



St Agnes'
CCMA
Community Centre for Music and the Arts
Ionad Pobail do Cheol agus na hEalaíona



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2029

St Agnes' Community Centre for Music and the Arts

Enriching people's lives through music



Introduction

Our founders, Sr Bernadette Sweeney and Dr Joanna Crooks originally set up the St Agnes' Violin Project in 2006, providing free music lessons for every child in St Agnes' Primary School, now Scoil Úna Naofa. They had a vision of inclusiveness and place making for all those in the Crumlin area. The inspiration came from the words of Mother Mary Aikenhead, founder of the Religious Sisters of Charity, that *"we desire to give to all what the rich can buy for money"* and it became the core motivation of the St Agnes' Violin Project. This vision became embedded in our community, giving a positive, educational and expressive determination so that through music and the arts our community could grow and flourish. So the seeds were sown for the St Agnes' Community Centre for Music and the Arts (CCMA), established in 2013 and formally opened by our own First Lady, Sabina Higgins. Today it is a thriving and innovative hub for those living, working and learning in the Crumlin area and the surrounds. In these ten years, we have engaged with over 40,000 people through our instrumental lessons, orchestras, choirs, musical society, music therapy programmes, baby and pre-instrumental music, summer camps and many concerts and performances.

Today, as we launch our second Strategic Plan (2024 – 2029), St Agnes' CCMA has become synonymous with equality, inclusion and community development by breaking down barriers of access. We believe that Enriching People's Lives through Music is key to organically growing our community; to live, work, learn and contribute to the fabric of the community on a local, municipal and national level.

Following the International Music Council, we believe that all in our community *"have the right to express themselves musically in all freedom"* and *"to have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation and information"*.

Providing a safe and accessible resource is key to breaking down the barriers to expression.

Our four core values of Rights to High Standard Music and Arts, Diversity/Inclusion, Sustainability and Place Making/Community building are reflected in every aspect of our organisation, from cradle to grave, promoting engagement throughout the generations.

We achieve this through our committed Board of Directors, our General Manager, our high quality tutoring staff, conductors and performance musicians, all supported by our administrative CE staff. This is only possible with the continued support of both statutory and non-statutory contributors, including Dublin City Council, Dublin City Arts Office, HSE, Non-Mainstream Music Bursary from Dept. of Education & Science, Music Network and Irish Youth Foundation with added financial support from a number of local corporate sponsors, including Greyhound Recycling, Leo Pharma and Brian McElroy.

Hilda Milner (MSC, BA(Mod), LTCL, Dip Prof Mgt)

General Manager,
St Agnes Community Centre for Music and the Arts

February 2024



"One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." **Bob Marley**



Our Vision

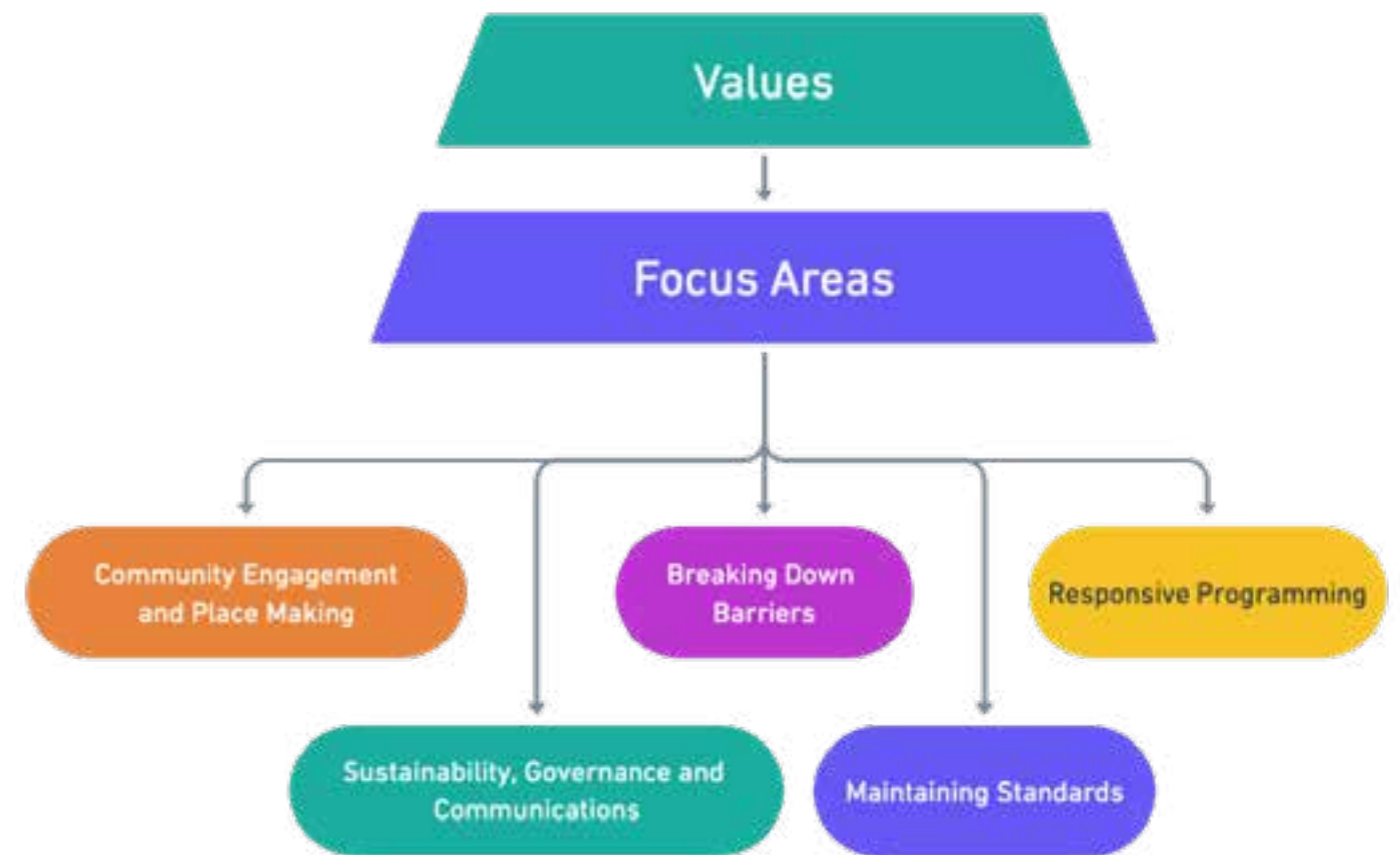
St. Agnes' Community Centre for Music and the Arts (CCMA) is a centre of excellence for the promotion of cultural equality, inclusivity and wellbeing through Music and the Arts.

Our Mission

The purpose of St. Agnes' CCMA is to create, maintain and develop positive opportunities and experiences for the enhancement and enrichment of the lives of all members of the local community through music and the arts. The CCMA strives for excellence and accessibility; and to inspire, encourage and support others towards the achievement of similar aims. St. Agnes' CCMA is committed to promoting wellbeing, through learning, participation, development and community cohesion.

Our Strategy: Cascade Model

Enriching People through Music



Values

Right to access to high standard music and arts

Every individual is valued, as a person with a contribution to make to the community. They have the right to learn, to create and to be acknowledged for their creativity.

We strive to develop meaningful and quality music and arts education that is part of the wider infrastructure of our Community, at local, municipal, national and international levels.

Diversity / Inclusion

Since our inception, breaking down barriers to learning through inclusive engagement, ensuring all of our programmes are accessible to everyone in our community and beyond, has been at the forefront of our organisation. Encouraging a sense of belonging in a non-judgemental environment, our programmes strive to cater for all ages, abilities, genders, orientation, neurodiversity, ethnicities and socio-economic status, especially those from underestimated communities. All programmes are conducted with transparency, in a climate of trust.

Sustainability

While maintaining a sense of relevance and committing to serve our community for generations into the future, St Agnes' CCMA works in partnership with local agencies and organisations to collaboratively achieve its goals. We promote our values to have a lasting positive impact on both the individual and the community. We endeavour to maintain current partnerships and foster new connections for mutual goals.

Place Making / Community

St Agnes' CCMA encourages engagement in activities which enrich the lives of our participants. Promoting a sense of community comes directly from the CCMA team through its Board, management, tutors and support staff, especially those within the Crumlin area. Our activities are supported by good governance and solid financial planning and strive to keep people and good relationships at the fore of everything that we do. Our activities promote wellbeing, good mental health and friendship. We communicate clearly in an accessible manner, both internally and externally.

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything"

Plato



Focus Areas

Focus Area 1:

Community Engagement and Place Making

We cater for all demographics within the Crumlin and wider environs, always looking to provide intergenerational involvement. Systemic building of a community is at our core and we achieve this through being accessible to all ages, abilities, neurodiversity, genders, orientation, ethnicities and socio – economic groups using the medium of music and the arts to provide inspirational activities.

Being an integral part of the cultural fabric of the Crumlin area, we strive to maintain and develop further civic engagement, encouraging ownership of music and arts development within both the individual and the community.



Rationale

A sense of belonging, artistic expression, developing your voice as an individual and as part of the wider community, are integral to our principles. We encourage social interaction, wellbeing and community engagement. We promote accessibility through our location, socio-economic considerations and intergenerational programming while also providing pathways for participation at regional, national and international levels.

Objectives

1. Building the CCMA community and developing our programmes to meet the evolving community needs.
2. Building access for all, as a means of promoting confidence within the individual and the community as a whole.
3. Breaking down socio-economic barriers, enabling access by keeping fees for participation as low as possible.
4. Finding new pathways such as Social Prescribing to engage with all in the community.
5. Advocate for and promote the development of a custom built performance venue for the Crumlin/ Dublin 12 area to help develop live arts performances for the local area.

"There is no doubt that music — in both its production and consumption — can be an important influence in shaping the typically hybrid identities of people and places, of engendering a sense of place and deep attachment to place. In this sense it can help contribute in important ways to the well-being of people and places."

Hudson, Ray. 2006. "Regions and Place: Music, Identity and Place". *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 5: 626–634.

Focus Area 2:

Breaking Down Barriers

At St Agnes' CCMA, we provide a space to develop the individual and the community through music and the arts.

Our programmes are actively responsive to all, innovating new learning pathways and enabling social interaction.

Rationale

Following the UN Charter for Human Rights, we believe that all of our community *"have the right to express themselves musically in all freedom"* and *"to have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation and information"*.

Providing a safe and accessible resource is key to breaking down the barriers to expression.



Objectives

1. Providing a variety of programmes for the community to engage with St Agnes' CCMA from "cradle to grave".
2. Promoting a person centred approach with innovative engagement that actively enables all.
3. Providing healthy engagement with the arts that helps overcome anti-social activity and counteract the underestimation of our community.
4. Opening doors to music and arts education, up to and including 3rd level training, developing the individual who can then feed back into the community through their artistic and educational practice.
5. Evaluating the experience of participants and evolving our programmes to meet the needs of the community.
6. By promoting the development of a performance venue for the Crumlin/ Dublin 12 area to help develop live arts performances for the local area, we aim to create a viable centre for music performance, increasing engagement for both the participant and audience.

Using Music education for combating educational disadvantage

Just under 30% of our community have only Primary level education in contrast to an average of 9.2% in the Dublin area. Data for third level qualifications is stark, with 50.2% of the Dublin area having a third level qualification in contrast to 18.7% in our community.

Focus Area 3:

Responsive Programming

We will continuously endeavour to respond to the developing community, and evolving practice in music and arts education to ensure the high quality and relevance of our programme. We will support both management and tutors to further develop their skills and deliver relevant music education programmes.

Rationale

From cradle to grave, we strive to provide programmes that cater for all generations and backgrounds, especially those from the Crumlin area. Inclusive and responsive programming will continue to be a primary focus, concentrating on enabling our community to reach their full potential.



Objectives

We will continue to provide the wide ranging programme currently on offer, from baby music classes, instrumental lessons, orchestras and choirs, Musical Society and St Agnes' Violin project.

We will strive to respond to specific new areas of programming for the duration of this plan.

1. Encouraging the development of Traditional Music education by building on our current programmes and developing new monthly sessions open to all in the community
2. Developing and facilitating Neurodiverse participants through our Sensory Stars Club led by a qualified Music Therapist. This will be done in partnership with Scoil Eoin and our community afterschool groups with D12 Autism.
3. Developing Music Therapy programmes for new members of our society who have experienced trauma as a result of displacement or conflict.
4. Seek statutory and non-statutory partners to develop an arts performance plan for the Crumlin/Dublin 12 area, using local amenities and venues while also striving to develop a custom built performance space

We have a 33% age dependency rate and Lone parent rates are almost 20% higher than the Dublin area average leading our community to being recognised as Disadvantaged/ Marginally Below Average area.

(Pobal Community Profiles 2022)

Focus Area 4: Maintaining Standards

We will maintain and improve the quality of music education provision in all of our programmes. We will concentrate on quality of experience for both the participant and the music / arts practitioner.

Rationale

Sustaining standards of provision and ensuring that all participants receive high quality music experiences in all of their activities. We also strive to sustain and improve quality employment for skilled music teachers, conductors and performers.



Objectives

1. Continuing to provide quality music education that is recognised at local, national and international levels.
2. Ensuring that all classes and performing ensembles are appropriately structured with suitable and relevant programming.
3. Providing meaningful and sustainable employment for musicians and teachers at local level, allowing them to live and work within the city area.
4. Enabling staff to seek Continuing Professional Development to help them to develop their practice, both artistically and pedagogically, for their own benefit and that of their students.
5. Reducing our environmental impact by encouraging green space development and upgrading the energy efficiency in our building. Promoting Dublin City Council's 15-minute city policy by encouraging participants to use carbon sensitive travel such as bus and providing safe cycling park.

Focus Area 5: Sustainability, Governance & Communications

Ensuring external communications are improved by building on local knowledge and developing an online communications plan.

Ensuring that communications are clear and open and that all communications between the Board of Directors, General Manager, teaching staff and support staff flow both ways.

Rationale

For continued sustainability, communications between all members of the CCMA community will be improved by increasing access points for information.

The Board of Directors and General Manager will ensure that clear governance parameters are in place to ensure the efficient and safe running of the organisation.



Objectives

1. Creation of two new employment roles of Head of Development; and an administrator.
2. Continuing to provide clear routes of communication at local level through partnerships and local knowledge.
3. Developing a new website and updating branding.
4. Developing clear social media plans and Key Performance Indicators.
5. Maintaining and developing funding partnerships with local and national organisations from both statutory and corporate sectors.
6. Develop sub-committees of the Board of Directors to encourage good governance by establishing a sub-committee in the following areas: HR & Finance, Compliance, Artistic Planning.
7. Updating Equality Diversity and Inclusion policy for further inclusivity.
8. Reviewing Terms of reference of Board of Directors, including a range of preferred skills of members and optimum lengths of service.
9. Engage an independent Review of the Board of Directors every 5 years.
10. Ensuring compliance with statutory obligations of Charity Regulator, Company Registration Office and employment legislation in a timely manner.

*"Music can name the unnameable and
communicate the unknowable."*

Leonard Bernstein

Appendix 1

Demonstrating Impact

Embedded in an area of social disadvantage and underestimation, we strive to move away from the negatives that are perceived and follow the origin of the DEIS idea, (Delivering Equality In Schools) by bringing this idea into the whole fabric of our community through all the generations.

In an area where less than 20% of our community progress onto third level education, the impact on the lives of our participants is shown across a full gamut of ages, encouraging and supporting all of our participants and enabling many to progress into third level education.

Outlined here are two case studies showing the impact St Agnes' CCMA has had on the lives of participants from early age into adulthood.

1. The Cellos — an intergenerational phenomenon



The intergenerational impact of St Agnes' CCMA is seen in full force in our cellos. In this profile, we follow an example of the intertwining of the project between families, generations, neighbours, St Agnes School (Scoil Úna Naofa) and our CCMA community.

Mick Deans has been a member of the Parents Orchestra since its inception in 2008. He has played cello since then and is a vibrant member of the renamed Late Starters Orchestra, attending rehearsals every Monday evenings. As students of St Agnes' Primary School, now Scoil Úna Naofa, all of Mick's children have played a string instrument. Melissa and Ashley play violin and viola respectively and are very active in our Chamber orchestra for secondary school children. The youngest in the family, Aiden, gave his first performance at our annual 'Sing for Simon' Christmas

concert, sitting side by side with his dad in the cello section of this intergenerational concert. They also all played in our annual performance at ChristChurch Cathedral during our Summer Camp. As a current student of Scoil Úna Naofa, Aiden is also a member of our SUNNY Strings, a string orchestra that meets after-school and is free of charge for all of the school community who take violin/cello classes in our St Agnes Violin Project, the original project created by our Founder Directors, Sr Bernadette and Dr Joanna Crooks.



What is truly phenomenal is that Aiden is now being tutored at St Agnes' CCMA by another past pupil of our Project, Rebecca Ross. Having started with violin when she was in 2nd class, Rebecca quickly moved to the cello and like so many, enjoyed a journey through Junior Strings, playing later in our Chamber Orchestra and Dublin Youth Orchestra while also attending the Royal Irish Academy of Music under scholarship during her secondary school years. After leaving school, Rebecca commenced a BA in Maynooth University but her love and talent for her cello called her back into the world of music. Her outstanding commitment and playing led the Board of Directors to act as sponsors for her third level degree course in music and in Sept 2023, she commenced her B Mus

in Cello at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Even with her dedication to her studies, Rebecca has taken on teaching and administrative work at the CCMA and has many students receiving the benefit of her talent at the CCMA, the youngest of which is Aiden Deans.



2. Yasmine Byrne (aka "Jazzy")

Now 26 years of age, Yasmine Byrne started school in St Agnes' Primary school in 2006. As part of St Agnes' Violin Project, her musical talent became apparent very quickly and she was an enthusiastic member of the violin class, being inspired by her Principal, Sr Bernadette and founder of the project, Dr Joanna Crooks.

Yasmine went on to play in the Junior Strings and Chamber Orchestra in her teens, completing her Grade 8 violin through the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She also featured in St Agnes' Musical Society's production of "Fiddler on the Roof".

Now, although she does still play violin at times, her vocal style has led her to be the first Irish female solo artist to top the Irish charts in 14 years. As a black Irish women, Jazzy feels a certain pride that she grew up in the same Dublin suburb of Crumlin as Phil Lynott "When I started to get out there as a musician, people started to make the comparisons... it's nice to be referenced in the same breath as him!"

Jazzy has topped the charts since 2022, making her vocal debut with Dublin based dance music duo, Belters Only. Following on from that, she signed with Universal Records and has been making her name through TikTok and other social media platforms. More recently, she has played Longitude in Dublin 2023 and 3Arena in October 2023. "I love being in studio but there's nothing like playing live... maybe it's from playing violin from such a young age, but honestly, I just run out on stage now". She always credits her grounding in St Agnes' Violin Project as having changed her life, thinking back to the moments working on supermarket deli counters' but she "checks herself every day and I'm super grateful for what I have achieved so far".



Her debut album, Constellations, was released in 2023 and she was nominated for International Song of the Year for the Brit Awards in 2024. She now divides her time between London and Dublin, still calling Crumlin her home.

Appendix 2

Board of Directors



Seamus Doyle
Chair



Sr Bernadette Sweeney
Founder/Director
Company Secretary



Mary Dowd
Treasurer



Dawn Davin



Councillor Pat Dunne



Senator Catherine Ardagh



Cormac Ó hAodáin



John Burns

Contributors

Sr Bernadette Sweeney
Hilda Milner
Deirdre McCrea
Dr Kelly Hickey
Melissa Nolan
John Burns

Founder Director, St Agnes CCMA
General Manager, St Agnes CCMA
Independent Music Consultant
Asst. Arts Officer, Dublin City Council
Speckintime
Board of Directors, St Agnes CCMA

Photography

Martin O'Brien
Irish Times

Support & Sponsors

Dublin City Council
Arts Office, Dublin City Council
Greyhound Recycling
Leo Pharma
HSE
Religious Sisters of Charity

Dr. Joanna Crooks



Founder of St Agnes' Violin Project
Orchestra Manager of Late Starters
Orchestra and St Agnes' CCMA
Chamber Orchestra



A huge thanks to Ray Yeates and Dr Kelly Hickey for their invaluable contribution and support that has enabled this Strategic Plan to be completed.

Thanks also to the Board of Directors of St Agnes CCMA.

Our immense gratitude for the support from our funders and sponsors.





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