

**brio**

strategy 2026 – 2030

**great  
futures,  
together.**



Our achievements have been recognised at the highest level, with Brio being named Outstanding Organisation of the Year at the national ukactive awards in 2025

– a testament to our dedication and resilience, as we surpassed both local and national leisure operators to claim this prestigious honour. This accolade is a reflection of the hard work and vision shared by our team, our partners, and the communities we serve.



AWARDS  
WINNER 2025

outstanding  
organisation  
of the year

education  
programme  
of the year

## foreword.



### Councillor Louise Gittins

Leader of the Council

As a wholly owned council company, Brio is an integral part of the Council family. Brio's contribution to enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents is not only valued, but vital. Through its wide range of services and community engagement, Brio plays a leading role in supporting population health and fostering active, thriving communities across our borough.

Importantly, Brio is well placed to help deliver Cheshire West and Chester Council's missions, including tackling health inequalities, promoting social inclusion, and empowering residents to lead healthier, happier lives. By working collaboratively, Brio can support the Council's aims to reduce disparities, strengthen community resilience, and ensure that every resident has the opportunity to benefit from improved wellbeing.

We also recognise Brio's potential to go further, especially for residents who face the greatest barriers to being active. While the Council is operating in a challenging financial environment, we remain committed to supporting Brio to sustain high-quality services and deliver measurable impact for Cheshire West and Chester.

Together, we will work to navigate these constraints with resilience and innovation, ensuring Brio continues to make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of our residents. On behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council, I extend our ongoing support and encouragement as Brio embarks on this new strategic chapter, confident that Brio will continue to be a key partner in achieving our Council's missions and ambitions for the borough.

welcome.



## Mark Bayley-Smyth

Chair of the Board of Directors

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this new strategy for Brio. Over the past three years, Brio has undergone remarkable development and growth, driven by our unwavering commitment to serve the communities of Cheshire West and Chester. We have delivered a comprehensive digital transformation programme, introducing a new website and mobile app that have significantly enhanced the customer journey making it easier than ever for customers to discover, book and enjoy our services.

Alongside these digital advances, we refreshed our brand to better embody the spirit of Brio and the loyalty of our valued customers. This refreshed identity reflects the vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking organisation we have become. Working in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council, we have also invested in our facilities, including the major refurbishment of Brio Northgate, ensuring our spaces continue to inspire wellbeing and activity across the borough.

Yet, our journey is far from complete. With the launch of our new strategy, Brio is poised for further growth and innovation, continuing to deliver outstanding services and experiences for all. Just as importantly, we will maintain a clear and consistent focus on delivering tangible social impact across the borough – helping more people to move more, improving wellbeing, and reducing avoidable inequalities through inclusive, accessible opportunities.

We will do this by playing an active, collaborative role in the wider local health and wellbeing eco-system – working alongside Cheshire West and Chester Council, health partners, and voluntary and community sector organisations to connect residents with the right support at the right time. By strengthening pathways between our facilities, community outreach and preventative wellbeing programmes, we will help create more joined-up, place-based services that deliver real outcomes for people and communities.

# our role.

Brio, a Community Interest Company founded in 2011, operates as an agent for the Council. As a company limited by guarantee, Brio reinvests profits and assets into public benefit. We provide accessible, affordable leisure and wellbeing services tailored to local communities, engaging tens of thousands of people every year.

## our model

### hub & spoke

Our facilities operate as community hubs. Spoke activities target less active areas, encouraging new users to access our services and those of partner agencies.

## our services

### leisure & entertainment

Swimming pools, theatres, fitness and community spaces – accessible, affordable, and tailored to local needs across Cheshire West and Chester.

## our health work

### wellbeing programmes

Weight management, falls prevention, smoking cessation and social prescribing – delivering preventative-based programmes where need is greatest.

Ellesmere Port

Frodsham

Northwich

Civic Hall

Neston

Winsford

Northgate

Chittleton

**our 8 hubs**  
cheshire west & chester

# our vital statistics.



We estimate that **one-in-four of the Cheshire West and Chester population, almost 90,000 residents**, visit Brio at least once a year for our entertainment programme.



A further **80,000 people from outside the borough** visit our entertainment events each year.



Some, but not all, also use Brio for activities: around **57,000 individuals use Brio for some form of physical activity** every year. **Over 42,000 are residents** of Cheshire West and Chester, meaning **one-in-nine people living in the borough** use Brio at least once a year for exercise.

We can't always capture individual visitors that we support to move more. We have approximately **200 clubs and partnership activities** using our wide-ranging facilities, engaging with more than **4,000 individuals** at Brio sites, every year.



Every year, there are nearly

# 2 million

physical activity visits to Brio sites, that is

## 1 visit every minute

during our opening hours!



**85% members**

15% pay as you go

85% of these visits are enjoyed by our members and 15% are by people who prefer to 'pay as they go'. These include **172,000 swim lessons** for children and adults including provision for **79 schools**.



Whilst the majority of the visits we support are by our **20,000+ dedicated members**, we also support nearly **300 children in care and care leavers, 150 members of the armed forces** and other specific groups with a free or subsidised membership.

Some residents cannot use our sites and our outreach activities have supported over

**540**

people to be active in the community.

More than

**2,250**

people use our wellbeing programmes, for smoking cessation, falls prevention and weight management. Some of these are now regular visitors to Brio.

We employ over

**680 staff**

and support them with training, enhancing employment policies, rewards and recognition.



With more than **80% of staff** living in the borough, we generate over

**£6 million**

in social value through this employment.

All in all, each year, the services provided by Brio contribute in excess of

**£25 million**

in social impact back to the population of Cheshire West and Chester.

# our strategic context.

Brio's strategy is shaped by the priorities of Cheshire West and Chester and by the wider regional and national context for health, wellbeing and public services. The factors below summarise the key drivers influencing our direction and the choices we make about where to focus our effort and resources.

**01. borough and place plan:** We will play a key role in delivering priorities within Cheshire West and Chester's Borough Plan 2024–28 and Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–31, supporting stronger communities, reduced inequality, increasing years of healthy life and promoting improved mental and physical health and wellbeing.

**02. prevention and early intervention:** We will maximise our services to support prevention and early intervention - helping people stay well and reducing demand on acute services - in line with the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England and Cheshire West's Integrated Neighbourhoods Plan.

**03. proportionate universalism:** We will be guided by the All Together Fairer framework and Marmot Principles to target our effort and resources for maximum social and health impact, using local data and insight to focus support where it is needed most.

**04. financial sustainability:** We must demonstrate value for money and deliver services sustainably in a challenging economic climate, balancing commercial performance with our social purpose.

**05. collaboration & systems leadership:** We will adopt a place-based approach and work collectively with partners across the local health and wellbeing eco-system to tackle physical inactivity and support joined-up pathways into community activity and wellbeing services.

**06. workforce:** We will invest in our people to maintain a skilled, motivated and professional workforce, ensuring we have the capability and culture to meet the needs of our communities and deliver exceptional customer experiences.

**07. political and policy landscape:** The evolving approach to devolution, and the cyclical nature of local and national politics, present both opportunities and challenges. We must stay aligned to the ambitions for public service reform and local empowerment, while ensuring our services remain relevant, responsive and deliverable.

## our strategy.



### Matthew Parker

Managing Director

Our new strategy, great futures, together, is our commitment to the people and places of Cheshire West and Chester - setting a clear direction for how Brio will make a bigger difference through the period to 2030. It brings to life our vision: to inspire and empower people to move more and enjoy experiences that support communities to thrive.

Shaped through nine months of open and inclusive consultation with stakeholders, communities and colleagues, the message was consistent: build on what works, and go further for those who face the greatest barriers. Guided by the Marmot Principles and Proportionate Universalism, we will focus effort where it delivers the greatest benefit - supporting prevention and early intervention and helping to reduce avoidable inequalities.

Our values shape how we deliver: we will invest in our people, act with integrity, innovate, and lead with inclusion -without compromising on quality or safety. In a challenging economic climate, we will balance commercial sustainability with the social impact our communities need, aligned to the Council's missions and local priorities for health and wellbeing. Brio will play a systems leadership role, working with partners to connect more residents into activity and wellbeing support and tackle physical inactivity through practical, place-based action.

We will deliver great futures, together through five pledges - Inspiring People, Inspiring Places, Inspiring Partnerships, Inspiring Promotion, and Inspiring Performance - each supported by clear commitments, providing a practical and energising roadmap for Brio to thrive as a social enterprise. This is our call to action: wherever you contribute, champion the pledges, strengthen pathways into activity, and help us deliver lasting improvements in health, wellbeing and opportunity across Cheshire West and Chester.



**our mission**

**we enable  
happier,  
healthier  
lives through  
movement and  
experiences.**



**our vision**

**to inspire and  
empower  
people to move  
more and enjoy  
experiences  
that support  
communities to  
thrive.**

## our values.

Our values are our core beliefs and principles that shape our culture, decisions, and actions. Aligned with our mission, they guide both daily operations and our long-term strategy.



### **inclusive**

We provide vibrant, safe, sustainable spaces where communities feel welcomed and included.



### **integrity**

Working honestly, transparently and professionally to do the right thing.



### **investing in people**

Supporting and enabling our people to reach their full potential.



### **innovative**

We encourage ideas and creativity to achieve sustained commercial and social impact.



### **supportive**

We are caring and passionate about making a positive difference for our communities.



## our drivers.

Extensive consultation identified four key elements that have influenced our mission, vision and the specific commitments we have made through our pledges.

### strengthen identity

Strengthen our identity as a community interest company, delivering health and wellbeing services as a system partner.



### deepen collaboration

Deepen our collaboration through partnerships to expand our reach, improve population health, reduce inequalities and integrate services.



### sustainability & impact

Achieve our financial and environmental sustainability goals, evidencing measurable improvements in our social value.



### innovation & technology

Innovate in our service delivery by using technology, data and insight to enhance the customer experience.



## our pledges & objectives.

Our pledges clearly set out our priority areas of focus to enable the successful delivery of great futures, together. For each of the interlocking pledges, we have developed strategic objectives to define how we will achieve our vision. Each year, we will develop a detailed business plan, with specific actionable steps, measures and targets to ensure we effectively execute our strategy.

### **inspiring people.**

We will champion equality and inclusivity by celebrating diversity, enhancing talent and creating opportunities and places where people feel valued.

- ✓ Attract and retain a local, highly skilled workforce whose professional competencies and behaviours align with our organisational values.
- ✓ Create career progression opportunities to support employee growth, leadership capability, and resilience.
- ✓ Enhance workforce capability by implementing targeted upskilling programmes to address current and emerging skill shortages.
- ✓ Foster a highly engaged workforce by introducing meaningful rewards and recognition.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy, supportive and inclusive workplace that prioritises employee wellbeing.

### **inspiring places.**

We will evolve our facilities into vibrant, safe, sustainable community spaces that bring people and services together to increase participation and improve population health.

- ✓ Create welcoming, inclusive, high-quality community spaces that inspire people to visit, connect and take part in our activities.
- ✓ Embed environmental sustainability as a core organisational principle, guiding decisions that protect natural resources and support long-term ecological resilience.
- ✓ Ensure facilities and services are accessible, safe and welcoming for all people.
- ✓ Maintain a rigorous approach to health and safety, building maintenance and compliance across all operations, with an emphasis on continuous improvement.



## inspiring partnerships.

We will work collaboratively with stakeholders to co-design, integrate, improve and target services, remove barriers and inspire participation to deepen impact and transform lives.

- ✓ Co-design and deliver integrated services that directly respond to identified social and health priorities.
- ✓ Collaboratively design and deliver joined-up services that respond to and advance our key commercial priorities.
- ✓ Secure funding to grow our impact, extend our reach and strengthen our long-term sustainability.
- ✓ Strengthen our existing partnerships and actively develop new relationships that advance shared priorities and deliver meaningful outcomes for our communities.



## inspiring promotion.

We will increase awareness by developing and communicating impactful content, using human stories that will connect with people, our communities and stakeholders, across diverse channels, ensuring that Brio is genuinely understood, valued and embraced.

- ✓ Adopt a digital-first approach, making digital channels the primary gateway to our brand with clear, intuitive pathways for our community.
- ✓ Develop a brand that inspires loyalty and trust with a consistent identity and tone of voice across all touchpoints.
- ✓ Expand awareness in new markets through relatable, locally relevant content, developing community partnerships to connect with new audiences.
- ✓ Showcase our members, community, and staff – particularly voices of under-represented groups – ensuring all audiences can see themselves reflected in Brio.

## **inspiring performance.**

We will strengthen and adapt our offer to be inclusive, relevant, and to provide exceptional value, ensuring sustainable growth, wider reach and a measurable difference to the lives of people and communities.

- ✓ Develop our systems to support risk mitigation, reputational management, operational efficiency, data integrity and security.
- ✓ Devise pricing strategies that offer value for money for all, whilst maintaining a competitive edge for our facilities and services.
- ✓ Enable greater financial sustainability through growth and operational efficiencies, and strong collaboration with our shareholder and their strategic aims.
- ✓ Generate, evidence and communicate our social value with partners through clear, credible reporting that demonstrates meaningful community impact.



## our enablers.

We have identified four enablers – the foundational capabilities, resources and processes that will support us in achieving our mission and long-term goals.

### finance.

We will act with responsible stewardship, ensuring resources fuel meaningful impact and achieve business sustainability.

### workforce.

We will recruit, develop and retain talent and capability to achieve more and do better.

### digital.

We will harness new technologies to innovate and optimise business performance, customer experience and impact.

### governance.

We will implement strong leadership and accountability, guiding ethical, effective decision-making to optimise success and manage risk.



# evaluating progress.




## our approach to evaluating progress with partners.

Through our detailed annual business action plan we will ensure we can measure and track our impact against outcomes and outputs to determine our levels of success. This will be done in a number of ways, including the following:

### basic evaluation.

Record participation levels, establish value for money and benchmark performance.

#### Tracking

participation	
value for money	
benchmarking	

### focused evaluation.

We will develop case studies to establish what works, identify good practice and foster learning and improvement.

 case studies

 learning cycles

### experiment & innovation.

Test new ideas and challenge conventional wisdom with carefully designed interventions.



challenge convention –  
design bold interventions



# strategic risk management.

As with all organisations, we face a diverse set of risks that may affect our ability to achieve strategic objectives. These risks are systematically tracked and documented in the Strategic Risk Register, which is reviewed and reported quarterly to both the Board and the Shareholder.

We employ mitigation strategies including diversification of income sources, comprehensive talent development programmes, phased innovation initiatives, and enhanced board oversight. The principal strategic risks currently facing Brio are outlined below.

## **competition risk**

The growing competition in the leisure industry creates challenges in attracting and keeping customers, setting fair pricing policies, and increasing income in line with inflation.

## **contractual risk**

Financial constraints and the imperative to enhance efficiency may lead to reduced resources or insufficient investment in key business areas, posing a risk to Brio's ability to meet contract specifications. As the current contract expires in 2030, the limited remaining duration will present challenges throughout the strategy period.

## **financial risk**

Rising pay, inflation, and high energy costs pose significant challenges. Although Northgate's re-opening will generate additional income, it is needed to offset Council funding cuts, requiring a stronger emphasis on commercial activity and efficiency.

## **political landscape**

As a Council-owned company providing non-statutory services, our operations are shaped by political changes at both local and national levels. Upcoming elections and the new Combined Mayoral Authority for Cheshire and Warrington may create risks, challenges, and opportunities during the strategy period.

## **whole lifecycle sustainability of assets risk**

Brio manages a mixed portfolio of assets, each over 10 years old. Planned condition surveys will guide asset management planning with the Council and inform capital budgeting decisions.

# brio

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”



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WINNER 2025

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