

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027

Our Vision: An Ireland where all children are connected to their creative powers so they can live life to the full.

Our Mission: Generating creative encounters for children with lifelong health conditions to improve wellbeing and creativity.

Values: Three core values underpin all of our work: **Care, Integrity, and Creativity.**

- 1 OUR CARE** for children and their families is demonstrated in how we listen and how we act, how we strive for increased inclusivity and how we work as a team.
- 2 THE INTEGRITY** of our organisation is demonstrated through how we share our learning, how we report to our stakeholders and how we maintain high quality standards.
- 3 CREATIVITY** drives every aspect of how we work with children and with each other, we demonstrate this through our training, our processes and our championing of the child's voice.

STRATEGIC GOALS

We have identified five goals which we will strive to achieve over the next five years 2023-2027:

CREATE TO GROW:

Generating creative encounters with children who have lifelong health conditions, in the heart of their own communities

IMPROVE TO INCLUDE:

Commit to the development and delivery of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy

SHARE:

Sharing our model in partnership with others to increase access to creative practices

ADVOCATE:

Working with children and young people to advocate for the child's right to participate in culture

Provide in-person activities for all ages, removing barriers to access

Make our programmes nationwide through technology

Provide artists with bespoke training and resources

Showcase the achievements of our children and artists

Invest resources in reflecting on feedback to improve our programmes

Improve opportunities for parents to meet

Broaden representation and amplify voices

Remove communication barriers

Connect with communities

Invest in our people

Use technology to provide more tools to support inclusive art practices for children

Build on our ability to deliver professional development training in inclusive arts

Develop innovative and sustainable referral pathways to local arts and cultural services

Identify partners with whom we can share and innovate our model

Appoint staff dedicated to supporting youth advocacy and participation

Play our part in raising statutory agency awareness of their duty to fulfil every child's right to culture, education and participation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

SUSTAIN: Continuing our strong track record of governance underpinned by a solid financial model, ready for the next stage of growth

People - Provide a high performing, fair, inclusive, and agile place to work

Systems - Develop effective systems which support good governance at all levels

Resources - Implement fundraising and marketing strategies to resource our mission

Evidence - Communicate the evidence from our programmes to advocate for sustained investment

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HOW WE WORK

Children living with lifelong health conditions face many challenges, such as loneliness, stress and anxiety. They often feel like their lives are defined by their condition. Helium Arts empowers these children through creativity and the arts, giving them an opportunity for connection, belonging, imagination and joy.

We value the artist's distinct contribution to a child's creative journey throughout childhood and their impact on children's wellbeing. The artist is the catalyst through which we spark unique connections and change children's lives. We create opportunities for our artists to respond to and reflect the diversity of the children we work with, enabling artists to transcend challenges, thrive, and be fulfilled.

We connect with children throughout their childhood and their transition into adulthood, involving and listening to them, their families, their caregivers, and others who support them, valuing our association with them as equals and their right to culture.

We are embedded in the child's circle of support, creating connection, community, and trust among families, health and social care staff, volunteers, and cultural providers.

We make extra efforts to include children who face additional barriers in accessing their right to culture and who may face additional vulnerabilities.

We have clear participation criteria that we review on a periodic basis, this allows us to build authentic responsive programmes over time.



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The Five Habits of Creativity

Our work is underpinned by a model to build creative habits. Children are encouraged and enabled to be: **Imaginative, Inquisitive, Collaborative, Persistent** and **Disciplined** in their creative exploration. We know that these creative habits will enable children to flourish not just creatively but in other aspects of their lives, like school, with their peers, at home, and in their communities. In this way we nurture the whole child.

"They let her be herself in a room of people just like her. It's like she looked up and realised, 'I'm not alone'."

Mother of Participant (aged 7)



¹ Inspired by the Tallis Pedagogy Wheel

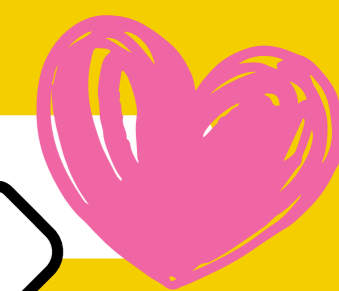
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OUR STORY SO FAR

Helium Arts was founded in 2010 and has grown exponentially ever since. Our last five-year strategy saw us reach 3,000 children, including reimagining our model during the pandemic. Our annual income has grown from €150K to over €600K through securing the trust and investment of the Arts Council and four government departments via Creative Ireland. Our impact reports consistently show the connectivity between our work and an increase in children’s wellbeing.

GOAL 1 CREATE TO GROW

- Provide in-person hospital and community-based activities to 3,000 (growing to 6,000 by 2027) children a year for all ages through hubs in Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin, with extra effort to include more vulnerable children who face additional barriers to access (2023 & 2024).
- Make our programmes available nationwide through an online programme (2023 & 2024).
- Provide 20+ artists with bespoke training and resources focused on inclusivity (2023).
- Showcase the achievements of our children and artists and use these stories to secure more programmes (2023 – 2027).
- Invest time and resources in reflecting on the feedback we get from children, families, artists, healthcare professionals and use this information to continually improve our programmes (2023 – 2027).
- Improve opportunities for parents to meet and support each other through a complementary programme (2024).

GOAL 2 IMPROVE TO INCLUDE

- Broaden representation and amplify voices by diversifying representation throughout the organisation and improve meaningful pathways of influence to amplify these voices (2024).
- Remove communication barriers by reflecting diversity and inclusion in all communications to improve engagement and participation of marginalised groups (2024).
- Connect with communities by investing in outreach and relationship building at a local and regional level to improve access to programmes (2024).
- Invest in our people by empowering staff through opportunities to share, support, and learn together, and creating a culture of belonging where the team feels safe to celebrate all aspects of their identity and be their full authentic selves (2023-2025).

THE NEXT 5 YEARS

To achieve our new strategy goals, we will listen and respond to children and their families, build the expertise of our artists, work with health and community leaders, share our ideas and advocate for increased access for all.

GOAL 3 SHARE

- Build on our existing Learning Bank to provide more tools for families, teachers, healthcare staff and artists to support more inclusive art practices for all children (2023 & 2024).
- Showcase our leadership in developing inclusive visual arts programmes for children, building on the professional development training delivered to Helium artists in the first two years of our strategy (2025).
- Integrate our model into health and social care system delivery, developing innovative and sustainable referral pathways to local arts and cultural services. Pilot a model of ‘social prescribing’ based on the recommendations of our recent research (2025).
- Identify partners with whom we can share and innovate our model, with a specific focus on experts who are supporting children living with mental health difficulties and intellectual disabilities to enable them to devise responsive models of their own (2026).

GOAL 4 ADVOCATE

- Appoint staff dedicated to supporting youth advocacy and participation by our programme participants (2024).
- Play our part in raising statutory agency awareness of their duty to fulfil every child’s right to culture, education and participation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2026).

GOAL 5 SUSTAIN

- People - Provide a high performing, fair, inclusive, and agile place to work.
- Systems - Develop effective systems which support continued good governance at all levels of the organisation.
- Resources - Implement fundraising and marketing strategies which provide the resources to achieve our mission.
- Evidence - Communicate the evidence from our programmes to advocate for sustained investment in the model.



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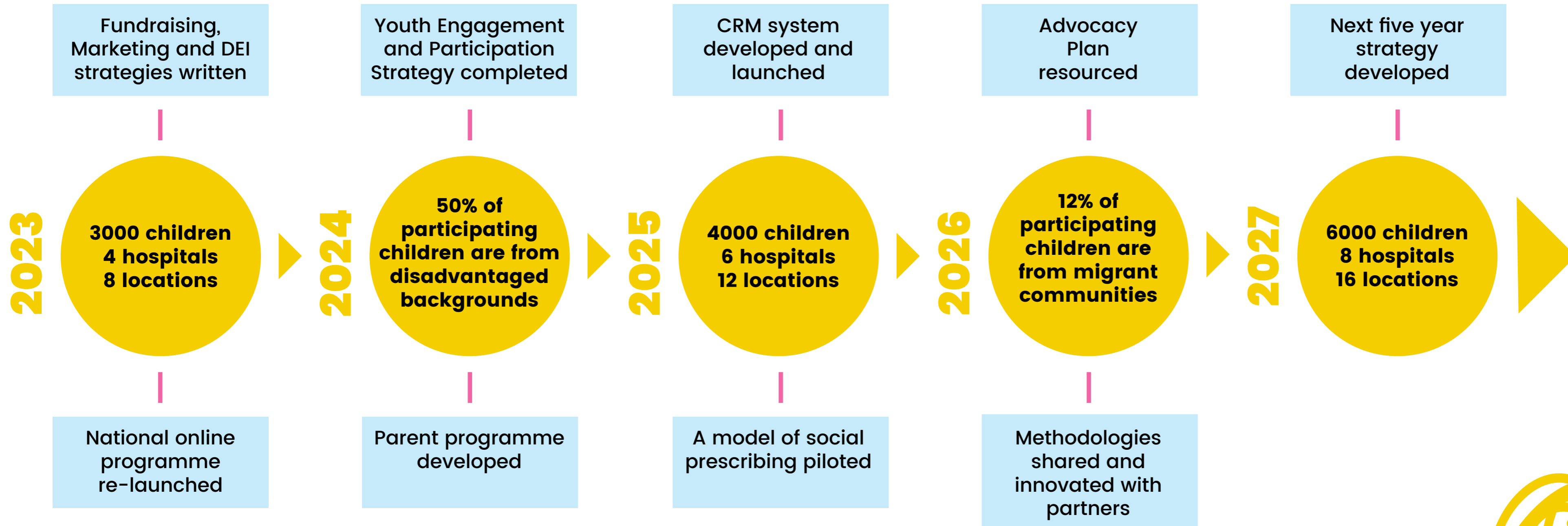
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TIMELINE

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OUR STANDARDS

We are verified as a Triple Locked member of the Charities Institute Ireland, a standard awarded to charities that uphold the highest standards in transparent reporting, ethical fundraising and strong governance structures. We are a registered Charity and are fully compliant with the Charity Governance Code and the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the

Public. We have adopted the use of Charities SORP (FRS 102). We are a double Good Governance Award winner.

We have a Safeguarding Policy publicly available on our website, which is reviewed by an external consultant every two years and has an action plan and employee training in place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to those who contributed to the creation of Helium Arts - Strategic Plan:

Helium Arts Youth Advisory Group, Board of Directors, the wider team, Artist Panel, and key supporters and stakeholders in the health, social, and childcare sectors.

Thank you to Noeleen Hartigan who helped gather and collate everyone's expertise and insights.

Thank you to Rethink Ireland for funding the making of this strategy.

Graphic Design: Darklab Creative Design
Illustration: Maia Thomas

CHY Number: 19236
Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20075200
Companies Registration Office: 486621

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HELIUM ARTS - PUTTING ALL CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

Our Policy Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We believe that every child is inherently creative.

We champion the right of children to express themselves and their creativity.

We know from our work and our research that creative engagement has a positive impact on children's wellbeing.

We work with children who have lifelong health conditions. The children we meet come from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences. Many children and their caregivers face significant barriers to accessing their rights, in addition to the challenges posed by their health status.

We are working hard to make sure that we can be truly inclusive, and to remove the barriers to participation in our programmes. We make extra efforts and devise new approaches to include children who face these additional barriers in accessing their right to culture and who may face additional vulnerabilities.

We want to show through the stories we tell, and the programmes we create, how Ireland can be a more inclusive country for all children.

We acknowledge that Ireland is an unequal society which is reflected in children's access to and participation in the arts, especially those with lifelong health conditions.

We commit to an examination of all aspects of our organisation in order to develop and implement a comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and Plan in 2023.



THIS WILL REQUIRE US TO:

1. Continually check if the child, their playfulness and creativity, wellbeing and voice is at the centre of how we think, act and speak.
2. Invest time, space and money into learning more about children's needs and how to respond to them.
3. Be in an ongoing open conversation with children, parents, caregivers and health and social care providers about how to make our programmes more accessible.
4. Reflect the diversity of Ireland in our staff team, artist panel, volunteers and board, proactively supporting new voices to shape our organisation.
5. Learn by doing, partner with others and share what we've learned.

This Policy Statement is being published as part of our new Strategic Plan 2023-2027. We will embed our commitment to putting children at the centre of what we do throughout our plan and issue annual reports on our progress.

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