



SWEET CIRCUS IMPACT REPORT

August 2023

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ABOUT US



Who we are

Sweet Circus is a Community Interest Company, sometimes referred to as a social enterprise or not-for-profit organisation. This means that we do not generate profits, or when we do, they are used to fund the continuing work we do. We have social aims rather than commercial ones. We are looking to convert to a charity in the near future.

Our mission and values

We believe passionately in the social, physical and mental health benefits of participation in Circus Arts and strive to make it accessible to all.

Our aims are; to reduce isolation, improve confidence and positive self image. Promote physical and mental health, community cohesion and provide employability skills and work experience opportunities through participation in Circus Arts.

What we do

We provide opportunities for those with and without barriers to engage, actively seeking to work collaboratively with those who attend, to overcome barriers to participation, so everyone can enjoy creative physical and social activity. Some of the ways we do this include:

- **Classes**
- **Workshops**
- **Circus Play**
- **Team Building**
- **Quality Circus Supplies**
- **Corporate Training and Events**
- **Employability skills training and opportunities**
- **Teacher training**

CODE OF CONDUCT



CODE OF CONDUCT

We are all on our circus journey. The journey is open to Every Body who wants it. We started in different places at different times and are taking different routes at different speeds, but we are all on a voyage of self-improvement, acceptance and discovery.

We are accepting of all people and respectful of their identity (including pronouns, checking boundaries regarding language / touch / volume etc).

We share, look after, value and respect each other, our equipment and our venues but our journey is our own.

We help each other to see our improvements and celebrate together.

We can ask for help, and help others, but we also look after, value, and respect ourselves.

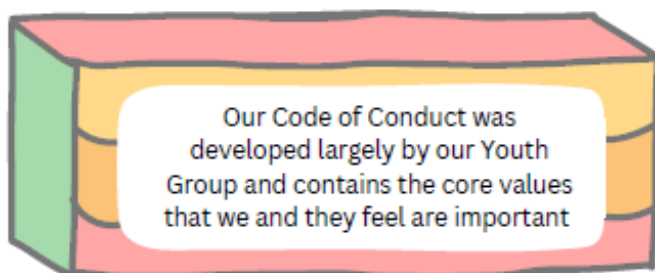
We don't take ourselves too seriously and give ourselves permission to have fun.

We are welcoming and friendly, and want to help everyone feel included.

We wear cool socks, odd socks are cool but not wearing cool socks is also cool.

We get things wrong sometimes but we learn from that and use it to improve.

We are supportive and embrace effort over achievement – No one-upmanship!



Our Code of Conduct was developed largely by our Youth Group and contains the core values that we and they feel are important



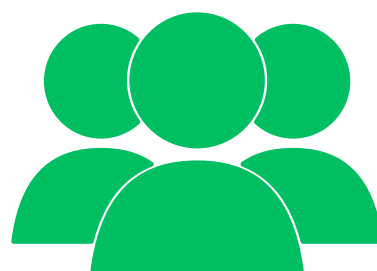
WE PROVIDE SERVICES FOR:



CHILDREN

Focused on physical and emotional literacy

Our specialist team is certified and experienced in working with children with SEND, neurological, learning, or physical differences



ADULTS

Focused on building confidence, strength, fitness, and social connections



YOUTH

Focused on self-esteem, confidence, resilience, peer support, positive self-image, and healthy choices

We aim to promote positive friendship and socialising, as much as being physically active



THE WIDER COMMUNITY

We aim to engage as many people as possible in circus through free play at events and festivals or just in the park, and take our workshops to community groups

ENGAGEMENT



OUR SWEET CIRCUS COMMUNITY:

106

regularly-attending
students

362

in the entire
student base

300

outreach
participants

**and we aim to
continue growing!**

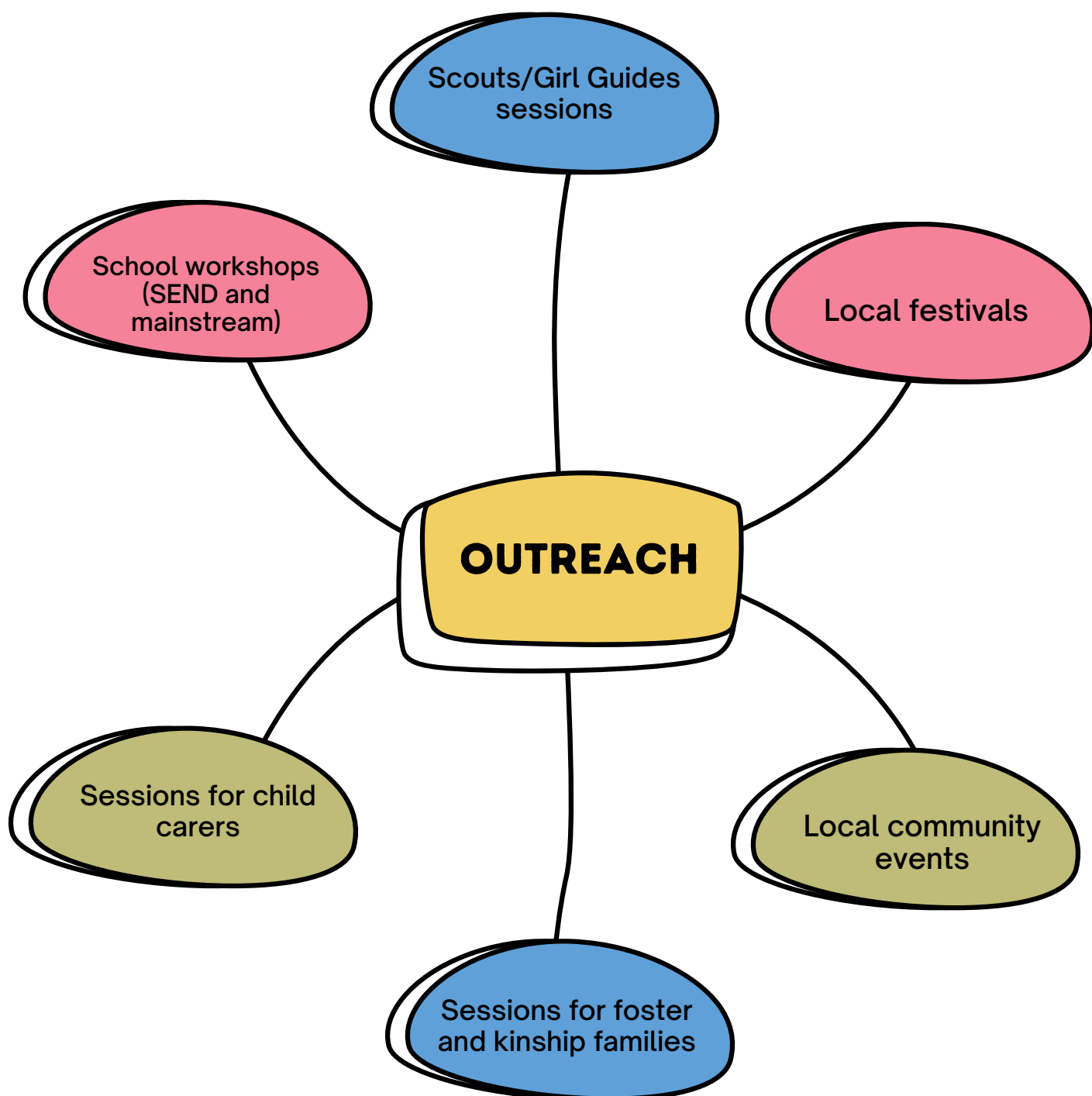
132

joined in the last
12 months

OUTREACH

AT SWEET CIRCUS,

We make connections within the local community, increasing opportunities for people to enjoy circus play. Some of the ways we do this include:



ABOUT THIS REPORT

We surveyed our students, parents/carers, and youth volunteers on the following four areas of priority:



1 SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND COMMUNITY



2 MENTAL WELL-BEING

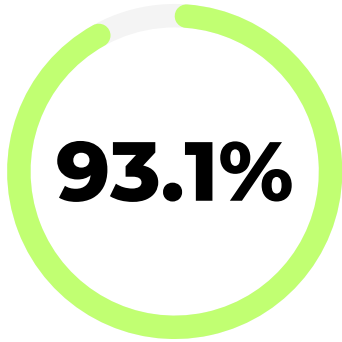


3 PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

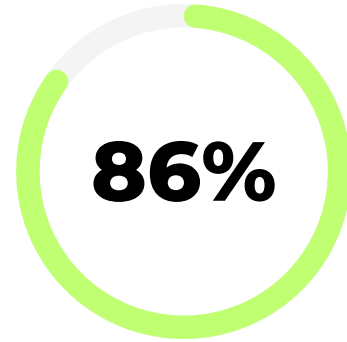


4 SKILLS FOR LIFE

SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND COMMUNITY

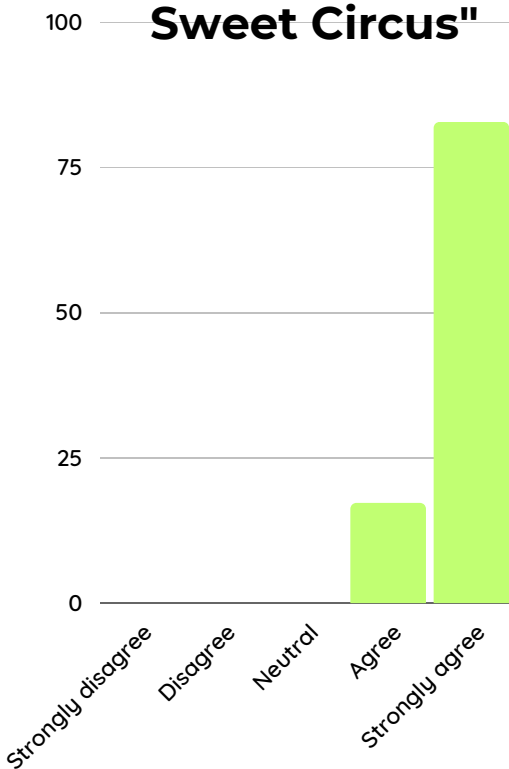


of students said they could be themselves at Sweet Circus



of students said they made friends at Sweet Circus

Percentage of student responses to "I feel safe and welcome at Sweet Circus"



"Sweet Circus has helped me gain confidence with talking to people I don't know. I have gained more friends and helped me to learn new skills."
-Youth Circus student

"I have made strong friendships and learned to be more confident in myself."
-Youth Circus student

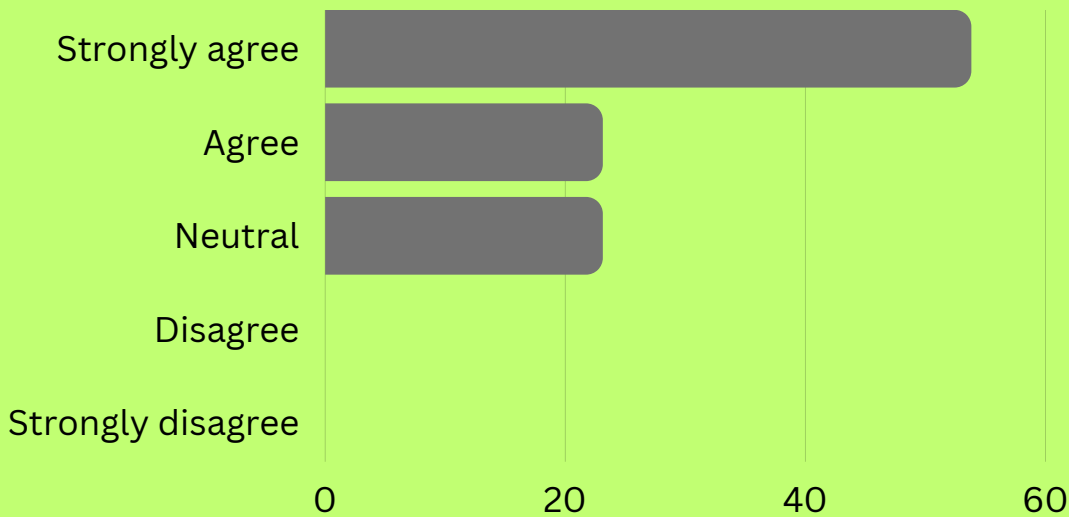
"I'm not shy anymore."
-Mini & Juniors Circus student

"I love that I can meet up with likeminded (childish) people who don't mind embarrassing themselves. It's my adult play group."
-Adult student



92.3%
**of parents strongly agreed that
 their child feels safe and welcome
 at Sweet Circus**

Percentage of parents' responses to "My child has made friends at Sweet Circus"

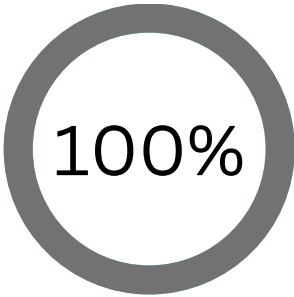
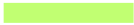


"After lockdown, my child would cling to me at events...Miz and Laura have been so welcoming and patient, she now confidently attends a variety of classes in different settings happily."

"Both girls love going to Sweet Circus. It's making them confident and happy to be part of a community."

"My child has become more confident in talking to other children and adults."

MENTAL WELL-BEING

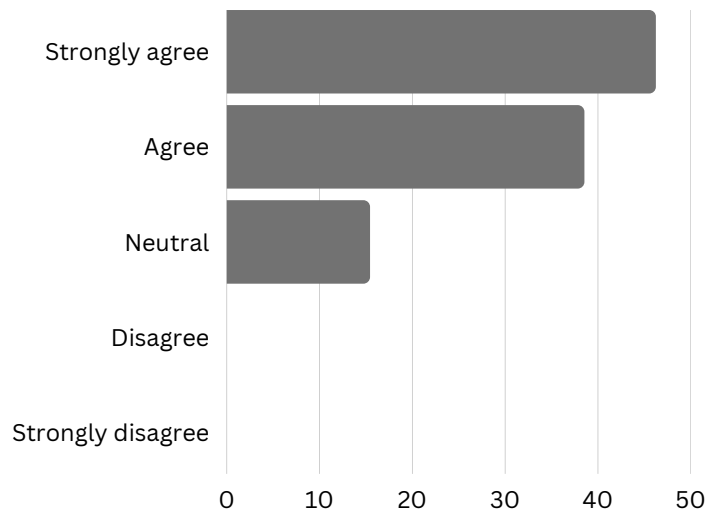
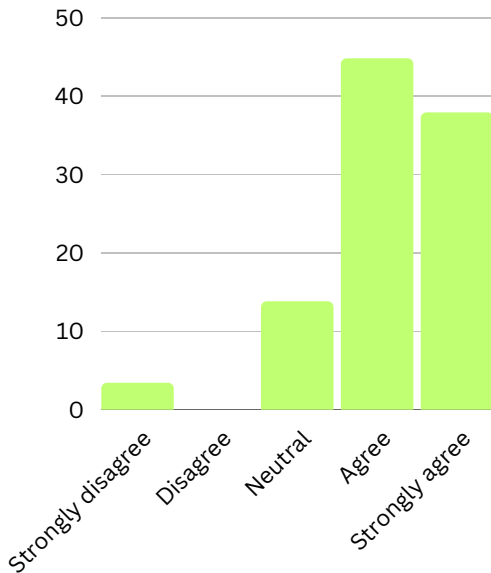


of student respondents agree or strongly agree to "I enjoy coming to Sweet Circus"



Percentage of student responses to "Since joining Sweet Circus, I have become a more confident person overall."

Percentage of parent responses to "Since joining Sweet Circus, my child has become a more confident person overall."



What do the students say?

"Sweet Circus has made me like my body more as it can be strong. It doesn't matter what it looks like."

-Youth Circus and Support student

"I have more friends here. I have lots of fun."

-Youth Aerial student

"It has made me excited at the start of the week and has made me more confident."

-Circus Futures student

"Sweet Circus has positively affected me with the confidence to try new things. I feel more confident to be myself."

-Youth Aerial student

"I enjoy Sweet Circus very much, as it is practising different skills which are fun and educational."

-Circus Kids student

What do the parents say?

“I have found [my child] able to do more acrobatic activities with her sister. She shows a confidence about things that used to scare her. I.e. talking to children she doesn't know or trying new things at the park.”

“Since joining, she is so much happier, more confident and manages her emotions better. She isn't scared to try or struggle anymore and feels completely accepted.”

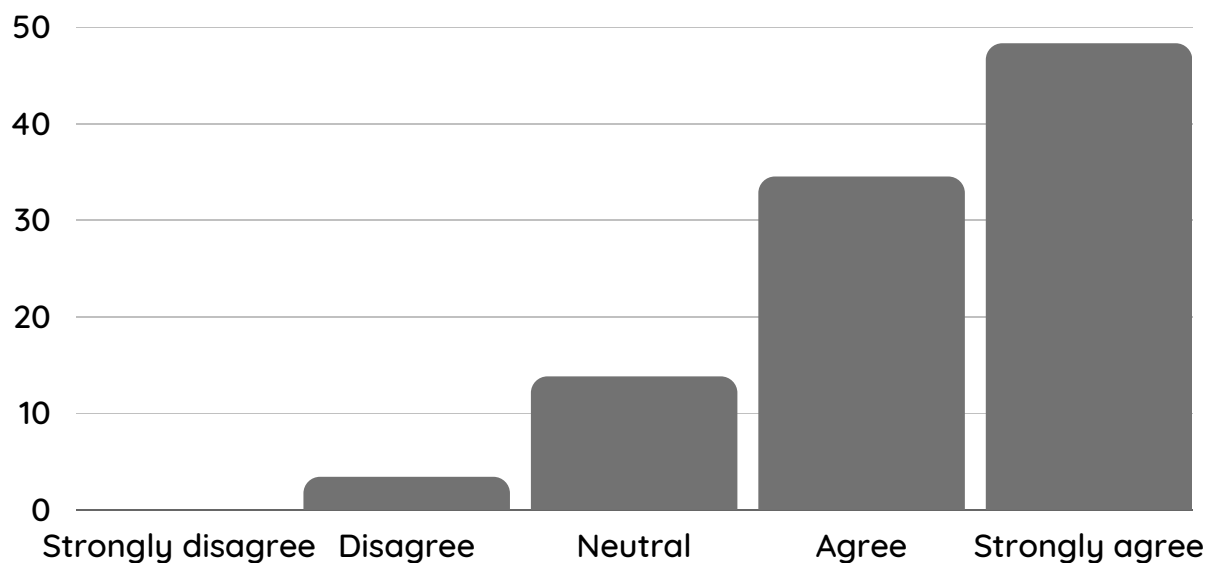
“Temperament has improved.”

“The amazing leaders have helped so much not only in the usual ways but they have given me so much support and advice with her additional needs that we can actually enjoy more clubs and activities.”

“Starting with SEN sessions in Jan and March, this was a great introduction for a girl who can struggle in new surroundings.”

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

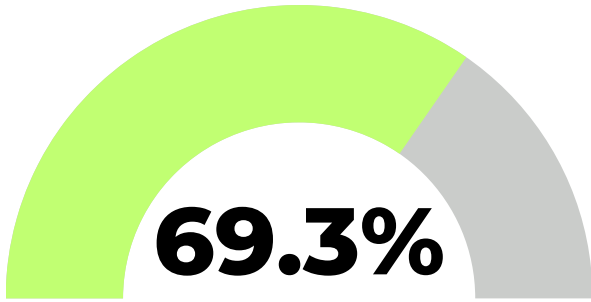
Percentage of student responses to "Since joining Sweet Circus, I have become more physically active"



"It has made me more flexible. I love it!"

"Improved my balance and stretching."

"I have learnt many tricks. It's made me express myself more."



of parent respondents agreed or strongly agreed to "Since joining Sweet Circus, my child has become more physically active"

"[My child] has become more active and wanting to try new things, tries more tricks on a scooter thanks to confidence and improved balance."

"I have noticed her balance has improved since she has started circus and she is more confident to try new things."

"Gross motor skills and fine motor skills vastly improved."



Student responses to "Name 2-3 of your best circus skills!"



AT SWEET CIRCUS,

Students in our children and youth classes engage in circus skills which encourage the development of:

- Balance
- Agility and co-ordination
- Movement sequencing
- Flexibility and strength
- Control
- Technique

which are congruent with the National Curriculum Physical Education aims (Department for Education, 2013).

SKILLS FOR LIFE

AT SWEET CIRCUS,

We aim to encourage healthy physical, mental, and social development that will have a positive impact on our young participants' lives. We understand that there are many ways to succeed in life, with common skills required to achieve our individual potential. By playing to the strengths of each of our youth participants, we support the acquisition of these key skills that will allow them to thrive, and flourish in their future endeavors.

WE ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH THREE MAIN PROGRAMS:



YOUTH CIRCUS AND SUPPORT

An extended session which includes social time, ground skills, and aerial fun. A youth counsellor is part of the delivery team offering check-ins throughout the session to provide guidance, signposting and counselling within the class.



CIRCUS FUTURES

An invitation-only session for children and youth who have the potential, passion and commitment to perform, compete or go on to pursue a career related to circus - to offer the opportunity to join a positive, safe, and open community for life.



YOUTH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

An opportunity for our enthusiastic participants to share their knowledge and skills with others. Our volunteers develop employability skills, connect with their communities, and may progress, via our training and development programme, to become a paid Sweet Circus instructor.

MORE ABOUT THE YOUTH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Who are our youth volunteers?

Our volunteers have completed both a Letter of Application and a successful interview, designed to mimic college/employment interviews. We look for individuals who:

- Show enthusiasm
- Are personable and hard-working
- Will benefit the most from the opportunity
- Or, have reduced opportunities to gain employment and work skills elsewhere

What do we hope our youth volunteers gain?



Confidence



Skills to lead



Greater sense of self-worth



Customer service experience



Communication skills



Initiative skills



Any skills that interest them!

Including:

- Rigging
- Safety
- Advanced training

MORE ABOUT THE YOUTH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



4 of our volunteers used their experience with Sweet Circus and **GAINED EMPLOYMENT**

2 of our youth volunteers are training to be **ADULT VOLUNTEERS**

2 of our volunteers are training to be **PAID INSTRUCTORS**



Write 2-3 things you learned from being a volunteer.

"Leadership, confidence, responsibility"

"Teaching other participants /children new things"

We also have opportunities for other students to "shadow volunteer" on a supported basis.

OUR ADULT PROGRAMS

Our Adult classes are designed to engage adults who perhaps would not attend other forms of exercise. As with other programmes, we aim to improve the physical, mental and social health of our participants. We add some silliness and fun to our sessions to help participants let go of their inhibitions and feel safe to try, fail and try again. We model a very supportive environment where all participants are each other's cheerleaders, boosting confidence and positive self-reflection.

For some participants, our classes might be the only "me time" or social time they have each week, so we ensure that there is always time for a chat and a giggle and encourage the development of social connections. We ensure there are opportunities for all levels of gain a sense of achievement, from the person who has never engaged in physical activity, to the person who has been doing circus for years and needs a higher level challenge.



"It's my absolute lifeline."



Our Adult Programmes include:

- Aerial hoop (Beginner's, Improver's, Intermediate, Mixed Ability)
- Aerial sling
- Aerial conditioning
- Silks school
- Trapeze time
- Air Control Aerial Pilates
- Aerial sound baths and retreats
- Strings and balls



"I didn't even like exercise until Sweet Circus."

"I always wanted to do something like this but I didn't have the confidence. The instructors were so welcoming and friendly, introduced me to the other students, and put me at ease."

OUR 50+ PROGRAM

Circus is proven to promote and maintain brain health and can guard against deterioration of brain function and related diseases as we age. We use juggling, hula hoop, diabolo, feather balancing and all sorts of circus inspired activities to keep our participants moving and give novel but achievable challenges to their bodies, nervous systems and brains, boosting all domains of health. The goal is to improve agility, balance and coordination and ensure our participants are staying socially active also. All activities are provided with level so that participants can work at their own pace, and we adapt activities for those who need to sit, or indeed are super fit and strong.

The class is run on a donation-only basis.



of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed to "I feel I have learned new skills at Sweet Circus"

"Fun, relaxed, friendly folks, all good positive stuff"

"Doing things I didn't think I could do"

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

At Sweet Circus, we are committed to providing opportunities for everyone to participate, including those with special educational needs or who struggle to access education and training, neurodivergent people, people living with various types of disabilities or difficulties and those who find other forms of physical movement and exercise inaccessible.



LEADING THE WAY IN THE INDUSTRY! IN THE LAST YEAR;

Miz has worked with Upswing Circus to develop and deliver a circus programme specifically for those living with dementia in a care home

A third of the UK instructors for the CircusWorks international circus inclusion course, funded by Eurasmast+, are part of Sweet Circus!

Miz was selected as one of only 2 of the UK delegates for the inclusion course, to work with practitioners across Europe, in development and delivery of this course

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTS:

Later this year, Miz and Sophie will be working with Freestyle Fitness at their incredible Big Top, learning from Afreaka Aerial, how to use hoists and counterweight flying, to support students with complex mobility disabilities to access aerial arts.

NEXT STEPS



Some of our goals for the future:

1

FULL-TIME ORGANISATION

We hope to become a full-time organisation with a permanent base, employing full-time staff to increase opportunities for people in the community to participate in social circus. We also plan to convert to a charity.

2

EDUCATIONAL RECOGNITION

We'd like to deliver recognised qualifications such as BTECs. We see the value that circus can have for young people and would like to increase their accessibility to the circus community.

3

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We hope to receive long-term funding to expand our outreach programs. We hope to make it more accessible for people in our community to be involved with circus.

4

CULTURE CHANGE

We'd like circus to be a part of people's everyday lives. We believe that incorporating circus skills, such as juggling, into people's working lives can reduce stress and increase productivity!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Everything that we do at Sweet Circus is only made possible by our students, parents, friends and funders:



**We thank you for
your continued
support in our
programmes!**

Sweet Circus CIC

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