



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-29

1. Chair's Introduction

When we look back at our last 5-year plan for 2018 -23, what strikes us is that when it was written no-one could have conceived of a global pandemic, or how it would impact society in relation to our organisation and the challenges we would face. Regular lockdowns, two metre distancing, fear of infection through contact, furlough schemes, school closures, zoom meetings, working from home and the life-threatening impact on some of those most vulnerable in society could not have been foreseen. Now as we approach 2025 with fewer restrictions, the COVID pandemic feels like a surreal period of history. However its impact on Streetwise has transformed us as an organisation and put us on a totally new footing for the future.

When the first lockdown took effect in March 2020, every plan we had to deliver workshop programmes or events were shelved, leaving no opportunities for any of our staff to work. Everyone was scrambling to establish what, if any, entitlement they had for Covid support. The entire arts sector closed, with many organisations furloughing permanent staff and shutting their doors to the public, with freelance artists left to fend for themselves. We took a different approach. We agreed with our funders that we could re-profile our budgeting to enable us to react to the new situation. We offered emergency loans to staff and paid staff to produce online videos. We trained a team to use Zoom for teaching and through our partnerships with community organisations and charities, commenced a programme of Zoom classes which reached as far as Newcastle upon Tyne, forging new community partnerships. We identified the total isolation being felt by people living in sheltered accommodation and commenced a series of shows outside sheltered accommodation employing staff, hence expanding relationships with housing providers. As restrictions eased, we introduced new ways of working, which meant staff worked as solo tutors providing "distanced" workshops enabling us to expand workshops throughout Northern Ireland in sheltered accommodation, dementia schemes and disability day centres. In addition, we were able to establish regular Age-ility workshops for older people in Lislea, Millisle, Enniskillen and Whitehead. As a result, in addition to expanding our partnerships in the community, we were able to keep our staff working, keeping our team together and increasing the skills of the tutors.

While the way we worked was adapting and evolving, as an organisation we were also making changes to secure our future. Our office manager is now employed as a SCC employee which means that when our current CEO retires, we have an experienced office manager in position and we can focus on just transitioning one post. Our management committee has been expanded to include members from all our Age-ility programmes as well as representation from Evergreen and freelance artists. In 2021 due to additional capital funding available from the Arts Council we were finally able to realise our dream of getting curtains and aerial equipment installed in Morton Community Centre which has now become an integral part of our Age-ility and Youth programmes.

The last five years has demonstrated the strengths of Streetwise both as an organisation and our staff. The way we work now is unrecognisable from the way we delivered programmes 5 years ago. We currently have solo tutors delivering 45 sessions a week which equates to 1600 workshops a year across the Province, reaching people living with dementia, older people, young people, and people living with disabilities. We continue to adapt and make changes to increase access and enable more marginalised groups to benefit. As we re-focus on the future, we can now see opportunities to use the skills of our staff to keep innovating and creating new social circus programmes to reach more marginalised groups.

Over the next 5 years we need to tackle the issue of succession planning, which has been discussed for many years but will, by the end of this plan, be a reality. We need to implement all aspects of this strategic plan to enable us to transition as an organisation without having to cut the

core programmes which make us the vibrant organisation we are today. This will involve working with core funders and community partners to establish a core administration which has long-term sustainability and can continue to deliver the benefits of social circus for future generations.

David Sutor

Chairperson: Streetwise Community Circus

2. The Current Context

Since our formation in 1995 Streetwise Community Circus has been continuing to develop and grow as a “social circus” organisation in Belfast. We are unique as a community circus organisation which is artist led, with a current membership of 22 artists who deliver over 1600 workshops per annum throughout Northern Ireland.

Being “artist led” is not just a title originating from being founded as a co-operative, but it is also a business model which means that we direct our funding into artistic activities, rather than administrative salaries, with our costs of administration being minimised to maximise the output of workshops. Being artist led also means that creativity is at the core of our organisation enabling us to expand and develop into new areas of work. However, this has also resulted in Streetwise spending less than 20% of its turnover on administration, which is not sustainable in the long term as we shall explore later.

The development of Streetwise as the leading provider of “social” circus in Ireland.

- In 1995 we were primarily a youth circus organisation working in a cross-community capacity, delivering workshops throughout Northern Ireland.
- In 2002 we became the first circus group in Ireland to work with people living with disabilities or mental health issues. This work has gained us an international reputation through our partnership with the Global Institute of Circus Studies, resulting in us being asked to speak at the Social Circus Conference in Tampere Finland in 2012.
- In 2014 we started a circus for older people, originally based in Belfast but now delivering programmes for older people throughout Northern Ireland.
- In 2015 we were one of four groups out of over 250 applications to be awarded funding from Spirit 2012 to support our work with people with disabilities throughout the Province.
- Also, in 2015 we developed working relationships with the Alzheimer’s Society and introduced new ways of working to allow circus to be enjoyed by people living with dementia.
- In 2016 we developed a new pilot programme focusing on people at risk of going into the justice system.
- 2019 we were awarded 4-year Lottery Funding to develop circus for older people across Northern Ireland.
- 2020 Streetwise continued to work through Covid lockdowns and restrictions by developing new techniques of Zoom teaching and “distanced” workshops, reaching some of those most isolated by the pandemic including people living in sheltered accommodation.
- 2022 Streetwise had established regular programmes for older people in 5 centres in Northern Ireland – Belfast, Lislea, Millisle, Enniskillen and Whitehead with outreach programmes in sheltered accommodation.
- 2024 Streetwise were awarded 5 year funding to develop programmes introducing circus to sheltered accommodation and dementia units, while also enabling participants to attend programmes in their community.

Our artists are at the core of everything we do, continuing to develop and expand the skills which enable them to work in ever more challenging environments, making themselves more sustainable as artists while enabling marginalised groups and individuals to participate in and benefit from circus skills. During Covid we established the viability of tutors working solo making it economically viable to work with small groups which in turn allowed us to expand to work in sheltered accommodation and dementia units and day centres. We developed “sitdown” circus techniques making our workshops more accessible to people with restricted mobility.

Streetwise continues to be an “open” organization, continuing to attract and recruit new artists. We are the only circus organisation to have membership of our tutor team, based on achieving a certified skill level making us open to new members. This policy has enabled us to rejuvenate our team while simultaneously retaining experienced tutors. Our current tutor team is highly inclusive with an age range of 18 years to 64 years, including people who have been recruited from our youth circus as well as people with over 35 years’ experience.

Whenever possible, Streetwise aims to make programmes free to participants in order to ensure that economic background is not a barrier to participation. The cost of running a circus workshop led by experienced staff is over £10 per head, based on 20 participants. Therefore, we aim to work with funding bodies and partners who see the value of the benefit to participants. This involves working with arts funding organisations, local government, health trusts, educational organisations, national charities, local charities and community groups to establish long-term sustainable partnerships. In recent years we have successfully managed to raise partnership funding for our Arts Council Lottery Programmes to 50% from many of our partners who, despite restrictive budgets, can see the value of the work and its impact.

In the current economic climate, we have seen cuts in arts funding, even more cuts in local government and increased pressure on funding in the health and educational sector. To many organisations these cuts result in a reduction in activity as they attempt to fund their core costs with reducing resources. Our approach has been different, we have attempted to expand our work through the development of new areas of work, such as working with people living with dementia, which may attract funding from new areas. This is possible because we do not have a team of full time salaried staff running the organisation. Our current administration is carried out by Jim Webster (CEO £34,000) and Lorraine Anderson (Office Manager £20,000).

However, as previously noted, this system is only sustainable because Jim Webster, as a founder of the company, is personally willing and in a position to deliver the administration of the company in this demanding way, as he also performs and generates income as an event coordinator. It is unlikely that the organisation (or for that matter any organisation) will be able to attract another person who would be willing to work to carry on these various roles so enthusiastically and so successfully without a substantial increase in salary.

In the last financial year, the total cost of administration was less than £54,000. If the Streetwise Board had to employ individuals to provide the same level of administration with a CEO to run the company and a part time office manager, a conservative estimate of £65,000 annually would be required from a guaranteed source.

In developing this 5-year plan we must consider that Jim Webster is 62, so by 2029 Streetwise Community Circus will have to have plans in place to allow for the transition to a new administration. However, the aim has to be to achieve this without losing the many benefits we have established by being artist led, and avoiding the trap of becoming an organisation weighed down by its administration, and perhaps, disempowering the artists who are the life blood of our work.

As this is now a key priority for the organization in the near future, we have had an initial review of the other companies in our sector, based on information submitted to Companies House. (Please see Section 5) It is clear that we are unique in running the programmes we offer with such a low level of funding for administration. The main funder of arts administration in Northern Ireland is the Arts Council and in Belfast, Belfast City Council. Both these bodies, despite different strategies, have for the most part maintained the same level of funding to the same organisations for many years, which has not reflected changes and company development over that time. Streetwise Community Circus is now in a position where we have to look to these funders for long-

term support to allow the long-term continued development of the organisation in the medium and long-term.

3. Streetwise Community Circus (SCC CiC): The Story So Far...

Streetwise Community Circus: CiC is a Community Interest Company based in South Belfast but with an operational base across Northern Ireland. It was established initially as a co-operative in 1995 by 13 circus practitioners, led by Jim Webster. The aim of the organisation was to share circus-based skills in a more formal manner through workshops. It aimed to deliver workshops across Belfast and beyond as well as creating an environment for practitioners to make a sustainable living. SCC Cic teaches a wide variety of circus based skills at its workshops and also has a Samba Band open to non-members. The latter was established primarily to attract new members. SCC Cic currently has 22 members providing them with a wide range of training including teaching circus skills, first aid, child protection, disability awareness and Makaton in order to ensure its product is as inclusive and safe as possible for all participants, regardless of age or ability.

SCC Cic organises and delivers a wide range of circus workshops which are targeted at both adults and children (over the age of 8) to attend workshops without distinction of sex, race, disability, economic/cultural background and political or religious opinion. SCC Cic's participants represent a wide and diverse cross section of the community and our work actively promotes non-sectarian activity and activity across all social divides.

SCC Cic operates a range of Policies and Procedures designed to promote and encourage inclusion and safety including

- Equal Opportunities Policy,
- Safeguarding guaranteed source Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Risk Assessment Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure
- Drugs Policy and Procedure
- Financial Policy and Procedures

SCC Cic also has an active policy of not excluding anyone from its activities irrespective of disability or age. Since October 2001 it has run a Disability Initiative which works specifically with people who have a range of physical and learning disabilities. This Initiative is funded currently through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Annual Funding with support through regional Health Trusts and the Tourism Culture and Arts Unit at Belfast City Council. This Initiative is unique on the island of Ireland in terms of the work it does. In 2014 Streetwise Cic launched its new Age-ility Circus for the over 60s, funded by ACNI's Arts and Older People Programme which has developed over the last 10 years to working across 5 areas of Northern Ireland in the community, in sheltered accommodation and in dementia units, with funding from the Lottery Community Fund and ACNI's Arts and Older People Programme.

Since 2011 SCC Cic has been carrying out detailed evaluations of projects by Dr Nick McCaffery. These include an evaluation of a Special Needs School Programme (Knockavoe Special School), a 12 week Fit for Olympics programme leading to a show case, a National Autistic Society Programme, a pilot programme for children at risk of being excluded from school (Malone College) and audience evaluations of our summer school. These evaluations have been published on line and have led to us being invited to deliver papers or speak at seminars at Arts Care Conference, Belfast (2012), the American Youth Circus Organisation's Educator's Conference in Seattle 2012, Finnish Social Circus Seminar 2013. The direct result of this last seminar has been the creation of a

Global Institute for Circus Studies. In 2018 we produced an evaluation of Circus Aurora funded by Spirit 2012, and since 2020 we have produced annual evaluations of our Age-ility programmes.

In 2024 SCC Cic is governed by a Board of four Individuals

Chair: David Suitor
Treasurer: Chris Patterson
Secretary: James Bamford
Dave Powell

A members Management Committee meets monthly comprising

David Suitor – Chair
Chris Patterson - Treasurer
James Bamford - Secretary
David Powell
Pauline White Belfast Age-ility member
Graham McFarlane Belfast Age-ility member
Mark Taylor Representative Whitehead Age-ility Circus
Kate Quinn Representative of Lislea Age-ility Circus
Jo Scott Representative of Millisle Age-ility Circus
Nicholas Watts Representative of Fermanagh Age-ility Circus
Darren Murphy Representative of Evergreen Circus
Nura Isa Youth Circus leader

The administration of SCC Cic is carried out by Jim Webster and Lorraine Anderson.

Streetwise Community Circus: Vision, Mission and Values

Vision:

SCC Cic is a not-for-profit Professional Circus Arts organisation which seeks to further the development of Circus Arts Provision across Northern Ireland through the provision of inclusive access to and participation in circus training and opportunities for people regardless of age, ability, economic, social, ethnic or religious background and to ensure the ongoing skills development of Circus Arts Professionals remains current, up-to date, innovative, relevant and inclusive.

SCC Cic's Mission is to

- Ensure that circus skills training is accessible to people, especially marginalised people throughout Northern Ireland, irrespective of gender, age, disability, economic, religious or cultural background, by providing circus workshops throughout the community, facilitated by experienced tutors.
- Inculcate professional circus skills to practitioners/tutors availing of training in: Teaching Circus Skills, First Aid, Child Protection, Disability Equality, and Makaton Skills making our workshops inclusive, enjoyable and safe environment for learning.
- Safeguard circus performing and or teaching as a viable and sustainable career path, enabling practitioners to live and work in Belfast and Northern Ireland, thereby ensuring the best quality practitioners working in the community.
- Operate as a not-for-profit community interest company, utilising Equal Opportunities and Child Protection/Safeguarding Policies.

The Values of SCC Cic are:

- **Quality:** Our products and services are constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure that they remain of the highest professional standards.

- **Innovation:** We consistently strive to ensure that our work remains fresh and new, that it reaches new participants and audiences and that we keep breaking new ground and pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved through participation in circus and the impact that this can have on our society.
- **Inclusion:** We are committed to ensuring that our products and services are truly open to everyone, in a real and meaningful way. We do not believe in token gestures but rather see no limitations on anyone taking part in our work, no matter what their age, perceived ability, economic, cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds are.
- **Value For Money:** We thoroughly appreciate the support given to us by our funders and aim constantly to provide a service that is both excellent in content and represents real return on their investment in it.
- **Consistency:** We are committed to maintaining and as much as possible improving the excellent standards of the work for which we are known, delivering the same standard of investment, commitment and delivery to each participant and group/organisation with whom we work.

4. Current Situational Analysis

In order for SCC Cic to successfully achieve this vision and fulfil our purpose in the period 2025 - 2029, it is necessary to closely examine the organisation, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that currently and will affect us. We outline these below in a SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong board and committee with appropriate range of policies and procedures ● Established long-term team of highly trained professional arts facilitators ● Diverse range of specialist skills throughout the above team. ● Facilitators also trained in a wide range of practical skills designed to complement their artistic specialisms. ● Highly trained in disability awareness and working with disabled participants ● Ongoing flexible training policy that is open to evolution as required as work becomes more diverse. ● Wide range of ages, gender, cultural background across the team. ● Strong reputation and track record in the delivery of innovative inclusive projects with excellent standards of work. ● Strong, sustainable and established relationships with community providers across NI ● Strong, sustainable and established relationships with Health Trusts across NI ● Wide distribution of partners from different sectors including councils, trusts, national charities, local charities, community arts organisations, entertainment venues and schools ● Innovative unique product and service. ● Flexible product that can be tailored to a broad variety of situations and sectors: schools, community groups young populations, with people with a variety of disabilities, with older people and with people living with dementia. ● Good relationships with Funders and Grant-makers. ● Recipients of the Spirit of 2012 Award, and Lottery Community Fund Awards speaks to quality of product and delivery. ● The development of Morton Community Centre with facilities to create a social circus centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long-term need for funding of our Administration which is dependent on good will of our current CEO and increasingly unsustainable. ● Inability to expand administration in line with our expanding outputs. ● Our financial dependence on two major funders (ACNI and Lottery Community Fund) to deliver our programmes. ● Social media presence needs to be expanded and website continually updated, required in order to improve interaction through increasing user engagement ● Marketing requires improvement, current provision needs to be more formalised and widespread. ● Improve communication between the board and the members so that there is buy in, ownership and input from the whole organisation into the proposed future developments. ● Only a limited recognition in the general public about what SCC Cic does. ● The apparent perception of the arts sector that Streetwise is “the third company after Circusful and BEAT Carnival”. ● Need to ensure revision of last two points taking into account and promoting an internationally recognised social circus, the unique selling point of Streetwise ● The lack of staffing in core funding organisations meaning that they do not have time to read our strategic plans and keep up to date with changes in the sector. If any staff from ACNI or BCC read this document, could you let us know, by emailing to demonstrate that this perceived weakness is false.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing reputation as the leading social circus organisation in Ireland with long established funders i.e. Arts Council, Lottery Community Fund & Belfast City Council. 	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased range of social circus projects expanding the potential capacity of the organisation • Increased range of partners and/or purchasers e.g. ELBs, and Health Boards • Building of empirical evidence regarding benefits of circus skills in all areas of social circus. • Possibility of expanding into new areas of Social Circus e.g. with refugees and asylum seekers, in the youth justice sector, with children at risk of exclusion, and on mental health programmes • To become leaders and innovators in the field of Social Circus, exporting our product beyond the island of Ireland. • Creating international links with other social circus organisations. • Sharing expertise globally through the “Global Institute of Circus Studies”, • Creating international links, relationships, exchanges and training opportunities for circus artists through accessing Creative Europe Funding. • Successful sourcing of long-term funding, leading to the ability to strategise in the long term for SCC Cic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brexit reducing opportunities for international engagement on a European level, opportunities for funding and partnership through Creative Europe. • Static core funding over many years from existing funding bodies and potentially not meeting the long-term needs of Streetwise. • Inflation causing a need to use current programming funding for core costs. • Reduction in opportunities for investment for the Arts from other potential funders due to ongoing public cuts here and subsequent lack of matched funding. • Continued pressure of Health Sector Funding post Covid. • Brexit reducing opportunities for activity in ROI • Loss of practitioners due to the impact of Covid and the associated financial insecurity at the time. • Long-term impact of not securing an increase in core funding. • The possibility of not replacing our Lottery Community Fund award when the current award ends in Dec 2028.

Solid implementation of and adherence to our previous 2018-23 business plan has resulted in many of the opportunities being realised and weakness highlighted being reduced.

- Our successful applications for capital funding and growing partnership with Belfast City Council has resulted in us realising our plans for Morton Community Centre which now has aerial equipment and stage curtains. These give us the facilities of a circus performance space without the associated running costs.
- Our management committee now includes representatives of all our Age-ility groups, the Evergreen programme, as well as staff from youth circus, disability programmes, and Age-ility programmes.
- Our website is now been upgraded and is kept updated on a regular basis.
- Our office manager is now an employee of SCC simplifying succession planning as we have continuity in that post and can focus on the transition to a new CEO when Jim Webster retires.
- We have increased funding from alternative sources by:
 1. Opening a donation scheme
 2. Charging commissions on members' performance work through Streetwise Performance Ltd
 3. Charging commissions on commercial workshops.
 4. Increasing partnership funding

The strengths highlighted in our previous plan proved themselves as we tackled the impact of the COVID pandemic during which:

- We used grant funding to keep staff working and reduced the loss of experience from the organisation and the sector.
- Using the skills and experience of our staff to develop new ways of working which reached new audiences e.g. Zoom and "solo" teaching.
- Raising our standing with funding organisations and community partners due to the way we rose to the challenge.

Dr Nick McCaffrey's work for SCC Cic has given us a thoroughly detailed analysis of the impact of our work and created a solid foundation for all future organisational evaluation. This applied academic approach will be highly useful and instrumental in convincing Health Trusts and other medical authorities of the validity of the argument that participation in the arts has solid health benefits for people with disabilities. Dr McCaffrey has already presented to the Arts Council Board based on our findings to date, on the impact and potential delivery of social circus for vulnerable groupings in Northern Ireland.

External Environmental Analysis: PESTLE

SCC Cic. is also influenced by a number of outside forces which can influence the way in which it may do things in the future. These influences must be acknowledged and considered in the future planning of the organisation.

External Environmental Analysis	
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brexit reducing our ability to work in ROI • Lasting financial impact of Covid both at Stormont and in local government, resulting in a low priority for the Arts as distinct from tourism.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of uplifts in core funding causing a gradual reduction in programming due to inflation will make some of our core programmes untenable in the future . • Potential lack of partnership support due to general lack of funding in community and health sectors. • Reduced sponsorship opportunities
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Page needs to be updated regularly and linked to Social Media platforms. • Increase connectivity and involvement with Facebook/X/BlueSky /Instagram • Explore digital platforms for Streetwise and Social Circus specifically Zoom as a means of reaching new audiences globally.
Legal Governmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All policies and procedures to be in line with EU Guidelines in order that product can be sold internationally • Child protection legislation incorporated annually as well as all updates on working with vulnerable adults into Child & At Risk Adult Protection Policy • Staff police checks carried out regularly • Health and safety updated annually • Public liability insurance updated annually • Professional indemnity insurances for practitioners updated annually
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making own equipment from scrap/recycled materials • Recycling • Children more environmentally aware • Adoption of the Environmental Policy for the organisation so that it informs core and project activity • Utilise email rather than paper post when possible. • All meetings held on Zoom removing impacts of transport • Administration working from home to remove commuting • Invoicing via email reducing paper use • Payments via bank transfer to reduce paper

Equality

- Section 75
- Equality drive (specifically to address the gender make up of organisation)

5. Peer Administrative Review and Analysis
(Carried out by C Patterson reviewing Company House data)

The Beat accounts to 31-03-23		
	2022	2023
Total Income	£273,320	£328,507
Admin 4 Full time equivalent staff	£133,379	£131,280
Artist/performer & Tutor fees	£45,714	£60,284
Strategic Reserve	£727,241	£755,626

In Your Space accounts to 31-03-23		
	2022	2023
Total Income	£499,992	£688,557
Admin 4 full time equivalent	£99,692	£124,104
Artist/performer & Tutor fees	£185,582	£146,001
Strategic Reserve	£108,094	£248,235 *

* of which £91,507 allocated for new building project

Circusful accounts up to 31/3/24		
	2023	2024
Total Income	£517,030	£524,076
Admin numbers	9	10
Admin Costs	£243,688	£243,537
Artist Costs	£348,151	£168,502 (see note below)
Reserves	£297,468	£336,206 (see note below)

Note

Artist cost No clear indication of artistic costs in the breakdown of expenses, however the general cost for charitable activities noted on the balance sheets for 2023 is £348,151 and in 2024 it is £168,502. This would in my opinion have to relate to the workshop costs which would encompass tutor fees

Unrestricted Income fund 2023 Unrestricted Income fund 2024

Space						
Circusful	10	£243,537	£168,502	£524076	£336,206	£297,468

The above comparison demonstrates how we are by far the largest generator of income for artists. Only In Your Space pay out more to artists that they do to administrators. All other companies in the sector are adding to their reserves year on year. As “artist costs” are the measure of the front-line activities delivered by a company the comparison between administrative staff numbers and artist costs, highlights how Streetwise is the most cost effective at delivering our artistic objectives which benefits the community compared to the rest of the sector.

6. What makes Streetwise stand out: our unique selling point.

SCC Cic believes we are necessary to the ecology of the Arts Infrastructure of Northern Ireland and provide significant value for money and return on investment because:

- SCC Cic is the only Circus Organisation on the Island of Ireland whose primary core function is “**Social Circus**”. This unique selling point for the organisation has demonstrated a whole new way in which circus skills can be utilised as well as creating new opportunities for the arts to work in conjunction with other sectors such as Health, Education, Voluntary and Community. It has also redefined how the general public perceive the capabilities of people who have been marginalised or ignored by society.
- Intrinsic to this is our strong and long-term track record of targeting those members of society often ignored or disregarded by other circus arts providers. While we do deliver to children and young people, this demographic is far from the only focus of our work. Over 25 years we have worked with people with physical disability and learning difficulties and soundly demonstrated the benefits of circus skills for this group. This work has been at the heart of our provision – it has never been a token gesture. Similarly, and building on these foundations, we are now developing circus skills delivery with older people across Northern Ireland.
- Since 2014 we have developed a programme for older people which now includes 5 core centres in Belfast, Millisle, Whitehead, Lislea and Fermanagh with a wide range of outreach programmes across the surrounding areas. This has now expanded to include people living with dementia.
- SCC Cic works with groups and within communities in local areas, in local venues, many of which suffer from high levels of multiple deprivation. Not only does this keep our products and services highly flexible and overheads down, it promotes circus skills and their values at a local level and encourages communities to create local showcases, celebrating local talent, raising self-esteem and attracting visitors and tourists to areas which they might otherwise not have visited
- Our evaluation methodology is rigorous in the extreme, developed to the highest academic standards by SCC Cic member Dr Nick McCaffrey and its ongoing application to our work ensures that we are constantly developing and tailoring our work towards the benefit of our participants and tutors. We are also at the heart of “The Global Institute of Circus Studies” sharing all the academic social circus evaluations from around the world.
- Our ancillary tutor training programme is also unique, providing all our tutors annually with a wide range of skills that ensure that they are able to work directly with any potential participant regardless of their age, ability or background.
- SCC Cic are the only circus in Ireland who require a skills entry level for tutors. This guarantees skill levels within our team but also enables us to offer the opportunity to new members making us uniquely accessible to new artist and open as an organisation
- SCC Cic is an artist led organisation, with the board being elected annually by the members. This is unique in Ireland and has been a key feature of our ability to adapt and move into new areas of Social Circus.
- SCC Cic are an efficient organisation which punches well above its weight in the widespread delivery of inclusive, innovative workshops as well as the development of a unique Summer School and Performance opportunities for Disabled Artists and the creation and delivery of large-scale local events across Northern Ireland, targeting specifically some of its most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens.

7. Current Funding Climate:

There is no doubt that the current economic climate is difficult while all levels of government are recovering from Covid. Expanding our company is challenging, especially at a time when many in the sector have not returned to pre-Covid positions yet funding from ACNI and Belfast City Council has remained unchanged across the sector. However, we are committed to ensuring that the work we do remains achievable and that the benefits it brings to so many of the most vulnerable citizens in our society continue to improve lives. Although we are in a situation where a reduction in some areas of our programming seems to be the only option, Streetwise is committed to expansion and enhancement where possible and we will work tirelessly to this end. Over the last 20 years we have implemented a process of ongoing development and reviewing of our procedures, policies and methodology of work, consistently striving to improve and this has shown in the increase and reception of our programmes. SCC Cic is a small organisation, but has shown itself not only to be efficient and highly capable of adapting to change, but also of creating on the island of Ireland a large-scale body of work that is consistently innovative, inclusive and extremely good value for money. In short SCC Cic is an extremely good investment for funders and we are committed to ensuring that this remains to be the case.

We have also managed to secure a variety of other support for the work we do, both in kind and in cash through creating relationships with health trusts, voluntary organisations and corporations for our work and given its effect and the good news stories and positive publicity it engenders, we do not foresee any significant reduction in this, rather the opposite, in the coming year.

This is not to say that our task is easy, but as we have innovated in our work, thinking outside the box, so must we be creative in our approach to funding, finding new and diverse streams of revenue, convincing funders through evidence, and first hand accounts of why investment and increased investment is worth it. We will keep our work as cutting edge as possible and will not rest on our laurels in order to ensure the sustainability of SCC Cic as we approach our 30th anniversary.

How Have We Done?

Reaching the Goals and Objectives of our 2018 - 23 Corporate Plan

The challenge we could not have foreseen in 2018 was the impact of the Covid pandemic which impacted all aspects of society and is still having lasting consequences in terms of funding and the economy. However, as an organisation we thrived, utilising the skills and resources which meant we were able to continue delivering our aims and objectives. Nevertheless, we had to refocus some of our aims.

In our Strategic Goals and Objectives we stated that Streetwise were committed to:

Streetwise Cic 2018-23: Priorities for Action:

Aims	Objectives	Actions	Outcome
Future proofing SCC Cic	Securing partnerships outside of Northern Ireland to ensure ongoing diverse opportunities to work and learn.	Explore options for collaboration and cross border work, both North South and East West in post- Brexit Northern Ireland with partner organisations – arts and non-arts in Ireland, Scotland, England Wales and Europe	As a leading social circus organisation in the UK we are now part of “Circusworks” where we aim to develop wider social circus concepts expanding circus for older people and disability groups across UK. During Covid we established via Zoom a circus group for refugees in Newcastle upon Tyne
	Securing a level of investment commensurate with placing solid sustainable administration and management at the heart of SCC Cic	Make the case for increased core investment to all our funders. Create business case for SCC Cic product and forward to ACNI, BCC etc.	Our Office manager is now an SCC employee and we continue to argue for increased core funding to facilitate succession planning.
Increasing and securing SCC Cic’s revenue streams:	Securing multi-annual funding from existing public funders ACNI and Belfast City Council.	Create strong achievable programme that is innovative and inspirational with realistic aims and objectives and	We have carried out our actions but core funding is still being assessed on an

		aligns with Strategic visions of both ACNI and BCC	annual basis
	Securing funding specific to our targeted participants	Explore with Dept of Communities and Dept of Health possibilities of funding for projects working directly with older people and people with disabilities, over and above arts funding.	We have secured 5 year funding from Lottery Community Fund for working with older people across Northern Ireland
	Strengthening our existing relationships with Regional Health Trusts and City/Borough/Local Councils towards securing new support streams	Collaboration with health trusts and local councils/statutory organisations to ensure that current delivery is on target and effective while identifying new areas for future mutual project work.	We have long-term working relationships with Northern Trust, Belfast Trust SE Trust and through Covid have developed new relationships with many of Northern Irelands Social housing providers
	Identifying other revenue sources such as trusts and foundation funding that specialise in working with people with disabilities	Ongoing research into available and relevant funding through trusts and foundations. Secure face to face meetings with representatives from identified appropriate organisations prior to making application. Invitation to representatives to appropriate Events and Conferences that showcase Streetwise's work	We have struggled to increase funding from local health trusts, although since Covid we have a new expanding relationship with Camphill Community Glenraig who now provide 50% funding with plans to expand our programmes in the future
	Identifying and encouraging corporate sponsorship for our work	Work with Arts & Business to identify business mentors and corporate partners for Streetwise. Secure corporate sponsorship for Ageility Youth and Justice Programmes	This has not been developed over the Covid pandemic
Raising SCC Cics profile across Northern	Developing and applying practically an Annual Marketing Plan in order to	Identify and create a new Marketing Sub-Committee to work with staff and	In the last 5 years we have been the subject

Ireland and beyond	make press and media across NI and beyond aware of its work and the many “good news” stories it involves	where possible outside marketing consultants to ensure ongoing PR and marketing is as strong as possible. Work in collaboration with Thrive and Arts & Business to enhance this	of numerous good news media stories around our Age-ility programme including TV (Bara Best, Pamela Ballantine) newspaper features and funders’ evaluation reports.
	Ongoing development and updating of its website including linking in to other arts organisations websites in order to encourage cross sectoral promotion of its work.	Update Social Media Plan to work in concert with Marketing Plan. Ongoing collaboration and partnerships with other arts organisations	Our website has been upgraded and is now updated regularly linking in with Facebook. Communications remains an organisational weakness due to lack of administrative capacity
	Ensuring a high profile presence across 2018-23 festivals and public events in NI, ROI and internationally.	Ongoing attendance at conferences and events to showcase Streetwise work and upcoming events. Identify and source funding to ensure international touring of work through North South Touring Programme, Creative Europe and other platforms. Ensure media are aware of Streetwise presence	Covid and Brexit have impacted on our ability to deliver these actions.
Aims	Objectives	Actions	
Creating strategic alliances across the sectors and throughout Northern Ireland	Developing relationships and potential for collaborative work between SCC Cic and arts venues in Northern Ireland, for instance The Crescent Arts Centre, The MAC and potentially The Ulster Museum.	Ensure ongoing contact between Streetwise and venues. Identify opportunities for partnership work, especially in Outreach. Invite programmers to Streetwise events.	The cutting of our disability summer school initially due to Covid and then to lack of funding has reduced our contact with arts venues
	Consolidating our already existing relationships with	Provide ongoing updates to health sector partners.	We provide annual

	health trusts, community organisations and disability organisations throughout NI towards the creation of new work and the securing of support for this, not least in the procurement of testimonials promoting the benefit of the work we do.	Schedule regular meetings with partners to explore new avenues of work and potential partnership funding opportunities. Provide partners with participant feedback.	evaluations which gather feedback and demonstrate the benefits of our work.
	Developing close working relationships with our funders in order that we have input into future policy/strategy development most especially in the area of funding/support for the arts	Ensuring that our relationships with all our funders remains strong by aligning our programme with their aims and objectives and that they are in receipt of all Organisation M&E head of schedule.	We continue to work closely with ACNI, BCC and Lottery community Fund providing all monitoring and evaluation on our programmes
	Sustaining our existing and creating new relationships with other arts organisations both within the circus sector and without throughout NI and in the UK and ROI in order to create new opportunities to work collaboratively and pool resources.	Create ongoing opportunities for partnership work. Pool resources when and where possible to help other arts organisations. Invite representatives from other Arts organisations to Streetwise events. Provide training to other arts organisations when and where possible. Attend a support as many other Arts Events and Conferences as possible.	We have shared evaluations and social circus training with In Your Space who are developing social circus programmes in the NW. We have been a full participant in circus sector meetings in Northern Ireland and worked with BEAT on Lisburn Events Circusful on Belfast events including producing "Cabaret in the Cathedral.
Aims	Objectives	Actions	
Continuing to fully support the development and existence of Circus provision in Northern Ireland	Consistently striving to promote innovation and inclusion in our sector by developing new projects that push the boundaries of what can be achieved through Circus training.	Source funding to continue to deliver Age-ility Circus for the over 60s. Develop and deliver new programmes aimed at some of the most vulnerable in society: people in the justice system, refugees. Work in concert with front line providers to explore options for intervention	We have secured 5 year funding for Age-ility Circus programmes focusing on those suffering isolation in sheltered accommodation as well as annual funding for Targeting people

		and direct delivery	living with dementia and funding from REAP for rural communities.
	Providing ongoing, relevant, innovative and new skills training and employment for Circus Professionals in Northern Ireland.	Attend international symposiums and conferences to ensure that we are fully up to date with professional training developments within our field. Identify and source funding to bring International Practitioners for masterclass training to Northern Ireland. Provide a world class training programme for Circus Practitioners in Northern Ireland that is open to independent practitioners as well as Streetwise members.	We have been unable to do attend international conferences in person although increasingly these are being replaced by Zoom conferences which we have attended.
	Provide a Social Circus Centre for Northern Ireland.	Work in partnership with Belfast City Council to identify funding to develop the Hall at Morton Community Centre into a bespoke Social Circus Centre with the appropriate equipment to deliver circus skills training to people with disability, with learning difficulties, older people, children, young people and potentially many more.	This has been achieved through the successful applications for capital funding which enabled us to install aerial equipment and stage curtaining in Morton Community Centre. As a result our Morton based groups now include these skills.

Ongoing partnerships since 2018 include:

Name	Sector	Reach
Belfast City Council	Local Government	Belfast
Belfast Trust	Health	Belfast
Northern Trust	Health	Antrim
South Eastern Trust	Health	Newry & Mourne
Camphill Community Glencraig	Health	Co Down
Clifden Community College	Education	ROI: Galway
Alzheimer's Society	Health	NI Wide
Whitehead Community Circus	Community & Arts	Antrim
Lislea Community Association	Community Development	Newry & Mourne
Millisle Community Association	Community Development	Ards and North Down
Fermanagh Age-ility Circus	Community Arts	Fermanagh & Omagh
Clanmil Housing	Health & Community	NI Wide
Alpha Housing	Health & Community	NI Wide
Radius Housing	Health & Community	NI Wide
Abbeyfield Housing	Health & Community	Belfast
SERC	Education	Co Antrim
Mid and East Antrim Age Partnership	Health & Community	Antrim
Mid & East Antrim BC	Local Government	Antrim
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Local Government	Antrim
Causeway Coast & Glens	Local Government	Antrim
Derry & Strabane District Council	Local Government	Derry
BEAT Initiative	Community Arts	Belfast
Circusful	Community Arts	Belfast
In Your Space	Community Arts	Derry
NEST	Charity	Newcastle upon Tyne

Streetwise Cic 2025 - 29: Priorities for Action:

Aims	Objectives	Actions
Futureproofing SCC Cic	Securing partnerships outside of Northern Ireland to ensure ongoing diverse opportunities to work and learn.	Explore options for collaboration with partner organisations – arts and non-arts in Ireland, Scotland, England Wales and Europe promoting “social” circus and SCC as an “expert in the field”
	Securing level of investment commensurate with placing solid sustainable administration and management at the heart of SCC CiC	Make the case for increased core investment to all our funders. Create business case for SCC CiC product and forward to ACNI, BCC etc. as part of succession planning
Increasing and securing SCC Cic's revenue streams:	Securing multi-annual funding from existing public funders ACNI, Belfast City Council and Lotteery Community Fund	Create strong achievable programme that is innovative and inspirational with realistic aims and objectives and aligns with Strategic visions of both ACNI, BCC and Lottery ensuring funding is in place post 2029
	Continuing to develop new “social”	Potential programmes include

	circus programmes and expanding funding base	activities with refugees and asylums seekers, mental health programmes, youth justice, children at risk of exclusion, and a summer school in partnership with Glencraig.
	Strengthening our existing relationships with Regional Health Trusts and City/Borough/Local Councils towards securing new support streams	Collaboration with Health Trusts and local councils/statutory organisations to ensure that current delivery is on target and effective while identifying new areas for future mutual project work.
	Identifying other revenue sources such as Trusts and Foundation Funding that specialise in working with people with disabilities	Ongoing research into available and relevant funding through Trusts and Foundations. Secure face to face meetings with representatives from identified appropriate organisations prior to making application. Invitation to representatives to appropriate Events and Conferences that showcase Streetwise's work
	Identifying and encouraging corporate sponsorship for our work	Secure corporate sponsorship for Age-ility, Youth and Justice Programmes
	Expanding our donation scheme	Promote our donation scheme via social media / website and word of mouth
Raising SCC Cics profile across Northern Ireland and beyond	Developing and applying practically an Annual Communications Plan in order to make press and media across NI and beyond aware of its work and the many "good news" stories it involves	Expand the activities of our Communications Sub-Committee to target specific marketing outcomes
	Ongoing development and updating of its website including linking in to other arts organisations website in order to encourage cross sectoral promotion of its work.	Update Social Media Plan to work in concert with Communications plan. Ongoing collaboration and partnerships with other partner organisations to utilise their media presence.
	Ensuring a high profile presence across 2025-29 festivals and public events in NI,ROI and internationally	Ongoing attendance at conferences and events to showcase Streetwise work and upcoming events. Identify and source funding to ensure international touring of work through North South Touring Programme, Creative Europe and other platforms. Ensure media are aware of Streetwise Presence
Aims	Objectives	Actions
Creating strategic alliances across	Developing relationships and potential for collaborative work between SCC Cic and arts organisations in Northern Ireland,	Ensure ongoing contact between Streetwise and arts organisations. Identify opportunities for partnership work, especially in

the Sectors and throughout Northern Ireland	for instance The Crescent Arts Centre, The MAC and potentially The Ulster Museum.	training research and development. Invite partners to Streetwise events.
	Consolidating our already existing relationships with health trusts, housing providers, community and disability organisations throughout NI towards the creation of new work and the securing of support for this, not least in the procurement of testimonials promoting the benefit of the work we do.	Provide ongoing updates to health sector partners. Schedule regular meetings with partners to explore new avenues of work and potential partnership funding opportunities. Provide partners with participant feedback.
	Developing close working relationships with our funders in order that we have input into future policy/strategy development most especially in the area of funding/support for the arts	Ensuring that our relationships with all our funders remains strong by aligning our programme with their aims and objectives and that they are in receipt of all organisation M&E ahead of schedule.
	Sustaining our existing and creating new relationships with other arts organisations both within the Circus Sector and without throughout NI and in the UK and Eire in order to create new opportunities to work collaboratively and pool resources.	Create ongoing opportunities for partnerships work. Pool resources when and where possible to help other arts organisations. Invite representatives from other arts organisations to Streetwise events. Provide training to other arts organisations when and where possible. Attend a support as many other arts events and conferences as possible.
Aims	Objectives	Actions
Continuing to fully support the development and existence of Circus provision in Northern Ireland	Consistently striving to promote innovation and inclusion in our sector by developing new projects that push the boundaries of what can be achieved through Circus training.	Source funding to continue to deliver Age-ility Circus for the over 60s. and people living with dementia. Develop and deliver new programmes aimed at some of the most vulnerable in society: people in the justice system, refugees. Young people at risk of exclusion and mental health programmes Work in concert with front line providers to explore options for intervention and direct delivery
	Providing ongoing, relevant, innovative and new skills training and employment for circus professionals in Northern Ireland.	Attend international symposiums and conferences to ensure that we are fully up to date with professional training developments within our field. Identify and source funding to bring international practitioners for masterclass training to Northern Ireland. Provide a world class training

		programme for social circus practitioners in Northern Ireland that is open to independent practitioners as well as Streetwise members.
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Executive Summary

In assessing the outlook for Streetwise Community Circus for the next 5 years, it is clear, that we are starting from a point of real strength in terms of the skills and experience of our staff and our ability to develop new programmes. Our evolution since 2018 has left us with a dynamic organisation with many stakeholders who value the work we deliver. Prior to 2020, tutors worked in teams of three, the introduction of solo teaching, which is unique to Streetwise, means that we can justify working with small groups, opening up new opportunities including sheltered accommodation and nursing homes, enabling us to have a real impact on reducing isolation. This is something we can now take forward as we develop new “social circus” programmes potentially with refugees and asylum seekers, mental health programmes, youth justice or young people at risk of exclusion from education.

Our weakness is in our long-term financial security, in terms of our need for succession planning for our administration and the requirement to rebuild our reserves. It appears from our comparison of the sector, that many of the companies that ceased operation for 18 months used the period to increase reserves. We are in the process of building a reserve in line with our reserve policy of between 3 and 6 months of our administrative commitments, which is standard for the charitable sector. This can be achieved through income from donations, commercial activities and commissions from performances. However large scale or rapid expansion of reserves in other organisations seems to have been at the expense of not using core funding on activities. Funding bodies should consider this when assessing the needs of the different organisations within the sector.

Supporting our tutor team by continuing to work through Covid has reaped rewards as we have not only kept our team together but expanded their skills, with the result that we now have the most experienced team of “social circus” tutors in Ireland and the UK including internationally recognised artists who work for us in community settings and mentor new tutors.

Streetwise has demonstrated its ability to adapt, deliver, and thrive when there are real challenges. We must now redouble our efforts to demonstrate this to our core funders the Arts Council and Belfast City Council who provide the sector with the annual funding to cover core administration costs. It is clear from our sector comparison, that while we are at the forefront of delivering the stated impacts and objectives of the funders, we are far behind on the support we receive. Funding allocations have not changed for well over 10 years with all organisations receiving the same awards irrespective of their outputs. Having worked for almost 30 years with one administrator and now a part time office manager we are left unsustainable in the long term, while elsewhere, there are funded organisations who have multiple posts funded annually irrespective of outputs. This is a difficult conversation to have as it implies criticism of other organisations or the funders who we depend on for support. However, unless we can demonstrate this case to those who take decisions, we will be forced to cut areas of programmes which are currently improving lives.