

Exploring & Thinking

Early Childhood Arts Residency Awards 2026/27

Plain Text Version.

Introduction

The Dublin region Local Authorities and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are working in partnership to support early childhood arts practice and to increase access to quality arts experiences for children experiencing homelessness.

The partnership invites applications from artists to develop and deliver early childhood arts residencies within homeless accommodation services across the four local authority administrative areas. We invite applications from artists who propose to collaborate with other artists and/or creative practitioners.

One residency award is available in each of the following areas:

- Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown County
- Dublin City North
- Dublin City South
- South Dublin
- Fingal

Children Experiencing Homelessness.

Homelessness amongst children and families is consistently increasing. In March 2026, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive reported that 1,866 families and 4,118 children were living in emergency accommodation. The types of accommodation provided range from hotels and B&Bs to family hubs, most of which are supported by Non-Governmental Organisations.

For all young children, family and accommodation circumstances have a huge influence on their health and wellbeing and life opportunities. Families experiencing homelessness have described feelings of insecurity that cause stress, while the temporary nature of many of these situations may also bring about feelings of anxiety.

What will an artist receive from this Residency Award?

Early childhood arts include a wide range of different arts practices and creative experiences with and for children aged 0-5 years.

This Residency Award offers:

- A maximum budget of €13,000 for each residency award. This fee is to research, develop and deliver a project with children aged 0- 5 years and their adult caregivers in an assigned homeless accommodation service.
- Support from the Local Authority, CYPSC partners and accommodation services.
- Three facilitated peer-to-peer reflective learning sessions, estimated to be one half-day each, and covered within the budget allocation of each residency award.

What do the partners expect from the artist for this Residency Award?

- Research and development to commence by November 2026.
- Completion of a minimum of 10 artistic engagements by June 2027.
- Navigation of fluctuating participation if necessary.
- Consideration of how to deliver this residency in a shared living environment.
- Employment of ethical and appropriate documentation methods, approved in advance by the partners and accommodation service.
- Participation in three facilitated peer-to-peer learning sessions with artists working across the Dublin region - one in December 2026 and two between January and June 2027.

Note: There is no expectation for a public outcome or public dissemination of documentation.

What are the Objectives and Priorities for this Residency Award?

- Reach early years children experiencing homelessness through meaningful and high-quality arts engagement.
- Support artistic ambition, professional development, and collaboration in early childhood arts.
- Promote access, participation and inclusion for children aged 0-5 years and their adult caregivers with an emphasis on those experiencing homelessness.
- Encourage research, experimentation and innovation in early childhood arts practice.
- Stimulate dialogue between the Dublin local authorities, the CYPSCs, artists, and homelessness support services.
- Support reflective, ethical and evidence-informed practice in early childhood arts.
- Build on existing knowledge and experience across artforms, professional disciplines and social contexts.
- Contribute to advocacy in early childhood arts.
- Encourage sustainable approaches that are achievable, realistic and responsive to identified needs.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

1. Artists who propose to collaborate with other artists and/or creative practitioners
 - a) throughout the development and delivery of the residencyor
 - b) at an identified point of development and delivery of the residency.
2. Individual artists with a named collaborator/s who wish to develop their practice in early childhood arts.
3. Artists practicing in all art forms.
4. Artists with experience of working with early years children experiencing disadvantage.

How do I apply?

Apply [online](#)

Please contact us if you have access requirements.

You will need to include the information listed below.

1. **CVs** Please outline your arts experience and that of your collaborators; please include all relevant CVs and examples of creating art with children.

2. **Outline Proposal**

We would like to get a sense of what the children and adult caregivers may expect to experience by working with you. Please provide an outline proposal to give us a sense of your ideas and how you will approach a residency in a homeless accommodation; what medium/artform(s) you plan to work in; and name and describe the role of any other artists and/or creative practitioners that will be working with you.

3. **Indicative budget**

Please include a budget that breaks down what fee you will pay yourself for this Residency Award. Please also include fees for other artists and/or creative practitioners that you may wish to work with. Please list the costs of any resources that you may need (for example, materials or equipment hire). We understand that you will not yet know all of this information and that will be difficult to cost. However, we need to see that you have the experience to budget if you are awarded a residency.

4. **Examples of previous work**

We would like to understand more about your work. You can help us by adding photographs, audio files, written texts, or other examples that help us get a sense of your work. Please include examples of work where you have collaborated with early years children to create art.

5. **The name and contact details of two referees**

Please make sure that one of these people has worked with you on a similar project.

6. Local Authority Area

Please list the local authority areas in order of preference for where you would like to be matched. We cannot guarantee your preference but will endeavour to match artists appropriately. Alternatively, you may state 'No Preference'.

Timeline

- The deadline for **questions** is **2pm, 19 August 2026**
- The deadline for **applications** is **2pm, 2 September 2026**
- The panel assessment will take place the **week of 21 September 2026**
- Notifications of outcome will be shared the **week of 28 September 2026**

We will let you know by email if your application is successful or not.

How will we select the artist/s?

We will assess the applications with a panel that will include representatives from each of the four Dublin Local Authorities, at least one representative from the CYPSCs and at least one representative from the homeless accommodation services.

The decision of this selection panel will be final.

The applications will be marked based on the scoring system outlined below.

Scoring System

a) The previous experience of collaborating and working with early years children. 40/100

The selection panel will mark by assessing the artist/s CV and examples of previous work.

b) Quality and feasibility of the application. 40/100

The selection panel will mark by assessing the artist's outline proposal and budget.

c) Evidence of working with children experiencing disadvantage. 20/100

The selection panel will mark by assessing the artist's CV and examples of previous work.

Qualifying Marks

The minimum **qualifying mark is 70**.

This means that any application that scores under 70 will not be eligible for selection.

If none of the applications we receive reach the minimum 70 marks, we will not choose from this call. We will then use a different selection process instead.

- We will select one application for each residency award.
- Five applications will be chosen in total.
- We may form a panel from the applications. We may use this panel for further projects if more funding becomes available within a one-year timeline.
- We will not accept applications that are late.
- We will not accept applications that do not have everything we have asked for.

Funding and payments

- The lead artist/applicant will receive and manage the funding award and will be responsible for managing the residency award budget and administering the budget to collaborators.
- The lead artist/applicant will receive 45% of the award in 2026 and the remaining 55% of the award in 2027.
- Funding will be granted from the relevant Local Authority and Children and Young People's Service Committee / or their partner organisation.

Contact Details

Julie Clarke, Fingal Arts Office

julie.clarke@fingal.ie or telephone (01) 890 5000

Sinead Connolly, Dublin City Council Arts Office

sinead.connolly@dublincity.ie or telephone (01) 222 7846

Máire Davey, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts Office

mdavey@dlrcoco.ie or telephone (01) 236 2756

Richie O’Sullivan, South County Dublin Arts Office

richieosullivan@sdblincoco.ie or telephone (01) 414 9000

Appendix

About Exploring & Thinking

2026 marks 10 years of Exploring and Thinking, a collaborative framework for early childhood arts in the Dublin region. It came about in 2016 when the four Dublin Local Authorities, South Dublin County, Fingal County, Dublin City and Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown County, partnered for the first time to collectively consider early childhood arts provision in the Dublin region.

In 2025, the partnership expanded through collaboration with the Dublin Children and Young People’s Services Committees, intending to increase opportunities for children to access and benefit from meaningful arts engagement. This new collaboration focuses on creating inclusive and accessible arts experiences for children living in homeless accommodation in Dublin.

About Children & Young People’s Service Committees

[Children and Young People’s Services Committees](#) (CYPSC) are county-level interagency committees in Ireland designed to plan, coordinate, and enhance services for children, young people (ages 0–24), and their families. They bring together statutory, community, and voluntary service providers to ensure that services are accessible, effective, and responsive to local needs.

By fostering collaboration, CYPSCs aim to create better outcomes for children, young people, and families across Ireland. Since 2025, the five Dublin CYPSCs have been working in collaboration with the four Dublin Arts Offices, this includes Fingal CYPSC, Dublin City North CYPSC, Dublin City South CYPSC, South Dublin CYPSC and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown CYPSC.

Freedom of Information Act 2014 The Freedom of Information Act 2014 applies to all Local Authorities. This Act gives people the right to request information held by public authorities and the right to have personal information held about them corrected or updated where the information is incomplete, incorrect, or misleading.

If you feel that any of the information you submit as part of your application is confidential or sensitive, you should let DLR Arts Office know. You must clearly state why you think the information is confidential or commercially sensitive, and why it should not be released as part of a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Data protection laws mean that your personal data should only be stored where there is a lawful basis, such as your consent or where there is a legal obligation. Any information you provide for this application will be held for one year from the date you submit it and will only remain in the ownership of the partners named above. We will only use the information you give in your application to administer and manage this opportunity and selection process (this will include several external panel members who will read/view your application).

You may withdraw your consent to the retention of the information relating to your application at any point by sending an email to arts@dlrcoco.ie

Garda Clearance

Full Garda Clearance will be required for each collaborator on this residency. It is a legal requirement that everybody working with children, young people and vulnerable people is Garda Vetted.

Insurance

We must ensure that any person or company working with us on a project such as this has insurance cover in place. If you are selected for this residency, you and your collaborators will need to have Public Liability Insurance in place up to a limit of €6.5 million. Public Liability Insurance covers your legal liability to pay damages to members of the public for injury, loss, or damages, which occur because of your activities. The insurance policy must indemnify (cover) the relevant Local Authority and Children and Young People's Services.

Tax Clearance Certificate

We reserve the right to seek a tax clearance certificate

arts.
fingal.ie



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

SDCC
Comhairle Contae
Átha Cliath Theas South Dublin
County Council



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

Dublin City North

Dublin City South

South Dublin

Fingal