

# helium

Inspiring life through art

## **Diversity Equity and Inclusion Strategy and Plan**

Helium welcomes and celebrates people, especially children, in all their diversity.

Helium commits to improving all aspects of our organisation to better include and reflect that diversity.

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## **Helium**

### Diversity Equity and Inclusion Strategy

“The purpose of developing a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Strategy is to support the implementation of positive policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcome of all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community or socio-economic background”

The Arts Council

“Inclusive and diverse environments are likely to have a multitude of beneficial effects not captured in traditional research, for both individuals, their employers and wider society. Any business case for diversity should hold these outcomes in balance and recognise the benefits at not only an organisational level but from an individual and societal perspective.”

CIPD: The professional body for HR and people development

“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.”

Helium

## **Introduction**

This document presents the findings of a consultative process to develop Helium' first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Helium have recently developed their new five-year Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy will be situated, implemented and monitored as part of the Strategic Plan.

As part of that process Helium have reaffirmed in their mission and values their desire for increased inclusivity and advocating for increased access for all children living with health conditions. By including a specific objective on the delivery and monitoring of this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy, the Strategy Plan will focus and maintain organisation attention on DEI issues and improvements during the lifespan of the plan. It ensures responsibility for the DEI Strategy at the highest level within the organisation.

**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.**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Helium Strategic Goals for the 2023- 2027 period:**

1. **Create to Grow:** Generating creative encounters with children with lifelong health conditions through a network of regional hubs and a national online programme.
2. **Improve to Include:** Commit to the development and delivery of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan during the timeframe of this strategic plan.
3. **Share:** Sharing our model in partnership with others, so we can increase access to creative practices for all children living with health conditions.
4. **Advocate:** Working with children and young people to advocate for the child's right to participate in culture.
5. **Sustain:** Continuing our strong track record of governance underpinned by a solid financial model, ready for the next stage of growth.

## **Helium Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement**

As part of the recent strategic planning process the following Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement was developed. This DEI Strategy and Action Plan are to be viewed as complementary documents to be implemented in tandem.

*Helium - Putting all children at the heart of what we do.*

### **Our 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 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.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy Development Process**

A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consultant was contracted at the beginning of January 2023. The consultant was aware that the development of this DEI Strategy and Implementation Plan was coming towards the end of the Strategic Plan, 2023- 2027 process and also in tandem with the development of the new Communications and Marketing Strategy.

The consultant was given access to key documents through Google Drive to gain an insight into the recent consultative processes involved in developing those strategies.

The consultant also reviewed a number of key resources including The Arts Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit Building a Policy for Inclusive Arts Practice and The Project Arts Centre's Towards Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy as a key case-study cited by The Arts Council.

It became evident from initial meetings with the CEO and Senior Management Team that Helium had made considerable efforts in the DEI domain and they would like someone to synthesise that progress while also identifying gaps that could be addressed over a two-three-year time frame with recommendations on how to do so. While aware of their obligations as a publicly funded organisation, there was a sincere desire to continue to learn and implement DEI best practice at every level of the organisation and throughout all its programmes.

There was a recognition that this work is an ongoing process of consistent review and reflection and learning. There was also an acknowledgement of the need to be realistic with the ambition of the plan given the resources available to the organisation and that any major changes, such as a possible office relocation, could not happen in the immediate to medium term given the cost and resource implications. At all stages of the consultation, the consultant encouraged the stakeholder to be realistic rather than aspirational as progress would only be measured against actions achieved.

The organisation had expanded and grown so much with eight members (over half) of the team recruited to the organisation over the past two years. There was an understanding for the need to involve everyone as a collective in the process to inform employees of the Helium core values and way of working to ensure as much as is possible a common understanding of Helium and the 'Helium Child' and its commitment to DEI throughout the organisation.

The consultant was invited to consult with a wide range of stakeholders to identify the gaps and hear from the people involved at all levels of the organisation.

## Presentation of Preliminary Findings

The Consultant presented the findings of the consultation process to the Board Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 which included:

- Commitment to the DEI actions should be integrated into new Strategic Plan and Communications & Marketing Plan by including an additional DEI objective and specific monitoring indicators
- It is important that DEI objectives and actions are not seen separately to the overall strategic direction of the organisation
- Many of the DEI actions can be integrated into existing annual planning, review and learning processes by ensuring an additional DEI lens, e.g. professional development and training for artists and staff, workshop resources, improvements to website & comms, representative groups
- Acknowledgement that Helium needs to set realistic targets to improve the diverse representation and voice throughout the organisation including all future recruitment to the Board, staff, artist pool, volunteers and advisory groups
- Emphasis on the importance of regional information and in-person relationships with key health, community and education professionals to improve Helium profile and reach to marginalised children
- There is great willingness and awareness among staff to continue the DEI journey
- Monitoring systems need additional DEI indicators

## Language and Terminology

Throughout this report Helium' preferred term of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is in use. Helium recognises the unequal distribution of resources and many marginalised groups and communities face barriers in accessing services. We also recognise barriers to employment, particularly in the arts. Helium particularly recognises and attempts to address the barriers to creative activity and expression faced by children with long-term health conditions. Helium also appreciates that many children face multiple disadvantages/discrimination and the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, disability, literacy and economic factors. Throughout the consultations with stakeholders, Helium defines Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by the following:

We understand **Diversity** to be the presence of differences within a given environment.

**Equity** refers to the acknowledgement that historically excluded, underserved and underrepresented individuals or groups have experienced barriers to full participation, and therefore additional measures are needed to assist these individuals or groups to achieve equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups

We understand **Inclusion** to be The act of bringing those from traditionally excluded groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. It is the practice of welcoming Diversity in all we do.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Purpose, Benefits and Aims**

The development and dissemination of this DEI Strategy promotes an inclusive organisational culture that is underpinned by diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### Purpose of DEI Strategy

Helium undertook this process to synthesise and articulate the immense work and efforts that have been achieved to date and help priority areas for further action and improvement.

The aim of the consultation was to investigate what work needs to be done to ensure that Helium becomes truly reflective of contemporary Ireland and also improve its reach to marginalised children with long-term health conditions.

Adopting a DEI Strategy and Implementation Plan is about achieving better outcomes for all those who interact with Helium.

“The purpose of developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is to support the implementation of positive policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcome of all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community or socio-economic background.” The Arts Council DEI Toolkit

### Benefits of DEI Strategy Development

“The benefits of developing policies and practices which reflect of the needs of diverse groups of people go far beyond compliance with the law. It means a business or organisation can demonstrate respect for diversity, inclusion and equality. It can lead to happier and more productive workplaces and can enhance and improve the way services are provided.” The Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission

“By openly promoting and demonstrating our commitment to DEI we will attract the top talent we want in our workplace. Providing an inclusive environment will ensure we keep this talent. A key outcome of DEI is engagement. When people feel like their voice is heard, they are more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work.” Department of Justice DEI Strategy

Having a DEI Strategy also promotes organisational cohesion by identifying the appropriate structures and supports necessary to implement the plan.

Helium rightly prides itself in its accountability structures and organisational transparency. Adopting this DEI Strategy will further enhance Helium' accountability to all its stakeholders. This strategy will enable Helium to have a fuller view of its organisational impact.

“Having a clear strategy is always useful as a touchstone to ensure shared understanding of values. The strategy will also provide something against which to assess effectiveness on the ground.” Survey respondent

A DEI Strategy enhances the organisation's capacity to clearly communicate its values to a wider audience.

“It shows that Helium takes diversity, inclusion and equity seriously. A structure and framework for best practice. Good for funders to see this in place and action.” Survey Respondent

A DEI Strategy gives confidence to the staff and wider team that they will be supported to celebrate all aspects of their identity and to be their full authentic selves. This in turn leads to higher staff satisfaction and a sense of belonging within the organisation.

“Increased representation and accessibility, build a good reputation and leader of best practices for inclusion/diversity in the arts, have a meaningful impact, welcoming workplace culture, socially responsible for the community Helium serves, welcoming broader perspectives.” Survey Respondent

### Aim of DEI Strategy

By developing an DEI strategy, Helium aims to:

- Promote an inclusive organisational culture that is underpinned by diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Agree a shared vision of what achieving a DEI strategy will mean for the organisation and generating buy-in at every stage of change
- Set clear and realistic objectives for what we want to achieve
- Monitor and evaluate our progress and revise our DEI strategy as we progress

### **National, International and Organisational Context**

## National and International Legislation and Commitments

All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and it originated in Section 42 of the [Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014](#).

### Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty



#### 1. ASSESS

A public body is required to set out in its strategic/ corporate plan an assessment of the equality and human rights issues relevant to its purpose and functions, in a manner that is accessible to the public.

#### 2. ADDRESS

A public body is required to set out in its strategic/ corporate plan the policies, plans and actions to address issues raised in the equality and human rights assessment, in a manner that is accessible to the public.

#### 3. REPORT

A public body is required to report annually on developments and achievements in regard to the equality and human rights issues and actions, in a manner accessible to the public, in its annual report.

Ireland is a signatory to the UN International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 31 of [The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) states that

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Our work helps children fulfil their rights not just in Article 31, but connects them to other rights too. Our DEI aims are underpinned by all the UN Convention, including its General Principles: Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests), Article 6 (survival and development) and Article 12 (views of the child). Also, for example, Article 29 which provides that the aims of education include the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.

## **Organisational Context**

### **Key Features of Helium that already address Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

There is no doubt that Helium is a values driven organisation, demonstrating its commitment to DEI by engaging with this process with an openness and acknowledgement that the learning is continuous and that the DEI Implementation Plan will be a journey for the organisation, team and all its stakeholders. This past commitment to DEI can be seen primarily through the way in which Helium creates access, equality and inclusion for the children and families they serve.

### Working with Child with long-term health conditions

By providing high-quality arts experiences exclusively to children with long-term health conditions free of charge, Helium is already actively working in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion domain. Helium's own research has shown that children with long-term health conditions often feel isolation, loneliness and that they are often defined by their illness.

“24% of children in Ireland are living with a life-long health condition, 30% of those children report being hampered by that condition.”

### Space of Expressing and Connection

Helium provides that essential place and space for connection and opportunities for friendships and creative expression for some of the most marginalised children in our society.

Helium places paramount importance on having the child at the centre of all their activities and championing that child's voice. Helium addresses some of the barriers experienced by families by providing community based, local workshops free of charge including all materials. They also provide transport costs to those who would not otherwise be able to attend the workshops.

#### Addressing Barriers to Inclusion

Helium employ highly skilled, experienced artists and allocate volunteers to support the workshops. These artists are supported in practical ways by providing checklists for workshops, guidance on inclusive language and more recently inclusivity training.

Helium also ensures that a qualified medic is always in the room which gives reassurance to the children, parents, artists and volunteers that any medical issues that may arise can be addressed by a professional close at hand.

Cognisant of the financial pressures many parents are under, they provide free materials and a learning bank of resources and ideas for creativity activity at home. Helium also provides free transport to community workshops on a case by case basis. Exploring the expansion of this offering will be an area for development in the future.

## Responsive to Emerging Needs

Helium provided on-line workshops for children during the Covid Pandemic and now plan to extend this on-line offering to enable children access to workshops from anywhere in Ireland. This is especially welcome as Helium Hubs are located mainly in the West, Mid West and South of the country.

All workshop venues are assessed for accessibility to ensure access for wheelchair users. A member of the Youth Advisory Group mentioned that whenever they attend a venue organised by Helium, they can completely trust that it is totally accessible “as a wheelchair user I don’t have to worry about that.”

## Inclusive Arts Practice

Responding to the identified needs of the artists Helium provide a range of training including Child Safeguarding and Inclusion training which was delivered during the first quarter of 2023.

“Helium has embarked on developing our inclusive practice, interrogating what we mean by 'inclusive' as an organisation and confronting our own bias.

“The Inclusion Training Programme presents an extensive learning and development opportunity for the Helium team’s, supported by leaders in disability awareness, identity and youth participatory practice and interdisciplinary creative practice in Ireland and the U.K. We aim to articulate what quality inclusive arts practice/process looks like in an arts and health context and most importantly document and capture this so that we can influence better practice in this country.

By increasing our team’s knowledge, practice, and confidence around disability awareness and collaborative visual arts practice with children with additional needs, we ensure our organisation can deliver inclusive experiences for children and young people in an arts and health context.”

## **The consultation process has identified Five Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Objectives**

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Objectives 2023 – 2025**

#### **Objective 1: Broaden representation and amplify voices by diversifying representation throughout the organisation and improve meaningful pathways of influence to amplify these voices (2024)**

##### DEI Commitment

Helium will:

- Set realistic targets to have more diverse representation and voice throughout the organisation including all future recruitment of Board, staff, artists, volunteers and advisory groups
- Improve meaningful pathways of influence to amplify diverse voices through advisory groups on DEI actions
- Have an accessible office by end of 2026

##### Key Results

We will know we have done this by:

- Better reflecting diversity in all its forms throughout all levels of the organisation.
- Harnessing the experience and expertise of Advisory Groups to better inform the organisation
- Having an accessible office by end of 2026

#### **Objective 2: Remove communication barriers by reflecting diversity and inclusion in all communications to improve engagement and participation of marginalised groups (2024-2025)**

##### DEI Commitment

Helium will:

- Improve reach to marginalised groups by promoting DEI and reflect diversity in external communications to reflect this strategy
- Improve DEI's profile, reach and representation through the new Communications and Marketing Strategy
- Better inform health professionals & parents about eligibility criteria and build understanding on 'Who is a Helium Child?'

## Key Results

We will know we have done this by

- Continuing to demonstrate that children and their right to creative expression is central to all that it does
- Receiving more referrals as per targets set in the Strategic Plan
- Increasing its profile and reach with marginalised communities
- Attracting children with health conditions from marginalised / minority groups

### **Objective 3 Connect with communities by investing in outreach and relationship building at a local and regional level to improve access to programmes (2024-2025)**

#### DEI Commitment

Helium will:

- Invest in relationship building at regional level with key health, statutory and youth & community-based professionals
- Improve information gathering to inform demand and capacity needs at regional level
- Increase outreach capacity

## Key Results

We will know we have done this by

- Have trusted access points to marginalised and minority groups through improved relationships with key professionals in each region
- Increase the number of harder to reach children accessing Helium workshops (community hubs and on-line)

### **Objective 4 Invest in Our People by empowering staff through opportunities to share, support, and learn together. Create a culture of belonging where the team feels safe to celebrate all aspects of their identity and be their full authentic selves. (2023-2026)**

#### DEI Commitment

Helium will:

- Support our entire team on the DEI journey to improve practice together
- Enhance the promotion of our inclusive organisational culture internally and improve confidence discussing DEI issues and values
- Continue to provide opportunities for sharing and learning through annual planning cycle with artists & staff team with DEI focus
- Continue to strive to enhance the individual child's workshop experience by supporting our programme team's DEI awareness and training
- Upskill our artist team in inclusive practice and enable them to include all children

#### Key Results

We will know we have done this by:

- Helium organisational culture will promote a welcoming and inclusive culture

Our people will:

- Be empowered to celebrate all aspects of their identity and to be their full authentic selves
- Be confident and competent to include all children with a health condition regardless of their background

## **Objective 5 Monitor and Evaluate**

### DEI Commitment

Helium will:

- Measure and report on DEI progress in a transparent manner
- Ensure high level oversight for realising the DEI Strategy
- Instil a whole organisation approach to DEI, the Strategy will be integrated in all planning and review systems
- Ensure two-way interaction with Board to monitor progress and accountability
- Adopt appropriate monitoring systems to measure progress

### Key Results

We will know we have done this by

- Have a team approach to engagement and responsibility for DEI within the organisation by identifying three DEI leads
- Be able to demonstrate progress in all its DEI actions to funders, stakeholders, public etc
- Be able to demonstrate its accountability on DEI actions
- Be able to demonstrate best practice in DEI monitoring & reporting

## **Key DEI Actions**

Each DEI objective is associated with a number of key actions to be delivered over the course of the plan to achieve the desired outcomes. These actions are detailed in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Plan below.

## Helium Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Plan 2023-2026

<b>DEI Objective 1: Broaden Representation and Amplify Internal Voices</b>			
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>
Set realistic targets to have more diverse representation and voice throughout the organisation including all future recruitment of Board, staff, artists, volunteers and advisory groups	1.1 SMT to agree targets with advice from HR Consultant & including (voluntary) Equality & Diversity Monitoring Forms as part of the application process	Q4 2023	Helium will better reflect diversity in all its forms throughout all levels of the organisation. Q4 2025
	1.2 Place job and opportunities where they are more likely to be seen by people from marginalised/ minority groups (see report)	Q2 2023	Helium will see an increase in applicants from minority/ marginalised groups
	1.3 Review job descriptions for plain English/dyslexia friendly	Q3 2024	
Improve meaningful pathways of influence to amplify diverse voices through advisory groups on DEI actions	1.4 Creation of Disability Advisory Group Review TOR of Parents' Advisory Group / YAG and agree key DEI areas for input, advice & feedback	Q1 2025	Helium will harness the experience and expertise of Advisory Groups
Accessible Office	1.5 Continue discussions with landlord on ground floor options. Investigate sponsorship options for move to new office.	Q4 2026	Helium will have an accessible office by Q4 2026
<b>DEI Objective 2: Remove Communications Barriers</b>			
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
Helium will improve its profile, reach and representation through the implement new Communications and Marketing Strategy  Helium will better inform health professionals & parents about eligibility criteria and build understanding on 'Who is a Helium Child?'	3.1 Clear PPT presentation & script to explain 'Who is a Helium Child' to be delivered to all stakeholders	Q3 2023	Helium will continue to demonstrate that children and their right to creative expression is central to all that it does
	3.2 Development of One-Page 'How to Talk About Helium' document for all stakeholders	Q1 2025	Helium will receive more referrals as per targets in Strategic Plan
	3.3 Review of website as per Comm Strategy with additional DEI lens	Q4 2024 Q4 2024	Helium will increase its profile and reach with marginalised communities

Helium will reflect diversity in promotional materials and website	3.4 All new promotion materials to be reviewed with DEI lens to ensure positive representations of diversity		Helium will attract children with health conditions from marginalised / minority groups
<b>DEI Objective 3: Connect with Our Communities</b>			
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
Helium will invest in relationship building at regional level with key health, statutory and youth & community-based professionals	5.1 Undertake scoping exercise to determine size and profile of target group by region; key professional leads and local representation organisations and networks	Q1 2025	Helium will have trusted access points to marginalised and minority groups through improved relationships with key professionals.
Improve information gathering to inform demand and capacity needs at regional level	5.2 Secure funding for the recruitment of part-time outreach role at working at regional level to increase profile and reach	Q2 2024	Helium will increase the number harder to reach children accessing Helium workshops through community hubs and on-line
	5.3 Development of Helium ambassador roles as outlined in Communications Strategy.	Q2 2025	
<b>DEI Objective 4: Invest in Our People</b>			
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
Helium will enhance the promotion of its inclusive organisational culture internally and improve confidence discussing DEI issues and values	4.1 Improve internal information systems to ensure values and DEI commitments are accessible including content management systems for Google Drive to include DEI Resources folder	Q4 2023	Helium organisational culture will promote a welcoming and inclusive environment  Helium Team will be empowered celebrate all aspects of their identify and to be their full authentic selves
Continue to provide opportunities for sharing and learning through annual planning cycle with artists & staff team with DEI focus	4.2 Review and expand the 'Guidelines for Inclusive Language'	Q4 2024	Helium Team will have confidence in addressing and/or discussing any issues relating to DEI
By supporting our artists' awareness and DEI training, we will continue to strive to enhance the individual child's workshop experience	4.3 Include space for reflections on DEI as part of annual team review process. 'Inclusive Practice' to be included as a standard area for review	Q4 2023	Helium Team are confident and competent to include all children
Helium Artists are upskilled in inclusive practice and enabled to include all child		Q4 2023	
		Q2 2025	

with a health condition regardless of background.	<p>4.4 Identify and respond to emerging DEI training needs including cultural competence and unconscious bias</p> <p>4.5 Continue to provide practical supports including improvements to pre-workshop profile information</p>	Q2 2024	
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### DEI Objective 5: Monitor and Evaluate

Commitment	Action	Timeline	Desired Outcome
<p>High level oversight for realising the DEI Strategy</p> <p>Instil a whole organisation approach to DEI Strategy to be integrated in all planning and review systems</p> <p>Two-way interaction with Board to monitor progress and accountability</p> <p>Adopt monitoring systems to measure progress</p>	<p>2.1 Governance Sub-Committee to appointed for responsibility</p> <p>2.2 Identify DEI Leads with SMT &amp; Board &amp; artist pool to ensure a constant monitoring of Action and applying DEI lens throughout the organisation.</p> <p>2.3 Quarterly Reporting to the Board included in the 5-year strategy reporting dashboard to also include Board supports, resourcing &amp; decision making</p> <p>2.4 Commit to standardised data collection by introducing Equality and Diversity Monitoring Forms (see report)</p>	<p>Q3 2023</p> <p>Q3 2023</p> <p>Q4 2023</p> <p>Q4 2024</p>	<p>Helium team will have engagement and responsibility for DEI within the organisation</p> <p>Helium will be able to demonstrate progress in all its DEI actions to funders, stakeholders, public etc</p> <p>Helium will be able to demonstrate its accountability on DEI actions</p> <p>Helium will be able to demonstrate best practice in DEI monitoring &amp; reporting</p>

## **Additional Recommendations, Comments and Resources**

**DEI Objective 1: Broaden representation and amplify voices by diversifying representation throughout the organisation and improve meaningful pathways of influence to amplify these voices**

### Equality and Diversity Monitoring

In order to measure progress, the consultant recommends the introduction of voluntary Equality & Monitoring forms in all future recruitment processes. The information given on the forms will give Helium a better understanding of the profile of applicants which will give an indication whether the efforts to reach marginalised communities is reflected in the applications.

“Gathering data can help your organisation to monitor progress and determine whether you have achieved your goals. Think about whether you need to adapt your current method of data gathering to find out more about EDI in your organisation. In doing so, remember that how questions are asked (for example, using inclusive language) is often as important as the questions themselves.” The Arts Council EDI Toolkit

A standard form should be used throughout the organisation and include questions on Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Caring Responsibilities.

In line with GDPR regulation, information must be given on the purpose of gathering personal data information. There are eight key principles to the Data Protection Acts (Data Protection Commissioner)

1. Data must be obtained and processed fairly;
2. Data must be only kept for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes;
3. Data can only be used and disclosed in ways compatible with these purposes;
4. Data must be kept safe and secure;
5. Data must be accurate, complete and up-to-date;
6. Data must be adequate, relevant and not excessive;
7. Data can only be retained for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes;
8. Personal data must be made available to an individual, on request

Explanatory text could read:

“Helium wants to meet the aims and commitments set out in its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy. This includes not discriminating under the Equality Act, and building an accurate picture of the make-up of our team in encouraging equality and diversity.

The organisation needs your help and co-operation to enable us to do this, but filling in this form is voluntary. The information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for monitoring purposes only.

If you have any questions about the form contact [add contact details].”

### Resources

Pavee Point continue to campaign for the inclusion of ethnic identifier in routine administrative data systems as a tool to inform service planning, challenge discrimination and promote inclusion. Pavee Point have published an excellent resource on the **Policy and Practice in Ethnic Data Collection and Monitoring** [Counting Us In - Human Rights Count](#).

Their recommendations include:

- Datasets should use standard ethnic classifications developed by the CSO to ensure consistency and cross comparability of data.
- Ethnic data must be disaggregated by gender and other relevant equality grounds to ensure that particular individuals within minority groups are included in policy and service planning.

The National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO) are carrying out a programme of work to develop and support Ethnic Equality Monitoring within a range of health services.

The collection of Ethnic Equality Monitoring is included as actions in the following national Government strategies:

[The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#)

[The Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018-2023](#)

## **Inclusive Recruitment**

Helium currently uses inclusive language in its recruitment information which should be continued.

“In line with our new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, we would be delighted to hear from people whose communities or backgrounds are less represented in the arts in Ireland.”

### Visibility and Targeting

While established job e-bulletins and website for the Community & Voluntary and Arts Sectors include ActiveLink, The Wheel and Create, efforts should be made to ensure that adverts for any future roles and opportunities should be advertised with organisations who actively work with minority groups. Adverts should be placed where they are more likely to be seen by marginalised applicants.

Some of these organisations include:

#### The Open Doors Initiative

Created in 2020, [The Open Doors Initiative](#) is an initiative of over 100 of the biggest companies and NGOs based in Ireland, who work with the government to create pathways to employment for marginalised people, nationwide. As part of this The Open Doors Initiative created a [jobs page](#) of their website where some of the organisations that they work with post their positions so that they can get more of a diverse range of people applying. For organisations that want to improve the representation of diversity among their employees, The Open Doors Initiative has published a detailed [Inclusivity Employment Toolkit](#)

#### Recruit Refugee Ireland

[Recruit Refugees](#) Ireland wants to help organisations navigate the hiring process so your organisation can be a part of working towards a brighter, more inclusive Ireland for all.

“A job is so much more than just a job, it creates inclusion, togetherness and community. It opens up opportunities for friendships and learning and it provides hope and a future for those who have lost so much yet still have so much to give.”

#### Ahead

The Ahead [Willing Able Mentoring \(WAM\)](#) Programme is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace.

#### Count on Us Recruitment

[Count on Us Recruitment](#) connects employment opportunities for Family Carers around their caring commitments.

#### Other Resources

CIPD publish a range of factsheets and guidance papers and resources including

[A Guide For Inclusive Recruitment for Employers](#) and [Promoting and Supporting Employee Wellbeing](#)

#### Focus on Diversity – Amplifying Diverse Voices

[Focus on Diversity](#) is a hub for promoting Irish companies, people and programmes who are proactive in the area of Diversity and Inclusion.

#### **Reasonable Accommodation**

Research carried out by AHEAD found that two thirds of workplace reasonable accommodations requested were related to tasks and had no cost at all. The remaining requests tended to be readily available in the organisation. There is also a Reasonable Accommodation Fund available to private employers through the Department of Social Protection.

According to [Invisible Disability Ireland](#) there are many people living with non-physical/invisible disabilities. In fact, 80% of people with disabilities have invisible disabilities.

#### **Meaningful Pathways of Influence for Advisory Groups**

The consultant is aware that the Advisory Groups are in the process of developing or reviewing their terms of reference. This process should clarify and establish and agree key DEI areas for input, advice & feedback

#### **Office Access**

At present, the Helium office is situated on the top floor above a shop in Mullingar with no wheelchair access. The CEO is currently in discussions with the landlord about renting additional office space on the ground floor. Understanding the resource implications of an office move, the consultant recommends research and investigation into possible local business sponsorship options for an accessible office for Helium.

## **DEI Objective 2: Remove communication barriers by reflecting diversity and inclusion in all communications to improve engagement and participation of marginalised groups (2024-2025)**

By the implementation of the new Communications and Marketing plan, the Helium team, especially the newer members, will have clarity on 'Who is a Helium Child'. This will instil more confidence across the organisation when communicating with the various audiences and stakeholders.

Helium will better inform health professionals and parents about eligibility criteria which should lead to an increase in better quality referrals.

In the current review of the website and promotional materials, a DEI lens should be applied.

### Other Permissions and Consent Forms

[Inclusion Ireland](#) have provided a sample Consent Form which can be used for photographs and videos for use on websites.

“We would like to use this photo of you on the Helium website.

This means everyone who visits our website will see your photo. It will not just be people in Ireland but people from around the world. It is important that you understand this information before you decide.

Please tick yes or no and sign the form. Thank you”

## **DEI Objective 3: Connect with communities by investing in outreach and relationship building at a local and regional level to improve access to programmes (2024-2025)**

While acknowledging that building relationships takes time and investment, there was a strong recognition throughout the consultation process for the need of regionally based information gathering and relationship building with key health and other community-based professionals to improve Helium profile and importantly reach to marginalised children.

Gaining regional intelligence about the relevant health and community professionals who are in a position of trust within communities. Public Health Nurses, Education Welfare Officers, Social Workers and others based with NGOs providing services to marginalised communities including asylum seekers and refugees can provide key information about how best to get the word out about the arts programme.

Review current system of referral information received by Helium. Improved profile information about children can provide direction on the most appropriate creative experience/engagement according to the needs of the child. This information will influence the workshop design and improve the child's workshop experience.

**DEI Objective 4: Invest in Our People by empowering staff through opportunities to share, support, and learn together. Create a culture of belonging where the team feels safe to celebrate all aspects of their identity and be their full authentic selves. (2023-2026)**

Many DEI actions can be integrated into existing annual planning, review and learning processes by ensuring an additional DEI lens, e.g. professional development and training for artists and staff, workshop resources, improvements to website & communications, and representative/advisory groups.

Continue to provide opportunities for sharing and learning through annual planning cycle with artists & staff team with DEI focus

By supporting artists' awareness and DEI training, Helium will continue to strive to enhance the individual child's workshop experience

**DEI Objective 5: Monitor and Evaluate**

The consultant recommends that three DEI leads should be identified throughout the organisation, including on the Board, Senior Management Team and artist panel. This will ensure that responsibility for the strategy lies throughout the organisation and DEI objectives and actions are not seen separately to the overall strategic direction of the organisation. This assists the integration of the plan within existing systems and planning and review process with the conscious addition of a DEI lens through which all programmes should be viewed.

To ensure accountability and monitoring of DEI progress over the coming years, it will be important to embed Ethnic Equality Monitoring (EEM) throughout the organisation's systems.

In line with these DEI objectives and targets, specific indicators should be identified in consultation with the Programme Evaluator to monitor and report on progress.

## **Appendix 1 Methodology and Process**

### **Consultation Meetings and Inputs**

The consultant was given time in each of the Advisory Group meetings to introduce the process and invite their thoughts and insights. Each group was informed that they could contact the consultant after the meeting by email should they have any further ideas or contributions.

#### Expected Outcomes

Each meeting was informed of the expected outcomes for the new DEI Strategy which would include:

- Commitments  
Values and goals – commitment to resourcing DEI plan and implementation
- Actions  
Based on priority areas identified through consultations
- Desired outcomes  
Thinking through every action; putting necessary resources, structures, supports and training in place to achieve outcomes

Each Stakeholder group was asked the following:

- Their hopes and concerns with regard to the DEI process?
- What is Helium doing well with regard to DEI?
- Where can Helium improve or do better?
- What are your priority areas for Helium to work on?
- Do you have suggestions on how to make positive change happen?

### **On-Line Survey**

The Consultant designed an anonymous on-line survey through Survey Monkey which was sent to volunteers and associate artists on 25<sup>th</sup> February and received thirteen responses. Questions included:

- What does Helium do well in relation to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?
- Where can Helium improve or do better?
- What do you think the challenges will be for Helium?
- What changes or actions would you like to see prioritised over the next two years?
- How can Helium improve its reach to marginalised groups/children?

## Identification of Possible Areas of Action

The DEI consultation process identified possible areas of action which the consultant presented to the SMT in table format. They were asked to indicate the level of priority for each action along with the estimated timescale for completion and the team members whose responsibility the action should be with.

### Consultation Schedule January – March 2023

17 January	Met with CEO
26 January	Met with Senior Management Team (SMT)
28 January	Met with Youth Advisory Group (zoom)
23 February	Met with Cork Regional Advisory Group (zoom)
25 February	Survey sent to associate artists and volunteers
2 March	Met with Mid-West Regional Advisory Group (zoom)
2 March	Met with West Regional Advisory Group (zoom)
6 March	Workshop at Employee Away Day
14 March	Draft Action Plan sent to SMT
29 <sup>th</sup> March	Met with Board with preliminary findings (zoom)