

**PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended 31 March 2024**

**Company No: NI030225**  
**Charity No: NIC104724**

**PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
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Year Ended 31 March 2024

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**PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Company Information**

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<b>Trustees</b>	Mr S Buchanan	(Chairperson)
	Mr R Winter	(Vice-Chairperson)
	Mrs F Cole	(Treasurer)
	Miss S Kelly	
	Mrs P Lowry	
	Mr N Galway	
	Mr I Hontavilla	(Resigned 8 May 2024)
	Miss J Hadden	(Resigned 29 May 2024)
	Mrs A Crawford	(Resigned 22 November 2023)

**Secretary** Mr J Gillen

**Address for correspondence** 7 Crescent Gardens  
Belfast  
BT7 1NS

**Registered Office** 7 Crescent Gardens  
Belfast  
BT7 1NS

**Auditor** FPM Accountants Ltd  
Chartered Accountants  
1-3 Arthur Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GA

**Bankers** Bank of Ireland  
4-8 High Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2BA

**Solicitors** Cleaver Fulton Rankin  
50 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7FW

**Registered Charity No.** NIC104724  
**HMRC Charity No.** XR86639  
**Registered Company No.** NI030225

**Key Management Personnel:**

Mr A Herron	Chief Executive Officer
Mr J Gillen	Director of Corporate Service & Finance
Mrs A Stallard	Director of Service Delivery & Development (Acting)

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024**

The Executive Committee are pleased to present their annual Directors' report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 March 2024, which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2008, the Companies Act 2006, the Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

#### **Chairs Report**

As PlayBoard approaches a significant milestone in its history – with our upcoming 40th anniversary - it gives me great pleasure to write my second forward as Chair for the organisation's Annual Impact report, covering the year 2023/24. As a long-time supporter of PlayBoard, I am honoured to fulfil the role of Chair, and am immensely proud of the organisation's many significant achievements over the years.

As with previous Annual Impact reports, this document provides only a snapshot of PlayBoard's considerable activity and impact over the past year. I would actively encourage you to visit our website regularly, follow us on social media and sign up to our regular E-Play. These various platforms allow you to keep up to date on all that PlayBoard does in Leading the Play Agenda in Northern Ireland. As in previous years, our annual report provides you with a snapshot of Playboard's activity and impact. I would encourage you to look at our website, follow us on Facebook or Twitter, and sign up to our E-Play, which will keep you a breast of all that we do in Leading the Play Agenda in Northern Ireland.

Alongside our many colleagues across the wider community, voluntary and charitable sector, it has once again been a significantly challenging year for PlayBoard. Ongoing political instability has embedded an unfavourable external funding environment, impacting at core, strategic & operational funding levels. Whilst the resumption of the NI Assembly is welcome & offers some signs of positivity and hope, the legacy of political instability continues to cause significant concern, with a continued deficit in decision making & a lack of budgetary sign-off.

Beyond the political arena, the continued economic downturn, coupled with rising utility and material costs, has added significant further financial pressure to the organisation whilst creating a hesitant and undefined environment. These wider economic pressures, alongside the imposition of funding cuts of around 20%, acted to increase operating costs significantly whilst reducing income raising and fundraising opportunities. Such external factors have led to PlayBoard reporting an end of year deficit. Throughout the year, the Board and Senior Management Team have worked diligently to circumnavigate the many challenges we have faced. We are, however, confident that the resumption of the political institutions will allow us to move swiftly back towards stability and growth over the coming years.

At societal level, the need for quality play has never been more apparent. Continued physical and mental health concerns regarding our children and young people, alongside recognition of the critical role of play in supporting educational, skills and social development, make the work of PlayBoard as necessary as it ever has been. Indeed, during the past year, the need for further action at government level to embed the right to play in Northern Ireland was emphasised by the United Nation Committee on the Rights of the Child during its most recent reporting review. At the core of the Committee recommendations was the establishment of a clear Play Strategy for Northern Ireland - a key target for PlayBoard as we move forward.

Despite the many challenges presented throughout the year, PlayBoard has continued to develop and deliver key services in support of achieving its overarching strategic plan. Advocacy, campaigning and lobbying at all

## PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND

### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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levels remain a cornerstone of PlayBoard's work, with a focus on making the right to play a reality for all children through a combination of research, communications and public campaigning.

During the year membership rose by 5%, whilst social media reach across all platforms resulted in over 500,000 impressions. Active representation on key strategic fora ensured PlayBoard continued to shape the policy framework for children and young people, whilst participation in conferences and seminars helped to expand the organisation's reach.

From a campaigning perspective, following initial budget cuts, PlayBoard successfully secured the resumption of funding for at-risk 'Bright Start' School Age Childcare providers, and delivered a celebration campaign highlighting the benefits of play-based School Age Childcare.

PlayBoard's increased membership and growing reach lends ever increasing support to our lobbying work, providing us with a clear mandate for continued political engagement aimed at securing a Play Strategy for Northern Ireland. The delivery and enhancement of play opportunities has been at the core of Playboard's work since its establishment in 1985. Over the year, we have continued to work at a local level supporting the delivery of community play sessions within local council areas, delivered training and support to the primary school sector, and delivered a pilot prison-based programme. The SEUPB-funded Our Generation programme came to an end, having delivered to over 1,000 children, 500 practitioners and 270 parents over its 3 years of delivery.

Acknowledging the need to work towards enhanced access to inclusive play opportunities, PlayBoard, in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, developed and launched the ADAPT Framework, aimed at supporting the design and development of inclusive play spaces. Demand for PlayBoard's support, training and resources again stretched beyond Northern Ireland, with an increasing demand from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). In line with growing levels of interest, we will continue to explore play and playwork development opportunities across the island of Ireland over the coming years. As an organisation, PlayBoard prides itself in being able to establish, strengthen and maintain good partnership relations with a wide range of stakeholders. Our abilities within this area have helped us to remain responsive to changing needs whilst growing strong alliances to deliver improved outcomes for play.

On behalf of the Board and wider staff team, I would like to thank our members for your continued support over the past year, and for your continued belief in our vision of a playful future for our children and young people. On your behalf, we will continue to strive to achieve the vision as laid out in our strategic plan.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of all our funding agencies who contribute to making PlayBoard the organisation that it is. PlayBoard's commitment to professionalism, coupled with robust internal management, planning and governance systems, will ensure that we continue to successfully navigate the many challenges faced by the voluntary and community sector.

Finally, a massive thank you to our fantastic staff team who, despite repeated challenges and uncertainty, showed skill, determination and enthusiasm to deliver the right to play for so many children and young people across Northern Ireland and beyond.

Stuart Buchanan  
Chairperson

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees** Year Ended 31 March 2024

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#### **PURPOSES AND ACTIVITIES**

As the lead NGO for play in Northern Ireland, PlayBoard works strategically to influence policy development that is supportive of play whilst providing support for grass roots organisations involved in play delivery. Representing a strategic network of individuals and organisations both within, and related to, the play sector, PlayBoard exists to promote and to advocate play on behalf of its membership, and the children and young people it represents.

PlayBoard supports and develops the interests and aspirations of its membership with the aim of providing an independent voice for the play sector. Working with its membership, the wider play sector and key cross-sectoral stakeholders, PlayBoard works to promote, create and develop quality play opportunities aimed at improving children's play experiences, holistic development and overall quality of life across Northern Ireland. In addition to its work in Northern Ireland, PlayBoard provides focused support and delivers play programmes within the Republic of Ireland in response to demand, whilst contributing at UK level through its representative role on the UK Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum.

PlayBoard provides support to any child or young person, individual or organisation whose ethos is based around supporting the child's right to play - to express their views and participate in the decision-making process as it relates to play and wider community planning issues. PlayBoard supports the play sector through the provision of play-based information, training and advice on a range of areas including play qualifications, committee governance, charity law, fundraising, best practice development, human resources, advocacy and school age childcare development.

In line with our mission statement, the principal activity of PlayBoard during the year was: Leading the Play Agenda. This took many forms, including promoting the benefits of children's play to ensure the holistic development of the child; ensuring there was adequate investment in children and young people through training and quality play projects, advising and assisting in the administration of funding to play services and engaging in political lobbying in a local, national and international context.

PlayBoard has delivered advice, support and training to the sector through one of its thematic support programmes, that is the School Age Childcare Bright Start programme. Further, a number of Workforce and Play Development programmes were delivered including Positive PlayGrounds, Youth@Play and Play Training for childcare settings including SureStart's and daycare settings.

With the end of funding for PlayBoard's highly successful 'Spaces to Be' project, part of the SEUPB funded OUR Generation programme, PlayBoard has strived to secure further funding to expand the project through PEACE Plus. If successful, further funding will enable PlayBoard to develop its suite of play based approaches to tackling underlying health and wellbeing issues outside of the Urban Villages.

As part of the planned programme, children and young people will support programme design and delivery, developing skills and confidence through play to improve well-being within their communities and to act as agents of change, building peace for future generations. Using play, PlayBoard will build resilience in children and young people by recognising and celebrating difference, in turn supporting their positive mental health and well-being.

PlayBoard continues to administer the Bright Start programme on behalf of The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety through the Regional Childcare Partnership as work continues on the development of the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy. Locally PlayBoard is represented on multiple networks and forums including the Childcare Partnerships, CINI Early Years Alliance, NICCY Participation Forum, All Party Children and Young People's group, Childhood, Transition and Social Justice Initiative.

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024**

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On a wider level, PlayBoard continues to represent the interests of the play sector in Northern Ireland on a number of National and International Forums including:

- UK Four Nation Children's Play Policy Forum
- UK Play Safety Forum
- The British Standards Institute
- The International Play Association via the Northern Ireland branch (IPA NI), and
- The European Network for School Age Childcare

#### **PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT**

PlayBoard's direct beneficiaries are children, young people, parents, carers, child-minders, playworkers and play-based organisations. Further the children and young people who are supported by those organisations can be viewed as indirect beneficiaries.

#### **BENEFITS**

The following benefits will be achieved from PlayBoard's purposes:

- Increased effectiveness and efficiency of community and voluntary sector organisations concerned with the provision of play-based activities in Northern Ireland, resulting in enhanced outcomes and service delivery and, consequently an improved quality of life for those children and young people;
- Increased self-awareness, resilience, competence, and confidence among children and young people. The development of children and young people's social skills and abilities and an enhanced sense of purpose and fulfilment through play;
- Enhanced knowledge and capacity of children, young people parents, carers, child-minders, playworkers and play based organisations to make healthier lifestyle choices through play;
- Increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of the importance of play opportunities in supporting child development among beneficiaries involved in delivering play-based activities;
- Enhanced ability of the play sector to provide advice & information to statutory sector bodies and agencies, funders and others to exert a positive influence on the development of policy and practice for play;
- Provide statutory authorities and others with opportunities to connect with young people in a positive manner. The immediate beneficiaries are those community and voluntary sector organisations and statutory bodies and agencies and others concerned with play provision activities; Raised awareness about the child's right to play and the cultivation of a society that favours equality and diversity and challenges prejudice related to the right to play in Northern Ireland;
- Improved governance within Management Committees; resulting in improved sustainability of their community Play Groups or Childcare centres;
- Connecting children & young people to their communities through play, resulting in positive citizenship and behavioural change;
- Increased opportunities for children & young people to engage in play activities that bring both communities and people together, leading to greater social cohesion, improvements in health and fitness, well-being and personal fulfilment;
- Enhanced mental health and well-being of children and young people which builds self-esteem, independence, resilience and respect for self and others;
- Through advice, support, training and play based activities beneficiaries are supported to develop new skills and coping mechanisms.

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### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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Benefits will be evidenced in the following ways:

PlayBoard operates an outcomes-based accountability framework, which is used to measure the impact of all areas of work. The following mechanisms are used to measure impact.

Feedback and evaluations of the work and impact from children and young people who participate in PlayBoard programmes and who participate within the play organisations PlayBoard provide support, advice, and training. This enables PlayBoard to conduct internal reports of the play-based organisations concerned and carryout both internal and external evaluations of both their work and that of PlayBoard.

Evidence is derived from engagement and feedback from children and young people, community and voluntary sector representatives, reports produced by statutory sector bodies and agencies as well as funders and other likeminded organisations.

Evidence of impact is gleaned through analysis of social policy wherein play is now included.

Regular satisfaction and impact surveys are conducted with PlayBoard members, school age childcare providers, parents, carers and interested stakeholders.

#### **Private Benefits**

PlayBoard can confirm that there will be no private benefits and our purposes are not harmful to any of the identified beneficiaries.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

The year 2023/24 has been one of challenge for many across the community and voluntary sector. Over the last financial year, the organisation like many of its counterparts in the NGO Charitable sector has found itself in uncharted waters due primarily to an unfavourable external funding environment resulting from political instability which has impacted at both core funding and strategic levels.

Whilst the resumption of the NI Assembly offers signs of positivity for the upcoming financial year, it is noted that the legacy of political instability remains with no concrete decision making or budgets signed off for Departments. The continuing economic downturn has also impacted, creating a hesitant and undefined environment.

The impact of external funding cuts reduced opportunities for play delivery, however during the period PlayBoard has continued to review its delivery methods in order to maintain the active promotion of the benefits of play for children and young people.

Despite the many environmental challenges, PlayBoard has continued to deliver a broad range of key services against the core themes within its overarching strategic plan as we sought to advocate for, deliver and develop play across twelve strategic objective areas:

1. Advocating for play.
2. Building our evidence based on practice and experience.
3. Strengthening our voice.
4. Developing and delivering a quality framework suitable for several sectoral contexts.
5. Promoting and developing the playwork workforce.
6. Delivering playwork.



## PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND

### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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7. Working with councils, schools, and childcare settings to enhance understanding and knowledge of play and playwork.
  8. Developing strategic alliances, collaborations and new partners to promote the health and inclusion benefits of play e.g. PHA, disability sector.
  9. Enhancing our cross-border profile to share learning and develop new relationships and partnerships.
  10. Advancing PlayBoard's economic growth.
  11. Developing PlayBoard's competence, capability and capacity.
  12. Enhancing organisational leadership, culture and growth.

The Trustees Report provides an overview of the broad range of activities delivered in support of the key aims which underpin the Strategic Plan, namely:

Aim 1: Being the authoritative voice for play.

Aim 2: Promoting quality in play and playwork practice.

Aim 3: Increasing and improving opportunities and conditions for play.

Aim 4: PlayBoard's organisational growth and development.

Some highlights under each key strategic aim includes (not definitive):

**Aim 1:** Being the authoritative voice for play.

- Strategic representation on 30+ networks, forums, partnerships including UK Play Safety Forum, UK Play Policy Forum, DoE Sectoral Partnerships, Network Youth NI, All Party Groupings, Childcare Partnerships, NICCY Participation Forum etc.
- Active representation of the school age childcare and wider play sector on the Department of Education's Early Learning and Childcare Strategy Reference Group and Stakeholder Forum.
- Undertook consultation with younger children on behalf of TEO to support and guide the development of a new Good Relations policy and for DE in support of the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy development.
- Ongoing engagement with senior government officials across a range of departments aimed at enhancing the commitment to delivering quality play opportunities.
- Facilitated quarterly NI Play Development Forum meetings and play park site visits with council and the Department of Education.
- Convention and at IPA World online events.
- Increased social media presence on Facebook, with a reach of 279.4k across 8,221 followers
- Increased social media presence on X (formerly Twitter) with 231.7k impressions across 4,899 followers.
- Development of PlayBoard Instagram and LinkedIn social media platforms with 478 and 316 followers respectively.
- 12 E-Plays issued in year and 4 E-Play updates providing details of strategic/policy matters and operational delivery to PlayBoard membership.
- Delivered targeted social media campaigns and information resources aimed at supporting parents, schools, childcare settings and youth organisations to enhance play-based activities.
- Delivered series of webinars to audiences in NI and RoI focused on improving knowledge and understanding of play and its role in supporting children and young people's development.
- Presented on PlayBoard's works at the 'Children's Research Network' conference in Dublin.
- Undertook focused political engagement with all major parties aimed at progressing the development of a Play Strategy for NI.

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### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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**Aim 2:** Promoting quality in play and playwork practice.

- During the past year PlayBoard has worked hard to support the delivery and provision of CPD opportunities. In seeking to do this we have worked strategically with a range of partners including government departments, Childcare Partnerships, local authorities, training providers, colleges and employers to promote greater access to training and qualifications, greater choice of courses and greater access to variety of approaches to learning.
- PlayBoard delivered direct training across a range of settings including sessions for Childcare Partnership members, SureStart's, Daycare settings, Getting Ready to Learn and other practitioner groups from across NI.
- Through PlayBoard's work, the profile and professionalism of playwork has been enhanced, and training and practice has stimulated collaboration and cross-sectoral mobility within the children's workforce
- Delivered training in the Rol to Dublin YMCA, National Libraries and Healthy Ireland co-ordinator group.
- Membership of UK School Age Childcare forum, connecting to regional representative bodies across UK to promote quality within play-based School Age Childcare settings.
- Development and submission of evidence focused on the benefits of play within School Age and wider childcare settings to the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy team aimed at influencing policy direction.
- PlayBoard led a successful campaign, securing ongoing funding for Bright Start funded groups following initial indications of funding withdrawal due to financial crisis at Stormont.
- Successfully delivered a celebration campaign for Bright Start groups, focused on the benefits for families, children and wider society, including input from Bright Start practitioners, parents, children, political representatives and senior officials.
- In partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, completed development of the ADAPT Framework for designing and developing Inclusive Play Spaces with launch at Stormont in March 2024.
- Developmental input to the National Occupational Standards Review (4 Nations group, representing PETCs across the 4 Nations) and participation on PETCUK and PETCNI.
- Bright Start – ongoing quality, governance and monitoring support for 48 SAC projects in receipt of Bright Start funding.
- Published focused children's book entitled 'Archie's Adventures in Emotions' alongside activity resources and animation based on the work of PlayBoard's 'Spaces to Be' project, part of the wider SEUPOB funded 'Our Generation' programme. Resource aims to support emotional intelligence and develop resilience in childhood.

**Aim 3:** Increasing and improving opportunities and conditions for play.

- PlayBoard held its first large-scale Play Day event since the pandemic with over 200 children and families attending a play event in Ormeau Park, Belfast with a focus on loose parts and inclusive play.
- PlayBoard supported and promoted local Play Day events held by councils and other providers, with a focus on encouraging people to celebrate play within their communities.
- Spaces 2 Be, OUR Generation project successfully delivered by end of funding with 500 practitioners, 270 parents and over 1,000 children and young people participating over its 3-year duration.
- Pop-up play session delivered in Ard and North Down Council area with 70 children in attendance.
- Delivered 8 Positive PlayGrounds sessions within Primary Schools.
- Delivered a play programme within Magilligan Prison. Sessions were held with Prison Officer and prisoners within the prison to highlight the importance of play and how play can reconnect families.
- Building on the theme 'Play in times of Hardship' PlayBoard continued to promote low-cost play ideas aimed at supporting families facing budgetary hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis.

## PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND

### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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**Aim 4:** PlayBoard's organisational growth and development.

- Given the volatility of the funding environment, PlayBoard's fundraising committee has continued to meet with the aim of broadening the funding base for the organisation. This has included engaging with a range of potential funding bodies to grow capacity to meet underlying play need. This has included collaborative funding bids to PEACE Plus, the success of which will not be known until 2024/25 year.
- All Board meetings and Finance and Personnel sub-group meetings have been undertaken as required alongside PlayBoard's AGM which took place in November 2023.
- During the year an internal subgroup has continued to work to develop a research and evidence base to underpin advocacy aimed at securing a Play Strategy for Northern Ireland.

During the year PlayBoard continued to develop its work in the Republic of Ireland in partnership with the National Childhood Network (NCN). This included direct delivery of play sessions, targeted play training and advocacy work aimed at pro-actively advocating for play by developing relationships with key stakeholders including political representatives, government officials, colleagues, and practitioners from across the children's sector.

#### PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

PlayBoard's vision is of 'A society where the right to play is both valued and realised'. In seeking to achieve our vision, PlayBoard will continue to represent the voice of children, young people and the play sector, advocating and lobbying on their behalf with local and regional government officials, departments, Councillors and MLAs. PlayBoard will continue to build the capacity of the sector to fully engage with children and young people, providing play experiences that support the holistic development and overall health and well-being of children and young people through the provision of training and quality play projects. Playboard will:

- Design, develop and deliver play training programmes aimed at both the playwork sector as well as wider sectors that have an interest in, or an influence on play.
- Lead on the completion of research aimed at highlighting the impact of play on individuals & communities.
- Proactively engage with government Departments and Councils with a view to influencing policy & practice.
- Advocate and lobby for children and young people's right to play.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to all who has an interest on play.
- Deliver focused area-based community development projects centred on enhancing play experience within communities.

The three-year Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 has successfully finished its second year of activities. An annual operational plan was agreed for April 2024 - March 2025.

Some of the key challenges and changes for the next year include:

- Completion of the operational plan so that PlayBoard meets its strategic aims and objectives.
- Ongoing support to the play sector in recovering from the impact of Covid.
- Secure additional funding so that PlayBoard deliver on its current strategic plan.
- Completion of contractual service level agreements in the delivery of face-to-face services.
- Continued focus on supporting the play sector regarding the impact of the Children & Young People's strategy.

PlayBoard has been awarded grant funding from the Department of Education to deliver, develop and further children and young people's play throughout Northern Ireland. PlayBoard is recognised as the Department's strategic partner for play in NI, a major achievement for PlayBoard, which no other organisation has achieved, and will play a vital role in PlayBoard's strategic plan moving forward.

PlayBoard will look to develop both its strategic & operational plan to ensure that it is fit for purpose during the economic downturn, appraising different work methods and areas of delivery that will support the organisation in achieving its strategic aims.

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees** Year Ended 31 March 2024

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#### **Financial Review**

The results for the year are set out in the attached financial statements.

The total funds held at the end of the year are shown in the notes to the financial statements.

Over the last financial year, the organisation like many of its counterparts in the NGO Charitable sector has found itself in uncharted waters due primarily to an unfavourable external funding environment resulting from political instability which has impacted at both core funding and strategic levels. Whilst the resumption of the NI Assembly offers some signs of positivity for the upcoming financial year, it is noted that the legacy of political instability remains with no concrete decision making or budgets signed off for Departments. The continuing economic downturn has also impacted, creating a hesitant and undefined environment.

Within this context the Executive Committee will examine and consider the form and function of the organisation and the strategic and operational remit of the organisation as it is mandated to undertake on behalf of its membership body.

Initial review of the results for the year suggests an overall deficit of £105,820. The results need to be considered in light of the £28,484 depreciation charged in the year, £24,405 of which has been set against the designated fund for the purchase and work on the building. Therefore, PlayBoard made a trading deficit in the year of £77,336. The deficit in year has resulted from the loss of what was classed as secured income of £84,857 from both government grants and the economic downturn, resulting on funding withdrawn, this with additional unforeseen expenditure of £39,135 covering essential roof repairs and redundancy payments facilitated the deficit. If PlayBoard had received its full grant income and did not have the additional expenditure, the year-end would have shown a surplus, but unfortunately neither happened.

In order to deliver on PlayBoard's strategic aims and objectives the Executive Committee require both capacity and competency to deliver on existing funding obligations and be proactively able to promote and develop new initiatives and relationships. Building upon our strong foundations the Executive Committee will present a responsible and manageable budget that is focused on good governance, better outcomes and improves the ability of PlayBoard to deliver on its current strategic plan.

#### **DESIGNATED FUNDS**

The Executive Committee recognise that purchasing, renovating and furnishing the building at Crescent Gardens has a financial impact on the organisation.

#### **RESERVES POLICY**

PlayBoard's reserves policy explains to existing and potential funders, donors and other stakeholders why a charity is holding a particular amount of reserves. A good reserves policy gives confidence to stakeholders that the charity's finances are being managed and can also provide an indicator of future funding needs.

The aim is to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise, recognising the volatile grant environment as well as allowing for the payment of any liabilities which would arise should the company cease to operate. In the Executive Committee's view, the reserves should provide the charity with adequate financial stability and the means for it to meet its charitable objectives for the foreseeable future.

#### **GOING CONCERN**

The activities of the charity were impacted slightly by the effects of Covid in the financial year ended 31 March 2024. However, the trustees are of the view that they have responded pro-actively throughout and the measures taken during the year to reduce costs and continue to secure future funding has meant that the charity has been well placed to manage the uncertainty going forward. The trustees

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees** Year Ended 31 March 2024

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continue as a going concern, even with the uncertainty of a functioning Executive and local Assembly impacting significantly on both service funding and policy development, PlayBoard have ensured that there are appropriate levels of reserves to enable it to deal with an expected reduction of income or

PlayBoard's reserves policy will be used to assist in strategic planning by considering how new projects or activities will be funded. It will inform the budget process by considering whether reserves need to be used during the financial year or built up for future projects and it will inform the budget and risk management process by identifying any uncertainty in future income streams.

The Executive Committee have established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed should equate to six months' total resources expended. Any call upon the use of reserves will be at the approval of the Executive Committee which will examine the rationale for doing so and agree an amount where appropriate. At 31 March 2024, PlayBoard's reserves policy exceed this policy. At 31 March 2024, the level of "free reserves", excluding fixed assets and designated funds were £352,833.

#### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

Company Number: NI030225

Inland Revenue Charity Number: XR86639

Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland: NIC104724

Registered Office: 7 Crescent Gardens, Belfast, BT7 1NS

#### **STRUCTURE**

PlayBoard NI is incorporated under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, being a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital. The company is governed by its Articles of Association since its incorporation on 6 December 1985. PlayBoard is also a charity and has been formally admitted by the HM Revenue & Customs, as such, for income tax purposes and is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and abides by the legal requirements to submit an annual monitoring return form providing information on the charity's activities, governance and finances.

#### **GOVERNING DOCUMENT**

PlayBoard is governed by its Articles of Association. The Executive Committee confirm that they have complied with their duty within the Charities Act NI 2008 and have amended the Articles of Association in line with the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, which were agreed on the 8th October 2013. PlayBoard will carry out a governance health check and make any recommendations arising from this on its Articles of Association at its next AGM in November 2024.

#### **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

PlayBoard is a membership body for the play/playwork sector. The Directors of the company are also Charity Trustees for the purposes of Charity Law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Executive Committee. In addition, three Honorary Office Bearers are elected to serve on the Committee: these being a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Honorary Treasurer. All the Executive Committee members have been registered as Company Directors.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Up to 10 Executive Committee members which include PlayBoard Honorary Officers are nominated and duly elected by PlayBoard at its Annual General Meeting. Committee members are appointed for a period of three years. Executive Committee members elected to an Honorary Officers post may extend their tenure to a maximum of six years. The Executive Committee can also co-opt up to four additional members to fill a skills gap in the Committee make up as they see fit.



## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **COMMITTEE INDUCTION AND TRAINING**

New Executive Committee members undergo induction training to brief them on good governance, their roles and responsibilities, their legal obligations under charity and company law, the committee and the decision-making processes, the strategic and operational planning processes, the organisational structure and key organisational activities.

As part of their induction Executive Committee members are provided with the following:

- PlayBoard's Articles of Association
- PlayBoard's Vision Mission & Values
- PlayBoard's Strategic Plan
- PlayBoard's Operational Plan
- PlayBoard's Trustee/Directors' Roles and Responsibilities
- PlayBoard's Finance & Personnel Committee Terms of Reference
- PlayBoard's Code of Conduct / Conflict of Interest policy
- PlayBoard's Skills Audit
- PlayBoard's organisational chart
- PlayBoard's Audited Accounts
- PlayBoard's Principles of Good Governance
- The Code of Good Governance Northern Ireland
- PlayBoard Risk Register

#### **GOVERNANCE**

The Executive Committee ensures the good governance of the organisation by setting its strategic objectives and policy direction through PlayBoard's three-year strategic plan and monitoring progress on this through the annual operational planning process.

The Committee meets every six weeks and the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee which specifically deals with the human and financial resources of the organisation meets on a quarterly basis. The Chief Executive, appointed by the Committee, manages the day to day operations of the organisation. To facilitate effective operations, the Chief Executive has delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the Committee, for operational matters which include the application and monitoring of the agreed strategic and operational objectives as listed in the Strategic and Operational Plans.

In the course of the year PlayBoard Executive Committee met every six weeks to considered the potential impact of the recession over the next year on the organisation, including the threats to PlayBoard's income streams, how and when they might materialise and what PlayBoard would have to do to confront any constraints to the organisation's income. The Executive Committee assessed the possible strategic and operational risks in determining the costs for the coming year and has agreed a budget that enables PlayBoard to continue to be fit for purpose both financially and operationally.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Executive Committee members and staff have an obligation to act in the best interests of PlayBoard and its beneficiaries, present and future. Executive Committee members need therefore to be sensitive to the possibility that their activities outside the organisation (including holding office or being otherwise involved in organisations, companies, political parties or) could be perceived as having a bearing on – or coming into conflict with – the objects and integrity of the organisation. Executive Committee members have a duty in law to avoid conflicts of interest and must not take part in any discussion or decision in which there is such a conflict.

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### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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Each year both Executive Committee members and staff will be asked to complete a declaration of interests form to declare any affiliated connections through the following: Spouse, domestic partner, child, mother, father, brother or sister or close associates; any corporation, business or non-profit organisation of which you are serve as staff , officer, board member, partner, participate in management or are employed by; any trust or other estate in which you have a substantial interest or as to which you serve as a trustee or in a similar capacity. Disclosure forms are monitored as part of the risk register controls.

At the start of each Executive Committee meeting, members will be asked to declare whether any agenda items raise a potential conflict of interest. This will be recorded and reflected in minutes. Where a conflict of interest occurs, the Trustee concerned will withdraw from the meeting for that item on the agenda. It is the potential, rather than the actual, benefit from which the conflict of interest arises which requires authority, in order to avoid a breach of trust and to ensure transparency.

#### RISK MANAGEMENT

PlayBoard have designed and implemented a robust and comprehensive risk management toolkit that lets the Executive Committee identify the risks involved, assess how likely is it to happen and what would the impact be to the organisation. These then let the Trustees plan and implement controls that will mitigate the risk while monitoring and reviewing the identified risks within the register.

Through the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee on a quarterly and annual basis wherein both the strategic and operational risks are assessed to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to Strategic risks, which are those risks arising from major events that could impact across the whole of PlayBoard e.g. major overspend or serious damage to the reputation of PlayBoard and Operational risks, which are those arising from the day-to-day management of activities within teams and less likely to impact upon other teams or PlayBoard as a whole.

The health and well-being of our staff, members and most importantly children and young people remains paramount, so PlayBoard continues to access and monitor risks associated with Covid mitigating were possible. Where a safe space is not permissible, PlayBoard continues to take appropriate measures to protect staff and our members with activities via online and other multimedia platforms.

The Executive Committee are continually assessing the impact of Covid-19 and implementing measures to ensure PlayBoard remains fit for purpose, this is being done in the following ways;

The Board meet on a six weekly basis to examine the following;

- Ensure PlayBoard have an effective risk management procedure in place taking account of Covid-19 related risks, for example cyber security and data protection, as well as a return-to-work risk assessment and policy.
- Ensure PlayBoard communicates with funders to confirm that funding will still be provided.
- Review the financial status of PlayBoard questioning management's rationale and underlying assumptions in their financial assessments, keeping up to date of the current financial position, taking any action if needed, being realistic with projections and focusing on essential spending only, reducing overheads where possible.
- Ensure that PlayBoard continue to look for new funding opportunities, while confirming that current activities and commitments are met, reviewing if any projects can be delayed or cancelled.
- Consider cash reserves, which can be used to help cope with unexpected events if needed.

PlayBoard continues to monitor all procedures associated with risk management and ensure that continuous risk assessment feeds into any decision making and business processes that will mitigate its exposure to the major risks identified.

## **PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **Report of the Trustees** **Year Ended 31 March 2024**

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PlayBoard continues to monitor all procedures associated with risk management and ensure that continuous risk assessment feeds into any decision making and business processes that will mitigate its exposure to the major risks identified.

#### **PAY POLICY FOR SENIOR STAFF**

The Trustees (Executive Committee) all give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. The organisation has adapted the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales for its use for many years, were the Finance & Personnel through an evaluation made a recommendation of pay points for each grade within the organisation including the Senior Management Team. These pay scales at the time were set based on an external benchmarking exercise against roles with similar job roles and levels of responsibility. Cost of living increases are assessed by the Finance & Personnel Committee before going to the Executive Committee for agreement.

#### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Executive Committee (who are also the Directors of PlayBoard for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Executive Committee to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Executive Committee have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the Executive Committee must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Executive Committee are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions. The Executive Committee are continually assessing the impact of Covid-19 and implementing measures to ensure PlayBoard remains fit for purpose, while protecting both its staff and members by moving activities.



## PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND

### Report of the Trustees Year Ended 31 March 2024

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to an online model where a safe space is not available. As a result of the actions above, these accounts are considered to be prepared on a going concern basis.

#### Statement as to disclosure to our auditors

In so far as the Executive Committee are aware at the time of approving our trustees' annual report:

- there is no other relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the trustees, having made enquiries of fellow directors and the group's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all steps that he/she is obliged to take as a director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

By order of the Board of Trustees



Stuart Buchanan  
Chairperson

Date:

26/6/24