



2025/26

ANNUAL REPORT

Placing Bowls at the Heart of Every Community as an Accessible Sport for All



IAN MCDOUGAL
Chair, Bowls Development Alliance

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

THIS year marks both a continuation and a moment of change for the Bowls Development Alliance. As I took on the role of Chair, I did so at an important point in our journey. We are now in the fourth year of our We Are Bowls strategy. This is a strategy built on partnership, inclusion, and a shared ambition to place bowls at the heart of every community.

I would like to begin by recognising the contribution of my predecessor, whose leadership over the past eight years helped shape a stronger, more collaborative organisation. The progress we see today, and what we hope to come, in our partnerships, our governance, and our growing impact across communities is built on those foundations.

Over the past year, we have continued to evolve as an organisation. We have strengthened our governance through the introduction of new Board leadership and specialist sub-committees. This will ensure that areas such as data and insight, equality, diversity and inclusion, and strategic development receive the focus they deserve. This has brought greater clarity, accountability, and purpose to our work. What is particularly encouraging is the way collaboration across the bowls family continues to strengthen. Working alongside our National Governing Body partners we continue to improve the alignment of our efforts to deliver shared outcomes for the sport and the communities we serve.

However, significant opportunities and challenges remain ahead. Broadening participation among underrepresented groups, supporting clubs to become more resilient and sustainable, and strengthening the volunteer workforce that underpins our sport will continue to be central to our work. Equally important will be our ability to use high-quality data, insight, and evidence to demonstrate the wider social, health, and community value bowls delivers across the country. Ensuring that we make decisions based on quality data analysis will help us to deliver the aims and ambition for the whole sport.

We are entering an exciting period of development. As we begin to look beyond the current strategy cycle, there is huge potential for the BDA to play an even greater role in supporting the long-term sustainability of the sport. In a fragmented sporting landscape, collaboration, shared learning, and aligned development approaches will be increasingly important.

By continuing to work closely with our National Governing Body partners, clubs, volunteers, and wider stakeholders, we can help build a more connected and resilient bowls community for the future.

Our focus in the years ahead will be on strengthening the people, systems, and partnerships that enable bowls to thrive locally. In doing this I am confident we can support clubs to become stronger community assets. We want to empower volunteers by giving them the tools and confidence they need. We want to ensure the sport remains welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all.

Building upon strong foundations, I am confident we are positioning the whole sport for the future. Together, we can not only sustain bowls but modernise and strengthen it for the next generation. I know the efforts of the BDA team; the National Governing bodies and all the volunteers and participants will combine to make a positive contribution to communities across England for many years to come.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025/26 represents an important year for the Bowls Development Alliance as we enter the fourth year of the We Are Bowls strategy and continue to deliver against our Sport England investment. Over the past 12 months, our work has been shaped by three key themes: collaboration, insight, and supporting local delivery.

Continued collaboration across the sport

Partnership working across the bowls system has continued to evolve, with closer alignment between the BDA and our NGB partners. Through shared planning and joint initiatives, we are continuing to operate as a connected system where it matters most, enabling us to deliver more effectively and maximise the impact of investment. The focus on creating the Bowls Big Summer campaign, with all four NGBs aligned behind a single campaign for the first time, is a great example of this.

Insight driving our decision-making

This year has seen significant progress in how we use data and learning to inform our work. The continued growth of the Club Health Checker, alongside development of shared data systems has provided greater insight into the needs of clubs and communities. Club Health Checker completions in priority counties increased by 45% year-on-year, and a net 50.7% governance improvement was recorded across clubs completing second assessments. A stronger Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach is enabling us to understand what works, adapt our delivery, and share insight across the sport.

Delivering locally to meet community need

Our work improving links between local clubs and their communities has been central to delivery, with focused work in six priority counties demonstrating how bowls can contribute to wider health, wellbeing and community outcomes. Bowl for Health programmes produced measurable impact with 82% of regular participants continuing to bowl or join a club and with health and wellbeing scores improving by an average of 17.5%.

Looking ahead

As we move into the next phase of our strategy for the sport, our focus will be on deepening our impact through maximising our county-based delivery model. Strengthening long-term partnerships at local level will also be key, as will increasing our reach into underrepresented communities, and continuing to build a robust evidence base to demonstrate the value of bowls. We are pleased that the progress made this year will provide a stronger platform for the future.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

900+

New participants engaged in our dedicated community programmes

39

Community sessions delivered across 36 clubs

70%

Participants said they would play again after their first session

30%

Participants were women and girls

27%

Participants stated they had a disability or long-term health condition



82%

Bowl for Health participants went on to join a club

80%

Bowl for Health participants reported improved health and wellbeing



127

Clubs completed the Club Health Checker

50.7%

Of clubs improved their governance scores through the Club Health Checker

+45%

Club Health Checker completions year-on-year

97%

Of Club Health Checker clubs have a Safeguarding Officer

52

Safeguarding cases reviewed (CMG)

2,666

School students tried Bowls for the first time through the School Games



1,223

Volunteers signed up to the Weeks of Learning

96%

Of Volunteers would recommend the Weeks of Learning

86%

Partners feel well-connected to BDA

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

CLUB development sits at the heart of everything the BDA does. With more than 5,000 clubs across 48 counties, the BDA cannot be everywhere at once. Our approach is built on sustained local relationships rather than broad coverage because the evidence is clear that depth of presence produces measurably stronger outcomes. Counties where officers have been working for 12 months or more show stronger volunteer retention, better governance and greater community engagement.

In 2025/26, delivery was concentrated in six priority counties; Kent, Norfolk, Cornwall, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, North Yorkshire, and North Lancashire and Fylde selected in consultation with NGBs using deprivation.

01

Building relationships that drive change

The foundations were laid through roadshows delivered across all six priority counties in March 2025, attended by 126 club representatives. These events introduced clubs to the support available, raised local challenges and started the development relationships that ran throughout the year.

The impact shows clearly in the Club Health Checker, a self-assessment tool covering governance, participation, finance and sustainability. Completions increased from 21 to 70 across the priority counties, with particularly strong growth in Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Kent and North Lancashire and Fylde. Clubs are not just accessing support; they are actively taking steps to strengthen their organisations.

02

Growing participation

Across the year we supported 36 clubs who delivered 39 community sessions reaching more than 900 participants. A diverse group that included more than 360 young people under 18 and almost 200 people with a disability or long-term health condition. Clubs worked with schools, community groups and local partners to reach audiences that have traditionally been under-represented in the sport.

Club confidence was further reflected in Bowls Big Weekend, with participating clubs in the priority counties growing from 85 to 110, a 29% increase. North Lancashire and Fylde moved from zero to 17 participating clubs, while Cornwall and Kent also recorded strong growth. Clubs are increasingly willing to open their doors, promote what they offer and position themselves as welcoming community venues.

03

Looking ahead

Alongside delivery in the priority counties, the BDA prepared for future engagement through roadshows across six new counties; Northumberland, Merseyside, Warwickshire, Lincolnshire, Essex and Somerset. Across seven events, 189 club officials attended, with 100% rating the sessions as useful and saying they would recommend them to others.

The results from 2025/26 make a compelling case for what sustained local investment in club development can achieve. The County Development Programme is helping bowls clubs become stronger organisations and more valuable assets in their local communities.

I have found the sessions I attended this week to be very useful — noted a few things I will try to champion. Brilliant enthusiasm from everyone involved in driving change — most encouraging.

— Roadshow attendee, 2026

PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Continue building the case for expanded permanent CCDO capacity
- Develop schools and community outreach resources for clubs, addressing a priority topic from roadshow feedback
- Extend the county model into the six new counties; Northumberland, Merseyside, Warwickshire, Lincolnshire, Essex and Somerset
- Strengthen the link between Club Health Checker completion and access to BDA support, making the tool a pathway to development resources rather than a standalone exercise.

CASE STUDY

Bringing Bowls to Coventry – New Provision from Scratch

COVENTRY presented a clear opportunity: an area with no existing indoor bowls provision, a willing local authority partner in Coventry City Council and working alongside CV Life as a leisure provider, and some communities who had never encountered the sport. The BDA's approach was to build local delivery capability from the outset rather than create dependency on continued BDA involvement.

Bowls does not need to be sold to communities — it needs to be made accessible. Every time we removed a barrier, people came.

— Vicki Evans, CCDO Midlands

WHAT HAPPENED

Working with Coventry City Council and Cov Sport, the BDA helped establish a new weekly short mat session at the Xcel Centre - an area with no indoor bowls provision. The programme attracted more than 8 regular weekly participants, with 70% new to bowls. One participant quickly joined a local bowls club; two outdoor players now attend through winter.

Bowls was also showcased as a participation opportunity for local residents at Coventry Sport Fest 2025, giving people of all ages the chance to experience the sport in a fun and welcoming environment. Supported by local bowls clubs, the event provided opportunities for individuals and families to have a go at bowls, learn more about the sport, and connect with clubs within their local community.

The BDA supported Coventry City Council with the Bowls Small Grants Fund – helping to secure funding to 8 local outdoor bowls club by providing funding for essential equipment and initiatives - to improve facilities, purchase bowls and disability equipment to help support current members and bring in new participants from their local community.

An associated School Games Bowls weekly programme supported by local coaches and CV Life staff engaged 252 pupils across 21 primary schools, targeting those pupils who might be disengaged or don't play a traditional sport to attend. 40 PE leads and teachers trained prior to the programme - embedding delivery capacity directly in schools.

YOUTH SPORT TRUST AND SCHOOL GAMES

Bowls has not traditionally been a school sport. Introducing it into the School Games framework is genuinely new territory for the BDA. Young people who disengage from traditional competitive sport are finding something in bowls that works for them. With support from the NGBs, that insight has driven our commitment to this area, and the results of 2025/26 have strengthened it considerably.

The BDA's School Games offer has been developed in partnership with the Youth Sport Trust and all four NGBs, with the goal of building a sustainable pipeline from school engagement to community club membership.

West Denton IBC delivered sessions to 178 pupils across eight visits, with teachers noting bowls' effectiveness with pupils who are disengaged from mainstream PE. Feedback like this keeps coming back to the same theme: bowls offers something different. It is social, low-impact, technically interesting and genuinely accessible to young people who have switched off from sport.

A cross-code School Games Steering Group with NGB and Coach Bowls representation is now operational, providing the governance structure to develop and sustain the offer across all codes. In June 2025 the BDA attended the YST School Games National Summit, an important opportunity to strengthen relationships with the School Games network, share the bowls offer with School Games Organisers nationally and explore how bowls can be embedded into the framework going forward.

During 2025/26 the BDA also developed and published Activity Cards for both primary and

secondary settings, giving teachers and School Games Organisers ready-to-use resources for delivering bowls in school. Designed to work across all codes and adapted for different age groups and abilities, the cards lower the barrier for schools to introduce bowls, removing the need for specialist knowledge and making it straightforward for any PE lead to run a session confidently. A School Safety Checker was also created to support safe delivery, giving teachers and organisers clear guidance on risk management so the sport can be offered with confidence in any school environment.

We are under no illusion that we have only scratched the surface. The potential here is significant, not just for growing participation among young people, but for changing the perception of bowls as a sport that is genuinely for everyone.

We hope to build on what we have started and we are honest that doing so properly requires more capacity than we currently have. This is an area where additional investment would be directly and immediately impactful. The infrastructure is in place, the relationships are established and the evidence of engagement is strong. What we need now is the resource to go further.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Attend the YST School Games National Summit to strengthen relationships and explore further opportunities for bowls within the School Games framework
- Build closer engagement with the School Games Organiser network, increasing the number of SGOs actively delivering bowls in their areas



CLUB HEALTH CHECKER

THE Club Health Checker (CHC) gave us a clearer picture of how clubs are functioning across governance, safeguarding, facilities, and recruitment and where the biggest gaps remain.



127 clubs completed the CHC in 2025/26. That's down from 193 in 2024/25, but above the 123 recorded in 2023/24, and the quality of insight from this year's data is strong. 70 of those 127 completions came from our priority counties where we have dedicated Development Officers in place. That's a consistent pattern: counties with a Development Officer on the ground generate significantly higher engagement, strengthening the case for continued investment in a regional based model.

Safeguarding structures continue to improve. 98% of completing clubs now have a designated Safeguarding Officer in place, up from 93% in 2024/25. 76% hold an in-date Enhanced DBS, an improvement on previous years, though a 24% gap remains and is a named priority for 2026/27. More significantly, only 10% of Safeguarding Officers or club officials have completed mental health awareness training in the last three years. That's a gap we intend to address directly.

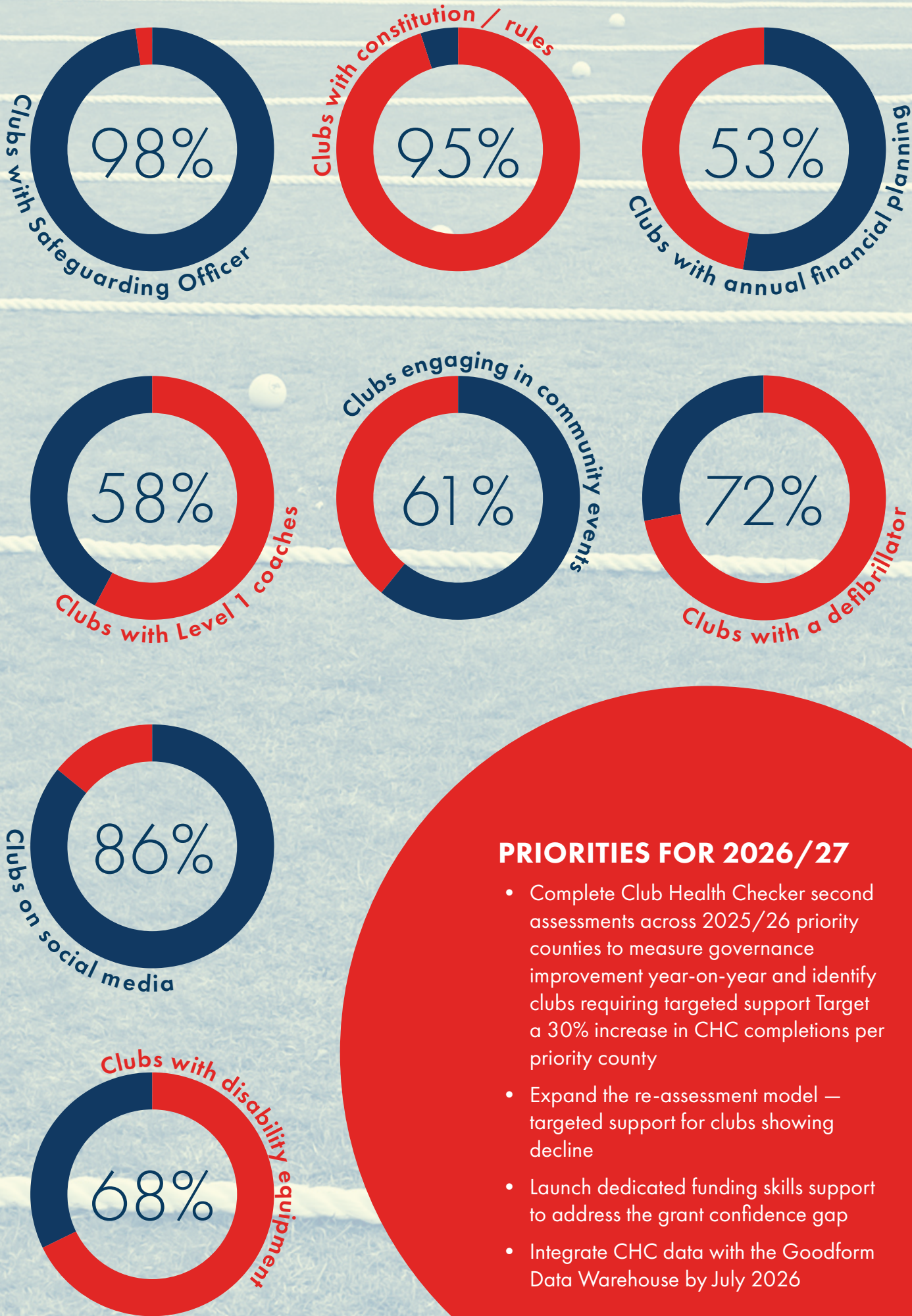


On facilities, 62% of clubs rated their overall provision as good or excellent, and 72% have a defibrillator on site. 68% hold at least some disability-adapted equipment, though provision is uneven.

Financially, just over half of clubs undertake annual financial planning and 39% have not applied for any external funding in the last five years. Funding confidence is the most consistent gap in the data and becomes a named education priority in 2026/27.



Clubs are largely digitally present. 76% have a website and 86% are active on social media but 39% never engage in local community events, pointing to an untapped recruitment opportunity.



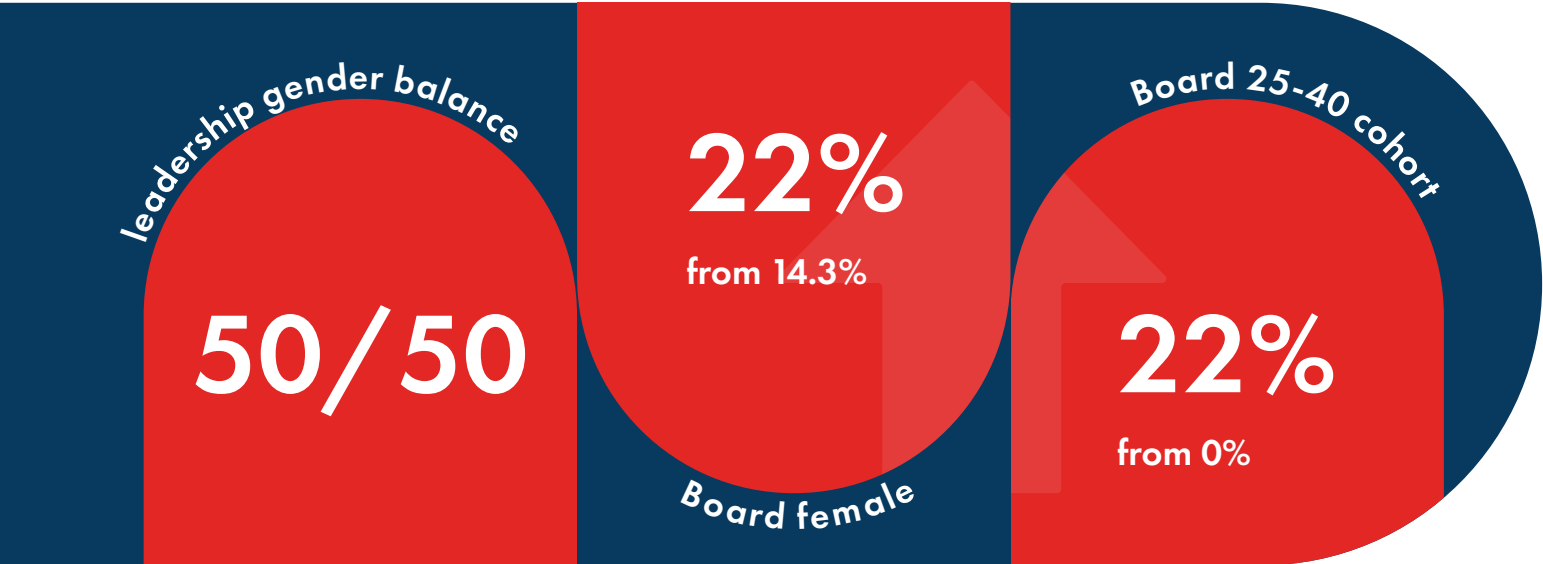
PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Complete Club Health Checker second assessments across 2025/26 priority counties to measure governance improvement year-on-year and identify clubs requiring targeted support Target a 30% increase in CHC completions per priority county
- Expand the re-assessment model — targeted support for clubs showing decline
- Launch dedicated funding skills support to address the grant confidence gap
- Integrate CHC data with the Goodform Data Warehouse by July 2026

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

THE BDA's approach to EDI has matured significantly in 2025/26. Rather than treating inclusion as a standalone project, it is now embedded in governance, delivery and our push for sport-wide diversity commitments across all four codes, supported by a dedicated EDI Working Group meeting quarterly and reporting directly to Board.

GOVERNANCE AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY



Ethnic diversity remains our most significant gap, with representation below minimum thresholds across staff, leadership and Board. Our most recent recruitment campaign showed encouraging pipeline progress: 23% of applicants were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, rising to 50% at both interview and final stage. The processes are fair but the challenge remains translating pipeline into appointment.

Structural improvements made this year include blind CV shortlisting, structured interviews, an updated diversity monitoring form, and a Board Skills Matrix with new INED Chair and Vice Chair roles added to metrics. ED&I is now a standing Board agenda item, with a dedicated working group meeting quarterly. Ethnic diversity in staff, leadership and Board remains below minimum thresholds. Being addressed through a formalised shortlisting commitment, targeted NED outreach, a Board observer programme, and tracked DIAP targets for 2026/27.

Areas requiring continued focus

Annual ED&I audit of staff, and leadership is still to be scoped. Governance training for Board members on ED&I responsibilities remains outstanding.

Inclusion in delivery

EDI-focused workshop content has been embedded in Roadshow sessions through the Connecting Your Communities strand, generating qualitative evidence to inform future planning.

The Bowls Without Bias initiative, now developed within the EDI Working Group will create a brand identity for a regular, informal drop-in series bringing clubs, community organisations and external specialists together online. The public-facing DIAP has been published on the BDA website, meeting Code for Sports Governance transparency requirements.



2026/27 DIAP COMMITMENTS

- Board composition target: 61% male (currently 78%)
- At least one ethnically diverse candidate shortlisted for every NED vacancy
- Baseline participation survey - 5,000+ responses disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity and disability, with results to Board October 2026
- 50%+ of DIAP milestones completed or on-track by March 2027
- EDI sub-group meeting quarterly with Board-level reporting

BOWL FOR HEALTH — COMMUNITY IMPACT

CASE STUDY

Bowl for Health Norfolk —
Evidenced Community Change

FOUR venues in Breckland — all in areas more deprived than at least 50% of English neighbourhoods — delivered 32 sessions. 58 participants engaged, with 48 becoming regular weekly attendees. Eighteen coaches and volunteers supported delivery.

82% Regular participants continued bowling

+17.5%
Avg. wellbeing improvement

100%
Participants classified as “Active” at the end of 8 weeks

Wellbeing was measured across life satisfaction, things in life worthwhile, happiness, confidence, goal achievement and perseverance — before and after the programme. All six improved. Happiness showed the strongest gain at +12.3%. Being aged 75+ was not a barrier to high activity or wellbeing.

I have suffered from depression and anxiety and might be at home alone; this helps me get out and talk to people.

— Bowl for Health participant, Norfolk

I need to get out because I lost my husband, and it helps me get out and have fun again.

— Bowl for Health participant, Norfolk

The whole programme was brilliant — honestly one of the best things I’ve been part of since joining Breckland.

— Lorraine, Breckland Council

Lorraine, the Breckland Council officer who coordinated the programme, described one participant’s journey: Jeff lives alone and found social interaction difficult, but attended every session. Over eight weeks he grew in confidence, improved his game, and found in his fellow participants ‘a little supportive family, always encouraging him and making him feel part of something.’

When one participant passed away unexpectedly, the club welcomed her husband to meet the friends she had made. The Brecks club created a yearly memorial trophy in her name.

Active Norfolk and Breckland Council have committed funding for further expansion in 2026. Breckland Council secured £2,800 of local funding to expand the programme across four clubs.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

BROADER COMMUNITY ACTIVITY 2025/26

Across 39 programmes reaching 900 participants, the BDA's community delivery covered an exceptionally broad range of community contexts:

- Parks IBC (North Yorkshire): Six Bowl for Health sessions with 10 weekly participants through Age Concern — progressing from 20-minute to full hour sessions
- New Earswick IBC (Yorkshire): Visually impaired group sessions with 8 regular weekly participants
- Shrewsbury IBC: Weekly sessions for two Parkinson's groups and one Alzheimer's support group
- Southampton Atherley IBC: Club Hub involving Diabetes UK, Unpaid Carers, Communicare and Southampton Sight — 75 new participants
- Cornwall: Veterans' taster sessions at Truro Bowls Club with the Armed Forces Breakfast Club
- Lancashire: 75 indoor sessions with Warren Manor Hub; 24 further sessions with Together We Can Do charity



PARTICIPANT DATA

85% of respondents would play again or return. Programmes reached participants with mental health conditions, dementia, neurodiverse conditions, mobility limitations, cancer diagnoses and armed forces backgrounds



WARM WELCOME SPACES —YEAR 2 UPDATE

Sixteen bowls clubs are now registered as Warm Welcome Spaces, operating as year-round community hubs that extend well beyond sport. This includes a number of clubs in Wales who have registered through our channels, reflecting the wider reach of the programme.

Warm Welcome Spaces have agreed to actively support registration growth among our members by including relevant communications in their newsletters, which reach 10,000 people.

These will ask readers whether they know of bowls clubs in their area and encourage them to register with Warm Welcome Spaces, a significant opportunity to expand the network further.

WARM WELCOME SPACES PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Expand registration to 25 clubs, building on the momentum of the WWS newsletter campaign
- Develop a shared evaluation framework across all registered clubs
- Promote through Autumn / Winter 2026 Weeks of Learning
- Follow up with clubs identified through the WWS newsletter outreach to support their registration journey.

EDUCATING OUR CLUBS AND VOLUNTEERS

HELPING clubs and volunteers learn, share and improve is one of the most practical things the BDA does.

Our education offer spans national online programmes, in-person roadshows, and a growing peer-to-peer learning model, all shaped by what clubs tell us they need.

WEEKS OF LEARNING

Now in its third year, the Weeks of Learning programme delivered four rounds between August 2025 and March 2026, generating 1,223 registrations across the year. The January 2026 round was the strongest single round to date with 312 registrations, a figure that reflects both growing awareness of the programme and its increasing relevance to clubs' day-to-day challenges.

Topics were shaped directly by Club Health Checker data and club feedback, covering safeguarding, disability inclusion, dementia awareness, short-form competition formats, community engagement and governance. Sessions are rated consistently above 4.5 out of 5 for learning outcomes.

The most significant shift this year has been the move toward facilitated peer-to-peer conversation alongside presentation-led content. Sessions where clubs share real experiences with each other consistently generate stronger engagement and better feedback than those where information flows one way. This is a meaningful change in how we think about education and is not only about telling clubs what to do but more about creating the conditions for clubs to learn from each other.

ROADSHOWS

The in-person roadshow programme extended into six new counties in early 2026 reaching 189 club officials across seven events, an average of 32 officials per event from across all four codes. Every single attendee rated events as useful and said they would recommend them to others.

The roadshows do two things at once. They introduce clubs to the support available and the tools the BDA provides, and they generate the feedback that shapes what comes next. The three most requested topics from 2026 roadshow attendees were green maintenance support, funding confidence and engaging schools and community groups. These are now directly embedded in the 2026/27 education offer.

LOOKING AHEAD — THE DROP-IN MODEL

The peer learning insight has prompted a concrete proposal for 2026/27: monthly drop-in club sessions. Informal, open online sessions where clubs connect with BDA staff, each other and external specialists. There will be no agenda, no obligation, just accessible ongoing support.

The model has been endorsed by the EDI Working Group and is being developed for launch later in the year. The goal is to move from an education offer that runs in defined rounds to one that clubs can access continuously, building the kind of ongoing learning culture that individual Weeks of Learning rounds cannot sustain on their own.

1,223
REGISTRATIONS
Aug 25–Mar 26

312
REGISTRATIONS
in Jan 2026

4
ROUNDS of
Weeks of Learning

PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Launch the monthly drop-in club workshop model
- Deliver four Weeks of Learning rounds aligned to indoor and outdoor seasons
- Target 20% of clubs in each priority county
- Achieve 70%+ of learners reporting improved confidence

GOVERNANCE AND SAFEGUARDING

GOVERNANCE

The BDA Governance review, commissioned and completed in Q4 produced 15 actions, with three already complete. The remaining 12 actions have target completion dates of July–October 2026, covering the Articles of Association, Board Skills Matrix, director induction process and risk policy.

The Board KPI tracker returned 80% green across eight strategic areas at year-end. The Code of Conduct has been comprehensively redrafted, introducing a new conflict of interest framework clarifying that nominated directors must act in the BDA’s interests in all Board decisions.

Three risks formally named at Board level: Sport England funding dependency, geopolitical instability, and Board diversity, the last named explicitly as a risk rather than simply an aspiration.

GOVERNANCE PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Complete Governance action plan by October 2026
- Finalise NEW Sustainability Action Plan — Board approval July 2026
- NED recruitment with formalised diverse shortlisting commitment
- Revised People Plan 2026-2028 to Board for approval July 2026

BOARD ATTENDANCE

Board Member	Role	Possible	Actual	Note
Malcolm Douglas	Chair / INED	1	1	Outgoing Chair
Ian McDougal	Chair / INED	3	3	New Chair from 2025/26
Amanda Solloway	Vice-Chair / INED	3	3	New Vice Chair from 2025/26
Paul Humphreys	Senior INED	4	3	
Ben Abberstein	INED	4	4	
Paul Ashmore	BCGBA	2	1	Outgoing CEO
Dan Newton	BCGBA	2	2	New CEO from September 2025
Barry Hedges	ESMBA	4	4	
Peter Thompson	EIBA	4	4	
Jon Cockcroft	BE	4	2	
Alistair Hollis	BE	0	2	Replacement for Jon Cockcroft
Lisa Graham	MD / ex-officio	4	4	

SUSTAINABILITY

The Sustainability Action Plan (2026–2029) progressed substantially with the aim to have a plan signed off by July 2026. Most staff completed carbon literacy training through BASIS. The plan is on track for July 2026 Board approval. For clubs, practical guidance focuses on water management through butts and storage, wildflower planting and biodiversity on greens, and reduced chemical use.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding continued to be a core priority throughout 2025/26, with close collaboration between the BDA and the Lead Safeguarding Officers from each National Governing Body strengthening a positive safeguarding culture across the sport. Our commitment to ensuring bowls is a safe, inclusive and welcoming space for all participants remained unwavering.

The BDA appointed a new Safeguarding Manager in 2025, bringing extensive safeguarding experience developed through a career in policing and previous experience as a Safeguarding Officer within another sporting NGB. He has built on the strong foundations laid by his predecessor and has actively strengthened safeguarding practices and continued to support Lead Safeguarding Officers across all four codes.

SAFEGUARDING PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Enhance safeguarding reporting, case management and data insight
- Support clubs in creating safer, more inclusive environments
- Maintain focused compliance with CPSU and ACT standards
- Deepen partnership working with Sport Welfare Officers and NGB Lead Safeguarding Officers
- Improve opportunities for children to share their views and develop clearer mechanisms for ensuring the child’s voice influences safeguarding responses across all levels of the sport



Our relationship with Sport Welfare Officers, introduced by Sport England to strengthen welfare and safeguarding support across sport, continued to develop meaningfully. Our Safeguarding Manager attended regular online meetings with Sport Welfare Officers, who in turn actively contributed to BDA roadshows. Their input was consistently well-received, with clubs valuing both the information shared and the practical support offered. One notable example was a Sport Welfare Officer delivering a dementia awareness workshop at a club in Taunton Deane.

The BDA submitted its framework review to the CPSU in 2025. Feedback was positive overall, with a recommendation to further develop one particular safeguarding area in collaboration with our link consultant. In May, the BDA submitted its evidence to the Ann Craft Trust for the Safeguarding Adults in Sport Framework assessment.

The Case Management Group continued to meet monthly throughout the year to monitor, record and respond to safeguarding concerns from across the sport. 52 safeguarding concerns were reported and addressed over the past 12 months, an increase on previous years that reflects improved reporting processes and growing awareness of safeguarding responsibilities at club level, both positive indicators of a maturing safeguarding culture.

Engagement with Weeks of Learning safeguarding sessions remained strong, with consistently high attendance providing clubs with practical learning how to understand, implement and embed safeguarding regardless of the code of played.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

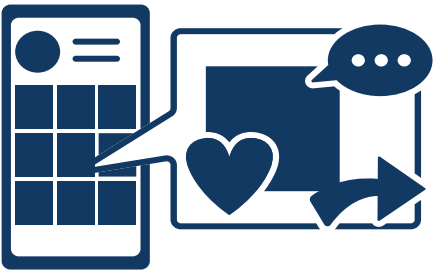
THE BDA’s communications continued to grow in reach and quality in 2025/26. A consistent focus on storytelling, anchoring communications in participant voices, club case studies and specific evidence, produced stronger engagement across all channels.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS 2025/26



Case study library expanded — the go-to resource for clubs, partners and funders seeking evidence of bowls’ community impact.

The quarterly BDA newsletter grew its readership by **40%** between 2024 and winter 2025, with open rates **rising from 48% to 55%**. Regular bi-monthly articles in Bowls International maintained a consistent presence across the wider bowls sector.



Social media engagement grew strongly across key platforms in 2025/26. Facebook followers grew by **42%** year-on-year. Video content performed particularly well following the Bowls Big Summer launch.

New website pages for roadshows, School Games offer, Bowls Big Summer and community programmes drove increased traffic.

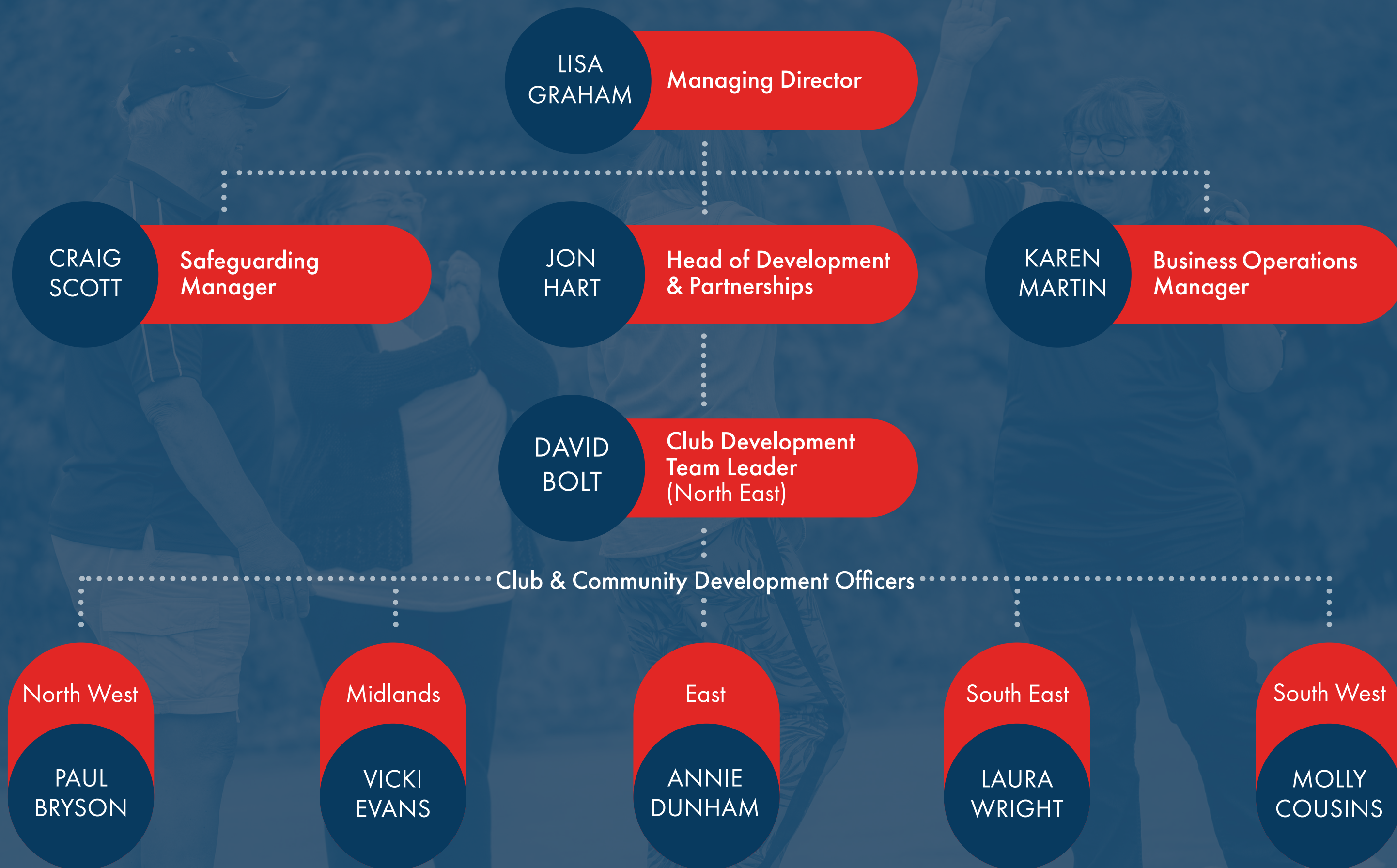


PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

- Expand case study library capturing participant voices alongside data
- Develop Inclusive Marcomms Strategy, including practical guidance for clubs
- Amplify Bowls Big Summer and Commonwealth Games messaging through summer 2026
- Launch Bowls Without Bias brand identity for inclusion work
- Grow newsletter subscriber base with club-focused content strand



STAFF STRUCTURE





REGISTERED OFFICE

Pera Business Park, Nottingham Road
Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 OPB

01664 777001

office@bowlsdevelopmentalliance.org

bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com