



Galway Community Circus

Impact Report

2024

DARE, DREAM AND CREATE

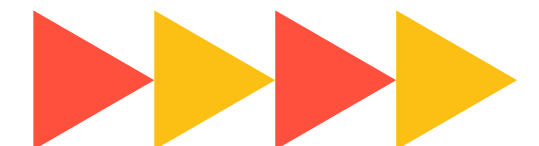




Dare, Dream, Create

Daring to dream and create, 2024 was a year of transformation at Galway Community Circus. From empowering young people to advancing circus education, we made an impact locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2024 we dared to push boundaries, dreamed big for our future, and created opportunities to make a difference. Whether it was empowering young people to take risks and build confidence, fostering inclusion through community participation programmes, or advancing circus education through research and collaboration, our work was rooted in meaningful impact.



3,154
youth circus
festival
engagements

601
weekly
members

198
days of
professional
developemnt

9
performances

7,072
people
engaged

7
European
projects

19
community
programmes

1,042
community
programme
participants

4
youth
exchanges

Youth Circus



Building Skills, Friendships and Futures

2024 was a fantastic year filled with creativity, collaboration, and growth. Core parts of our Youth Circus programme included our Youth Performance Troupe, our Mayhem Youth Circus Festival, youth exchanges and performance opportunities.

601

members

7072

people
engaged

4

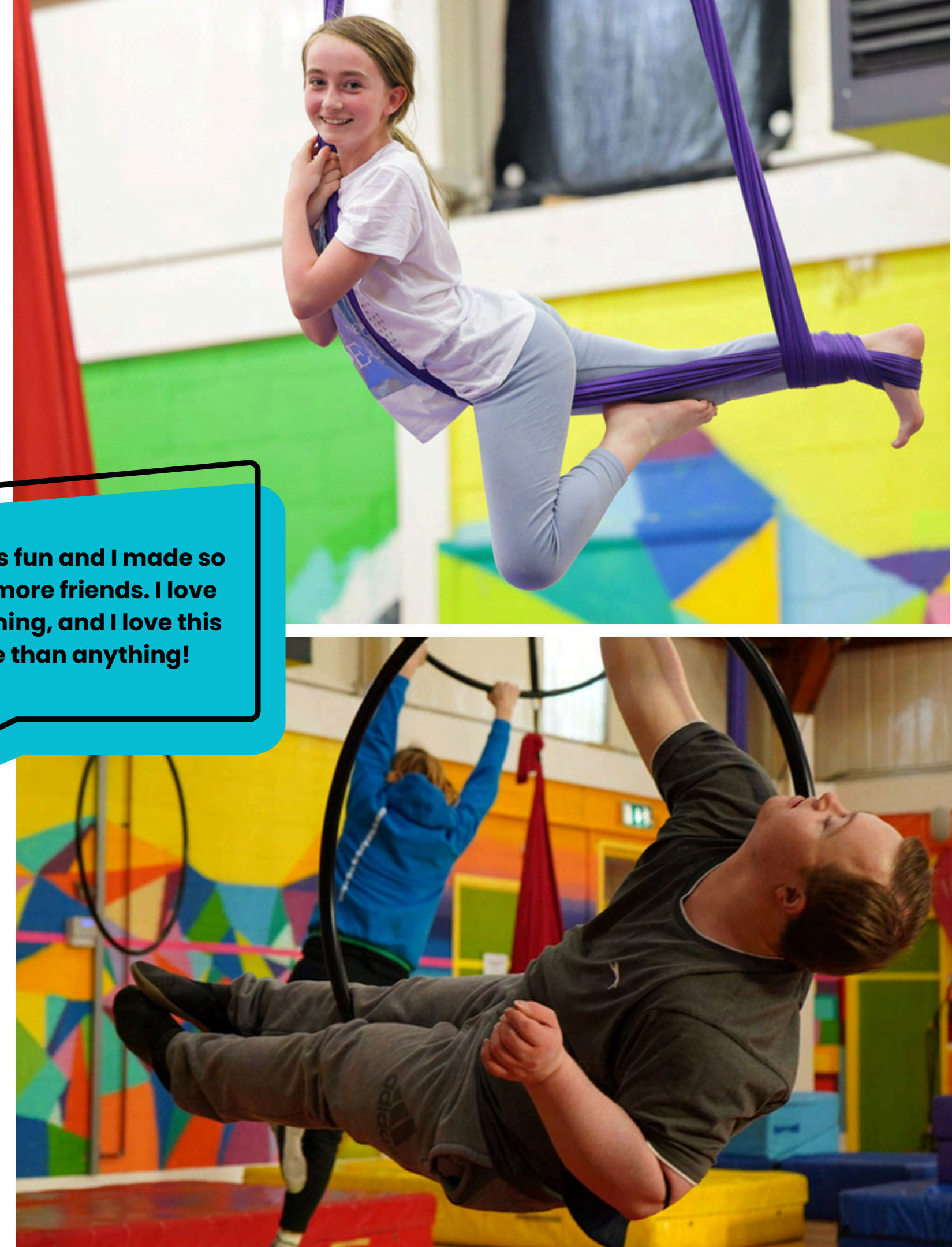
youth
exchanges

9

performances



Circus is fun and I made so many more friends. I love performing, and I love this more than anything!



Youth Circus



Youth Performance Troupe

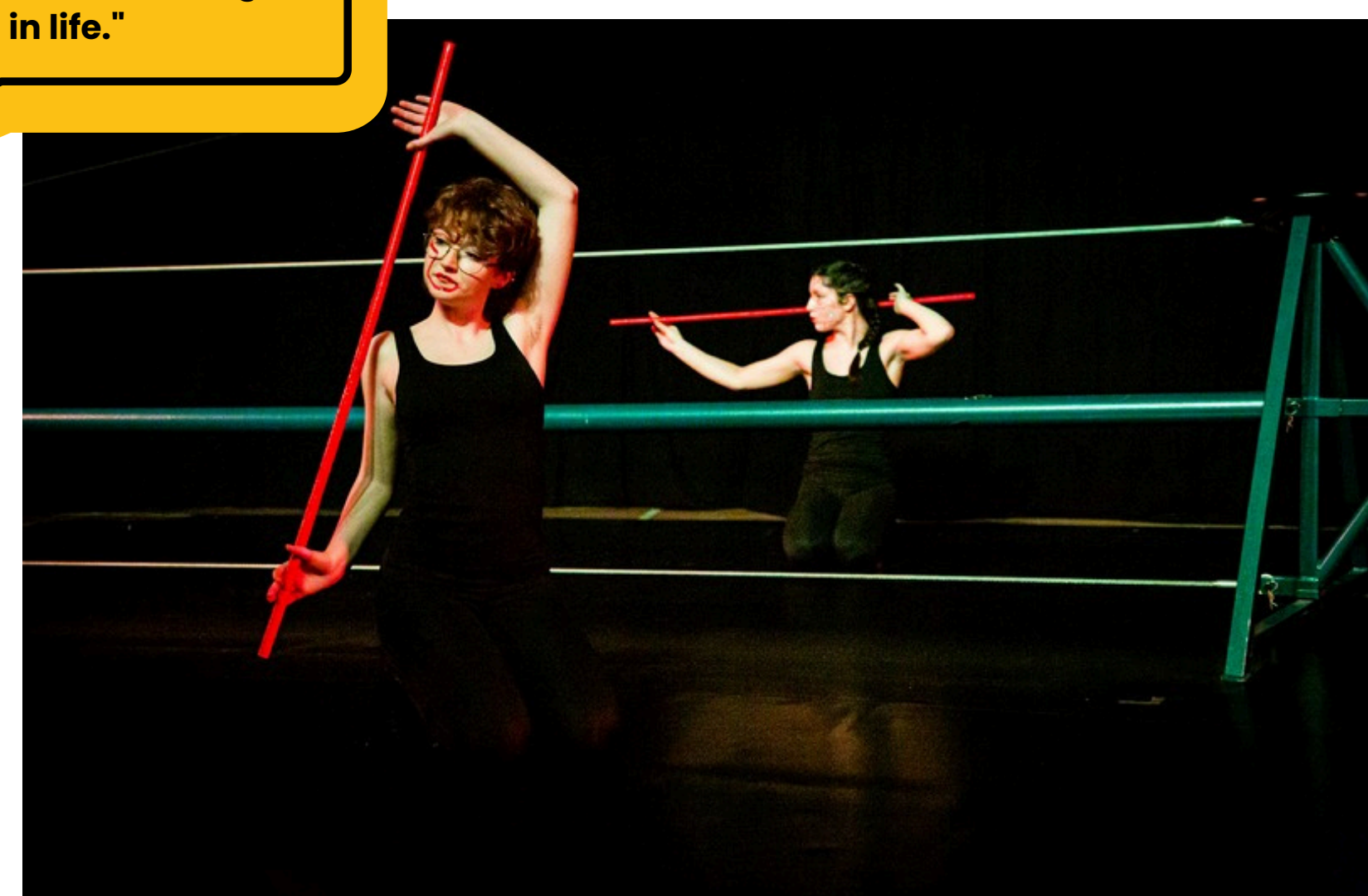
The Youth Performance Troupe is our Young Artist Development Programme for emerging circus artists. Troupe members received specialised training and performed a work-in-progress showcase. With expert guidance, they honed their skills in teamwork, discipline, and performance artistry, setting the stage for future careers in circus.

Mayhem Youth Circus Festival

The 2024 Mayhem Youth Circus Festival drew 3,154 engagements and featured a fun line-up of events for our members and community. The festival included Circus in the Park, a family-friendly day with circus skills workshops in our big top tent taught by youth exchange participants, outdoor aerial and funambulism workshops, stilts walkabouts by our youth performers, and two hilarious performances by professional clown Fraser Hooper; a Scratch Night performance featuring youth exchange members; and in-class performances and workshops for member families and friends to join in on the circus fun.



"Circus has helped me to believe more in myself, to love my body and to overcome new challenges in life."



Youth Circus



Youth Exchanges

Our youth members participated in four transformative youth exchanges, each offering unique opportunities for skill development and connection.

- Circus Explored: Led by ISACS, bringing together youth from In Your Space Circus (Derry), Circusful (Belfast), and Galway Community Circus.
- Italy Youth Exchange: Hosted in partnership with Pirilampo Scuola di Circo and Badabam Scuola di Circo
- Irish Aerial Creation Day: Hosted by the Irish Aerial Creation Centre
- Irish Youth Circus Gathering: Organised and hosted by Cloughjordan Circus Club

Performances: Taking the Stage

Performance opportunities are a cornerstone of our programme. Our youth members showcased their talents at Scratch Nights, the Galway St. Patrick's Day Parade, and our annual Christmas Cabaret. Our Unicycle and Stilts class members were standout performers at Mayhem, while the Youth Performance Troupe debuted an exciting new work-in-progress show. Participants in Circus Transformation 7 also put on a fantastic performance for our community while they were in Galway.



"I will have fond memories of this week for the rest of my life. I need to do this exchange again to see the people I met again."





Empowering Community Through Circus

Community Partnership Programme

We believe in the transformative power of circus to inspire, empower, and bring people together. These programmes create accessible and inclusive opportunities for schools, youth, and community groups to develop confidence, social skills, and a sense of belonging. From introducing young children to vital developmental skills to providing a safe space for individuals to take risks and express themselves, circus education has a profound impact.



19

community programmes

1042

community programme participants



Empowering Community Through Circus



Big Tops to Big Dreams

We partnered with New Horizon Athlone, the Gateway Youth Project UBU, Foróige, and the Athlone Community Taskforce to deliver Big Tops to Big Dreams. This two-week programme supported the physical and mental well-being of refugee youth and young people in Direct Provision.

Funded by the Bank of Ireland Begin Together Arts Fund in partnership with Business to Arts, the programme engaged 340 participants, including youth, arts educators, translators, and community partners. Led by circus educator Pete Duncan, the sessions explored circus skills, performance techniques, and meaningful discussions on learning and resilience.

The initiative culminated in a vibrant celebration at Burgess Park on August 10th, featuring a colourful parade, engaging workshops, and a performance titled 'Resilience'. The event was a testament to the strength, creativity, and connections built during the programme.



The skills our young people learned in a mere 12 hours were skills they will take forward in life.



Empowering Community Through Circus

Circus Workshops with Western Travellers / Bru Bhríde

We facilitated a workshop programme with Western Travellers Bru Bhríde. Focused on promoting children's health and well-being through play and group activities, this initiative provided a safe and joyful space for participants to learn new skills, build friendships, and embrace the magic of circus.

Expanding Our Reach with Galway City Partnership

We also began working with Galway City Partnership to bring circus to even more communities. We hosted three taster workshops at the Ballinfoyle Castlegar Neighbourhood Centre, giving participants a chance to explore the magic of circus in a fun and inclusive environment.





Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

At Galway Community Circus, we are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. We launched our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy in 2023, and in 2024, we continued taking meaningful steps to embed these principles across everything we do.

4
EDI projects

“
I'm more aware about inclusivity in my work but also in my daily life thanks to this training.
”



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Extraordinary Bodies

We teamed up with Extraordinary Bodies, a UK circus company renowned for its inclusive practices, blending the talents of D/deaf, disabled, and non-disabled artists. Together, we delivered a transformative programme focused on inclusive youth circus practices, funded by the Arts Council Capacity Building Support Scheme.

Over two days, we hosted more than 20 youth circus practitioners from across Ireland in Galway for professional development workshops. Led by Extraordinary Bodies' Inclusion and Access Facilitators - alongside professional and young artists - the sessions explored accessible teaching techniques, inclusive performance creation, and strategies for integrating disabled and non-disabled artists into ensembles. The culmination of this collaboration was a special public event held on Culture Night at Galway Community Circus.

Thanks to the support of ISACS and Creative Ireland, the programme sparked meaningful discussions about how we can better support young people of all abilities. It reinforced our belief that circus is an art form for everyone, regardless of physical ability.



I intend on having more conversations about access and barriers faced by participants. I will be investing using elements of accessibility as part of creative performance and exercises.



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

ISACS EDI Project

We participated in the ISACS EDI Project, joining other arts organisations Waterford Spraoi, Macnas, and the Irish Aerial Creation Centre to advance inclusivity across the Irish arts sector. Led and facilitated by Noeleen Hartigan, the project involved workshops, data-gathering activities, and collaborative discussions aimed at analysing current practices and identifying gaps.

Galway Community Circus EDI Audit

Galway Community Circus conducted a comprehensive EDI audit. Facilitated by Pete Duncan, this process involved engaging 21 contributors – including staff, board members, trainers, parents, and external partners – through interviews, questionnaires, and discussions.

Auditing Accessibility with PATH

Accessibility extends beyond our physical spaces, and this year, we partnered with our website developers, PATH, to assess and improve the accessibility of our website. We made essential updates to meet accessibility standards and laid the groundwork for future improvements.





Artform Development

Investing in the Future of Circus

We are dedicated to building a community of valued circus professionals and aim to support artists, educators, and arts practitioners at every stage of their careers while contributing to the growth of the circus sector. Our artform development programme offers artists access to daily training and rehearsal space, production support, mentorship, and connections to a network of Irish and international circus professionals.

198
days of
professional
development



Artform Development

Circus Transformation: Driving Social Change Through Circus

We completed Circus Transformation 7 and began Circus Transformation 8, a "training for trainers" programme by the Caravan Circus Network. Bringing together 10 organisations and over 20 participants, it equips Social Circus educators with skills for social engagement and change through four intensive modules. Galway Community Circus sent two artists to Circus Transformation 7, hosted a 5-day training in Galway, and has sent two more artists to Circus Transformation 8.

Professional Development Workshops

We facilitated two professional development workshops with Circa Contemporary Circus and professional clown Fraser Hooper. During the Galway International Arts Festival, Circa delivered an acrobatics masterclass inspired by their show Duck Pond, while in May, Fraser Hooper led a clowning workshop as part of our Mayhem Youth Circus Festival, sharing his expertise with youth exchange participants and tutors.



Artform Development

ASK Training (Assistant Trainers Sharing Knowledge)

Developed by EYCO, the ASK training programme provides a dedicated curriculum for assistant trainers in youth circus, focusing on pedagogical skills, best practices, and youth engagement to create a standardized European framework. This year, we took a key step in bringing ASK to Ireland by training Irish circus trainers to deliver the programme locally, supporting the next generation of assistant trainers and strengthening the sector nationwide. This training was supported through the Circus Explored programme led by ISACS.

Supporting Independent Artists

Beyond structured training programmes, Galway Community Circus offers professional artists space and opportunities to develop their craft. In 2024 we hosted artist Naomhan McKeon Joyce for a residency in funambulism. Providing artists with dedicated space to train and experiment is a cornerstone of our mission to support innovation and growth within the circus arts.





More Circus in More Places

Expansion to Galway's Eastside

Galway Community Circus launched Toddler and Youth Circus classes on Galway's Eastside in 2024, marking a significant achievement in our efforts to bring circus to more communities. As part of our work with Rethink Ireland's Step-Up programme, and with the support of Galway City Council Arts Office, we successfully piloted the programme at Mervue Community Centre. This marked the beginning of our strategic cultural partnership with Galway City Arts Office, which will help support the long-term development of youth arts in the area. We also continued to run our limited Youth Circus programme in Tuam with support from Galway County Council Arts Office.

3

classes offered in Galway's Eastside

2

classes offered in Tuam



Circus has been great for building my toddler's physical confidence and for building social skills. It's a warm and welcoming environment that really gives us a sense of belonging.





Advancing Circus Education Through Collaboration

We continued our commitment to advancing circus education through national and international collaborations to develop and professionalise the art form. These efforts reflect our vision of embedding circus into primary school curriculums and expanding circus pedagogy at third-level institutions in Ireland.

YPCE Residency at University of Galway

As part of our second year of the YPCE Residency with the University of Galway, we delivered the Fail Better module for the Designing Futures programme, using circus to teach resilience and risk-taking. We also led workshops across multiple education modules and welcomed guest lecturer Pete Duncan, who explored the role of play in theatre and early childhood learning through circus-based activities.



Advancing Circus Education Through Collaboration

Circus Transformation Advanced

Caravan's Circus Transformation Advanced project concluded in 2024, enhancing and evaluating Social Circus teacher training while strengthening connections between circus, social, and youth work. Researchers, including Dr. Ian Walsh (Chairman of GCC's Board), hosted a creative research event in Finland, and the final report highlighted social circus's role in fostering inclusion and resilience.

Curriculum Development

Dr. Ian Walsh also worked with our team on a curriculum development initiative, guiding tutors through the fundamentals of curriculum design. His academic expertise helped lay the groundwork for creating a strong, tailored curriculum for Galway Community Circus.





Building Global Connections Through Circus

We are committed to strengthening our ties with European and international partners, believing that these connections enhance our growth as an organisation. Our partnerships provide us with invaluable opportunities to learn from best practices, access professional development, and offer international opportunities for our members. They allow us to bring skilled artists and students to Galway through long-term residencies and EU programmes, fostering a dynamic environment where circus practitioners can thrive.



7

European projects

The European Solidarity Corps programme is a beautiful experience. I have learned much more in 5 months than I have in my entire life.

Building Global Connections Through Circus

Engaging with European Networks

We engage with key national and international networks to share our work and learn from the wider circus sector. As members of CircusWorks UK, EYCO, FEDEC, and the Caravan Circus Network, we contribute to sector development at European and professional levels. In 2024, we hosted the EYCO General Assembly in Galway, participated in the Caravan General Assembly in Barcelona, and continued our role as Caravan board members.

Erasmus+ European Solidarity Corps

One of the most rewarding aspects of our international partnerships is the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), which enables young people to volunteer and contribute to projects that benefit communities. In 2024, we welcomed 8 volunteers from Italy, France, Germany, and Belgium, who joined our circus team and supported us in classes and administratively.



THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

