



# Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

Cloughjordan Circus Club

**CIRCUS**  
  
**CLUB**  
CLOUGHJORDAN

"Cloughjordan Circus Club provides a high quality and unique arts offer for young people in this rural part of Tipperary. Members have the opportunity to work with national and international professionals and learn from the best in the business. Tipperary County Council has been delighted to support Cloughjordan Circus Club. I congratulate the vision and commitment of its founders and wish current and future members and leaders continued success with this initiative."

**Melanie Scott, Arts Officer,  
Tipperary County Council.**



## Welcome

As Cloughjordan Circus Club celebrates its ten-year anniversary staff, members and board have been reflecting on our achievements and imagining our next stage. It has been an affirming process to hear from participants and stakeholders about the impact our work has had for them personally and for the wider community. And it has been an exciting process, working collaboratively to share our ambitions and aspirations and shape our future.

From small beginnings we've had a steady journey and have evolved in response to the interests and needs of the young people we work with. Year on year we've increased activity and reach, growing our artistic ambitions and creative outlets, connecting with the wider youth circus community throughout Ireland enabling local young people to work with artists of the highest calibre and participate in unique events. We have always strived for excellence: in facilitation, skills and performance. We're very proud of our inclusive creative process that places the young person's voice at its heart and is rooted in reflective, responsive practice. We're equally proud of our talented young members and the high quality of our performances.

Our regular membership now stands at fifty. We have a very busy programme, a confident position in the youth circus sector nationally and a strong reputation locally for our excellent youth projects. As we have grown, though, so too have the pressures of sustaining the organisation. We are keenly aware of the need to find a way to increase our organisational, project management and governance capacity to support our current programme and keep evolving. So as we approached our 10th anniversary it felt like a good time to take stock, reflect and plan to ensure that we flourish in the future.

This Strategic Plan comes out of a collaborative process and will guide our work for the next five years. We are grateful to North Tipperary Development Company for their support under the Rural Youth Development Programme which allowed us to undertake a strategic review of Cloughjordan

Circus Club, capturing our achievements to date and exploring how we might secure a more sustainable operational model for the future. The results of this process are this Strategic Plan as well as a detailed Business Plan and Financial Strategy. As we neared the end of our planning process we found ourselves in the midst of the global pandemic which prompted us to address some new and completely unexpected challenges.

I would like to thank the external consultants who have guided us on this journey: Anna McCarthy who assisted us to reflect on our successes, define our vision and ambitions and determine aspirations for the future and Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan for her thorough research and strategic thinking around our financial sustainability.

A huge thanks to our dedicated board, our amazing team of artist facilitators, our tireless volunteers and our wonderful members, who have all given generously of their time and ideas to help shape these plans.

Thanks also to all those who have supported, funded, helped and joined in with us over the past ten years: you've helped to make us what we are, and we couldn't have done it without you!

And a final thanks to Joanna Williams, our founding Artistic Director, whose skill, commitment, tenacity and passion have enabled truly wonderful experiences for so many young people.

**Sarah Thornton, Chair**

**Artistic Director:** Joanna Williams

**Associate Artists:** Maria Corcoran & Julie Lockett

**Circus Trainee:** Gary O'Rourke

**Volunteer:** Ben Hutchinson

**Board Members:** Linda Austin, Jenny Fox, Margo O'Donnell-Roche, Suzanne O'Brien, Martin Maguire, Sarah Thornton (Chair)





# Our Achievements

## OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS WE HAVE

- Engaged 130 young people in year-round creative activity, many staying from early childhood to late teens
- Created 15 new shows which we've performed to thousands of audience members
- Developed a unique, award winning aesthetic dedicated to exploring the art of circus
- Collaborated with over 20 professional artists from a diverse range of performance disciplines
- Performed in 21 local and regional parades and community events.
- Engaged over 900 children and young people in outreach circus activity
- Delivered five holiday camps
- Performed at two international festivals
- Initiated and hosted the first all-Ireland Youth Circus Festival, now an annual event in its third year
- Brought leading circus experts from all over the world to teach our members
- Generated €85,000 of investment into the local area through funding packages and grant income
- Been awarded Limerick Arts Office's Best Creative Performance in their 2018 Circus themed St Patrick's Day Parade and nominated for a Pride of Place Award in 2020

"For me Circus captures the energy, vibrancy and fun that life should embody. I believe that the arts and creative expression can transform lives and communities and I'm driven by a strong sense of social justice. I feel privileged to witness the incredible journeys young people take, and I love learning and playing together. Creating performances with an ensemble of young people is a genuine collaboration - I plant the seed of an idea and watch it grow into something much richer than I could have ever imagined."

**Joanna Williams, Cloughjordan Circus Club Artistic Director**



## Our History

Cloughjordan Circus Club was founded in 2010 by Artistic Director Joanna Williams to offer an alternative social and creative outlet to children and young people aged 8 - 25, promoting social connections, creative expression and physical wellbeing through inclusive, participatory circus arts.

Over the past ten years the project has evolved, extending our reach well beyond Cloughjordan to engage children and young people from many surrounding Midlands towns and villages. The project provides an exciting programme of weekly circus activities, creates regular performances for parades, festivals and theatres, involves young people in trips and exchanges, and runs peer education & leadership programmes for older members. More recently we have stepped up our outreach work offering workshops in schools and youth groups throughout the region.

Cloughjordan Circus Club is the only rural Youth Circus in Ireland, the only circus for the Midlands and the second longest established youth circus provider in the country.

The club is run by Joanna who is responsible for day to day operations and is lead artist on all projects. In addition we employ freelance artists to co-deliver on the core programme and to provide one-off and weekend intensive masterclasses.



# Analysis of Need

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR AREA

We draw children and young people from towns and villages in North Tipperary and south Offaly including Cloughjordan, Nenagh, Roscrea, Birr, Borrisokane, Shinrone, Toomevara and Moneygall. These are all rural communities.

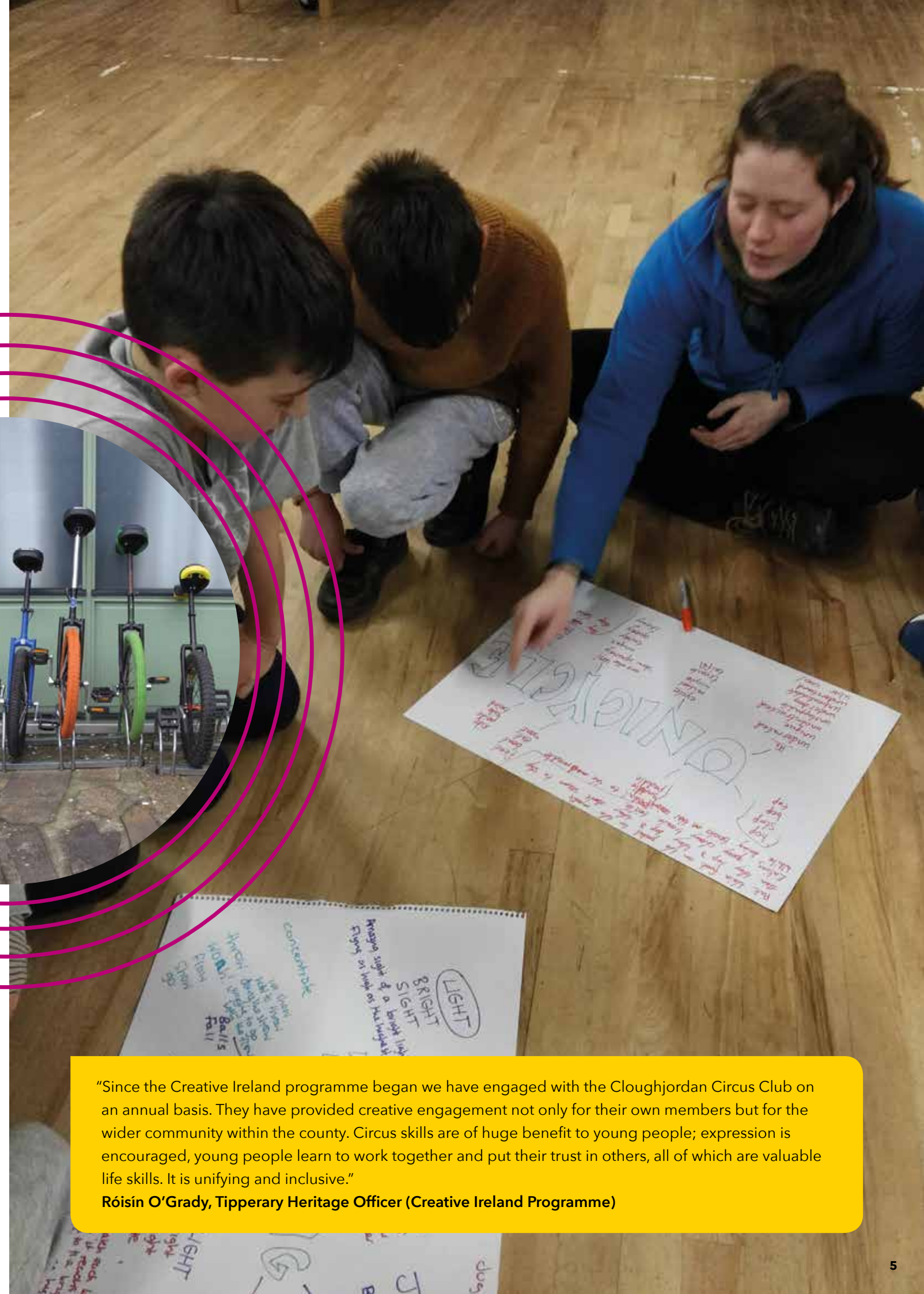
The National Youth Council of Ireland highlighted the range of issues unique to young people and their families living in rural communities in a recent report. Transport, lack of knowledge about services and scarcity of services lead to greater isolation of young people. Fewer education and employment opportunities mean there are half the number of young adults in rural areas than in urban areas. The lack of safe, supervised, affordable and accessible recreational opportunities for young people in rural areas sees rural young people often citing 'somewhere to go' and 'something to do' as some of the main gaps in their lives.

There is also health inequality among rural communities, with a lack of youth mental health support services, and additional challenges and fear for LGBTI+ youth in terms of support and marginalisation. Drug and alcohol use and misuse among youth in rural areas is a growing issue due to factors of isolation and lack of opportunities. We have the second highest rate of youth depression in the Mid-West region.

The majority of out-of-school activity for young people in our local area is based around GAA and other sports offers, dance (predominately ballet, Irish dance and some contemporary) and a youth theatre in Nenagh.

Cloughjordan Circus Club makes a valuable contribution to our local area, providing an exciting alternative to more mainstream youth provision and reaching young people who don't engage with other services. Our classes have lots of personal, social, educational and physical benefits for the young people involved, as you'll see in the following pages.

"Circus has given me something to do in a place where everything is just sports. It's full of great people and it's always been a really welcoming environment. I've gone from being the youngest member of the teen group to being one of the oldest and I can now mentor the younger groups. My favourite part is always when it's busy - the build-up to a show or an intensive weekend of circus. I love having the consistency of it every week as well - it's always something I can look forward to. It's definitely something I'll miss when I leave home." **Participant**



"Since the Creative Ireland programme began we have engaged with the Cloughjordan Circus Club on an annual basis. They have provided creative engagement not only for their own members but for the wider community within the county. Circus skills are of huge benefit to young people; expression is encouraged, young people learn to work together and put their trust in others, all of which are valuable life skills. It is unifying and inclusive."

**Róisín O'Grady, Tipperary Heritage Officer (Creative Ireland Programme)**



# The Benefits of Youth Circus



"After participating in the circus program children showed significant improvements in four areas of mental wellbeing: stress relief; self-esteem; confidence; and socialisation. Children reported that circus training helped them feel much better about themselves, both physically and mentally."

**McGrath & Stevens, "Forecasting the Social Return on Investment Associated with Children's Participation in Circus-Arts Training on their Mental Health and Well-Being". International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure, 2019; 2 (1-2)**

"Two of my sons have a diagnosis of ADHD, another has a speech and language disability and one daughter has dyslexia. Circus incorporates many exercises which help them to manage their conditions. The ability to concentrate on the task in hand for a prolonged period, control, hand/eye co-ordination, awareness of others, regulating responses, supporting and providing assistance within a group setting are all areas that are seen at a circus skills workshop.. Everyone has fun and the co-operation builds teams as well as friendships." **Parent of Cloughjordan Circus Club members**

Youth Circus is a unique activity with many proven benefits. It is a vibrant, exciting, playful art form that encompasses a wide variety of skills and activities with an ethos of teamwork and trust at its core. It offers young people an opportunity to undertake daring challenges, to manage risk and take responsibility for their own and others safety. It is an exciting and unusual creative outlet for young people and develops capacity for patience; teaching young people the benefits and results of commitment, practice and positive engagement.

Research has shown that it has significant cognitive and physical benefits: from improved hand/eye coordination, reflexes, peripheral vision and balance to enhanced problem solving and concentration skills; from improving core strength, fitness and flexibility to actually increasing brain mass. There is evidence to suggest that circus is particularly helpful for people with dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD both because it strengthens and creates new neural pathways and because of the social development involved.

Emotionally, it has been demonstrated to improve self-esteem, facilitate creative expression, help participants build trusting relationships, develop empathy, overcome fears and grow in confidence. Perhaps most importantly it is fun and joyful: a safe space where children and young people can fail without fear and support each other to learn, share and be proud of their achievements.

## Impact of our work

"It makes me feel brilliant" - **Participant**

"My child has a quiet confidence and is happy to keep trying when something goes wrong and not cross when something doesn't work out how planned."  
- **Parent**

"You don't have to be scared to be different as everyone is so supportive." - **Participant**

"The confidence they have acquired in themselves and each other will be invaluable in their future lives. It was also extremely moving to see how the older/more able were able to support the younger/less able in an enabling unpatronising way. The fact that they all still wanted to be involved spoke volumes!"  
- **Audience Member**

"My eldest used to be shy and is not out going, she is more confident now." - **Parent**

"We're really rural - we're surrounded on all sides by fields - so it's really amazing that we have such a different and unique club in such a tiny village in the middle of Tipperary" - **Participant**

"Circus Club helps him to feel valued within this group and very much a part of his community"  
- **Parent**

"I don't think anything has given me as much hope for the future as seeing these young people working so hard individually to hone their own skills and then being able to bring it all together into such a cooperative and mutually supportive venture."  
- **Audience Member**







"I like that no matter how many times you don't succeed, no one would laugh and everyone's just helpful and kind - even people you don't know."  
**Cloughjordan Circus Club Member**

# Overview of our Strategy

Our research into youth provision in our area, combined with consultations with the young people who take part in our activities has demonstrated the relevance of and need for our work.

Our evaluations with members, parents and other stakeholders have clearly evidenced that we are achieving important impacts and benefits that chime with international research.

We are clear in our vision for the contribution we want to make in our area, both for the young people who live here and the wider community.

We have identified 4 key pillars of activity by which we can achieve our ambitions. Some, like our Circus School, are well established and the goal is to continue to find new ways to new grow and resource the work. Others are in their infancy, such as our Outreach programme where we aim to build partnerships that allow for a deeper, more sustained engagement with the diverse communities beyond our core membership. Our CPD and Peer Educator strand is a way to increase our sustainability and address the challenges of finding locally based facilitators in a rural area, as well as offering young people the opportunity to develop their

leadership skills. Performances and Events ensure that we continue to offer creative expression to all our members, as well as supported opportunities for older members to develop their professional performance practice, with the dual benefits of contributing to the colour of local events and generating income for our youth activities.

These 4 pillars require a strong organisational foundation to flourish, and this Strategic Plan highlights a vital fifth area for development. Organisational Development is essential to sustain our current levels of activity and facilitate the growth we want to undertake in order to meet the needs of our local young people. We need to create the structures and infrastructure to ensure smooth management. In particular we need to secure medium to long term funding to enable forward planning and shore up our staff base.

In the following pages we will outline the ambitions for our 4 programme pillars over the next 5 years in more detail and set out a broad Action Plan showing how we intend to achieve it.

Greater detail, including timelines, along with a detailed analysis of how we can sustain and fund such activity can be found in our Business Plan.



# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## MISSION

Our mission is to:

- provide fun, engaging contemporary circus activities for children and young people aged 8-25 years
- provide a unique alternative to more traditional sporting and cultural activities which form the bulk of the offer in our rural setting
- offer the highest quality arts engagement opportunities for a diverse range of local young people through training workshops, performances, outreach residencies, and exchanges.

## VALUES

We believe that circus is a fun, supportive, non-competitive way to work with people, building skills and growing confidence.

It enables participants to engage with physical challenges and learn the value of practice and commitment as dexterity, resilience and fitness increase.

It creates a safe space to fail and learn.

It stimulates creativity and celebrates self-expression.

We firmly believe in the positive impact that circus can have on the mental, physical and creative wellbeing of children and young people.

We are committed to providing the highest quality experience possible for our members and audiences, both in terms of the quality of engagement and process, and the final artistic products.

## APPROACH

We foster respect for ourselves and each other; playful interaction, generosity, sharing and listening.

We nurture individuality, confidence and self-esteem.

We deliver young-person-centred practice that puts the voice of participants at the heart of all our work.

We champion inclusion, removing barriers to participation for those children and young people who are excluded or isolated because of their circumstances.

We ensure the highest standards in all our youth circus activities, our governance and management and the highest quality of experience for members and audiences.

## OBJECTIVES

- To advance the artistic, personal and social development of children and young people through circus arts.
- To nurture children and young people's development by creating an imaginative and non-competitive environment where they can express themselves freely in a confident and positive manner.
- To highlight the sophistication and diversity offered by contemporary circus and to offer teaching in the widest possible range of circus disciplines.
- To create exciting new performances, led by the interests and ideas of young members, to share with audiences through shows, parades and community events.
- To offer peer-education and young leader training, and to provide support and guidance towards careers in circus.
- To give children and young people an opportunity to contribute positively to their local community.
- To carry out special projects in partnership with other community groups, organisations and institutions to extend our reach and deepen our impact.
- To educate young people about the health and safety aspects of each discipline, teach them how to manage risk and engender a sense of responsibility for themselves and the groups safety.



# Sustainability and Funding

It is essential to the achievement of our goals to find a more sustainable way to financially support the running of the organisation. While members do pay towards activities this makes up only 30% of our turnover. 60% currently comes from short-term grants, 5% from box office and 5% from additional fundraising. This funding model is not compatible with medium to long term planning and organisational resilience. Our future plans see us re-focussing our grant funding efforts to longer term and sometimes non-arts funding streams, as well as growing our commissions and partnerships income, revising our membership and donations models and developing a social enterprise strand.

## GRANT FUNDING

Cloughjordan Circus Club has a strong track record of securing funding through the Tipperary County Council Arts Act, and successfully growing support year on year. The growing programme of additional initiatives such as Summer Camps, Performances and Events have been supported by one off project grants from a wide range of funding partners including Creative Ireland, Tipperary Co Co, Arts Council, The Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation, Irish Youth Foundation Applegreen Fund, IPB Community Fund and LEADER / RDF. We will continue to maintain and build on relationships with current and past funding partners.

However, with the strategic focus on growth and sustainability, we need to identify longer term, strategic funding that supports our entire programme of activities which includes paying staff to facilitate the programme as a whole rather than piecemeal. It will also be important to explore non-arts funding for youth initiatives in line with the health and wellbeing impacts of our work. Relationships to explore in this area include Arts Council, Arts Grant programme as well as RDF, Leader and Irish Youth Foundation.

## COMMISSIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We plan to identify third sector partners and commissioners with whom to develop bespoke outreach programmes. Of particular interest and value would be agencies working with young people in the areas of mental health, social services, justice and new arrivals. This will be an important area for our development over the coming years.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

As a new income stream, Cloughjordan Circus Club plans to create packages of themed walkabout performances that can be hired by local events, businesses, or any cultural and/or family focused event. This would enable us to earn a small amount of income through these events, and of course the performers would be paid for their work. This would also be a pathway to empowering young people to be valued and paid for their art and their skills, as well as building their confidence and social skills as they interact with event attendees.

## MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

CCC currently gains income through its participant attendance at €6 or €8 per session with an approximate 80% attendance rate. Piloting a membership programme at CCC could be a way of covering costs in the long-term, while actually saving money for participants who attend the most regularly. However it would be important to retain the option to pay per session, so as not to alienate low-income families.





# Our 4 Programme Pillars

## 1. CIRCUS SCHOOL

Term-time weekly skills workshops in contemporary circus for beginners, 8 - 12 year olds and teenager groups. Co-facilitated by our Artistic Director and a team of professional artists, supported by emerging youth circus graduates.

We currently teach **manipulation** (juggling, diabolo, hat manipulation, hula hoop, plate spinning, flowersticks, shaker cups), **balance** (unicycle, stilt walking, rola bola, walking globe, tightwire), **acrobatics** (pairs acrobalance, pyramid building, handstands, tableside, and **wider art forms** (dance, physical theatre, clowning, puppetry, percussion.)

We will continue to bring in visiting circus artists from across Ireland and further afield to teach specialist workshops and to take groups to other circus schools for different skills, such as Aerial with the Irish Aerial Creation Centre or Funambulism with Galway Community Circus School.

We will continue to meet in St Keiran's Hall in Cloughjordan where we also store our extensive stock of equipment. We plan to increase our pool of regular teaching artists and grow our capacity to increase our membership. Our programme will include regular holiday camps and taster sessions so that more children and young people can participate.

Our facilitation will continue to demonstrate our twin commitment to excellence of process and product: the excellent teaching of skills ensures the highest quality of circus artistry, the excellent facilitation results in important social, health and wellbeing benefits.

During Covid-19 lockdown we moved our classes online and worked with members via Zoom classes and Whatsapp groups. We plan a blended approach moving forward, and are working with our peers to make sure our in-person classes will be Covid-safe.

## 2. PEER EDUCATION AND CPD

We believe that Continuing Professional Development is vital to maintain, refresh and enhance the circus and youth arts work force in the country. We also need to address the challenges of being located in a rural setting meaning that many of the circus artists with whom we may wish to work are not based locally.

In 2019 we introduced a programme of professional development weekends for our teaching artists and emerging teen mentors, delivered in specialist skill areas in partnership with Belfast Community Circus School.

We plan to build on this and embed a programme of training for both professional tutors and peer educators (young members aged 15-18 who help to facilitate younger and beginner classes).

The aim is to ensure that the proficiency and teaching technique with each circus skill is of the highest and safest standard; alongside a reflective and responsive approach to facilitation through evaluation and planning. We want to support emerging and established artists to have opportunities to keep learning and developing their potential. The training will be led by our Artistic Director and enhanced by visiting experts.

*"Circus has been a big part of my life and it's a pleasure being able to now help out with teaching the younger ones. It gives you another perspective and you get a sense of achievement when they get a move you've been trying to teach."*

**Cloughjordan Circus Club Peer Tutor**

## 3. OUTREACH

For many years the focus of our outreach programme has been to diversify and extend the reach of recruitment for our circus school. In particular our holiday camps and taster workshop programme for local schools, TY's and youth groups succeeded in increasing the reach and diversity of our membership - we're now operating at capacity. We will continue to offer this programme as we want to reach out into all corners of our communities to ensure that Cloughjordan Circus Club is as accessible as possible.

We want to be able to respond to the growing number of requests from organisations and groups who have experienced our tasters with a more substantive offer - what we term Social Circus projects. Social Circus can be thought of as an umbrella term for the use of circus arts in any caring, supportive or therapeutic setting. It uses circus as a tool to work with youth who are marginalised or at social or personal risk, to contribute to the personal and social development of the participants.

In order to achieve this we will focus on developing partnerships with youth support organisations working in our rural area, for example Youth Work Tipperary. We plan to develop and deliver at least one project per year, in the setting where the group is based, designed to take place over a particular time- limited period with clear aims to address the specific needs of the group.

## 4. PERFORMANCE AND EVENTS

We will create a large-scale show every year, as well as performing in lots of local, regional, national and international events. We will continue to develop our own unique circus aesthetic which fuses circus skills with different performance disciplines, such as dance, physical theatre, clown, puppetry and percussion.

We plan to keep on creating new work and some of our upcoming projects include:

**Elephant!:** is in production for 2020/1. Inspired by oral history from Cloughjordan about memories of when the circus would come to town, the show has been written collectively by 50 young members of Circus Club. It will use large-scale puppetry and a broad range of circus skills. Originally planned as a live event we are currently reimagining it as a film.

**Festival of Fools:** Our teen group have twice taken their work to this international circus and street theatre festival in Belfast, staying for the weekend to watch professional performance and join in workshops with other youth circus groups. Due to Covid-19 their 2020 trip was cancelled, but we plan to resume in future years.

**Irish Youth Circus Gathering:** In 2018 we hosted the first ever gathering of Youth Circus members across the island of Ireland, we plan to continue to host it annually. As well as the benefits to participating young people, it contributes to developing positive relationships and collaborations in the Youth Circus sector.

**Wires Crossed / Galway 2020:** This project is a partnership with Galway Community Circus. Members aged 10+ will participate in outdoor Funambulism workshops using a long pole to balance as they walk across a wire. These workshops are great for social distancing and will make up a core part of our offering until we can resume indoor classes. There will also be opportunities to invite other youth organisations to take part.

*"This was a stupendous experience! The explosion of fun and enjoyment was mind blowing. We were all on the edge of our seats."*  
**Cloughjordan Circus Club Audience Member**



# Cloughjordan Circus Club Action Plan

IMPACT

PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC  
OBJECTIVES

OUTCOMES

Provide  
unique  
creative  
experiences  
for children  
and young  
people in the  
Midlands.

1.  
Create a rich, meaningful  
programme of circus activities that  
reach a diverse range of children  
and young people

- Conceive and deliver a core programme of high-quality circus arts education and performance for children and young people.
- Consolidate existing membership and extend the reach of the programme.
- Evaluate all work to assess value and ensure impact.

- An exciting core programme of weekly skills development workshops for three different groups (Beginners, Juniors, Teens).
- An outreach programme that feeds into the core provision and increases our reach.
- A high-quality large-scale annual performance.
- An annual collaboration with at least one other national/international circus provider.
- An on-going peer education/training programme.
- A series of small-scale performance opportunities across the region, with one national opportunity annually.
- An annual evaluation report following consistent evaluation criteria.

2.  
Grow our profile, communicating  
the benefits of circus and the  
impact of our work

- Extend the existing reputation of our organisation locally, nationally and internationally.
- Develop & refine our advocacy materials.
- Engage effectively in relevant national and international networks.

- Re-branding of organisation.
- Increased following on SM platforms and digital audience engagement with our work.
- Increased profile locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Suite of high quality advocacy materials.

3.  
Ensure the sustainability and  
smooth running of CCC

- Re-branding of organisation.
- Increased following on SM platforms and digital audience engagement with our work.
- Increased profile locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Suite of high quality advocacy materials.

- 2-3 year funding secured to enable sustainable running of the organisation as well as project-based funds.
- Job descriptions and volunteer protocols in place for all providing services to CCC ensuring fair working terms.
- Administrative, fundraising and marketing support in place to assist the Artistic Director.



# Challenges

## SHORT TERM FUNDING

The structure of our funding portfolio to date has meant that we are constantly in a fundraising cycle, securing small funds for specific projects with a very limited opportunity to support core costs or multi-year programming. This significantly limits our ability to grow or to plan strategically. It has a negative impact on staff, both in terms of stress levels, lack of employment security and the amount of time required for fundraising and multi-grant reporting. The challenge of securing multi-year funding is likely to be significantly harder in light of Covid changing the funding landscape.

## RURAL SETTING

While we have a history of bringing exciting tutors from all over the world to teach our members, this has been and continues to be a real challenge. We are based in a rural location, in the middle of the country, with limited public transport access and no proximity to the larger cities where most of Irish-based circus artists reside.

We have combatted the problem in the past with a combination of bringing tutors in for special weekend intensives and week-long residencies. We have also brought in professional artists who live locally and specialise in other aspects of performance, and this has enhanced the artistic interest and richness of our aesthetic. We plan to continue these arrangements moving forward.

While this approach brings a real richness to our programme, we want to strengthen the weekly provision by attracting new tutors to commit to working with us on a weekly basis. This is necessary to ensure the on-going development of the circus school and is one of the key challenges we aim to address over the next three years.

"The Circus zoom sessions over lock down allowed us all to continue to do what we love in a situation we had no control over and to keep spirits up in the difficult times we all faced. We were able to open up a new set of skills we didn't know we had in an environment we were not used to." – **Cloughjordan Circus Club Member**

## COPING WITH COVID

We responded very quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic, keen to keep members engaged and keep up a creative outlet during this difficult time. First we made a virtual St Patrick's Day parade, filmed individually and brought together through the magic of video editing to be shared with our local community.

Throughout lockdown we delivered three classes a week to our members via Zoom, finding new ways of playing games and doing skills-based exercises, trying to keep the essential playfulness of circus alive. Juggling with household objects and making props from found objects was just the start!

In addition we commissioned a series of YouTube tutorials from our tutors and guest tutors and stayed in touch with our groups via WhatsApp to encourage a sense of togetherness, share and encourage our circus practice and create performance challenges. We ran a 10-week outreach project 'Freestyle Soccer Challenges' with commissioned Circus Artist Simon Llewellyn and we even participated in Galway Community Circus's Mayhem Festival, joining in on-line activities, watching and sharing performances and participating in debates.

At the time of writing Ireland is slowly moving out of lock down. Cloughjordan Circus Club is working closely with peer organisations to plan for the future, developing a programme and new teaching practices that will be suitable for a socially distanced short to medium term, and putting all the correct protocols in place. Alongside all similar organisations it will be challenging to navigate the new and changing landscape in light of the pandemic.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

To date our Artistic Director has undertaken the vast majority of administration for Cloughjordan Circus Club including all aspects of project management, record keeping and data management, financial management and fundraising, performance booking, coordinating events, trips and all other activities, with some voluntary support from board members.

At this stage in the development of the organisation it is vitally important to bring in some paid administrative support for the Artistic Director to enable her to focus more on the creative and artistic development of the organisation and less on daily operational matters. We also need to find ways to bring in some additional fundraising support for the Artistic Director and board to enable growth and sustainability.

## INSURANCE

Insurance continues to be a huge challenge to our sector as a whole and we work closely with ISACS (Irish Street Arts, Circus & Spectacle) and Alliance for Insurance Reform to lobby for changes. From the outset insurance has placed restrictions on our activities and omits aerial and some of the more advanced aspects of some skills. We have addressed this gap in our provision by arranging residencies and visits, for instance a 10-week course for our members at the Irish Aerial Creation Centre, where we travelled to Limerick weekly for classes in silks, trapeze and aerial hoop. This challenge will continue to influence our programming options during the lifetime of this plan.





# We are excited about our future and hope that you are too!

If you would like to find out more about our activities, how to become a member or how we can work with your group, please contact:  
[cloughjordancircusclub@gmail.com](mailto:cloughjordancircusclub@gmail.com)

Keep up to date with our activities here:

Facebook: @cloughjordancircusclub

YouTube: CircusClubCloughjrodan

Instagram: @cloughjordancircusclub



Tipperary Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the managing body for the European Union Rural Development 2014 -2020 (LEADER) Programme in County Tipperary. This project has been co-funded under the EU Rural Development 2014 -2020 (LEADER) Programme implemented in County Tipperary by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership on behalf of the Tipperary LCDC.


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Written by Sarah Thornton with Joanna Williams, Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan & Anna McCarthy  
Design by Shane Ó Mearáin, [www.somacreative.ie](http://www.somacreative.ie)  
September 2020

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