

SYNERGY THEATRE PROJECT

England & Wales · Charity number 1088692

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	04219146
Registered	2001-10-01
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL
Phone	020 3475 5758
Email	info@synergytheatreproject.co.uk
Website	www.synergytheatreproject.co.uk

Activities

Objects: THE COMPANY IS ESTABLISHED TO AID AND ASSIST WITH THE REHABILITATION AND CONTINUING SUPPORT OF AND TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION IN THE ARTS OF PRISONERS, THOSE ON PROBATION, EX OFFENDERS AND YOUTHS AT RISK THROUGH THE PROVISION OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES AND OTHER RELATED ACTIVITIES

Activities: Synergy Theatre Project is established to aid and assist with the rehabilitation of, and advance the education in the arts of prisoners, ex-offenders and youths at risk through theatre and related activities whilst placing the wider issues surrounding imprisonment in the public arena.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Economic/community Development/employment
- **Who:** Children/young People, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- Throughout England

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-05-31	£483,563	£483,380	-	-
2024-05-31	£565,125	£564,802	£216,357	7
2023-05-31	£456,026	£434,250	-	-
2022-05-31	£433,443	£401,399	-	-
2021-05-31	£430,988	£404,538	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Gabrielle Sumner		2014-07-01
Ihsan Rahim		2022-09-20
Jessica Draper		2025-09-22
Keshina Bouri		2022-09-20
Paula Hamilton		2018-04-23
Sarah Brown		2026-01-15
Susan Sandeman		2026-01-15
Tyrone Paul		2022-09-20
Yaw Manu		2026-07-16

SYNERGY THEATRE PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1088692

Accounts

**synergy
theatre
project**

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2025**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report

for the year ended 31 May 2025

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2025.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair) Jessica Draper (appointed September 2025) Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair) Tyrone Paul Alison Porter (resigned October 2024) Ihsan Rahim Clíona Roberts (resigned September 2025) Deborah Samuel (deceased December 2024) Gaby Sumner	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director	Esther Baker
	General Manager	Jennie McClure
	Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults)	Kit Withington
	Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People)	Siân Henderson-Styles
	Learning & Engagement Co-ordinator (Young People)	Shane Wheeler-Osman
	Learning & Engagement Assistant (Adults)	Karl Smith
	Progression & Pathways Co-ordinator (Young People)	Olivia Fraser (until September 2024)
	New Writing Manager	Neil Grutchfield
	Development Manager	Nisha Oza (until August 2024)
Registered office:	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2025.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and 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 for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 24 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people at risk of offending through **Synergy** and **Young Studios** with a focus on skills development, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering bespoke and commissioned work through **Synergy Services**, including ex-prisoner role play training for criminal justice professionals and a range of creative collaborations, drawing on our expertise to feed into research and education and contributing to systemic change and wider public debate.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

I didn't learn how to read in school. It made me nervous. I'm not a very confident person. Coming here is something I never thought I'd do. It's given me confidence.

Prisoner participant, comedy course, HMP Thameside

In spite of the cost-of-living crisis continuing to impact the most vulnerable, including the beneficiaries of our work and their families, and increasingly fierce competition for funding with trusts and foundations overwhelmed, Synergy has managed to navigate these challenges and deliver a programme of exciting, insightful and impactful work engaging young people across London, prisoners – young and not-so-young from Devon to Staffordshire – and ex-prisoners and their families. In response to consultation with beneficiaries we extended the breadth of creative engagement opportunities and also increased activity locally by forging partnerships with youth organisations in Lambeth and building on our relationship with Southwark Playhouse in the neighbouring borough. Synergy continued to develop existing work for production and co-production, including collaborations for the following year with HAL Company and Paines Plough, and toured *Providers*, an outstanding new play commission for young people by Ambreen Razia, which culminated in our first week's run at Brixton House, a successful collaboration cementing our relationship with the venue where our company base is located.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 182 prisoners and ex-prisoners (105 and 77 respectively) through our range of courses, performance, work experience and employment opportunities and reached prison audiences of 200. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 3,700 through performance and activity including 332 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects and Young Studio. We engaged a further 732 of the general public, reaching total audiences of 4,632.

We are especially proud in the past year to have won The Community Award at The Stage Awards 2025 in January, an event which recognises excellence in British theatre and celebrates achievements in the industry in the last 12 months. Synergy was also a finalist for the 2025 Smiley Charity Film Awards for *Cancer Cells*, a specially commissioned short film to present research findings following a 4-year study into cancer care for prisoners by NHS and King's College London; the film was also screened at the House of Lords. We were listed as Assessors' Choice by the Off West End Awards (The Offies) for *Providers* while our Artistic Director received a Special Award from the 2025 Fringe Theatre Awards, recognising her for spearheading life-changing theatre concerning the criminal justice system.

PRODUCING

Electrifyingly powerful... Humorous but also moving and occasionally shocking, this work has impact well beyond the theatre stage. ★ ★ ★ ★

Everything Theatre on *Providers*

Synergy began the year with an exciting week-long development workshop in August at the National Studio interrogating the first draft of Dexter Flanders' play exploring family courts. This informed the next draft which is with several theatres to find a potential home for a production.

A touring production of *Providers*, a brilliant new play for young people by critically-acclaimed writer Ambreen Razia, commissioned by Synergy, formed the focal point in spring. The play explores the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on young people through the lens of two unconventional families and addresses how financial pressures affect them and pull them into criminality, sparking discussions about money, vulnerability and resilience. The narrative resonated deeply with young audiences. We toured to 21 schools and PRUs across seven London boroughs with levels of high deprivation (Harrow, Brent, Ealing, Camden, Barnet, Lambeth, and Hammersmith and Fulham) and where many students face real challenges.

Following our proven model, the cast and crew comprised a powerful combination of professional creatives and individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice. The role of ex-prisoner company members proved invaluable, bringing authenticity and relatability to the

project that helped break down barriers, especially for young people struggling with behavioural and emotional challenges. Performances were accompanied by post-show Q&As, providing young people the opportunity to ask questions about the play and speak directly with the company members about their personal experience and involvement in criminality. To further enhance engagement, we delivered four creative response projects and also extended work opportunities to six young trainees as an integral part of the project.

Providers marked our first public run at Brixton House, where Synergy is based, engaging local Lambeth schools and youth organisations as well as new public audiences, which helped grow our local youth engagement, and cemented our partnership with the venue. We also performed *Providers* at HMP Downview which had particular significance, as one of the actors and one of the assistant stage managers had been released from there recently. Returning in a professional capacity communicated a powerful sense of possibility and transformation, resonating deeply with the women in custody. Through the tour and run at Brixton House, we reached a total audience of 3,934 including 3,419 young people, 215 teachers and 300 members of the general public.

Synergy supported Paines Plough on the development of *Ordinary Decent Criminal*, a new play by ex-prisoner writer Ed Edwards, with our New Writing Manager acting as dramaturg. Their co-production with Live Theatre, Theatre Royal Plymouth and Ellie Keel Productions, in association with Synergy, will tour from July 2025. We also provided ongoing support to Danusia Iwasko's HAL Company on *Penned Up*, her play inspired by teaching in prisons for Synergy.

In terms of commissions, we found a home in Southwark Playhouse for *Lifers*, Evan Placey's timely new play which explores the care of older prisoners with the production programmed for October 2025. In May, we travelled to HMP Littlehey with a group of actors to perform a script-in-hand reading to a group of prisoners in order to test the authenticity of the play in advance of rehearsals starting in the autumn.

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

It made me feel alive again. Prisoner participant, acting course, HMP Thameside

The Government pause on prison procurement on account of the 2024 Autumn Budget and delayed Spending Review halted the tendering and bidding process for contracts for some months which impacted on our delivery in the prison estate. We did, however, manage to successfully deliver eight courses in prisons – HMPs Belmarsh, Gartree, Thameside and YO1 Werrington – and reached a range of cohorts, from young offenders to lifers as well as returning to the London Pathways Unit in HMP Brixton to engage offenders with complex psychological difficulties (with or without a formal diagnosis of personality disorder). These courses comprised Introductions to, and Advanced Acting and Playwriting in addition to Spoken Word, Stand-up Comedy and a week-long intensive performance project.

Returning to HMP Belmarsh proved a real highlight. We delivered a Spoken Word project which resonated strongly with participants who had both previous experience in music and an interest in writing lyrics. A particularly impactful element was the opportunity for a final sharing at the end of the project; sharing creative work with family members has a positive impact on strengthening relationships while individuals serve their sentences.

Continuing our longstanding collaborations with Morley College and Soho Theatre and developing our relationships with the Bush and Brixton House Theatres, Synergy delivered seven courses within the community ranging from Introductions to Acting, Playwriting and Workshop Facilitation to Spoken Word, Stand-up Comedy and a writer response project to *Dao of Unrepresentative British Experience* by Daniel York Loh. In addition, and in direct response to consultation with beneficiaries, we piloted introductory courses in filmmaking and directing.

Stand-up Comedy has continued to feature as a popular highlight as part of our community offer. Two participants this year progressed to bursary places on Soho Theatre's Comedy Labs while several others developed and refined their routines by accessing open mic nights and gigs

across London's comedy circuit. This progression demonstrates that the course has found a strong home among Synergy's members, providing a supportive space where participants can express themselves, build confidence, and continue to develop creatively.

Other community engagement opportunities included a devising project with CEA CAPA London and a week-long performance project with Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD). Thanks to the kind offer of free and discounted tickets we were able to arrange theatre trips for beneficiaries to see *MJ: The Musical*, *Coriolanus*, *The Hot Wing King* and *The Other Place* (National), *A Good House* (Royal Court), *The Little Foxes* and *Punch* (Young Vic), *Tambo and Bones* (Stratford East), *Speed* (Bush) and *Retrograde* (Apollo).

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights during the year include:

- Eight ex-prisoners being employed by Synergy on *Providers* in various roles including actors, assistant director and stage managers and workshop facilitators;
- 14 working as workshop support facilitators on Synergy's young people's programme;
- Two receiving bursaries for Soho Theatre's Comedy Lab courses;
- Six being accepted onto an external advanced playwriting course;
- Five taking part in acting courses at Central School of Speech & Drama and LAMDA;
- One having a TV script in development with Boffola Pictures;
- Three being accepted onto a journalism course with Warner Bros;
- One winning Lounges.tv Best Comedy Newcomer and securing a contract with InterTalent Agency;
- One writing an episode for Dennis Kelly's new BBC TV drama, *A Life Inside*, and will also be performing in the series.

In addition to the courses, Synergy's New Writing Manager provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 23 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. These include ongoing commissions by writers with lived experience of the criminal justice system and plays on the challenges of living with autism, on sex work, stigma and the law, and a comedy drama.

Synergy partnered for the seventh consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Arts Awards, circulating the 28 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development from our New Writing Manager. The winning plays were celebrated at script-in-hand readings by professional actors at HMP Thameside and the Royal Court Theatre in January 2025.

Young People's Programme

This project changed my life – I've stopped being so angry. Young participant on *Providers* response project

Providers formed a focal point of our young people's programme and provided a perfect stimulus for the delivery of activity both in the lead up to our tour and following engagement with the performances. Synergy continued to work through longstanding and effective partnerships with The Helix and Jubilee Academy PRUs as well as Whitmore High School, Salvatorian College and delivered a range of longer-term creative projects using acting and spoken word in response to *Providers*, which encouraged participants to interrogate the themes of the play including peer pressure and of familial duty. After one of the projects a teacher wrote, "I don't think you realise the power of the work you do. You've literally saved that young person's life and changed their whole outlook. Thank you so much".

Having 'D', a young woman recently released from prison, perform in *Providers* and share her story had a powerful impact, particularly on the young females in PRUs. One of them said, "The show was really good. As a young person, I can relate. I feel changed after watching. I feel like I'm going to do so much differently. 'D' inspired me, and it's given me so much hope. It's shown me that opportunities can come, and that I should keep being strong and pushing".

Our one-to-one work engaged a number of young people at Whitmore High where the school was keen for us to work with some of their more disadvantaged students. The activity focused on helping participants to prepare monologues in advance of examinations, and they demonstrated significant progress in their acting skills, enhancing their ability to connect emotionally with their characters. One participant remarked, *"I feel the workshops have helped develop my personal character as well as my understanding of how to portray emotions truthfully"*. The project further strengthened our relationship with Whitmore High; staff praised the students' progress and increased confidence, and the school is eager to extend our activity to reach more of their students, particularly those at risk.

Project activity over the course of the year has had the following impacts on young participants:

- 99% did not get arrested within a year;
- 82% reported positive changes to self-concept and positive impact on future aspirations;
- 85% reported high confidence at the end of their course;
- 90% demonstrated improved team working, interpersonal skills, improved ability to articulate ideas, listening skills, improved timekeeping and attendance.

In addition to our group and one-to-one work, Synergy was approached again by Saracens High School to deliver another day of participatory workshops as part of their Deep Learning Day.

Young Studio

Being part of this project showed me I can actually do something. I didn't think people like me got those chances. Young Studio participant

Continuing to build on the previous work of our Young Studio programme to engage young people who have taken part in our activity in PRUs, YOTs and through one-to-ones, we delivered a range of group projects during the year, extended our work placement opportunities and piloted provision for those at the upper age range of 18-25 years. We also built on a highly beneficial relationship with Southwark Playhouse, a venue in the neighbouring borough which provided not only a vital space nearby, but also opportunities for beneficiary progression. Synergy continues to be an active member of Lambeth Made and the Harrow Culture Forum, and we have further deepened our community connections through regular attendance at the Harrow Youth Violence Partnership meetings, contributing to discussions on reducing violence and increasing young people's access to creative opportunities.

Particular highlights include our first-time collaboration on our young people's work with Southwark Playhouse last summer. The offer of space in-kind for an acting project at a leading London fringe and, more importantly, a recognisable venue enabled us to introduce young people from Lambeth to their local theatre and subsequently refer those interested to the organisation's young theatre company, mirroring past projects in north London at Kiln theatre. Following this highly successful pilot, our relationship has gone from strength to strength in the form of collaborations and support in-kind on two further Young Studio projects.

In autumn 2024 Synergy expanded its offer and trialled an acting course for 18-25-year-olds, marking an exciting development and a new target age range. The course had a waiting list of applicants and attracted a diverse group of participants eager to develop their acting skills. It was an opportunity to engage vulnerable young adults at a significant transitional phase in their lives, and when they are exploring career paths and creative outlets. There was some fluctuating attendance, but participants demonstrated resilience in adapting and showed remarkable growth in their acting abilities. As a result of its success, we intend to continue developing work with this age range and are in discussion with a number of organisations which can offer placements and roles to young people over the age of 18 in order to build meaningful pathways into employment, education and further training for this particular cohort.

Opportunities for further training, work experience and employment within our organisation and beyond during the year have included:

- Two young participants from a PRU returned to mainstream education;
- From our Young Studio cohort:
 - Eight joined our creative development panel, developing *Providers* in early draft;

- Three joined Southwark Playhouse Young Company;
- Six gained work placements as trainees (actor, film makers, stage managers and assistant directors) on our production of *Providers*;
- One worked as a trainee on our National Theatre Studio R&D on *Three Children*;
- Two gained work as actors in a short film;
- One is now a trained workshop support facilitator;
- One is undertaking an apprenticeship with Warner Bros.

Building on our pilot in the previous year of work placement opportunities, one highly successful outcome during this reporting period was our young trainee programme. Six trainees developed professional skills during our tour of *Providers*, gaining hands-on practical knowledge and experience in workshop facilitation, acting, filmmaking and directing. One trainee has since gone on to secure a creative apprenticeship with Warner Bros. (as above), highlighting our programme's impact in supporting entry into the industry.

SYNERGY SERVICES

In their workshops, collaborations and mentoring projects, they [Synergy] dissolve the 'us' and 'them' of mainstream society and the penal system, causing all who participate to think deeply about personal choices and the broader, societal structures in play.

Director of Theatre Education (London), CEA CAPA

In terms of our work within the prison estate Synergy secured eight commissions for course delivery at HMPs Belmarsh, Brixton, Gartree, Thameside and YOI Werrington. The pause on procurement during the year had an adverse effect on delivery, and Synergy's levels of earned income dipped slightly as a result, but as the tendering process restarted we secured a number of commissions for the coming year.

Our continuing relationship with King's College London involved a further commission to collaborate on a workshop as part of their wider research into the risk assessment of violent re-offending on release from prison, whether violent recidivism is affected by educational factors and if these factors can help improve the predictability of violence risk assessment tools. The workshop involved a group of ex-prisoners discussing their early educational histories and other risk factors leading to re-offending such as homelessness, unemployment, trauma and isolation.

Synergy was commissioned to support the sourcing of 15 actors for the creation of two informational films; one for the National Crime Agency as part of their campaign in March to combat the threat posed to teenage boys by financially motivated sexual extortion (FMSE), and the other for the UK Government, BT, O2 and Virgin Media to raise awareness of landlines switching to digital and the impact on telecare alarms. We were also commissioned by CEA CAPA Global Education Network's London Centre to collaborate for another year on a devising project in the autumn term with their international students in response to Synergy's work and beneficiaries' lived experiences, culminating in performances of each group's work.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you, Synergy, for providing work crafted for young people and continuing your brilliant ethos of employment [of ex-prisoners]. Off West End Awards Assessor

The unexpected death last December of one of our board members, a former beneficiary, was a devastating loss for the organisation. Having survived a traumatic history, she was an inspiration to many while her passionate support for women in the criminal justice system won her an award as part of the National Probation Service Team in 2018, the same year she joined Synergy's board. In light of this, and in order to ensure that women's as well as men's lived experience of the CJS remains at the heart of our board, and also to bring new expertise and knowledge, we look forward to welcoming new members: Sue Sandeman (former beneficiary), Sarah Brown (Creative Director of Drama, STV) and Jessica Draper (Head of Creative Engagement, Soho Theatre) in 2025/26.

During the year we experienced significant difficulty in recruiting a permanent fundraiser due to the shortage of skilled individuals at the salary level that small organisations such as ours can

offer. We recently engaged a highly experienced freelance fundraiser and, while this offers only a short-term solution, we intend to gain significant ground through this expertise before attempting further recruitment drives.

Building on our highly skilled team in February we contracted a Marketing Manager with 20 years' experience, bringing new expertise to deliver the company's marketing and audience development campaigns, highlight our impact and develop positively our reach and reputation.

FUTURE PLANS

I have had lots of chats with the men since where they have reflected on how much they enjoyed the project, and how surprised they were at how much they felt able to come out of their shells. Not easy to do with anyone, particularly some of the people on the [Offender Personality Disorder] unit, so thank you again for creating that space for everybody. Prison officer, performance project at HMP Brixton

During the coming year, and with our producing ambitions front and centre in terms of scale and reach, we have a commission by one of our Associates for production in London alongside two co-productions touring regionally, and intend to continue delivering our learning and engagement programmes through longstanding partnerships while further expanding the breadth of our offer following consultation with both young and adult beneficiaries and piloting creative activity to engage new cohorts, including older offenders, in response to insights evolving out of our work.

In terms of commissions, we found a home in Southwark Playhouse for *Lifers* by Synergy Associate, Evan Placey, a new play which offers a powerful and deeply human look at ageing behind bars. The production in October 2025, with accompanying panel discussion to explore the issues raised, marks our most ambitious and largest venue to date and will enable us to engage greater audiences with our work. Our association with Paines Plough, Live Theatre and Theatre Royal Plymouth on the production of *Ordinary Decent Criminal* by Ed Edwards, performed by award-winning comedian and political satirist Mark Thomas, will result in a tour from July 2025, stopping off at Edinburgh Fringe Festival and travelling up and down the country until early December. We will also support HAL Company's production of *Penned Up* by longstanding playwriting tutor Danusia Iwaszko, borne out of her teaching experience in prisons for Synergy, touring regionally from September to October 2025. Following highly positive feedback, a raft of 4-star reviews and high demand from schools, we also plan to revive and tour *Providers* in autumn 2026 with a three-week run at Brixton House, further strengthening our partnership with the venue and enabling greater engagement with local and wider audiences.

Our learning and engagement programme for adults will comprise acting, stand-up comedy and playwriting courses in the community in collaboration with longstanding partners, Morley College and Soho Theatre. In response to beneficiary feedback, we also intend to trial new artforms including podcasting as well as series of masterclasses for each of our young and adult cohorts. Again, reflecting interest and demand gauged from consultation, we aim to develop creative activity to engage prisoners' families in addition to older offenders as result of the scoping and audience development work we have been undertaking surrounding *Lifers*.

Following the restart of procurement, we have fortunately secured several commissions for delivery in the prison estate at HMPs Hollesley Bay, Thameside, Wayland and Whatton and will continue to bid for additional contracts. Further to the government's announcement in December of sweeping changes, primarily to tackle the court backlogs and prison overcrowding crisis, we await to see the effect these will have on the criminal justice system and the beneficiaries of our work.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may then offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2025 and served throughout the year:

Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair)

Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair)

Tyrone Paul

Ihsan Rahim

Clíona Roberts

Gaby Sumner

Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), Learning and Engagement Co-ordinator (Young People), Learning and Engagement Assistant (Adults), New Writing Manager and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity within the agreed annual budget.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis and is working on the creation of a formal risk register. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed a reduction of £81,562 (14.4%) in total income and a decrease of £81,422 (14.4%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £183 in unrestricted reserves.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, Didymus Charity, Garfield Weston Foundation, Hedley Foundation, Henry Smith Foundation, John Lyon's Charity, National Lottery Community Fund, Pickwell Foundation and Rayne Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks.

The balance sheet on page 16 shows that, at 31 May 2025, Synergy held net current assets of £216,540 (2024: £216,357).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 3 to 6 months' costs

However, the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The Trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern and have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those 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 judgments and 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees 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.

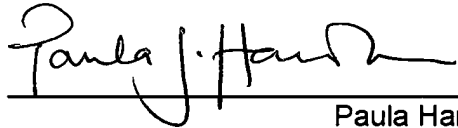
Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

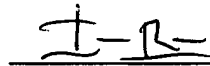
Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 15 January 2026 and signed on their behalf by:



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Ihsan Rahim
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2025 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 15 to 22.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 12 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant
Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

15 January 2026

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income:					
Donations and grants	2	21,127	371,555	392,682	461,376
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		4,717	-	4,717	-
Fees		80,480	-	80,480	85,701
Theatre tax relief		-	-	-	12,630
Investment income		5,684	-	5,684	5,418
Total Income		112,008	371,555	483,563	565,125
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	31,745	-	31,745	51,386
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	80,080	371,555	451,635	513,416
Total Expenditure		111,825	371,555	483,380	564,802
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		183	-	183	323
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		216,357	-	216,357	216,034
Total funds carried forward		216,540	-	216,540	216,357

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.

All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2025

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	9,000	11,643
Bank Account		371,004	324,864
Total Current Assets		380,004	336,507
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(163,464)	(120,150)
Net Current Assets		216,540	216,357
Net Assets		216,540	216,357
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		216,540	216,357
Total Charity Funds		216,540	216,357

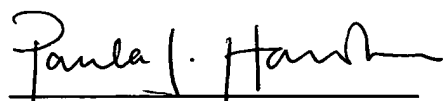
For the year ending 31 May 2025 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 18 to 22 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 15 January 2026 and signed on their behalf.



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	40,456	21,645
Interest income	5,684	5,418
Change in cash in the year	46,140	27,063
 Cash at the beginning of the year	 324,864	 297,801
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	371,004	324,864

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2025	2024
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	183	323
Deduct interest	(5,684)	(5,418)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	2,643	11,403
Increase (decrease) in creditors	43,314	15,337
Cash provided by operating activities	40,456	21,645

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2025

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 October 2019) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries of staff associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support and governance costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include office administration, staff and premises costs, and governance costs, which support the charity's development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support and governance costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year into a separate entity. Once the contributions have been paid the company has no further payment obligations. The contributions are recognised as expenses when they fall due. Amounts not paid are shown in accruals in the balance sheet. The assets of the plan are held separately from the company in independently administered funds.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations and grants

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
AB Charitable Trust	18,000	-	18,000	18,000
Arts Council England	-	29,700	29,700	24,300
BBC Children in Need	-	-	-	25,093
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	500
Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund	-	-	-	89,438
Didymus Charity	-	10,000	10,000	-
Field Family Charitable Trust	-	2,000	2,000	-
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	60,000	60,000	-
Harrow Change Makers	-	-	-	10,660
Hedley Foundation	-	3,000	3,000	-
Henry Smith Foundation	-	70,000	70,000	40,000
John Lyon's Charity	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
John Lyon's Charity Cultural Capital Fund	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	-	-	35,583
National Lottery Community Fund: RC London and South East Region	-	99,463	99,463	91,584
Pickwell Foundation	-	4,976	4,976	6,659
Rayne Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Other via CAF Online	2,627	-	2,627	1,929
Donated Services	-	17,251	17,251	16,603
Accruals & deferred income carried forward	-	(29,835)	(29,825)	31,610
	21,127	371,555	392,682	461,376

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Staff costs	31,745	-	31,745	51,386

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Direct costs:					
Fees	43,280	34,546	27,473	20,823	126,122
Staff	43,577	96,720	4,534	55,199	200,030
Other	29,740	24,996	695	4,509	59,940
Support costs	9,003	19,985	938	11,408	41,334
Governance costs	5,272	11,705	550	6,682	24,209
	130,872	187,952	34,190	98,621	451,635

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	14,321	7,240	21,561	Staff time
General Office	27,013	13,657	40,670	Staff time
Fees	-	312	312	Governance
Accountancy services	-	3,000	3,000	Governance
	<u>41,334</u>	<u>24,209</u>	<u>65,543</u>	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2024: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2024: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £97,055 (2024: £94,390).

Staff cost during the year were

	2025	2024
	£	£
Salaries and wages	229,301	257,155
Social security	18,495	19,162
Pensions	5,540	5,527
	<u>253,336</u>	<u>281,844</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 6 (2024: 7)

7. Debtors

	2025	2024
	£	£
Grants receivable	3,000	-
Other debtors	6,000	11,643
	<u>9,000</u>	<u>11,643</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Tax & social security	9,938	11,106
Trade creditors	3,318	20,470
Grant prepayments	150,208	88,574
	<u>163,464</u>	<u>120,150</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2024 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2025 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations and grants	-	371,555	(371,555)	-
Total restricted funds	-	371,555	(371,555)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	216,357	112,008	(111,825)	216,540
Total unrestricted funds	216,357	112,008	(111,825)	216,540
Total funds	216,357	483,563	(483,380)	216,540

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General Funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	229,796	150,208	380,004
Creditors due within one year	(13,256)	(150,208)	(163,464)
Total net assets	216,540	-	216,540

SYNERGY THEATRE PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1088692

Accounts

**synergy
theatre
project**

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2024**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 May 2024

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair) Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair) Tyrone Paul Alison Porter (resigned October 2024) Ihsan Rahim Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow (resigned March 2024)	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director General Manager Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults) Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People) Learning & Engagement Co-ordinator (Young People) Learning & Engagement Assistant (Adults) Progression & Pathways Co-ordinator (Young People) New Writing Manager Development Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Kit Withington Siân Henderson Shane Wheeler-Osman (appointed September 2023) Karl Smith Olivia Fraser (until September 2024) Neil Grutchfield Nisha Oza (until August 2024)
Registered office:	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2024.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and 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 for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 24 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people at risk of offending through **Synergy** and **Young Studios** with a focus on skills development, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering bespoke and commissioned work through **Synergy Services**, including ex-prisoner role play training for criminal justice professionals and a range of creative collaborations, drawing on our expertise to feed into research and education and contributing to systemic change and wider public debate.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

I don't think you understand what this has meant to me. I suffer from depression, but this has made me excited to wake up. Prisoner cast member on *The Gut Girls* production

While continuing to navigate the cost-of-living crisis and an increasingly challenging financial landscape as a result Synergy has over the past year delivered a programme of activity which has engaged a range of cohorts and resulted in some outstanding work, from collaborating with the London Pathways Unit in HMP Brixton which provides services for offenders who have complex psychological difficulties (with or without a formal diagnosis of personality disorder), embarking on year-long drama provision at HMP Gartree for prisoners serving life sentences to producing our first play within the prison estate since before the pandemic with a group of women prisoners at HMP Downview.

Synergy delivered the second of its two-year 'Comeback Comedy' programme of activity in both the prison estate and the community focusing on Covid recovery through comedy, promoting positive outcomes for mental wellbeing, social connections and building resilience for our beneficiaries who continued to be impacted severely by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. For young beneficiaries, we built on the successful pilot of our Young Studio initiative in the previous year, offering ongoing opportunities for creative training, work experience and mentoring.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 186 prisoners and ex-prisoners (116 and 70 respectively) through our range of courses, performance, work experience and employment opportunities and reached prison audiences of 603. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 3,300 through performance and activity, 527 of whom took part in workshops including 262 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects and Young Studio.

Synergy introduced a new Associates initiative at the beginning 2024, placing five dynamic theatre-makers – identifying as 60% global majority and 60% female – at the heart of our work and meeting our strategic aims to broaden our programming and expand our networks. We are ambitious to produce more new work that speaks to universal concerns and challenges public perception of criminal justice and intend for this diverse group of talented artists to initiate and unlock creative projects to fuel our artistic programme.

During the year our work was shortlisted for two 2023 London Youth Awards while our commissioned play, *He Said She Said* by Magero Otieno-Magero, won the 2024 Off West End (Offies) Award for Theatre for Young Audiences (Writing), and our Synergy Studio promotional film won a 2024 Smiley Charity Film Award.

PRODUCING

It has reminded me that the arts are transformative, it provides hope and opportunities, and it changes people. Prison Governor, HMP Downview on *The Gut Girls* production

Synergy toured *Followers*, a new play by Sonali Bhattacharyya looking at the rise of online influencers who promote misogynistic rhetoric, the risk to teenagers and impact on criminal behaviour, to schools across London from February to March, supported again by John Lyon's Cultural Capital Fund, reaching over 3,300 young people through performances, post-show Q&As and accompanying workshops. The production, following our proven model, featured a cast and crew of professional creatives and individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice system, and Q&As provided young people the opportunity to ask questions about the play as well as speak with the company which garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Our production of *The Gut Girls* by Sarah Daniels marked a joyous return, following the pandemic, to producing theatre in prisons. The play traces the lives of women working in a gutting shed and examines issues of power, exploitation, class and gender in Victorian England and resonates for its reflection on the struggle for freedom and fairness today. The project created a real sense of community in the prison with prisoners and staff commenting on the excitement it generated in the run-up to the show and afterwards. This contributed to the

improvement of the women's self-esteem, helping them to feel humanised in the prison after previously feeling isolated and ignored.

Working with the women in HMP Downview on the production served as a reminder of the transformative effect of engagement with theatre on participants, in turn challenging and inspiring audiences and shifting prison staff's perceptions of both the participating prisoners and the use of the arts, creating legacy by paving the way for future creative projects and also launching the beginning of the institution's year-round performing arts provision. Staff from other prisons attending the performances, including HMPs High Down and Belmarsh have since requested similar work.

In terms of commissions, we finally found a home in Southwark Playhouse for *Lifers*, Evan Placey's timely new play which holds a mirror to the crisis in social care by examining our ageing prison population with the production programmed in autumn 2025. Dexter Flanders delivered the first draft of his play examining the complexities of family courts and Ambreen Razia was also commissioned to write our 2025 play for young people.

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

Through this experience I have learnt to have more self-confidence, aptitude and self-respect as this has given me another skill which I didn't know I had within myself. I also think this drama programme should be rolled out to be taught in all prisons as it gives hope and faith in a very hopeless place. Prisoner participant, writing course, HMP Thameside

The delivery of the second of our two-year Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Funded 'Comeback Comedy' programme formed the main focus of Synergy Studio. The use comedy, an integral part of the programme, enabled exploration of often difficult subjects in a new way while also improving mental health and wellbeing. Those engaging with our activity have produced and shared some outstanding work during the course of the year as writers, actors and comedians, leading to some brilliant opportunities. Synergy plans to seed commission two to co-write a comic play for potential production, one of whom took part in our stand-up comedy course with Soho Theatre and is now performing on the comedy circuit, provided warm-up act for Dara Ó Briain and also reached the semi-finals of *So You Think You're Funny 2024*.

In collaboration with longstanding partners Morley College, Sara Putt Associates, Soho Theatre and Dante or Die, Synergy delivered 19 courses both within the prison estate at HMPs Brixton, Gartree, Littlehey, Thameside, Wandsworth and Wayland and in the community ranging from Introductions to Acting, Playwriting and Workshop Facilitation to Audio Drama, Spoken Word, Stand-up Comedy and Film Production. In addition, we delivered a performance project using *Smithereens* by Sean Buckley in the community as well as the full-scale production of *The Gut Girls* which marked our largest projects in scale, investment and resources during the year.

The wider impact of our work on beneficiaries' families has also been particularly evident during this year's programme of activity, especially from those whose loved ones engaged with the prison production and Young Studio, and their feedback has been heartfelt and insightful. Having witnessed this and spoken at first hand to family members over recent years, we feel compelled as an organisation to develop some form of creative engagement offer for these groups and plan to pilot a families project over the course of the coming year.

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights during the year include:

- 12 working with Synergy to support delivery of one-to-one and group projects as part of our young people's programme;
- Four gaining acting and backstage roles on *Followers*, our production for young people;
- One being awarded a scholarship on LAMDA's Performing Arts Foundation course;
- One working as a stage-hand for Connections Crew and three as crew at Brixton House;
- Seven completing a two-month regional tour as performers and crew members on Dante or Die's production of *Kiss Marry Kill*;

- One becoming a 'Soho Theatre Artist' after participating in Synergy's comedy course, and is building her career as professional stand-up comedian;
- One winning Best Producer for *Going for Gold* at the 2023 Black British Theatre Awards;
- One joining the BBC Voices, Royal Court and Hampstead Theatre's Inspire writers programmes with his first play due for production by BBC Radio and a commission for TV drama episode.

Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 30 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. A three-day play development workshop for a new play by one of the writers resulted in her obtaining artistic representation.

Synergy partnered for the sixth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 31 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development from our New Writing Manager. The winning plays were celebrated at script-in-hand readings by professional actors at HMP Littlehey and the Royal Court Theatre in December.

Young People's Programme

This has been the best project partnership I have done in 20 years of teaching. The [ex-prisoner] facilitator is an invaluable asset to your company. The way he speaks to the students, whether it being constructive criticism or giving them confidence, is brilliant. ALL THE STUDENTS LOVED HIM. His lived experience enabled students to understand that if you focus and put your mind to something, you can achieve it. Partner project staff member

During the year Synergy continued working through embedded relationships with partners, Woodbridge, The Helix, Jubilee Academy and Saffron Valley Collegiate PRUs. We delivered a range of longer-term creative projects using spoken word, acting and filmmaking in response to our touring theatre production, *Followers*, which encouraged participants to think about dangerous online influencers, misogyny and the impact it has on young people's criminal behaviour. Our remaining projects explored county lines using our short film *Dues*, knife crime and how social media can escalate violence, using the same artforms to interrogate the themes.

Partner staff commented that engagement with our activity ignited the young people's enthusiasm for learning, keenness to continue creative projects and one said, "The support you provided has helped students to make better academic progress as well as improving their emotional, social and mental well-being and development... they have been given the opportunity to try something new and we have recognised an 'I can do it' approach that is required in so many young people today. It has helped them to nurture their qualities and abilities in a safe space with adults who believe in them".

One of Synergy's partnering PRUs received an Ofsted inspection during one of our sessions and the headteacher reported that Synergy was referenced in the follow-up meeting with inspectors regarding personal development and arts provision and that the workshops were a positive reflection on the school's culture. The teacher said, "It was fantastic to showcase the great work Synergy offers to our young people... the inspector was really impressed with the team and the level of engagement the young people were giving".

Synergy's online one-to-one work engaged 14 young people at risk of offending during the year, again including a cohort at Park Lane Primary at a challenging point of transition to secondary school. This work continues to be highly effective for these young cohorts, many of whom are care-experienced, have unstable home lives or a close family member in prison, all factors which can affect their future aspirations. The one-to-ones culminate in end-of-project sharings to celebrate participants' achievements with peers, staff and family members and carers. One partner staff member commented on one of the young participants, "The way he's been carrying himself since doing this course [of one-to-ones] is notably different".

Project activity over the course of the year has had the following impacts:

- 85% of the participants demonstrated shifts in attitudes towards crime;
- 80% of young people reported that they had learned a new creative skill, improved their communication and increased their confidence;
- 70% of young people requested to be referred on to further creative projects.

In addition to our group and one-to-one work, Synergy was approached again by Saracens High School to deliver another day of participatory workshops as part of their Deep Learning Day.

Young Studio

It was wicked to have the opportunity to see young men like me being represented... made me see things in a much more important way. Young participant

Building on the pilot in the previous year of our Young Studio programme we delivered group projects and engaged young people at risk who had taken part in our activity delivered in PRUs, YOTs or online one-to-ones. While provision had previously focused mainly in Harrow where we have longstanding partnerships and became a board member of Harrow Culture Forum, we extended the programme into Lambeth last year. Having located to office at Brixton House in 2022, we have gradually extended our networks in the borough and forged reciprocal referral relationships with organisations engaging young people including Ingeus, The Reach Out Project, Young Urban Arts Foundation and Mainz World. Being an active member of the Lambeth Made network has enabled us to spread the word about our creative programme offers and also identify potential progression pathways for local young people engaging with our work.

Forging a new partnership with Knights Youth Centre in Lambeth which actively encourages young people to take a positive role in their community, the first of our group projects engaged their young cohort in spoken word. Working with two professional artists and an ex-prisoner support facilitator and using *Dues*, our short film exploring county lines, the project culminated in recording participants' pieces and celebrating them in a sharing. During May half-term we worked again with Kiln Theatre and delivered a filmmaking project, engaging young people in intensive week-long activity and working towards an online premiere and screening. Our Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator worked one-to-one with each Young Studio participant to identify targets and goals and also reached out to parents and carers to arrange follow-up sessions with each family to look at pathways and further creative opportunities.

These opportunities within our organisation and beyond included:

- 10 gaining work on a collaborative project between Synergy, King's College London;
- One signing up for a programme to enable her to visit universities in New York over the summer to help her gain a scholarship to study medicine;
- One featuring in an advert for *Dove* following support to sign up to a film extras agency;
- Five engaging in one-to-one courses with Synergy, working with artists and ex-prisoner support facilitators to further develop their skills in acting, spoken word and scriptwriting;
- Two going on to write, produce and direct their own short films;
- One moving on to permanent part-time work.

We trialled work placements for young people as part of our production and tour of *Followers*, including the roles of Assistant Director, Assistant Stage Manager and Workshop Assistant, each shadowing the respective creative professional and gaining valuable practical knowledge and experience. The integration of these placements proved to be a hugely successful model and one which we intend to continue using going forward.

SYNERGY SERVICES

One of the most powerful things I have seen about healthcare in prison, ever.

Director of Research, EP:IC on *Cancer Cells* film with KCL

In terms of our work within the prison estate Synergy secured nine commissions for course delivery at HMPs Brixton, Littlehey, Thameside and Wayland as well as HMP Gartree, establishing a new contractual relationship to facilitate a 14-month drama programme. Building on the post-pandemic growth achieved in the previous year and restoring this stream of earned

income, successful delivery at the establishments has resulted in further commissions from these and others including YOI Werrington.

Synergy was commissioned during the year to provide 46 actors for the creation of two informational films; one for the Sentencing Council's innovative website, *You be the Judge* (<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/research-and-resources/you-be-the-judge/>), which provides insight into the sentencing process, and the other for the Department for Work and Pensions on physical security awareness to highlight safe daily working practices. We were commissioned again by CAPA Global Education Network's London Centre to collaborate on a devising project over three months with their international students in response to Synergy's work and its beneficiaries' lived experiences, culminating in performances of each group's work.

In 2022 Synergy collaborated on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London exploring the experience of cancer patients. This resulted in our production of *Cancer Cells*, a short film by Evan Placey written in response to the NHS Trust's research which was finally screened at an event at the House of Lords in May, and the findings published in world-leading medical journal, *The Lancet*, in June.

Synergy was commissioned again by King's College London to collaborate on a series of workshops involving groups of young people and practitioners working with young people interacting with the criminal justice system. These focused on their views on the use of data and how it may predetermine offending risks. The groups explored the findings of the research into early education and social services data and criminal justice data on repeat offending.

As part of their staff away day London Probation Service commissioned Synergy to deliver a presentation about our work. This included testimonials from three ex-prisoners on the impact that engaging with Synergy has had on their lives in order to inspire probation officers and demonstrate that the right support and referrals can redirect the lives of their service users.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Amazing. This is why I do the job I do. Learning & Skills Manager, HMP Wayland

At the beginning of the year, we successfully recruited a Learning and Engagement Co-ordinator who took up the role last September; this new full-time post was created to increase capacity in our young people's programme and support our Learning and Engagement Manager who returned to work part-time after maternity leave. This expansion in our staff team, following the earlier appointments in June and July of both a Development Manager and a Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator, resulted in embarking on a review, in collaboration with an HR consultant and former trustee, of our existing internal systems, policies and procedures towards ensuring a continuing positive organisational culture.

The inaugural meeting of our Associates took place in February with a second in June, and two members – Olivier and BBC Radio & Music Award-winners – have directed theatre productions for Synergy during the year; one directing *Followers*, our young people's show with a company of professionals and ex-prisoners which toured across London, and the other *The Gut Girls* with women prisoners at HMP Downview, enabling them to work within new contexts and demonstrating our commitment to supporting their ongoing artistic development.

In terms of our advisory network, we facilitated our first session with a group of beneficiaries to provide opportunity for reflection and discussion of ideas for future programming and wider organisational strategy. We intend to facilitate further sessions with professional facilitators and other cohorts impacted through our work such as beneficiaries' family members. These will feed into a wider review and help to identify current gaps in provision and areas for development.

FUTURE PLANS

Without Synergy, I don't know where I'd be today. I was introduced to playwriting through their course in 2018. In just under six years since, I've had two plays produced and two commissioned, gained a place in the BBC Writers Room and been given an episode to write on a series. Men and women from backgrounds similar to mine sometimes need lifelines to help realise their contributions and get started in the world. Former Studio participant

Looking ahead to the coming year, and still with the strategic aim of growing our producing output to the fore, we have a number of commissions in development and for production alongside fresh creative input from our Associates, and we intend to continue delivering our engagement programmes with longstanding partners and test new artforms, extend our offer to new cohorts and expand our pathways into training and employment for our beneficiaries.

In terms of commissions, we secured a three-day workshop at the National Studio to develop Dexter Flanders' play examining family courts and will be touring *Providers*, a new play by Ambreen Razia, to schools across London in spring 2024. The tour will culminate in our first week-long run at Brixton House, the venue where Synergy is based, and enable us to increase our profile, reach and engage young audiences and potential beneficiaries in Lambeth and neighbouring boroughs. This development will strengthen our relationship with the venue and its engagement team with a view to opening up more pathways and progression opportunities for our young beneficiaries in tandem with our increasing networks in the area.

Our learning and engagement programme for adults will comprise acting, stand-up comedy, playwriting and film production in the community in collaboration with longstanding partners, Morley College, Soho Theatre and Sara Putt Associates and, in direct response to beneficiary reflection and feedback, we intend to test courses using new artforms including podcasting and pilot a project, responding again to interest and demand, to engage prisoners' families.

Within the prison estate, we have several commissions for delivery in HMP Belmarsh, Brixton and Thameside, will near completion of the year-long contract at HMP Gartree and embark on an intensive programme at YOI Werrington having been approached by the institution for creative intervention. We hope that the groundbreaking appointment of James Timpson, a consistent employer of ex-prisoners and Chair of the Prison Reform Trust, as prisons minister will bring positive change to the criminal justice system and for the beneficiaries of our work.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may then offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2024 and served throughout the year:

Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair)
Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair)
Tyrone Paul
Alison Porter
Ihsan Rahim
Clíona Roberts
Deborah Samuel
Gaby Sumner
Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), Learning and Engagement Co-ordinator (Young People), Learning and Engagement Assistant (Adults), Pathways and Progression Co-ordinator, New Writing Manager and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity within the agreed annual budget.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis and is working on the creation of a formal risk register. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed an increase of £109,099 (23.9%) in total income and an increase of £130,552 (30.1%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £323 in unrestricted reserves.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Harrow Change Makers, Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Pickwell Foundation and Rayne Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks.

The balance sheet on page 15 shows that, at 31 May 2024, Synergy held net current assets of £216,357 (2023: £216,034).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 3 to 4 months' costs. However, the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The Trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern and have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those 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 judgments and 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees 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.

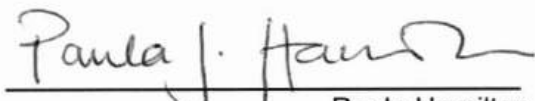
Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 5 December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:


Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee


Gaby Sumner
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2024 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 14 to 21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 12 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

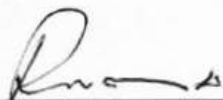
Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant

Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

5 December 2024

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Income:					
Donations	2	37,032	424,344	461,376	391,308
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		-	-	-	1,483
Fees		85,701	-	85,701	49,050
Theatre tax relief		12,630	-	12,630	12,773
Investment income		5,418	-	5,418	1,412
Total Income		140,781	424,344	565,125	456,026
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	51,386	51,386	34,964
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	140,458	372,958	513,416	399,286
Total Expenditure		140,458	424,344	564,802	434,250
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		323	-	323	21,776
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		216,034	-	216,034	194,258
Total funds carried forward		216,357	-	216,357	216,034

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.

All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	11,643	23,046
Bank Account		324,864	297,801
Total Current Assets		336,507	320,847
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(120,150)	(104,813)
Net Current Assets		216,357	216,034
Net Assets		216,357	216,034
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		216,357	216,034
Total Charity Funds		216,357	216,034

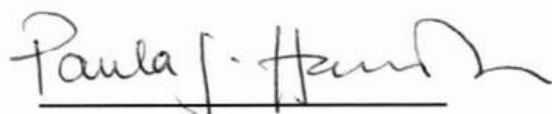
For the year ending 31 May 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 17 to 21 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 5 December 2024 and signed on their behalf.



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	21,645	(14,175)
Interest income	5,418	1,412
Change in cash in the year	27,063	(12,763)
Cash at the beginning of the year	297,801	310,564
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	324,864	297,801

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2024	2023
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	323	21,776
Deduct interest	(5,418)	(1,412)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	11,403	19,504
Increase (decrease) in creditors	15,337	(54,043)
Cash provided by operating activities	21,645	(14,175)

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2024

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 October 2019) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries of staff associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, personnel payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support and governance costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year into a separate entity. Once the contributions have been paid the company has no further payment obligations. The contributions are recognised as expenses when they fall due. Amounts not paid are shown in accruals in the balance sheet. The assets of the plan are held separately from the company in independently administered funds.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
AB Charitable Trust	18,000	-	18,000	18,000
Arts Council England	-	24,300	24,300	3,196
BBC Children in Need	-	25,093	25,093	33,626
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	500
Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund	-	89,438	89,438	64,687
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust	-	-	-	4,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	25,000
Greater London Authority	-	-	-	7,500
Harrow Change Makers	-	10,660	10,660	
Henry Smith Charity	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
John Lyon's Charity	-	40,000	40,000	35,000
John Lyon's Charity Cultural Capital Fund	-	40,000	40,000	-
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	-	-	35,583
National Lottery Community Fund:				
RC London and South East Region	-	91,584	91,584	43,825
Pickwell Foundation	-	6,659	6,659	5,000
Rayne Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Supporting the Arts in Harrow	-	-	-	8,000
UK Online Giving Foundation	1,929	-	1,929	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Build Back Better	-	-	-	8,000
Donated Services	16,603	-	16,603	7,944
Accruals & deferred income carried forward	-	31,610	31,610	26,447
	37,032	424,344	461,376	391,308

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Staff costs	-	51,386	51,386	34,964

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	70,055	-	-	-	70,055
Facilitator fees	-	45,556	19,580	47,834	112,970
Other costs	17,027	30,832	1,294	8,663	57,816
Support costs	44,270	119,424	5,465	92,142	261,301
Governance costs	1,911	5,152	236	3,975	11,274
	133,263	200,964	26,575	152,614	513,416

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	223,389	7,069	230,458	Staff time
General Office	37,912	1,200	39,112	Staff time
Fees	-	300	300	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,705	2,705	Governance
	<u>261,301</u>	<u>11,274</u>	<u>272,575</u>	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2023: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2023: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £94,390 (2023: £80,990).

Staff cost during the year were

	2024	2023
	£	£
Salaries and wages	257,155	180,636
Social security	19,162	13,694
Pensions	5,527	4,399
	<u>281,844</u>	<u>198,729</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 7 (2023: 5.7)

7. Debtors

	2024	2023
	£	£
Grants receivable	-	3,196
Other debtors	11,643	19,850
	<u>11,643</u>	<u>23,046</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Tax & social security	11,106	5,375
Trade creditors	20,470	15,770
Grant prepayments	88,574	83,668
	<u>120,150</u>	<u>104,813</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2023 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2024 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	424,344	(424,344)	-
Total restricted funds	-	424,344	(424,344)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	216,034	140,781	(140,458)	216,357
Total unrestricted funds	216,034	140,781	(140,458)	216,357
Total funds	216,034	565,125	(564,802)	216,357

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	247,933	88,574	336,507
Creditors due within one year	(31,576)	(88,574)	(120,150)
Total net assets	216,357	-	216,357

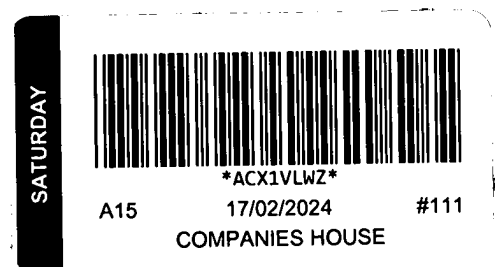
SYNERGY THEATRE PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1088692

Accounts

synergy theatre project

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2023



Brixton House, G.1 Carlton Mansions, 387 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8GL
Company no: 04219146 Reg'd Charity no: 1088692

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report

for the year ended 31 May 2023

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair) Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair) Tyrone Paul Alison Porter Ihsan Rahim Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Jonathan Smith (resigned April 2023) Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director General Manager Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults) Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People) Learning & Engagement Assistant New Writing Manager Development Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Kit Withington Siân Henderson (maternity leave until April 2023) Danielle Baker & Alesha Pryce (maternity cover) Karl Smith Neil Grutchfield Julie Shaw (until January 2023) Nisha Oza (appointed June 2023)
Registered office:	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2023.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and 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 for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 23 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners and ex-prisoners through **Synergy Studio** with its growing focus on skills accreditation, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering ex-prisoner led roleplay through **Synergy Services** which provides training services for resettlement agencies and an effective and targeted way to contribute to systems change within the criminal justice arena.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

What Synergy is doing is amazing! Director, Creative Circle Awards

Over the last year, and in the midst of the worst cost-of-living crisis in half a century after emerging from the pandemic and enforced lockdowns, Synergy has remained resilient and continued to offer a range of creative engagement opportunities while piloting and delivering new programmes in response to these challenges and producing acclaimed artistic work with partnering organisations, supported by longstanding and new funders.

These crises continued to have a devastating effect on the beneficiaries of our work and impacted severely on their wellbeing. In view of this, Synergy embarked on 'Comeback Comedy', a two-year programme of activity in both the prison estate and the community focusing on Covid recovery through comedy, promoting positive outcomes for mental wellbeing, social connections and building resilience. For young beneficiaries, we successfully piloted our Young Studio initiative, offering ongoing opportunities for creative training, work experience and mentoring.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 243 prisoners and ex-prisoners through our range of courses, performance, work experience and employment opportunities and reached prison audiences of 430. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 2,500 through performance and activity, 301 of whom took part in workshops including 146 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects.

While continuing to navigate the challenging landscape, our work was shortlisted for the 2022 London Youth Awards, and our short film, *Dues*, exploring the issue of county lines was screened as part of the Chicago Children's and British Urban Film Festivals in November 2022. In July 2023 Synergy received three 2023 Creative Circle Awards (Gold, Silver and Bronze) for a promotional film about our work developed through the Media Trust.

PRODUCING

He Said She Said should be seen as a clarion call and is a play that as many young people as possible should see. ★★★★★ Theatre Weekly

As a result of his work on one of our previous ex-prisoner invitational courses with Soho Theatre, one of our writers of promise was commissioned by Paines Plough to write *One Off*, a play exploring the relationship between a prisoner and a night duty prison officer he never sees. We are hugely proud to have co-produced the play with Paines Plough and Live Theatre in Newcastle in November 2022. *One Off* received 4-star reviews in regional and national press including The Guardian and The Stage, the latter describing it as "a powerfully affecting, deeply humane production": <https://www.live.org.uk/whats-on/one>

Following the success in spring 2022 of *He Said She Said*, our young people's touring production by spoken word artist Magero Otieno-Magero, we revived the show after securing support again from John Lyon's Cultural Capital Fund. Using dialogue, verse and music, the play explores the impact of social media on youth violence and crime and proved hugely popular with young audiences. After a two-week tour to schools and PRUs across London from February to March, reaching over 1,300 young people and engaging them in accompanying Q&As and workshops, we performed daily as part of the inaugural Schools Week at Kiln Theatre, reaching a further 905. Having piloted our Young Studio programme there and also delivered a course for adults, this further strengthened our collaborative relationship with the venue, engaged new audiences and met our aim to maximise our touring work for young people.

In terms of commissions, Evan Placey delivered *Lifers*, a timely new play which holds a mirror to the crisis in social care by examining our ageing prison population. Synergy is in conversation with a number of venues over co-producing the play in 2024. Synergy also supported the ongoing development of *DisAble Me*, a new play about living with disability by a beneficiary

emerging from a series of Soho Labs, in addition to *Penned Up* by Danusia Iwaszko, inspired by her extensive experience of teaching playwriting for Synergy in prisons.

Synergy collaborated in the previous year on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London (KCL) exploring the experience of cancer patients. This resulted in *Cancer Cells*, a short by Evan Placey written in response to the NHS Trust's findings from the research. The findings are due to be published in *The Lancet* and the film screened at the House of Lords in May 2024.

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

I have recently come off anti-depressants, having been on them for four years. I genuinely put my improved mental health partly on being fortunate enough to access this course.

Comeback Comedy prison course participant

The year's activity began with the launch of 'Comeback Comedy', our national competition and call-out for 10-minute comedic plays, supported by a number of comedy playwriting courses and broadcast of recorded video tutorials through prison TV networks to provide essential tools and encourage entries. This programme of work, supported by Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund, marked the first time that Synergy has used comedy as the basis for its scriptwriting courses which produced some highly positive outcomes and where participants discovered a freedom to tackle difficult subjects through humour in a new way that was liberating and light. The programme also focusses on improving mental health and wellbeing and feedback indicated a 92% improvement in participants' mental health at the end of projects. Our competition winners' event at Soho Theatre in March comprised the winning scripts performed by professional actors.

During the year we have experienced some outstanding work from participants, particularly the high standard of scripts submitted and the performance project using *Road* by Jim Cartwright. This project and choice of script highlighted the impact of poverty on mental health, leading to addiction and depression. It felt particularly pertinent being performed by a group of individuals impacted significantly by the cost-of-living crisis. The project also established a new relationship with Chelsea Theatre, a community-based venue offering competitive charity rates for future work, and our wider Studio programme has strengthened Synergy's partnerships over the last year, increased our repertoire and network of industry professionals.

In collaboration with partners, Morley College, Sara Putt Associates, Soho and Kiln Theatres and The Lot, Synergy delivered 14 courses both within the prison estate at HMPs Belmarsh, Highpoint, Littlehey and in the community ranging from Introductions to Acting, Playwriting, Comedy Scriptwriting and Workshop Facilitation to Advanced Playwriting and family-focused projects. Engaging with families proved especially significant and we received much feedback expressing gratitude for the positive impact that working with Synergy had had on their family member in prison or outside. At some end-of-course sharings family members stood and expressed very emotionally how they felt hope for the future of the respective participants and would support and encourage them to continue their engagement with us.

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights during the year include:

- 13 working with Synergy to support delivery of our young people's programme;
- Five gaining acting and backstage roles on our production, *He Said She Said*;
- Three ex-prisoners gaining work with Synergy as role play actor facilitators to deliver training for Catch22 staff on Managing Challenging Conversations and Behaviour;
- 14 gaining work with Synergy as cast and crew on a promotional film for Synergy Studio, supported by the Media Trust, which received three Creative Circle Awards;
- Two auditioned for LAMDA, one of whom was awarded a scholarship on their Performing Arts Foundation course;
- The writer of *One Off* subsequently on commission with Orange Tree and Live Theatres and developing projects with BBC and Film Nation;

- Two working regularly as professional actors, another as a film extra, a fourth as a stage-hand with Connections Crew, and three gaining work as crew at Brixton House;
- Two gaining acting roles on an information film about prisoners and oral health for Dental Public Health and the Primary Care Institute of Dentistry;
- Three playing roles in The Brigstow Institute's short film, *The Wounds We Keep*;
- Two supported with subsidised places to take part in an external playwriting group;
- One working in script development at Netflix and seed-commissioned by Defibrillator;
- One co-producing *Going for Gold*, winning the 2023 Fuse International Best of Brighton Fringe Theatre Award; Best Production, Producer and Male Lead at the 2023 Black British Theatre Awards.

In addition, Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 27 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. Following on from the Advanced Playwriting Invitation group all nine participating writers received further dramaturgical meetings with directors, delivering full length plays and receiving further professional development advice.

Synergy partnered for the fifth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 28 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development from our New Writing Manager. The winning plays were celebrated at script-in-hand readings by professional actors at HMP Wymott and the Royal Court Theatre in November.

Young People's Programme

It's given her confidence and the ability to make new friends and it has also helped with her anxiety. I've noticed that since doing course she's more determined to succeed in life it's given her an alternative which is hard to find being from a family that don't have privileges.

Parent of a Young Studio member

The year began with the culmination of a series of screenings of our short film, *Dues*, which focuses on county lines together with accompanying workshops to explore the issue in greater depth. The film, which Synergy made in the previous year, was screened as part of the Chicago Children's and British Urban Film Festivals in November 2022, enabling both greater and wider geographical reach. *Dues* has since been uploaded to our website as a free resource to accompany our education pack containing information around grooming, recruitment and exploitation and signposting to support wider learning around county lines.

Synergy continued working through embedded relationships with partners, Woodbridge, The Helix and Saffron Valley Collegiate PRUs, delivering longer-term creative projects in response to the revival and tour of our theatre production, *He Said She Said*, using spoken word, acting and filmmaking. The play encourages young people to think about issues relating to youth crime including social media, gang violence and grooming. Partner feedback noted high levels of students, often very disengaged, engaging fully with our projects and maintaining high retention rates. Staff comments included, "Synergy always manages to engage our learners and they look forward to sessions" and, "it offers them something different that they don't learn in lessons". 80% of the young people reported that their confidence levels had increased, and staff stated that taking part in the projects had made their students feel more positive about their learning with one teacher commenting, "Three of the participants felt positive enough to have joined the performing arts club at school as a result of their growing confidence on the project".

Attendance and retention rates were similarly exceptional at YOI Isis where we delivered a comedy scriptwriting course as part of our Comeback Comedy programme, particularly with one wing known to prison staff as the least likely to engage positively in education. The course garnered highly favourable feedback from one of the prison officers who commented, "To have that many guys in a room together, and for there to be no major incidents during the whole course, was impressive. The guards were all sceptical to start with... but the fact they engaged the whole time, they turned up each week and there wasn't any incidents really says something about what you do". One of the participants, dyslexic and permanently excluded from school 12

years earlier, entered his script and won our competition. Having recently been released, we will provide ongoing writer development support.

Our online one-to-one work continues to be highly effective and engaged 13 young people at risk of offending during the year, including a cohort at Park Lane Primary at a challenging point of transition to secondary school. These creative one-to-ones appeal directly to the most vulnerable young people who may struggle in group environments, have sporadic school attendance or simply benefit from more individualised work. End-of-project sharings celebrate participants' achievements together with peers, staff and family members and carers. One parent commented, "My daughter has had a wonderful time given the opportunity to work with Synergy over the last couple of months and has grown in confidence so much".

Project activity over the course of the year has had the following impacts:

- 80% of the participants demonstrated shifts in attitudes towards crime;
- 80% of young people reported that they had learned a new creative skill, improved their communication and increased their confidence;
- 70% of young people requested to be referred on to further creative projects.

In addition to our group and one-to-one work, Synergy was approached by Saracens High School to deliver a day of participatory workshops using *He Said She Said* as a stimulus as part of their School Arts Week in October.

Young Studio

Losing his place at college caused my son to get into trouble with too much time on his hands. So, the opportunity to work with Synergy came at the perfect time and changed the landscape for him. He regained his focus and put his energy into something really positive which he yearns to continue. Parent and beneficiary on his son's work experience on *Road*

The pilot of our Young Studio, following the format of our successful Synergy Studio model for adult beneficiaries, included the delivery of three group projects to engage young people at risk who have previously taken part in our programmes delivered in PRUs and YOTs or creative online one-to-ones. Supported by National Lottery Reaching Communities, activity had been focused mainly in Harrow where we have longstanding partnerships, but we extended the programme to Lambeth where Synergy is based. This enabled us to deepen our connections in the borough and engage with youth organisations not previously aware of our work and from whom we can take referrals for future projects.

The first of these group projects took place at Kiln Theatre in summer 2022 and explored themes of cultural differences, individuality and community and culminated in a celebration of monologues, spoken word, rap and music. The project had a significant impact on the group; working with a smaller number allowed the team to focus more of the young people's individual talents and find ways for them to express themselves. Two of the participants went on to join Kiln Theatre's Young Company, and all members have been receiving individual support from Synergy's team in looking at pathways and finding further creative opportunities.

Alongside our performance project, *Road*, we were able to offer work experience to a young person – and son of a beneficiary – who had been cautioned by the police but expressed a particular interest in stage management. He worked as part of a professional stage management team on the intensive two-week rehearsal period and performances; he was responsible for props, marking up scripts and liaising with actors on a day-to-day basis. The stage manager he shadowed with was full of praise for his work ethic and his ability and we intend to offer him further work on our 2024 young people's touring production.

SYNERGY SERVICES

Seeing the change in some of the participants over such a short time gives me tremendous pleasure and reminds me why I choose to do the job I do. We need more opportunities to engage with projects such as Synergy, the benefits of these projects are really tangible."

Learning & Skills Manager, HMP Wayland

In terms of the commissioning of our work and following the slow opening up of the prison estate in 2022, Synergy secured six commissions for course delivery during the reporting period at HMPs Highpoint and Littlehey as well as HMPs Belmarsh and Brixton, establishing new contractual relationships. Presenting a modest start to rebuilding both this area of our work and our stream of earned income, successful delivery at the establishments has since resulted in further interest from these and others including HMPs Gartree and Wayland.

During the course of the year, Synergy was commissioned to provide actors for the creation of two informational films; one concerning the DfE's reading framework and the other for the Dental Public Health and Primary Care Institute of Dentistry at Queen Mary University of London to improve *the oral health of community returners*. We were commissioned again by CAPA Global Education Network's London Centre to collaborate on a devising project over three months with their international students in response to Synergy's work and its beneficiaries' lived experiences, culminating in performances of each group's work in December.

Synergy was also commissioned by Catch22 to deliver programmes of role play training for their staff with our ex-prisoner facilitators on communication and interpersonal skills focusing Managing Challenging Conversations and Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We can't thank you enough for this amazing intervention.

Teacher, Ormiston Latimer Academy

Synergy undertook an EDI audit, led by Ngozi Lyn Cole of GLT Partners, in the previous year and this actively supported our drive to recruit new board members and commitment to ensuring greater diversity in our governance, including individuals of the global majority and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system, to better reflect the communities we engage through our work. Alongside our own call-out, we worked with BoardLead, in partnership with NCVO and Trustees Unlimited, to identify potential trustee candidates from the corporate sector. In September 2022, we welcomed four new trustees from a diverse range of backgrounds with diverse skills and experience including legal and corporate. We subsequently planned a programme of training with GLT Partners, engaging both staff and trustees, which offered practical sessions looking at EDI concepts (protected characteristics, intersectionality and anti-racism), unconscious bias, and inclusion involving discussion around gender and sexuality.

In terms of the funding landscape, we are acutely aware that the environment is fiercely competitive. Synergy appointed a new Development Manager who took up the post in June 2023, relieving pressure on both the Artistic Director and General Manager while providing near full-time capacity for the first time in Synergy's history and scope to investigate new sources of funding to diversify our income further with a view to strengthening the organisation's long-term financial sustainability.

FUTURE PLANS

The play's raw intensity, its barbed wire humour, its characters' mix of brutality and vulnerability, the hot blood coursing through its veins and its sense of despair infused ultimately with a shot of hope make this – well, a one-off. British Theatre Guide on *One Off*

During the coming year, and with our strategic aim to increasing our producing output in mind, we have a number of commissions coming to fruition and have recently introduced a dynamic group of artistic associates – 60% global majority and female identifying – in order to bring greater diversity in programming decisions and facilitate access to other creative partners and theatres in order to open up opportunities and raise our profile.

In terms of commissions, we are seeking co-producing partners for Evan Placey's *Lifers* and will be touring *Followers*, a new play by Sonali Bhattacharyya looking at the rise of online influencers who promote misogynistic rhetoric and the risk to teenagers, to schools across London in spring 2024. Dexter Flanders has also delivered his first draft of a play examining family courts.

Our Learning and Engagement programme for adults will comprise comedy-focused activity including a theatre production in prison, acting and playwriting courses in both existing partner prisons including HMPs Littlehey and Thameside, new partners HMPs Gartree and Wayland and delivery in the community with Soho Theatre, Dante or Die, Morley College and LAMDA. Building on relationships forged through our Young Studio activity, we intend to expand our work in the Lambeth borough where we are also based.

With a view to facilitating further growth in our young people's programme, we expanded our team and appointed a Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator in July 2023, a new role created to increase placement and employment opportunities for beneficiaries. We subsequently appointed a full-time Learning & Engagement Co-ordinator in September, an additional new post to both increase capacity and support our Learning & Engagement Manager who returned in April 2023 after maternity leave to work part-time. This expansion in our staff team represents a growth of nearly a third and is aligned with plans set out as part of our National Lottery funding. While we believe we foster a good and healthy workplace culture, we are aware with staff expansion of the need to review our existing procedures and policies and are in the process of doing so over the next few months.

In light of the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our beneficiaries and following discussions with our board in response to our EDI work, two trustees, both former beneficiaries are establishing an advisory group. We aim to host an initial meeting and engage a number of project beneficiaries and family members we have met during the course of last year's activities.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may then offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2023 and served throughout the year:

Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair)
Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair)
Tyrone Paul
Alison Porter
Ihsan Rahim
Clíona Roberts
Deborah Samuel
Gaby Sumner
Catherine Thornborrow
Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), New Writing Manager, Learning and Engagement Assistant and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity within the agreed annual budget.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis and is working on the creation of a formal risk register. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed an increase of £22,583 (5.2%) in total income and an increase of £32,851 (8.2%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £21,776 in unrestricted reserves which is in line with the company's reserves policy.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Pickwell Foundation and Rayne Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks.

The balance sheet on page 15 shows that, at 31 May 2023, Synergy held net current assets of £216,034 (2022: £194,258).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 6 months' costs. However, the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The Trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern and have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those 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 judgments and 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees 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.

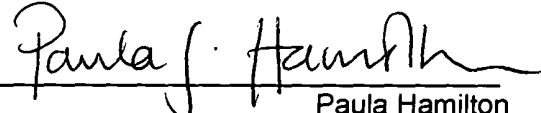
Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 15 February 2024 and signed on their behalf by:


Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee


Alison Porter
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2023 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 17 to 21:

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 12 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant
Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

15 February 2024

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income:					
Donations	2	18,533	372,775	391,308	383,227
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		1,483	-	1,483	-
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		-	-	-	3,038
Fees		49,050	-	49,050	47,041
Theatre tax relief		12,773	-	12,773	-
Investment income		1,412	-	1,412	137
Total Income		83,251	372,775	456,026	433,443
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	34,964	34,964	40,109
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	61,475	337,811	399,286	361,290
Total Expenditure		61,475	372,775	434,250	401,399
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		21,776	-	21,776	32,044
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		194,258	-	194,258	162,214
Total funds carried forward		216,034	-	216,034	194,258

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.

All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	23,046	42,550
Bank Account		297,801	310,564
Total Current Assets		320,847	353,114
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(104,813)	(158,856)
Net Current Assets		216,034	194,258
Net Assets		216,034	194,258
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		216,034	194,258
Total Charity Funds		216,034	194,258

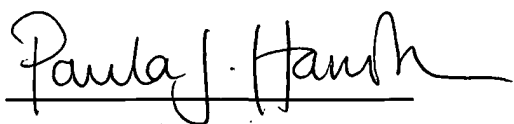
For the year ending 31 May 2023 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 17 to 21 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 15 February 2024 and signed on their behalf.



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	(14,175)	54,429
Interest income	1,412	137
Change in cash in the year	(12,763)	54,566
 Cash at the beginning of the year	 310,564	 255,998
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	<u>297,801</u>	<u>310,564</u>

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2023	2022
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	21,776	32,044
Deduct interest	(1,412)	(137)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	19,504	(42,550)
Increase (decrease) in creditors	(54,043)	65,072
 Cash provided by operating activities	 <u>(14,175)</u>	 <u>54,429</u>

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2023

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries of staff associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, personnel payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support and governance costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
AB Charitable Trust	18,000	-	18,000	15,000
Arnold Clark Community Fund	-	-	-	1,000
Arts Council England	-	3,196	3,196	28,767
BBC Children in Need	-	33,626	33,626	32,800
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	500
City Bridge Trust	-	-	-	66,530
Comic Relief	-	64,687	64,687	-
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust	-	4,000	4,000	-
Field Family Charitable Trust	-	-	-	4,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Greater London Authority	-	7,500	7,500	46,500
Henry Smith Charity	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
Ironmongers' Company	-	-	-	9,180
John Lyon's Charity	-	35,000	35,000	34,500
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	35,583	35,583	33,000
National Lottery Community Fund: RC London and South East Region	-	43,825	43,825	-
Peter Sowerby Foundation	-	-	-	25,000
Pickwell Foundation	-	5,000	5,000	9,167
Rayne Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Build Back Better	-	8,000	8,000	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Supporting the Arts in Harrow	-	8,000	8,000	-
Others	33	-	33	2,692
Accruals & deferred income carried forward		34,358	34,358	9,591
	18,533	372,775	391,308	383,227

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Staff costs	-	34,964	34,964	40,109

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	44,777	-	-	-	44,777
Facilitator fees	-	61,786	5,120	35,538	102,444
Other costs	10,800	26,395	444	4,966	42,605
Support costs	35,522	83,831	4,744	74,983	199,080
Governance costs	1,853	4,371	247	3,909	10,380
	92,952	176,383	10,555	119,396	399,286

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	157,719	6,046	163,765	Staff time
General Office	41,361	1,586	42,947	Staff time
Fees	-	253	253	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,495	2,495	Governance
	<u>199,080</u>	<u>10,380</u>	<u>209,460</u>	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2022: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2022: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £80,990 (2022: £84,366).

Staff cost during the year were

	2023	2022
	£	£
Salaries and wages	180,636	193,938
Social security	13,694	12,863
Pensions	4,399	4,119
	<u>198,729</u>	<u>210,920</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 5.7 (2022: 5)

7. Debtors

	2023	2022
	£	£
Grants receivable	3,196	7,500
Other debtors	19,850	35,050
	<u>23,046</u>	<u>42,550</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Tax & social security	5,375	5,813
Trade creditors	15,770	46,470
Grant prepayments	83,668	106,573
	<u>104,813</u>	<u>158,856</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2022 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2023 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	372,775	(372,775)	-
Total restricted funds	-	372,775	(372,775)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	194,258	83,251	(61,475)	216,034
Total unrestricted funds	194,258	83,251	(61,475)	216,034
Total funds	194,258	456,026	(434,250)	216,034

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	237,179	83,668	320,847
Creditors due within one year	(21,145)	(83,668)	(104,813)
Total net assets	216,034	-	216,034

SYNERGY THEATRE PROJECT

England & Wales - Charity number 1088692

Accounts



**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2022**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 May 2022

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2022.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (appointed 22 November 2022) Jules Carey (resigned 22 November 2022) Paula Hamilton Tyrone Paul (appointed 22 November 2022) Alison Porter (appointed 22 November 2022) Ihsan Rahim (appointed 22 November 2022) Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Jonathan Smith (Chair) Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director	Esther Baker
	General Manager	Jennie McClure
	Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults)	Kit Withington (appointed November 2022)
	Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People)	Siân Henderson (maternity leave) Danielle Baker & Alesha Pryce (maternity cover)
	Learning & Engagement Assistant	Karl Smith
	New Writing Manager	Neil Grutchfield
	Development Manager	Miriam Sherwood (until January 2022) Julie Shaw (appointed March 2022)
Registered office:	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2022.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and 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 for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 22 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners and ex-prisoners through **Synergy Studio** with its growing focus on skills accreditation, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering ex-prisoner led roleplay through **Synergy Services** which provides training services for resettlement agencies and an effective and targeted way to contribute to systems change within the criminal justice arena.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

What I learned? How to open up my mind and think about how I see myself, the world and the things I choose to value and appreciate.

Young offender participant, YOI Isis, on a spoken word project

Synergy has remained resilient over the last year, supported by longstanding and new funders to navigate the ongoing challenges of the pandemic in the lead up to the gradual lifting of government restrictions. The main success of our work was the continued delivery of a range of creative participatory opportunities – including innovative collaborations and creative solutions to overcome barriers to engagement – in spite of widescale lockdowns which also prevented access in person to the prison estate until the latter part of 2021. As conditions allowed face-to-face delivery in the community to resume and enable us to re-engage with beneficiaries and long-term partnering organisations, we were also able to produce a range of work including the much-welcomed return to touring live theatre into schools, bringing scripts in development to fruition and forge new collaborations.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 156 prisoners and ex-prisoners through our courses in both the prison estate and the community, performance, work experience and employment opportunities. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 5,200 through performance and activity, over 575 of whom took part in participatory workshops including 196 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects.

PRODUCING

A gripping watch that shouldn't be overlooked. Highly recommended ★★★★★

Short Films Matter on Synergy's short film, *Dues*

Having been postponed twice on account of the pandemic our short film, *Dues*, by Ambreen Razia (BBC Talent Hotlist 2017; creator, writer and star of BBC3 pilot, *Hounslow Diaries*), went into post-production in summer 2021. Examining the issue of county lines and the ways in which young people are targeted and vulnerable to exploitation and grooming by criminal gangs, *Dues* features a cast and crew of professionals and ex-prisoners and we toured to schools, PRUs and YOIs across London from September to November, engaging over 2,800 young people with the film and a range of supporting activity. The film was subsequently selected for screening as part of both the 39th Chicago International Children's and 2022 British Urban Film Festivals in November 2022.

Following hot on its heels, we commissioned a new play, *He Said She Said*, by spoken word artist Magero Otieno-Magero whose work chimes with current youth culture. Using dialogue, verse and music, the play explores the impact of social media on youth violence and crime, examining how the online actions of four teenagers have devastating consequences in real life. Marking our first live performances since the pandemic, the production toured and engaged 2,000 young people in schools and alternative provision across London from February to March and provided a stimulus for much of our longer-term work with key partners. Harnessing its success, we plan to revive the production in spring 2023.

Synergy supported the ongoing development of *Nothing in a Butterfly*, a play by Ric Renton, one of our ex-prisoner writers, based on his life story and the resulting production at Omnibus Theatre from March to April which received outstanding feedback. As a result of his work on one of our courses with Soho Theatre, Ric was commissioned by Paines Plough to write *One Off*, a play exploring the relationship between a prisoner and a night duty prison officer he never sees. This led to an agreement between Synergy, Paines Plough and Live Theatre in Newcastle to co-produce the play in November 2022.

Our collaboration on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London (KCL) exploring the experience of cancer patients in prison came to fruition in January. We produced *Cancer Cells*, a short by Evan Placey written in response to the NHS

Trust's findings from the research and the film was subsequently shared at a wider policy meeting and is also due to be screened at the House of Lords.

Other works in development include a play by Evan Placey, commissioned in the previous year and nearing a final draft, exploring the increasing population of older prisoners and their treatment. Synergy also made play development progress with two new ex-prisoner authored plays: a Soho co-commission about a woman living a double life and a seed commissioned play written by an ex-prisoner which developed from an initial idea to first draft.

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

Amazing! My heart was thumping so fast. Like, these were just words on a page. Now they're being understood by actors trying to live in that world of words.

Prisoner participant on hearing the broadcast of his audio drama on Radio Wanno

While the pandemic and ongoing national lockdowns continued to impact our ability to deliver our work in person, it also presented a new opportunity to adapt and develop provision, utilise digital platforms, create and offer new resources to ensure sustained engagement with our beneficiaries. This was not something that we would have envisioned before the pandemic, but the success of this model of working became evident quickly and is one that we will continue as it enables us to extend our reach. For example, we offered a blended Introduction to Playwriting course for ex-prisoners and were able to recruit five participants from outside London since there was a reduced travel requirement with most of the sessions taking place over Zoom. We also liaised with HM Prison and Probation Service to extend curfew conditions in order for two participants to attend the live sessions. Led by Theatre503's Literary Manager, participants wrote new plays and extracts which were performed in rehearsed readings by professional actors at Theatre503 in November. Three writers of promise from the group have since been invited to take part in our subsequent Advanced Invitation Group in autumn 2022.

Demand for our services from the prison estate started growing again at the beginning of 2022 towards pre-pandemic levels and we delivered our first-ever in-cell audio drama writing project which was devised by a playwright in collaboration with our digital editor and staff at Radio Wanno, the station at HMP Wandsworth. Workbooks accompanied the recorded tutorials which were broadcast twice daily from September to October. Plays handwritten in-cell were transcribed for performance by professional actors at Radio Wanno's studio and recorded and edited by two prisoner sound engineer trainees. The plays were broadcast on rotation between 27 and 29 December, reaching an audience of 910 listeners including the writers. This offered a welcome addition to the prison radio programme during the Christmas period when mental health and wellbeing is of acute concern. Radio Wanno's Head of Communications has expressed interest in expanding the audio drama course and finding a wider audience for the work. Synergy has begun discussions with Morley College over creating a joint project involving prisoner and ex-prisoner writers together with Radio Wanno sound engineers to create plays for both prison and public broadcast.

We also delivered our Introduction to Playwriting course using a blended model at HMP Highpoint, adapting to the gradual reopening of the prison by engaging smaller cohorts resident in its two sites, delivering half the tutorials in person and providing in-cell DVDs for the remainder in order to complete the necessary guided learning hours. When the spread of new Covid-19 variants prevented live script-in-hand readings by professional actors of participants' plays, we recorded these off-site and made DVD copies available to the writers to watch in-cell. Delivery at HMP The Mount was delayed by three months, but this enabled us to deliver the entire course in person, culminating in live performances in May.

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights include:

- 9 gaining work with Synergy to support the delivery of 15 online one-to-ones with young people at risk referred by the Met Police, and face-to-face and group projects;

- 8 supporting our early intervention work in primary schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and a number of deep learning days in secondary schools as well as workshops accompanying the tour of our short film, *Dues*;
- 7 gaining acting and backstage roles on Synergy's production, *He Said She Said*;
- Three working as cast and crew on *Cancer Cells*, the short film collaboration with KCL;
- One ex-prisoner writer being seed-commissioned by Synergy, another gaining a week's paid writing attachment at The Royal Court Theatre;
- One completing a paid traineeship as shadow writer with STV Drama on *Screw*, a series broadcast on Channel 4 in January, and developing his shadow episode;
- Supporting one ex-prisoner to perform and produce his autobiographical play, *Nothing in a Butterfly*, at Omnibus Theatre;
- Nine gaining roles in film and TV ranging from Netflix-sponsored interns at documentary and post-production companies, VFX trainee for Netflix to location manager for the BBC.

In addition, Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 21 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development.

Synergy also partnered for the fourth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 17 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and subsequent judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development support by correspondence from our New Writing Manager. Due to ongoing restrictions, we were unable to present a public event for the winning plays in 2021 but agreed a resumption of live events and a return to the Royal Court with Koestler Arts for autumn 2022.

Young people's programme

Pupils that wouldn't necessarily have the self-confidence, or indeed self-belief to even participate, managed to engage throughout the project whilst feeling proud of their individual accomplishments. Additionally, we have invariably found the tutors that Synergy use possess the acquired qualities, skillset and alacrity in ensuring our pupils get the most out of the sessions. Senior Manager, The Helix Education Centre PRU

Again, as Covid-19 restrictions eased, Synergy slowly returned to delivering activity in person in schools and alternative provision to support young people, particularly in partnering organisations Woodbridge Park, The Helix Education Centre and Saffron Valley Collegiate PRUs. Our work in these settings used *Dues* and *He Said She Said* as stimuli and took the form of acting and spoken word as chosen by the young participants. We delivered a further two response projects using *Dues* in Jubilee Academy PRU and YOI Isis as part of the tour of the short film. 92% of the young offenders reported that the project had made them think more about the impact of crime on themselves and their communities while all of the participants on both projects demonstrated increased confidence with 96% stating that they had learned new skills. Jubilee Academy has requested that Synergy return to run more projects in the school as they recognise the benefits of this work, and we are in the process of sourcing funding to provide this support.

The short film has been a tremendous success and we will continue to use it as a stimulus for our ongoing creative interventions and participatory work as part of our wider young people's programme. Once the festival screenings have taken place, we will upload the film to our website as a free resource for schools, youth organisations and young people. It will accompany the education pack which is already available online and contains interviews with the creative team, information around grooming, recruitment and exploitation, an outline for a participatory workshop and signposting to support wider learning around County Lines.

Having outlined the new development of online creative one-to-one interventions for young people in last year's report, demand for this work has not waned with the lifting of restrictions and we have engaged a further 13 through referrals from partner organisations and Met Police with an extensive waiting list. Reflecting participants' hugely positive feedback parents and guardians were in equally high praise of the one-to-ones, commenting on the powerful impact

that engagement had had on the young people and requesting further work with us. In final sharings many were emotional and really proud of the participants' achievements, and one parent stated:

'R' always gets distracted and finds routine hard, he doesn't usually stick to anything so the fact he's been wanting to come back is a massive improvement, he has a lot more drive and self-discipline now and he seems to care more about letting others down – a big improvement since working with Synergy.

SYNERGY SERVICES

I wanted to pass on our gratitude to you on what I've been told has been amazing training delivered by yourselves to our staff. Senior Operations Manager, Catch22 Personal Wellbeing Services, on Synergy's roleplay training

Prior to the pandemic, we had been working extremely hard to build our earned income generated from theatre productions, our role-play training but mainly from prisons for course delivery which was halted by nationwide lockdowns. However, as the prison estate began to open up at the beginning of 2022, we started to slowly rebuild this area of work and delivered five commissioned courses before the financial year end with a further two underway by the end of the calendar year which marks a positive start to reinvigorating this stream of income.

During the course of the year, Synergy was commissioned to provide actors for the creation of an information film for the Department for Education's Reading Framework to support teaching the foundation of literacy. We were also commissioned by CAPA Global Education Network's London Centre to collaborate on a devising project over three months with their international students in response to Synergy's work and its beneficiaries' lived experiences, culminating in performances of each group's work in December.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Working with Synergy Theatre Project has always been a guaranteed success.
Quality Lead, HMP The Mount

We have been working closely with our board, focusing particularly on elements of governance. Our first priority was interrogating our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion practices and we undertook an audit, led by Ngozi Lyn Cole of GLT Partners, through the Lloyds Bank Foundation's Enhance programme. This actively supported our drive to recruit new board members and commitment to ensuring greater diversity in our governance, including individuals of the global majority and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system, to better reflect the communities we engage through our work. In tandem with our own call-out, we worked with BoardLead, in partnership with NCVO and Trustees Unlimited, to identify potential trustee candidates from the corporate sector. At our board meeting in September 2022, we welcomed four new trustees from a diverse range of backgrounds.

During the year, we have developed and tested a new website which went live in May 2022. The new design is contemporary and engaging whilst being easy to navigate. It is dynamic and contains content which better captures both the artistic work and the impact on beneficiaries, including a 'Synergy at home' section, which allows viewers access to recorded productions and a section of archival material to show the range of past work. In addition, the site contains a platform to include the filming and streaming of performances with our first streamed event planned for March 2023. We plan to develop a members' area for information, resources and participant feedback as well as upload additional resources including digital education packs to accompany young people's productions.

Synergy signed a 20-year lease for an office at Brixton House, a new venue which incorporates theatre, rehearsal and working space in the heart of the community in Lambeth. Some elements of Synergy Studio and young people's programme will be delivered in this new space, creating opportunities for mutually beneficial long-term partnerships, placements and cross-referrals through Brixton House's Creative Circle, Soar and Young Producers programmes and through the hub of resident creative organisations. The relocation will also ensure a sustainable hybrid

working model for our staff and a mindful balance of digital technology and physical space after a prolonged period of home working.

FUTURE PLANS

It was amazing, it tells you all about crime and social media. I want to watch it again it was so good, I loved it! Student on *He Said She Said*

As we find ourselves in the midst of the worst cost of living crisis in half a century, the year ahead looks to be another challenging one with increasing pressure and demand on services provided by charitable and voluntary organisations and those we support. The detrimental effects of the pandemic alone on the beneficiaries of our work impacted severely on wellbeing. We received much feedback from participants young and old that engagement with our activity and regular interaction with peers improved their mental health significantly. With this in mind, Synergy secured a grant from the Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund for 'Comeback', a two-year programme of activity from June 2022 in both the prison estate and the community focusing on Covid recovery through comedy, promoting positive outcomes for mental wellbeing, social connections and building resilience. This comprises the launch of a competition and call-out for 10-minute comedic plays, supported by a number of comedy playwriting courses and broadcast through prison TV networks of a series of recorded video tutorials by experienced writers to provide essential tools and encourage entries. The remaining programme for the year includes a range of engagement opportunities including theatre productions in and outside prison walls.

Building on the recent pilot of our Young Studio at Kiln Theatre, modelled on our adult programme and supported by The National Lottery Community Fund, we intend to expand the programme steadily and take referrals from partner organisations engaging with our young people's programme including YOIs, PRUs and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). By offering a progression route to a Young Studio, these extremely marginalised young people will receive creative training, mentoring, opportunities for further engagement and referral onto programmes with partnering arts organisations, work placements and employment which will increase their future changes and help them to realise their potential.

Looking ahead with a view to achieving our strategic aim to increase our producing output, and having successfully maintained momentum with our developmental pipeline, we have a number of commissions emerging from, and exploring issues around criminal justice coming to fruition. These include a play focusing on the ageing prison population now nearing its final draft with a view to producing it in 2023/24, and another by an ex-prisoner offering a humorous exploration of his struggles with autism. Ahead of these and outlined above, is the co-production – Synergy's first outside London – with Paines Plough and Live Theatre of *One Off* at the venue in Newcastle by one of our most promising ex-prisoner writers. We were invited to apply again to the John Lyon's Cultural Capital Fund for a revival of *He Said She Said* which will tour across London and perform daily at Kiln Theatre as part of their Schools' Week programme in March 2023, further strengthening this recent collaborative partnership, engaging new audiences and meeting our aim to maximise our touring work for young people. In terms of developing new work, we intend to explore migration with second generation ex-prisoner migrants and detainees in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) in collaboration, respectively, with The Gate Theatre and Hibiscus Initiatives.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2022 and served throughout the year:

Jules Carey
Paula Hamilton
Clíona Roberts
Jonathan Smith (Chair)
Deborah Samuel
Gaby Sumner
Catherine Thornborrow
Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), New Writing Manager, Learning and Engagement Assistant and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed an increase of £2,455 (0.6%) in total income and a fall of £3,139 (0.8%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £32,044 in unrestricted reserves.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, BBC Children in Need, City Bridge Trust, Field Family Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Henry Smith Charity, Ironmongers' Company, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Peter Sowerby Foundation, Pickwell Foundation and Wates Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks.

The balance sheet on page 15 shows that, at 31 May 2022, Synergy held net current assets of £194,258 (2021: £162,214).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 6 months' costs. However, the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The Trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern and have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those 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 judgments and 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees 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.

Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 9 February 2023 and signed on their behalf by:



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Catherine Thornborrow
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2022 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 17 to 21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 13 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant

Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

9 February 2022

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Income:					
Donations	2	18,192	365,035	383,227	383,952
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		3,038	-	3,038	26,580
Fees		47,041	-	47,041	2,825
Theatre tax relief		-	-	-	17,500
Investment income		137	-	137	131
Total Income		68,408	365,035	433,443	430,988
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	40,109	40,109	42,997
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	36,364	324,926	361,290	361,561
Total Expenditure		36,364	365,035	401,399	404,538
Net income/(expenditure) for the year		32,044	-	32,044	26,450
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		162,214	-	162,214	135,764
Total funds carried forward		194,258	-	194,258	162,214

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.
All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	42,550	-
Bank Account		310,564	255,998
Total Current Assets		353,114	255,998
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(158,856)	(93,784)
Net Current Assets		194,258	162,214
Net Assets		194,258	162,214
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		194,258	162,214
Total Charity Funds		194,258	162,214

For the year ending 31 May 2022 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 17 to 21 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 9 February 2023 and signed on their behalf.



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	54,429	56,948
Interest income	137	131
Change in cash in the year	54,566	57,079
Cash at the beginning of the year	255,998	198,919
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	310,564	255,998

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2022	2021
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	32,044	26,450
Deduct interest	(137)	(131)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	(42,550)	62,639
Increase in creditors	65,072	(32,010)
Cash provided by operating activities	54,429	56,948

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2022

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries of staff associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, personnel payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support and governance costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
AB Charitable Trust	15,000	-	15,000	-
Arnold Clark Community Fund	-	1,000	1,000	-
Arts Council England	-	28,767	28,767	35,000
BBC Children in Need	-	32,800	32,800	33,000
BBC Children in Need (Next Steps)	-	-	-	34,400
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	-
City Bridge Trust	-	66,530	66,530	-
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 2)	-	-	-	23,400
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 3)	-	-	-	38,830
Early Intervention Youth Fund (MOPAC)	-	-	-	7,000
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	-	-	10,000
Field Family Charitable Trust	-	4,000	4,000	-
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	20,000
Greater London Authority	-	46,500	46,500	24,000
Harrow Community Action (Coronavirus Fund)	-	-	-	10,000
Harrow Safer Neighbourhood Board (MOPAC)	-	-	-	2,500
Henry Smith Charity	-	40,000	40,000	12,500
Ironmongers' Company	-	9,180	9,180	-
John Lyon's Charity	-	34,500	34,500	20,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	33,000	33,000	33,000
Lloyds Bank Found'n Emergency Funds	-	-	-	6,000
Peter Sowerby Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	-
Pickwell Foundation	-	9,167	9,167	11,667
Violence Reduction Unit (Home Office)	-	-	-	7,500
Wates Foundation	-	-	-	9,636
Others	2,692	-	2,692	4,602
Accruals & deferred income carried forward		9,591	9,591	40,917
	18,192	365,035	383,227	383,952

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Staff costs	-	40,109	40,109	42,977

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	46,901	-	-	-	46,901
Facilitator fees	-	22,112	1,750	33,210	57,072
Other costs	35,296	6,013	-	2,029	43,338
Support costs	50,786	65,038	5,621	79,291	200,736
Governance costs	3,351	4,291	370	5,231	13,243
	136,334	97,454	7,741	119,761	361,290

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	163,475	7,336	170,811	Staff time
General Office	37,261	1,672	38,933	Staff time
Fees	-	1,985	1,985	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,250	2,250	Governance
	<u>200,736</u>	<u>13,243</u>	<u>213,979</u>	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2021: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2021: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £84,366 (2021: £98,915).

Staff cost during the year were

	2022	2021
	£	£
Salaries and wages	193,938	193,883
Social security	12,863	12,668
Pensions	4,119	4,032
	<u>210,920</u>	<u>210,583</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 5 (2021 4.6)

7. Debtors

	2022	2021
	£	£
Grants receivable	7,500	-
Other debtors	35,050	-
	<u>42,550</u>	<u>-</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2022	2021
	£	£
Tax & social security	5,813	5,110
Trade creditors	46,470	29,697
Grant prepayments	106,573	58,977
	<u>158,856</u>	<u>93,784</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2021 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2022 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	365,035	(365,035)	-
Total restricted funds	-	365,035	(365,035)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	162,214	68,408	(36,364)	194,258
Total unrestricted funds	162,214	68,408	(36,364)	194,258
Total funds	162,214	433,443	(401,399)	194,258

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	246,541	106,573	353,114
Creditors due within one year	(52,283)	(106,573)	(158,856)
Total net assets	194,258	-	194,258

Accounts



**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2021**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 May 2021

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2021.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Jules Carey Paula Hamilton Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Jonathan Smith (Chair) Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director General Manager Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults) Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People) Learning & Engagement Assistant New Writing Manager Development Associate Development Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Denise Heard (until October 2020) Siân Henderson Karl Smith Neil Grutchfield Jo Cottrell Miriam Sherwood (appointed November 2020)
Registered office:	3Space International House 6 Canterbury Crescent London SW9 7QD	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2021.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and 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 for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 22 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners and ex-prisoners through **Synergy Studio** with its growing focus on skills accreditation, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering ex-prisoner led roleplay through **Synergy Services** which provides training services for resettlement agencies and an effective and targeted way to contribute to systems change within the criminal justice arena.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Much has been said over the past year about the social importance of theatre and Synergy's work with prisoners during the pandemic has been testament to this. The Stage 100

The last year has been like no other with the challenges of a global pandemic and its impact on the most marginalised in society, including those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners and vulnerable young people – while the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement shone a fresh light on racial injustice. Synergy was able to respond swiftly and creatively – through generous support from existing funders and new funding streams made available in response to the pandemic – to adapt our model to digital delivery, develop new programmes of work and ensure that we continued to reach and engage beneficiaries during ensuing lockdowns. In terms of artistic activity, we made a short film for young people focusing on county lines exploitation and, maintaining our focus on growing our developmental pipeline to test ideas and increase our producing output, commissioned a breadth of new work. Significant progress was made in relation to our strategic aim to develop our digital footprint across our programmes which involved devising a wide range of online activity including several projects in response to the BLM movement on both sides of the prison walls, a stand-up comedy pilot with longstanding partner, Soho Theatre, a national writing competition with resources for in-cell and online learning and digital correspondence playwriting courses for prisons

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 231 prisoners and ex-prisoners through our training, performance, work experience and employment opportunities. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 506 through performance and activity, all of whom took part in participatory workshops including 126 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects.

The announcement of the winners of 'The Stage 100' 2021 Award in January included Synergy Theatre Project under 'Serving the community', acknowledging and celebrating our commitment to ensuring provision and sustained engagement for beneficiaries during the pandemic. Synergy received a commendation at the Howard League for Penal Reform's Community Awards 2021 under the 'Policing and children' category for our one-to-one intervention work. We were recently shortlisted for the CJA Awards 2021 for our Lockdown Dramas national prison scriptwriting competition, as was our New Writing Manager for the Kenneth Tynan Award, the only one of its type in the country to recognise outstanding professionals working in the field of dramaturgy.

PRODUCING

I'm excited to be in the film and really look forward to going back into my old PRU to talk to the young people there about how far I've come. Young cast member of Dues

After the pandemic forced us to twice postpone the shooting of *Dues*, our short film by Ambreen Razia (BBC Talent Hotlist 2017 and creator of BBC3 pilot, *Hounslow Diaries*), this finally took place over a five-day period in May 2021. Examining the theme of county lines and the ways in which young people are targeted and vulnerable to exploitation and grooming by criminal gangs, we also shot a behind-the-scenes film which delves into both the content and the making of the short to be used alongside screenings of the film to young people to enhance engagement.

Involving a cast and crew of professionals alongside ex-prisoners, the film also features a young person who we worked with previously at Woodbridge PRU in her first acting role. This demonstrates an inspiring journey for one of our young beneficiaries and she also expressed an interest in taking part in some of the post-screening Q&As, particularly at her old PRU, which will allow her to talk about her experience and encourage other young people in similar situations to engage in creative work and make positive choices.

In addition, we commissioned two short monologues for different age groups – primary and secondary – exploring social media, cyberbullying and crime. These were filmed in March to provide a digital resource to utilise as stimuli for response projects with young people which have been very well received in both settings.

Synergy also commissioned Juliet Gilkes Romero (winner of the 2020 Alfred Fagon Award) as part of a wider Black Lives Matter project to write a play exploring racial inequality and the criminal justice system. As part of her research Juliet interviewed a range of ex-prisoners, prison staff and other criminal justice professionals and the play underwent a week's R&D in March. This culminated in a rehearsed reading online towards the second draft of the play for potential production next year.

Other works in development include a play by Evan Placey exploring the increasing population of older prisoners and their treatment, and a collaboration on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London exploring the experience of cancer patients in prison. As well as professional writers, Synergy has also seed-commissioned one ex-prisoner and has co-commissioned another with Soho Theatre.

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

It has been such a challenging year for everyone, and it was fantastic to read how you continued adaptation of your service provision to meet the needs of people in prison and ex-offenders during the pandemic. Funding Manager, City Bridge Trust

During the past year, access to the prison estate and partner organisations for face-to-face provision has been severely restricted on account of social distancing guidelines. However, we were able to react swiftly and shift delivery in order to offer a much-needed creative digital programme of opportunities for engagement with beneficiaries. This programme provided what many prisoners described as a 'lifeline' while activities including work, education, family visits and exercise ceased due to the pandemic and prisoners struggled to occupy themselves and faced chronic boredom, heightened anxiety and a deterioration in physical and mental health. Ex-prisoners were likewise severely impacted both practically and emotionally, but their feedback highlights that engaging with our activity significantly improved their mental health and reduced their isolation.

Our digital programme was launched with *Lockdown Dramas*, a national writing competition for prisoners and ex-prisoners calling for 10-minute plays responding to the first lockdown. This comprised four 'Introduction to Playwriting' video tutorials by award-winning playwrights screened via Wayout TV, an in-cell learning channel in 55 prisons with a reach of 35,000 prisoners and a course for ex-prisoners via Zoom. We received 104 entries and script-in-hand readings of the six winning scripts were recorded at Soho Theatre and screened live last November across our Facebook and YouTube channels:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtZ0KtJ8c9c>

Harnessing this success, we devised and delivered two subsequent playwriting correspondence courses in HMP Thameside and YOIs Cookham Wood and Isis which resulted in some great work from participants, particularly in the adult setting. While this remote learning package created legacy for our competition and opportunity for participants to further hone their skills, the pilot also enabled us to put this new offer to the test and identify areas for improvement. This has resulted in a drive to provide, where possible, a blended approach in delivery and to revise the remote model further in order to enable greater geographical reach in future.

In response to global events, and as the Black Lives Matter movement gathered momentum in the UK and our beneficiaries felt impelled to express feelings around the subject, Synergy delivered a series of projects with a specific focus on racial inequality and the criminal justice system. These comprised responses using playwriting and spoken word – two in prisons and two for ex-prisoners – led by experienced BAME playwrights and artists including Juliet Gilkes

Romero. These were highly subscribed and proved especially popular and resulted in live and recorded sharings of powerful and poignant work.

Collaborating again with partners including Morley College, Sara Putt Associates' Trainee Scheme and Soho Theatre, we delivered a host of online courses for ex-prisoners in acting for screen, film making, film production and introductory acting which all culminated in online sharings to invited audiences. We piloted a stand-up comedy course together with Soho Theatre which proved highly successful and one which we aim to continue as part of our ongoing offer.

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights include:

- 12 gaining work with Synergy to support the delivery of 41 online one-to-one projects with young people referred by the Met Police, and face-to-face and group projects;
- 8 of the above also supporting our early intervention work in primary schools and a deep learning day in a secondary school;
- 7 gaining acting or crewing roles on Synergy's short film, *Dues*, focusing on the issue of county lines, to be toured to schools in autumn 2021;
- Three performed audio recordings for a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study collaboration with King's College London;
- Two performed recordings of poetry winners for the 2020 Koestler Awards exhibition;
- One ex-prisoner writer being seed-commissioned by Synergy;
- One being commissioned by The Big House theatre company;
- Three working as extras on film sets;
- One on a paid traineeship as shadow writer with STV Drama Productions on new series for Channel 4, *Screw*;
- Another Synergy alumnus winning a 2021 The Stage 100 Award under 'Putting on shows' for *Death of England: Delroy*, a one-man show at the National Theatre that opened and closed on the same night on account of lockdown measures.

In addition, Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 17 prisoner and 14 ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. This includes three writers in particular; one whose play was workshopped over two days towards a rehearsed reading online, another who has received both ongoing development and support to secure funding to tour his autobiographical play in 2022, and the last, following his success in our competition, has been seed-commissioned by Synergy to develop a new play. Synergy is committed to developing and presenting a range of unique artistic voices from people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and we believe that these writers are as essential to our mission as the professional writers we commission.

Synergy also partnered for the fourth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 55 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and subsequent judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development support by correspondence from our New Writing Manager.

Young people's programme

This [project] makes me happy and happiness helps you control your anger – it puts the anger aside so that you don't rage at people. Young one-to-one project participant

As the effects of lockdown started emerging, Synergy experienced a marked increase in demand for our work and received high numbers of referrals from partners and the Met Police of young people who have been arrested or come to police notice – many for the first time – because of anti-social and violent behaviour, involvement in robbery, cyberbullying with many at risk of gang-affiliation and grooming for county lines, all exacerbated by the pressures of the restrictions and increased online presence, with growing concern over their wellbeing and mental health. Our offer of online one-to-one projects with creative professionals using spoken

word, songwriting, playwriting, film and performance, each supported by our trained ex-prisoner facilitators, have proven highly effective in terms of young beneficiary engagement and retention, increased confidence and self-esteem. This body of continuing and growing work has also provided the ex-prisoner facilitators with an enormous sense of purpose and self-worth as well as some means of income at a particularly difficult time.

Of the 41 young people who completed these online one-to-one projects:

- 80% stated that their attitude had shifted towards the impact of crime on both themselves and their community;
- 80% felt they had increased in confidence;
- 70% felt more comfortable expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas;
- 80% felt that people listened to them more;
- 74% stated that the project(s) had taught them a new creative skill that they would like to use again;
- 70% felt more comfortable expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas by the end of the project.

While we have reached fewer numbers of young people this year, this has enabled us to be highly responsive and adapt sessions and tailor projects to meet individual needs and ensure deeper engagement. The development of these one-to-one projects has provided opportunity to further strengthen links with Early Engagement Police Officers to target young people at a point in their lives when a change of direction is vital, and also to build excellent referral pathways and trusted relationships with other youth organisations.

Where restrictions allowed, we continued to work through long-term relationships with key partners. This included face-to-face delivery of spoken word projects in response to our short film, *The Thief*, engaging one group of boys and one of girls at Jubilee Academy PRU from October to December. Interrogating key moments in the film, they created their own spoken word pieces to perform to peers and staff. Working again with the Wish Centre in Harrow, we delivered a spoken word and performance project to engage a group of young women aged 12-18 who were vulnerable to, or had experienced child sexual exploitation, introducing them to a non-judgemental, creative space where they could express themselves and speak freely. We also applied the remote learning package developed through Synergy Studio (above) in YO1 Isis, but found this approach less effective in terms of engaging the resident young offenders on account of pandemic-related challenges. This resulted, as aforementioned, in the decision to offer a blended approach in future, especially in this setting and where possible, to ensure better support and higher retention rates going forward.

Continuing our early intervention work which we piloted at the beginning of 2020, we delivered 6- to 10-week performance projects exploring cyber bullying in Grange, Harlesden, Norbury, Pinner Park and Uxendon Manor Primary Schools from November to May, engaging 50 young people.

In addition to our one-to-one initiative and work with existing partners, Synergy was approached in February by Hillingdon Children's Services to deliver an online spoken word workshop during half-term. This engaged young people aged 13-16, referred due to poor school attendance, low self-esteem and at risk of criminal activity, and used *The Thief* as a stimulus to focus on themes of decision making and identity. We also played a significant part in Archer Academy's Deep Learning Day in May. This involved the delivery of six drama workshops, again utilising *The Thief*, with accompanying Q&A sessions and testimonials from our ex-prisoners.

The video recordings of *Girls Like That* and *Blackout*, our productions for young people, alongside our short film, *The Thief*, have together gained an impressive 97,000 views to date on YouTube, clearly demonstrating an appetite for our work. We have developed digital learning packages to accompany two of these productions which include behind-the-scenes films, Q&As with the writer, actors, ex-prisoners and director, video workshops and written materials. These

packages offer in-depth exploration of the themes in order to enhance engagement and provide a more creative resource for staff working with young people.

SYNERGY SERVICES

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the earned income that we had built through course delivery in the prison estate and Synergy Services, our roleplay training initiative for the criminal justice sector. While this has been on hold on account of the lockdowns, we have resumed discussion over a potential contract with Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) – subcontractors of MoJ HR with responsibility for prison officer recruitment nationally – and completed a further security assessment as part of the next stage of the on-boarding process. We have been liaising with the Head of Government Assessment Operations over the logistics for a contract which presents significant potential where employment and strengthening progression routes for our ex-prisoners is concerned but also in relation to income generation.

Having previously forged strong partnerships with private probation companies, our roleplay training initiative has also been affected by the reform programme to bring all offender management back into the statutory National Probation Service (NPS) from June 2021. With this in mind, we completed the process to become a supplier on Probation Services' Dynamic Framework, an e-tendering portal, and have recently been in discussion with the Commissioning and Partnerships Manager for NPS London over future provision.

During the course of the year, Synergy was commissioned to provide actors, some of whom were ex-prisoners, for the creation of three public information films; two concerning Covid-19 safe practices for gyms and office working, the third on HMRC import and export changes post-Brexit.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What you have achieved is absolutely outstanding, I am truly staggered.
Wates Foundation trustee on Synergy's delivery during the pandemic

Covid-19 put charities under enormous pressure, particularly financial, and Synergy was no exception. However, the generous support of existing funders and the funding streams made available in response to the pandemic ensured that we were able to react quickly and extend the range of provision outlined above. Synergy secured over £150k in funding from Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund, BBC Children in Need Next Steps, City Bridge Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, London Community Response Fund Waves 2 and 3, and Harrow Coronavirus Giving.

In terms of further increasing the organisation's financial stability, we successfully appointed a new Development Manager in November, a role which we had struggled to fill since the departure of the last postholder in 2018. Our new team member took up the post in February 2021 and has a wealth of experience, particularly with trusts and foundations, from her development roles at Battersea Arts Centre and Clod Ensemble. Having a permanent Development Manager in post has increased capacity significantly while ensuring effective stewardship of funder relationships.

Synergy recognises the need to strengthen the company's infrastructure and we are committed to interrogating our equity, diversity and inclusion practices to ensure that our organisation is diverse at every level. Our Artistic Director participated in PACT (Power Accountability Connection Trust) Pioneers, a learning programme funded by Barrow Cadbury Trust and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation exploring how power can be shared and used more effectively within organisations, their work and civil society. To this end, we will be undertaking an EDI audit through Lloyds Bank Foundation's Enhance programme in the first part of 2022.

Synergy's Artistic Director, accompanied by our beneficiaries, gives regular lectures on theatre practice within the criminal justice system at educational institutions and at sector-related events although these were curtailed by national lockdowns. She did, however, take part in a panel discussion hosted by Clean Break in May, 'Women's homelessness: the issues, the solutions

and the art', and the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Network Hangout in June to share Synergy's experience during the pandemic and shift to digital delivery. As a GLA Young Londoners Fund grantee, Synergy was selected as one of only 5 funded projects to feature in a short documentary in partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation. Showcasing our work alongside the other companies, the film will be promoted and screened across London during National Youth Work Week in November 2021.

We are nearing the completion of negotiating a lease for an office at the new theatre space, Brixton House, which is due to open in early 2022. With two theatres and 7 rehearsal studios this marks a very positive move for the organisation artistically in terms of potentially producing work there and collaborating on projects, but also with regard to greater opportunities for engagement for our beneficiaries, referral on to the venue's extensive range of creative provision and possible work placements and employment. The new office space will also enable us to offer staff a blended and flexible approach to working.

During the year we also undertook a review of our website, resulting in the construction of a new one including the integration of new functionalities in order to make our work available online and ensure that our digital resources are both fit-for-purpose and sustainable in the longer term.

FUTURE PLANS

Synergy is one of the few provisions we have worked in partnership with, in recent years, that has consistently diverted some of our high-risk young people from negative influences and anti-social behaviours in the community. Teacher, The Helix Education Centre

As an organisation we have managed to navigate the challenges of the last year effectively, but appreciate that we will need to continue adapting to further change and assessing how best to offer support to beneficiaries in the face of any emerging new variants of Covid-19. The most significant challenge in terms of delivery is within the prison estate although we have worked hard to devise and adapt models to extend and engage prisoners with creative provision. We are trialling our blended approach with an audio drama project in HMP Wandsworth and have been contacted by the Regional Lead for Learning, Skills and Employment from HM Prison and Probation Service to enquire about delivery as regimes begin to open up. We aim over the next year to offer a series of creative opportunities focussing on post-Covid recovery, mental health and wellbeing and these activities will bring together our strongest partners in theatre and the criminal justice system, our expertise in delivering high quality artistic engagement for beneficiaries and our learning from blended models which have extended our reach.

In terms of our developmental pipeline Juliet Gilkes Romero has delivered a further draft of her play exploring racial inequality and the criminal justice while Evan Placey's commission exploring the ageing prison population is at first draft stage. Our collaboration with King's College London and script commission will result in shooting a short film in 2022 to accompany their findings on the experience of cancer patients in prison to engage policy makers and the wider public with this issue. We have recently commissioned spoken word poet, Magero Otieno-Magero, to develop a script focusing on social media and its influencing factor on youth violence, highlighted as an ongoing issue from consultation with professionals and young cohorts. The production will tour to young people in March 2022. Our research into family courts continues with the aim of commissioning a play in the spring.

Having completed *Dues* in May, the short film toured to schools, alternative provision and youth organisations in Harrow, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Greenwich, Hackney, Hounslow and Lambeth from October to November 2021 with further screenings scheduled for 2022. Q&As featuring members of the cast, creative team and ex-prisoners accompanied screenings in addition to the offer of creative workshops. Having not been able to arrange a face-to-face visit to YOI Isis, we worked with a senior governor to make the short film available via the prison's TV network to enable the young offenders to view it. A recorded Q&A with cast and crew is available watch alongside the film in order for this cohort to engage with a discussion about its themes. The film is also being submitted to festival around the world.

Our work with long-term partners will continue in the year ahead, including YOI Isis as above, Jubilee Academy, Saffron Valley, The Helix and Woodbridge Park PRUs, alongside the ongoing offer of online one-to-one interventions which are in high demand as well as bespoke projects. The pilot of a Young Studio, based on our existing and highly successful model for ex-prisoners, will mark a new and exciting departure.

As far as the organisation is concerned, we will be undertaking an EDI audit in the early part of 2022 with a view to diversifying our governance through recruitment to include more Trustees who have lived experience of the issues we tackle and who reflect the demographic of our participants and ensuring an embedded inclusive workplace culture.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2021 and served throughout the year:

Jules Carey
Paula Hamilton
Cliona Roberts
Jonathan Smith (Chair)
Deborah Samuel
Gaby Sumner
Catherine Thornborrow
Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), New Writing Manager, Learning and Engagement Assistant and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed a decrease of £74,571 (14.8%) in total income and of £97,253 (19.4%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £26,450 in unrestricted reserves. These changes are attributable to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The principal funding sources were Arts Council England, Backstage Trust, BBC Children in Need, City Bridge Trust, Early Intervention Youth Fund (MOPAC), Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Harrow Community Action, Harrow Safer Neighbourhood Board MOPAC), Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Pickwell Foundation, Violence Reduction Unit (Home Office) and Wates Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks

The balance sheet on page 16 shows that, at 31 May 2021, Synergy held net current assets of £162,214 (2020: £135,764).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 3 months' costs. However, given the current pandemic situation both the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern. Covid-19 impacted the charity as recorded in the Financial Review above. The Trustees have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has enabled all key and experienced staff to be retained. Income has remained steady. Services provided have, where appropriate, been delivered online. The continued progress of the vaccination programme has led to the easing of restrictions and the return of direct face-to-face provision of services. As the pandemic wanes activities will quickly revert to previous levels. Hence, overall Covid 19 is not expected to have a significant impact on the charity.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those 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 judgments and 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; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees 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.

Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

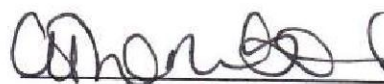
Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 31 January 2022 and signed on their behalf by:



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Catherine Thornborrow
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2021 which comprise the Statement of financial activities and Balance Sheet with the related notes set out on pages 18 to 22.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 13 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below. Due to Covid-19 my examination was conducted remotely. The charity's accounting system was made available online and key management were available for interview by telephone and via Zoom video calls and I was provided with copies of documents requested. This made the process more time consuming but did not impair my statement.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant
Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

31 January 2022

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Income:					
Donations	2	16,257	367,695	383,952	390,794
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		-	-	-	9,533
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		26,580	-	26,580	13,493
Fees		2,825	-	2,825	87,007
Theatre tax relief		17,500	-	17,500	4,641
Investment income		131	-	131	91
Total Income		63,293	367,695	430,988	505,559
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	42,977	42,977	42,261
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	36,843	324,718	361,561	459,530
Total Expenditure		36,846	367,695	404,538	501,791
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		26,450	-	26,450	3,768
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		135,764	-	135,764	131,996
Total funds carried forward		162,214	-	162,214	135,764

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.
All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	-	62,639
Bank Account		255,998	198,919
Total Current Assets		255,998	261,558
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(93,784)	(125,794)
Net Current Assets		162,214	135,764
Net Assets		162,214	135,764
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		162,214	135,764
Total Charity Funds		162,214	135,764

For the year ending 31 May 2021 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 18 to 22 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 31 January 2022 and signed on their behalf.



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2021

	2021	2020
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	56,948	39,254
Interest income	131	91
Change in cash in the year	57,079	39,345
Cash at the beginning of the year	198,919	159,574
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	255,998	198,919

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	26,450	3,768
Deduct interest	(131)	(91)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	62,639	13,762
Increase in creditors	(32,010)	21,815
Cash provided by operating activities	56,948	39,254

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2021

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis, in particular taking regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. They have reviewed the expected level of activities for a year from the date of approval of these accounts and concluded that there is no material uncertainty to the charity continuing on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries, direct costs and overheads associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, personnel payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company established a defined contribution pension scheme during the year with The People's Pension. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Arts Council England	-	35,000	35,000	13,500
Backstage Trust	-	-	-	12,000
BBC Children in Need	-	33,000	33,000	33,300
BBC Children in Need (Next Steps)	-	34,400	34,400	-
City Bridge Trust	-	-	-	47,650
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 2)	-	23,400	23,400	-
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 3)	-	38,830	38,830	-
Early Intervention Youth Fund (MOPAC)	-	7,000	7,000	9,000
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	10,000	-	10,000	20,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	20,000	20,000	-
Greater London Authority	-	24,000	24,000	48,000
Harrow Community Action (Coronavirus Fund)	-	10,000	10,000	-
Harrow Safer Neighbourhood Board (MOPAC)	-	2,500	2,500	5,995
Henry Smith Charity	-	12,500	12,500	25,000
John Lyon's Charity	-	20,000	20,000	25,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	33,000	33,000	34,000
Lloyds Bank Found'n Emergency Funds	-	6,000	6,000	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	-	-	75,000
Old Possum's Practical Trust (on behalf of Human Ensemble)	-	-	-	5,000
Pickwell Foundation	-	11,667	11,667	5,000
Royal Victoria Hall Foundation	-	-	-	1,000
Violence Reduction Unit (Home Office)	-	7,500	7,500	15,000
Wates Foundation	-	9,636	9,636	-
Others	3,257	1,345	4,602	14,790
Accruals & deferred income carried forward	3,000	37,917	40,917	1,559
	16,257	367,695	383,952	390,794

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Staff costs	-	42,977	42,977	42,261

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	30,026	-	-	-	30,026
Facilitator fees	-	32,615	2,130	61,415	96,160
Other costs	15,200	4,417	59	6,278	25,954
Support costs	38,135	79,597	5,185	70,561	193,478
Governance costs	3,142	6,559	427	5,815	15,943
	86,503	123,188	7,801	144,069	361,561

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	160,253	7,353	167,606	Staff time
General Office	33,225	1,524	34,749	Staff time
Fees	-	5,000	5,000	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,066	2,066	Governance
	193,478	15,943	209,421	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2020: £2,500), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2020: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £98,915 (2020: £89,969).

Staff cost during the year were

	2021	2020
	£	£
Salaries and wages	193,883	197,035
Social security	12,668	14,958
Pensions	4,032	4,393
	210,583	216,386

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 4.6 (2020 5.2)

7. Debtors

	2021	2020
	£	£
Grants receivable	-	2,000
Theatre Tax	-	-
Other debtors	-	60,639
	-	62,639

8. Creditors due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Tax & social security	5,110	5,795
Trade creditors	29,697	20,105
Grant prepayments	58,977	99,894
	93,784	125,794

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2020 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2021 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	367,695	(367,695)	-
Total restricted funds	-	367,695	(367,695)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	135,764	63,293	(36,843)	162,214
Total unrestricted funds	135,764	63,293	(36,843)	162,214
Total funds	135,764	430,988	(404,538)	162,214

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	197,021	58,977	255,998
Creditors due within one year	(34,807)	(58,977)	(93,784)
Total net assets	162,214	-	162,214