

Annual Report 2025

CEO Report: Reflections on 2025 and Roadmap for 2026–2030

Dear Board Directors, Members & Stakeholders,

The year 2025 was a significant milestone for Minding Creative Minds CLG, marked by operational learning, structural maturity, and deeper strategic cohesion. As an organisation, we took a focused look at our core services, the service-user journey, and the accelerated growth achieved since our inception. This evaluation has laid the foundation for our Strategic Plan 2026–2030, which will support consolidation, purposeful structures, continuous improvement in service quality, and long-term relevance to Ireland's creative community.

A major highlight of the year was the challenging but deeply rewarding process of securing Business All-Star Accreditation from the All-Ireland Business Foundation. This recognition independently validates MCM as a trusted, customer-centred service framework and reflects the care embedded in every therapeutic hour, mentorship cycle, and guidance channel we deliver. Our strategic planning work also underlined the importance of diversifying MCM's funding base. In response, we have begun developing a comprehensive, multi-tiered funding strategy to support long-term financial health and organisational resilience.

To support our commitment to sustainable growth, we expanded our internal administration capacity during the summer by welcoming two dedicated part-time professionals. Gabriella joined the team to support career services, internal administration, and research, while Rosa strengthened office workflows through focused processing, administrative support, and marketing layout development. We also continued to deliver our all-island service, enhancing our outreach and presence in Northern Ireland through developing collaborations with local creative forums and sector councils.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a defining year for MCM's regulatory evolution as we formally submit our application for Charity Status. Supported by the specialist advisory work of Gary Dunne, we are preparing our presentation data to achieve full funder-readiness by Autumn 2026, opening critical external funding channels to support our future. Our dedication to transparency, professional standards, and empathetic support remains unwavering. We look forward to navigating this journey of consolidation alongside our community, staff, and funding partners.

Warm regards,

Dave Reid

Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Minding Creative Minds

Key Areas of Focus for 2026

To manage accelerated growth responsibly while preserving our core values of kindness, empathy, and integrity, MCM has identified clear structural priorities to guide operational delivery throughout the 2026 cycle:

- **Growth and strategic expansion of the Board:** MCM will refocus recruitment efforts to expand non-executive board membership by year-end, prioritising specialised finance, compliance, and legal expertise to strengthen oversight and diversify board capability.
- **Improving visibility, storytelling, and impact:** MCM will strengthen public engagement through a dedicated digital newsletter, improved impact dashboards, and clearer storytelling that explains the breadth of support available through the Service.

Enhanced Governance, Compliance & Structural Evolution

Throughout 2025, Minding Creative Minds strengthened its governance infrastructure, translating compliance analysis into clearer operational procedures. This work was supported by multi-layered expert review, helping to close administrative gaps, improve internal workflows, and maintain a high standard of professional integrity.

A defining step toward long-term clarity took place in February through a reflective strategic planning process. This was followed by focused work with Select Strategy, who collaborated with the Board on a rigorous review. Together, these workstreams supported the development of a unified five-year Board Roadmap to guide non-executive duties and organisational oversight.

Comprehensive Compliance & Policy Enhancements

- **Internal expert development:** As a member of the executive leadership team and a paid employee, Emma Olohan worked closely with management and the Board to strengthen compliance and governance operations. This collaboration supported a rigorous review and creation phase, resulting in more than 40 policies and documents prepared for audit.
- **External corporate governance transition:** Following this internal baseline phase, the full suite of 40+ operational and policy documents was formally handed over to an external advisor in September 2025. This transition was designed to progress the governance roadmap into its next professional stages.
- **Solicitor & CRO ratification:** Following a dedicated Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 15 April 2025, the Board ratified the updated Constitution, incorporating structural feedback from Gerry McGrath of McGrane Mullane Solicitors. The finalised instrument was processed through the Companies Registration Office (CRO) and uploaded to a secure, password-protected board portal on the MCM website.

Board Expansion, Recruitment & Internal Staffing Updates

- **Independent Recruitment Infrastructure:** To ensure transparency and parity of opportunity, the Board established a dedicated recruitment subcommittee and engaged Noreen Flynn from careersteps.ie as an independent HR Advisor. Board openings are now published transparently on public platforms including Board Match, Avelink, and The Wheel.

- **Strategic board changeover:** As founding board members reached timelines requiring term and role changes, the Board prioritised recruitment to ensure gender balance and a diverse mix of skills. Recruitment cycles have been structured to avoid simultaneous departures while onboarding committed professionals from the arts, finance, and legal sectors.
- **Gender parity mapping:** MCM continues to align its long-term selection criteria with national gender balance targets, guiding recruitment toward a minimum 33% representation baseline for underrepresented genders.

Services Activity Summary & Impact Metrics

MCM continues to support the emotional, mental, and professional wellbeing of the creative sector through four distinct, values-led service pillars:

1. Core Counselling & Mental Health Services

Primary therapeutic supports, delivered through our partnership with Spectrum Life, continue to serve as a vital lifeline for the MCM community. In 2025, the Spectrum counselling contract went to tender. The process led to enhanced visual dashboards and more responsive client management systems, enabling clearer top-line data sharing and helping MCM communicate its impact with greater transparency and confidence.

A top-line view of service demand shows a strong upward trajectory in community trust:

- **Accelerated growth:** Core counselling utilisation for the first four months of the year rose to **883 hours**, compared with 581 hours during the equivalent period last year.
- **Annual projections:** Based on active trends, the annual baseline projection is expected to reach **2,591 hours**, tracking significantly ahead of previous benchmarks.
- **Enhanced multi-disciplinary volume:** Including unmapped enhanced service hours, 2025 reached **2,591 total service hours** and **1,468 counselling sessions** across **1,615 engaged creatives**.

Mental Health

Spectrum

- Total service hours in 2025: **2591**
 - Counselling sessions: **1468**
 - 'In the moment' support: **333**
 - Ancillary services (Finance / Legal): **109**
 - Helpline volumes: **851**
 - People engaging: **1615**
 - Enhanced counselling sessions: **664**
 - Enhanced 'in the moment' support: **17**
- **18%** overall increase in service hours from 2024

- Independent counselling sessions in 2025: **152**
- Sessions conducted by 2 independent counsellors



2. Pilot Year – Creative Arts Therapies Service (CAT)

The Creative Arts Therapies service continued to play a vital role as a non-verbal, creative, multi-disciplinary pilot for adults across artistic sectors. To align with public funding structures and stabilise fixed overheads, the Service adjusted its delivery model from 12 to 10 sessions, bringing it closer to national public benchmarks.

A central milestone was the completion of an intensive client survey, which generated exceptional feedback and valuable insights into participant outcomes. Data gathered through the Experience of Service Questionnaire and the Behind the Curtain Survey highlighted clear therapeutic benefits:

Creative Arts Therapy Pilot Programme Participant Outcomes & Testimonials

Participant Outcomes

Felt emotionally supported: 92%

Gained useful tools or insights: 86%

Positive impact on mental health: 83%

Improved confidence & motivation: 80%

Reconnected with creativity: 78%

Participant Testimonials

"Helped me reconnect with and prioritise my creativity as an essential tool & asset."

"Gave me tools I can use for life."

"Helped me to see things differently and move further towards the goals identified."

"For once, I explored and surfaced trauma stored in the body in ways that would take ages with traditional talk therapy."

"Allowed me to shake out the negative noise in my head."



Delivery Snapshot (CAT Coordinator):

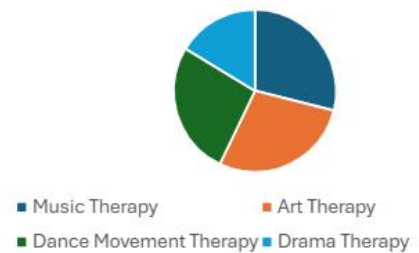
- **Initial phase volume:** The service documented 157 hours supporting 23 active clients early in the year, expanding significantly to 69 concurrent clients and 633 active sessions across the full-year baseline.
- **Bespoke modality breakdown:** Multi-disciplinary delivery reached 184 Music Therapy sessions, 180 Art Therapy sessions, 169 Dance Movement Therapy sessions, and 104 Dramatherapy sessions, reflecting a 112% increase from the previous period.
- **March case review:** March delivery totalled 55 hours across 31 active clients, comprising 25 Music Therapy, 12 Art Therapy, 12 Dance Movement Therapy, and 6 Dramatherapy sessions. Non-attendance rates dropped to 40.2%, down from 46.7% in February.

Creative Arts Therapies (CAT)

- Clients served: **69**
- Sessions held: **633**
- Session delivery by modality:
 - Music Therapy: **184**
 - Art Therapy: **180**
 - Dance Movement Therapy: **169**
 - Dramatherapy: **104**
- **68%** increase of clients from 2024 (41)
- **112%** increase of sessions from 2024 (298)



Number of Sessions



3. Specialist Advisory Service (SAS)

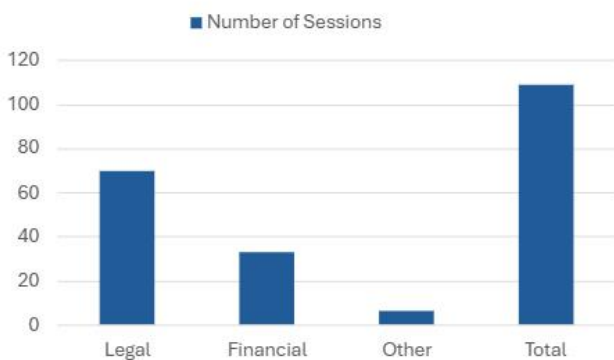
The Specialist Advisory Service was formally launched to address the complex logistical and professional challenges faced by creative sector workers, offering targeted support for nuanced individual circumstances:

- **Total expert consultations delivered:** 109 consultations processed with care.
- **Core areas of support:** Tailored human resources compliance, specialised legal advice (70 sessions), and sector-specific financial guidance (33 sessions).

Special Advisory Service

- Total consultations in 2025: **109**
 - Legal: **70**
 - Financial: **33**
 - Other: **6**

Special Advisory Panel (SAP)
Breakdown



4. Career Hub Service Pillar

The Career Hub provides responsive, practical career programming grounded in community empathy. A key highlight of 2025 was the completion of the Mentor Feedback Review, which produced strong ratings and validated MCM's shift toward blending one-to-one sessions with collaborative group tutorials.



The Career Hub continued to scale its practical career supports in 2025, combining high-volume online workshop access with targeted, in-person sector engagement.

2,660 Workshop registrations	49 Bespoke workshops delivered	225 Creative Careers Summit attendees
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- **Highest-engagement workshop tracks:** BIA Community Career Mapping & Transitions led the year with 135 attendees, followed by Arts Council Agility Award Application Basics with Cli Donnellan at 64 attendees, alongside strong demand for digital audience development sessions with Maya Cullen.
- **Creative Careers Summit, Dublin:** The Summit welcomed 225 active attendees, strengthening MCM's visibility as a trusted, practical career support for creatives and creating a high-value moment for brand awareness, referral pathways, and sector relationship-building.

Sector Outreach & Events Support to Arts and Culture – Marketing & Career Hub.

Minding Creative Minds continues to extend its presence beyond digital channels, supporting the spaces where Ireland's creative community works, performs, and gathers.

Nationwide Engagement, Campus Out-reaches & Specialised Networks

MCM's commitment to community visibility is reflected in consistent regional engagement and educational field clinics across the country:

- **Supporting the BIA community:** MCM supported the Business All-Stars (BIA) community throughout 2025 by coordinating structured information sessions, workshops, and career mapping exercises to guide transitions.
- **Creative events nationwide:** Marketing and operations teams maintained an active presence at artistic gatherings across film, music, theatre, and visual arts, including key regional engagement points at Ireland Music Week.
- **Postgraduate and on-campus support:** To support emerging talent entering the sector, MCM provided on-campus presence and targeted resources at postgraduate events, including engagement at Galway ATU with more than 100 students.
- **Film and screen sectors:** Dedicated advisory streams at film and screen events helped raise awareness of MCM's legal, financial, and mental health supports for above- and below-the-line workers.
- **Performing arts presence:** MCM established a practical wellness presence at **Electric Picnic (EP)**, one of Ireland's largest performing arts festivals. The team managed credential logs for production cabins and stage safety crews and distributed more than 5,000 information packs through official employee induction materials to support live events personnel working under intensive conditions.

Institutional Arts Support & Industry Panels

MCM works closely with established cultural bodies and sector working groups, including Safe to Create, Screen Ireland, and Theatre Forum peers, to help champion healthier and more supportive working environments across artistic spaces.

- **Gate Theatre Panels:** MCM participated in peer-led performance seminars, notably collaborating on the **Gate Conversations** series curated by the Gate Theatre. A centrepiece panel, **Drama as a Tool of Transformation**, brought MCM service pillar leadership directly onto the stage alongside Artistic Director Róisín McBrinn to explore how dramatic practices interface with mental wellbeing, advocacy, and social progression.
- **Northern Ireland activation:** MCM completed its initial cross-border awareness expansion by coordinating a dedicated information event in Belfast in October, in close collaboration with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

General Marketing & Digital Engagement Metrics

MCM's 2025 communications activity strengthened public visibility through steady digital growth, live event outreach, and continued community-facing engagement across multiple channels.

5,396 Facebook followers	1,324 New organic additions	55+ Annual outreach engagements
12,000+ Community entries processed	Multi-channel Digital and live event outreach	Nationwide Community-facing engagement

2025 was a transformative year for Minding Creative Minds CLG. It was defined by unprecedented growth, expanded support frameworks, stronger governance foundations, and a deeper understanding of what is required to sustain our service responsibly into the future.

The delivery of our governance roadmap and compliance audit has helped embed our core values of kindness, integrity, empathy, and professionalism into the operational fabric of the organisation. While the pace of expansion has placed temporary pressure on internal capacity, it has also clarified a responsible strategic path for 2026: consolidation, administrative stabilisation, regulatory excellence, and continued quality of care for the creative community.

In 2025, Minding Creative Minds strengthened its internal structures, hosted board and staff training, increased staff numbers, dedicated the required time to ensuring our corporate governance structures are robust, and increased board membership. Strata Financial and Boardmatch worked with us to ensure all key administration duties are up to speed as we begin the process of applying for Charity Status and seeking external funding. As we move into 2026, MCM remains committed to being an essential, trusted, and empathetic partner to creatives across Ireland — strengthening our structures while staying close to the people and communities we exist to support.

Notice: Final accounts, the statement of financial position, and detailed financial reports will be added following receipt of the completed annual audit materials from Strata Financial