



Kids' Own

Annual Activity Report

2023

**kids'
own**
PUBLISHING PARTNERSHIP

kidsown.ie

About Kids' Own

Kids' Own is a children's art organisation and publishing house and Ireland's only dedicated publisher of books by children, for children. Kids' Own works in defence of children's right to culture and supports their individual creative expression through publishing and the arts. Kids' Own is driven by a passionate belief in the intrinsic value of the arts in children's lives, as a source of joy, fulfilment and connection. We work to give children greater access to cultural expression and to be actively creating, enquiring, communicating and making meaning through the arts.

Our vision is for a society that recognises children as independent writers, thinkers and creators and that truly values the arts in the lives of all children. Our mission is to develop, publish and promote artwork and writing created by children for children and their communities through meaningful engagement with professional artists.

Strategic Aims

Aim 1: Engagement and co-creation

Increase opportunities for children to develop artwork and writing through meaningful engagement with professional artists.

Aim 2: Visibility of Children's Work

Increase the visibility of children's artwork and writing through publishing, exhibition and dissemination.

Aim 3: Professional Arts Practice with Children

Strengthen the practice of artists and other professionals who work with children.

Aim 4: Research and Advocacy

Strive to build evidence and lead change towards children's inclusion as active creators.

Aim 5: Building Internal Capacity

Ensure that Kids' Own has the capacity to achieve its strategic aims.

Organisation and Governance

Legal Structure

Kids' Own is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.

Company Number

508465

Tax Registration Number

9822769G (not VAT registered)

Charity Registration Number

20082190

Board Members:

In 2023, Kids' Own had 5 board members:

Liz Coman

Naomi Feely (Chair)

Tommy Flavin

Michael Kirby (Treasurer)

Carmel Brennan

Election of Board Members

Kids' Own's Constitution sets out the following rules for election/appointment of board members:

To qualify for appointment, a director must be nominated and seconded for the position by existing directors. Nominations must be in writing, received at the registered office at least two weeks before the board meeting at which the appointment is to be made.

And for Terms of Directors:

Directors shall be appointed for a term of three years and shall thereafter be eligible for reappointment for a further period of three years, but shall then retire.

The Role of the Board

The key role of the board of Kids' Own is to provide leadership to the organisation by setting strategic direction and ensuring policies are in place that support this direction

The board also:

Approves, monitors and reviews the work programme to ensure it is effectively meeting the agreed objectives and performance indicators.

Protects and represents the interests of Kids' Own and is accountable to the membership.

Ensures a framework of prudent and effective controls are in place for the work of Kids' Own.

Discharges its responsibilities in accordance with the defining rules of the organisation.

Board Meetings

The board of Kids' Own met on the following dates in 2023:

16th February

30th May

27th September

30th November

Governance Standards

As a registered charity and publicly funded not-for-profit organisation, Kids' Own is wholly committed to fulfilling best practice requirements in relation to the governance of our organisation. In 2020, our Board dedicated particular focus to ensuring full compliance with the Governance Code issued by the Charities Regulator in November 2018 and is delighted to now have a framework within which to continue operating to the highest standards of governance.

The Kids' Own Board

Tommy Flavin

Tommy Flavin is the Founder and Creative Director of The Reelists, a full-service video production company. Through his company, he works with a wide variety of charities and nonprofits, helping them develop campaigns and tell their stories to the general public. This work with nonprofits motivated him to become more directly involved in the sector. As someone who was raised from a young age with a passion for the written word, Kids' Own was a natural fit. As a Board Director, Tommy looks forward to using his communications experience to help further Kids' Own's important mission.

Naomi Feely

Naomi Feely is an experienced social researcher and policy analyst with over 15 years' experience working in the public, not-for-profit and private sectors in Ireland. She has carried out research in the areas of early childhood care and education, low-income families, income adequacy, childhood disadvantage and ageing. She has worked for leading not-for-profit organisations such as Age Action, Barnardos and Start Strong. Naomi has a strong interest in philanthropy and is finalising her doctoral thesis on this topic. Naomi holds a BA in Public Administration, an MA in Sociology and a second MA in Political and Public Communications.

Michael Kirby

Michael has almost three decades of experience working in the private sector in the U.S., England, and Ireland and, since 2001, is a Partner of business and management consultancy firm Meehan Tully & Associates Ltd. He holds a B.A. from Villanova University, a M.A. in International Relations from St. John's University, New York, and a MBA from Trinity College Dublin. Michael has extensive professional experience of the not-for-profit sector and is actively involved in a number of organisations in a voluntary capacity.

Liz Coman

Liz Coman is an Assistant Arts Officer with Dublin City Council and a Visual Arts Education Curator. Liz has a Masters in History of Art and in Museum Studies, with a focus on public programming. She has led trainings in enquiry-led approaches to mediating artwork for visual art facilitators in The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children, The National Gallery of Ireland, and The Turner Prize, Derry and offers ongoing mentorship for individual artists and educators. She is a certified Visual Thinking Strategies facilitator with VTS/USA and has completed training to coaching level.

Liz is writer of the first Arts, Education and Learning Policy for Dublin City Council and through her work at the arts office, she designs and evaluates supports for artists – including awards, bursaries and studio spaces. A key aspect of her role is to grow resources through strategic partnerships and budget management by being alert to funding opportunities based on an extensive knowledge of local, national and international funding infrastructure.

Carmel Brennan

Dr. Carmel Brennan recently retired as Head of Training and Practice with Early Childhood Ireland, where she had responsibility for the organisation's work in developing curriculum, improving practice and supporting services to work with the national frameworks. She now works as a part-time lecturer at Maynooth University on the Bachelor and Masters in Early Childhood Education programmes. Her research interests are in the areas of curriculum and particularly children's play – the subject of her PhD thesis. More recently, she focuses on children's co-construction of stories through play and the relationship between play and artistic enquiry in children's lives.

Overview of our programme in 2023

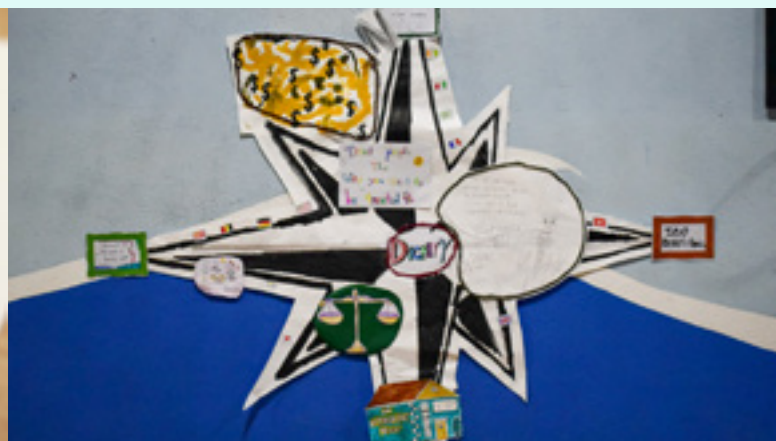
2023 was another busy year for Kids' Own, with many new projects, partnerships, publications, book launches and events. We initiated our dedicated Youth Advisory Group, a dedicated and inspiring group of young people who will consider and advise us on all aspects of our work, from policy making, to project focus and development. Their main task in 2023 was to help us shape our new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy. The formation of the Group is a milestone for us, as we continue to facilitate and champion work made by and for young people.

In collaboration with Cranmore Co-operative Society, we began an ambitious year-long project focusing on ecology, biodiversity and climate change (funded generously by Creative Climate Action, Creative Ireland). Four Seasons in Our Garden is a multidisciplinary, intergenerational project exploring multifaceted approaches and processes across arts and sciences. It also chimes with our own organisational commitment to sustainability and climate considerations, and we hope to continue it beyond its current run. We continued to work with SMILY Sligo, developing work with young LGBTQ+ people on issues that matter to them, producing an animation exploring ideas of identity and community. Our Young Writers group continued to develop, with a dedicated podcast series showcasing original writing by the young people involved and the release of *Buoyant*, an anthology of short stories.

In 2023, we started two new projects focused on exploration through the arts with early years children. In partnership with Dungarvan Traveller Community Health Project and Waterford County Childcare Committee, we facilitated creative sessions outdoors on the beach in Dungarvan with early years Traveller children and their siblings, exploring ephemeral art and different arts processes. We were also delighted to be selected as one of four arts organisations/artists to be part of the Arts in Early Learning & Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare

(SAC) scheme pilot, where two of our Associate Artists worked with two ELC settings in Sligo. There were wonderful learning opportunities throughout for the Kids' Own team, as we joined other artists and arts organisations who participated in the pilot for meetings and focus groups. Kids' Own then presented our experience of and learning from the project at the Baboró International Children's Arts Festival in October.

We've had a busy year with lots of new publications too: including a book created by children from St Cecilia's School, Sligo; two new books by Traveller and Roma children in Cork; and a book by children and young people whose families foster children.



Aim 1

Create opportunities for children and artists to work together

Increase opportunities for children to develop artwork and writing through meaningful engagement with professional artists, and in community with each other.

In 2023, we continued to provide opportunities and spaces for children and arts professionals to work together, facilitating collaboration, engagement, self-expression and development of original artwork.



Kids' Own Youth Advisory Group

In May 2023 Kids' Own launched a call out for children and young people to join our Youth Advisory Group, as part of our mission to include children and young people's voices in every aspect of our work and decision-making, and to empower young people through creativity and collaboration. In line with our ethos and the communities of children we work with, we particularly encouraged applications from children and young people from all backgrounds.

Following this, an initial group was formed, and the children and young people in the group began to meet and work alongside some of our artists, engaged in creative activities and learned more about Kids' Own's work. As members of this advisory group, the young people will advise us on planning and decision-making, support us in inclusive representation and will also played a vital role in shaping Kids' Own's new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy. Our meetings in 2023 included creative sessions with Kids' Own associate writer Mary Branley, assisted by Sarah O'Keefe, and further sessions with our Associate Artists Vanya Lambrecht Ward and Francesca Hutchinson. The group explored working with a range of different materials and creating different types of books, including Leporello concertina book-folding style, in ways that encouraged exploration of diversity in a gentle and engaging manner.

Kids' Own's Youth Advisory Group is an ongoing and long-term project, and we're very grateful for the group's enthusiasm and dedication. We look forward to the development of this transformative project, as it begins to influence all aspects of our work and continues our commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that children's voices are at the centre of our work.

Funders: Arts Council Ireland

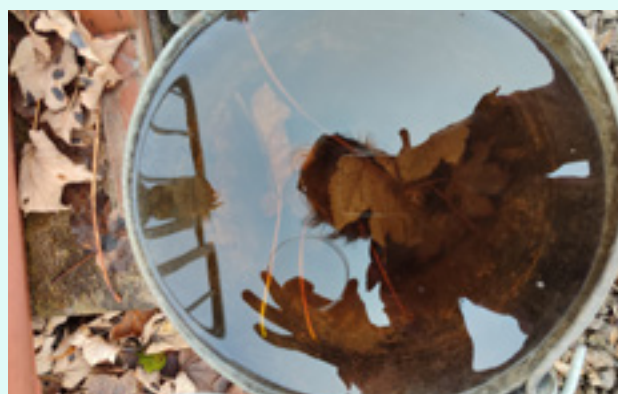
Participants: Children and young people aged 8 to 16

Participant numbers: 20

Dates: May 2023 – ongoing

Four Seasons in Our Garden: A Yearbook

Celebrating biodiversity, addressing climate change, and fostering intergenerational connections in Sligo town, this groundbreaking project, a collaboration between Kids' Own, Cranmore Co-Operative Society, and a panel of environmental scientists and experts, serves as a bridge between the arts, community sector, and sciences. It is a dynamic, intergenerational initiative, bringing young people of all ages and older generations together to explore and find solutions to pressing climate and biodiversity issues. Participants included Cranmore co-op's many regular attendees and wider network of all ages, and extended to engage members of the general public, who joined following focused callouts by Kids' Own. Through seasonal residencies and celebrations, explorations in ecology and biodiversity through different artistic and scientific mediums, and multidisciplinary approaches, a large body of collaborative work has emerged. This material will be gathered and edited by the group into a publication in 2024 when the project has finished.



Date: November 2023 – November 2024

Participants: Members of Cranmore Co-operative's regular groups and afterschool club, intergenerational members of general public.

Participant numbers: 40

Artists: Vanya Lambrecht-Ward (project curator), Sarah Lundy, Karen Webster, Ruth Le Gear, Naomi Draper, Brenda Kearney

Partners and project personnel panel: Cranmore Co-Operative Society, Martina Kilian, Dr Aga Piwowarczyk, Dr Ruth Quinn, Dr Fiona Britton

Funders: Creative Climate Action/Creative Ireland

Family and Early Years Project with Dungarvan Traveller Health

Over the spring and early summer 2023, our Associate Artists Maree Hensey and Francesca Hutchinson developed and facilitated a series of creative sessions on the beach in Dungarvan with early years Traveller children and their siblings. The project has been a wonderful experience for the children, allowing them to explore their surroundings through exploratory, ephemeral arts practice. Most of the workshops took place on Clonea Beach giving the children an opportunity to experience nature together and let creativity and collaboration lead the way. On their final day on the beach together, artists Maree and Francesca, and the two groups of children involved, held a farewell and closing ceremony, reflecting on all they had experienced and learned together over the months they had worked on the project together. We are working to create a brand-new publication from the artworks created by the children and the experiences they had together.



Date: February to June 2023

Participants: early years Traveller children and their families

Participant numbers: 38

Artists: Maree Hensey, Francesca Hutchinson

Partners: Dungarvan Traveller Community Health Project; Waterford County Childcare Committee

Funders: Community Foundation for Ireland, RTE Toy Show Appeal

Arts in Early Learning & Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) scheme

We were delighted to be part of a new pilot programme run by The Arts Council and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). This exciting new scheme, the Arts in Early Learning & Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) scheme aims to support professional artists and arts organisations working with Early Learning & Care and School Age Childcare settings; Kids' Own was one of four children's arts organisations/artists to be part of this exciting pilot in 2023.

Artists Maree Hensey and Naomi Draper collaborated with two Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings in Co Sligo, Inspiring Minds and Farmyard Miniworld. Over a span of 7 weeks in each setting, this project aimed to create purposefully minimalist environments that fostered deep engagement and amplified every participant's voice, both verbal and non-verbal. Revolving around three central pillars (non-verbal participation, exploration of materials, and the nurturing of a democratic space), the project was enhanced by photography and documentation by Anna Leask.

Date: April to October 2023

Participants: Children in Early Learning Settings

Participant numbers: 40

Artists: Maree Hensey, Naomi Draper

Partners: Inspiring Minds, Farmyard Mini World

Funders: The Arts Council, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth



SMILY Sligo Video Project – Celebrating Individuality and LGBTQI+ Voices

We were excited to develop a video project in collaboration with SMILY Sligo, aimed at empowering young people to express themselves and address LGBTQI+ issues that matter to them. Working with artist and animator Fergal Brennan, writer Mary Branley, and associate writer Sarah O'Keeffe, the project brought young people together to create an animation that celebrates individuality and togetherness, and sheds light on LGBTQI+ issues significant in their lives. A journey of self-expression and exploration for all involved, the resulting finished video is unique celebration of diversity, individuality, and the young LGBTQI+ community's voices.

Date: Autumn/Winter 2023

Participants: LGBTQI+ Youth

Participant numbers: 12

Artists: Mary Branley, Sarah O'Keeffe, Fergal Brennan

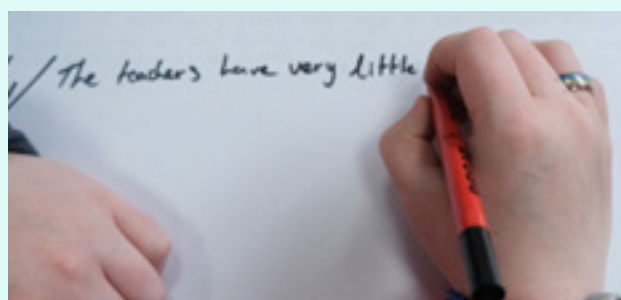
Partners: SMILY Sligo

Funders: Youth Work Ireland North Connaught



Kids' Own and EPIC: Empowering People in Care

This new collaborative project between Kids' Own and EPIC focused on producing a book written by young people in care, or who have experience of care, on how schools and teachers can better engage and support students in care. Following consultation with EPIC's Youth Council (aged 18-26), where they shared their own experiences and advised on the best way to work creatively with younger people, our project writer and artist, Mary Branley and Sarah Fuller, collaborated with young people in care in Dublin and Kildare. Overall, the project aimed to: raise awareness care-experienced children and young people in schools; highlight the potential for education to make a positive difference in the experiences of children in care. The aim is that the forthcoming book publication (2024) will also support teachers to build knowledge of teachers to support children in care.



Dates: July 2023

Artists: Mary Branley, Sarah Fuller

Participants: Children and Young People in care in Limerick, Dublin and Kildare (aged 14-26)

Participant numbers: 15

Partners: EPIC (Empowering People in Care)

Funders: TESS (TUSLA Educations Support Service)

Kids' Own and Cruinniú na nÓg at Sligo Library

We hosted an event for Cruinniú na nÓg in Sligo Central Library, where associate artist Sarah Lundy held a wonderful eco-workshop incorporating flora and fauna as a focus for the children.

The children were fascinated with Sarah's collection of taxidermy and animals, most especially Fergus the frog who died from dehydration in the drought! The children drew bold posters of the four life cycles of a frog all inspired by Fergus. Also included in the workshop were Brendan the bullfinch and Terry the fox, both taxidermy animals, which Sarah uses to raise environmental awareness through creative engagement.



The children made plant rubbings of wildflowers, ferns and leaves and crafted clay miniatures of Sissy Swan, inspiring lots of quirky conversations and laughs.

Date: June 2023

Artist: Sarah Lundy

Participants: Open to general public.

Participant number: 10

Partner: Sligo Central Library

Funder: Sligo Libraries

New Artist Residency at St Cecilia's School

Over the course of a number of months, associate artist Andy Parsons worked with students of St Cecilia's school for students with learning disabilities, facilitating their creative expression and voice. Through a variety of materials and processes, they collaborated to provide a mode of expression for young people, some of whom are non-verbal. Initially, they delved into the world of movement, scale, action, and motion by creating smaller sculptures, exploring diverse materials and techniques each week. As their artistic journey evolved, they transitioned to crafting larger-sized sculptures, giving rise to many experimentations with shape and surface design. The students embraced abstract shapes, enjoying the freedom of creating without the pressure of representation and exploring an authentic means of communication beyond verbal constraints. An important part of this project was sharing the work with students from a mainstream school, offering the young people a sense of equality with their peers. The inclusive environment brought different students together, fostering a sense of unity and shared creativity, and greatly enriched this process-based, abstract art project.

Dates: Throughout 2023

Artists: Andy Parsons

Participants: Young people at St Cecilia's School in Sligo

Participant number: 15

Partners: St Cecilia's School

Funders: The Ireland Funds, Heart of the Community Fund 2023



Compass of Change – Let Dignity Be Our Compass

In honour of 2023's UN International Day for The Eradication of Poverty, Kids' Own collaborated with Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) program in Sligo to develop a new workshop series. Our mission was to creatively address the theme of 'Let Dignity be our Compass: Working together towards change to end persistent poverty'. Through a youth-led, youth-centered approach, the participants engaged in conversations and creative activities, venturing into the complex realm of poverty. With the support of BBBS mentorship and associate artist and writer, Andy Parsons and Sarah O'Keefe, they discovered a safe, nurturing, and imaginative space for dialogue. Together, they delved into a challenging subject – poverty eradication – through ambitious explorations in illustrations, painting, writing, and knitted creations.

We invite you to delve into this remarkable publication, "Compass of Change," and witness the powerful impact of creative collaboration in addressing poverty:

Dates: October 2023

Artist: Andy Parsons, Sarah O'Keefe

Participants: Members of Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister Sligo Club

Participant number: 16

Partners: Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) Sligo

Funders: Department of Social Protection



Aim 2

Give visibility to children's artwork and writing

Increase the visibility of children's artwork and writing through publishing, exhibition and dissemination.



Publication of *Grow Up Strong and The Real Us*

Developed in collaboration with the Cork Traveller Visibility Group and the Cork STAR project, this project and the resulting publications offer a unique insight into the worlds of Traveller and Roma children, showcasing their creativity and resilience. Over a period of 12 weeks, participants engaged in collaborative sessions with Kids' Own associate artist Francesca Hutchinson, alongside associate writers Daniel Brennan and Mary Branley. The creative process involved storytelling about their lives and experiences, accompanied by experimentation with unconventional materials such as latex, PVA, clay, and found materials to produce visually stunning artwork. The resulting books, *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* were carefully titled by the young creators. The title *Grow Up Strong* encapsulates the resilience and confidence imparted by their mothers, encouraging them to stand tall despite challenges; the title *The Real Us*, the group of Roma young people addresses prevalent stereotypes, emphasising their genuine aspirations for education and a meaningful future.



Artists: Francesca Hutchinson, Mary Branley, Daniel Brennan

Participants: Traveller and Roma young people

Partners: Cork Traveller Visibility Group; the Cork STAR project; TUSLA Education Support Service.

Funders: RTE Toy Show Appeal, the Community Foundation for Ireland

Publication and launch of: *That's Me: Artwork by pupils from St Cecilia's School, Sligo about their lives and experiences*

With the invaluable support of the Movement for Good grant, this project aimed to provide a positive outlet for creative expression among young people with learning disabilities. In close collaboration with the school, we developed a book that champions their creative expression. The heart of this project was a unique collaboration involving the students, artist Anna Spearman, and the dedicated guidance of St Cecilia's teacher Triona O'Dowd. Over a period of months, participants explored their surroundings and many diverse processes and materials. The resulting book, *That's Me*, showcases the creativity and authentic artistic students at St Cecilia's School, and seeks to ensure that their voices have a platform and are valued. In October 2023, we hosted a book launch to celebrate the young people who created the book and their families, staff at St Cecilia's, Kids' Own, and the project funders, the Benefact Group.



Artist: Anna Spearman

Participants: Students at St Cecilia's School

Partners: St Cecilia's School

Funders: Movement For Good Award

Publication of *Buoyant: An anthology of new voices from Donegal and Derry/Londonderry*

In a further development for our Young Writers group, we were delighted to launch *Buoyant* in 2023, an anthology of prose, poetry, and short stories by talented young authors in Derry/Londonderry and Donegal. The launch took part in Verbal Arts Centre in Londonderry, a day-long event hosted by associate writer Mary Branley including workshops, introductions and celebration. The Young Writers project is inspiring and successful in so many ways: running since 2018, it firmly demonstrates how and why young people should lead and shape the creative projects they're involved in, and how projects change and grow alongside their participants.

Artist: Mary Branley and Susanna Galbraith

Partners: Donegal County Council Library Service, Libraries NI

Funders: Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund.



Publication and launch of *A Bright Light: Stories and artwork by children from families who foster in counties Leitrim and Sligo*

This project focused on children of families that foster, through a meaningful creative process and the production of animated videos and a book on their experiences.



Following engagement and workshops in 2022, where the young people took part in a range of arts activities, including making stop-motion animation videos with Karina, we were delighted to launch the project publication, *A Bright Light*, in November 2023. The event was held at The Model in Sligo and was attended by the children and their families, our associate artist Karina Nachbar and our associate writer Mary Branley. As well as showcasing the children's original artwork and writing in a joyful and fun way, Anne McGloin, Social Work Team Leader from the Foster Care Resource Service, also says that the book 'has created an awareness and deeper understanding of both the joys and challenges inherent in fostering.'

You can see some of the beautiful project animations here:

<https://kidsown.ie/watch-our-children-who-foster-projects-creative-stop-motion-animations/>

Artist: Karina Nachbar, Mary Branley

Participants: Foster Care Resource Service Sligo/Leitrim/West aged 11-16

Partners: Foster Care Resource Service Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan Area

Funders: The TUSLA Children's Participation Seed Fund

Exhibition of artwork created through St Cecilia's artist residency

In December 2023, we hosted an exhibition of sculptural work created by students from St Cecilia's, and Transition Year students from the Ursline, Sligo, in collaboration with artist Andy Parsons, at the Hawk's Well Theatre. This event was a showcase of the amazing artwork created by the young people over a number of months, and featured large abstract sculptures exploring movement and form.

The students proudly stood beside their creations, while family and community members cheered and celebrated with them. A video documenting the project and the final exhibition is being developed and will be available in early 2024.

Artist: Andy Parsons

Participants: Students at St Cecilia's School, Sligo

Partners: St Cecilia's School

Funders: The Ireland Funds, Heart of the Community Fund.

World Children's Day Celebration

On World Children's Day, Kids' Own Youth Advisory Group, alongside Kids' Own artists Francesca Hutchinson and Mary Branley, facilitated a day of celebration, marking the end of our Youth Advisory Group meetings for 2023 and celebrating children's voices and creativity. A group of children from around Sligo joined in the celebrations that the Youth Advisory group and artists had planned, which included working with fabric and thread, making books, and good snacks!

Kids' Own also hosted a session where local organisations and interested members of the public could come and meet Kids' Own, find out more about what we do, and have some tea and cake.

Artist: Mary Branley and Francesca Hutchinson

Participants: Kids' Own Youth Advisory Group and members of the public

Partners: Sligo County Council; The Nest, Branching Out, Sligo

Funders: Sligo County Council

Participant number: 32



Aim 3

Support professional artists in their practice with children

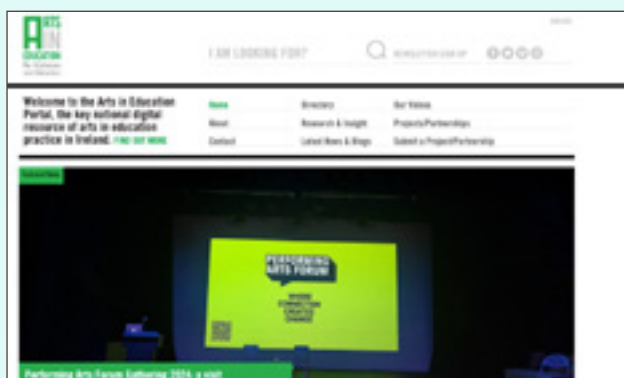
Support and develop the practice of artists and other professionals who work with children and young people; provide a leading model of best practice within the sector.



The Arts in Education Portal

In 2023, Kids' Own continued to manage the Arts in Education Portal on behalf of the Portal Committee. The Arts in Education Portal is the key national digital resource of arts in education practice in Ireland. Throughout 2023, Kids' Own continued to bring our critical knowledge of the sector to our continued management and development of the Arts in Education Portal and to promote excellence of practice through this resource.

The Portal is live at www.artsineducation.ie



Portal events and activity:

- Spring Regional Day: The seventh of our annual Portal Regional Days showcased arts in education and creative practice in the South-West region. The 2023 gathering took place in Cork city, with the support of MTU Crawford College of Art and Design. It was an inspiring day of introductions, presentations and creative workshops, alongside an exhibition in partnership with Sample Studios.
- National Day: The eighth annual National Arts in Education Portal Day took place at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick in partnership with the Department of Arts Education & Physical Education. With over 70 artists, teachers and arts in education professionals in attendance, this year's conference was jointly opened by Helen O'Donoghue from the Arts in Education Portal Editorial Committee and Dr Gwen Moore of Mary Immaculate College. The day unfolded from there, with lectures and creative workshops providing insights into the breadth of practice across the sector.
- Documentation Awards: Three arts-in-education projects were awarded the chance to document their work through film and photography
 - » Keystone was commissioned by Clare County Council to celebrate and mark 20 years of artist in schools programming by Clare Arts Office. The curatorial framework art Art School, directed and curated by Jennie Guy, provided a framework. This project was delivered by artists Mitch Conlon and James Moran, with co-curator Fiona Gannon. The project took place over the course of 2022 and 2023 in Coláiste Mhuire (Ennis) and Scoil Mhuire (Ennistymon) in Co. Clare, providing an opportunity for fifth year students to work with the artists to explore the significance of myth within local youth cultures.
 - » SCEALTA, was a residency project in conjunction with the BA in Early Childhood Education and Care programme at ATU Galway and Mayo, developed by artist Cliodhna Noonan in partnership with Tuam Community Childcare Centre and Whiz Kids preschool.
 - » Up, Up, Up, was an immersive experience for early years children with a physical disability and complex needs and is supported by the Exploring & Thinking Award, an initiative of the four Local Dublin Authorities and the Arts Council of Ireland. The project aims to provide early years children living with limited mobility and additional needs the opportunity to grab, stretch and reach into the forbidden cookie jar! The project was devised in collaboration by artist Helen Barry and Early Years Educator Audry Fagan.
- Throughout 2023, we continued to commission content from others in the sector, including guest blogs.

Participation in the Arts in Early Learning & Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) Pilot

As part of Kids' Own's participation in the new pilot programme run by The Arts Council and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), Kids' Own artists Maree Hensey and Naomi Draper attended meetings and focus groups with the three other arts organisations and artists participating in the pilot. These meetings involving Graffiti Theatre's Beag programme, the Ark, and dancer Monica Munoz, were wonderful opportunities to share practice and connect with other artists across different art forms.

Artist collaboration and mentoring

Throughout 2023, with thanks to the Arts Council, Kids' Own offered paid time for established members of the Kids' Own Associate Artist panel to spend paid time with newer Kids' Own artists. During these meetings, artists shared insights into their respective practices, and more established Kids' Own Associate

Artists aimed to act as a sounding board and mentor as newer artists worked on Kids' Own projects. This time together was invaluable in many respects and provided support for the artists we work with, and allowed two artists to get to know each other better, in turn supporting new future collaborations across our artist panel.

Kids' Own Associate Artist Day

In December 2023, we invited our wide network of associate and project artists and writers to the Model, Sligo, for a day of connecting, sharing and learning together. Leading on from an informal mentorship scheme, where established Kids' Own associate artists shared learning and conversation with newer artists, it was another chance to consolidate our collaborative creative approach. The day included creative activities, discussions and opportunities to consider what is valuable about Kids' Own's work and to contribute to Kids' Own's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.



Aim 4

Advocate for children's equal status as artists and writers

Champion children's right to actively engage in the arts, and advocate for recognition of the societal value of children's artwork and writing.



Our Lives, Our Voices Research

We were excited to collaborate with Dr. Susan McDonnell and Dr Tamsin Cavaliero of ATU Sligo, who undertook a research project in parallel with the Our Lives, Our Voices project with Traveller and Roma children and young people, which resulted in the publications *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*. Their research focused on the arts and creativity as a means of articulating voice and explored the impact on participants of being part of a child-led book project that focuses on their lives, voices, and creative expressions. The evaluation report is available to read here:

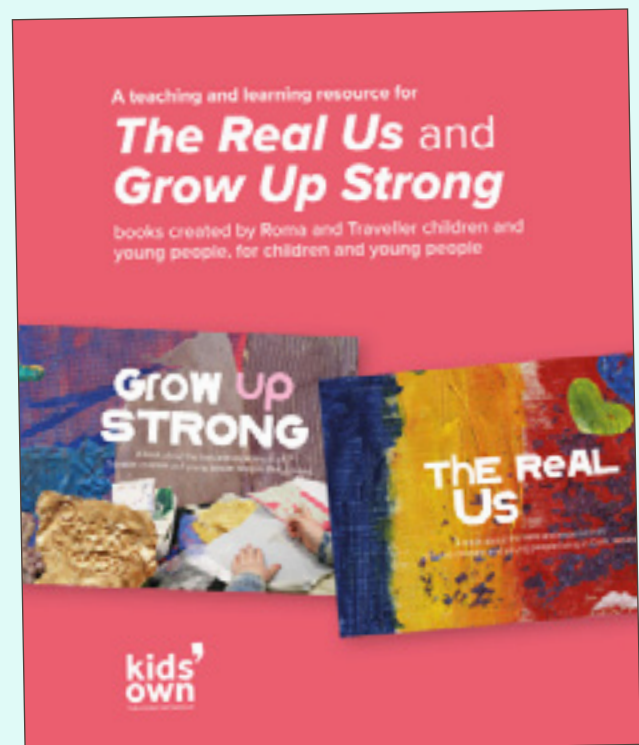
https://kidsown.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Our_Lives_Voices_Report_Lo_Res_Web-compressed.pdf



Publication of *A teaching and learning Resource for The Real Us and Grow Up Strong*, books created by Roma and Traveller children and young people, for children and young people.

As a result of the Our Lives, Our Voices project, we also developed and published a teaching and learning resource to support the use of the books, created by Traveller and Roma children and young people, in the classroom. The resource was designed by a working group of teachers, STAR project Traveller and Roma Education Workers, alongside Kids' Own artists and writers, who came together to respond to these books, *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*, made by young people and to consider how these books could be used in the classroom.

The main focus of the resource is to develop cultural and intercultural understanding through a focus on creativity, art, and discussion, and by listening to and responding to children and young people's voices and experiences.



Creative Workshops at ATU Sligo

At the invitation of Dr. Karin White, we were delighted to work with first year students on the on the B.Ed in Early Education and Care, on the Inclusive Practice module, at ATU Sligo, through a number of creative workshops throughout October and November. Kids' Own CEO and Creative Director Ciara Gallagher and Associate Writer Mary Branley began the series by facilitating a creative workshop with first-year students, where we delved into Kids' Own's distinctive approach to working with early years children, focusing on the books developed by and with young children. Later sessions with artists Maree Hensey and Naomi Draper focused on exploration of materials and extending non-verbal invitations to participate when working with very young children.

Research alongside Family and Early Years Project with Dungarvan Traveller Community Health Project

Alongside our outdoor project, exploring arts processes and ephemeral art on the Clonlea beach in Dungarvan with early years Traveller children and their families, we were delighted to appoint early years consultant and researcher Leah Russell, as the project researcher. Leah attended creative sessions throughout the project and followed up with conversations with children, parents, and other stakeholders. We look forward to publishing this research in 2024.



Youth Advisory Group

The establishment of our Youth Advisory Group in 2023 was a key moment in advancing how we seek, listen, and respond to children and young people's voices in every aspect of our work. Through getting to know Kids' Own's creative work and process, The Youth Advisory Group's focus was helping us to develop our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.



Pilot workshops with teachers using Kids' Own books

In 2023, we began consulting with teachers in three different schools on using Kids' Own books in the classroom. CEO and Creative Director, Ciara Gallagher and Dr Bernadette Ní Áingléis, held focus groups with teachers. These focus groups were followed up with tailored creative sessions with a Kids' Own artist Francesca Hutchinson and writer Mary Branley, addressing issues and questions that teachers identified, and supporting them to bring Kids' Own books into the classroom.

Aim 5

Build Our Capacity

Translate our ambition into tangible and measurable impacts, by ensuring the necessary resources, processes and structures are in place.



New Marketing and Communications Officer

In 2023, we were delighted to welcome Lorna Golden as a new team member, and our Marketing and Communications Officer!

Originally hailing from London, Lorna has been living in Sligo for nearly twelve years. With a background in photography, Lorna ran her own studio in London for over ten years; her particular passion was portrait photography, but she also crossed over into shooting bands and gigs on the London music scene. In recent years, she has been involved in running the online platform Sligo Hub by creating content, shooting images and promoting Sligo. She is also a committee member of Sligo Film Society.

Arts Council Capacity Building Scheme

In 2023, Kids' Own was awarded funding from the Arts Council Capacity Building Scheme to hire an in-house Graphic Designer and a short-term grant writer (freelance position). Both roles are integral to the work Kids' Own does and the support from this fund was an exceptional opportunity to trial growing our small team in key areas.

Participation in the RAISE Up Programme

In 2023, Kids' Own was delighted to be selected to be part of the RAISE Up programme, funded by the Arts Council. Following our participation in RAISE academy in 2021, this new opportunity in 2023 allowed us to work with Oonagh Desire (O'Kennedy Consulting) for a number of consultation hours throughout the year. CEO Ciara and Marketing and Communications Officer Lorna Golden worked with Oonagh to develop our new fundraising strategy and case for support, respectively.

We are hugely grateful to the RAISE programme and to the Arts Council for support in this area of diversification of funding, which is so important in the financial sustainability of our organisation.



Achievements and Outputs



4008

Kids' Own video views



206

Children and young people through direction engagement and co-creation



1070

Children and parents as public audiences for our work



11,800

Book audience



375

Sector professionals



7882

Online audience

19,989

Portal users



5 Books published

2 Other/sectoral publications

Executive Team

Creative Director/CEO

Ciara Gallagher

Ciara's background is in third-level education in the Arts and Humanities, including postdoctoral research in children's literature and culture and she has taught in several universities in Ireland. As Creative Director and CEO, she is responsible for the creative direction of Kids' Own, successful delivery of the organisation's strategic plan, sound governance and financial stability, fundraising, HR and sustainability.

Operations Manager

Emma Kavanagh

Emma holds a Bachelor of Design from NCAD and an Honours Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Policy & Practice from NUI Galway and has been working in the professional arts and cultural sector since 2009, with a particular focus on digital media. Since joining Kids' Own in 2016, Emma has been involved in the management and development of the Arts in Education Portal, on behalf of the Portal Editorial Committee.

Emma moved into the role of Digital Content Manager in 2018, where she was responsible for the management of the Arts in Education Portal, focused on building online and offline space through the Portal where artists and teachers working collaboratively with children and young people within education can be supported and inspired. In her current role as Operations Manager with Kids' Own, Emma works alongside the CEO and Creative Director, supporting the smooth running of operational activities.

Project Manager

Lorna Kavanagh

Lorna trained as a potter at Grennan Mill in Kilkenny with The Crafts Council of Ireland and holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fine Art Ceramics from GMIT. A Graduate Diploma in Community Art and Education from NCAD cemented Lorna's passion for education within the arts. After working with The Model, Sligo, and Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane as an Education Assistant, Lorna moved to Rua Red Arts Centre in Dublin, where she was Education Executive for some years. Within her role as Project Manager, Lorna works alongside the Director to devise, plan and facilitate dynamic projects that engage all communities of young people.

Marketing and Communications Officer

Katie Whelan

Originally hailing from London, Lorna has been living in Sligo for nearly twelve years. With a background in photography, Lorna ran her own studio in London for over ten years; her particular passion was portrait photography, but she also crossed over into shooting bands and gigs on the London music scene. In recent years, she has been involved in running the online platform Sligo Hub by creating content, shooting images and promoting Sligo. She is also a committee member of Sligo Film Society.

Arts in Education Portal Manager

Edel Doherty

Edel is a native of Sligo and returned in 2014, after a period living in Leeds and Cork. Edel has been involved in many projects and collectives over the years, wearing many different hats along the way, and with a particular focus on film and photography. In her current role as Arts in Education Portal Manager, she manages all aspects of the Arts in Education Portal website, including content, project features and related digital marketing, and manages the coordination of all Portal events, particularly the annual National Arts in Education Portal Day and Spring Regional Day.

Looking ahead to 2024

We look forward to continuing to working in partnership with different communities of children in 2024, and we aim to further extend the diversity of children and young people that we collaborate with. We have already begun to develop a new project in partnership with the Irish Penal Reform Trust to create a book with children and young people who have experience of having a family member in prison.

We look forward to continuing our sustainability-focused work with Cranmore Community Co-Op Garden. We excited to bring our archival exhibition TADA to new audiences, beginning with a new exhibition at FE McWilliam, Banbridge in early 2024. We will continue to listen to and support artists in a way that reflects our collaborative ethos.

Financial Summary

Total income:	€398,898
Total expenditure:	€393,575
Total assets:	€40,144

Testimonials

“When I first discovered *Charlie Barley* and *Clotty Malotty*, I was delighted to see that Kids’ Own had captured an insight into the community which I believed to be genuine and true. I remembered some of the rhymes and connected with others as they brought me back to my childhood. I delighted in the fact that I was remembering words and phrases that were unique to my community... The text and imagery are both wonderful and it is clear to see that the books are the result of a meaningful collaboration between all involved. I believe that through the very pure and innocent perspective of a child’s voice, the books will allow for the stimulation of dialogue around the many aspects and traditions of Traveller culture.”

– Leanne McDonagh, Artist.



Testimonials

"It is hard to believe that it is almost 20 years since the first publication of Clotty Malotty and All Her Friends... I am still in touch with some of the Traveller girls who took part in the project and who speak fondly of their memories of collecting the rhymes and jingles, creating the artwork, producing the book, and participating in the launch in the local Finglas library... To all involved in the republishing of Clotty Malotty and All her Friends, I send my best wishes and hope that this type of publication continues into the future so we can all be supportive and encouraging to the collecting and retelling of stories and rhymes from the past generations so that these voices will be appreciated into the future."

Winnie McDonagh, former project worker with TESO/Barnardos, and project partner on development of Clotty Malotty in 2003.

"The artist, Naomi, considered early childhood learning and development, and although impacted by the pandemic, put arts and creativity at the centre of the project, using mediums suitable for children at a more advanced stage. The project furthermore encouraged parents to play with their children."

Maeve Whittington, Coordinator, Sligo Leitrim Children and Young People's Services Committee

"The children who attended were such a joy to be around. Even though the activities planned were the same, every workshop was completely different based on individual needs"

Alex MacNaughton, Artist on Hearts and Minds Project

"I knew very well that there was no specific Traveller culture reading material or appropriate resources for young Traveller children in the early stages of reading. I asked the Traveller children in my class for more rhymes and gradually a small collection of rhymes and jokes emerged. My hopes of getting this collection published became a reality when I met the Kids' Own team in the Model, Sligo in 2001. Workshops to create the artwork for Charlie Barley commenced in three schools that autumn, with artist

Orla Kenny (RIP). Charlie Barley and All His Friends was launched at the Model on the 13th December 2001, to a huge crowd of proud parents, Traveller and settled, to celebrate Traveller culture. It was a highlight in my life."

Mary Branley, Kids' Own Associate Writer.

"Sligo County Childcare Committee were delighted to be involved with the A-Z programme and the results highlighted by the parent and child's voice has demonstrated the importance of that parent/carer interaction. We hope the project can provide valuable learning for both parents and educators into the future."

Sharon Boles, Manager, Sligo County Childcare Committee

"Expressing yourself is important. As soon as I could express myself, an opportunity came my way. Expressing myself taught me that we're all different in form we are all equal in value"

AR, participant in Love is Love book.

"The finished product, their book, is a beautiful piece of work and while some of the stories they have to tell are critical of the services they have been involved with, that makes it all the more valid and important and it will be a resource for us in Tusla to help us think about how better to work with children and young people."

Dr Liam White, Area Manager, Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan

Testimonials

“We met, we talked, we made things and threw them in the river, well everything except plastic. We drew our hands and other pictures. We made floats, and boats and rafts and watched them float and get stuck, turn over in the rapids and fall apart.

Some of our creations made it under the bridge and were carried out to sea. We walked in the woods too, and soem of us hid in trees and caves and a little hut. We talked about our lives in foster care, and how we coped with the hard times. We shared our hopes and dreams for the future”.

– Participant in workshops for *My Own Jungle*



Testimonials

"Children are traditionally understood as targets of arts programmes and interventions and much more rarely as co-creators and I think the value of Kids' Own's work from a children's rights perspective is their implementation of children's right to be heard. They do that by putting children's creative voice at the forefront of the publications."

Dr Amy Hanna, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

It's been a real delight to see their work throughout the years, beautiful publications that have been made and the gorgeous processes that have led to the creation of those books. They've taken the time to create these processes between artists and children. I've known Kids' Own since Orla Kenny was the director and the incredible love and joy that she brought to the work and that was across it all is still here, and you can still feel that. And that's an incredible thing for an organisation to be able to carry that work on."

Seóna Ní Bhriain, Head of Young People, Children and Education, Arts Council of Ireland.

"We had eight weeks to make the book, step by step. We did the recordings and some of us did some writing. We started making the boxes. The boxes are about us and the parts of our lives we wanted to tell stories about. They show our past lives in Syria, our families and friends. I like art and I like the way we created the boxes, and it gave us the feeling of being creative and we don't want it to end".

Participant in Kind Hearts book.

"The work Kids' Own does is so valuable and so unusual."

Dr Bryonie Reid, Quarto Collective.

"The work they do is just so beneficial to young people in the community in order to get their voices heard and be able to express themselves in a creative process, because unfortunately sometimes young people aren't listened to. Kids' Own really manage to get their voice across."

Kate McGoldrick, Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service.

"Our hope for the future is that our book will explain the war and how we came to Ireland. Some people feel that Syrian people are not good people, but the book will show you that they are".

Participant in Kind Hearts book

"I tell my friends about my foster family. I think some people don't understand about foster care, but it's easy to explain. It's when you are taken away from your parents if they were fighting or something, and they weren't able to look after you. So, you go and live with a new family."

Participant, My Own Jungle.

"I want to make my box about my house that broke in Syria."

Participant in Kind Hearts book.

"I am who I am and, as long as my close circle of friends know who I am and what I represent, then that's fine by me'.

– Participant at LGBTI+ creative workshop, Love is Love