



BRINGING JOY, AMBITION AND OPPORTUNITY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028

In Your Space Circus is about inclusion, diversity and individuality which is the future of Northern Ireland that I want for my children.

Youth Circus Participant Parent



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to In Your Space Circus's (IYSC) Strategic plan which lays out the company's plans and aspirations for the period 2024-2028.

Over the lifetime of the previous Strategic Plan (2018-2024), IYSC has been building momentum across its circus education and performance work with growth in audiences and participants, and increased ambition across the projects and creative work being developed.

This plan is also being developed at a very exciting time in our history, with a major capital development on the horizon, providing a physical space which matches our ambitions.

With this in mind, it is important that we have a clear shared vision for the future, so collectively we can continue to grow, develop and strive to reach our goals and aspirations.

We are striving to create connection, empower expression and support social change.

Cath McBride Company Director



IN YOUR SPACE CIRCUS WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Derry-based In Your Space Circus, is a circus school and street theatre company, which works with artists (local, national and international) with a wide range of skills. We work individually and in collaboration with other organisations and art forms to deliver projects which involve circus skills, street theatre, visual arts, music, costume-making, and theatre.

We are one of the most innovative and dynamic arts organisations in Derry and the North-West of Ireland, utilising circus and street theatre as a vehicle for personal, social and community development.

We are passionate about Contemporary Circus and Street Theatre. Circus is incredibly exciting, combining high skill with comedy and wonder. Because of the unique ability of circus to support personal, social and community development, it is now being recognised as a powerful tool for change. Street Theatre ensures there are fewer barriers and more opportunity for audiences who may not ordinarily engage with the arts to feel welcome and valued in their participation.

We pride ourselves on creating (and curating) acts, shows and installations which are unique and provide meaningful engagement. This allows our audiences to escape the challenges of day-to-day life, if only for a moment, and invites them to play, be silly and make memories together.

IYSC is a charitable company limited by guarantee with a board of directors. Annually we work with around thirty regular freelance artists, and another 120 occasional freelance artists.

Regular core funding is provided by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI) and Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC). Other core and project funding comes from ACNI, DCSDC, trusts and foundations, government departments, sponsorship, donations and earned income.



**Sometimes you don't know
whose life you're making a
positive impact on or whose
life you might be changing with
the work that you do.**

Circus has reinforced my children's spirit of determination, increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence. In addition to creating a beautiful contagion effect for those we are around entering the magical world of the circus.

Youth Circus Participant Parent



OUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES

IYSC CIRCUS SCHOOL – CENTRAL CIRCUS

Focused on making life better for the participants, our Central Circus School consists of:

- Peas in a Pod (for 1–3-year-olds)
- Seedlings Circus (for 4-8 year olds)
- Youth Circus (for age 9 plus)
- Adult Circus.

We also have a youth performance troupe which performs across Northern Ireland, a master-class series, and a trainee trainer's programme providing a career pathway for young people in circus and the arts.

150 regular members access our classes each week. This number is growing.

IYSC CIRCUS SCHOOL – SOCIAL CIRCUS OUTREACH

We work across Northern Ireland and Ireland in community contexts through our portfolio of outreach projects. This includes:

- CircAbility - targeting those with disabilities,
- General Outreach - targeting disadvantage,
- Silver Circus - targeting the growing 50+ population,
- Circus Together - bringing people together from different cultural backgrounds to address mental health and peace and reconciliation themes.

Our outreach projects currently reach approximately **5,000 people** each year.



My child looks forward to circus school all week. I feel it truly nourishes him as an individual and gives him an important outlet for his physical creativity.

Seedlings Circus Participant Parent

IYSC PERFORMANCE AND STREET THEATRE PRODUCTION

We produce high quality circus and street theatre acts, shows, installations and large-scale outdoor spectacle. This provides paid creative opportunities for local artists and raises our unrestricted income to support our charitable projects.

Our work is highly visual and devised and created with the outdoor audience in mind, often crossing barriers such as language, background and ability to provide meaningful engagement to the public audience.

Often working in collaboration with others, we deliver approximately **500 performances** each year, reaching **audiences greater than 350,000**.

IYSC also produces and curates ambitious new work with local and international artists and Companies. We are passionate about collaborating with other artforms (Visual Arts, Dance, Music, etc) and our expertise in blending these with our own disciplines (Circus & Street Theatre) has earned us a great reputation for creating bespoke, accessible and quality programming across Festivals and Events throughout NI.



CARNIVAL OF COLOURS: ANNUAL CIRCUS, ARTS AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Historically taking place in St Columb's Park, we relocated our annual Festival to Derry City Centre in 2021, incorporating the City's stunning built and cultural heritage as a backdrop for our local and international programme of Circus, Arts and Music.

IYSC has public and voluntary stakeholders who have an interest in the work of the organisation. When asked their thoughts on the strengths of In Your Space Circus responses included:

- Artistic freedom
- Innovation
- Artists
- Talent development
- Breadth of work
- Collaboration
- Carnival
- Circus education
- Unique events
- Young people

The organisation is conscious of a challenging and rapidly changing external environment and the need to create ambitious plans to take the organisation to a new level.

The draft strategy that follows has been developed from several one-day workshops with staff, artists, trainers and directors. The Director also carried out a number of one-to-one consultation sessions with a range of stakeholders.



What a bright, positive, fun, professional, varied, entertaining, buzz. It showed off the inner-city area beautifully. And also showcased local talent and businesses. Looking forward to next year already. Doctors should prescribe it.

Carnival of Colours Audience Member

OUR VISION

A vibrant, connected and thriving community where artists, participants and audiences have the space to explore and develop their creative talents through circus, street theatre and play.

OUR MISSION

To unleash the power of circus and street theatre, igniting the imagination and transforming lives and communities.

Fabulous performances throughout the town, but even better when you know they are homegrown!

Audience Member Illuminate the Walled City



A background image showing a group of children and adults looking up at several green and white striped balls being juggled in the air. The scene is outdoors with green foliage in the background. A young boy in a pink t-shirt is in the foreground, looking up with an open mouth. A woman is partially visible on the left, also looking up. The text 'CARNIVAL of COLOUR' is printed on the boy's t-shirt.

OUR VALUES

The things that drive us...

Circus as a vehicle for social change

We believe in the power that circus and street theatre has in bringing about personal and social change and building vibrant and supportive communities.

Creativity and play

We believe that through creativity and play everyone can flourish and express their unique selves.

Lifelong learning

We believe in using the medium of circus to make sure people can continue to learn throughout their lives.

Inclusion

We are committed to delivering street theatre and circus in highly creative and inclusive ways, ensuring meaningful engagement for everyone, no matter what their age, ability or background.

Collaboration

We are passionate about harnessing creative opportunities and being more effective by working together with others.

Excellence and Innovation

We are committed to ensuring that everything we do and create is of the highest quality and continually innovates and improves.

OUR GOALS 2024-2028

GOAL 1: Our Home

To ensure we successfully move into the Cathedral School and develop a home which meets the needs of our artists, participants and audiences.

GOAL 2: Performance and Events

To increase the ambition and quality of our performance and producing work.

GOAL 3: Education and Training

To increase progression routes for everyone to have the opportunity to develop circus and street theatre skills at their own level.

GOAL 4: Social Circus Outreach

To harness the power of circus to support the health and wellbeing of people and communities, and encourage them to reach their potential.

GOAL 5: People and Culture

To ensure that we have the right people to support us in achieving our goals, and that they are supported, nurtured, and given opportunities to grow.

Our daughter has a lengthy list of disabilities yet she is doing more Occupational Therapy in one session of Circability than she would do with her therapist, whilst having fun. She is having all her needs met, mentally, socially, physically and educationally.

Circability Participant Parent



REALISING OUR GOALS

GOAL 1: Our Home

To ensure we successfully move into the Cathedral School and develop a home which meets the needs of our artists, participants and audiences.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Agree the terms of a 25-year lease for the Cathedral School building.
- Develop an ambitious fundraising strategy and action plan for the capital development.
- Develop appropriate business plans and feasibility studies to ensure the capital project is sustainable and that the building will support income generation and robust business models.
- Develop the Cathedral School ensuring best practise in relation to conservation and sustainability values.
- Become the custodian of this incredible heritage space and opportunity.

GOAL 2: Performance and Events

To increase the ambition and quality of our performance and producing work.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Attract new artists to work with IYSC, and retain existing artists, by providing space to play, create, work and develop.
- Diversify IYSC's offering by producing new performance work which supports artists' individual talents and passions and increases our quality and range of artistic products.
- Continuing to collaborate locally, nationally and internationally to create unique work and provide exciting opportunities for multi-discipline artists.
- Develop the ambition of Carnival of Colours through new collaborations and innovative programming.

GOAL 3: Education and Training

To increase progression routes for everyone to have the opportunity to develop circus and street theatre skills at their own level.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Ensure there are opportunities for participants to engage in developmental Circus activities from 2 years to adult.
- Ensure participants have the opportunity to improve skills, perform, and develop important relationships through the Circus School.
- Develop a comprehensive programme for Trainee Trainers to encourage youth circus members to gain skills and passion for working in the sector.
- Effectively evaluate the outcomes and impact of our Circus Education work.

GOAL 4: Social Circus Outreach

To harness the power of circus to support the health and wellbeing of people and communities, and encourage them to reach their potential.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Strategically expand and deepen our good relations and peacebuilding work, reaching participants and communities who will gain greatest benefit.
- Develop and expand our work with children and young people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and neurodivergent conditions.
- Develop and expand our work with older people, focusing on those experiencing loneliness, isolation, mobility challenges and dementia.
- Develop pathways for social circus participants to engage with Central Circus School programmes.
- Research and evaluate the outcomes and impact of social circus work.

GOAL 5: People and Culture

To ensure that we have the right people to support us in achieving our goals, and that they are supported, nurtured, and given opportunities to grow.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Ensure we have the right staff and artists in the appropriate roles and that the team feels supported and nurtured in a positive, professional environment.
- Ensure staff and artists receive the training they require and are given the opportunity to develop.
- Identify where external specialist support and advice is required to support and advance specific areas of work.
- Effectively engage and support volunteers.
- Enhance and strengthen the organisation's leadership.
- To provide an open and honest engagement policy with artists to ensure they are supported and nurtured to create highest quality work.



Spectacular! Thank you for all your hard work to make this town such a special place in so many ways...you make the magic that's in the Derry air.

Audience Member Derry Halloween

OUR COMMITMENTS 2024-2028

COMMITMENT 1: Communications

To continue to raise our profile locally, nationally and internationally, communicating with a consistent voice and confidence in our brand.

COMMITMENT 2: Finance

To ensure we raise the income we need to achieve our goals and that these resources are managed effectively and transparently.

COMMITMENT 3: Governance

To ensure the governance of IYSC reflects the visionary, ambitious and creative ethos of the company and effectively balances creative aspiration with compliance and best practise.

COMMITMENT 4: Change Making

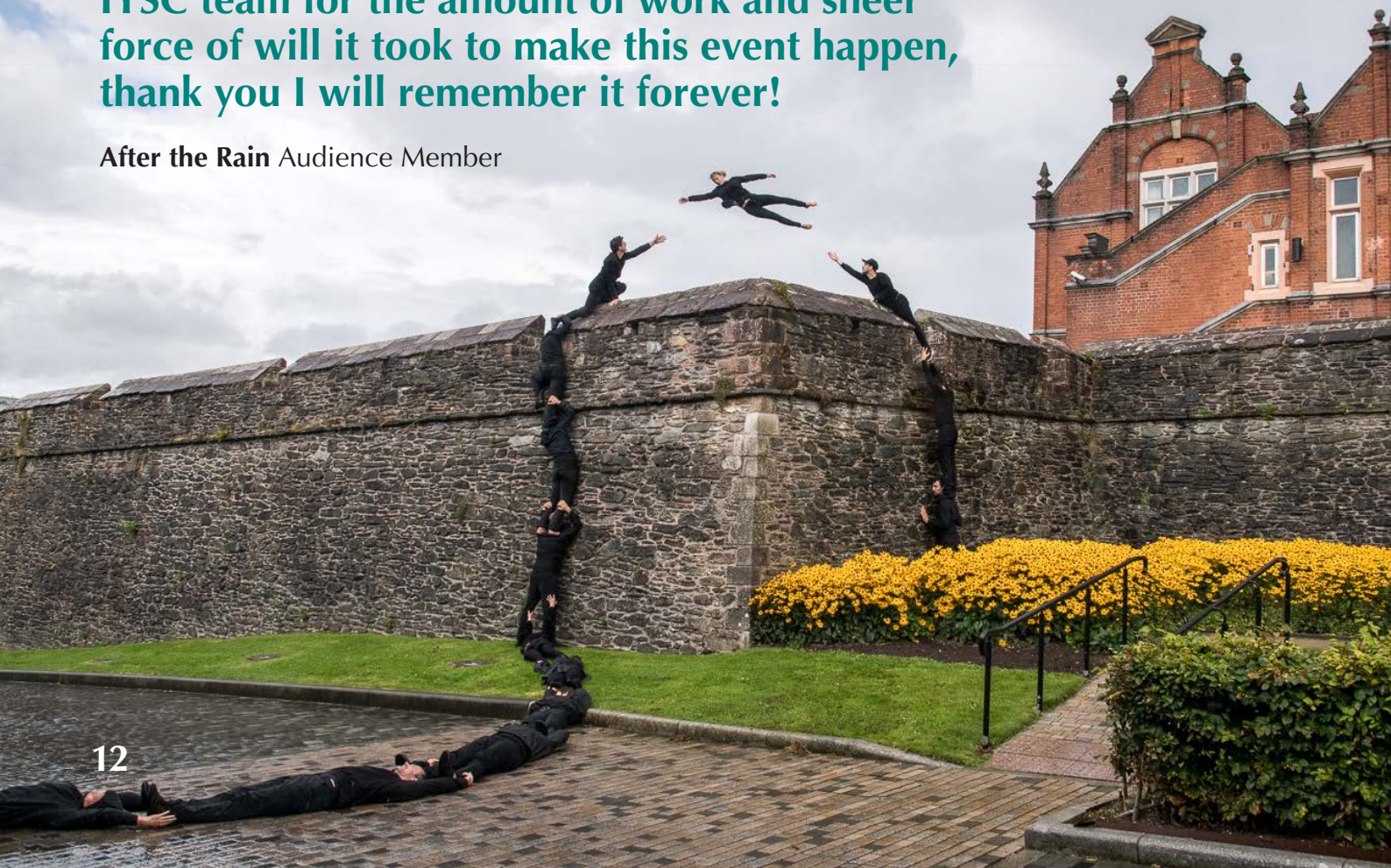
To support the development of advocacy, lobbying and practice in relation to circus and the arts.

COMMITMENT 5: Artistic Excellence

To support the highest quality delivery in circus education and performance while encouraging skills and talent development at all levels of circus.

I have huge appreciation and respect for the IYSC team for the amount of work and sheer force of will it took to make this event happen, thank you I will remember it forever!

After the Rain Audience Member



REALISING OUR COMMITMENTS

COMMITMENT 1: Communications

To continue to raise our profile locally, nationally and internationally, communicating with a consistent voice and confidence in our brand.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Develop, implement, and review a marketing and communications Strategy.
- Recruit a marketing and communications officer.
- Develop a new website and range of digital resources reflecting our strategy and ambition.
- Consolidate the IYSC and Carnival of Colours branding to ensure a consistent message and clear communication.

COMMITMENT 2: Finance

To ensure we raise the income we need to achieve our goals and that these resources are managed effectively and transparently.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Develop, implement and review an ambitious income generation strategy which aims to increase turnover to £1m by 2028.
- Raise the capital funding for the Cathedral School development.
- Increase the use of professional fundraising consultants where appropriate.
- Empower the whole team to support income generation.
- Building a robust and exciting reserves policy.

COMMITMENT 3: Governance

To ensure the governance of IYSC reflects the visionary, ambitious and creative ethos of the company and effectively balances creative aspiration with compliance and best practise.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Ensure that the board has the skills to effectively deliver the strategic plan.
- Recruit new board members to support the capital development project.
- Review governance documents, structures and processes to reflect managing a capital development, and the ambition of IYSC.
- Ensure we develop and employ a realistic and achievable Environmental Sustainability policy.

COMMITMENT 4: Change Making

To support the development of advocacy, lobbying and practice in relation to circus and the arts.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Develop strong relationships with relevant MLAs, councillors, and officials.
- Influence public sector decision-making in support of our aims and objectives.
- Collaborate with others to promote the importance of the arts, circus and street theatre as an artform, and the arts in the North-West.
- Promote fair pay and conditions for artists.

COMMITMENT 5: Artistic Excellence

To support the highest quality delivery in circus education and performance while encouraging skills and talent development at all levels of circus.

Between 2024 and 2028 we will:

- Ensure the right artists are fulfilling the right roles to deliver our work.
- Ensure we provide time, space and proper remuneration for creating high quality artistic work.
- Ensure the right infrastructure is in place to support and nurture artists.
- Raise the funding to offer exciting opportunities and properly support the creative process for making new work.
- Begin offering residencies at the Cathedral School.



In Your Space Circus is such an amazing asset to the community and they deserve a dedicated space to share their magic with everyone.

Youth Circus Participant Parent

OUR PEOPLE (2024)

IYSC is lucky to have an incredibly committed and passionate team consisting of:

A proactive Board of Directors:

Christina Crouch who is an Educational Psychologist and parent of 4 Circus School participants. Christina has a firm belief in the power of circus as an educational tool which supports the emotional and physical development of children and young people, particularly at transitional stages in their lives.

Max Beer who is a master of fundraising and the strategic development of arts organisations. Having led a major capital project with Derry Playhouse, Max is a huge asset at this time in IYSC's development.

Ross Parkhill who runs Stendhal festival and is passionate about music and the collaboration of different art forms to ensure best quality programming.

Stephen Kelly who is the CEO of Manufacturing NI and is very well connected across the business and political sector Northern Ireland (and the UK and Ireland).

Eavan King who leads on Film Education at the Nerve Centre in Derry. Eavan is passionate about arts education and the potential for career development through engaging and immersive arts programmes.

Core Operational Staff:

Cath McBride (Company Director): Cath leads the Company to meet the identified needs of participants, the wider community, the sector, and the aspirations, talents and capacity of the artistic team. Cath began her circus journey in 2008 as the Senior Fundraiser with Belfast Community Circus School. After moving to Derry, Cath joined the IYSC team and became the Company Director in 2012. Under Cath's leadership the organization has grown its annual income from £125,000 to over £680,000 and evolved IYSC to become one of Derry and Northern Ireland's most significant arts organisations.

Rachel Melaugh (Creative Director): Rachel has more than 10 years' experience performing both onstage and in street theatre contexts across Northern Ireland, Ireland and the UK. Rachel joined IYSC in 2014 and progressed through a range of roles until her position was embedded as the Creative Director in 2020. Rachel has significantly grown our producing work and raised the Company profile and reputation for delivery due to her passion for creating fresh,

innovative work on the streets, and her keen eye for detail and meaningful audience engagement.

Anna Kelly (Admin and Finance Officer): Anna joined IYSC in January 2019 and quickly became an essential part of the team. Anna is efficient, organized and focused; these attributes have ensured that she has developed and applied a range of systems across financial systems, data management and project monitoring, streamlining our admin functions and improving our capacity.

Project and Events Team:

Ciaran Flanagan (Projects Coordinator): Ciaran has been with IYSC since 2021, coordinating circus school projects and programmes

Eimear Willis (Assistant Producer): Eimear has been a volunteer and freelancer with IYSC since 2011. She is now our Assistant Producer supporting events and festival productions.

Ciara Canning (Heritage Project Manager): Ciara joined IYSC in 2024 and is supporting the Cathedral School Development project.

Luke Blakeley (Seedlings Circus Project Lead): Luke is a freelance performer and trainer, specialising in our Seedlings Circus programme which works with 4-8 year olds.

Michael Johnston (CircAbility Project Lead): Michael is a freelance performer and trainer, specialising in our Circability programme which works with neurodivergent and disabled children and young people.

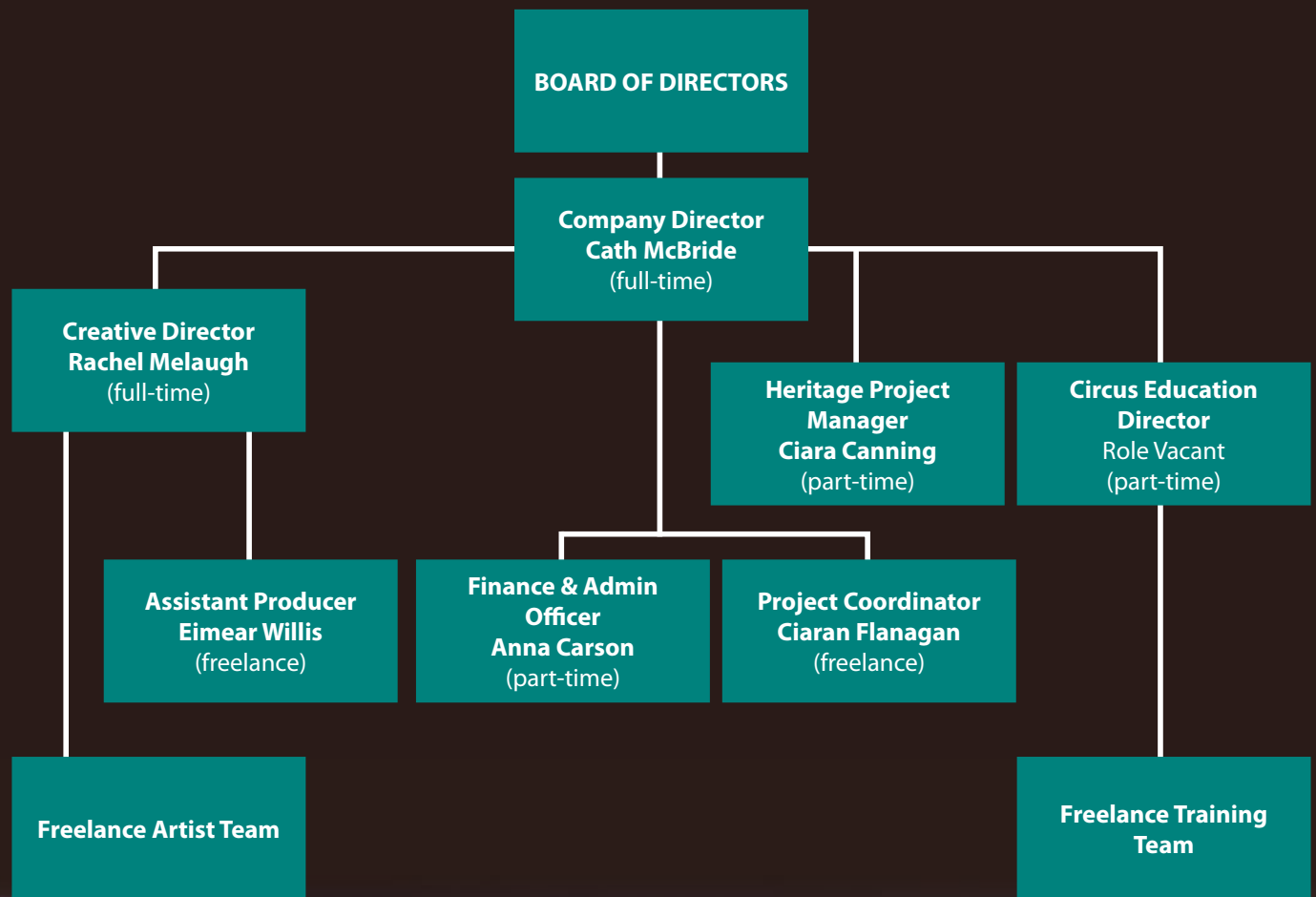
Martin McClelland (Silver Circus Project Lead): Martin is a freelance performer and trainer, specialising in our Silver Circus programme which works with older people.

Paul Quate (Youth Circus Project Lead): Paul Quate is a freelance trainer and performer, supporting us to develop our Saturday Youth Circus programme for an initial interim period (2024-2024).

Damon Cooper, Brent Young, Richie McClelland (Project Leads): Damon, Brent and Richie are freelance trainers and performers, they work across our range of circus school projects, leading and supporting as required.

In addition, we work with a brilliant team of freelance trainers, artists, support trainers and trainee trainers/performers to deliver our programme of work annually.

STAFFING STRUCTURE 2024



IYSC engages approximately 120 freelance artists each year. We have a core Circus training team of 10 experienced and talented circus teachers, and a large pool of artists who support our annual producing programme.

IN YOUR SPACE CIRCUS
Waterloo House
44a-48a Waterloo Street
BT48 6HF

info@inyourspaceni.org
028 7137 7113



PRINCIPAL FUNDER



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSrátha Báin
Derry Cille & Strabane
District Council



In Your Space Circus is a registered company limited by guarantee: NI 050953.
Registered charity number: NIC103059.