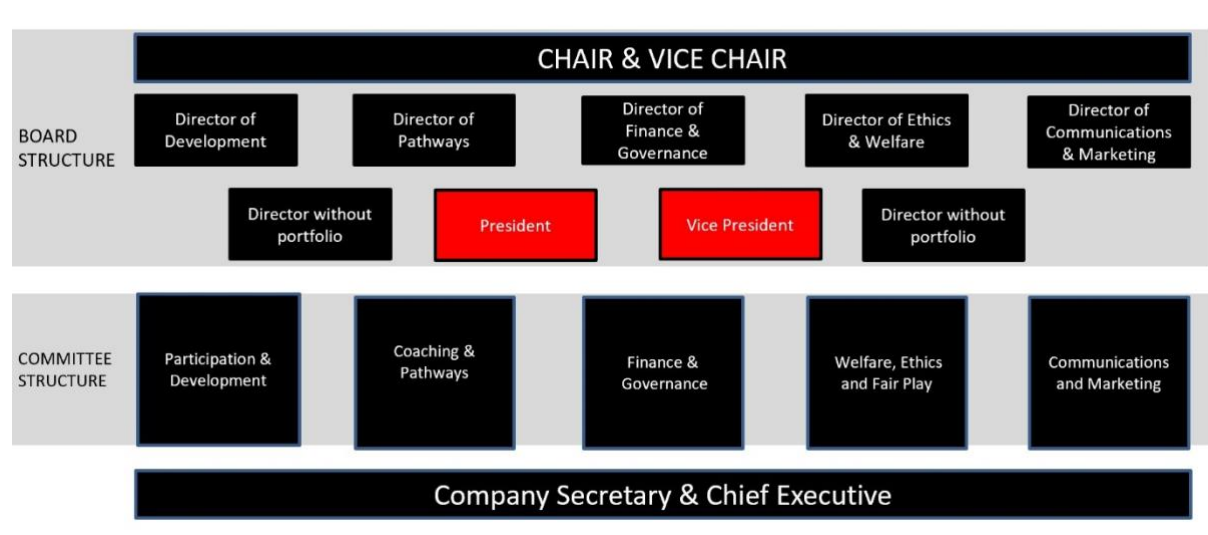
- **Inclusion**, which means we are respectful.
- **Integrity**, which means we are responsible.
- **Inspiration**, which means we lead.
- **Teamwork**, which means we are collaborative.
- **Openness**, which means we are engaging.
- **Unity**, which means we are pioneering.

As we deliver our Strategic Plan, Ulster Hockey will continue to evolve and grow. We will regularly review our values, vision, and mission to ensure they reflect the organisation we want to be.

The Structure

In parallel with the strategic development, Ulster Hockey has reviewed its legal structures and has been operating as an incorporated structure, Ulster Hockey Ltd, since April 2021.

The following Board & Committee structure is being implemented:



Chief Executive's Report - Marc Scott

2023/24 has been an exciting year for Ulster Hockey and the sports sector across Northern Ireland in general as we returned towards normality following the disruption caused over the last few seasons due to the pandemic. It has not been without its challenges, however, and as with all businesses and sectors, we have faced rising costs in all aspects of our operations and experienced issues around public funding. I have no doubts that our members and clubs are still being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and for that reason I am thankful for the continued support of our members. We would hope that with a return to business at the Northern Ireland Assembly, we will see more positive developments regarding budgets which will impact on the sports sector and Ulster Hockey.

Our financial performance in 2023/24 has been very positive despite funding challenges. We saw an increase in Sport NI funding of approximately 30% in and have maintained the same level of funding for the incoming financial year. However, this has been off-set by the removal of Central Good Relations Funding due to significant budgetary issues for the Executive Office. We have applied for support under this programme in 2024/25 and await the outcome. In the meantime, we have continued to support the employment of the Inclusion and Diversity Officer from our own resources as we see this role as an integral to the growth of the sport going forwards.

We have returned a positive financial position in the most part due to our careful budgeting and strict financial management. This approach allows us to make decisions which protect the current structure when faced with unplanned funding issues. We are continuing to see our costs rise, and as with last year it will necessitate increasing our reserve. However, against this backdrop we remain committed to investing wisely in the development of the sport and are developing a sound financial base on which to do so and aspire to provide meaningful financial support directly to clubs in the near future.

In addition to the rewards for our prudent financial management impacting on our financial results, we have also been beneficiaries of a kind legacy left to us in the will of Mr. Robert Stevenson MBE. 'Steve' was a long-term supporter of Ulster Hockey, presenting the Robert Stevenson Shield annually to the runners up of the Belfast Telegraph Girls Senior Cup. In recognition of this kind gesture, we have rebranded the Girls Super league competitions as the Stevenson League Cup and Bowl at both senior and U14 levels.

The weather was kind to us in 2023/24 that there was minimal disruption to domestic competition as a result of inclement conditions - albeit there were some very wet days on the pitch. However, we still encountered challenges with the senior league schedule, with the Kirk Cup and Denman Ulster Shield being impacted by wider calendar issues with Hockey Ireland and the international programme. This creates some difficulties for the Committees and staff in rescheduling fixtures and managing the Cup competitions and a great deal of credit must go to Competitions Committee Chair Iain Kelly and the Committee members for the work undertaken to ensure the season was managed as well as possible. We continue to work closely with Hockey Ireland to better co-ordinate our competitions and wish to ensure that the Senior Ulster Cups retain their gravitas.

We continue to consider how best we can deliver our core product of competitive hockey and it is notable that we had meaningful consultation around competitive hockey from all stakeholders. The review has been commissioned with 3 key areas of focus: 1) A review of the league and cup structures; 2) a review of how competitive hockey is administered and

managed; and 3) a review of the alignment of schools, club and performance/pathway hockey. We have reached the conclusion of the review and the key recommendations will be presented to members at the AGM.

With respect the structure of league competition, there is to be a club consultation scheduled post-AGM which will outline proposals based on feedback gathered both within the parameters of the Review and through ongoing feedback provided by clubs. We recognize that there will never be a perfect solution which works for every single club, but we are committed to looking at the broader picture of how we can best provide a structure which encourages club growth and sustainability.

As I stated in my report last year, any process of change can create uncertainty and concern in some areas of our sporting community. However, the review is being carried out independently and any changes to our sport will be implemented in the best interests of the future sustainability of the sport and ensuring player welfare is central to everything we do.

Some concerns have been voiced in this regard by our school's community. I wish to reiterate in this report that school's hockey is a valued aspect of Ulster Hockey. Schools often provide the first engagement with members, introducing them to the sport and developing them in their early years. Schools' hockey also provides an extremely valuable competitive structure for players of all school ages and abilities.

The value of school hockey was never more apparent throughout the January to May period this year. Despite some inclement and often torrential weather, there was a series of exciting and competitive finals days which provided great enjoyment to all involved, with some great hockey on show. It is notable that Ulster schools dominated the All-Ireland Schools tournaments. Congratulations to Royal School Armagh (Kate Russell), Banbridge Academy (June Smith & Pilot All Ireland League Cup), Banbridge Academy (Herbie Sherman), Wallace High School (Tasmanian Shield) and Cookstown High (John Wareing) for their success.

In addition, recognition goes to both Banbridge Academy and Royal School Armagh for successfully hosting the senior boys' and girls' events respectively. Both were professionally organised and a good reflection on the schools and Ulster Hockey.

The support from the hockey community and schools has been significant as reflected by the large crowds in attendance at the schools' finals across the year. Specific notes on performance must go to Royal School Armagh who completed treble success in the Senior Girls events (including Kate Russell) with every team from the school reaching its respective final including 2nd, 3rd and 4th XI. In the junior boys' schools' events, Cookstown High completed the treble of the Richardson Cup, Ferris Cup and Bannister Bowl.

Progressing into 2024/25 we are currently reviewing the structure of school's hockey to provide a modern, inclusive and sustainable future in line with the recently restructured Ulster Hockey Ltd and meetings are scheduled in early June with both the Principals of our member schools and the Heads of Hockey in schools to provide information on this future direction.

As we come towards the mid-point of the strategic cycle, Ulster Hockey remains on track to achieve the majority of the targets which we set out in 2021. It is clear from reviewing our current position that, whilst there are a lot of positive developments in Ulster Hockey and a lot of progress being made, there are still some areas of improvement required. The Board has had a significant review of the strategic objectives at its mid-point and have revised

some targets - generally in an upwards direction where we have been exceeding expectations.

Ulster Hockey advised last year that we had recently appointed a Communications Officer. The profile of Ulster Hockey and quality of coverage on social media has been significant and the feedback received has been generally of a positive nature. This has been reflected in ongoing positive engagement analytics of our social media channels. I hope that the members are already aware of an increased presence in the local press, with a particular focus on domestic hockey. Despite the positive feedback and transformation in the area of communications, we wish to continue to develop in this area and are identifying ways in which we can provide enhanced digital content. As always, we are open to input from clubs and wish to promote all areas of the sport, whilst still being open to constructive feedback on where we can continue to improve.

This year's annual report highlights both the successes of Ulster Hockey over the last 12 months and some of the challenges. We will continue to face the challenges head on to ensure that the sport of hockey continues to grow and provide enjoyment and opportunities for participants of all ages. We are aware that it is necessary to continue to be an influential part of the sports sector and to that end we have been reaching out to our political representatives and building strong political connections for the benefit of the sport.

In addition, I continue to represent Ulster Hockey on the Board of the NI Sports Forum and took up the post of Chair in November 2023. I would hope that this position provides not only personal challenge and benefit but is also beneficial to the sport of hockey in terms of ensuring we are at the leading edge of influence in the sector. Across 2023/24, Ulster Hockey has been actively represented at the All-party Working Group for Sport and this engagement has seen direct political intervention and interest in facilities issues faced by the sport.

This year has seen some changes in the delivery of our community-focused Good Relations programme. There has been continued engagement with the Ulster GAA through a successful collaborative 'stick and ball' programme. However, with the appointment of Jack Kyle as Schools outreach Officer, working closely with Inclusion and Diversity Officer Eamonn McFerran, we have had a significant focus on delivery of schools outreach programmes in Primary schools of mixed denomination. These programmes have seen huge success and continue to be over-subscribed in terms of demand. In addition, there has been significant engagement with Special Needs schools in the last year. Introducing hockey activity to this community has been extremely rewarding for participants and coaches alike.

As with last year, we have continued to manage a successful and often oversubscribed summer and half-term camps programme, providing opportunities to our younger members across the Province to play in an enjoyable and safe environment. Our clubs continue to grow despite the challenges of the last 2 years, and we now have 11 clubs accredited through Clubmark. A review of this accreditation scheme has seen the launch of a more effective accreditation in partnership with Hockey Ireland. A gold, silver and bronze package sees a more flexible approach which should be accessible and supportive to all clubs.

A key focus of our club development function has been assisting clubs to source and secure external funding. Led by Ian Hughes in partnership with S3 Solutions, we have commenced a series of funding workshops and the expertise of S3 are available to clubs to assist with

applications. We continue to encourage clubs to engage in these workshops or engage directly with S3 Solutions via Ian as it is a strategic objective of Ulster Hockey to see increased investment in the sport at all levels.

Our youth hockey environment is continuing to thrive with growing numbers of youth members in our clubs and a very successful schools hockey programme at primary and secondary level. In February 2022, Amanda Morton commenced in the post of Youth Development Officer, and she has brought her extensive experience in sport gained primarily with the Irish Football Association to Ulster Hockey. As she has settled into the role following a whirlwind first 12 months, in 2023/24 there was a significant increase in the number of young players at school and club level playing in blitz events. Anyone who attended the schools or club blitz events will attest to the strength of hockey at this age group.

Our workforce development function has continued to provide skilled and qualified individuals to manage the sport at all levels. As with last year, there has been a key focus on Umpires in 2023/24 with a significant number of individuals progressing through the structured Umpires qualification system. 2023/24 has also seen the launch of the Umpires Academy. It is hoped that we will see this translate into an increased number of Umpires available to support the competitive structure each weekend. Recognition for the continued success of our valued workforce development programme must be afforded to Jonny McMeekin.

Finally, we must recognize the remarkable success of Ulster teams and players in the Talent pathway. With ongoing success and development in the Ulster squads the number of Ulster based players progressing to Ireland and GB squads is testament to the strength of talent in Ulster and support they are receiving from our volunteer coaching structure under the influence of Shirley McCay MBE.

I wish to thank all our members for their ongoing support of the sport, continued challenge to Ulster Hockey and wish everyone a restful summer and I look forward to seeing continued growth of the sport next season with collaboration (and challenge) with our clubs, partners and stakeholders.

Objective 1 - Financial Sustainability

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Income:	£692,815	£873,027
Expenditure:	£236,057	£581,341
Operating costs:	£384,826	£452,195
Surplus for year:	£71,932	£129,146

Increased sponsorship from £37,000 in 2023 to £53,000 in 2024

Increased gate receipts from £39,993 in 2023 to £48,888 in 2024

Increased development surplus from £59,562 to £70,193



Increased grant income from £217,547 in 2023 to £253,116 in 2024. Grant providers increased to 6

Ulster Hockey is 29% reliant on grants a reduction from 31% in 2023.

Reserves have been increased to £270,000 and income increased by 26%

Increased administration costs from £382,846 to £452,195

Increased staff costs from £272,449 to £327,676

Administration costs 9% under budget



Funding Partners 2022/23



Lead Sponsors 2023/24



Summary of Performance against Objective 1

KPI - Diversification of income streams and financial reserves

Objective	Measurement	Target	Actual	RAG
Identify savings, economies of scale and best value for money through competitive procurement where possible. In consultation with Clubs, keep membership levies under review as we recover from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic	Level of financial reserves	£ 200,000	£270,000	
Establish a business forum where corporate and private benefactors can subscribe in support of the organisation's strategic objectives.	Commercial income as percentage of total income	6%	8%	
Identify a lead commercial partner and sponsor to generate more revenue and maximise the financial value of the Ulster Hockey brand.	New and prospective corporate sponsors / private benefactors	3	3	
Identify a lead commercial partner and sponsor to generate more revenue and maximise the financial value of the Ulster Hockey brand. Reduce reliance on Sport NI funding to insulate Ulster Hockey from the effects of potential reductions in public sector budgets.	Lead sponsorship agreement.	1	1	

<p>Identify a lead commercial partner and sponsor to generate more revenue and maximise the financial value of the Ulster Hockey brand.</p> <p>Reduce reliance on Sport NI funding to insulate Ulster Hockey from the effects of potential reductions in public sector budgets.</p> <p>Identify and secure alternative sources of public funding from a range of government departments (north and south) and related agencies.</p>	<p>Sport NI funding as a percentage of total income.</p>	<p>31%</p>	<p>24%</p>	
<p>Identify a lead commercial partner and sponsor to generate more revenue and maximise the financial value of the Ulster Hockey brand.</p> <p>Reduce reliance on Sport NI funding to insulate Ulster Hockey from the effects of potential reductions in public sector budgets.</p>	<p>New public sector grants secured.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	
<p>Support clubs to identify and secure to public funding for revenue and/or capital-based projects.</p>	<p>Number of clubs supported in making the business case/completing application forms for funding.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>12</p>	

Ulster Hockey Ltd - Draft Accounts

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR END 31 MARCH 2024	2024 £	2023 £
Income		
Affiliation fees	198,930	184,150
Schools Affiliation Fees	19,340	-
Sponsorship	53,000	37,000
Club 1896 Income	20,225	-
Grants Receivable	253,116	217,547
Gate Receipts	48,888	39,963
Miscellaneous income	14,502	10,225
Legacies	37,500	-
Umpires Income	497	3,022
Development Programme Income	<u>227,029</u>	<u>182,643</u>
<u>Total income</u>	<u>873,027</u>	<u>692,815</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Umpires Expenditure	15,123	18,000
Development Expenditure	156,836	123,081
Competition Costs	16,510	5,000
Hockey Ireland Fees (Club)	77,060	77,060
Hockey Ireland Fees (School)	<u>0</u>	<u>12,916</u>
	(291,686)	(236,057)
<u>Administrative Expenses</u>		
Personnel Costs	327,676	272,449
Travel Expenses	1,389	1,010
Office Accommodation	21,136	19,219
Administration	19,325	12,403
Insurance	18,965	15,025
Marketing	15,656	19,260
Computer & Website Costs	11,847	10,010
Professional Fees	14,209	18,569
Audit fees	7,058	3,300
Sundry expenses	5,987	3,700
Subscriptions	675	2,949
Depreciation	<u>8,272</u>	<u>6,932</u>
	(452,195)	(384,826)
Operating Surplus	129,146	71,932

Outcome 2 - Safe & Sustainable Clubs

Clubmark

The Sport NI platform for club accreditation was removed in March 2021. However, Ulster Hockey sees merit in continuing with a club accreditation scheme and the value of this for clubs in 2023/24 we have contributed to the development and introduced Hockey Ireland's new 3 tier accreditation. This approach aligns to the club centred focus of the 2021/26 strategy. To achieve Club mark accreditation under the previous system, a club was required to provide 35 pieces of evidence which now, under the new system, has been reduced to 23. This is split into Bronze (10), Silver (8) and Gold (5) which can be completed in under 12 months. This revision of the scheme has created a more streamlined and user-friendly experience for our clubs.



Current Accredited Clubs



There are currently a total of 67 member clubs in Ulster and we have a longer-term target to ensure each club achieves a minimum of the bronze Clubmark over the period of the current strategy.

Workforce Development

47 Activities



864 Participants

10 x Fundamentals Courses	201 Coaches
3 x Level 1 Coaching Courses	60 Coaches
1x Level 2 Coaching Course	12 Coaches
8 x Safeguarding Courses	120 Coaches
1 x Coaching Goalkeepers Workshop	15 Coaches
1 x Working with Parents in Sport Workshop for Coaches	13 Participants
1x Autism in Sport Coaching Clinic	13 Participants
1 x Designated Safeguarding Officer Training course (12 participants)	12 Participants
15 x Young Leaders Award courses	254 Participants
2 x Schools Coaching Award	112 Teachers
4 x Other CPD Opportunities	65

Umpire Development



Breakdown of Activities

10 x Young Umpires	138 Participants
6 x Club Umpires Workshop	126 Participants
Umpires Academy	8 Participants

2023 Workforce Awards

- Children's Coach of the Year
- Young Coach of the Year
- Club Performance Coach of the Year
- Talent Coach of the Year
- Young Umpire of the Year
- Club Umpire of the Year
- Umpire of the Year

Summary of Performance against Objective 2

KPI - More players, more teams, more umpires and more volunteers

Objective	Measurement	Target	Actual	RAG
Develop, manage and refine a portfolio of resources that provide umpires, coaches, volunteers and players with advice or guidance to help them learn and develop.	Number of courses/webinars delivered to umpires, coaches, volunteers, and players.	31	71	Green
Encourage all affiliated clubs to work towards achieving Ulster Hockey's new 'Club Assurance Accreditation' to promote high standards of club governance and administration, including safeguarding.	Number of clubs registered and working towards new Club Assurance Accreditation.	20	20	Green
	Number of clubs with a valid Club Assurance Accreditation.	21	11	Red
Take a proactive role in helping to secure long-term access to local playing and training facilities by working with facility owners and operators to safeguard existing facility capacity for hockey.	Number of clubs supported by Ulster Hockey	10	21	Green
Deliver a high-quality coach education programme to enhance capacity at a club level and throughout the participation pathway.	Number of coaches accredited by Hockey Ireland - L1 to L3.	630	841	Green
	Number of coaches attending CPD opportunities.	680	710	Green
Work with Hockey Ireland to foster a consistently high standard of match officiating by delivering a programme of high-quality education	Number of umpires accredited by Hockey Ireland - L1 to L3.	165	340	Green

courses, webinars and conferences.				
Extend the existing youth panel to involve a minimum of one young person (aged 17-24 years) from each Ulster Hockey affiliated club, ensuring fair representation of views from clubs regardless size, type or location.	Number of young people (aged 17-24 years) in Ulster Hockey's youth panel or acting as Youth ambassadors in clubs	10	21	
	Number of clubs represented on Ulster Hockey's youth panel or hosting youth ambassadors	10	10	
Plan and deliver an annual event to increase engagement with the Ulster Hockey family and to celebrate the contribution and support provide by volunteers.	Delivery of annual celebratory events targeting volunteers and the entire Ulster Hockey family.	Delivered	Delivered	

Outcome 3 - Participation Growth & Diversification

Good Relations

In 2023/24 Ulster Hockey unfortunately lost its Good Relations funding due to significant budget cuts affecting the NI Executive Central Good Relations programme. Recognising the strategic importance of delivering the Inclusion & Diversity programme, and in particular the Schools outreach programme, Ulster Hockey has continued to support a Good Relations Officer (now known as Inclusion & Diversity Officer) and programme costs. In addition, Sport NI has provided funding support through its Sports Systems Investment programme for a Schools Delivery Officer. Jack Kyle has been appointed to this post. A successful programme has been delivered in association with several partners including schools, local authorities, and clubs.

In 2023/24 Ulster Hockey has continued to engage with the Ethnic minorities in Sport NI organisation (EMSONI) to engage with the ethnic minority and refugee communities.

An application to continue Central Good Relations funding has been submitted for 2024/25 where a further increase is included, and it is hoped that with the return of the NI Assembly the budget for this programme will be restored and the application will be successful. To offset the loss of the NI Executive Central Good Relations funding, Ulster Hockey received support of 10,000 Euro from the Government of Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs programme for cross-border programme support. 8,500 Euro was previously secured in 2022/23 which has supported cross border initiatives.

Central Good Relations Funding:

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
£22,097	£36,601	£39,087	£0	£49,914 (Applied)

Good relations Programme - 590 Participants engaged.





**Schools Outreach Programme
- 460 participants**

In 23/24, Ulster Hockey was in receipt of support from Sport Ni to deliver a Women in Leadership programme. Sinead Sharkey-Steenson and Lisa Strutt from Reboot were appointed as delivery partners and delivered the programme to 10 participants.



Membership Numbers

Playing membership is continuing to show a year-on-year increase with a particular focus on increased junior members.

Club Membership

2021 - 10,665

2022 - 11,226

2023 - 12,280



Registered Veterans Teams

2019 - 19

2022 - 24

2023 - 24

Schools Hockey

2023/234 saw continued growth in schools' hockey as the sport progresses past the numbers participating pre-COVID. At senior level there has been a number of new schools engaged in competition, particularly through the growth of the Wooden Floor Company Girls' Super league Tier B and the introduction of a Tier B in the revised McCullough Cup format. At Primary school level, there has been ongoing growth of schools engaged in the sport through both the Schools Outreach Programme and the McCloy & Pearson.

In both Primary and Senior schools there has been fantastic turn outs for the finals and the support for schools' hockey has surpassed all expectations in 2023/24.

Ulster schools have had a particularly successful year having dominated the All-Ireland schools competitions with

Ulster Hockey would hope that next season sees continued growth across schools' hockey at all level. It is notable that Ulster schools dominated the All-Ireland Schools tournaments. Congratulations to Royal School Armagh (Kate Russell), Banbridge Academy (June Smith &

Pilot All Ireland League Cup), Banbridge Academy (Herbie Sharman), Wallace High School (Tasmanian Shield) and Cookstown High (John Waring) for their success.

The Senior Boys All Ireland competitions, Kate Russell and John Waring were all successfully hosted in Ulster by Banbridge Academy, Royal School Armagh, and Ulster Hockey respectively and it is a positive reflection on the schools and Ulster Hockey how professionally these events were organised and promoted.

Senior Schools



**35 Schools Finals Coordinated by
Ulster Hockey or member schools:**

**19 Girls Finals
14 Boys Finals
3 All Ireland**

**80 Schools took part in Ulster
Hockey competition:**

**Girls - 58 (188 teams)
Boys - 22 (89 teams)**



**4 Senior Schools engaged in
Good Relations Activity**

**2 Non-hockey playing
schools**

Primary Schools

McCloy & Pearson

**219 teams
99 Boys teams
128 Girls teams**

600 Matches



Pearson Cup Winners - Cookstown Primary

McCloy Cup Winners - Kings Park Primary



Ahead of the Pearson and McCloy qualifying tournament events, Ulster Hockey has introduced Schools Blitz events in both term one and term two, in every council area. These allow primary schools more access to hockey throughout the calendar year. These events were delivered over 44 days to around 15,700 players and work with the schools' outreach program to engage new schools to the sport.

From October - November 2022 and January - February 2023, Ulster Hockey introduced a 'Year 8' Blitz programme in schools to compliment the schools blitz programme. Following this successful pilot the competitions were repeated in 2023/24 with XX schools taking part.



15 Primary Schools engaged in Outreach programme

10 Non-hockey playing schools

Youth Hockey

In 2023/24, youth hockey has continued to go from strength to strength. There has been a continued increase in the numbers involved in youth hockey in the club blitzes, with an additional area included for girls' hockey and the continued growth of the U15 League Competition.

60 Blitz sessions (girls) & 30 sessions (boys) at U11 & U13

**3 Boys regions
6 Girls regions**

**U15 League -
7 divisions,
23 Boys teams, 79 Girls Teams
650 matches,
1500 players**



Youth Consultation

Ulster Hockey remains committed to consultation members to ensure we shape the future of our sport considering the needs of our multiple stakeholders. This includes ongoing consultation with club representatives.

2021 saw the establishment of the Youth Panel, which is continuing to develop, and the panel has been engaged in the process of reviewing competitive hockey. The Forum is now being refreshed with a recruitment process underway, but the success of the Forum can be evidenced through:

- The appointment of 1 member to the Ulster Hockey staff team (Harry Templeton)
- The progress of 1 member through the talent coaching system (Matthew Armstrong-Sanchez)
- The success of 'At the Heart of the Game' supported through the Youth Forum (Anna Pim)
- Student placement and significant volunteering engagement in hockey activity (Hannah Brownlee)

The Youth Forum has continued to be an extremely successful initiative and other sports such as Basketball NI and Ulster Rugby have engaged with Ulster Hockey in the development of their own forums. It is considered that the Ulster Hockey is leading the way in the sector in this regard.

The Forum continues to deliver a useful mechanism for engaging with younger members of Ulster Hockey and it has been engaged in the consultation process around the review of competitive hockey.

Summary of Performance against Objective 3

KPI - New players actively engaged and involved in the sport year-on-year

OBJECTIVE	MEASURES	TARGET	ACTUAL	RAG
Increase the number of people participating in hockey as members of Ulster Hockey affiliated clubs	Number of participant members at UH affiliated clubs	12,720	14,377	
Develop and reinforce links between schools and clubs to encourage children and young people to become part of the hockey family, by investing in professional support for coaching and coach education in primary schools.	Number of primary schools supported by Ulster Hockey to deliver the sport within the school environment.	144	219	
Where appropriate, and dependent upon resources, consider developing schools-based Youth Blitzes for children and young people to engage with and enjoy hockey for the first time.	Number of school & club based Youth Blitzes planned and delivered by Ulster Hockey.	115	170	
Be inclusive, and develop a plan to reach out to non-traditional hockey playing people and areas, through efforts such as the Good Relations programme.	Number of people engaged from within targeted areas by Ulster Hockey.	570	590	
Consider supporting a club and/or district council to develop a pilot scheme to provide hockey to people with physical and/or learning disabilities, modelled on the Flyerz programme.	Design and delivery of pilot scheme targeting people with a physical and/or learning disability.	Implemented	Implemented – Hockey4All & Schools Outreach Programme	
Explore the potential of extending the	A feasibility study conducted to test			

range of competitive outlets for year-round hockey participation, with a view to offering alternative ways to play, to include:	market demand for additional participation opportunities for both club members and new participants.	Completed	Completed	
Indoor Hockey	Successful implementation of a review of competitive hockey			
Hockey 5s				
Mixed Hockey (junior and senior)				
Midweek Hockey				
Address the gap between junior and senior hockey in Ulster by instituting an U18 club competition that provides an additional development opportunity for young players.	Number of clubs entering teams into a new under 18 competition(s) for both male and female players.	TARGET REMOVED FOLLOWING CLUB FEEDBACK	TARGET REMOVED FOLLOWING CLUB FEEDBACK	
Respond to the evident demand for Veterans hockey (aged 40 and above) by organising a club/community-based programme of participation which emphasises fun and encourages social interaction.	Number of clubs entering teams into a club-community based programme of Veterans hockey for both male and female players.	16	24	

Outcome 4 - Effective Athlete Centred & Connected Pathway

International

11 Ulster players in Men's senior Ireland squad which has qualified for Paris 2024

7 players in Women's Senior Ireland squad

2 Ulster Players in GB&NI Senior Squad

90 Ulster Players in Ireland Age Pathway (43 below U18 age bands)

2 Ulster Players in GB&NI Age Pathway



Ulster

30 different clubs represented in U16, U18 girls and boys and U21 boys squads.





Talent Programme

Summer Camps - 125 Participants, 12 Coaches, 3 locations

U15 TDP – 200 Participants, 24 Coaches, 5 locations

U16 Programme – 48 Participants, 10 Coaches

U18 Programme – 48 Participants, 10 Coaches

Summary of Performance against Objective 4

KPI - Increased number of players identified as having potential to progress from a larger number of clubs

OBJECTIVE	MEASURES	TARGET	ACTUAL	RAG
Make athlete needs the central focus of the talent pathway by reviewing and refining the system which captures and nurtures all of the available talent regardless of type, size or location of a club or school.	Number of players from clubs-schools engaged in Hockey Ireland's talent identification and development programmes	36	90	
	Number of clubs represented on the talent pathway	23	28	
Support athletes selected to international squads by improving the quality of locally available coaching, mentoring and support services.	Percentage of talented athletes highly valuing the quality of service and support provided by Hockey Ireland and coaches on the talent pathway.	90%	94%	
Encourage commitment to international hockey by ensuring that Ulster hosts its fair share of training sessions and international fixtures, building on the success of the recent IRL v GBR test series.	Number of international hockey training sessions and/or fixtures staged in Ulster.	16	1	

Outcome 5 - Recognised & Valued Brand

Raising the profile of the sport in Ulster is a priority for the current strategic cycle. Hockey is undoubtedly one of the most significant sports in Ulster and the profile of the sport must be aligned to this fact.

Ulster Hockey is acutely aware that the changing landscape of media and expectations of members has resulted in a need for ongoing development in the area of Communications and Marketing, and this was articulated at the last 2 years' AGM. Ulster Hockey Communications Officer Andrew Morrison, with the guidance of Communications & Marketing Director Sarah Little has developed a communication strategy

We have continued to review and improve our social media and communications function and identifying the resource required to ensure an appropriate level of communications across all aspects of hockey on all our media platforms and have seen a significant increase in coverage in the press, particularly around domestic hockey.

Due to technical issues a new Facebook page was launched and despite a significant reduction in followers on this platform, engagement remains positive and continues to grow.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	TARGET	ACTUAL	RAG
Increase the amount of impressions (views) on all three of our social media platforms based on the numbers from 2022/23				
	Twitter	2,000,000	3,417,700	
	Facebook	1,000,000	3,172,619	
	Instagram	2,000,000	3,983,683	
Increase the number of people we are driving from our social media platforms to our own website through links in posts.				
	Twitter	15,000	17,964	
	Facebook	10,000	12,362	
	Instagram	3,500	4,493	
Increase the rate of engagement on social media posts across all of our platforms.				
	Twitter	2.5%	2.4%	
	Facebook	2.5%	5.86%	
	Instagram	5%	4.91%	

Summary of Performance against Objective 5

KPI - Increased levels of engagement in the sport, more positive media coverage at local, regional and national level and commercial interest

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	TARGET	ACTUAL	RAG
Develop and implement a communications strategy to strengthen Ulster Hockey's profile and brand, showcase the achievements of players, teams, clubs and schools, and enhance propositions for commercial sponsors and investors.	Strategy Developed and Implemented	Initiated	In place	Green
Develop a distinctive brand identity for Ulster Hockey which reflects the vision and values of the organisation, in line with brand guidelines, and is used consistently in all communications and promotional activity.	Brand identity integrated with all internal and external communications	Reviewed	Reviewed	Green
Exploit the full range of media channels to promote the sport of hockey to the widest possible audience, emphasising the inclusive nature of the game, and drawing upon recent success at international level.	Number of new followers on social media channels:			Green
	Twitter	8800	9349	Green
	Facebook	7280	2100	Yellow
	Instagram	5160	8082	Green
Work in partnership with Hockey Ireland and other provincial governing bodies to host a high-profile domestic and/or international fixture(s) to raise the profile of hockey in Ulster and Ireland as a whole, with the aim of achieving significant media coverage.	A 'high profile' fixture planned and delivered by Ulster Hockey	Planned	Nothing in place – boxing day match planned	Red

Outcome 6 - Responsive & Effective Leadership

Board & Company Restructure

2023/24 has seen continued progress in terms of the governance and legal structures of Ulster Hockey Ltd which commenced trading on 1st April 2021. Across 2023/24 there has been an ongoing transition of the Board to the structure presented to and adopted by the members in 2020. New byelaws have been developed and will be presented to the members at the AGM for adoption, which will remove the need to reference the 2019 Ulster Hockey Union constitution for 'sport based' rules.

In this period there has been continued progress on the Board with the following key changes:

Billy Pollock completed his term as Chair and continues his voluntary Board involvement in the sport as a member of the Hockey Ireland Board.

George Wilson has been appointed Ulster Hockey Chair.

The Ethics, Welfare and Inclusion Committee has evolved with a number of interested members. This commenced operating in June 2023 with Chloe Gillard appointed as Chair.

Chloe Gillard completed her Boardroom Apprentice programme and has been appointed to the Board.

Review of Competitive Hockey

As a response to feedback derived from the strategic planning process and ongoing engagement with the hockey family and our schools and clubs engaged in a significant Review of Competitive Hockey. This process has included extensive desk top research of historical results and trends around our league structures and a wide ranging consultation of members and stakeholders through a survey, individual meetings and focus groups.

This review has been completed and the recommendations and implementation plan will be presented to member at the AGM. There will also be a consultation around the league structures following the AGM.

It is hoped that this will address issues relating to league and competitive structures, management and communications around competitive hockey and alignment of club, school, and talent/performance hockey and at this stage of the review there are a number

of key themes and opinions forming which will inform the direction of travel for hockey in Ulster over the coming years.

Code of Good Governance

The Ulster Hockey Board alongside the Chief Executive conducted an audit of our governance structures against best practice as outlined in the NI Code of Good Governance (reviewed and relaunched in 2023). This review highlighted that Ulster Hockey has strong governance systems in several areas, however there are some key gaps in the system and an action plan has been developed with agreed timelines to address all areas of weakness identified. The Board has continued to monitor progress against all objectives which have been achieved.

Aligned to this, in March 2023, Ulster Hockey was assessed by Sport NI through a Financial Systems Control Assessment. This audit indicated that there are no gaps in Ulster Hockey's financial management systems and Ulster Hockey has been allocated a robust' rating. The Financial Policies and Procedures document was reviewed in 2023 as the sole recommendation of the audit.

Summary of Performance against Objective 6

KPI - Continuous monitoring of satisfaction through stakeholder feedback and membership consultation

OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS	Target	Actual	RAG
Operate to best practice standards in governance and management reflecting principles of openness and accountability, in line with the Code of Good Governance (DIY Committee Guide) to be adopted by the Board.	Self-appraisal against the five key principles of good governance.	Reviewed	Reviewed & compliant	
Continually review, adopt and implement best practice in safeguarding and anti-doping.	External review by external bodies to provide assurance statement.	Reviewed	Reviewed & compliant	
Identify existing management information datasets to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress against strategic objectives, and set meaningful targets for the improvement of data	Adhering to Companies House requirements and ensuring delivery of organisational purpose.	Reviewed	Reviewed & in place	

collection and management systems.				
Developing new and innovative programmes/services that harness latest technology and appeal to new stakeholders.	Evidence based performance management system of reporting.	Reviewed	Reviewed	
Identify and work with a range of stakeholders that will support the organisation to deliver its strategic objectives.	Number of new programmes and initiatives.	3	3	
Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to target high value partnership arrangements and mutually beneficial projects.	Number of new strategic partnerships established.	4	7	

Honours

Schools - Boys

John Minnis Burney Cup

Royal Belfast Academical Institution



McCullough Cup

Banbridge Academy



Burney Plate

Grosvenor Grammar



Prior Shield

Wallace High School



Dowdall Cup

Wallace High School



Taylor Cup

Markethill High School



Richardson Cup

Cookstown High School



Ferris Cup

Cookstown High School



Bannister Bowl

Cookstown High School



McCullough Cup Tier 2

Methodist College



Richardson Plate

Banbridge Academy



Ferris Plate

Regent House



Bannister Plate

Grosvenor Grammar



Schools - Girls

Belfast Telegraph Girls
Senior Cup

Royal School Armagh



Senior Girls Shield

Belfast Royal Academy



Senior Girls Plate

Friends School Lisburn



Wooden Floor Company
Girls Superleague Tier A

Royal School Armagh



Wooden Floor Company
Girls Superleague Tier B

Royal School Dungannon



U14 Girls Superleague Tier
A

Friends School Lisburn



U14 Girls Superleague Tier
B

Cookstown High School



McDowell Cup

Rainey Endowed



McDowell Shield

Methodist College



McDowell Plate

Wallace High School



Gibson Cup

Royal School Armagh



Gibson Plate

Friends School Lisburn



4th XI Cup

Royal School Armagh



Junior Cup

Banbridge Academy



Junior Shield

Clounagh Junior High School



Junior Plate

Rainey Endowed



Intermediate Senior Cup

Kilkeel High School



U16 High Schools Cup

Dromore High School



U14 High Schools Cup

Kilkeel High School



Clubs - Men



MEN'S LEAGUE WINNERS 2023-24

Premier League:	Cookstown 1 st XI
Intermediate League:	PSNI 1 st XI
Junior League 1:	Banbridge 2 nd XI
Junior League 2:	Lisnagarvey 4 th XI
Junior League 3:	Bangor 3 rd XI
Junior League 4:	Bangor 4 th XI
Junior League 5:	PSNI



MEN'S CUP WINNERS 2023-24

Kirk Cup:	Lisnagarvey 1st XI
Linden Cup:	Mossley 1 st XI
Corken Cup:	Lisnagarvey 1 st XI
McCabe Cup:	Lisnagarvey 2 nd XI
Junior League 1 Cup:	Lisnagarvey 2 nd XI
Junior League 2 Cup:	Lisnagarvey 4 th XI
Junior league 3 Cup:	Raphoe 2 nd XI
Junior League 4 Cup:	Saintfield 2 nd XI
Anderson Cup:	TO BE CONFIRMED
McClements Cup:	NI Civil Service 2 nd XI
Junior Shield:	Bangor 3 rd XI
Minor Cup:	PSNI 2 nd XI
Junior League 5 Cup:	Armagh 1 st XI

Clubs - Ladies



LADIES LEAGUE WINNERS 2023-24

Premier League (A): Queens University Belfast 1st XI

Senior 1: Mossley 1st XI

Senior 2: Larne 1st XI

Senior 3: Castle 1st XI

Junior 1: Pegasus 2nd XI

Junior 2: Ulster Elks 2nd XI

Junior 3: Portadown 2nd XI

Junior 4: Lisnagarvey 3rd XI

Junior 5: Armagh 2nd XI

Junior 6: Saintfield 2nd XI

Junior 7: Armagh 3rd XI

Junior 8: Mossley 3rd XI

Junior 9 (A): Instonians 3rd XI

Junior 9 (B): Portadown 4th XI

Junior 9 (C) Saintfield 3rd XI

LADIES CUP WINNERS 2023-24

Denman Ulster Shield: Pegasus 1st XI

Senior Cup: Dungannon 1st XI

McConnell Shield: Queens 2nd XI

Intermediate Cup: South Antrim 1st XI

Junior Cup: Lisnagarvey 3rd XI

Minor Cup: Portadown 3rd XI

Junior 9 Cup: Lisnagarvey 6th XI



LADIES PLATE WINNERS 2023-24

Qualifying Plate: Ulster Elks 2nd XI

Intermediate Plate: Bangor 1st XI

Junior Plate: Armagh 2nd XI

Minor Plate: Mossley 4th XI

BOYS COMPETITION WINNERS 2023-24



Pearson Cup: Cookstown Primary School

Pearson Plate: Methodist College Belfast

U11 Cup: Cookstown Hockey Club

U11 Plate: Instonians Hockey Club

U13 Cup: Lisnagarvey Hockey Club

U13 Plate: Bangor Hockey Club

U15 Performance: Lisnagarvey Hockey Club

U15 Intermediate: North Down Hockey Club

U15 Development: NICS Hockey Club

GIRLSS COMPETITION WINNERS 2023-24



McCloy Plate:	Kingspark Primary School
McCloy Plate:	Victoria Prep
U11 Cup:	Portadown Ladies Hockey Club
U11 Plate:	Pegasus Hockey Club
U13 Cup:	Coleraine Hockey Club
U13 Plate:	Banbridge Hockey Club
U15 Performance:	Portadown Ladies Hockey Club
U15 Intermediate:	Rainey Hockey Club
U15 Development:	Raphoe Hockey Club
U15 Development 2:	Pegasus Hockey Club

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