

# CURIOUS MINDS

England & Wales · Charity number 1130988

## Details

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**Other names** CURIOUS MINDS LANCASHIRE

**Status** Registered

**Legal form** Charitable company

**Company number** [06775402](#)

**Registered** 2009-08-06

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

## Contact

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**Website** [www.curiousminds.org.uk](http://www.curiousminds.org.uk)

## Activities

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**Objects:** TO ADVANCE FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN ENGLAND IN ORDER TO ENABLE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AS MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS, IN PARTICULAR BY: A) SUPPORTING THEM TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS BY WORKING WITH OTHERS TO EXTEND THE RANGE, AMOUNT, QUALITY AND SCOPE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREAS OF CREATIVITY, ARTS, MEDIA, CULTURE, HERITAGE, HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE; B) SUPPORTING TEACHERS, PRACTITIONERS, CARERS, PERFORMERS AND ARTISTS IN DEVELOPING THE NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO ASSIST THEM IN ENABLING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE FORMAL EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND APPLY THEIR SKILLS AND TALENTS AND TO OPEN UP TO THEM CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY; C) DEVELOPING PROGRAMMES, WHERE APPROPRIATE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS TO DELIVER POSITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ENCOURAGE THE RECOGNITION, ENJOYMENT AND USE OF CULTURE, MEDIA AND HERITAGE; D) EMPOWERING THEM TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND ENHANCING THEIR SKILLS, CAPACITIES AND CAPABILITIES; E) ENCOURAGING THEM TO VISIT, EXPERIENCE, PARTICIPATE IN, INITIATE AND ENGAGE IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, PLACES AND PERFORMANCES.

**Activities:** Curious Minds is a creative charity delivering a wide range of initiatives for children and young people in the North West. We believe it is everyone's right to have the opportunity to realise their creative potential and we aim to make a difference in children and young people's lives through increasing participation in arts and cultural activities.

## Classification

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- **How:** Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science
- **Who:** Children/young People, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

## Geography

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- **Area of benefit:** ENGLAND
- Throughout England And Wales

## Finances

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Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£1,280,356	£1,166,380	£1,474,306	16
2024-03-31	£1,339,076	£1,143,879	£1,360,330	14
2023-03-31	£2,013,202	£2,025,081	£1,165,133	24
2022-03-31	£1,778,060	£1,615,506	£1,177,012	21
2021-03-31	£1,898,750	£1,923,526	£1,014,457	24

## Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
<b>Kathy McArdle</b>	Chair	2023-11-08
Abby Erin Symonds		2024-07-12
Alicia Carmel Smith		2022-01-26
Janet Mary Madden Goodier		2024-07-12
Jennifer Eileen Mutch		2025-09-03
Kara Jane Orford		2024-07-12
Linda Wachaga		2026-01-29
Matthew James McCallum		2025-10-22
Samira Jane Al-Obaidi		2020-07-22

**CURIOUS MINDS**

England & Wales - Charity number 1130988

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# Accounts

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# **Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements**

For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

***Curious Minds' Registered Office:***

Studio 15, Gerrard Winstanley House  
Crawford Street, Wigan  
Greater Manchester  
WN1 1NA

***Curious Minds is a Company Limited by  
Guarantee and a Registered Charity***

Registered Company  
Number: 06775402

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# Company Information

## Incorporation

The charitable company was incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and commenced trading on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

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## Trustees

Ms. Kathy McArdle – Chair

Mr. Jonathan Robinson – Vice-Chair (Retired 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024)

Ms. Samira Al'Obaidi

Mr. Mustafa Hassan (Resigned 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025)

Mr. Matthew McCallum (Appointed 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025)

Ms. Janet Madden (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)

Ms. Jennifer Mutch (Appointed 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025)

Ms. Kara Orford (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)

Ms. Alicia Smith

Ms. Abby Symonds (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)

Mr. David Wearing (Resigned 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025)

## Executive Management Team

Chief Executive Officer

Derri Burdon

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Kelly Allen

Chief Operating Officer

Sue Langfeld

## Statutory Auditors & Accountants

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 44 Peter Street

Manchester

M2 5GP

## Bankers

CAF Bank Limited

25 Kings Hill Avenue

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent MA19 4JQ

## Solicitors

Counterculture Partnership LLP

Unit 115

Ducie House

Ducie Street

Manchester M1 2JW

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# Chair & Chief Executive Statement

This year has brought both challenge and momentum for Curious Minds. The change of government has triggered reviews across arts and education, opening important opportunities to influence how future generations experience creativity and culture in their learning. We have stepped into these conversations with energy and optimism, sharing evidence, insight and the voices of the cultural education workforce.

Our second year as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation has seen us extend our influence across the North and nationally. We continue to support Local Cultural Education Partnerships, strengthen collaboration between schools and cultural providers, and celebrate excellence through our Northern Cultural Education Awards. A major milestone was our appointment as the England Hub for the International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC), connecting England's teaching artist workforce with a vibrant global network and creating new opportunities for shared learning. This reflects our long-held commitment to Teaching Artists as vital, skilled professionals who enrich children's learning and strengthen the cultural education workforce.

Financial resilience has been a clear priority. We secured new philanthropic support from the Steph Lampl Foundation, grant funding from WEA/GMCA, and entered into a partnership with Star Academies to help shape and deliver their performing arts enrichment programme. Alongside this, we have grown earned income from our courses and consultancy, strengthening our ability to invest in the field.

We thank departing trustees Mustafa Hassan and Jonathan Robinson for their wisdom and long service, and warmly welcome Janet Madden, Kara Orford and Abby Symonds, whose insight and energy will guide the next chapter of Curious Minds. We are equally grateful to our dedicated team, funders and partners, whose belief in the power of arts and culture for children and young people makes this work possible.

Later this year we will move into Pier 2 at Wigan Pier; an iconic heritage site long associated with Wigan's industrial past and working-class resilience. Reclaiming this place for creativity is powerfully symbolic. It will give Curious Minds a permanent home and a national base, rooting us in Wigan, Greater Manchester and the North while staying close to children and families who are often furthest from opportunity. Pier 2 will be a place where ideas gather, partnerships are forged and the next generation of cultural educators can learn, lead and create a more equitable future.

We are also taking our Northern Cultural Education Awards national, inviting nominations and celebrating brilliant work from across the country. This ambitious step signals our determination to grow as a national force for arts and cultural education, championing excellence and equity wherever it is found.

Meanwhile, the Department for Education's plans for a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education are taking shape. As the cultural education landscape evolves, we are working carefully to define our role and ensure that the voices and needs of educators, Teaching Artists and young people shape what comes next.

We are also conscious of the changing social climate. Across society we are seeing rising division, fear and intolerance, with young people increasingly exposed to influences that promote polarisation and mistrust. Our work will adapt to meet this challenge, redoubling our commitment to use arts, culture and creativity as a force for empathy, understanding and hope.

Through all this change, our purpose holds steady: to champion every child's entitlement to brilliant arts and cultural learning and to support the people and partnerships who make it possible. We look to the future with hope and determination to help create an education landscape where curiosity, creativity and culture belong to every child.

The future remains curious!

Kathy McArdle  
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Derri Burdon  
Chief Executive Officer



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# Trustees' Annual Report

## Our Purpose and Activities

The purposes of the charity are to advance for the public benefit the education of children and young people within England to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals, in particular by:

- supporting them to become successful learners and responsible citizens by working with others to extend the range, amount, quality and scope of formal and informal learning opportunities in the areas of creativity, arts, media, culture, heritage, humanities and science;
- supporting teachers, practitioners, carers, performers and artists in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in enabling children and young people both inside and outside formal education to develop and apply their skills and talents and to open up to them cultural and creative activity;
- developing programmes, where appropriate, in partnership with others to deliver positive learning outcomes and encourage the recognition, enjoyment and use of culture, media and heritage;
- empowering them to be involved in the promotion of cultural and learning activities and enhancing their skills, capacities and capabilities; and
- encouraging them to visit, experience, participate in, initiate and engage in cultural activities, places and performances.

Curious Minds aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the North of England through facilitating access to arts and culture for all. It promotes cultural education and enables creative innovation and collaboration between the cultural, educational and youth sectors.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main beneficiaries are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners and we are mindful that they all continue to work within a challenging social, financial and policy climate.

## Our Vision and Mission

Our Vision is for a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant culture is a regular part of every child's life and learning.

Powered by curiosity, we work to tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people who are often excluded by social and economic inequalities.

# Our Values - The 7 Cs

The 7C's are seven words beginning with the letter C by which we hold ourselves to account and invite others to do the same. They continue to guide our planning, recruitment and self-evaluation, and provide a framework for performance management.

- **We are *CURIOUS***

We are hopeful for a fairer future. We explore new possibilities and seek out best and next practice, listening and responding to the opinions and ideas of others, especially children and young people.

- **We *COLLABORATE***

Partnerships and collaboration are fundamental to how we work. In these times of change and uncertainty we understand the importance of listening to build meaning and grow collective impact.

- **We are *COURAGEOUS***

We are relentless in our pursuit of fair access to creativity and culture for all, and work to disrupt the status quo. We accept and deliver challenge, especially concerning diversity, inclusion, quality and relevance.

- **We are *CREDIBLE***

We are evidence driven and always learning. We draw expertise from across education and culture to skilfully navigate and connect both worlds. We seek out and build alliances with experts in their field.

- **We are *CONSCIENTIOUS***

We take our leadership role seriously and never take for granted the privilege of being trusted by our funders and partners to do the right thing with the resources we hold. We practise Host Leadership, knowing when to step forward and when to step back.

- **We *CARE***

We care deeply about children and young people, the adults who support them and the places where they live and learn. We embrace, celebrate and champion diversity in all its forms.

- **We *CELEBRATE***

We celebrate and champion creative and cultural education, the diverse professionals championing and delivering it, and the children and young people it is for.

# Our Commitment to Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

We want all children and young people to enjoy and contribute to the cultural life of society. We are ferociously committed to identifying and removing barriers to engagement for children and young people from marginalised backgrounds. We recognise this can only be achieved by a more diverse, resilient, and better-connected workforce. We commit to playing our part to bring about these changes – starting with ourselves. We are a Real Living Wage employer.

## Our Commitment to Quality

We believe that quality and equality go hand-in-hand. Raising the quality of the creative and cultural learning experiences all children and young people have access to, at school and in the community, is fundamental to 'levelling up' opportunity.

Developing the workforce is key. Overcoming preconceptions and barriers to engage with previously excluded children and young people is highly skilled work, yet most practitioners learn on the job with little support. We commit to creating new and clearer pathways that lead to the professionalisation of the Cultural Education workforce.

## Our Commitment to Climate Change

The global pandemic which struck in 2020 led to a year in which Curious Minds, and the wider world, changed. Our Action Plan and supporting Policy have been developed as we emerge from the pandemic and seize the opportunity to build on these changes to develop our environmental practices for the better.

We commit to redoubling our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our day-to-day operations and be more environmentally responsible. We seek to influence, educate, and advocate for a post carbon future through our day-to-day work and programmes; including doing whatever we can to ensure children and young people see themselves as global citizens and develop the creative skills they will need to access opportunities arising from the transition to a low carbon economy.

## Charging Considerations

Our main beneficiaries/stakeholders are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners, all of whom are working in a challenging financial and policy climate. Affordability and access to our programmes is important to us and remains a key consideration when we are planning our activity. Wherever possible, we provide places on our events and training programmes at low or no cost to participants using the grants we receive as subsidy. The decision whether to provide a service, place on training or at an event or conference is carefully balanced to ensure cost does not act as a barrier, but also taking into account our experience of drop-off when offering places for free (e.g., people register but don't turn up). We cost all our traded offers on a full cost recovery basis.

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# Review of our Achievements and Performance in 2024/25

Curious Minds continues to punch above its weight to achieve significant impact with limited resources. We choose to support the sector rather than directly working with young people and it is this strategic approach that enables us to have substantial regional, and more recently, national and international reach and influence as honest brokers and advocates for cultural and creative education.

We target our work to benefit children and young people living and learning in some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of England. We continue to support the cultural and education sectors to collaborate so that these children and young people can enjoy larger, richer cultural lives.

We are proud to be part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio, acting as a field catalyst for arts and cultural education:

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*"We are 'field builders' for cultural education; creating the conditions and catalysing action to bring about organisational and systemic change – one teacher, one youth worker, one creative practitioner at a time."*

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In 2020 we worked with Social Value Lab to uncover a distinct methodology, which continues to inform how we work and who we work with to achieve our charitable objectives:

## Methodology



# Evaluating Our Long Term Impact

Acting as a field building catalyst, Curious Minds aims to create lasting, positive change across the field of cultural and creative education. Whilst we work directly with individuals and organisations, our goal is a cumulative effect, catalysing long-term systems-change.

In the 11 years of Arts Council England's Bridge programme, which concluded in March 2023, Curious Minds built relationships with over 60% of the North West region's schools, and over 96% of National Portfolio Organisations in the North West alongside freelance artists, grassroots arts organisations and non-NPO heritage organisations. In our first year as an NPO (2023 – 2024), we continued to support the growth of the sector, delivering 84 events, with 1724 attendances.

In 2019-20 we worked with Social Value Lab to better understand our impact; they explained the challenges of evidencing lasting systems-change. Since then we have used Theory of Change to understand progress towards long-term goals. We remain committed to evidence and evaluation, and in 24-25 we trialled Rick Davies' Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology.

The pilot of MSC has provided powerful, narrative-based evidence of Curious Minds' long-term impact. By collecting personal stories, some spanning nearly a decade, the evaluation revealed the difference we are making with sustained effort over time.

Teachers, cultural leaders and institutions described how Curious Minds supported their development into advocates and leaders, often sparking youth-led initiatives, shifts in whole-school culture and embedded arts practices. The MSC stories highlighted recurring themes: networks, leadership, sustainable practice, youth voice, and the ripple effects of an ongoing relationship with Curious Minds.

Museums and schools credited Curious Minds with accelerating organisational change, embedding cultural education, co-creation, inclusive policies, and youth engagement far earlier in the organisations' developmental journey than might have happened otherwise.

The evaluation validated Curious Minds' role as a 'field catalyst', stimulating ambition, scaffolding curiosity, and embedding lasting change. Crucially, it affirmed the value of the organisation's relational approach: narrators consistently cited the personal support and continuity offered by staff as transformative.

“

**We went further in a much shorter amount of time. And that's been driven by working with an organisation with beautiful core values. They are relentlessly positive. We'd always come away buzzing with an idea about where to go and what to do next.”**

# Activity

Since April 2023 we have been using the following Strategic Framework to plan and deliver activity:



## 1. INNOVATE

*We innovate in the field of creative and cultural education by collaborating with multi-sector partners to explore and test new approaches to the delivery of cultural learning and leadership programmes.*

### 1.1 AFTEC Cultural Leadership Programme

In 2024-25 Curious Minds adapted its long-established SLiCE training model for an initiative commissioned by the Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection (AFTEC) based in Hong Kong. This CPD programme was delivered with 15 school leaders and teachers, and 8 teaching artists from Hong Kong throughout the academic year via online sessions and two days of face-to-face engagement when the group visited London. The programme has benefitted from the invaluable support of a member of the Curious Minds team who is originally from Hong Kong. Curious Minds delivered a training syllabus including whole-school approaches to arts education; Theory of Change; auditing arts provision; project-planning; advocacy and partnership working. We curated guest speakers and case studies to provide inspirational

examples from England's cultural education sector including schools, the Northern Creativity Collaborative, the National Theatre and the Southbank Centre.

Delegates reported increased appetite and confidence to drive creative collaboration across their schools and have already begun to apply tools and models.

The partnership has provided a valuable experience of international work in preparation for our role as the England ITAC Hub.



**Undertaking the arts and cultural audit is like having an x-ray focus on arts provision in our school.”**

*AFTEC Teacher*

## 1.2. #BeeWell Artsmark Schools

#BeeWell is an extensive wellbeing survey conducted by the University of Manchester, the Anna Freud Centre, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), which creates a huge and detailed dataset on the wellbeing of young people in Greater Manchester.

The #BeeWell Artsmark Pilot is 2-year programme running between 2023 and July 2025, which we were commissioned to design and deliver by Arts Council England. It explores how schools can use the #BeeWell data to commission creative interventions that target specific wellbeing needs.

Seven GMCA secondary schools (including two SEND schools) are involved. The pilot is youth-led; we support pupils to use the #BeeWell data to make both a micro-commission and a neighbourhood level commission. This results in the commissioning of 20 creative practitioners to work with almost 660 students, as well as other people from their local communities.

In addition, 38 young people gained a Creative Health level 2 qualification from the Royal Society for Public Health, whilst developing the skills to make and manage the commissions.



**Leading the intervention session with the younger students for our Arts and Wellbeing taster workshop was nerve-racking but I am overall glad I did it. I learnt how to cope/lead a session ... it helped with my leadership and presentation skills immensely.”**

*Student who achieved the Youth Health Champion Certificate.*

“

**It has created a cultural shift in our school, [it's] highlighted the arts as intrinsic to wellbeing and made that very visible.”**

*Lead Teacher*

“

**The young person [...] was not interested in art or culture before this project, actually loved it so much and felt so empowered and included that he came back to one of our summer programmes, and Curious Minds funded his attendance and travel. He genuinely surprised himself in developing a love of creativity through this work.**

**What a joy!”**

*Lead Teaching Artists, Everyday Wigan.*

### 1.3. Artsmark Rural

Commissioned by Arts Council England, Curious Minds worked with four rural schools in Whitehaven, Cumbria to understand the experience of rural schools in achieving Artsmark Award and pilot ways of offering support. With mentoring from Grayrigg Primary and training from Anti-Racist Cumbria, Curious Minds supported schools to address the challenge many rural schools experience in offering diversity within their arts provision.

Each school was supported to identify an action research question to guide their planning; Curious Minds then supported with mentoring, group sessions, cultural audits, identification of barriers, problem solving and brokering arts partnerships. One school described their highlight as

Outputs included over 300 children engaged in art and creative sessions not least through an innovative ‘creative cover’ model whereby supply cover was provided by Teaching Artists. Curious Minds trained 6 staff, Anti Racist Cumbria trained 8 staff, and 7 Teaching Artists were engaged.

For legacy and sustainability, Curious Minds connected schools with partners such as Cumbria University, the National Saturday Club and a local Artsmark Gold school. Positive feedback from teachers and schools reported: being inspired to rethink which artists they engage; embedding anti-racist practice; and strategic planning for the arts.

“

**The opportunity to share some of the challenges we have within school [and] the chance to share ideas and become clearer.”**

*Artsmark Rural School Teacher*

## 1.4. Rhyme & Reason Steph Lampl Foundation

The year had a strong start with a £50,000 grant secured from the Steph Lampl Foundation to utilise poetry for mental health benefits across five secondary schools. Curious Minds went above and beyond the Foundation’s initial invitation, embedding mechanisms for sustainability and legacy within the project design and delivery.

‘Rhyme & Reason’ is inspired by a clinical model developed by Edgehill University called ‘Arts for the Blues’. The project set out to explore how the model could be taken beyond the clinical setting as a framework for providing creative arts-based interventions that tackle low-mood and anxiety. Scott Thurston, Professor of Poetry, Innovation and Creative Practice at Salford University, and one of the originators of Arts for the Blues, worked with us to adapt the model for this context.

The project engaged 5 Teaching Artists (poets), 5 Teachers and a Poet Mentor, and was supplemented with individual supervision from Edge Hill University and specialist input on trauma informed practice. Feedback was extremely positive:

“

**Creative, gorgeous people, amazing intention and genuine care for young people. Loved it.”**

*Teaching Artist/ Poet*

“

**One student who hardly attends school on Fridays (and if she does is usually late) has been at every Rhyme and Reason activity session on a Friday morning; and on time!”**

*Teacher*

## 1.5. Goldsmiths University of London Partnership

Our partnership with the psychology department at Goldsmiths continued, with the conclusion of a pilot study supported by the University’s Research Impact Fund focusing on the impact of Teaching Artists in the classroom. This work will result in the publication of a co-authored research paper to be peer reviewed in the next financial year.

In summer 2024 the partnership hosted three CPD sessions for the sector focusing on impact and evaluation, which brought together researchers, academics, and sector leaders. Sessions were well attended with 135 delegates. This is the first in a programme of Curious Praxis where research insights are directly shaping sector practice. Feedback was positive:



**Brilliantly concise, engaging presentations with just the right amount of content and really directly relevant as well as inspiring.”**

*CPD Session Delegate*



**Where to start! It was fantastic.”**

*CPD Session Delegate*



**I plan on feeding back to my colleagues the ways in which we can make our evaluation more effective and impactful.”**

*CPD Session Delegate*

As a result of this pilot project, we successfully applied to the South East Network for Social Sciences (SENS) to host a collaborative PhD focusing on the impact of Teaching Artists in the classroom.

Our doctoral candidate Saul Argent began his studies in the Autumn of 2024, under the supervision of Dr Diana Omigie (Psychology), Professor Alice Bartoli (Educational Psychology), and our own Dr Steph Hawke, Head of Impact and Evaluation. Our Rhyme and Reason project provided a first opportunity for data-collection and this is Saul's first pilot study for his thesis.

To launch the PhD, the team hosted a round table event at Goldsmiths in September 2024 which was well attended by leaders, teachers and teaching artists from the sector, including Creativity Collaboratives, The V&A Museum, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and the Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) amongst others. The event will produce a co-authored research paper for peer review and publication in the next financial year.

The partnership has also produced a thought-leadership article for the CLA's Latest Thinking newsletter which, taken together with two articles published as a result of our first partnership with Goldsmiths in 2021-2, and two articles in the pipeline, represent praxis in cultural education, a continuous cycle of research, reflection and practice that strengthens the evidence base available to policy-makers.

## 1.6. STAR Performing Arts Academy

We were approached by the STAR Multi Academy Trust to work with them on the STAR Performing Arts Academy. Having secured funding from the Christopher & Henry Oldfield Trust, STAR sought our expertise in mobilising and guiding 5 schools in the North West to deliver performing arts enrichment clubs, cultural visits and celebration performances with Key Stage 3 pupils. We were able to extend the scope of their ambition to include teacher development and training, to ensure that the project has sustainable impact. Towards the end of this year, we had been introduced to the schools and begun to understand and assess their individual needs, encouraging wider ambition for the role that arts enrichment could play in school life. [Star Academies Arts at the Heart](#)

## 1.7. Work with Higher Education

Partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) formed a significant strand of our work in 2024-25. Projects exploring the use of Greater Manchester #BeeWell survey data forged a stronger connection with Manchester University, while our Rhyme and Reason project, with funding from the Steph Lampl Foundation, deepened our partnership with Professor Scott Thurston at Edge Hill University, translating the 'Arts for the Blues' clinical model for use in classroom settings.

Our partnership with Goldsmiths college, University of London went from strength to strength through the development of our collaborative PhD studentship, and we also developed new partnerships with Dr Elisavet Christou of Lancaster University, focussing on creative evaluation, and the Centre for Cultural Value at Leeds University, with a focus on building a national Cultural Education Impact Network.

# 2. INVEST

***We INVEST in a diverse cultural education workforce to develop, celebrate and professionalise the field of cultural education.***

## 2.1. Anti-Racism Group (ARG)

Established to drive forward our aim to be a proud anti-racism role model for the sector, our Anti-Racism Group (ARG) continued to shape Curious Minds' programmes and partnerships and were woven into our work in multiple ways.

This year we expanded membership to include Young Associates' graduate Linda Wachanga. Members contributed to the Northern Cultural Education Awards as judges and presenters, joined our board away day, supported the Curious Creatives Network, participated in a roundtable discussion with ITAC founder Eric Booth, and played active roles in our careers and employability work.

Notably, we commissioned poet Amina Atiq to write and perform a poem at our Labour Party Conference fringe event, advocating for the importance of cultural education directly to decision makers. 2 ARG members delivered on our *Rhyme and Reason* project supporting them to develop advanced skills in wellbeing focused work and ensuring representation of black and brown people within a limited pool of specialists. The ARG helped us respond to race riots following the Southport attacks, where we commissioned qualified mental health practitioners to offer group support to black and brown arts practitioners in our networks. This was hugely appreciated by attendees, many of whom had received no other support from their organisations.

The ARG also provided consultancy to Burnley Youth Theatre on diversifying staff recruitment and supporting young professionals from underrepresented backgrounds. The resulting action plan is helping BYT to embed and sustain anti-racist practice in its organisational culture.

## 2.2. Curious About Seminars

We continued to provide essential CPD for the cultural education workforce through our Curious About Seminars. Across the year we delivered eight sessions, with a particular focus on impact evaluation, safeguarding, and fundraising.

A major strand was our three-part *Curious About Impact Evaluation* series, delivered in partnership with Goldsmiths University and the Cultural Learning Alliance. These online workshops attracted 135 participants from across the sector, 35% from Arts Council England's Priority Places. Evaluation showed strong impact: 92% found the sessions relevant, 90% useful, and 80% gained new insights. Feedback highlighted the clarity of content and the value of practical tools, with participants noting the sessions were "concise, engaging, and inspiring."

Other highlights included a sold-out *Let's Talk About Safeguarding* workshop in November, delivered with TiPP (Theatre in Prison and Probation), attended by 26 practitioners, and fundraising CPD in partnership with disabled theatre company Tip Tray.

Feedback across the programme showed us that this programme is appreciated and useful, highlighting the relevance of content and the accessible, supportive environment we have created. Participant feedback included:



**A great session – which opened up lots of interesting perspectives and things to use in my own practice.”**

*Curious About Delegate*



**Curious Minds (...) excels at creating work which meets the needs of arts practitioners, so we can make fabulous work whilst feeling safe.”**

*Curious About Delegate*

## 2.3. Curious Creatives Network

The Curious Creatives Network continued to provide a vital, inclusive mechanism for the cultural education workforce to connect. Across 8 sessions, we maintained a strong focus on inclusion by carefully curating the content and speakers, as well as proactively ensuring a demographically balanced membership of a minimum of 30% from under-represented groups.

An impressive line-up of inspiring guest speakers shared insights on their work, including themes such as structural inequality and forced migration, race, class, health, schools and curriculum, and creative leadership.

Attendance is consistently high across more than 100 active members, with our largest session in February seeing 60 attendees. We believe the success of the network is due to its accessible and welcoming format which suits grassroots organisations and freelancers, and programming which is responsive to their interests and needs. It has helped to build skills, confidence, knowledge and professional connections for the cultural education workforce this year.

## 2.4. Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs)

Curious Minds has continued to play a central role in convening and supporting LCEPs across the North of England, strengthening collaboration and efficiently utilising peer to peer learning to ensure this highly influential group of decision makers are scaffolded. Our initial intention to engage with North-West and Yorkshire LCEPs was extended mid-year to include LCEPs in the North East (in agreement with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums who are active in that area), who have enthusiastically participated since.

Over the year, we hosted both online and in-person gatherings, with 41 of the 47 active Northern LCEPs (87%) represented. These meetings provided valuable opportunities for sharing practice, exploring challenges, and developing collective solutions.

Highlights included an in-person convening at HOME Manchester in April 2024, which brought together 41 representatives from 26 partnerships. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with over 90% of participants rating the event as relevant, useful, and well thought through. Attendees told us they felt more connected, re-energised, and supported as a result. Regular online sessions also proved very effective, with presentations from Barnsley Fusion on their Artsmark Place-Based pilot and contributions from ACE Relationship Managers. An online format which includes invited speakers and single issue breakout sessions has been

well received, with SPARK Wakefield presenting in March on co-created curriculum resources, and themes such as youth voice, working with schools and wellbeing were offered in response to requests for deeper discussion.

We have continued to celebrate and share LCEP activity through our quarterly newsletters too, which all Northern LCEPs receive. Newsletters published this year featured 11 partnerships and attracted over 500 views online. Additional LCEP case studies hosted on our website generated a further 388 views, demonstrating their ongoing value. Feedback included:

“

**I feel more connected to other LCEPs, I feel less alone with the challenges we face... I did feel a sense of camaraderie and support from others in the room. I feel re-energised about the difference LCEPs can make and why they are needed.”**

“

**We are a fledgling LCEP and it will help to inform next steps as well as giving us access to a cohort of relevant contacts/ peer support.”**

“

**Has been really helpful in informing decision making at this pivotal point in our LCEP process. It was great to share challenges and hear other people’s input and insight, as well as feeling useful to be part of helping others to find solutions.”**

## 2.5. Our role in Wigan Borough

As our home borough, increasing our presence and contribution to the cultural ecology in Wigan is a priority. This year we committed to coordinating the Wigan Borough LCEP, aligning it with the Chance to See Fund. This will provide it with central purpose which sits within Wigan's new movement for change 'Progress with Unity', building an 'entitlement' to creative and cultural education for all children and young people.

Our CEO is Chair of Wigan Borough Cultural Partnership and has led the writing group tasked with producing a new five year cultural strategy. The Fire Within: The Forge was launched at a spectacular pop-up event at Wigan Pier in September 2025 and was very well received. Curious Minds is profiled in the strategy document under the Cultural Education priority.

The *Chance to See Fund* is our ongoing partnership with chart-topping Wigan band The Lathums, which continued to grow in reach and impact throughout the year. To date, the fund has distributed 10 grants and was selected as one of the incoming Mayor of Wigan's charities for 2025/26. Fundraising highlights included proceeds from the band's December 2024 homecoming gig which were matched by local developer Heatons, generating an additional £9,000 for distribution in 2025/26.

We also sponsored the Wigan Borough Dance Festival, using the four-night event to raise money for the Chance to See Fund, and provided evaluation support. Our Curious Works programme concluded successfully, creating five Alternative Saturday Jobs for local young people in Wigan's cultural organisations.

Combined, these activities ensure we're increasingly embedded in our home borough, laying the groundwork for our plan to open a base at Wigan Pier later this year.

## 2.6. Leading the Arts in Your School

Leading The Arts in Your School is our longstanding course which equips teachers with the skills and knowledge to drive the development of their school's arts offer. At the start of this year, we had a cohort of 16 teachers already on this journey. By June, they had all completed the course, a work shadowing opportunity, and received certification. 10 arts organisations were involved in course delivery, simultaneously giving those organisations updated insight into the needs of teachers. A report of the delegates' progress and success was sent to their Headteachers, to encourage recognition of their skills and boost their influence within school.

Reflections from this year's cohort highlighted development of their arts-leadership, advocacy, networking, and the opportunity to learn from the practice of other schools.



**Really good course. Allows you to meet other art teachers and share good practice. I really enjoyed the work shadowing and have made friends along the way.”**

*Leading the Arts in Your School Participant Teacher*



**The course will provoke creativity and empower you to advocate for the arts in your setting.”**

*Leading the Arts in Your School Participant Teacher*

## 2.7. Let's Craft

2024-25 marked the final year of the Let's Craft programme, which was initially established during Covid 19 to get craft materials to children who were experiencing disadvantage. Brokered nationally by the Crafts Council with resources from Hobbycraft and delivered by former Bridge partners, the programme continued beyond the pandemic to meet ongoing need, coupled with the willingness of Hobbycraft to continue providing resources. Curious Minds coordinated distribution across priority areas in the North-West and Yorkshire, working through LCEPs and local partners to ensure packs reached the children and young people they were intended for.

During this final year, we supported delivery of 1,520 craft packs across Halton, Ellesmere Port and Doncaster. Packs were distributed via schools, food banks, housing associations, libraries, faith groups, and family hubs, reaching children in care, young people eligible for free school meals, SEND families, and other vulnerable groups.

The impact of the packs was clear. One carer told us:

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*"Child A was living with nan since mum was sent to prison for drug offences. Child A was not coping well since mum left. We knew that the child A loved art, and we provided them with an art pack. Child A has used the pack to create many different crafts and has been excited to show us each one. The family has been referred to local agencies for additional support. Child A's behaviour has settled down and Nan is grateful for the art pack that worked as a catalyst for change."*

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A housing association partner similarly reflected that an unassuming offer of craft packs enabled them to identify and engage new families in need and connect them to wider support services including food banks and benefit support.

This programme is a great example of how, for those not currently in a position to engage with more substantial activities, the simple provision of creative materials can still have a positive impact on those in the greatest need.

In total 40,285 craft packs were delivered nationally across the two phases of the Lets Craft programme, and it is estimated they benefitted more than 100,000 children. Of parents surveyed, 84.9% said that receiving a pack made them feel more confident about making things at home with their children.

## 2.8. Curious Works

In 2024-25, Curious Minds successfully secured £75,000 from GMCA/WEA to deliver *Curious Works*, a pilot programme to support young people aged 16-25 in Wigan who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET.

The programme utilised the strengths of arts-based organisations to engage young people who find themselves on the margins. A combination of opportunities were offered broadly through local partners, which included workshops, masterclasses, mentoring, and creative enrichment activities, with a focus on building confidence and removing barriers to education and employment. For the most interested, we offered Alternative Saturday Jobs (ASJs) in partnership with Wigan based arts organisations. We also engaged a team of Young Producers, who planned and delivered a youth-led creative careers event for their peers, developing transferrable skills along the way. This event reached over 50 young people and featured interactive stalls from 11 local creative employers and freelancers, showcasing pathways into creative careers.

Despite initial recruitment challenges, in total the project engaged 38 young people from underserved groups across the borough. Participant feedback reflected the programme's transformative impact.

Curious works has laid strong foundations for future programmes, and a successful new relationship with funders WEA and GMCA.



**Proving dyslexia isn't such a barrier in a new environment was a massive confidence boost."**

*Alternative Saturday Jobs Participant*



**It's been good for my confidence and also just given me work to show people... I can put it on LinkedIn, which has helped me network with other potential employers."**

*Curious Works, Young Producer*

## 2.9. I'm a Teenager Get Me Into There

Our 'I'm A Teenager Get Me Into There' course helps non-specialist staff in cultural venues understand the needs and behaviors of teenage visitors and make them feel more welcome. It continues to go from strength to strength and is our most popular one-day training course to date. During this year, 190 arts and cultural professionals across 50 arts organisations benefited from our in-person training.

We have successfully extended its reach, delivering this year in Scotland, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and The South East. It continues to draw attention from national organisations well positioned to spread the word, and we have been receiving invitations to present at events and gatherings, including the National Trust, the Association of Children's Librarians (ASCEL), and the Kids In Museums Conference.

In addition to in-person training, 3940 professionals have accessed the online course, which continues to provide value free-of-charge for those who cannot afford to attend in person, as well as enabling those who do attend to cascade the activities to colleagues with ease.

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*"It's been great because we've been able to make the training work for us, fitting it into the only timeslot that's really available to the front-of-house team... I felt like the Visitor Team felt valued and heard, and it makes my job easier to work towards change because I have an evidence base to back up the need... It was really great that you were able to offer this training in different formats as it made it accessible to both myself and the Visitor Team when time and budgets are tight!"*

Manchester Art Gallery

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We are incredibly pleased with the course's continuing popularity, which is helping to make more young people welcome in cultural venues across the country. Ongoing evaluation shows that delegates leave with plans to change marketing, programmes, signage and even the layout of some spaces; but above all the course is changing perceptions and inspiring delegates to become advocates for young people amongst their own staff teams. Feedback has been positive:

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*"An eye-opening session that will help move our library service into a much more teenage-friendly space"*

*"A fantastic session that helps us to empathise with, and understand teenagers."*

*"A great session that challenges you to self-reflect, whilst equipping you with the knowledge of how to best support young people's engagement with culture."*

*"A much needed opportunity to discuss this important topic and to listen to ideas, opinions and experiences from across the Service, with a view to improving our offer for young people."*

*"Excellent session which ultimately changed how I view how we approach teenagers in cultural services."*

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## 2.10. Curiosity Outside the Classroom

Our brand new course, Curiosity Outside the Classroom, trains teachers to get the greatest value for their students from a cultural trip.

It was created in response to our own observations of teachers lacking confidence and experience in organising trips, with several reporting they have never taken students out. Research from The Sutton Trust in 2003 evidenced that trips have indeed declined by 50%, rising to 68% of schools in deprived areas, hitting the students who need it the most hardest.

The content for this course draws on 2,000 trip reviews generated through our Curious Citizens programme (where groups of students identified as having the least cultural opportunity then planned and went on first time cultural visits). Their reviews provided significant insight into what young people value the most, which we turned into concrete advice for teachers.

Before the close of this year, we had road-tested the course with 6 secondary schools (including one SEND), and 2 primaries. Our knowledge has led to our CEO being invited by Clore Duffield Foundation to join an expert panel overseeing grantmaking to schools in Blackpool and Cornwall for cultural trips. Our 'Curiosity Outside the Classroom' course will be offered to the successful schools in the coming year.

Feedback has been positive with teachers telling us that as a result of the training they will plan differently, work across departments and make trips more purposeful. They felt more connected to the opportunities available for their pupils and inspired to prepare, for some, their first ever arts trip:

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*"I have lots of trips planned in my head... (it's) given me the confidence to go for it."*

*"Apart from the content and delivery of the course, which was excellent, it's a good opportunity to meet and talk to others in similar jobs."*

*"Extremely useful session, gained both practical ideas to use, and challenged my preconceptions."*

*"The amount of group activities helped to explore the thinking and suggestions from other members of staff. The real life experiences show how trips are an integral part of a school life and all children should be given the same experience."*

*"Lots of practical tips and takeaway tools to put straight into practice. Really made me think in a more 360 degree way to creating more impactful experiences for young people."*

*"It has provided us with a blueprint of activities and resources that can be referenced, revisited, and utilised with confidence and clarity for short term and longer term actions. This will offer reassurance for the wider team, keeping them in the challenge zone, not the panic zone."*

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## 2.11. Other Training

We have laid ground work for two more short training courses to build our offer. Our Peer Tutoring course will prepare students to lead arts based clubs for small groups of their peers. As well as the benefits individuals will gain from youth leadership, this will help schools sustain some arts enrichment provision without reliance on financial resources or substantial staff capacity. This is an adaptation of the University of the First Age (UFA) course we had reworked in the previous year, with their support and permission, following the closure of the UFA. It has been prepared for primary school delivery, and will also be adapted for trial in 5 STAR Academies secondaries in the coming year.

Our second new course will focus on Youth Leadership in the cultural sector. Whilst youth voice training is available from other providers, existing courses do not extend to authentic youth leadership at a strategic level and this remains a need for LCEPs in particular. We have extensive insight and experience from many programmes to draw on, particularly our Hope Streets programme, which concluded in March 2024.

## 2.12. ITAC England Hub

The title 'Teaching Artist' is the international name for cultural and creative educators or community artists. ITAC (International Teaching Artist Collaborative) is the first and only global network of Teaching Artists, and consists of established hubs in 5 countries, with several more set to join. At the start of this year, we had already successfully applied and secured our place as the only ITAC hub for England.

Throughout this year we progressed our position as a national convenor for teaching artists within this global network. Through regular engagement with the ITAC executive and our international counterparts, we have contributed to shaping developments such as the launch of a new ITAC membership platform, website and programme of online sessions, ensuring they also meet the needs of practitioners in England. We have also supported ITAC with practical expertise, including digital communications advice.

In September 2024, four members of our senior leadership team attended the ITAC7 Conference in New Zealand. This bi-annual event is an established focal point for ITAC, and attending enabled us to build relationships with other hubs, exchange practice, and understand the facets of English work considered the most pioneering from an international perspective, in particular arts in health and social prescribing. It also provided valuable insight into how the conference itself operates, the expectations of participants, and the opportunities that hosting a future conference could offer. Looking ahead, we are in discussion with the ITAC executive about hosting a future conference in England, potentially in 2028, and are considering a Major Projects grant application to ACE to support this ambition.

Continuing to grow and establish ourselves in this role will enable us to make full use of our international partnerships to platform English work, as well as connecting the teaching artist community in England with international peers.

## 3. INFLUENCE

*We INFLUENCE cultural education partnerships, plans and policy by engaging with practitioners, leaders and politicians to galvanize cultural education partnerships and shape the debate about the importance of creativity and culture in childhood and adolescence.*

### 3.1 Evaluation Consultancy

Our work is powered by curiosity and we approach every activity and interaction as an opportunity to know more. Our goal is to innovate, invest in, and influence the field of evaluation in cultural education by upskilling the workforce and by using the evidence we collect to champion creative and cultural education. One of the ways we achieve this is by offering our skills as an external evaluator and critical friend.

In 2024-25 Curious Minds completed an impact evaluation for Youth Focus North West, evaluating their work across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority over seven years. This substantial piece of work involved 21 in-depth interviews with stakeholders, and the report will be officially launched in the next financial year.

Evaluations were also completed for: new Wigan-based NPO Thick Skin Theatre, National Museums Liverpool, Wigan Borough Dance Festival and Ellesmere Port NPO Theatre Porto. As part of the latter project, we trialled a subscription to the Social Value Engine software which gave access to a bank of current research for use as proxies to calculate social return on investment. In this year we were also commissioned by new NPO Buxton Opera House to evaluate the impact of its education and outreach programme. Where appropriate we share this learning and experience via our website.

### 3.2 Northern Cultural Education Awards

On 24th May 2024, Curious Minds hosted the Northern Cultural Education Awards, a unique flagship event to celebrate the achievements of the cultural education sector and shine a spotlight on excellent practice. For the first time this year it was open to the whole of the North of England, and we received 156 nominations from a wide geographical spread, demonstrating an appetite for recognition.

Eight awards and two runner-up Certificates of Commendation were presented, including a Changemaker Award for Paul Collard, who joined via livestream from Thailand to receive it. Hosted by broadcaster and producer Ngunan Adamu we presented a lively programme of performances and speakers, including a recorded message from Darren Henley, Arts Council England CEO, to 320 guests.

Over 80% of feedback respondents said they felt happy and proud to be involved. One nominee reflected:

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*“Within a few hours of us celebrating our commendation on social media, we’d had recognition from our MP and people at the council...don’t underestimate how important it is that someone brings this sub-sector together.”*

*Award Nominee, 2024*

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Throughout the year we continued to celebrate winners and finalists through event footage, case studies, and infographics, keeping their achievements in the spotlight. The event served as a powerful focal point to increase visibility and recognition for the sector, and to celebrate the people who make it happen.

### 3.3. Thought Leadership & Public Affairs

Curious Minds continued to play a strong role in shaping the national conversation on cultural education. A highlight was our collaboration with the Cultural Learning Alliance to host a fringe event at the Labour Party Conference in September 2024, attended by around 50 delegates. The event, *Access to Arts and Cultural Education: Helping Labour Deliver Creative Opportunities for Every Child*, brought together parliamentarians, sector leaders and artists to debate the future of cultural learning with the incoming government. Our commissioned poet, Amina Atiq, opened with a performance, and discussions centred on curriculum reform, accountability, and reversing the decline in arts qualifications.

Alongside this, we contributed evidence directly to the Government’s Curriculum Review Evidence Committee, and to the DfE at their request, drawing on many years of practical experience working with schools to protect and grow arts provision. Across the year, members of our leadership team presented at a wide range of sector events and advisory forums, including the C-Change Conference, Primary Drama Conference, ACE Learning and Participation leads away day, the National Theatre Drama Teacher Conference, and Peterborough’s Cultural Education Partnership launch. We also contributed to regional policy discussions, including a roundtable with the Deputy Mayor of Manchester on the potential role of arts in violence reduction and the Youth Focus North West ‘Spotlight’ Conference, attended by the DCMS and GMCA.

We have continued to exert influence on behalf of the sector through national networks and partnerships, with our CEO co-chairing the Cultural Learning Alliance, which published its influential 2024 Report Card, and our staff serving on advisory panels such as the Myriad Creative Health and Wellbeing programme. We were invited to advise on the Child in the North research initiative, led by Durham University, and contributed to a wide range of working groups and panels drawing expertise from across our staff team. These activities ensure Curious Minds’ practical expertise informs research, policy, and high-level decision making, improving the conditions for future work to flourish.

## 4. Organisational Development

Our Transition and Transform programme is reshaping Curious Minds to be stronger, more agile and better able to serve the cultural education field in a challenging funding climate. Supported by £503,800 of Arts Council England Transform funding (matched with £140,000 from our reserves and a further £160,000 set aside as a strategic development fund), this three-year plan runs to March 2026 and is designed to diversify income, modernise our infrastructure and ensure our long-term sustainability.

The programme has five interconnected areas of work: building organisational capacity; digital transformation; developing new products and services; unlocking the value of our existing intellectual property; and refreshing our approach to fundraising. Each strand is already shaping our day-to-day practice and strengthening our ability to support the sector.

Our digital transformation is well under way. After a competitive tender process we appointed CultureSuite to create a new website that integrates event booking, email marketing and Salesforce CRM. This will provide a modern and accessible home for our programmes and resources, with the flexibility to incorporate and improve on our existing online directories, The Culture Hub and the Cultural Providers Map. Together, these currently host over 900 live provider and school profiles and continue to exceed sector demand.

We have also expanded and refreshed our traded offer, developing new courses and tools that respond to emerging sector needs. This includes *Curiosity Outside the Classroom*, training teachers to deliver high-impact cultural trips; *Our Vox Curio*, a curiosity-led approach to evaluation combining our creative facilitation methods with the Most Significant Change methodology; and our *Peer Tutor Training* model, which helps schools sustain arts clubs and activities through youth leadership. We continue to build on the success of *I'm a Teenager... Get Me Into There*, which remains a flagship training product, extending its reach nationally and informing how cultural venues welcome young people.

At the same time, we are strengthening our ability to generate income from consultancy, facilitation and evaluation services, while building a more strategic approach to fundraising and philanthropic giving. These changes are making Curious Minds a more nimble and dynamic organisation - one able to adapt to policy shifts, meet the needs of schools and cultural partners, and invest in the children and young people who stand to gain most from access to brilliant arts and cultural learning.

## 5. Our Plans for the Future

The Trustees, Executive Management Team and staff of Curious Minds remain ambitious for the charity's future, knowing that our work is urgent and deeply needed.

Later this year we will move into Pier 2 at Wigan Pier, creating a permanent home for Curious Minds and establishing a new Centre of Excellence for arts and cultural education. This iconic site, long tied to Wigan's industrial story, will become a place where creativity and opportunity meet. It will give us the space to convene, innovate and support the cultural

education workforce, while rooting us firmly in Wigan, Greater Manchester and the North. Our long-term partnership with Wigan Council has secured a 10-year peppercorn rent for the site, a clear sign of shared commitment to making this a home for cultural education and opportunity. Our presence there will contribute to Wigan's Progress with Unity missions, helping the borough build a fairer future for its children and young people.

To prepare for this move, we are actively raising the capital finance needed to complete essential works at Pier 2 and have begun our first experience of applying for social investment alongside grant funding. This marks an important step in diversifying how we finance our growth and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our new home.

As part of our local commitment, we will continue to grow the Chance to See Fund, which provides cultural opportunities for children and young people who might otherwise be excluded. Being named the Mayor of Wigan's Charity for 2025/26 gives us a powerful platform to raise the profile of this work and expand its reach.

Nationally, we will formally launch the ITAC England Hub in December with a Teaching Artists' Symposium, bringing together teaching artists, funders and policy makers from across England. We will also take our Northern Cultural Education Awards national, with plans now under way to host the first National Arts and Cultural Education Awards in Manchester in October 2026. This ambitious step will celebrate outstanding practice and champion excellence and equity across the country.

We are also investing in leadership for arts and cultural education. Our flagship programme, SLiCE (Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education), is being fully redeveloped and relaunched to bring together school and cultural leaders and equip them to act as effective system leaders - shaping policy, strengthening partnerships and driving change well beyond their own institutions. SLiCE Fellows will champion the place of arts and culture in learning, influencing how cultural education is planned, delivered and valued across schools and wider services for children and young people.

We are preparing carefully for an evolving policy environment. The Curriculum and Assessment Review and the new Schools White Paper, both expected in autumn 2025, are anticipated to strengthen and embed the role of arts and cultural education in schools. The forthcoming National Youth Strategy is expected to call for more and better cultural opportunities in informal learning settings, underpinned by major investment from the Dormant Assets Fund, now rebranded as Every Child Can. Alongside this, government attention to early years development, children's mental health and wellbeing, and improving outcomes for white working-class children and young people presents clear opportunities for us to contribute our expertise and influence.

We are also alert to the changing social climate. Across society we are seeing rising division, fear and intolerance, with young people increasingly exposed to influences that promote polarisation and mistrust. Our work will respond with determination, redoubling our commitment to use arts, culture and creativity as a force for empathy, understanding and hope.

In the year ahead, we expect Arts Council England to open applications for its next National Portfolio in the first half of 2026. We will prepare a strong case to secure NPO funding beyond 2028, ensuring that Curious Minds can continue to lead, innovate and invest in the future of arts and cultural education.

As the Department for Education establishes its National Centre for Arts and Music Education, we will work to position Curious Minds constructively within the new national ecology. We will continue to build strong alliances with funders and partners, expand our training and consultancy offer, and ensure that the voices of educators, artists and young people are heard in shaping policy and practice.

Our purpose remains constant: to champion every child's entitlement to brilliant arts and cultural learning and to support the people and partnerships who make it possible. We look to the future with hope, confident that by working together across places and systems we can build an education landscape where curiosity, creativity and culture belong to every child.

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# Financial Review

## Financial Results

The Trustees are pleased to report a variance in free reserves to £500,539 (2024: £621,869), keeping the Charity in a stable financial position to meet our future plans. We continue to plan for a new base and have therefore set aside further funds towards the cost of establishing this in the coming year. Total funds designated towards our new base and Transformation and Development programmes now total £762,628 (2024: £518,673).

Additional funding sources during the year derive from restricted grants, with a total of £211,139 (2024: £219,788) funds carried forward at the year end to meet the associated programme plans.

## Core funding

From April 2012 to March 2023, Curious Minds was in receipt of National Portfolio Funding and Department for Education funding from Arts Council England in respect of its status as a Bridge organisation. From April 2023 we were awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by Arts Council England, securing £2.4 million of funding over three years.

## Project funding

We also deliver a number of projects funded by Arts Council England, such as Artsmark Rural and #BeeWell, and have designed and delivered projects for the Steph Lampl Foundation and the GMCA/Workers' Education Association scheme during the year.

The Charity continues to aim for further diversify in incoming resources in future periods.

## Financial Risk Management

Within the wider risk management process, the Board of Trustees monitors and assesses financial risks to which Curious Minds may be exposed and assesses their potential impact on the Charity.

## Reserves policy

The level of unrestricted reserves has been set to meet the costs of retaining sufficient staff and covering overhead costs for six months in order to continue to pursue our objectives, given the planned investment in transforming our business model to become more sustainable over the period 2023 - 2026.

The target was reviewed in 2025 and the unrestricted reserves needed to meet these costs remained at £500,000 (2024: £500,000). During the current year, this target was met and at the year-end the free reserves stood at £500,539 (2024: £621,869).

At the discretion of the Trustees, the surplus above target can be designated to development work. The Trustees review the reserves policy annually.

## Investment policy

Our cash assets, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, are invested in appropriate fixed-term and notice cash deposit accounts that yield a greater return than our instant access current accounts. This investment policy is reviewed with reference to a detailed cash-flow analysis and assessment of future funding opportunities; however, the scheduling of cash outgoings (including grant claims) remains difficult to predict with accuracy, as this is largely in the control of our partners and therefore timing is unknown.

## Financial control and audit

The organisation's finances are overseen by the Finance and Operations Team. They use Xero Accounts software for financial processing and adhere to finance systems which were developed in partnership with our Auditors and are reviewed annually. Relevant staff receive appropriate training for day-to-day financial systems and consistently process financial information in an accurate and timely manner.

To ensure effective financial management within the organisation, management accounts are produced on a quarterly basis for the Executive Management Team and the Board of Trustees. The COO oversees core budgets, whilst programme budgets are reviewed between the Finance & Operations Manager and individual project budget holders to ensure that all transactions are posted accurately and according to the principles of accruals-based fund accounting.

The Board of Trustees have a comprehensive overview of audit requirements, financial policies and procedures, including accounting policies and compliance with statutory requirements, risk management and financial planning. The Board continues to appoint the external Auditors and approve their remuneration and terms of engagement and responds to any relevant matters relating to annual financial statements raised by the External Auditors as a result of their audit work.

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# Structure, Governance & Management

## Governing Document

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 17th December 2008, as amended by special resolutions dated 3rd March 2009, 25th June 2009 and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. The Company is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission.

## Trustee recruitment

Transparent procedures are an important element of good governance. All new Trustees to the Board are appointed through a transparent open recruitment process when skills and knowledge gaps in the Board are identified. A thorough induction to Curious Minds is given to all newly appointed Trustees and they receive a governance pack which includes the organisation's business plan and current financial budget, the organisation's memorandum and articles of association, the Trustee role and description and sub-committee terms of reference, the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee', and the publication 'Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector'.

Curious Minds' Board of Trustees is fortunate to contain a mixture of skills ranging from arts, culture, heritage, public services and education through to human resources and accountancy. This enhances the placement of the organisation as a key player within the arts and cultural sector, regionally and nationally.

Trustees are encouraged to attend events and project activity throughout the year to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of the work of Curious Minds, and they are required to attend an annual Board away day with the management team to develop their skills within the Board environment and to discuss key strategic issues for Curious Minds, which in turn informs the business planning process for the organisation.

## Related Parties and links with other organisations

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity. Trustees and members of the Curious Minds paid staff team are required to declare any interest - when considering what interests to declare, the principal rule is that if members of the general public could reasonably conclude that the interests might have an influence on an approach taken by Curious Minds to an application or contract awarded, to funding received by Curious Minds, or general organisational decisions taken by Curious Minds, then they must declare them.

Due to Curious Minds' recruitment of experienced sector leaders, it is inevitable that Trustees and Executive Management will have declared interests arising from either executive or non-executive appointments with Public, Cultural and Education Sector organisations. Where

Curious Minds engages with a partner organisation in which a declaration has been made, the interested party must be excluded from the decision making processes. It is considered that these transactions do not represent 'related party transactions' for reporting purposes.

## Decision making

The Board of Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management and decision making of Curious Minds to the Chief Executive. Significant decisions that impact on, for example, staff employment, business planning, financial stability and the sustainability of the organisation, are brought to the Board for approval prior to action taking place.

## Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which Curious Minds is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Curious Minds has a thorough risk management procedure wherein risks to which the organisation may be exposed are monitored and assessed as to their potential impact and likelihood. Appropriate controls are then identified and put in place to provide reasonable assurance against their occurrence.

The executive management team, led by the Chief Executive, monitor the risks associated with the organisation regularly and the updated risk register is presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly for discussion and approval.

## Internal policies

Curious Minds have a range of internal policies that have been written in consultation with appropriate professionals and that are reviewed annually and amended more frequently according to new legislation as appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the following areas:

- Employment (including wellbeing)
- Inclusion
- Pay policy (see note 5)
- Fund Management and Financial Controls (including procurement)
- Health & Safety (including Covid-19)
- Safeguarding
- Environmental sustainability.

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# Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Curious Minds for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements 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.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

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# Statement as to disclosure of information to Auditors

In so far as the Trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the Auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's Auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow Directors that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they are obliged to have taken as a Director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's Auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

## On behalf of the Board of Trustees:



Kathy McArdle

**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

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# Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of Curious Minds

## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Curious Minds (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flow, and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- the charitable company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement the Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with regulations made under that Act.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

### Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Identifying and assessing potential risks related to irregularities

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the sector, control environment and charitable company's performance;
- results of our enquiries of management about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charitable company's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:

- identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in relation to the timing of the recognition of income, and the recognition of grants payable. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override and we identified a risk in relation to the posting of unusual journals and the manipulation of accounting estimates.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the charitable company operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the reporting requirements of the funding bodies and the charity commission regulations.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the charitable company's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty.

## Audit response to risks identified

In addition to the above, our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations described above as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- enquiring of management and members of the Board of Trustees concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and reviewing correspondence with relevant authorities where matters identified were significant;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

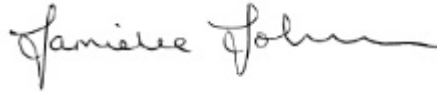
We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Jamielee Johnston CA  
Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP



***Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.***

# Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 (Including income & expenditure account)

	Note	2024/25		2023/24		2024/25	2023/24
		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	878,204	354,822	895,491	406,739	<b>1,233,026</b>	1,302,230
Investment income	2	47,330	-	36,846	-	<b>47,330</b>	36,846
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>925,534</b>	<b>354,822</b>	<b>932,337</b>	<b>406,739</b>	<b>1,280,356</b>	<b>1,339,076</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Expenditure on charitable activities	3	865,656	300,724	826,567	317,312	<b>1,166,380</b>	1,143,879
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>865,656</b>	<b>300,724</b>	<b>826,567</b>	<b>317,312</b>	<b>1,166,380</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>							
	6	59,878	54,098	105,770	89,427	<b>113,976</b>	195,197
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>	11	62,747	(62,747)	14,699	(14,699)	-	-
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR AFTER TRANSFERS</b>							
		<b>122,625</b>	<b>(8,649)</b>	<b>120,469</b>	<b>74,728</b>	<b>113,976</b>	<b>195,197</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>							
<b>BALANCES BROUGHT</b>	11	1,140,542	219,788	1,020,073	145,060	<b>1,360,330</b>	1,165,133
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>1,263,167</b>	<b>211,139</b>	<b>1,140,542</b>	<b>219,788</b>	<b>1,474,306</b>	<b>1,360,330</b>

The notes on pages 45 to 55 form part of these accounts.

# Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

	Note	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	8	88,832		33,986	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,441,966		1,386,376	
		<u>1,530,798</u>		<u>1,420,362</u>	
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>56,492</u>		<u>60,032</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<b>1,474,306</b>		<b>1,360,330</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<u><b>1,474,306</b></u>		<u><b>1,360,330</b></u>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted	11		<b>1,263,167</b>		<b>1,140,542</b>
Restricted	11		<b>211,139</b>		<b>219,788</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<u><b>1,474,306</b></u>		<u><b>1,360,330</b></u>

For the year ending 31 March 2025 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies but as this company is a charity, it is subject to audit under the Charities Act 2011.

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 45 to 55 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025.

And signed on their behalf by

**Kathy McArdle - Chair of the Board of Trustees**  
Company registration number 06775402



# Statement of Cash Flow for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

	2025	2024
Note	£	£
<b>Cash used in operating activities</b>		
Net movement in funds	113,976	195,197
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	2 (47,330)	(36,846)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	8 (54,846)	120,240
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	9 (3,540)	(161,987)
<b>Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities</b>	<b>8,260</b>	<b>116,604</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest income	2 47,330	36,846
<b>Cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>47,330</b>	<b>36,846</b>
<b>Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>55,590</b>	<b>153,450</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,386,376	1,232,926
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,441,966</b>	<b>1,386,376</b>

## Analysis of changes in net debt

The charity did not hold any overdraft or loan facilities nor finance lease obligations at the start or during the period covered by these accounts or in the previous accounting period.

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# Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

## 1. Accounting Policies

### ***Basis of Preparation***

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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102 - effective 1 March 2018), Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2016.

Curious Minds meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

### ***Going concern***

These accounts are prepared on the going concern basis. At the time of approving the financial statements the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the directors continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Charity has confirmed ACE grant funding to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and sufficient cashflow to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

### ***Incoming resources***

Income is recognised in the accounting period in which it is receivable, except in the following circumstances, when the income is deferred and included in creditors:

The income is unrestricted core funding for a specified future period.

A sales invoice has been raised ahead of work being carried out and there is no contractual entitlement to the income until the work has been done.

Not all the terms and conditions for the receipt of the grant instalment have been met.

The project has been completed and the grant conditions are such that unspent grant must be refunded.

Income includes grants in respect of revenue and capital items.

## ***Resources expended***

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

## ***Allocation and apportionment of costs***

Support costs have been allocated between the cost centres: salaries; travel and subsistence; learning, development and recruitment; marketing and publicity; premises related costs; and office, sundry costs and depreciation.

Central costs are charged to unrestricted funds with contributions to overheads levied to individual programmes as appropriate. Contributions to overheads are charged to programme funds, as agreed with funders and where funds are restricted, these are shown within fund transfers along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work.

## ***Grants payable and grant making policy***

Curious Minds issues grants in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid out within the various funding agreements we receive. The Charity does not have its own funds for grant making purposes.

In meeting our strategic objectives (and requirements of our funders where applicable), the nature of the investments committed determines grant making as the legal form to achieving this, as they do not constitute contracts for services.

Grant commitments are recognised when the legal agreements are signed and control of the grant funds is passed to the recipient or lead partner in a partnership.

Direct grant costs are allocated directly to the grant funds. Where agreed with the funder, a management charge is levied for central overheads, administration and contribution to reserves (this is credited to unrestricted funds, where associated costs are charged).

Where agreed with the recipient, grant repayments during the year are shown as a reduction in grants payable.

## ***Tangible fixed assets***

Single asset purchases, not forming part of a related series of transactions, costing less than £2,000 are not capitalised, but are written off as a revenue expense in the year of acquisition.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life:

Office Equipment / Furniture & Fixtures at 25% on cost

## ***Taxation***

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

The Charity is not registered for VAT and therefore all its input VAT is irrecoverable. Expenditure is analysed inclusive of VAT where this has been incurred.

## ***Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits***

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which pays 6% of gross salary. Contributions payable to the employees' personal pension schemes are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. The Charity' staging date for auto enrolment was 1/4/2017 and the scheme is compliant.

## ***Operating leases***

Payments under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

## ***Fund accounting***

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in this note to the financial statements.

## ***Designated Funds***

- ***Curious Stories***  
Funds generated from sale of the Curious Stories book, sponsorship as well as fundraising to enable disadvantaged children to better experience high quality arts and culture.
- ***Curious Space***  
Following closure of our Preston base in 2020, we have designated costs saved as set up funds towards a new base as we emerge from Covid-19 restrictions and home working.
- ***Development & Transformation Fund***  
Funds set aside to support development of income generation activities and international opportunities and towards Transformation of the business model from 2023, in conjunction with ACE Transform funding.
- ***Dialogic Teaching & Learning***  
A trial project to explore the impact of dialogic teaching and pedagogy.
- ***Hope Streets Fund***  
Additional funds to cover the required match contribution to the NLHF programme and cover ongoing legacy requirements.

## Restricted Funds

- **ACE Artsmark Projects**  
ACE funded projects to promote and embed Artsmark in areas where engagement is low.
- **ACE #BeeWell**  
Grant from Arts Council England for an Artsmark pilot project across Greater Manchester.
- **ACE Transform**  
Grant from Arts Council England towards organisational development working towards greater sustainability and less reliability on ACE.
- **Steph Lampl Foundation**  
Grant funding for a pilot project using poetry at it's core, aiming to improve mental wellbeing and coping strategies among young people.
- **The Lathums – Chance to See Fund**  
A fund inspired and supported by the band The Lathums to improve access to musical instruments and opportunities for children in Wigan.

## 2 INCOME

Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities:		2025	2024
Restricted Grants		£	£
Funding body	Purpose		
Arts Council England	Artsmark projects	40,000	30,000
Arts Council England	BeeWell	-	20,000
Arts Council England	Coronation Bandstands project	-	17,329
Arts Council England	Transform	179,984	220,521
Cultural Citizens	Cultural Citizens	-	3,984
Steph Lampl Foundation	Rhyme & Reason project	50,000	-
The Lathums fundraising	Chance to See Fund	9,838	16,715
University of Manchester	BeeWell	-	98,190
Workers' Education Association	Curious Works project	75,000	-
		<b>354,822</b>	<b>406,739</b>
Unrestricted Income			
Arts Council England	National Portfolio 2023/26	800,000	800,000
Bank Interest		47,330	36,846
Donations		-	2,028
Fees received		68,804	92,463
Other Income		9,400	1,000
		<b>925,534</b>	<b>932,337</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,280,356</b>	<b>1,339,076</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	Direct	Support	Direct	Support	Total	Total
	costs	costs	costs	costs	£	£
Grants payable	20,039	-	16,735	-	20,039	16,735
Project delivery	871,862	263,961	825,696	293,001	1,135,823	1,118,697
Governance costs	-	10,518	-	8,447	10,518	8,447
	<b>891,901</b>	<b>274,479</b>	<b>842,431</b>	<b>301,448</b>	<b>1,166,380</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>
% of total expenditure	76.5%	23.5%	73.6%	26.4%	100.0%	100.0%

Charitable expenditure is allocated between unrestricted and restricted funds as follows:

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	8,300	11,739	750	15,985	20,039	16,735
Project delivery	846,838	288,985	817,370	301,327	1,135,823	1,118,697
Governance costs	10,518	-	8,447	-	10,518	8,447
	<b>865,656</b>	<b>300,724</b>	<b>826,567</b>	<b>317,312</b>	<b>1,166,380</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>
% of total expenditure	74.2%	25.8%	72.3%	27.7%	100.0%	100.0%

#### b. Grants payable by programme

Programme	Number of grants to institutions		2025	2024
	2025	2024	£	£
	Arts Council England Artsmark BeeWell	7	-	24,470
Arts Council England - Bridge	-	2	(12,731)	16,235
Arts Council England Department for Education	-	-	-	(250)
Curious Minds	5	1	8,300	750
	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20,039</b>	<b>16,735</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2025	2024
<b>ACE - Artsmark BeeWell Programme grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bedford High School	Neighbourhood commissions	1,090	-
Bolton School	Neighbourhood commissions	3,850	-
Byrchall High School	Neighbourhood commissions	580	-
Falinge Park High School	Neighbourhood commissions	3,850	-
Golborne High School	Neighbourhood commissions	4,540	-
Holingwood Academy	Neighbourhood commissions	4,940	-
Piper Hill High School	Neighbourhood commissions	5,620	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>24,470</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Falinge Park High School	Pushing Boundaries	-	600
Cumbria Music Service	FRAME project	(12,731)	-
Manchester Metropolitan University	Intergenerational pilot	-	(1,694)
Music for Youth	Coronation Bandstands	-	17,329
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(12,731)</b>	<b>16,235</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACE DfE Extension grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
United Learning Trust	SLiCE Programme	-	(250)
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(250)</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Curious Minds</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Everything Human Rights	Chance to See Fund	1,800	-
Goldsmiths University	PhD Collaboration	2,500	-
Hawk Dance Theatre	Chance to See Fund	-	750
Healthy Arts	Chance to See Fund	1,500	-
ThickSkin Theatre	Chance to See Fund	1,500	-
Wigan YouthZoe	Chance to See Fund	1,000	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>750</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Total Grants Payable</b>	<b>20,039</b>	<b>16,735</b>
	<b>Total number grants</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>

## 4 Analysis of governance and support costs

	2025	2024
<b>Governance Costs</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Audit fee	9,000	8,400
Support costs	1,518	47
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>10,518</b>	<b>8,447</b>

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	Project Delivery	Gover-nance	Project Delivery	Gover-nance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Support Costs</b>						
Salaries	159,932	-	170,692	-	159,932	170,692
Travel & Subsistence	11,667	399	9,366	47	12,066	9,413
Learning & Development and recruitment	5,526	-	13,266	-	5,526	13,266
Legal & Professional Services	34,498	-	36,648	-	34,498	36,648
Premises related costs	9,940	-	11,089	-	9,940	11,089
Office, sundry costs & Depreciation	51,398	1,119	59,837	503	52,517	60,340
<b>Total Support costs</b>	<b>272,961</b>	<b>1,518</b>	<b>300,898</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>274,479</b>	<b>301,448</b>
% of total expenditure	99.4%	0.6%	99.8%	0.2%		

## 5 Staff Costs

The payroll costs of the charity were as follows:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Wages & salaries	665,811	598,543
Social Security costs	64,655	57,415
Pension costs	38,326	35,272
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>768,792</b>	<b>691,230</b>

One employee had earnings (excluding employer pension costs) over £60,000 during the year:

Number of employees	Band
One (2023: One)	£60,000 to £70,000

The remuneration costs during the year of the Executive Management Team as outlined on page 2 (inclusive of pension costs) was £198,556 (2024: £190,346 restated).

The average monthly head count was 18 staff (2024: 16 staff) and the average monthly number of full time equivalent employees (including casual and part time employees) during the year was:

	2025	2024
Average FTE	15.5	14.4

## 6 Net incoming resources before transfer

This is stated after charging:	2025	2024
	£	£
Auditors remuneration - Audit fees	9,000	8,400
Director's (Trustees) expenses	398	47
	<u>9,398</u>	<u>8,447</u>
Number of trustees claiming expenses:	2	1

## 7 Tangible fixed assets

Cost	Office Equipment	Furniture & Fittings	Total
	£	£	£
As at 1 April 2024	16,474	3,887	20,361
As at 31 March 2025	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>
Depreciation			
As at 1 April 2024	16,474	3,887	20,361
	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>
Net book value			
As at 31 March 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
As at 31 March 2024	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

## 8 Debtors

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trade debtors	6,047	3,387
Prepayments	70,430	11,746
Grant and other income receivable	12,355	18,853
	<u>88,832</u>	<u>33,986</u>

<b>9 Creditors falling due within one year</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade creditors	<b>11,217</b>	18,895
Contract commitments due and accrued	<b>8,105</b>	12,865
Accruals	<b>29,210</b>	28,272
Grants and income in advance	<b>7,960</b>	-
	<b><u>56,492</u></b>	<b><u>60,032</u></b>

Curious Minds pays all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of invoices due for payment.

Accruals include £15,730 (2024:£17,250), being the cost of staff annual leave due but not taken and carried forward at year end.

<b>10 Deferred income</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Buxton Opera House	<b>7,960</b>	-
	<b><u>7,960</u></b>	<b><u>-</u></b>
<b>Movement in deferred income</b>		
Balance as at 1 April	-	14,548
Amount released to income	-	(14,548)
Amount deferred in year	<b>7,960</b>	-
Balance as at 31 March	<b><u>7,960</u></b>	<b><u>-</u></b>

## 11 Statement of funds

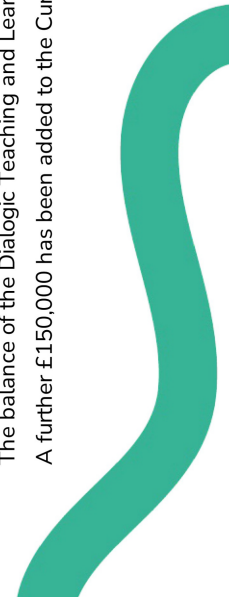
	Balance		Fund		Balance		Income		Expenditure		Fund		Balance	
	01/04/2023	£	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/3/2024 & 1/4/2024	£	£	£	£	Transfers	31/03/2025	£	£
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>														
General Fund	500,968	932,337	(826,135)	14,699	621,869	925,534	(861,611)	(185,253)	500,539					
<b>Designated Funds:</b>														
Curious Stories	6,193	-	-	-	6,193	-	-	-	6,193					
Curious Space	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	-	-	150,000	250,000					
Development & Transformation	344,287	-	(386)	-	343,901	-	-	145,117	489,018					
Dialogic Teaching & Learning	50,000	-	-	-	50,000	-	(2,883)	(47,117)	-					
Hope Streets	18,625	-	(46)	-	18,579	-	(1,162)	-	17,417					
	1,020,073	932,337	(826,567)	14,699	1,140,542	925,534	(865,656)	62,747	1,263,167					
<b>Restricted Funds</b>														
ACE Artsmark projects	-	30,000	(25,221)	-	4,779	40,000	(15,511)	(4,375)	24,893					
ACE BeeWell	74,338	20,000	(23,496)	-	70,842	-	(31,963)	-	38,879					
ACE Bridge Organisation	70,067	-	(70,067)	-	-	-	-	-	-					
ACE Coronation Bandstands	-	17,329	-	(17,329)	-	-	-	-	-					
ACE Transform	-	220,521	(94,481)	-	126,040	179,984	(196,571)	-	109,453					
Cultural Citizens	-	3,984	(3,984)	-	-	-	-	-	-					
Steph Lampl Foundation	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	(21,204)	(10,548)	18,248					
The Lathums - Chance to See Fund	655	16,715	(1,873)	2,630	18,127	9,838	(8,299)	-	19,666					
University of Manchester	-	98,190	(98,190)	-	-	-	-	-	-					
Workers' Education Association	-	-	-	-	-	75,000	(27,176)	(47,824)	-					
	145,060	406,739	(317,312)	(14,699)	219,788	354,822	(300,724)	(62,747)	211,139					
<b>Total Funds</b>	1,165,133	1,339,076	(1,143,879)	-	1,360,330	1,280,356	(1,166,380)	-	1,474,306					

### Notes on Statement of funds

Fund Transfers include contributions to salaries and overheads charged to programmes within individual funds, as agreed with funders, along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work in accordance with the use of those funds. Additionally, transfers include designation of reserves and consolidation of The net transfer of £62,747 (2024: £14,699) between restricted and unrestricted funds during the year is made up of £5,670 (2024: £NIL) agreed contribution to overheads and £57,077 (2024: £17,329) permissible programme costs, less a £NIL (2024:£2,630) contribution to The Lathums Chance to See Fund.

The balance of restricted funds represents expenditure not due at the Balance Sheet date from grant funding received.

The balance of the Dialogic Teaching and Learning fund has been incorporated in our wider development plans, with an addition of £98,000 from general funds. A further £150,000 has been added to the Curious Space designated fund towards development of our new base at Wigan Pier.



## 12 Analysis of net assets between funds

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	General Funds	Restricted Funds	General Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets	<b>1,263,167</b>	<b>211,139</b>	1,140,542	219,788	<b>1,474,306</b>	1,360,330
	<b>1,263,167</b>	<b>211,139</b>	1,140,542	219,788	<b>1,474,306</b>	1,360,330

## 13 Operating lease commitments

The charity has no commitments under operation leases for premises (2024: NIL).

## 14 Corporation tax

The company is a registered charity and is entitled to claim annual exemption from UK corporation tax.

## 15 Related Party Transactions

The following trustees were reimbursed travel and accommodation expenses to attend trustee meetings during the year of:

Kathy McArdle - £243 (2024: £46.70) and

Abby Symonds - £155 (2024: NIL).

Derri Burdon, Chief Executive, was appointed as Co Chair and Trustee of the Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) who were registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 10th May 2023.

Curious Minds provided the CLA with back office support from December 2023, for which fees of £14,350 were received in 2024/25 (2023/24 £1,100).

Our CEO's Daughter, Amy Hodgson is Founding Director of WigLe Dance CIC, a Wigan based youth-led dance organisation that produces the Wigan Borough Dance Festival. Curious Minds commissioned WigLe's youth and professional dance companies to perform at events throughout the year and sponsored the Wigan Borough Dance Festival that took place in March 2024, with WigLe receiving sponsorship, fees and reimbursed costs totalling £1,300 in 2024/25 (£3,633 in 2023/24).

WigLe Dance CIC commissioned the Curious Minds team for evaluation support, paying consultancy fees of £750 in 2024/25.

**CURIOUS MINDS**

England & Wales - Charity number 1130988

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# Accounts

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The logo for Curious Minds features the words "Curious" and "Minds" in a bold, black, serif font. The letter "i" in "Curious" has a purple dot, and the letter "i" in "Minds" has a teal dot. A thick, teal wavy line starts from the left side of the page, arches over the logo, and then curves down towards the bottom right corner.

# Curious Minds

## Curious Minds' Registered Office:

Studio 15, The Old Courts  
Gerrard Winstanley House  
Crawford Street  
Wigan  
Greater Manchester  
WN1 1NA

Curious Minds is a Company Limited by  
Guarantee and a Registered Charity

Registered Company    Registered Charity  
Number: 06775402    Number: 1130988

## Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

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# Company Information

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## Incorporation

The charitable company was incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and commenced trading on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

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## Trustees

Mrs. Karen Crowshaw – Chair (Retired 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023)  
Ms. Kathy McArdle – Chair (Appointed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023)  
Mr. Jonathan Robinson – Vice-Chair (From 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023)  
Ms. Samira Al’Obaidi  
Ms. Eleanor Chapman (Died 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023)  
Mr. Mustafa Hassan  
Mr. Jaffer Hussain (Resigned 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023)  
Ms. Janet Madden (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)  
Ms. Kara Orford (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)  
Ms. Alicia Smith  
Ms. Abby Symonds (Appointed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)  
Mr. David Wearing

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## Executive Management Team

Chief Executive Officer	Derri Burdon
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Kelly Allen
Chief Operating Officer	Sue Langfeld

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## Statutory Auditors & Accountants

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

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## Bankers

CAF Bank Limited  
25 Kings Hill Avenue  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent MA19 4JQ

## Solicitors

Counterculture Partnership LLP  
Unit 115  
Ducie House  
Ducie Street  
Manchester M1 2JW

# Chair's Statement

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It is with great pride and optimism that I present the Chair's statement for Curious Minds' 2023-24 Trustees Annual Report. This year marked a significant milestone as our first year as a new Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). Having been funded by Arts Council England as the North West Bridge since 2012, this transitional year has been both a period of reflection and forward planning.

Securing our core funding until March 2026 provided a welcome foundation of certainty, enabling us to engage in robust long-term planning. However, knowing that a general election was on the horizon, the Curious Minds team were working in an external climate of uncertainty tinged with hope that the next government will place greater value on the role of creativity and culture in children's lives.

I am delighted to have joined the organisation in November 2023 as Curious Mind's new Chair of Trustees. I am passionate about the value that cultural and creative experiences play in shaping the lives of children and young people and hope to bring my experience in that area and a fresh perspective to our board. I have also thoroughly enjoyed working with the fantastic staff team who are the beating heart of the organisation and will no doubt power it forward into its next phase of development locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Karen Crowshaw, our outgoing Chair, for her invaluable contributions over the past six years. Karen's leadership has been instrumental in guiding Curious Minds through significant growth and change.

We are also delighted to welcome three new Trustees to our board: Janet Madden, Kara Orford and Abby Symonds. Their diverse skills and passion for our mission will undoubtedly enhance our strategic direction and governance.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to announce that our application to become the ITAC England Hub has been successful. We eagerly anticipate the launch of the Hub later this year, which will further our mission to support and develop teaching artists and cultural education.

Additionally, we are excited about our partnership with Wigan Council to establish a new base for Curious Minds. This new national centre of excellence for Cultural Education and Teaching Artists will be a beacon of innovation and collaboration. We will be focussing our minds on establishing the centre in the latter part of 2024 and 2025.

As we navigate these changes and opportunities, the future remains bright and full of potential. The spirit of curiosity that drives our work continues to inspire us, and we look forward to another year of growth, creativity, and impact.

The future remains Curious!

**Kathy McArdle**  
**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

# Trustees' Annual Report

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## Our purpose and activities

The purposes of the charity are to advance for the public benefit the education of children and young people within England to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals, in particular by:

- supporting them to become successful learners and responsible citizens by working with others to extend the range, amount, quality and scope of formal and informal learning opportunities in the areas of creativity, arts, media, culture, heritage, humanities and science;
- supporting teachers, practitioners, carers, performers and artists in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in enabling children and young people both inside and outside formal education to develop and apply their skills and talents and to open up to them cultural and creative activity;
- developing programmes, where appropriate, in partnership with others to deliver positive learning outcomes and encourage the recognition, enjoyment and use of culture, media and heritage;
- empowering them to be involved in the promotion of cultural and learning activities and enhancing their skills, capacities and capabilities; and
- encouraging them to visit, experience, participate in, initiate and engage in cultural activities, places and performances.

Curious Minds aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the North of England through facilitating access to arts and culture for all. It promotes cultural education and enables creative innovation and collaboration between the cultural, educational and youth sectors.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main beneficiaries are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners and we are mindful that they all continue to work within a challenging social, financial and policy climate.

## Our Vision and Mission

**Our Vision** is for a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant culture is a regular part of every child's life and learning.

**Powered by curiosity**, we work to tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people who are often excluded by social and economic inequalities.

## Our Commitment to Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

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We want all children and young people to enjoy and contribute to the cultural life of society. We are ferociously committed to identifying and removing barriers to engagement for children and young people from marginalised backgrounds. We recognise this can only be achieved by a more diverse, resilient, and better-connected workforce. We commit to playing our part to bring about these changes – starting with ourselves. We are a Real Living Wage employer.

## Our Commitment to Quality

---

We believe that quality and equality go hand-in-hand. Raising the quality of the creative and cultural learning experiences all children and young people have access to, at school and in the community, is fundamental to 'levelling up' opportunity.

Developing the workforce is key. Overcoming preconceptions and barriers to engage with previously excluded children and young people is highly skilled work, yet most practitioners learn on the job with little support. We commit to creating new and clearer pathways that lead to the professionalisation of the Cultural Education workforce.

## Our Commitment to Climate Change

---

The global pandemic which struck in 2020 led to a year in which Curious Minds, and the wider world, changed. Our Action Plan and supporting Policy have been developed as we emerge from the pandemic and seize the opportunity to build on these changes to develop our environmental practices for the better.

We commit to redoubling our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our day-to-day operations and be more environmentally responsible. We seek to influence, educate, and

advocate for a post carbon future through our day-to-day work and programmes; including doing whatever we can to ensure children and young people see themselves as global citizens and develop the creative skills they will need to access opportunities arising from the transition to a low carbon economy.

# Our Values - The 7 Cs

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The 7C's are seven words beginning with the letter C by which we hold ourselves to account and invite others to do the same. They continue to guide our planning, recruitment and self-evaluation, and provide a framework for performance management.

- **We are CURIOUS**

We are hopeful for a fairer future. We explore new possibilities and seek out best and next practice, listening and responding to the opinions and ideas of others, especially children and young people.

- **We COLLABORATE**

Partnerships and collaboration are fundamental to how we work. In these times of change and uncertainty we understand the importance of listening to build meaning and grow collective impact.

- **We are COURAGEOUS**

We are relentless in our pursuit of fair access to creativity and culture for all, and work to disrupt the status quo. We accept and deliver challenge, especially concerning diversity, inclusion, quality and relevance.

- **We are CREDIBLE**

We are evidence driven and always learning. We draw expertise from across education and culture to skilfully navigate and connect both worlds. We seek out and build alliances with experts in their field.

- **We are CONSCIENTIOUS**

We take our leadership role seriously and never take for granted the privilege of being trusted by our funders and partners to do the right thing with the resources we hold. We practise Host Leadership, knowing when to step forward and when to step back.

- **We CARE**

We care deeply about children and young people, the adults who support them and the places where they live and learn. We embrace, celebrate and champion diversity in all its forms.

- **We CELEBRATE**

We celebrate and champion creative and cultural education, the diverse professionals championing and delivering it, and the children and young people it is for.

## Charging Considerations

Our main beneficiaries/stakeholders are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners, all of whom are working in a challenging financial and policy climate. Affordability and access to our programmes is important to us and remains a key consideration when we are planning our activity. Wherever possible, we provide places on our events and training programmes at low or no cost to participants using the grants we receive as subsidy. The decision whether to provide a service, place on training or at an event or conference is carefully balanced to ensure cost does not act as a barrier, but also taking into account our experience of drop-off when offering places for free (e.g., people register but don't turn up). We cost all our traded offers on a full cost recovery basis.

# Review of our Achievements and Performance in 2023/24

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Curious Minds continues to punch above its weight to achieve significant impact with limited resources. We choose to support the sector rather than directly working with young people and it is this strategic approach that enables us to have substantial regional, and more recently, national and international reach and influence as honest brokers and advocates for cultural and creative education.

We target our work to benefit children and young people living and learning in some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of England. We continue to support the cultural and education sectors to collaborate so that these children and young people can enjoy larger, richer cultural lives.

We are proud to be part of Arts Council England’s National Portfolio, **acting as a Field Catalyst Organisation for Cultural Education:**

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*“We are ‘field builders’ for cultural education; creating the conditions and catalysing action to bring about organisational and systemic change – one teacher, one youth worker, one creative practitioner at a time.”*

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In 2020 we worked with Social Value Lab to uncover a **distinct methodology**, which continues to inform how we work and who we work with to achieve our charitable objectives:

## Methodology



# Activity

Since April 2023 we have been using the following **Strategic Framework** to plan and deliver activity:

Our Mission	Our Theory of Change	Our 2023–2030 Priorities	Our Activity	Our Vision
In order to...	We will...	By focusing on...	Through the delivery of...	To achieve...
tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people	<b>INNOVATE</b> in the field of creative and cultural education	<b>1</b> Purposeful Inclusion & Relevance	learning and leadership <b>PROGRAMMES &amp; PARTNERSHIPS</b> that bring about individual, organisational and systemic change, <b>IMPACT Social Justice</b> outcomes and 'level-up' opportunity.	a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant arts and culture is a regular part of <b>EVERY</b> child's learning and life.
	<b>INVEST</b> in a diverse cultural education workforce	<b>2</b> Workforce & Leadership Development		
	<b>INFLUENCE</b> cultural education partnerships and policy	<b>3</b> Learning & Advocacy		
		<b>4</b> Quality & Creative Pedagogy		

## 1. Innovate

We innovate in the field of creative and cultural education by collaborating with multi-sector partners to explore and test new approaches to the delivery of cultural learning and leadership programmes.

### 1.1. AFTEC Cultural Leadership Programme

We were delighted to be approached by Hong Kong based AFTEC (Arts for Transformative Educational Change) to collaborate on their Jockey Club funded cultural exchange programme for teachers. Throughout the year we navigated the time difference to meet online with the team at AFTEC to plan a hybrid programme of leadership CPD with the Hong Kong based teachers for the 2024/25 academic year, including them visiting London in the Autumn of 2024.

### 1.2. #BeeWell GMCA Youth Health Champions Programme

Between January and October 2023, Curious Minds were contracted by GMCA to co-ordinate their #BeeWell informed Children in Need funded 'Youth Health Champions' Programme. 17 schools from 5 Greater Manchester Boroughs: Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford & Bury were involved in the programme. 17 teachers Completed Youth Health Champions Training to train and support participating young people in their schools to act as #BeeWell Youth Health Champions for their schools. Using participatory

budgeting practice, the young people had access to a commissioning pot of £5k per school which they used to commission activity with local providers, either on site or in local neighbourhood venues. Curious Minds delivered 'Commissioning with Confidence' training for both school staff and participating young people, and we worked with TiPP to develop and implement youth-led commissioning safeguarding models. We worked with the Royal Society of Public Health to write a Creative Health Module that forms part of the Youth Health Champions qualification.

### 1.3. BeeWell Artsmark Schools

We were appointed by the Arts Council England to deliver a pilot project focusing on the impact arts-based activity can have on the health and wellbeing of secondary school students.

We supported 7 Greater Manchester based secondary schools who took part in the #BeeWell survey to use their BeeWell data to identify areas of wellbeing priority, then plan and commission creative activity to respond to this need, whilst also meeting the Artsmark criteria.

Staff from participating schools took part in a range of training opportunities including:

- Young Health Champions RSPH Creative Health module 'train the trainer'
- Commissioning Cultural Partners
- Arts for Wellbeing
- Neurodiversity

They also received ongoing support from the Curious Minds team to deliver the key milestones of this project: delivering Youth Health Champions Creative module to 5 pupils; a micro-commission; neighbourhood commission of creative health activity.

#### School Quotes:

*"It means a lot to have excellent support to do this form of work."*

*"Brilliant and supportive as ever - appreciate the depth of understanding of my personal practice and setting and how this is factored in to the progression of discussions and plans."*

### 1.4. Curious Citizens Programme

Inspired by our successful 2017 Cultural Citizens pilot, Curious Citizens supported 4 schools in Wigan and 5 schools in West Cumbria to create compelling cultural learning experiences for Key Stage 3 pupils who would not normally have access to them. With a budget and support by specially trained Club Leaders, Key Stage 3 students worked in groups of ten to plan and experience five cultural trips. Along the way they engaged with inspiring creative professionals and experienced incredible cultural venues, developed essential life-skills, discovered new creative talents, and boosted their cultural capital.

The in-house evaluation reported positive outcomes for students:

- increased confidence to engage with cultural activities
- a greater sense of agency
- better social networks, and perseverance.

...and for teachers:

- greater understanding of pupil barriers to cultural education
- harnessing student leadership
- increased confidence to lead cultural education activities and trips
- increased understanding of how cultural education benefits the school.

**Teacher/Club Leader Quote:**

*“Last weekend, they were comfortably navigating walking to places they hadn’t been to before, town squares, walking into a gallery without asking if they were allowed first, some led by the more confident students but feel more comfortable that they can be somewhere like that and not waiting for an adult to show them.”*

### **1.5. Early Years Creative Co-labs**

Between January and October 2023, Curious Minds worked in partnership with researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University to develop a co-laboratory to explore how arts-based practices can be used to develop skills for playfulness in the early years workforce. Each co-laboratory was made up of a multi-professional team: artist/cultural organisation; specialist early years artist mentee; nursery practitioner. The project created 3 mentee artist placements. The model supported and built multi-professional capacity in the early years’ workforce.

The co-labs were based at Manchester Art Gallery’s Platt Hall site, where a lead and mentee artist worked alongside Martenscroft Children’s Centre and Stay & Play, Rusholme. Primed for Life dance company worked with a mentee artist at Sandcastles Nursery School, Morecambe. Horse + Bamboo Theatre and a mentee artist collaborated with Bacup Family Centre in Rossendale. Each co-lab was able to undertake individual research, around playful practice and explored how mentee artists can benefit from such experiences.

Practice was shared during and at the conclusion of the programme through events at Horse + Bamboo, Platt Hall and Manchester Metropolitan University, enabling a wider field of practitioners in arts and early years to benefit.

A network has evolved from these events. Hosted by Curious Minds, artists, researchers and early years practitioners meet online four times a year to continue to share practice and opportunities. The researchers in the MMU Children and Childhood Research Group will publish their report as book chapter in early 2025.

The work with Manchester Metropolitan University has contributed to one of our own team beginning a PhD in Education Research.

### 1.6. Goldsmiths University of London Partnership

A bracingly exciting year for the partnership between Curious Minds and Goldsmiths during which an application for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership provided the bulk of two further applications resulting in a long term substantial collaborative project to co-supervise a PhD in Creativity Curiosity and Professional Artists in Schools. The opportunity attracted a strong field of 22 applicants.

The successful candidate, Saul Argent, will conduct innovative research in the field of educational psychology that will advance Curious Minds' understanding of the special qualities of Teaching Artists' pedagogy and the impact and outcomes this achieves for children in the classroom. The year ahead will involve defining the research question, compiling an extensive and comprehensive review of the existing canon on the subject of Teaching Artists and drafting a research methodology. Curious Minds' Head of Evaluation and Learning Steph Hawke and Goldsmiths' Dr Omigie have plans for further enquiries into the world of creativity in education and plan to submit further proposals and grant applications in 2024-25.

## 2. Invest

We INVEST in a diverse cultural education workforce to develop, celebrate and professionalise the field of cultural education.

### 2.1. ARG (Anti-Racism Group)

Curious Minds' ARG was established in 2020 to support our long-term goal:

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*“Our permanent and extended workforce will be full of diverse individuals we have nurtured, and people who are very comfortable instigating sophisticated external conversations about inclusion and anti-racism. Our workplace will celebrate diversity and be a proud anti-racism role model for the sector and a conduit for change.”*

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The ARG met throughout the year to support our operational planning and recruitment processes. They played a valuable role in:

- Supporting the development of the Curious Creatives Network through targeted outreach to their networks
- Sitting on the recruitment panels for the new Head of Digital Innovation and Director of Relationships and Marketing

- Delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for teachers as part of Leading the Arts in Your School
- Facilitating sessions at our Cultural Education Summit in Wigan
- Taking part in judging panels for the Northern Cultural Education Awards

The ARG has given members the confidence to step up into strategic roles within the cultural sector, with members now sitting on the boards of The Everyman and Unity Theatre.

### Participant Quotes:

*"It has given me the confidence to talk about change and anti-racism with other organisations" (Amina Atiq, Poet & Freelance Artist, ARG member)*

*"Connecting to artists from different cultural backgrounds from my own, and seeing how other groups do things, has been really useful" (Zi Lan Lao, Pagoda Arts, ARG member)*

*"Curious Minds are creating safe and welcoming spaces for artists of colour, which is really important at this moment in time" (Mahboobeh Rajabi, Creative Producer & Freelance Artist, ARG member)*

*"It's important to keep anti-racism at the top of Curious Minds agenda and the ARG is modelling this for other organisations" (Niparun Nessa, Teacher & Freelance Artist)*

## 2.2. Artsmark Award

This year marked the end of our strategic role supporting the delivery of Artsmark Award with North West schools following Arts Council England's decision to tender for one central provider. Following deep consideration, we decided not to bid for the opportunity.

In the first quarter of the year, Arts Council England continued to fund us to provide a suite of support options for schools in the North West working towards their Artsmark Award. Working with our freelance Artsmark Associates, we delivered online Development Training and support sessions to help schools progress with the next milestone in their individual journeys.

Our Artsmark Associates also provided 26 schools with 1-1 bespoke support on SOC & SOI documents between April and July.

### School Quotes:

*"Thank you so much for your generosity with your time."*

*"All your advice was very thorough and I'm extremely grateful for your help."*

*"I want to thank you and Curious Minds for all your support while we completed our Silver mark. You were amazing - great advice and always at the end of an email or zoom call if needed."*

Curious Minds' contract for Artsmark support came to an end in July 2023, with the transition of the support offer to the National provider Goldsmiths.

### 2.3. Curious About Seminars

Across the year we continued to deliver our Curious About sessions with a focus on responding to the professional development needs of freelance practitioners, grassroots, and smaller cultural organisations. We delivered 9 Curious About sessions, working with leading experts and responding to sector and CYP priorities.

- 4th October 2023 - Wellbeing Dominoes with Cartwheel Arts
- 18th and 20th October 2023 - Neurodiversity with Starling CIC
- 3rd, 9th and 15th November 2023 - Arts and Wellbeing with Cartwheel Arts
- 7th March 2024 - HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) with Louise Roberts (DfE) and Louise Hesketh (Curious Minds)
- 11th March 2024 - Writing a Successful Funding Bid with Dr Steph Hawke and Louise Hesketh (Curious Minds)

We engaged 143 participants from across the cultural education sector, 25% of these from NPO's across the North and 75% freelancers & grassroots organisations.

In March 2024, Curious Minds co-hosted a briefing on the Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme, with the HAF Team at the Department for Education for freelancers and arts and cultural organisations. 16 individuals attended the online session, from Liverpool, Sheffield, Greater Manchester, Doncaster, Rotherham and Lancashire.

#### Participant Quote:

*"The session clarified what things to take into consideration when making a funding bid. I feel more confident in actually writing a bid. I didn't know where to start before."*

### 2.4. Curious Creatives Network

In November 2023 we launched our monthly online Curious Creatives Network, bringing together a wide range of creatives working in creative and cultural education.

The network has diversity and inclusion at its heart, featuring diverse speakers who share their valuable experiences and practices with the sector, creating engaging discussions and networking opportunities.

Curious Creatives Speakers 2023/24:

- Sameed Rezayan, Head of Learning at Factory International

- Keith Saha, Artistic Director and Co-CEO at 20 Stories High
- Adrian Jolly, Research Lead at Collective Encounters, exploring Trauma Informed Practice
- Sophia Newton, Anti-Racist Cumbria, exploring Arts and Activism

We engaged a total of 138 participants, approximately 40% were black, brown or ethnically diverse. 10 participants were from NPO's, 20 from grassroots organisations and 108 freelancers.

#### Participant Quotes:

*"Inspirational speakers and great energy".*

*"I enjoyed hearing about all the creative opportunities in the northwest".*

*"It was great to see such a diverse range of creatives come together".*

*"I enjoyed the relaxed feel and the speaker's passion shone through".*

## 2.5. Hyperlocal Partnerships

Curious Minds' approach to place-based working has evolved to a preferred approach where we work with partners in a distinct place to improve access to creativity and culture for children and young people there.

This year we engaged in hyperlocal partnerships in four places across the North of England:

- Allerdale & Copeland (West Cumbria)
- Ellesmere Port (West Cheshire)
- Rotherham (North Yorkshire)
- Wigan (Greater Manchester)

In **Allerdale & Copeland** we supported FRAME (the West Cumbria LCEP) to connect with secondary schools to deliver the pilot Curious Citizens Programme.

In **Ellesmere Port** we continued to work in partnership with the Ellesmere Port Cultural Learning Exchange and the C-Change Creativity Collaborative, including supporting a range of work-experience placements for local young people.

In **Rotherham** we worked in partnership with Rotherham Council and ROSIS (Rotherham School Improvement Service) to deliver a series of free online taster sessions which took place between April and July. We will continue to liaise with partners in Rotherham as they plan towards 2025 and their Children's Capital of Culture year but will direct our resource to where it is more needed.

In **Wigan**, our home borough, we are a key member of Culture Unlocked (Wigan's LCEP) and our CEO is Chair of Wigan's Cultural Partnership Board and part of the writing group

for the refresh of Wigan's Cultural Manifesto and we began to explore options for a permanent base in Wigan. Wigan schools were prioritised for places on our training and programmes, including the Curious Citizens and Peer Tutor Training pilot programmes.

## 2.6. LCEP's Networking

Developing a new role with LCEPs (Local Cultural Education Partnerships) and engaging with partnerships across Yorkshire & Humber has been key to our work this year. In May, all partnerships were sent a welcome email, outlining Curious Minds' new role as an NPO and our offer to LCEPs, including a termly newsletter, resources Padlet, and online network.

In July, we hosted a Partnership Agreement workshop, which was attended by representatives from 4 North West and 9 Yorkshire & Humber LCEPs.

We convened in-person gatherings for LCEP Chairs and Coordinators in September and December, with 29 LCEPs represented. Subjects under discussion included youth voice, events for schools, collaboration across LCEPs and communication methods. Feedback from meetings has been very positive, with the opportunity to connect and share ideas and information widely appreciated, and Curious Minds' support highly valued.

We invited contributions from across the North to our first LCEPs Connect newsletter, published in September and focusing on inclusion. Articles came from Sheffield, Greater Manchester, Pendle and Cheshire. The Spring issue focused on Youth Voice, with contributions from Wakefield, Warrington, Sheffield, Burnley, and Bolton. The newsletters have been viewed by over 1000 individuals. 69% of active North West & Yorkshire & Humber LCEPs have attended an online event or meeting.

### Feedback from LCEPs:

*"Being connected in to others through a central organisation makes me feel less adrift and isolated. Our LCEP feels connected to others in a more meaningful way."*

*"It is good to know that Curious Minds are supporting LCEPs and to feel there is someone we can go to with questions. Louise has been helpful in discussing funding options with us and is really supportive of our work."*

*"Appreciate the extension to Yorkshire LCEPs - would love this to continue."*

## 2.7. Leading the Arts in Your School

Between December 2023 & June 2024, we delivered one cohort of our arts leadership development programme, extending the opportunity to schools in Yorkshire & The Humber.

16 teachers based in schools across the North-West & Yorkshire successfully completed the course, which involved an online induction, three in-person training days, four online themed sessions and self-led learning via our online learning platform.

#### **Participant quotes:**

*"An excellent journey that has supported and enhanced my leadership of the Arts in my school setting. Well-resourced and organised, excellently delivered."*

*"The whole course has empowered and motivated me to improve the Arts in my school. It's given me so many exciting ideas that I have been able to put into place over the last few months. The chance to meet new, likeminded people who are in the same position as me has been fantastic. It has been great to learn about partnerships, how to set up a pupil voice group and how to increase diversity. Thank you!"*

#### **2.8. Let's Craft**

As part of the national Let's Craft partnership, led and supported by Crafts Council, Curious Minds received two despatches of craft packs from sponsors Hobbycraft in 2023-24. In spring 2023 we partnered with FRAME, the West Cumbria LCEP to distribute 480 boxes across Allerdale & Copeland. 14 organisations leading HAF activity were able to share boxes with children in receipt of FSM and a further 6 organisations, including Family Action shared boxes with the families they work with.

In summer 2023 Rotherham LCEP partner, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust led the distribution of 480 packs across the city through their faith network connections, to community centres and to Barnados, targeting families and children most in need. Church groups were able to lead craft sessions using the craft materials and provide participant families with boxes to take home.

#### **2.9. Liverpool's Royal Court, Theatre Mentoring Programme**

We continued to develop our partnership to support young creatives from Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to gain insights into the creative industries, both on and behind the stage. Plans are in place for 6 young mentees to work with 6 professional mentors, extending the partnership to involve Shakespeare North Playhouse and Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse Theatres.

#### **2.10. Ready Generations Partnership**

Curious Minds collaborated with Ready Generations to develop a 'Creative Inter-generational Curriculum' at the end of 2022. Based in a residential care village in Chester, Ready Generations have cultivated a unique approach to intergenerational learning.

A programme of activity in 2023/24 led to the development and testing of a pioneering and creative intergenerational curriculum called the Mirrored Curriculum Framework, this offers a broad and rich curriculum design that can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate the impact of intergenerational work for use across professional disciplines e.g., education, social care, health, libraries, museum and creatives.

The curriculum design included input from children, elders and their families linked specifically with the Belong Care Village and has been tested and trialled through a bespoke creative programme named the Harmony Wheels Programme and hosted under the intergenerational banner of Living Lives Together.

A range of spoken word and dance groups have been established and are continuing at Belong Chester.

These include:

- a spoken word history group,
- Intergenerational choir called the Sankofa Songsters, Sing-a long rambles, Intergenerational Repair Shop, storytelling sessions and an intergenerational Stay and Play Session,
- freelance creative artists have been involved throughout the project and one has now been commissioned by Ready Generations as a musical director.
- Richard O'Neill, freelance storyteller is now the resident storyteller at the Nursery and is co-constructing intergenerational stories based around life in the Nursery with the Ready Generations Team.
- Ready Generations were shortlisted for the Nursery World Creative Communities Award.

In October 2024, Ready Generations hosted an intergenerational creativity and learning conference at Theatre Porto in Ellesmere Port, supported by funding from Curious Minds. With over 70 delegates from across the UK, including academic researchers and leaders of intergenerational practice, workshops and sessions were hosted by a variety of settings, exploring the challenges and possibilities of intergenerational working, with a creative focus.

### **2.11. Young Associates**

This year's Young Associates programme saw 7 diverse early career Cultural Educators take part in our bespoke training and professional development programme. Between January and March 2024, they took part in 5 in-person sessions and 10 online sessions focussing on topics such as facilitation skills, health and well-being, and safeguarding. All of this was through the lens of changemaking and leadership as they are next generation of the cultural education workforce.

Progression and paid work opportunities included: being a Judge on the Northern Cultural Education Awards, Facilitators at the Cultural Education Plan consultation event with the LGA and forming a funding panel for the Chance to See Fund. We also saw a member of Cohort 1 returning as a Facilitator for this year's cohort.

**Participant quote:**

*"I've learnt that I have the tools, knowledge and intuition to facilitate and lead in the cultural sector".*

**Facilitator quote:**

*"I can't stress enough how important I feel it is that leaders are able to handle nuance and subtlety in order to successfully negotiate the complexities of the world and the Young Associates demonstrated a flexibility of thinking that left me feeling positive and hopeful for the future of the sector."*

### 3. Influence

We INFLUENCE cultural education partnerships, plans and policy by engaging with practitioners, leaders and politicians to galvanize cultural education partnerships and shape the debate about the importance of creativity and culture in childhood and adolescence.

#### 3.1. Case- Studies and Evaluation

This year 9 case studies of good practice were shared with the sector in a variety of ways. Our successful 5-year National Lottery Heritage Fund 'Hope Streets' project was featured in English Heritage's report into Young People's Engagement with Heritage. Our evaluation of the Superheroes project for Liverpool-based arts organisation 'Writing on the Wall' was shared online and we produced an impact report for regional infrastructure organisation 'Youth Focus North West'. Our work with schools to generate arts interventions in response to the BeeWell wellbeing survey was shared in the local press. Chester Zoo commissioned us to develop their evaluation practice and a case study of the inclusive evaluation work delivered by Associate, Dr Sue Caudle was shared online and with the Local Cultural Education Partnerships via the newsletter we produce on their behalf.

#### 3.2. Cultural Education Summit

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023, Curious Minds collaborated with the Local Government Association, and Wigan Council to host the North West Cultural Education Summit at The Edge Arena, Wigan.

This summit brought together 122 delegates from across local government, education, the cultural sector and children's services to discuss the findings of the [Commission on Culture and Local Government](#), and to consider how local government can collaborate with

education providers and the cultural sector to support the government's proposal for a national [Cultural Education Plan](#).

- Speakers on the day included:
- Alison McKenzie-Folan – CEO, Wigan Council
- Steve Moffit – CEO, A New Direction
- Sally Bacon – Co-chair, Cultural Learning Alliance
- Joanna Casson – Senior Policy Advisor, DCMS
- Clive Fischer – Senior Executive Officer, DfE

*“How can we NOT invest [in arts and culture] if we really want to do something about people’s health and wellbeing or enrich the lives of children and young people.” [Alison McKenzie-Folan]*

### **3.3. Northern Cultural Education Awards**

Throughout the year the Curious Minds team were busy behind the scenes planning and gathering nominations for the Northern Cultural Education Awards to be held in Wigan on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024. More than 150 nominations were received across 8 different categories.

### **3.4. The Culture Hub**

Curious Minds continues to manage The Culture Hub online portal, a legacy from our NW Bridge organisation role. As technology moves on at a pace the site is beginning to look tired and outdated. Its future is being considered within our Transition & Transform programme as part of a wider review of our digital assets and development plans.

### **3.5. Thought Leadership & Public Affairs**

Our partnership with the specialist education team at PR and public affairs agency PLMR continued this year with a focus on positioning the charity as a thought leader in the field of cultural education and increasing its profile with relevant politicians. This led to us publishing thought leadership articles in key specialist publications, including: Teach Secondary, Teaching Times, Teach Primary, Education Journal, Basic & Workplace Skills Bulletin, 14-19 Learning & Skills Bulletin. The articles covered a range of topics including: the role of arts and culture on young people’s mental health; the importance of school trips and visits; closing the skills gap by building cultural capital.

# Organisational Development

## Transition and Transform

Leaving behind our Bridge organisation status to join Arts Council England's National Portfolio proper, meant we were simultaneously grappling two significant challenges. As we adapted our plans and programmes to deliver our new role and secure the charity's future:

- **TRANSITIONING** from being a Bridge organisation (appointed by Arts Council England to deliver 'sector support' across the North West) to become an NPO (delivering services and programmes across the wider North and nationally). This process requires us to shift deeply ingrained perceptions about what we do, how and where we do it [see table below].

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*A key challenge is to maintain and grow our status as a strategic backbone organisation now that we are no longer an Arts Council England appointed Bridge organisation.*

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- **TRANSFORMING** our business model and operational structure to manage the 40% cut to our Arts Council England (ACE) regular grant funding; having been funded at a similar level since 2012.

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*A key challenge is to diversify sources of income to support our charitable objectives. We need to attract new funders and sponsors, and increase income through trading our training, evaluation and facilitation services.*

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We are delighted to have been awarded £503,800 Arts Council England Transform Funding from 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2026. We are matching this directly with £140,000 from our free reserves and have designated an additional £160,000 as a strategic development fund across the three-year period.

### 2023-24 was Phase 1 of a 3-year Transition and Transform Delivery Plan.

During this seven-month 'explore and test' phase we laid strong foundations to be able to deliver the next two phases of this important change programme:

<b>Phase 1</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2023 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	<b>EXPLORE &amp; TEST</b>
<b>Phase 2</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025	<b>MARKET &amp; DELIVER</b>
<b>Phase 3</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	<b>REVIEW &amp; EMBED</b>

The programme comprises 5 interdependent activity strands:

- STRAND 1 Creating Capacity for Transformation
- STRAND 2 Digital Transformation
- STRAND 3 Developing New Products & Services
- STRAND 4 Leveraging Value from Existing IP
- STRAND 5 A New Approach to Fundraising

Progress made this year includes:

### STRAND 1 – Creating Capacity for Transformation

- a. We created a new senior post ‘Director of Relationships and Marketing’.
- b. We facilitated the learning and professional development of our staff team. This included the whole staff undertaking the SAIL Carbon Literacy Training, and operational managers completing ICA Facilitation Training. Individual team members engaged in role specific professional development opportunities, including:
  - Saphena Aziz, Director of Inclusion & Workforce - Clore, Leadership Pulse
  - Teresa Baggaley, Cultural Education Manager – CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in Organisational Learning and Development (with Development Processes Group Ltd).
  - Derri Burdon, CEO - National Arts Fundraising School.
  - Tom Edwards, Digital Marketing & Campaigns Co-ordinator – Clore, Emerging Leaders

### STRAND 2 – Digital Transformation

- a. We created a new senior role ‘Head of Digital Innovation’ and were delighted to welcome Bill Lam into the role in March 2024.
- b. Following Bill’s appointment, we commenced the design and build of a new CRM. We commissioned the expertise of Time Technologies who guided us to scope a new system that will meet the needs of the organisation now and into the future.
- c. We began the process of scoping a new website, working in partnership with consultants at Creative Nation.

### STRAND 3 – Developing New Products & Services

- a. We successfully applied to become the ITAC (International Teaching Artists Collaborative) England Hub.
- b. We worked with former UFA Regional Manager Manjit Shellis to redevelop the UFA **Peer Tutor Training** materials by injecting our expertise in cultural education and curiosity-driven pedagogy. Between December 2023 and March 2024, 5 partner schools in Wigan and West Cumbria took part in a peer tutoring pilot programme based on the UFA model. Across 2 primary schools and 3 secondary students, 55

students received two days of training in peer tutoring methods, to support tutees within their schools. Subject foci included reading, maths, culture and personal achievement, life skills and social skills. Peer tutors began a twelve-week programme with their tutees in April 2024.

#### **Teacher feedback:**

*“The programme is excellent for placing students out of their comfort zone. It was a privilege to watch them grow and develop in confidence.”  
(teacher, secondary school)*

*“Most tutors are eager to work with their partners and a general ‘yes’ sounds out when we have asked the children to get their books out for a session!” (teacher, primary school)*

We plan to further develop the course materials to be able to offer an arts & culture specific Peer Tutoring course that will embed student leadership into curriculum and enrichment offers in primary and secondary schools.

#### **STRAND 4 – Leveraging Value from Existing IP**

- a. **I'm a Teenager Get Me Into there!** is our ground breaking training programme aimed at the staff teams of cultural and heritage venues and libraries and developed as part of our 5-year £1m National Lottery Heritage Fund project 'Hope Streets'. It aims to support public-facing staff to feel more confident in their interactions with young people and better able to create a welcoming, inclusive environment for the young people they invite into their building. This year we have delivered 7 'in-house' training sessions resulting in 22 venues receiving this training across the country. We have delivered 1 'train-the trainer' session to 1 venue, and 1 'public' training session engaging 9 different venues from across the country.

In total we have directly reached 32 venues nationally including; Birmingham University, National Museums Liverpool, The National Theatre, National Trust, YMCA Leicester and various museums and heritage sites across Yorkshire, East Midlands and the East of England. The training has been written into 2 funding bids. We have had 454 downloads of the free self-facilitation packs from 335 different users of the online platform.

#### **Participant Quotes:**

*“The team from Curious Minds provided a masterclass in how to engage teenagers and tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people. Their insightful workshop covered a range of areas and*

*activities that built empathy, understanding and provided a wealth of knowledge to work on making practical changes to our practices.”*

*“This is a session relevant to all museum and gallery workers. This session ensures that staff can approach teenagers, engage successfully with them and use an understanding of their development to ensure spaces are safe for this audience.”*

*“Will be brought up at SMT, will lead to change and internal training.”*

*“I don't think teenagers have been specifically considered before at our venue, I will share this knowledge and bear it in mind for future planning.”*

*“Hopefully will offer some staff/vol training, using the free training online or some of the activities we have done today.”*

- b. At the start of the year we commissioned NW based designer Noe Baba to refresh our suite of sub-brands to complement our new brand guidelines and logo.

### **STRAND 5 – A New Approach to Fundraising**

- a. This year marked the launch of the Chance to See Fund – an exciting collaboration between successful indie band The Lathums and Curious Minds. The partnership aims to bring joy, hope and positivity to the lives of financially disadvantaged children and young people who live in the Wigan Borough.

Inspired by a lyric from The Lathums’ 2021 single ‘How Beautiful Life Can Be’, the fund was created in response to the cost-of -living crisis and inspired by the band’s own successes having had access to music education as teenagers.

Through various fundraising activities at their gigs and festivals, the band raised £20,000. Funds have started to be distributed in the 2024-2025 financial year.

# Our Plans for the Future

The Trustees, Executive Management Team and staff of Curious Minds remain ambitious for the charity's future, knowing that our work is still urgent and very much needed.

However, we are hopeful that the change of government will create more favourable conditions for our work and charitable purpose. Speaking at the Labour Party Conference 2024, Lisa Nandy, Secretary of State for DCMS, spoke passionately about the important role creativity and culture play in the learning and lives of children and young people:

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*"We're going to reignite the imagination of the next generation. Because a complete education is a creative education."*

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But we know that pressures on public finances mean we will continue to operate in a climate of austerity. While we are ambitious about increasing levels of generated income into the organisation through selling our courses and services, we are resolved to depending on grant funding from public and charitable sources to be able to deliver our work and programmes for the foreseeable future.

Later this year we will apply to Arts Council England (ACE) to extend our NPO grant to March 2027 and, looking further ahead, will apply to secure our place within ACE's National Portfolio long-term. We will continue to nurture relationships with a wider range of funders and supporters and place a greater focus on securing philanthropic support and individual giving.

It is vital therefore that we continue to improve how we measure the impact of our work and how we tell the story of the difference we make for children and young people, their schools and communities. To this end, we will take necessary steps to strengthen our approach to marketing and communications and enhance our systems for monitoring and evaluation. This will include the implementation of a new CRM system and trialling the 'Most Significant Change' approach to evaluation.

We will use our new role as the ITAC England Hub to amplify Curious Minds' position as a centre of excellence for creative and cultural education on the national and international stage. At the same time, our hyperlocal work in neighbourhoods across the North, including our home borough of Wigan, will ensure that we remain rooted in our region and connected to the grassroots providers and diverse freelancers who form the bedrock of the cultural education workforce.

Most crucially, we need to keep listening to, learning from and ensuring our work and plans are influenced by children and young people. We are grateful to our partners Youth Focus

North West for sharing their expertise with us to embed The Lundy Model as a framework to underpin our approach to Youth Voice & Leadership. As well as improving our own practices, we will use the model (Space, Voice, Audience and Influence) to inform how we work with external partners or commissioners to advocate for children and young people to have the best experience possible through the creative and cultural offers we are involved in shaping and delivering.

# Financial Review

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## Financial Results

The Trustees are pleased to report an increase in free reserves to £621,869 (2023: £500,968) keeping the Charity in a stable financial position for meeting our plans for the future. We continue to plan for a new base and have therefore set aside further funds towards the cost of establishing this in the coming year.

Additional funding sources during the year derive from restricted grants, with a total of £219,788 (2023: £145,060) funds carried forward at the year end to meet the associated programme plans.

## Core funding

From April 2012 to March 2023, Curious Minds was in receipt of National Portfolio Funding and Department for Education funding from Arts Council England in respect of its status as a Bridge organisation. From April 2023 we were awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by Arts Council England, securing £2.4 million of funding over three years.

## Project funding

We delivered the Hope Streets project through National Lottery Heritage funding which commenced in 2018 and ran until March 2023. Total funding for the project was £1,127,000.

The Charity continues to aim for further diversify in incoming resources in future periods.

## Financial Risk Management

Within the wider risk management process, the Board of Trustees monitors and assesses financial risks to which Curious Minds may be exposed and assesses their potential impact on the Charity.

## Reserves policy

The level of unrestricted reserves has been set to meet the costs of retaining sufficient staff and covering overhead costs for six months in order to continue to pursue our objectives, given the planned investment in transforming our business model to become more sustainable over the period 2023 - 2026. The target was reviewed in 2024 and the unrestricted reserves needed to meet these costs remained at £500,000 (2023: £500,000). During the current year, this target was met and at the year-end the free reserves stood at £621,869 (2023: £500,968). At the discretion of the Trustees, the surplus above target can be designated to development work. The Trustees review the reserves policy annually.

## Investment policy

Our cash assets, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, are invested in appropriate fixed-term and notice cash deposit accounts that yield a greater return than our instant access current accounts. This investment policy is reviewed with reference to a detailed cash-flow analysis and assessment of future funding opportunities; however, the scheduling of cash outgoings (including grant claims) remains difficult to predict with accuracy, as this is largely in the control of our partners and therefore timing is unknown.

## Financial control and audit

The organisation's finances are overseen by the Finance and Operations Team. They use Xero Accounts software for financial processing and adhere to finance systems which were developed in partnership with our Auditors and are reviewed annually. Relevant staff receive appropriate training for day-to-day financial systems and consistently process financial information in an accurate and timely manner.

To ensure effective financial management within the organisation, management accounts are produced on a quarterly basis for the Executive Management Team and the Board of Trustees. The COO oversees core budgets, whilst programme budgets are reviewed between the Finance & Operations Manager and individual budget holders to ensure that all transactions are posted accurately and according to the principles of accruals-based fund accounting.

The Board of Trustees have a comprehensive overview of audit requirements, financial policies and procedures, including accounting policies and compliance with statutory requirements, risk management and financial planning. The Board continues to appoint the external Auditors and approve their remuneration and terms of engagement and responds to any relevant matters relating to annual financial statements raised by the External Auditors as a result of their audit work.

# Structure, Governance & Management

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## Governing Document

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 17th December 2008, as amended by special resolutions dated 3rd March 2009, 25th June 2009 and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. The Company is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission.

## Trustee recruitment

Transparent procedures are an important element of good governance. All new Trustees to the Board are appointed through a transparent open recruitment process when skills and knowledge gaps in the Board are identified. A thorough induction to Curious Minds is given to all newly appointed Trustees and they receive a governance pack which includes the organisation's business plan and current financial budget, the organisation's memorandum and articles of association, the Trustee role and description and sub-committee terms of reference, the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee', and the publication 'Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector'.

Curious Minds' Board of Trustees is fortunate to contain a mixture of skills ranging from arts, culture, heritage, public services and education through to human resources and accountancy. This enhances the placement of the organisation as a key player within the arts and cultural sector, regionally and nationally.

Trustees are encouraged to attend events and project activity throughout the year to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of the work of Curious Minds, and they are required to attend an annual Board away day with the management team to develop their skills within the Board environment and to discuss key strategic issues for Curious Minds, which in turn informs the business planning process for the organisation.

## Related Parties and links with other organisations

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity. Trustees and members of the Curious Minds paid staff team are required to declare any interest - when considering what interests to declare, the principal rule is that if members of the general public could reasonably conclude that the interests might have an influence on an approach taken by Curious Minds to an application or contract awarded, to funding received by Curious Minds, or general organisational decisions taken by Curious Minds, then they must declare them.

Due to Curious Minds' recruitment of experienced sector leaders, it is inevitable that Trustees and Executive Management will have declared interests arising from either executive or non-executive appointments with Public, Cultural and Education Sector organisations. Where Curious Minds engages with a partner organisation in which a declaration has been made, the interested party must be excluded from the decision making processes. It is considered that these transactions do not represent 'related party transactions' for reporting purposes.

## Decision making

The Board of Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management and decision making of Curious Minds to the Chief Executive. Significant decisions that impact on, for example, staff employment, business planning, financial stability and the sustainability of the organisation, are brought to the Board for approval prior to action taking place.

## Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which Curious Minds is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Curious Minds has a thorough risk management procedure wherein risks to which the organisation may be exposed are monitored and assessed as to their potential impact and likelihood. Appropriate controls are then identified and put in place to provide reasonable assurance against their occurrence.

The executive management team, led by the Chief Executive, monitor the risks associated with the organisation regularly and the updated risk register is presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly for discussion and approval.

## Internal policies

Curious Minds have a range of internal policies that have been written in consultation with appropriate professionals and that are reviewed annually and amended more frequently according to new legislation as appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the following areas:

- Employment (including wellbeing)
- Inclusion
- Pay policy (see note 5)
- Fund Management and Financial Controls (including procurement)
- Health & Safety (including Covid-19)
- Safeguarding
- Environmental sustainability.

# Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

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The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Curious Minds for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements 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.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

## Statement as to disclosure of information to Auditors

In so far as the Trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the Auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's Auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow Directors that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they are obliged to have taken as a

Director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's Auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

**On behalf of the Board of Trustees:**



**Kathy McArdle**  
**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

23/10/2024

# Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of Curious Minds

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## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Curious Minds (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flow, and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- the charitable company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement the Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless

the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

### **Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud**

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### **Identifying and assessing potential risks related to irregularities**

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the sector, control environment and charitable company's performance;
- results of our enquiries of management about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charitable company's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
  - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
  - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
  - the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in relation to the timing of the recognition of income, and the recognition of grants payable. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override and we identified a risk in relation to the posting of unusual journals and the manipulation of accounting estimates.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the charitable company operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the reporting requirements of the funding bodies and the charity commission regulations.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the charitable company's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty.

### **Audit response to risks identified**

In addition to the above, our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations described above as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- enquiring of management and members of the Board of Trustees concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;

- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and reviewing correspondence with relevant authorities where matters identified were significant;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*Mitchell Charlesworth*

01/11/2024

Jamielee Johnston CA  
Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

# Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Including income & expenditure account)

	Note	2023/24		2022/23		2023/24	2022/23
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
		Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	895,491	406,739	58,156	1,938,678	<b>1,302,230</b>	1,996,834
Investment income	2	36,846	-	16,368	-	<b>36,846</b>	16,368
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>932,337</b>	<b>406,739</b>	<b>74,524</b>	<b>1,938,678</b>	<b>1,339,076</b>	<b>2,013,202</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Expenditure on charitable activities	3	826,567	317,312	374,856	1,650,225	<b>1,143,879</b>	2,025,081
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>826,567</b>	<b>317,312</b>	<b>374,856</b>	<b>1,650,225</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>	<b>2,025,081</b>
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>							
	6	105,770	89,427	(300,332)	288,453	<b>195,197</b>	(11,879)
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>	11	14,699	(14,699)	620,372	(620,372)	-	-
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR AFTER TRANSFERS</b>							
		<b>120,469</b>	<b>74,728</b>	<b>320,040</b>	<b>(331,919)</b>	<b>195,197</b>	<b>(11,879)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>							
<b>BALANCES BROUGHT</b>	11	1,020,073	145,060	700,033	476,979	<b>1,165,133</b>	1,177,012
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>1,140,542</b>	<b>219,788</b>	<b>1,020,073</b>	<b>145,060</b>	<b>1,360,330</b>	<b>1,165,133</b>

The notes on pages 43 to 55 form part of these accounts.

# Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

	Note	2024 £	2024 £	2023 £	2023 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	8	33,986		154,226	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>1,386,376</u>		<u>1,232,926</u>	
		<b>1,420,362</b>		<b>1,387,152</b>	
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>60,032</u>		<u>222,019</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<b>1,360,330</b>		1,165,133
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<b><u>1,360,330</u></b>		<b><u>1,165,133</u></b>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted	11		<b>1,140,542</b>		1,020,073
Restricted	11		<b>219,788</b>		145,060
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b><u>1,360,330</u></b>		<b><u>1,165,133</u></b>

For the year ending 31 March 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies but as this company is a charity, it is subject to audit under the Charities Act 2011.

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 43 to 55 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024

And signed on their behalf by



**Kathy McArdle - Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Company registration number 06775402**

# Statement of Cash Flow for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

	2024	2023
Note	£	£
<b>Cash used in operating activities</b>		
Net movement in funds	195,197	(11,879)
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	2 (36,846)	(16,368)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	8 120,240	(24,590)
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	9 (161,987)	89,354
<b>Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities</b>	<b>116,604</b>	<b>36,517</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest income	2 36,846	16,368
<b>Cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>36,846</b>	<b>16,368</b>
<b>Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>153,450</b>	<b>52,885</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,232,926	1,180,041
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,386,376</b>	<b>1,232,926</b>

## Analysis of changes in net debt

The charity did not hold any overdraft or loan facilities nor finance lease obligations at the start or during the period covered by these accounts or in the previous accounting period.

# Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

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## 1. Accounting Policies

### Basis of Preparation

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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102 - effective 1 March 2018), Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2016.

Curious Minds meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

### Going concern

These accounts are prepared on the going concern basis. At the time of approving the financial statements the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the directors continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Charity has confirmed ACE grant funding to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and sufficient cashflow to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

### Incoming resources

Income is recognised in the accounting period in which it is receivable, except in the following circumstances, when the income is deferred and included in creditors:

- The income is unrestricted core funding for a specified future period.
- A sales invoice has been raised ahead of work being carried out and there is no contractual entitlement to the income until the work has been done.
- Not all the terms and conditions for the receipt of the grant instalment have been met.
- The project has been completed and the grant conditions are such that unspent grant must be refunded.

Income includes grants in respect of revenue and capital items.

## Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

## Allocation and apportionment of costs

Support costs have been allocated between the cost centres: salaries; travel and subsistence; learning, development and recruitment; marketing and publicity; premises related costs; and office, sundry costs and depreciation.

Central costs are charged to unrestricted funds with contributions to overheads levied to individual programmes as appropriate. Contributions to overheads are charged to programme funds, as agreed with funders and where funds are restricted, these are shown within fund transfers along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work.

## Grants payable and grant making policy

Curious Minds issues grants in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid out within the various funding agreements we receive. The Charity does not have its own funds for grant making purposes.

In meeting our strategic objectives (and requirements of our funders where applicable), the nature of the investments committed determines grant making as the legal form to achieving this, as they do not constitute contracts for services.

Grant commitments are recognised when the legal agreements are signed and control of the grant funds is passed to the recipient or lead partner in a partnership.

Direct grant costs are allocated directly to the grant funds. Where agreed with the funder, a management charge is levied for central overheads, administration and contribution to reserves (this is credited to unrestricted funds, where associated costs are charged).

Where agreed with the recipient, grant repayments during the year are shown as a reduction in grants payable.

## Tangible fixed assets

Single asset purchases, not forming part of a related series of transactions, costing less than £2,000 are not capitalised, but are written off as a revenue expense in the year of acquisition.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life:

Office Equipment / Furniture & Fixtures at 25% on cost

## Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

The Charity is not registered for VAT and therefore all its input VAT is irrecoverable. Expenditure is analysed inclusive of VAT where this has been incurred.

## Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which pays 6% of gross salary. Contributions payable to the employees' personal pension schemes are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. The Charity' staging date for auto enrolment was 1/4/2017 and the scheme is compliant.

## Operating leases

Payments under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

## Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in this note to the financial statements.

## Designated Funds

- **Curious Stories**

Funds generated from sale of the Curious Stories book, sponsorship as well as fundraising to enable disadvantaged children to better experience high quality arts and culture.

- **Curious Space**

Following closure of our Preston base in 2020, we have designated costs saved as set up funds towards a new base as we emerge from Covid-19 restrictions and home working.

- **Development & Transformation Fund**

Funds set aside to support development of income generation activities and international opportunities and towards Transformation of the business model from 2023, in conjunction with ACE Transform funding.

- **Dialogic Teaching & Learning**

A trial project to explore the impact of dialogic teaching and pedagogy.

- **Hope Streets Fund**

Additional funds to cover the required match contribution to the NLHF programme and cover ongoing legacy requirements.

## Restricted Funds

- **ACE Artsmark Projects**

Grant from Arts Council England for an Artsmark pilot project across Greater Manchester.

- **ACE Bridge Organisation**

Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of the Bridge role for the North West of England (Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester & Cheshire).

- **ACE Coronation Bandstands**

Funding from Arts Council England to support projects centred around Bandstands throughout England and engaging children and young people in music and the arts to celebrate the King Charles III's coronation.

- **ACE DfE Extension**

Grant from Department for Education, paid by Arts Council England, for Bridge network expansion activity.

- **ACE Transform**

Grant from Arts Council England towards organisational development working towards greater sustainability and less reliability on ACE.

- **Cultural Citizens**

A balance of grant funding remaining from a previous Cultural Citizens programme and used to support a refreshed delivery.

- **Erasmus+**

European Commission grant funding for a partnership project to explore arts-based youth work.

- **DWP Kickstart**

Grant funding from DWP contributing to short term employment opportunities for young people.

- **NLHF Kick the Dust Hope Street**

Grant received from National Lottery Heritage Fund for delivery of the 'Kick the Dust' Programme.

- **The Lathums – Chance to See Fund**

A fund inspired and supported by the band The Lathums to improve access to musical instruments and opportunities for children in Wigan.

- **University of Manchester**

Funding from Children in Need awarded to the University of Manchester for the GMCA BeeWell project used in full to commission artists working alongside schools.

## 2 INCOME

<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities:</b>		<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Restricted Grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Funding body</b>	<b>Purpose</b>		
Arts Council England	Artsmark projects	<b>30,000</b>	-
Arts Council England	BeeWell	<b>20,000</b>	25,000
Arts Council England	Bridge Organisation	-	1,359,893
Arts Council England	Coronation Bandstands project	<b>17,329</b>	200,400
Arts Council England	Transform	<b>220,521</b>	-
British Council as National Agency for the European Commission	Erasmus+	-	1,439
Cultural Citizens	Cultural Citizens	<b>3,984</b>	-
Department for Education	Bridge Extension	-	82,612
Department for Work & Pensions	Kickstart Scheme	-	46,903
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	-	221,776
The Lathums fundraising	Chance to See Fund	<b>16,715</b>	655
University of Manchester	BeeWell	<b>98,190</b>	-
		<b>406,739</b>	1,938,678
<b>Unrestricted Income</b>			
Arts Council England	National Portfolio 2023/26	<b>800,000</b>	-
Bank Interest		<b>36,846</b>	16,368
Donations		<b>2,028</b>	-
Fees received		<b>92,463</b>	57,305
Other Income		<b>1,000</b>	851
		<b>932,337</b>	74,524
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,339,076</b>	2,013,202

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2024		2023		2024 Total £	2023 Total £
	Direct costs £	Support costs £	Direct costs £	Support costs £		
Grants payable	16,735	-	494,570	-	16,735	494,570
Project delivery	825,696	292,498	1,187,843	334,842	1,118,194	1,522,685
Governance costs	-	8,950	-	7,826	8,950	7,826
	<b>842,431</b>	<b>301,448</b>	<b>1,682,413</b>	<b>342,668</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>	<b>2,025,081</b>
% of total expenditure	73.6%	26.4%	83.1%	16.9%	100.0%	100.0%

Charitable expenditure is allocated between unrestricted and restricted funds as follows:

	2024		2023		2024 Total £	2023 Total £
	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £		
Grants payable	750	15,985	5,000	489,570	16,735	494,570
Project delivery	816,867	301,327	362,030	1,160,655	1,118,194	1,522,685
Governance costs	8,950	-	7,826	-	8,950	7,826
	<b>826,567</b>	<b>317,312</b>	<b>374,856</b>	<b>1,650,225</b>	<b>1,143,879</b>	<b>2,025,081</b>
% of total expenditure	72.3%	27.7%	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%	100.0%

#### b. Grants payable by programme

Programme	Number of grants to institutions		2024 £	2023 £
	2024	2023		
Arts Council England - Bridge	2	23	16,235	394,165
Arts Council England Department for Education	-	4	(250)	33,705
NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	-	9	-	61,700
Curious Minds	1	1	750	5,000
	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16,735</b>	<b>494,570</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2024	2023
		£	£
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>			
Blackpool Grand Theatre	LCEP Development	-	5,750
Bury Arts Museum and Sculptures Centre	LCEP Development	-	675
Circus House	LCEP Development	-	3,000
Collective Encounters	CASE Leadership Programme	-	870
Community Arts NW	Pushing Boundaries	-	10,770
Creativity Works Preston	LCEP Development	-	1,000
Cumbria Music Service	FRAME Project PI	-	50,000
Factory International	CASE Leadership Programme	-	600
Falinge Park High School	Pushing Boundaries	600	-
Festival of Making CIC	LCEP Development PI	-	10,000
GMCA	Culture & Transport in GM PI	-	5,000
Gorse Hill Studios	LCEP Development	-	3,000
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Our Place in the World PI	-	1,000
Liverpool City Region	Generations of Change PI	-	5,000
Manchester Metropolitan University	Intergenerational pilot	(1,694)	13,000
Music for Youth	Coronation Bandstands	17,329	200,000
Pendle Leisure Trust	LCEP Development PI	-	10,000
Ready Generations	Creative Curriculum	-	4,500
Robert F Kennedy Human Rights UK	Poetic Universal Declaration of Human Rights PI	-	5,000
Royal Court Liverpool Trust	Mentoring Programme PI	-	12,000
Theatre Porto	Ellesmere Port Hyperlocal Development PI	-	25,000
Tullie House Museum	LCEP Development	-	3,000
Young Manchester	Youth & Play Cultural Partnerships PI	-	15,000
Z Arts	Creative Curriculum PI	-	10,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>16,235</b>	<b>394,165</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>ACE DfE Extension grants</b>			
		£	£
Anchorsholme Primary Academy	SLiCE Programme	-	10,000
Blackpool Sixth Form College	SLiCE Programme	-	11,705
Hawes Side Academy	SLiCE Programme	-	7,500
United Learning Trust	SLiCE Programme	(250)	4,500
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>(250)</b>	<b>33,705</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bolton Museum		-	12,500
Blaze Arts		-	10,000
Lancashire Museums		-	9,350
Pinc College NW		-	5,000
Reform Radio CIC		-	1,100
The Atkinson		-	8,750
Tullie House		-	5,000
West Cheshire Museums		-	5,000
Youth Focus NW		-	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	-	61,700
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	-	9
<b>Curious Minds</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Hawk Dance Theatre	Chance to See Fund	750	-
Lowry	Youth Performance Hub	-	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	750	5,000
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	1	1
	<b>Total Grants Payable</b>	16,735	494,570
	<b>Total number grants</b>	3	37

#### 4 Analysis of governance and support costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>Governance Costs</b>		
Audit fee	8,400	7,800
Support costs	550	26
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>8,950</b>	<b>7,826</b>

	2024		2023		2024	2023
	Project Delivery	Governance	Project Delivery	Governance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Support Costs</b>						
Salaries	170,692	-	252,500	-	170,692	252,500
Travel & Subsistence	9,366	47	8,483	-	9,413	8,483
Learning & Development and recruitment	13,266	-	5,599	-	13,266	5,599
Legal & Professional Services	36,648	-	19,542	-	36,648	19,542
Premises related costs	11,089	-	10,666	-	11,089	10,666
Office, sundry costs & Depreciation	59,837	503	45,852	26	60,340	45,878
<b>Total Support costs</b>	<b>300,898</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>342,642</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>301,448</b>	<b>342,668</b>

## 5 Staff Costs

The payroll costs of the charity were as follows:

	<b>2024</b>	2023
	£	£
Wages & salaries	<b>598,543</b>	795,418
Social Security costs	<b>57,415</b>	75,989
Pension costs	<b>35,272</b>	44,897
Redundancy payments	-	32,417
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>691,230</b>	<b>948,721</b>

One employee had earnings (excluding employer pension costs) over £60,000 during the year:

<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Band</b>
One (2023: One)	£60,000 to £70,000

The remuneration costs during the year of the Executive Management Team as outlined on page 2 (inclusive of pension costs) was £115,882 (2023: £216,528).

The average monthly head count was 16 staff (2023: 24 staff) and the average monthly number of full time equivalent employees (including casual and part time employees) during the year was:

	<b>2024</b>	2023
Average FTE	<b>14.4</b>	24.3

## 6 Net incoming resources before transfer

This is stated after charging:

	<b>2024</b>	2023
	£	£
Auditors remuneration - Audit fees	<b>8,400</b>	7,800
Director's (Trustees) expenses	<b>47</b>	26
	<b>8,447</b>	<b>7,826</b>
Number of trustees claiming expenses:	<b>1</b>	1

## 7 Tangible fixed assets

**Cost**

As at 1 April 2023

**As at 31 March 2024**

**Depreciation**

As at 1 April 2024

**Net book value**

**As at 31 March 2024**

As at 31 March 2023

	<b>Office Equipment</b>	<b>Furniture &amp; Fittings</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£	£	£
As at 1 April 2023	16,474	3,887	20,361
<b>As at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>16,474</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>20,361</b>
As at 1 April 2024	16,474	3,887	20,361
<b>As at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
As at 31 March 2023	-	-	-

<b>8 Debtors</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade debtors	<b>3,387</b>	24,242
Prepayments	<b>11,746</b>	9,023
Grant and other income receivable	<b>18,853</b>	120,961
	<b>33,986</b>	154,226

<b>9 Creditors falling due within one year</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade creditors	<b>18,895</b>	48,592
Contract commitments due and accrued	<b>12,865</b>	80,503
Accruals	<b>28,272</b>	53,710
Grants and income in advance	-	14,548
PAYE & Payroll deductions payable	-	19,486
Pension contributions payable	-	5,180
	<b>60,032</b>	222,019

Curious Minds pays all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of invoices due for payment.

Accruals include £17,250 (2023:£14,050), being the cost of staff annual leave due but not taken and carried forward at year end and £NIL (2023:£18,200) pay in lieu of notice for employees made redundant at the end of March 2023.

<b>10 Deferred income</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Chester Zoo	-	1,560
Cultural Citizens	-	3,983
GMCA BeeWell	-	9,005
	-	14,548

<b>Movement in deferred income</b>		
Balance as at 1 April	<b>14,548</b>	28,387
Amount released to income	<b>(14,548)</b>	(22,844)
Amount deferred in year	-	9,005
Balance as at 31 March	-	14,548

## 11 Statement of funds

	Balance		Fund		Balance		Fund		Balance	
	01/04/2022	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/3/2023 & 1/4/2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/03/2024	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>										
General Fund	481,491	74,524	(374,856)	319,809	500,968	932,337	(826,135)	14,699	621,869	
<b>Designated Funds:</b>										
Curious Stories	6,193	-	-	-	6,193	-	-	-	6,193	
Curious Space	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	
Development & Transformation	44,287	-	-	300,000	344,287	-	(386)	-	343,901	
Dialogic Teaching & Learning	50,000	-	-	-	50,000	-	-	-	50,000	
Hope Streets	18,062	-	-	563	18,625	-	(46)	-	18,579	
	700,033	74,524	(374,856)	620,372	1,020,073	932,337	(826,567)	14,699	1,140,542	
<b>Restricted Funds</b>										
ACE Artsmark projects	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	(25,221)	-	4,779	
ACE BeeWell	-	25,000	(662)	50,000	74,338	20,000	(23,496)	-	70,842	
ACE Bridge Organisation	476,979	1,359,893	(1,346,832)	(419,973)	70,067	-	(70,067)	-	-	
ACE Coronation Bandstands	-	200,400	-	(200,400)	-	17,329	-	(17,329)	-	
ACE DfE Extension	-	82,612	(61,959)	(20,653)	-	-	-	-	-	
ACE Transform	-	-	-	-	-	220,521	(94,481)	-	126,040	
Cultural Citizens	-	-	-	-	-	3,984	(3,984)	-	-	
Erasmus+	-	1,439	(3,579)	2,140	-	-	-	-	-	
DWP Kickstart	-	46,903	(52,566)	5,663	-	-	-	-	-	
NLHF Kick The Dust Hope Street	-	221,776	(184,627)	(37,149)	-	-	-	-	-	
The Lathums - Chance to See Fund	-	655	-	-	655	16,715	(1,873)	2,630	18,127	
University of Manchester	-	-	-	-	-	98,190	(98,190)	-	-	
	476,979	1,938,678	(1,650,225)	(620,372)	145,060	406,739	(317,312)	(14,699)	219,788	
<b>Total Funds</b>	1,177,012	2,013,202	(2,025,081)	-	1,165,133	1,339,076	(1,143,879)	-	1,360,330	

### Notes on Statement of funds

Fund Transfers include contributions to salaries and overheads charged to programmes within individual funds, as agreed with funders, along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work in accordance with the use of those funds.

The net transfer of £14,699 (2023: £620,372) between restricted and unrestricted funds during the year is made up of £NIL (2023: £397,612) agreed contribution to overheads and £17,329 (2023: £200,000) permissible programme costs, less a £2,630 contribution to The Lathums Chance to See Fund (2023: plus £563 contribution from the NLHF Kick the Dust programme, £2,140 to Erasmus+ and £5,663 to Kickstart projects).

The balance of restricted funds represents expenditure not due at the Balance Sheet date from grant funding received.

## 12 Analysis of net assets between funds

	2024		2023		2024	2023
	General	Restricted	General	Restricted	Total	Total
	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets	<b>1,140,542</b>	<b>219,788</b>	1,020,073	145,060	<b>1,360,330</b>	1,165,133
	<b>1,140,542</b>	<b>219,788</b>	1,020,073	145,060	<b>1,360,330</b>	1,165,133

## 13 Operating lease commitments

The charity has no commitments under operation leases for premises (2023: NIL).

## 14 Corporation tax

The company is a registered charity and is entitled to claim annual exemption from UK corporation tax.

## 15 Related Party Transactions

Kathy McArdle was reimbursed travel expenses to attend trustee meetings of £46.70 during the year.

Derri Burdon, Chief Executive, was appointed as Co Chair and Trustee of the Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) who were registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 10th May 2023.

Curious Minds provided the CLA with back office support from December 2023, for which fees of £1,100 were received in 2023/24 (2022/23 £NIL).

Derri was also a Co Chair of Trustees of Blaze Arts until resigning in November 2022. Blaze Arts was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in July 2018 and received grant funding and project commissions during 2022/23 of £13,800.

Curious Minds also provided Blaze Arts with back office support until July 2023, for which fees of £1,000 were received in 2023/24 (2022/23 £2,000).

Blaze Arts also reimbursed Curious Minds for salary costs of a seconded staff member to 31st July 2023 of £5,053 (2022/23: £37,082).

Derri's daughter, Amy Burdon, was commissioned for programme support and facilitation, receiving fees and travel expenses of £1,500 in 2023/24 (2022/23 £3,980).

Amy Burdon also runs WigLe Dance CIC who have been commissioned for event performances, receiving sponsorship, fees and reimbursed costs totalling £3,633 in 2023/24 (2022/23 NIL).

**CURIOUS MINDS**

England & Wales - Charity number 1130988

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# Accounts

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# Curious Minds

## Curious Minds' Registered Office:

Studio 15, The Old Courts  
Gerrard Winstanley House  
Crawford Street  
Wigan  
Greater Manchester  
WN1 1NA

Curious Minds is a Company Limited by  
Guarantee and a Registered Charity

Registered Company    Registered Charity  
Number: 06775402    Number: 1130988

## Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to

31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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# Company Information

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## Incorporation

The charitable company was incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and commenced trading on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

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## Trustees

Mrs. Karen Crowshaw – Chair (Retired 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023)  
Ms. Kathy McArdle – Chair (Appointed 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023)  
Mr. Jaffer Hussain – Vice-Chair (Resigned 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023)  
Mr. Jonathan Robinson – Vice-Chair (From 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023)  
Ms. Samira Al’Obaidi  
Ms. Eleanor Chapman (Died 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023)  
Mr. Mustafa Hassan  
Ms. Alicia Smith  
Mr. David Wearing

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## Executive Management Team

Chief Executive Officer	Derri Burdon
Chief Operating Officer	Sue Langfeld
Executive Director of Learning & Workforce	Jude Bird (Leaver on 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2023)
Executive Director of Social Justice	Kelly Allen (Deputy CEO from 1/2/2023)

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## Statutory Auditors & Accountants

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

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## Bankers

CAF Bank Limited  
25 Kings Hill Avenue  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent MA19 4JQ

## Solicitors

Counterculture Partnership LLP  
Unit 115  
Ducie House  
Ducie Street  
Manchester M1 2JW

# Chair and CEO's Joint Statement

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The financial year 2022/23 was, for the Executive Management Team and Board, one of the most challenging yet, as we put plans in place for our future - knowing for sure that our work was never more needed, but not knowing if our core Arts Council funding would continue beyond March 2023.

So it is with great pride that we present this report, highlighting the wealth of activity and impact the Curious Minds team delivered despite the uncertainty they and the organisation faced.

In some ways it was a bonus year, with Arts Council England (ACE) extending our Bridge funding for an extra twelve-months as the cultural sector started to recover from the devastating impact of Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions. We are grateful to ACE as our main funder for the space and flexibility this extra time afforded us; it meant we were able to end our 11 years as the North West Bridge organisation with care and consideration, as we had planned to do from the very beginning.

We knew that the national Bridge organisation network wasn't forever and, having successfully applied to join the ACE National Portfolio, we are excited about the increased freedom our new status allows in terms of what we do and where we work.

However, we are concerned that, for the first time in four decades, England is without a consistent publicly funded infrastructure for cultural education. Only time will tell what impact this will have on the availability, accessibility and quality of the cultural offer for children and young people.

Looking back over this year we must say a huge thank you to the staff and Trustees who left the organisation for their commitment and contribution. Special thanks must go to our outgoing Chair, Karen Crowshaw, vice-Chair Jaffer Hussain and Executive Director, Jude Bird. Also appreciated is Elli Chapman, a wonderful trustee, tragically lost this summer and much missed. All are incredible leaders who made a valuable contribution to our plans and strategy. Looking forward, we are delighted to welcome Kathy McArdle as our new Chair of the Board of Trustees.

So, into a curious future we go, determined to make a positive difference for children and young people, and the adults who support their cultural and creative lives.

*Jonathan Robinson*

[Jonathan Robinson \(Dec 8, 2023 12:53 GMT\)](#)

**Jonathan Robinson**  
Vice - Chair of the Board of Trustees

*Derri Burdon*

[Derri Burdon \(Dec 8, 2023 12:18 GMT\)](#)

**Derri Burdon**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Trustees' Annual Report

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## Our purpose and activities

The purposes of the charity are to advance for the public benefit the education of children and young people within England to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals, in particular by:

- supporting them to become successful learners and responsible citizens by working with others to extend the range, amount, quality and scope of formal and informal learning opportunities in the areas of creativity, arts, media, culture, heritage, humanities and science;
- supporting teachers, practitioners, carers, performers and artists in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in enabling children and young people both inside and outside formal education to develop and apply their skills and talents and to open up to them cultural and creative activity;
- developing programmes, where appropriate, in partnership with others to deliver positive learning outcomes and encourage the recognition, enjoyment and use of culture, media and heritage;
- empowering them to be involved in the promotion of cultural and learning activities and enhancing their skills, capacities and capabilities; and
- encouraging them to visit, experience, participate in, initiate and engage in cultural activities, places and performances.

Curious Minds aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the North of England through facilitating access to arts and culture for all. It promotes cultural education and enables creative innovation and collaboration between the cultural, educational and youth sectors.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main beneficiaries are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners and we are mindful that they all continue to work within a challenging social, financial and policy climate.

## Our Vision and Mission

**Our Vision** is for a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant culture is a regular part of every child's life and learning.

**Powered by curiosity**, we work to tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people who are often excluded by social and economic inequalities.

We know, from evidence and experience, that children who take part in arts and culture do better in school and are happier and healthier. As young adults they are more likely to vote, go to university and to get and stay in good jobs.

But despite decades of investment and good intention, too many children and young people still miss out on the pleasure, happiness and learning that engaging in arts and culture brings. And the situation is getting worse.

In 2023, the status and provision of arts subjects in schools continues to decline while the cultural participation gap between the most and least well off is widening. Without proper investment and innovation, soon only the most affluent families will be able to purchase the advantages of a proper cultural education for their children.

## Charging Considerations

Our main beneficiaries/stakeholders are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners, all of whom are working in a challenging financial and policy climate. Affordability and access to our programmes is important to us and remains a key consideration when we are planning our activity. Wherever possible, places on our events and training programmes are provided at low or no cost to participants using the grants we receive as subsidy. The decision whether to provide a service, place on training or at an event or conference is carefully balanced to ensure cost does not act as a barrier but also taking into account our experience of drop-off when offering places for free (e.g., people register but don't turn up). We cost all our traded offers on a full cost recovery basis.

# Review of our Achievements and Performance in 2022/23

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Curious Minds continues to punch above its weight to achieve significant regional impact with limited resources. We choose to support the sector rather than directly working with young people and it is this strategic approach that enables us to have substantial regional reach and influence as honest brokers and advocates for cultural and creative education.

Our work targets children and young people living and learning in some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the country. We continue to support cultural and education sectors to collaborate so that these children and young people can enjoy rich art and cultural experiences.

As this year began, the sectors we work across were still reeling from the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions, and our efforts to support the cultural education workforce through this period of recovery and renewal continued at a pace. At the same time, we, like most other cultural organisations, were deep into preparing our critical application to join Arts Council England's 2023 to 2026 National Portfolio, knowing that our role as the NW Bridge organisation and the funding attached to it would end in March 2023.

With our future beyond the Bridge role in mind, at the start of 2022 we worked with our Board of Trustees and Advisory Groups to refresh our long-term strategy. We agreed the following theory of change and priorities:

## Draft Strategic Framework 2022 - 2026

Through our work we will:

1. INFLUENCE children's services policy and practice
2. INVEST in the cultural education workforce
3. INNOVATE creative practice & pedagogy
4. INITIATE partnerships and strategic alliances

By focusing on:

- a) Purposeful Inclusion and Relevance
- b) Workforce and Leadership Development
- c) Learning and Advocacy
- d) Quality and Creative Pedagogy

It was a tense wait between submitting our NPO application in May 2022 to finding out in November 2022 that it was successful. We were delighted (and relieved) to be able to end the financial year knowing that we would join Arts Council's 2023-2026 National Portfolio and continue to play a key role in helping them achieve the ambition for children and young people as expressed in their new Ten-Year Strategy, 'Let's Create'.

# Activity

## 1. Workforce and Leadership Development

### 1.1. Leading The Arts In your School

Between October 2022 and March 2023, we delivered three cohorts of our teacher training programme Leading the Arts in your School. This included two open-access cohorts with thirty-five participants and one subsidised cohort in West Cumbria, with eleven participants, as part of our Priority Place targeted work. As part of our Hyperlocal work places for teachers working in Ellesmere Port schools were also subsidised.

Running across the academic year, this hybrid course involves an online induction, three separate in-person training days with teachers, three online themed sessions and self-led learning via our Online Learning Platform.

#### Participant Quotes:

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*"It's given me lots of confidence with work. It's also allowed me to approach SLT with a completely different mindset, and it's given me the empowerment and the knowledge to go and really focus on arts within our school."*

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*"I found the Curious Minds course really useful for building partnerships with other local schools. One in particular from the work shadowing: we've decided that we're going to continue to work together. We're going to put projects together in collaboration with our youngest children in school."*

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### 1.2. SLiCE®

We continued to work with United Learning Trust to deliver the SLiCE Programme during the year, with an overarching theme of Cultural Capital. We arranged cultural placements with Lewisham Education Arts Network, The Southbank Centre and Justice in Motion. The fellows received online CPD sessions, and self-directed work on our online platform and a commissioning budget was provided.

The year culminated in a sharing day in London that the cultural partners were also invited to.

## Participant Quotes:

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*“My SLiCE placement has been one of the highlights of my career.”*

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*“One of my main takeaways is what does ‘Cultural Capital’ actually mean and how can we best support our communities to ensure equity in education.”*

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*“Through our cultural commission our school has: increased engagement, a real appreciation of Arts & Culture, created a shift in SLT focus and increased interest in extra-curricular activities.”*

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*“This year’s work has forced me to reach beyond my staff to outside agencies. It has given the young people a chance to question how they want to be seen and how to positively commit to exploring and expressing that.”*

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### **1.3. Royal Society of Public Health Creative Health Module**

Through our involvement in the GMCA Sixth Form Social Prescribing Pilot, we developed a relationship with the Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH). Working with Julie McCarthy, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Creative Health Lead, we developed a Creative Health Module that can be delivered as part of the RSPH Youth Health Champions (YHC) Level 2 Qualification. We continued to develop training and resources to support the module.

### **1.4. #BeeWell - GMCA Youth Health Champions & Artsmark Pilot**

We were appointed by GMCA to project manage delivery of the YHC Pilot across five boroughs in greater Manchester, working with Theatre in Prisons and Probation (TiPP). We delivered Youth Led Commissioning Training and convened area-based marketplaces to enable participating schools to commission activity based on the schools and neighbourhood #Beewell Data with a £100k pot of funding provided by Children in Need. Managing this programme has been challenging, with schools involved struggling to find capacity and time to undertake the qualification and training effectively. It has however helped us develop our approach to a second #BeeWell Pilot funded in part by Arts Council England (ACE).

At the same time, Arts Council England approached us to develop and deliver a pilot programme exploring Health and Wellbeing linked to the Artsmark Framework using the #BeeWell Data as a starting point. This programme engaged schools in Wigan, Rochdale, Bolton, Oldham, and Manchester.

### 1.5. Freelance Network Events:

Across the year we continued to deliver our Curious About sessions with a focus on supporting Freelance Practitioners and people working at the grassroots.

- **June 2022 – Curious About... Health and Wellbeing, with:**
  - Julia Payne, The Hub, Colchester (Creatives Balance Toolkit)
  - Jacqui Wood, Arc Centre Stockport
  - Francesca Speakman, #BeeWell GMCA
  - Sara Domville, Curious Minds
- **November 2022 – Curious About... Place Based Policy & Practice, with:**
  - Hannah Baldwin – Curious Minds
- **January 2023 – Curious About... Governance, with:**
  - Ann-Marie Lawrenson – Halton & St. Helens Voluntary & Community Action

#### Participant Quotes:

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*"I found the session incredibly interesting and useful, and Ann-Marie was an incredible mine of knowledge!"*

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*"I feel so fortunate to be in the North West because of all the support you give to freelancers."*

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### 1.6. Training and Support programmes for practitioners

Throughout the year we also responded to the Professional Development needs of Cultural Learning Practitioners with a series of seminars designed to keep them up to date with best and next practice and connected to the very best experts in the field. Topics included:

- Connect 5 Training (Health & Wellbeing)
- How Young People Learn and Behave
- Socially Traded Organisations (Kindred Liverpool)
- Governance
- Holiday Activity Fund (in partnership with the Department for Education)
- SEND films & online Q&A sessions.

### **1.7. Associates Recruitment**

In September 2022 we undertook the successful recruitment and training of several Curious Minds Associates, to diversify our team and increase organisational capacity. We appointed 18 brilliant individuals with a range of skills and experience, including delivering training & facilitation, project management and evaluation.

### **1.8. City as Arts School**

We were delighted to work in partnership with MADE, Manchester's Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) to commission a film profiling eight Manchester Schools advocating for the importance of arts partnerships in schools. This was part of a wider Art Assembly Project. A full and short version of the film can be viewed online:

<https://vimeo.com/719398412/66642c3495>

In addition, we commissioned the development of a Youth Voice Toolkit linked to Artsmark Award. We are updating the toolkit to broaden its use and to incorporate our updated learning from our #BeeWell work, Hope Streets and I'm a Teenager.

### **1.9. Artsmark Award**

Leading on Artsmark across a region is one of our Core Roles as the NW Bridge organisation. Recruiting schools to Artsmark continued to prove challenging this year. This was due to continuing financial and capacity constraints schools were experiencing post Covid. For some the focus on 'catching up' in the core subjects means the arts aren't a big enough priority.

Where schools chose to engage in the Artsmark process, we saw an increase in them utilising the arts to support student wellbeing. This was evident in Statements of Commitment and Impact. Consequently, health and wellbeing has been more explicitly woven through the refreshed Artsmark Criteria.

We continued to deliver the Artsmark Support Programme as part of our Bridge Role. However, like other Bridge organisations, we were shocked about Arts Council England's plans to commission a single delivery organisation from April 2023. We considered tendering for the contract but felt the funding offered would not allow for an acceptable level of quality delivery meaning the reputational risk was too high. We continued to deliver the programme to July 2023 when it was handed over to Goldsmiths University who had won the tender.

### **1.10. Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs)**

Supporting the development of LCEPs in targeted places across the North West of England was one of our core Bridge organisation roles. 22 North West LCEPs had been established in the years leading up to 2022.

In spring 2022, Curious Minds supported the recruitment of a Development Coordinator for FRAME, the West Cumbria LCEP, using Partnership Investment funds. They worked closely

with the Curious Minds team to recruit 10 teachers for the Leading the Arts in your School 22-23 programme, and 4 high schools to be part of the Curious Citizens programme in 22-23.

We hosted a joint briefing with Edsential in May about the summer HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme. This and a follow up briefing in October connected freelancers, LCEP partners and HAF. A Padlet, regularly updated, to share information on HAF opportunities across the region, was shared with the LCEP network and continues to be updated to inform and equip LCEPs to engage with HAF to ensure cultural opportunities are included in local offers.

Between May and July 2022, Curious Minds supported the set-up of the Rochdale LCEP, after a request from the culture team at Rochdale BC. Rochdale had secured 3 years of funding to support an LCEP coordinator to develop and lead programmes for children and young people. Over three sessions, Curious Minds helped LCEP partners to develop a strategic vision and action plan for the LCEP, which the partners and coordinator took forward independently.

Between September 2022 and January 2023, Curious Minds supported the set-up of the Crewe Area LCEP, after a request from the culture team at Cheshire East. These workshops were originally planned for spring 2020, however the Covid pandemic delayed the original plans. In 2022 a new Cultural Economy Development Manager (CEDM) came into post, who then initiated the rescheduling of the workshops.

Over three sessions, Curious Minds helped LCEP partners to develop a strategic vision and action plan for the LCEP, which the partners and CEDM took forward independently.

Additionally, LCEP chairs and coordinators were sent quarterly reports of Arts Award and Artsmark activity within their local areas, and bi-monthly policy and practice updates.

14 LCEP chairs and coordinators attended an online meeting in September 2022, looking at LCEPs and their work with schools.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022, Curious Minds hosted an in-person event focusing on place, including explorations of ACE place partnership and other place-based funding. 15 LCEP chairs and coordinators attended the event.

During the year, Curious Minds staff attended LCEP partnership meetings in Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Halton, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Warrington, West Cumbria, Wigan, and Wirral. Oldham LCEP were supported in the development of a cultural strategy by the Curious Minds team.

### 1.11. Alumni Mentoring Pilot & Early Careers Research

As part of exploring a creative talent pipeline for the cultural education workforce, this year we piloted our Associates mentoring the alumni from our careers programmes. Five mentoring relationships were established and these centred around progressing in cultural education and working in this field.

Alongside this we commissioned research into what early career professionals want and need from Curious Minds going forward. The findings from this are due in July 2023.

The learning from both strands will help formulate ideas for creating a more joined up approach to our early careers work and wider workforce development.

## 2. Purposeful Inclusion and Relevance

### 2.1. Pushing Boundaries

We worked in partnership with Community Arts North West to devise and deliver this ground-breaking pilot programme to help us achieve our long-term aim of a more diverse, resilient, skilled and connected and strengthened cultural education workforce. Pushing Boundaries facilitated the development of a selected group of international artists who had experienced forced migration. The project helped them learn skills and develop a network that would support them to go on to work in English schools. The project was externally evaluated and culminated in an inspirational sharing event at the Whitworth Gallery. We are now seeking funding to further develop and scale the programme beyond Greater Manchester.

#### Participant Quotes:

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*"I felt valued as an artist, the bursary was really important because it acknowledged the cost of replacing my income, not just my expenses."*

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*"I am far more focused and understand what my creative practice can contribute to a school."*

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*"The programme gave me the skills to make the transition from training to becoming more professional."*

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### 2.2. Generations for Change

In 2021 we entered a partnership with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to support six paid work placements for Young Producers from Black, Asian and other

diverse Ethnic Communities. The project was part of LCRCAs Race Equality Programme, a response to the inequality that was exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and designed to support our shared campaign to advocate for cross-sector change to achieve racial equality. The project culminated this financial year with the production of six films giving the context and challenges of the Young Producers' research and findings.

### **2.3. Liverpool Royal Court Theatre Mentoring Pilot Programme**

We used Partnership Investment funding in 2021 to develop a partnership with Liverpool's Royal Court Theatre to support young creatives from Black, Asian and other Ethnic Communities to gain insights into the creative industries, both on and behind the stage. 8 mentors and 8 mentees took part in the programme across a period of 6 months and the partnership continued into 2022-23. An external evaluation noted that "Without exception, all mentees expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the MMP... They spoke of how much they valued their mentors' willingness to share their industry insights, knowledge and experience..." The programme is being scaled to involve more partners in 2023-24.

### **2.4. Access and Inclusion Champions, Alternative Saturday Jobs (ASJ)**

Working with partners Mind the Gap and Totally Inclusive People, we adapted our Alternative Saturday Jobs model to create youth employment opportunities that made a meaningful contribution to improving access and inclusion for others, not just within organisations, but across the wider local area.

Four young people with lived experience of SEND/neurodivergence worked across four place-based partnerships to audit four member organisations around access and inclusion. Following this, each partnership came together to share the learning and work towards a joined-up approach to improving access and inclusion for children and young people across their local area.

A summary document of the audit findings has been shared with our networks along with tools for partnerships and individual organisations to continue developing this work for themselves.

### **2.5. Creative Youth Voice Champions, Kickstart**

We successfully worked with seven young people under the Kickstart scheme from March 2022 to September 2022. Employed directly by Curious Minds and deployed in pairs across four LCEP areas in the North West, the Creative Youth Voice Champions were tasked with delivering a project for their local area, taking a creative approach to engaging children and young people's voices in creativity and cultural education.

All seven young people successfully completed their role with us. Working with their LCEPs and Curious Minds, they created a set of youth voice recommendations for place-based partnerships, and this has been shared with our wider networks.

They have gone on to other opportunities both with us and our wider networks. For example, working for Greater Manchester Youth Network, being part of our alumni mentoring pilot, joining Young Associates, and working in education.

## 2.6. ARG (Anti-racism Group)

Our ARG continued to meet throughout the year and support our operational planning and recruitment processes. Working with SEND experienced partners, they acted as an Advisory Group supporting us to develop our plans to respond to Arts Council England's 'Inclusivity & Relevance' Investment Principle as part of our new Strategy and NPO funding application. Our agreed long-term ambition is:

*“Our permanent and extended workforce will be full of diverse individuals we have nurtured, and people who are very comfortable instigating sophisticated external conversations about inclusion and anti-racism. Our workplace will celebrate diversity and be a proud anti-racism role model for the sector and a conduit for change.”*

## 2.7. Young Associates

This year's cohort was made up of seven early career professionals from diverse backgrounds from across the North West. We placed an emphasis on working with people who wanted to make a change to cultural education and had leadership potential, so the sessions were framed around these ideas.

It was our first year operating as a hybrid model and this was well received by both facilitators and participants, and we will look to continue this approach.

The programme was successfully coordinated by one of our alumni and their knowledge of the programme added value to the experience for this year's cohort. This is an example of our continued engagement with previous cohorts, and how they are part of our wider networks at Curious Minds

This year's cohort have continued to work with us in numerous ways. Examples include Facilitators at the NW Cultural Education Summit, working with Stockport LCEP to do youth voice research (inspired by our Kickstart and ASJ models), and taking part in our alumni mentoring pilot.

# 3. Quality & Creative Pedagogy

## 3.1. Philosopher in Residence

Manjit Shellis continues as our Philosopher in Residence developing our Curious Pedagogy work. She has supported initial scoping for programme development, including redeveloping successful courses delivered by the former charity UFA and utilising the learning coming from our ongoing partnership with Goldsmiths University.

Throughout this year, Manjit has chaired regular working group sessions to develop and deliver the Curious Citizens pilot project, including facilitating a two-day residential and further training sessions, recruiting a coordinator and producing resources.

Manjit has also contributed to the development of the 'I'm a Teenager Get Me Into There' training course which can be delivered for clients face-to-face at their venue, but also launched this year as an open access online course.

### **3.2. Let's Craft**

The first delivery of Let's Craft packs as part of the partnership between Crafts Council, Hobbycraft and 9 of Arts Council England Bridge organisations, began in November 2022.

In December 480 boxes of craft materials were delivered to the Turnpike Gallery, from where LCEP partners and Curious Minds staff distributed the packs to the following partners: 80 packs each for Fred Longworth High School, Bedford High School and Lowton CE High School; 55 packs for Expanse Learning (SEND setting); 60 for Spinners Mill (LCEP partner); 125 for WigLe Dance CIC (LCEP partner). Both WigLe Dance and Spinners Mill distributed their packs to young people taking part in the winter HAF programmes

All packs included an envelope with a Let's Craft leaflet and information on Creativity Unlocked (the Wigan LCEP) and activities for children led by Wigan Steam, WigLe Dance and others.

### **3.3. Curious Citizens**

Building on the Cultural Citizens pilot we delivered on behalf of the Government in 2016-17, Curious Citizens successfully launched as a pilot project with nine secondary schools (including one special school) in the priority areas of West Cumbria and Wigan. The programme involved twenty-two teaching staff and 180 pupils and concluded at the end of the 2022-23 academic year. The external evaluation of the programme is informing the programmes development and aiming to scale further.

## **4. Learning & Advocacy**

### **4.1. Goldsmiths Research Partnership**

The relationship with Goldsmiths continued in 22-23 as the results of our partnership to facilitate the research of four psychology master's students achieved publication in the journal *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*.

'Exploring barriers to and drivers of participatory arts engagement in early adolescence' explores how wellbeing is linked to perception of barriers to engagement with art and culture.

The results showed that a key barrier to engaging with art and culture was related to motivation; young people's interest in taking up an activity was linked to patterns within their personalities, particularly those related to curiosity. The paper concludes that

opportunities to engage with art and culture should be tailored to young people's personalities and interests if they are going to provide entry points to those young people who stand to gain the most from the associated wellbeing benefits.

The second article is titled, 'Character Strengths Afforded by Arts Engagement During Adolescence: The Development and Validation of the Creative Artistic Activities Strengths Affordances Scale (CAASA scale)'.

This article acknowledges that the wellbeing benefits of art and culture are the subject of growing interest but that research in this area has been limited by a shortage of tools for measuring arts engagement's impact on wellbeing for young people. The research focussed on the development of a new self-report questionnaire which will help researchers to identify the mechanisms by which engaging with art and culture can promote adolescent development and wellbeing.

Both articles draw on data collected from United Learning Trust, The Valley Leadership Academy and Bedford High School, resulting from Goldsmith's partnership with Curious Minds.

#### 4.2. Traded Evaluation and Facilitation

Five evaluation and facilitation contracts were completed this year with one ongoing into 2023-24. These comprise two projects with Chester Zoo, two with HEI clients and two with arts organisations: Crewe Lyceum Theatre and the completion of our work with Liverpool-based NPO, Writing on the Wall.

These projects have allowed us to explore how evaluation can be conducted by drawing upon a pool of trusted Associates. Projects for Cumbria University, Chester Zoo and Crewe Lyceum have been successfully delivered by this extended team.

Going forward we plan to grow this specialism as a source of income generation and to support out charitable objects. This includes our Head of Impact & Learning undertaking SROI (Social Return on Investment) training to enhance our organisational expertise and offer.

We continue to build our facilitation offer around ICA 'consensus' and 'ORID' methodologies and our programmes team recently took part in two-days training with an ICA facilitator to update and extend their skills and practice.

#### Client Feedback:

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*Working alongside Curious Minds "has been an invaluable experience not only for my own professional development but for that of Writing on the Wall and their best practice."*

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*“[The evaluation approach] helped create concrete plans and aims for the project that were essential to help us reflect and evaluate.*

*The role as critical friend was crucial for me as Head of Programmes, allowing space for me to discuss ideas and solutions but importantly to help me support new members of the team to understand the benefits of critical reflection & evaluation.”*

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### **4.3. Public Relations & Public Affairs**

We continue to retain the services of PLMR to support our Public Affairs and Public Relations work. Our CEO and Exec Directors were active across several strategic partnerships and events. Our CEO Derri Burdon was invited to join the Local Government Association’s Commission on Culture and Local Government which ran to December 2022. Subsequently we hosted one of the national Roadshow events as a Cultural Education Summit that was attended by 120 delegates from across the country, including Civil Servants from the Department for Education and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, who were leading on the development of the Cultural Education Strategy. Feedback from the event was provided to the Expert Panel appointed to develop the Plan.

We continue our involvement as a key partner and sponsor of The Northern Culture Club to support and inform the work of the Northern Culture APPG, with a focus on ensuring the needs and ambitions of children and young people, schools and the youth sector are considered in future cultural policy and planning.

### **4.4. Brand Identity**

We started the financial year by rolling out the new Curious Minds visual identity, which had been developed for us by PLMR, across all public-facing comms channels (website, social media, etc.).

### **4.5. Thought leadership and news content**

We published 29 individual sector-related stories via the blog/news page of the Curious Minds website through the year, as well as pushing out twelve eBulletins (6 cultural audience specific, 4 education audience specific and 2 to all subscribers).

### **4.6. Audiences**

CM website received 33,583 hits across the year and 58,218 page views. 12.6% of visitors are returning users. Core social media channels ended the year with the following audience/follower totals: Facebook-2,471, Twitter-12,785, Instagram-2,098, LinkedIn-542. Our email marketing list contained 3,541 subscribed email addresses at year end.

#### 4.7. Supporting national initiatives

Curious Minds was active in support of various national advocacy campaigns through the year, including Artsmark Celebration Week and National Careers Weeks, for which we published our own bespoke content as well as sharing that of the leading organisations. We also supported the official launch of the Arts in Schools and Cornerstones of Culture reports.

#### 4.8. Launching new CM initiatives

As well as supporting longstanding programmes with their annual callouts (Leading the Arts, Curious Associates, Curious Commissions), we were excited this year to launch two significant new initiatives - the '*I'm A Teenager Get Me Into There*' microsite and the *Chance to See Fund* in partnership with Wigan band The Lathums. Both launches were impactful and were assisted by PR support from PLMR.

## Our Commitment to Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

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We want all children and young people to enjoy and contribute to the cultural life of society. We are ferociously committed to identifying and removing barriers to engagement for children and young people from marginalised backgrounds. We recognise this can only be achieved by a more diverse, resilient, and better-connected workforce. We commit to playing our part to bring about these changes – starting with ourselves. We are a Real Living Wage employer.

## Our Commitment to Quality

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We believe that quality and equality go hand-in-hand. Raising the quality of the creative and cultural learning experiences all children and young people have access to, at school and in the community, is fundamental to 'levelling up' opportunity.

Developing the workforce is key. Overcoming preconceptions and barriers to engage with previously excluded children and young people is highly skilled work, yet most practitioners learn on the job with little support. We commit to creating new and clearer pathways that lead to the professionalisation of the Cultural Education workforce.

## Our Commitment to Climate Change

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The global pandemic which struck in 2020 led to a year in which Curious Minds, and the wider world, changed. Our Action Plan and supporting Policy have been developed as we emerge from the pandemic and seize the opportunity to build on these changes to develop our environmental practices for the better.

We commit to redoubling our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our day-to-day operations and be more environmentally responsible. We seek to influence, educate, and advocate for a post carbon future through our day-to-day work and programmes; including doing whatever we can to ensure children and young people see themselves as global citizens and develop the creative skills they will need to access opportunities arising from the transition to a low carbon economy.

# Our Values - The 7 Cs

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The **7C's** are seven words beginning with the letter C by which we hold ourselves to account and invite others to do the same. They continue to guide our planning, recruitment and self-evaluation, and provide a framework for performance management.

- We are **CURIOUS**

We are hopeful for a fairer future. We explore new possibilities and seek out best and next practice, listening and responding to the opinions and ideas of others, especially children and young people.

- We **COLLABORATE**

Partnerships and collaboration are fundamental to how we work. In these times of change and uncertainty we understand the importance of listening to build meaning and grow collective impact.

- We are **COURAGEOUS**

We are relentless in our pursuit of fair access to creativity and culture for all, and work to disrupt the status quo. We accept and deliver challenge, especially concerning diversity, inclusion, quality and relevance.

- We are **CREDIBLE**

We are evidence driven and always learning. We draw expertise from across education and culture to skilfully navigate and connect both worlds. We seek out and build alliances with experts in their field.

- We are **CONSCIENTIOUS**

We take our leadership role seriously and never take for granted the privilege of being trusted by our funders and partners to do the right thing with the resources we hold. We practise Host Leadership, knowing when to step forward and when to step back.

- We **CARE**

We care deeply about children and young people, the adults who support them and the places where they live and learn. We embrace, celebrate and champion diversity in all its forms.

- We **CELEBRATE**

We celebrate and champion creative and cultural education, the diverse professionals championing and delivering it, and the children and young people it is for.

# Our Plans for the Future

The Trustees, Executive Management Team and staff of Curious Minds remain ambitious for the charity's future, knowing that our work is more urgent and needed than ever.

2023 to 2026 represents a pivotal period of transition and transform in the life of Curious Minds, and the first phase of our seven-year strategy 'Into a Curious Future'.

Leaving behind our Bridge organisation status to join Arts Council England's National Portfolio proper, means we are simultaneously grappling two significant challenges. Both require us to adapt and find new solutions to secure the charity's future:

- **TRANSITIONING** from being a Bridge organisation (appointed by Arts Council England to deliver 'sector support' across the North West) to become an NPO (delivering services and programmes across the wider North and nationally). This process will take time and requires us to shift deeply ingrained perceptions about what we do, how and where we do it [see table below].

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*A key challenge is to maintain and grow our status as a strategic backbone organisation now that we are no longer an Arts Council England appointed Bridge organisation.*

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- **TRANSFORMING** our business model and operational structure to manage the 40% cut to our Arts Council England (ACE) regular grant funding; having been funded at a similar level since 2012.

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*A key challenge is to diversify sources of income to support our charitable objectives. We need to attract new funders and sponsors, and increase income through trading our training, evaluation and facilitation services.*

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To respond effectively it is vital that we dedicate time and resources to explore and test new income generation opportunities; build new partnerships; and foster more cost-efficient approaches to service and programme delivery.

We were delighted to be awarded £503,800 Arts Council England Transform Funding from 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2026. We will match this directly with £140,000 from our free reserves and have designated an additional £160,000 as a strategic development fund.

**Our Transform Delivery Plan** comprises **5 interdependent STRANDS** that will be delivered across **3 distinct PHASES**:

- STRAND 1**    Creating Capacity for Transformation
- STRAND 2**    Digital Transformation
- STRAND 3**    Developing New Products & Services
- STRAND 4**    Leveraging Value from Existing IP
- STRAND 5**    A New Approach to Fundraising

- Phase 1**        1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024                    **EXPLORE & TEST**
- Phase 2**        1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025                    **MARKET & DELIVER**
- Phase 3**        1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026                    **REVIEW & EMBED**

From Bridge organisation	➔ To National Portfolio Organisation
As a Bridge organisation the focus of our work was 'support' and 'sector development' which was an accurate description of our organisation and charitable objectives.	For NPOs the focus is on 'Delivery' which is less of an accurate fit for our work and methodology. We still describe ourselves as a 'Backbone Organisation' and 'Field Catalyst' and therefore will likely sit somewhere on the spectrum between NPO and IPSO.
As a Bridge organisation we were widely recognised as a source of free or heavily subsidised support, networking and CPD offers.	As an NPO we need to begin to charge for our services, support, training and events.
We were one of ten Bridge organisations (and only one in NW), working to four shared 'role descriptors' from ACE and benefitting from economies of scale through joint efforts and national relationships.	We're now one of many NPOs, developing our own activity plan to deliver our own strategy and helping to deliver ACE's Let's Create Outcomes.
We chose not to compete for same funds or participants as NPOs and other organisations we supported, enabling us to maintain excellent relationships and position ourself as an honest broker.	We're now vying for the same funding as lots of other NPOs, arts & youth organisations, at an extremely competitive time. Needing to establish relationships with multiple new funders, sponsors, commissioners and philanthropists.
We worked almost exclusively across the 5 North West sub-regions.	We need to extend our reach and impact across the wider North, nationally and internationally.
We used our ring-fenced Partnership Investment budget to forge relationships and lever additional funding that we reinvested in the sectors we work across, education, culture and youth - providing both financial and practical resource.	With a reduced grant from ACE we will need to use the reduced level of funding we have to deliver our own work and programmes.
We were able to be exceptionally generous with our time and ideas.	As an NPO we will need to consider our time as a cost implication and ideas as income generation opportunities.
We had bestowed status, kudos and credibility through being 'appointed by ACE'. We were sought out and people were directed to us. We rarely had cause to say no!	We now need to maintain and grow status, kudos and credibility on our own terms. It is likely we will need to say no a lot more.
We were resourced to maintain an overview of the sectors and landscapes we work across, positioning us strongly to advocate and be a source of expertise to significant bodies.	We still need to maintain an overview of the culture, education and voluntary sectors and political landscapes - but with less time and capacity to do so .
We were able to respond to need very quickly, (e.g. during Covid) as remit and resource was already in place.	It might take more time to secure or repurpose resource (e.g. via 'project funding') to respond to needs and opportunities.
We were able to undertake the kind of work that has limited funding potential, but is strategically important for the cultural sector. (e.g. work with schools around curriculum and workforce facing support).	We will need to incorporate 'fundability' into project design alongside responding directly to need, or income generate to undertake some strategically important work
Having a relatively secure role allowed programmes to be refined over several iterations. Repetition enabled momentum to be built (eg SLiCE, ASJ's).	Funders may expect more emphasis on new approaches and less on repetition and refinement.
Being the Bridge required a relatively large stable regionally based staff team (the term ACE used is 'footsoldiers') with a focus on relationship management and partnership development.	As an NPO we will need to remodel the organisation to embed a more flexible 'expand and contract' approach to staffing to support project and programme delivery and facilitation.

## Strategic Framework 2023 – 2030

Our Mission	Our Theory of Change	Our 2023–2030 Priorities	Our Activity	Our Vision
In order to...	We will...	By focusing on...	Through the delivery of...	To achieve...
tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people	<b>INNOVATE</b> in the field of creative and cultural education	<b>1</b> Purposeful Inclusion & Relevance	learning and leadership PROGRAMMES & PARTNERSHIPS that bring about individual, organisational and systemic change, IMPACT Social Justice outcomes and 'level-up' opportunity.	a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant arts and culture is a regular part of <b>EVERY</b> child's learning and life.
	<b>INVEST</b> in a diverse cultural education workforce	<b>2</b> Workforce & Leadership Development		
	<b>INFLUENCE</b> cultural education partnerships and policy	<b>3</b> Learning & Advocacy		
		<b>4</b> Quality & Creative Pedagogy		

By 2030, as a result of our innovation, investment and influence, we want to see:

- More children and young people benefitting from greater access to creativity & culture.
- Children and young people using culture and creativity to influence and make change.
- A more diverse and dynamic workforce.
- Stronger place driven partnerships and collaboration.
- Compelling & persuasive evidence about what works and why.
- Higher expectations of quality.
- Cultural education and cultural educators are valued more widely.

Driving all our work over the coming months and years is the belief that, with the right support and space to innovate, the cultural sector can play a greater role in making the North of England the best to grow up and achieve your potential.

Our long-term ambition is to become the representative body for creative and cultural educators in England.

# Financial Review

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## Financial Results

The Trustees are pleased to report an increase in free reserves to £500,968 (2022: £481,491) placing the Charity in a stable financial position for meeting our plans for the future. We continue to plan for a new base and have therefore set aside further funds towards the cost of establishing this in the coming year.

The principal funding sources during the year continued to derive from restricted grants, with a total of £145,060 (2022: £476,979) funds carried forward at the year end to meet future activity plans.

## Core funding

From April 2012, Curious Minds has been in receipt of National Portfolio Funding and Department for Education funding from Arts Council England in respect of its status as a Bridge organisation, which ran until March 2023, extended by a year in response to Covid-19. We also received funding through government initiatives in response to the Covid-19 pandemic during the year.

## Project funding

In late March 2020, we were awarded a European Commission Erasmus+ grant for a partnership project with Poland and Greece however this was impacted by the inability to travel during the pandemic and the timeline extended to complete. The war in Ukraine has further impacted the ability for travel to Poland and we therefore decided to draw the project to a close in spring 2022.

We continued to deliver the Hope Streets project through National Lottery Heritage funding which commenced in 2018 and ran until March 2023. Total funding for the project was £1,127,000.

The Charity retains the objective to further diversify incoming resources in future periods.

## Financial Risk Management

Within the wider risk management process, the Board of Trustees monitors and assesses financial risks to which Curious Minds may be exposed and assesses their potential impact on the Charity. We have in particular reviewed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our income and are monitoring and considering potential future scenarios. The continuation and extension of our core funding through ACE in 2022/23 has been hugely supportive.

The awarding of the Bridge Organisation status to Curious Minds by Arts Council England for an extended period April 2018 to March 2023 secured £6.7 million of funding.

The Bridge Organisation status gave us a solid platform from which to plan and develop the organisation. That said, we are committed to retaining our independence and the ability to pursue activities beyond our Bridge remit in order to ensure that the organisation is best placed to meet and deliver its strategic objectives.

## Reserves policy

The level of unrestricted reserves has been set to meet the costs of retaining sufficient staff and covering overhead costs for six months in order to continue to pursue our objectives, given the planned investment in transforming our business model to become more sustainable over the period 2023 - 2026. The target was reviewed in 2023 and the calculated unrestricted reserves needed to meet these costs increased to £500,000 (2022: £375,000). During the current year, this target was met and at the year-end the free reserves stood at £500,968 (2022: £481,491). At the discretion of the Trustees, the surplus above target can be designated to development work. The Trustees review the reserves policy annually.

## Investment policy

Our cash assets, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, are invested in appropriate fixed-term and notice cash deposit accounts that yield a greater return than our instant access current accounts. This investment policy is reviewed with reference to a detailed cash-flow analysis and assessment of future funding opportunities; however the scheduling of cash outgoings (including grant claims) remains difficult to predict with accuracy, as this is largely in the control of our partners and therefore timing is unknown.

## Financial control and audit

The organisation's finances are overseen by the Finance and Operations Team. They use Xero Accounts software for financial processing and adhere to finance systems which were developed in partnership with our Auditors and are reviewed annually. Relevant staff receive appropriate training for day-to-day financial systems and consistently process financial information in an accurate and timely manner.

To ensure effective financial management within the organisation, management accounts are produced on a quarterly basis for the Executive Management Team and the Board of Trustees. Activity against budgets is reviewed between the Finance & Operations Manager and individual budget holders to ensure that all transactions are posted accurately and according to the principles of accruals-based fund accounting.

The Board of Trustees have a comprehensive overview of audit requirements, financial policies and procedures, including accounting policies and compliance with statutory requirements, risk management and financial planning. The Board continues to appoint the external Auditors and approve their remuneration and terms of engagement and responds to any relevant matters relating to annual financial statements raised by the External Auditors as a result of their audit work.

# Structure, Governance & Management

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## Governing Document

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 17th December 2008, as amended by special resolutions dated 3rd March 2009, 25th June 2009 and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. The Company is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission.

## Trustee recruitment

Transparent procedures are an important element of good governance. All new Trustees to the Board are appointed through a transparent open recruitment process when skills and knowledge gaps in the Board are identified. A thorough induction to Curious Minds is given to all newly appointed Trustees and they receive a governance pack which includes the organisation's business plan and current financial budget, the organisation's memorandum and articles of association, the Trustee role and description and sub-committee terms of reference, the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee', and the publication 'Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector'.

Curious Minds' Board of Trustees is fortunate to contain a mixture of skills ranging from arts, culture, heritage, public services and education through to human resources and accountancy. This enhances the placement of the organisation as a key player within the arts and cultural sector, regionally and nationally.

Trustees are encouraged to attend events and project activity throughout the year to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of the work of Curious Minds, and they are required to attend an annual Board away day with the management team to develop their skills within the Board environment and to discuss key strategic issues for Curious Minds, which in turn informs the business planning process for the organisation.

## Related Parties and links with other organisations

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity. Trustees and members of the Curious Minds paid staff team are required to declare any interest - when considering what interests to declare, the principal rule is that if members of the general public could reasonably conclude that the interests might have an influence on an approach taken by Curious Minds to an application or contract awarded, to funding received by Curious Minds, or general organisational decisions taken by Curious Minds, then they must declare them.

Due to Curious Minds' recruitment of experienced sector leaders, it is inevitable that Trustees and Executive Management will have declared interests arising from either executive or non-executive appointments with Public, Cultural and Education Sector organisations. Where Curious Minds engages with a partner organisation in which a declaration has been made, the interested party must be excluded from the decision making processes. It is considered that these transactions do not represent 'related party transactions' for reporting purposes.

## Decision making

The Board of Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management and decision making of Curious Minds to the Chief Executive. Significant decisions that impact on, for example, staff employment, business planning, financial stability and the sustainability of the organisation, are brought to the Board for approval prior to action taking place.

## Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which Curious Minds is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Curious Minds has a thorough risk management procedure wherein risks to which the organisation may be exposed are monitored and assessed as to their potential impact and likelihood. Appropriate controls are then identified and put in place to provide reasonable assurance against their occurrence.

The executive management team, led by the Chief Executive, monitor the risks associated with the organisation regularly and the updated risk register is presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly for discussion and approval.

## Internal policies

Curious Minds have a range of internal policies that have been written in consultation with appropriate professionals and that are reviewed annually and amended more frequently according to new legislation as appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the following areas:

- Employment (including wellbeing)
- Inclusion
- Pay policy (see note 5)
- Fund Management and Financial Controls (including procurement)
- Health & Safety (including Covid-19)
- Safeguarding
- Environmental sustainability.

# Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

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The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Curious Minds for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements 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.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

## Statement as to disclosure of information to Auditors

In so far as the Trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the Auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's Auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow Directors that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they are obliged to have taken as a

Director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company`s Auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

**On behalf of the Board of Trustees:**

*Jonathan Robinson*  
Jonathan Robinson (Dec 8, 2023 12:53 GMT)

**Jonathan Robinson**  
**Vice - Chair of the Board of Trustees**

# Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of Curious Minds

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## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Curious Minds (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flow, and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- the charitable company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement the Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless

the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

### **Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud**

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### **Identifying and assessing potential risks related to irregularities**

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the sector, control environment and charitable company's performance;
- results of our enquiries of management about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charitable company's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
- identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in relation to the timing of the recognition of income, and the recognition of grants payable. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override and we identified a risk in relation to the posting of unusual journals and the manipulation of accounting estimates.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the charitable company operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the reporting requirements of the funding bodies and the charity commission regulations.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the charitable company's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty.

### **Audit response to risks identified**

In addition to the above, our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations described above as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- enquiring of management and members of the Board of Trustees concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;

- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and reviewing correspondence with relevant authorities where matters identified were significant;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



08/12/2023

Jamielee Johnston CA  
Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

# Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Including income & expenditure account)

	Note	2022/23		2021/22		2022/23	2021/22
		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	58,156	1,938,678	62,082	1,711,485	<b>1,996,834</b>	1,773,567
Investment income	2	16,368	-	4,494	-	<b>16,368</b>	4,494
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>74,524</b>	<b>1,938,678</b>	66,576	1,711,485	<b>2,013,202</b>	1,778,061
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Expenditure on charitable activities	3	374,856	1,650,225	352,281	1,263,225	<b>2,025,081</b>	1,615,506
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>374,856</b>	<b>1,650,225</b>	352,281	1,263,225	<b>2,025,081</b>	1,615,506
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>							
	6	(300,332)	288,453	(285,705)	448,260	<b>(11,879)</b>	162,555
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>	11	620,372	(620,372)	375,668	(375,668)	-	-
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR AFTER TRANSFERS</b>							
		<b>320,040</b>	<b>(331,919)</b>	89,963	72,592	<b>(11,879)</b>	162,555
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>							
<b>FORWARD</b>	11	700,033	476,979	610,070	404,387	<b>1,177,012</b>	1,014,457
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>1,020,073</b>	<b>145,060</b>	700,033	476,979	<b>1,165,133</b>	1,177,012

The notes on pages 39 to 51 form part of these accounts.

# Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	8	154,226		129,636	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>1,232,926</u>		<u>1,180,041</u>	
		<b>1,387,152</b>		<b>1,309,677</b>	
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>222,019</u>		<u>132,665</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<b>1,165,133</b>		1,177,012
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<b><u>1,165,133</u></b>		<b><u>1,177,012</u></b>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted	11		1,020,073		700,033
Restricted	11		145,060		476,979
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b><u>1,165,133</u></b>		<b><u>1,177,012</u></b>

For the year ending 31 March 2023 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies but as this company is a charity, it is subject to audit under the Charities Act 2011.

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 39 to 51 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

And signed on their behalf by

Jonathan Robinson  
Jonathan Robinson (Dec 8, 2023 12:53 GMT)

**Jonathan Robinson – Vice - Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Company registration number 06775402**

# Statement of Cash Flow for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

	2023	2022
Note	£	£
<b>Cash used in operating activities</b>		
Net movement in funds	(11,879)	162,555
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	2 (16,368)	(4,494)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	8 (24,590)	(30,510)
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	9 <u>89,354</u>	<u>(53,280)</u>
<b>Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities</b>	<u><b>36,517</b></u>	<u><b>74,271</b></u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest income	2 <u>16,368</u>	<u>4,494</u>
<b>Cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<u><b>16,368</b></u>	<u><b>4,494</b></u>
<b>Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>52,885</b>	78,765
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,180,041	1,101,276
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<u><u><b>1,232,926</b></u></u>	<u><u><b>1,180,041</b></u></u>

## Analysis of changes in net debt

The charity did not hold any overdraft or loan facilities nor finance lease obligations at the start or during the period covered by these accounts or in the previous accounting period.

# Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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## 1. Accounting Policies

### Basis of Preparation

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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102 - effective 1 March 2018), Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2016.

Curious Minds meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

### Going concern

These accounts are prepared on the going concern basis. At the time of approving the financial statements the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the directors continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Charity has confirmed ACE grant funding to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and sufficient cashflow to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

### Incoming resources

Income is recognised in the accounting period in which it is receivable, except in the following circumstances, when the income is deferred and included in creditors:

- The income is unrestricted core funding for a specified future period.
- A sales invoice has been raised ahead of work being carried out and there is no contractual entitlement to the income until the work has been done.
- Not all the terms and conditions for the receipt of the grant instalment have been met.
- The project has been completed and the grant conditions are such that unspent grant must be refunded.

Income includes grants in respect of revenue and capital items.

## Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

## Allocation and apportionment of costs

Support costs have been allocated between the cost centres: salaries; travel and subsistence; learning, development and recruitment; marketing and publicity; premises related costs; and office, sundry costs and depreciation.

Central costs are charged to unrestricted funds with contributions to overheads levied to individual programmes as appropriate. Contributions to overheads are charged to programme funds, as agreed with funders and where funds are restricted, these are shown within fund transfers along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work.

## Grants payable and grant making policy

Curious Minds issues grants in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid out within the various funding agreements we receive. The Charity does not have its own funds for grant making purposes.

In meeting our strategic objectives (and requirements of our funders where applicable), the nature of the investments committed determines grant making as the legal form to achieving this, as they do not constitute contracts for services.

Grant commitments are recognised when the legal agreements are signed and control of the grant funds is passed to the recipient or lead partner in a partnership.

Direct grant costs are allocated directly to the grant funds. Where agreed with the funder, a management charge is levied for central overheads, administration and contribution to reserves (this is credited to unrestricted funds, where associated costs are charged).

Where agreed with the recipient, grant repayments during the year are shown as a reduction in grants payable.

## Tangible fixed assets

Single asset purchases, not forming part of a related series of transactions, costing less than £2,000 are not capitalised, but are written off as a revenue expense in the year of acquisition.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life:

Office Equipment / Furniture & Fixtures at 25% on cost

## Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

The Charity is not registered for VAT and therefore all its input VAT is irrecoverable. Expenditure is analysed inclusive of VAT where this has been incurred.

## Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which pays 6% of gross salary. Contributions payable to the employees' personal pension schemes are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. The Charity' staging date for auto enrolment was 1/4/2017 and the scheme is compliant.

## Operating leases

Payments under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

## Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in this note to the financial statements.

## Designated Funds

- **Curious Stories**

Funds generated from sale of the Curious Stories book, sponsorship as well as fundraising to enable disadvantaged children to better experience high quality arts and culture.

- **Curious Space**

Following closure of our Preston base in 2020, we have designated costs saved as set up funds towards a new base as we emerge from Covid-19 restrictions and home working.

- **Development & Transformation Fund**

Funds set aside to support development of income generation activities and international opportunities and towards Transformation of the business model from 2023, in conjunction with ACE Transform funding.

- **Dialogic Teaching & Learning**

A trial project to explore the impact of dialogic teaching and pedagogy.

- **Hope Streets Fund**

Additional funds to cover the required match contribution to the NLHF programme and cover ongoing legacy requirements.

## Restricted Funds

- **ACE BeeWell**

Grant from Arts Council England for an Artsmark pilot project across Greater Manchester.

- **ACE Bridge Organisation**

Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of the Bridge role for the North West of England (Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester & Cheshire).

- **ACE Coronation Bandstands**

Funding from Arts Council England to support projects centred around Bandstands throughout England and engaging children and young people in music and the arts to celebrate the King Charles III's coronation.

- **ACE DfE Extension**

Grant from Department for Education, paid by Arts Council England, for Bridge network expansion activity.

- **Arts Connect Let's Craft**

Grants from the Artfund and the Crafts Council via Arts Connect for the delivery of creative resources to children during school closures due to Covid-19.

- **Erasmus+**

European Commission grant funding for a partnership project to explore arts-based youth work.

- **Esmee Fairbairn**

Grant from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation towards the Bubble Up programme of activities for children transitioning from primary to secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022.

- **DWP Kickstart**

Funding through the Government Kickstart scheme towards salaries and support for six month employment placements for young people.

- **Lowry**

Funding provided through a partnership project to deliver the Stage Directions programme.

- **NLHF Kick the Dust Hope Street**

Grant received from National Lottery Heritage Fund for delivery of the 'Kick the Dust' Programme.

- **Manchester Museum Development**

Funding to support Trailblaze placements.

- **The Lathums – Chance to See Fund**

A fund inspired and supported by the band The Lathums to improve access to musical instruments and opportunities for children in Wigan.

- **Warrington HAF**

Funding from Warrington Borough Council's Holiday Activities and Food programme 2021 to deliver a programme of activities during the school summer holidays.

## 2 INCOME

<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities:</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Restricted Grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Funding body</b>	<b>Purpose</b>		
Arts Connect	Let's Craft	-	4,365
Arts Council England	BeeWell	<b>25,000</b>	-
Arts Council England	Bridge Organisation	<b>1,359,893</b>	1,359,893
Arts Council England	Coronation Bandstands project	<b>200,400</b>	-
British Council as National Agency for the European Commission	Erasmus+	<b>1,439</b>	11,537
Department for Education	Bridge Extension	<b>82,612</b>	82,612
Department for Work & Pensions	Kickstart Scheme	<b>46,903</b>	4,620
Lowry	Stage Directions	-	15,000
MDNW	Trailblaze	-	2,445
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	<b>221,776</b>	213,318
The Lathums fundraising	Chance to See Fund	<b>655</b>	-
Warrington Borough Council	Holiday Activities and Food	-	17,695
		<b>1,938,678</b>	<b>1,711,485</b>
<b>Unrestricted Income</b>			
Bank Interest		<b>16,368</b>	4,494
Donations		-	12
Fees received		<b>57,305</b>	62,070
Other Income		<b>851</b>	-
		<b>74,524</b>	<b>66,576</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,013,202</b>	<b>1,778,061</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2023		2022		2023	2022
	Direct	Support	Direct	Support	Total	Total
	costs	costs	costs	costs	£	£
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	494,570	-	281,720	-	494,570	281,720
Project delivery	1,187,843	334,842	986,061	339,378	1,522,685	1,325,439
Governance costs	-	7,826	-	8,347	7,826	8,347
	<b>1,682,413</b>	<b>342,668</b>	<b>1,267,781</b>	<b>347,725</b>	<b>2,025,081</b>	<b>1,615,506</b>
% of total expenditure	83.1%	16.9%	78.5%	21.5%	100.0%	100.0%

Charitable expenditure is allocated between unrestricted and restricted funds as follows:

	2023		2022		2023	2022
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	5,000	489,570	5,000	276,720	494,570	281,720
Project delivery	362,030	1,160,655	338,934	986,505	1,522,685	1,325,439
Governance costs	7,826	-	8,347	-	7,826	8,347
	<b>374,856</b>	<b>1,650,225</b>	<b>352,281</b>	<b>1,263,225</b>	<b>2,025,081</b>	<b>1,615,506</b>
% of total expenditure	18.5%	81.5%	21.8%	78.2%	100.0%	100.0%

#### b. Grants payable by programme

Programme	Number of grants to institutions		2023	2022
	2023	2022	£	£
Arts Council England - Bridge	23	24	394,165	183,437
Arts Council England Department for Education	4	2	33,705	19,500
NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	9	6	61,700	73,783
Curious Minds	1	1	5,000	5,000
	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>494,570</b>	<b>281,720</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2023	2022
		£	£
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>			
Accrington Academy	The Uncertainty Principle PI	-	3,000
Blackpool Grand Theatre	LCEP Development	5,750	-
Blackpool Teaching School Alliance	Illuminating Futures PI	-	(60,712)
Blaze Arts, Preston	Staying Curious in a Crisis PI	-	10,000
Bury Arts Museum and Sculptures Ce	LCEP Development	675	-
Circus House	LCEP Development	3,000	-
Collective Encounters	CASE Leadership Programme	870	-
Community Arts NW	Pushing Boundaries	10,770	-
Community Objectives CIC	Let's Craft	-	250
Creativity Works Preston	LCEP Development	1,000	-
Cumbria Music Service	FRAME Project PI	50,000	20,500
Cumbria Music Service	Let's Create & Let's Craft	-	650
Factory International	CASE Leadership Programme	600	-
Festival of Making CIC	LCEP Development PI	10,000	30,000
Festival of Making CIC	Let's Craft	-	650
GMCA	Culture & Transport in GM PI	5,000	15,000
Gorse Hill Studios	LCEP Development	3,000	-
Home Start Warrington	Let's Craft	-	250
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Our Place in the World PI	1,000	7,000
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Let's Craft	-	650
Liverpool City Region	Generations of Change PI	5,000	45,000
Liverpool Learning Partnership	Let's Craft	-	350
Manchester Metropolitan University	Intergenerational pilot	13,000	-
Museum Development North West	Re-engaging Audiences PI	-	2,500
Music for Youth	Coronation Bandstands	200,000	-
Odd Arts	CASE Leadership Programme	-	671
Pendle Leisure Trust	LCEP Development PI	10,000	15,000
Ready Generations	Creative Curriculum	4,500	-
Robert F Kennedy Human Rights UK	Poetic Universal Declaration of Human Rights PI	5,000	45,000
Royal Court Liverpool Trust	Mentoring Programme PI	12,000	-
Theatre Porto (formerly Action Transport Theatre)	Ellesmere Port Hyperlocal Development PI	25,000	35,000
Tullie House Museum	LCEP Development	3,000	-
Warrington Borough Council	Let's Create & Let's Craft	-	250
Whole Education	School Ready Digital PI	-	3,000
Wigan STEAM	CASE Leadership Programme	-	778
Wirral Hospital Schools	LCEP Development	-	3,000
Ykids	Let's Create & Let's Craft	-	650
Young Manchester	Youth & Play Cultural Partnerships PI	15,000	-
Z Arts	Creative Curriculum PI	10,000	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>394,165</b>	<b>183,437</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>

**c. Analysis of institutional grants continued**

		£	£
<b>ACE DfE Extension grants</b>			
Anchorsholme Primary Academy	SLiCE Programme	10,000	-
Blackpool Sixth Form College	SLiCE Programme	11,705	-
Hawes Side Academy	SLiCE Programme	7,500	-
United Learning Trust	SLiCE Programme	4,500	18,000
University of Manchester	SLiCE Programme	-	1,500
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>33,705</b>	<b>19,500</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets</b>		£	£
Bolton Museum		12,500	11,250
Blaze Arts		10,000	-
Lancashire Museums		9,350	15,000
Pinc College NW		5,000	-
Reform Radio CIC		1,100	4,000
The Atkinson		8,750	11,250
Tullie House		5,000	15,000
West Cheshire Museums		5,000	17,283
Youth Focus NW		5,000	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>61,700</b>	<b>73,783</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Curious Minds</b>		£	£
Lowry	Youth Performance Hub	5,000	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Total Grants Payable</b>	<b>494,570</b>	<b>281,720</b>
	<b>Total number grants</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>

#### 4 Analysis of governance and support costs

	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>Governance Costs</b>		
Audit fee	7,800	7,950
Support costs	26	397
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>7,826</b>	<b>8,347</b>

	2023		2022		2023	2022
	Project Delivery	Governance	Project Delivery	Governance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Support Costs</b>						
Salaries	252,500	-	262,955	-	252,500	262,955
Travel & Subsistence	8,483	-	6,979	-	8,483	6,979
Learning & Development and recruitment	5,599	-	6,414	-	5,599	6,414
Legal & Professional Services	19,542	-	16,283	-	19,542	16,283
Premises related costs	10,666	-	8,935	-	10,666	8,935
Office, sundry costs & Depreciation	45,852	26	45,762	397	45,878	46,159
<b>Total Support costs</b>	<b>342,642</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>347,328</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>342,668</b>	<b>347,725</b>
% of total expenditure	100.0%	0.0%	99.9%	0.1%		

#### 5 Staff Costs

The payroll costs of the charity were as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages & salaries	795,418	787,044
Social Security costs	75,989	74,061
Pension costs	44,897	45,715
Redundancy payments	32,417	7,700
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>948,721</b>	<b>914,520</b>

One employee had earnings (excluding employer pension costs) over £60,000 during the year:

Number of employees	Band
One (2020: One)	£60,000 to £70,000

The remuneration costs during the year of the Executive Management Team as outlined on page 2 (inclusive of pension costs) was £216,528 (2022: £217,172).

The average monthly head count was 24 staff (2022: 23 staff) and the average monthly number of full time equivalent employees (including casual and part time employees) during the year was:

	2023	2022
Average FTE	24.3	20.7

## 6 Net incoming resources before transfer

<b>This is stated after charging:</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Auditors remuneration - Audit fees	<u>7,800</u>	<u>7,950</u>
	<u><b>7,800</b></u>	<u><b>7,950</b></u>
Number of trustees claiming expenses:	-	-

## 7 Tangible fixed assets

	<b>Office Equipment</b>	<b>Furniture &amp; Fittings</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
As at 1 April 2022	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>
<b>As at 31 March 2023</b>	<u><b>16,474</b></u>	<u><b>3,887</b></u>	<u><b>20,361</b></u>
<b>Depreciation</b>			
As at 1 April 2022	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>
	<u><b>16,474</b></u>	<u><b>3,887</b></u>	<u><b>20,361</b></u>
<b>Net book value</b>			
<b>As at 31 March 2023</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
As at 31 March 2022	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

## 8 Debtors

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade debtors	<b>24,242</b>	4,836
Prepayments	<b>9,023</b>	17,413
Grant and other income receivable	<u><b>120,961</b></u>	<u>107,387</u>
	<u><b>154,226</b></u>	<u>129,636</u>

## 9 Creditors falling due within one year

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade creditors	<b>48,592</b>	11,832
Contract commitments due and accrued	<b>80,503</b>	25,002
Accruals	<b>53,710</b>	41,992
Grants and income in advance	<b>14,548</b>	28,387
PAYE & Payroll deductions payable	<b>19,486</b>	19,849
Pension contributions payable	<u><b>5,180</b></u>	<u>5,603</u>
	<u><b>222,019</b></u>	<u>132,665</u>

Curious Minds pays all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of invoices due for payment.

Accruals include £14,050 (2022:£23,250), being the cost of staff annual leave due but not taken and carried forward at year end and £18,200 (2022:£NIL) pay in lieu of notice for employees made redundant at the end of March 2023.

## 10 Deferred income

	2023	2022
	£	£
Chester Zoo	1,560	11,180
Cultural Citizens	3,983	3,983
DWP re Kickstart	-	5,880
Erasmus+	-	6,244
GMCA BeeWell	9,005	-
Heriot Watt	-	1,100
	<u>14,548</u>	<u>28,387</u>
<b>Movement in deferred income</b>		
Balance as at 1 April	28,387	23,760
Amount released to income	(22,844)	(13,746)
Amount deferred in year	9,005	18,373
Balance as at 31 March	<u>14,548</u>	<u>28,387</u>

## 11 Statement of funds

	Balance				Fund				Balance			
	01/04/2021	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/3/2022 & 1/4/2023	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/03/2023			
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£			
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>												
General Fund	458,773	66,576	(352,281)	308,423	<b>481,491</b>	<b>74,524</b>	<b>(374,856)</b>	<b>319,809</b>	<b>500,968</b>			
<b>Designated Funds:</b>												
Curious Stories	6,193	-	-	-	<b>6,193</b>	-	-	-	<b>6,193</b>			
Curious Space	30,000	-	-	70,000	<b>100,000</b>	-	-	-	<b>100,000</b>			
Development & Transformation	44,287	-	-	-	<b>44,287</b>	-	-	<b>300,000</b>	<b>344,287</b>			
Dialogic Teaching & Learning	50,000	-	-	-	<b>50,000</b>	-	-	-	<b>50,000</b>			
Hope Streets	20,817	-	-	(2,755)	<b>18,062</b>	-	-	<b>563</b>	<b>18,625</b>			
	<b>610,070</b>	<b>66,576</b>	<b>(352,281)</b>	<b>375,668</b>	<b>700,033</b>	<b>74,524</b>	<b>(374,856)</b>	<b>620,372</b>	<b>1,020,073</b>			
<b>Restricted Funds</b>												
ACE BeeWell	-	-	-	-	-	<b>25,000</b>	<b>(662)</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>74,338</b>			
ACE Bridge Organisation	354,387	1,359,893	(905,632)	(331,669)	<b>476,979</b>	<b>1,359,893</b>	<b>(1,346,832)</b>	<b>(419,973)</b>	<b>70,067</b>			
ACE Coronation Bandstands	-	-	-	-	-	<b>200,400</b>	-	<b>(200,400)</b>	-			
ACE DfE Extension	-	82,612	(61,960)	(20,652)	-	<b>82,612</b>	<b>(61,959)</b>	<b>(20,653)</b>	-			
Arts Connect	-	4,365	(4,365)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Erasmus+	-	11,537	(8,117)	(3,420)	-	<b>1,439</b>	<b>(3,579)</b>	<b>2,140</b>	-			
Esmee Fairbairn	50,000	-	(50,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
DWP Kickstart	-	4,620	(4,620)	-	-	<b>46,903</b>	<b>(52,566)</b>	<b>5,663</b>	-			
Lowry	-	15,000	(15,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
NLHF Kick The Dust Hope Street	-	213,318	(196,217)	(17,101)	-	<b>221,776</b>	<b>(184,627)</b>	<b>(37,149)</b>	-			
Manchester Museum Development	-	2,445	(2,445)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
The Lathums - Chance to See Fund	-	-	-	-	-	<b>655</b>	-	-	<b>655</b>			
Warrington HAF	-	17,695	(14,869)	(2,826)	-	-	-	-	-			
	<b>404,387</b>	<b>1,711,485</b>	<b>(1,263,225)</b>	<b>(375,668)</b>	<b>476,979</b>	<b>1,938,678</b>	<b>(1,650,225)</b>	<b>(620,372)</b>	<b>145,060</b>			
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>1,014,457</b>	<b>1,778,061</b>	<b>(1,615,506)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,177,012</b>	<b>2,013,202</b>	<b>(2,025,081)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,165,133</b>			

### Notes on Statement of funds

Fund Transfers include contributions to overheads charged to programmes within individual funds, as agreed with funders, along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work in accordance with the use of those funds.

The net transfer of £620,372 (2022: £375,668) between restricted and unrestricted funds during the year is made up of £397,612 (2022: £395,119) agreed contribution to overheads and £200,000 (2022: £NIL) permissible programme costs, plus (2022: less) £563 (2022: £19,451) contribution from (2022: to) the NLHF Kick the Dust programme. £2,140 to Erasmus+ and £5,663 to Kickstart projects.

The balance of restricted funds represents expenditure not due at the Balance Sheet date from grant funding received. ACE Bridge funds carried forward within the grant period will be used to finalise projects linked to the academic year, by July 2023.

## 12 Analysis of net assets between funds

	2023		2022		2023	2022
	General Funds	Restricted Funds	General Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets	<u>1,020,073</u>	<u>145,060</u>	<u>700,033</u>	<u>476,979</u>	<u>1,165,133</u>	<u>1,177,012</u>
	<u>1,020,073</u>	<u>145,060</u>	<u>700,033</u>	<u>476,979</u>	<u>1,165,133</u>	<u>1,177,012</u>

## 13 Operating lease commitments

The charity has no commitments under operation leases for premises (2022: NIL).

## 14 Corporation tax

The company is a registered charity and is entitled to claim annual exemption from UK corporation tax.

## 15 Related Party Transactions

Mustafa Hassan claimed travel expenses to attend recruitment meetings of £26.40 during the year.

Derri Burdon, Chief Executive, was a Co Chair of Trustees of Blaze Arts which was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in July 2018.

Blaze Arts have received grant funding and project commissions during the year of £13,800.

Curious Minds have a service agreement to provide Blaze Arts with back office support, for which fees paid during the year amounted to £2,000 (2021/22 £5,000).

Blaze Arts also reimbursed Curious Minds for salary costs of seconded staff members of £37,082 (2021/22: £35,335).

Derri's daughter, Amy Burdon, was commissioned for programme support and facilitation, receiving fees £3,900 and travel expenses of £80 in 2022/23 (2021/22 NIL).












# Curious Minds TAR & FS to 31 March 2023

Final Audit Report

2023-12-08

Created:	2023-12-08
By:	Sue Langfeld (sue.langfeld@curiousminds.org.uk)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA2k5NkF_ShuV7j49_6ZAzX77q5lt1CmxB

## "Curious Minds TAR & FS to 31 March 2023" History

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**CURIOUS MINDS**

England & Wales - Charity number 1130988

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# Accounts

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# Curious Minds

## Curious Minds' Registered Office:

Studio 15, The Old Courts  
Gerrard Winstanley House  
Crawford Street  
Wigan  
Greater Manchester  
WN1 1NA

## Curious Minds is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity

Registered Company    Registered Charity  
Number: 06775402    Number: 1130988

# Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

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# Company Information

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## Incorporation

The charitable company was incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and commenced trading on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

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## Trustees

Mrs. Karen Crowshaw – Chair

Mr. Jaffer Hussain - Vice-Chair

Ms. Samira Al'Obaidi

Ms. Eleanor Chapman (Appointed 26/1/22)

Mr. Mustafa Hassan (Appointed 26/1/22)

Mrs. Ruth Raban (Retired 31/1/21)

Mr. Jonathan Robinson

Ms. Alicia Smith (Appointed 26/1/22)

Mr. Ivan Wadeson (Retired 31/12/21)

Mr. David Wearing

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## Executive Management Team

Chief Executive Officer

Chief Operating Officer

Executive Director of Learning & Workforce

Executive Director of Social Justice

Derri Burdon

Sue Langfeld

Jude Bird

Kelly Allen

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## Statutory Auditors & Accountants

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

44 Peter Street

Manchester

M2 5GP

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## Bankers

CAF Bank Limited

25 Kings Hill Avenue

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent MA19 4JQ

## Solicitors

Counterculture Partnership LLP

Unit 115

Ducie House

Ducie Street

Manchester M1 2JW

# Chair and CEO's Joint Statement

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This wasn't the year we thought it would be. We had known since 2018 that Arts Council England (ACE) funding for the national Bridge network would be coming to an end in March 2022. Due to the pandemic, ACE had extended our grant for a further twelve-months and we entered the year determined to make the most of the unexpected opportunity.

In April 2021 we, like the rest of the world, were navigating the post-pandemic 'new normal'. Although restrictions were being lifted, it would be many more months before education and culture, the two main sectors we work across, would get back to operating anywhere near normal. It's fair to say that the high levels of uncertainty that dominated the first half of this financial year affected our ability to plan events and training with certainty.

At the same time, the devastating impact that successive lockdowns and restrictions on social mixing had on children's learning and wellbeing was becoming clear. Distressing new phrases started to invade the education lexicon such as 'catch-up' and 'learning loss', and the media were warning of a looming mental health crisis amongst children and young people. We knew there was a crucial role for cultural education to tackle these pressing issues.

We were disappointed then, when in June Kevan Collins resigned from his role as education catch-up tsar due to the Treasury's refusal to fund his recommendations. We had grown hopeful that a recovery fund would bring with it opportunities for young children to catch-up on the creative and cultural learning experiences many of them had been deprived of due to the pandemic.

But we weren't defeated!

Our partnership with United Learning Trust (ULT) to deliver the Unlocking Experiences initiative demonstrated how useful a national approach could have been. The partnership was instigated by ULT's CEO, Sir Jon Coles who wanted both pupils and staff at his schools to 'get out and enjoy themselves' after lengthy periods of uncertainty and change. In his unique response to this time, he was recognising the pressures being felt by schools and their population. He also wanted to trial a model that could be replicated by other schools to address this challenge.

Footballer Marcus Rashford had spearheaded a successful campaign to extend support for low-income families to be able to access free school meals in major school holidays. We seized the opportunity presented to us by the Department for Education to influence more and better cultural activity through HAF (Holiday Activity Food) Camps. We delivered an online session for local authority commissioners from across England to advise them about good commissioning practice and encourage them to make use of our Cultural Providers Map. The involvement of cultural organisations and creative practitioners in the delivery of this scheme continues to grow across England.

As the year progressed, we realised quickly that the shift to online meetings and training during the pandemic had caused a permanent change in the way we would need to work going forwards. But starting to meet in-person again sparked a renewed appreciation about the value of being able to connect with people. So, as we settled into the 'new normal' we began to explore approaches to hybrid working. We think very carefully now about how and why we bring people together online or in-person. 'Holding the space' for professionals across the education, youth and culture sectors continues to be a key aspect of our work – the spaces are both digital and in-person now.

2020 had been a year of reckoning for us and we had embarked on a journey to become an explicitly anti-racist organisation, and to be a stronger champion for diversity and inclusion. We entered this year determined to be a conduit for sector-led change and welcomed Saphena Aziz into the new role of Director of Inclusion. Saphena made an immediate impact, working with our ARG (Anti-Racism Group) to conduct thematic deep dives into the inner workings of the charity. This work, particularly the change to our recruitment processes, has drawn national attention from others wanting to replicate our methods.

This was the year in which two long-serving Trustees, Ivan Wadeson and Ruth Raban retired. We are incredibly grateful for the support and expertise they offered. They both made a significant contribution to steering the charity through the choppy waters of the pandemic and their words of wisdom continue to influence what we do and how we do it. We in turn welcomed three new Trustees onto the board following a successful recruitment exercise: Eleanor Chapman, Mustafa Hassan and Alicia Smith. They bring a useful mix of professional and lived experience into the charity and add vibrancy to board discussion and fresh insight to planning and decision making.

The second half of the year marked a crucial point in Curious Minds' transition from being a Bridge organisation into its next phase of development as Trustees worked with the Executive Management Team to develop the organisation's new strategy for 2023 - 2030, and to apply to join ACE's portfolio as an NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) for the period 2023 - 2026. We knew it would be a highly competitive bidding round and while we were quietly confident that our application would be successful, there was no certainty that

it would be, or that we would be offered the same level of funding we receive as a Bridge organisation.

We're incredibly proud of the resolve and ingenuity the whole Curious Minds team mustered throughout a year permeated with uncertainty about both the immediate and long-term future. We continued to deliver our services and programmes to an incredibly high standard and to respond rapidly to the needs of the cultural education workforce as they became apparent.

Little did we know that this was simply the calm before the next storm!

Post-pandemic, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, political instability and a devastating cost-of-living crisis, the status and provision of arts subjects is declining, and the cultural participation gap is widening. There is a real danger that without rapid intervention, soon only the most affluent families will be able to purchase the advantages of a proper cultural education for their children. Our work is more urgent now than ever!

And so, into a curious future we proceed with a renewed determination to make it one in which being creative and experiencing brilliant culture is a regular part of every child's learning and life.

Karen Crowshaw  
**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

Derri Burdon  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Trustees' Annual Report

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## Our purpose and activities

The purposes of the charity are to advance for the public benefit the education of children and young people within England to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals, in particular by:

- supporting them to become successful learners and responsible citizens by working with others to extend the range, amount, quality and scope of formal and informal learning opportunities in the areas of creativity, arts, media, culture, heritage, humanities and science;
- supporting teachers, practitioners, carers, performers and artists in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in enabling children and young people both inside and outside formal education to develop and apply their skills and talents and to open up to them cultural and creative activity;
- developing programmes, where appropriate, in partnership with others to deliver positive learning outcomes and encourage the recognition, enjoyment and use of culture, media and heritage;
- empowering them to be involved in the promotion of cultural and learning activities and enhancing their skills, capacities and capabilities; and
- encouraging them to visit, experience, participate in, initiate and engage in cultural activities, places and performances.

Curious Minds aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the North West of England through facilitating access to arts and culture for all. It promotes cultural education and enables creative innovation and collaboration between the cultural, educational and youth sectors.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main beneficiaries are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners and we are mindful that they all continue to work within a challenging social, financial and policy climate.

## Charging Considerations

Our main beneficiaries/stakeholders are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners, all of whom are working in a challenging financial and policy climate. Affordability and access to our programmes is important to us and remains a key consideration when we are planning our activity. Wherever possible, places on our events and training programmes are provided at low or no cost to participants using the grants we receive as subsidy. The decision whether to provide a service, place on training or at an event or conference is carefully balanced to ensure cost does not act as a barrier but also taking into account our experience of drop-off when offering places for free (e.g., people register but don't turn up). We cost all our traded offers on a full cost recovery basis.

## Programme Delivery

Business plan priorities were originally agreed for the four year period 2018 – 2022, reviewed to manage a smooth transition towards 2023 in line with the Arts Council England's extended funding due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

These are:

1. **Widening our influence** – so that Curious Minds is positively influencing policy and practice across the entire children's workforce.
2. **Pioneering next practice** – recognising the factors impacting on children's lives and the vital role culture and creativity play in helping them navigate a rapidly changing society.
3. **Developing autonomy and resilience** – to ensure that Curious Minds is ready to tackle future financial and environmental challenges.
4. **Making a difference** – responding rapidly and innovatively to tackle issues affecting children's lives that we care deeply about.

From March 2020, when it became apparent that we would not be able to deliver our usual programme of activities, we reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic, repurposing our resources to respond to the crisis facing the cultural education workforce, and have incorporated these strategies in our action since then and into the Bridge extension year.

# Review of our Achievements and Performance in 2021/22

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Curious Minds continues to punch above its weight to achieve significant regional impact with limited resources. We choose to support the sector rather than directly working with young people and it is this strategic approach that enables us to have substantial regional reach and influence as honest brokers and advocates for cultural and creative education.

Our work targets children and young people living and learning in some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the country. We continue to support cultural and education sectors to collaborate so that these children and young people can enjoy rich art and cultural experiences.

As this year began, we were still responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. We had repurposed our resources in 2020/21 to respond to the crisis facing the cultural education workforce. It was a time of learning and, despite the challenges, of discovering new ways to define what it means to be a Sector Support Organisation (SSO). It was also a period in which the value of the cultural education workforce has been brought into sharper focus, along with its vulnerabilities.

In early 2021 we refreshed our plans for the remaining term of our business plan and agreed the following:

## Strategic Aims 2021 - 2023

Through our work we will:

1. IMPACT social justice outcomes
2. INFLUENCE children's services policy and practice
3. INVEST in the cultural education workforce
4. INNOVATE creative practice & pedagogy
5. INITIATE partnerships and strategic alliances

## Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023

Our Strategic Plan for 2021 - 23 was produced in partnership with our Board of Trustees, Advisory Groups and consultation with funders and key stakeholders. It is designed to manage a smooth transition as we move out of our current Arts Council England (ACE) Funded Bridge role which ends on 31 March 2023.

We will continue to play a key role in helping ACE to achieve the ambition for children and young people as expressed in the new Ten-Year Strategy, 'Let's Create', having been included within the National Portfolio 2023 - 2026.

## Delivery Plan 2021 - 2023

Over these two years we are focussing delivery and programme development across 4 key areas:

- Sector Development
- Social Justice
- Careers & Employability
- Learning and Impact

# Activity

## 1. Sector Development Activity

### 1.1. Artsmark

Working with our Artsmark Associates, we delivered monthly online Development Training and Statement of Commitment sessions, with additional 1:1 email review and feedback support on completed drafts of Statements of Commitment. As a result, 72 schools submitted their Statement of Commitment and progressed to delivering their Artsmark Programme.

*“Thank you so much for your help and guidance! We have really appreciated it and the zoom meetings were really inspiring and helpful to us. We look forward to the next stage of our journey!” Balderstone St. Leonard’s Primary School (Artsmark Gold).*

We provided monthly Statement of Impact sessions, with additional 1:1 email review and feedback support on completed drafts of Statements of Impact. By scaffolding this phase of the Artsmark journey with a comprehensive support offer and nurturing relationships over the long-term, 42 schools submitted their Statements of Impact and received their Artsmark accreditation (19 Silver, 17 Gold, 6 Platinum).

*“Thank you so much for your support and advice over the past few years. Your input and the support from Curious Minds was invaluable. In short, I could not have done it without you!” Blackmoor Park Junior School (Artsmark Gold).*

The team hosted three online Artsmark Partnership Programme briefings and confirmed 17 new organisations as Artsmark Partners.

*“Please can I just pass on our gratitude for this morning’s session. We found it extremely informative, and it gave us the clarity we were seeking. The session was so well delivered and put together that the time flew! We cannot wait to become partners!” I4YPC (Artsmark Partner).*

We also celebrated the Artsmark community with Artsmark Celebration Week 2021 with 69 guests attending our celebratory events during the week.

## 1.2. Leading The Arts

35 teachers successfully completed our 'Leading the Arts (LTA) in your school' course by the end of the Academic year 2022. LTA is our tried and tested modular programme designed for early to mid-career teaching staff in any education setting, with ambition to develop their school's arts and cultural offer and to make a real difference for children as they reconnect with learning. This iteration of the course included a hybrid model including the development of the Online Platform.

### Outputs:

- Increased knowledge of Quality Principles and how to embed these within their Arts Actions plans
- Increased knowledge of the arts and cultural sector across the North-West
- Increased knowledge of partnership working
- Increased knowledge and understanding of how to communicate the impact of their arts and cultural activity to various stakeholders
- Increased knowledge of Cultural Capital
- Increased knowledge of national and regional arts policy
- How to embed careers and employability, children and young people's voice and diversity and equality within their arts action plans

### The impact has been:

- Teachers have reported it has supported their Ofsted 'deep dives'
- Enabled them to have more meaningful conversations with SLT/Headteachers about the impact of their arts and cultural activity
- Improved the arts activity they offer in school

## 1.3. Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs)

We have supported LCEPs through meetings, advice, signposting to sources of funding and have delivered an in-person session on place-based working, as well as a conversation on Artsmark, and how that can support engagement with schools. We regularly share sector information and opportunities with LCEP chairs and coordinators and have supported changes of personnel (chairs and coordinators) across the LCEPs, ensuring all are connected into each other and kept updated.

Support is also maintained on an individual basis with LCEPs, as they continue to develop programmes to impact their areas. These are according to the needs and make up of each area and range from leading events for Borough of Culture (Halton), being key partners in City as Art School (Manchester), co-developing cultural strategies for their boroughs alongside other partners (Sefton) and creating a CPD offer for those working in schools

(Salford). Rochdale has been supported to develop an LCEP and Crewe are just at the beginning of that process. Seven LCEPs (in Greater Manchester and Pendle) have hosted Creative Youth Voice Champions under the Kickstart programme (led by Careers & Employability and supported by Sector Development). Their recommendations are being shared with all LCEP chairs and coordinators.

#### 1.4. Freelancer Network

We have co-delivered two briefings on the Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme funded by the Government. 14 individuals and small organisations attended alongside staff from 6 HAF teams. A number of organisations within our network were successful in securing funding to deliver activity during the summer holidays 2021.

We hosted three quarterly Network sessions with a total of 63 attendees. To provide additional support, we also hosted sessions focusing on Trauma Informed Practice (39 attendees), Governance (9 attendees) and a Spotlight on Being a Freelancer (6 attendees).

#### 1.5. Social Prescribing Pilot

The Creative Youth Social Prescribing Pilot ran between September 2021 and July 2022. In five 6th form Colleges across GMCA, this included commissioning of activity. The biggest impact has been the relationships that have developed from this work specifically: BeeWell, The Royal Society for Public Health and GMCA which has led to significant partnership working.

#### 1.6. SLiCE (Specialist Leader in Cultural Education)

Curious Minds has been working with United Learning Trust to deliver year 1 of a 2-year, national programme to six settings from the Multi Academy Trust. Six Fellows enrolled and five of those completed year 1 of the Fellowship.

The outputs from the programme for each Fellow are as follows:

- Increased knowledge of Cultural Capital
- Attended a two-day cultural placement with local Arts organisations
- Developed a Theory of Change to strategically embed the Arts within their setting
- Commissioned and delivered an Arts based project that met the needs described within the Theory of Change

The impact of the programme so far, has included:

- Greater value and participation from students and senior leaders with the Arts in Fellows' settings

*"Through our cultural commission our school has: increased engagement, a real appreciation of Arts & Culture, created a shift in SLT focus and increased interest in extra-curricular activities." Amy Burrows, Avonbourne Academy*

- Links into wider networks to develop ongoing and beneficial relationships

*“This year’s work has forced me to reach beyond my staff to outside agencies. It has given the young people a chance to question how they want to be seen and how to positively commit to exploring and expressing that.” Zoe Cooper, Sedgehill Academy*

- Application of newly acquired knowledge

*“One of my main takeaways is what does ‘Cultural Capital’ actually mean and how can we best support our communities to ensure equity in education.” Laura Orchard, Pegasus Primary School*

### **1.7. Hyperlocal and Blackpool SLiCE**

We launched Hyperlocal work in three areas - West Cumbria, Ellesmere Port and Blackpool. These are all areas of high deprivation with different needs and we have been working on the idea of investing staff time and Curious Minds’ programmes in each focused geographical area to monitor what happens given that our work has been regionwide for 10 years. Cumbria has Curious Citizens and Leading the Arts, Blackpool has SLiCE(R) and a careers focus and Ellesmere Port has Artsmark, LTA, artists as cover, intergenerational work and careers. This work will be further developed in 2022/23.

### **1.8. Creativity Collaborative**

In October 2021 we learned that St Bernard's RC Primary in Ellesmere Port had been successful in obtaining one of eight national awards to become a Creative Collaborative lead school. We have worked closely with this school since 2014 on SLiCE, CASE, Artsmark, LCEP and they are now part of the Ellesmere Port hyperlocal steering group. Our support for their bid augmented the established partnership with the schools and evidenced our impact working in a long-term in-depth way with them.

### **1.9. Early Years and Intergenerational Work**

We developed an early years web page on our site identifying the range of work we have been engaged in across education and the cultural sector. We have continued to be a lead partner in the cross Bridge early years network hosting symposia and network meetings to advance and share practice. Spring boarding from this we began conversations on intergenerational work and made contact with Dr Virginia Tandy at the Centre for Creative Ageing and Ready Generations to look at models of intergenerational working. This work will be further developed in 2022/23.

### **1.10. United Learning Trust (ULT) Unlocked programme**

We were introduced to the CEO of ULT via Arts Council England (ACE). He wanted their Manchester/Salford secondary pupils to get out into the world again after a series of lockdowns and do something enjoyable. We worked with Salford Academy, Cadishead and

Irlam Academy, Albion and the Lowry Academy, Stockport Academy, William Hulme Grammar School and Manchester Academy.

We brokered links to cultural organisations including Manchester Camerata, HOME, National Football Museum, People's History Museum, Manchester Arts Gallery and the Whitworth and the Lowry. Due to another wave of Covid-19 some of the planned activity was stymied however the sessions that did run were considered hugely successful.

### **1.11. Arts Award**

In partnership with Preston LCEP, we supported the development of an LCEP Arts Award map. The aim of this was to join up the regular offers of the cultural organisations so the Arts Award pathway across a local area was more visible to Arts Award advisers and young people

The impact has been:

- A more co-ordinated approach to Arts Award by the LCEP
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the Arts Award offer across a local area
- Joint working with Trinity College London – we have shared this piece of work on a national level as part of their LCEP events
- Joint working with Artsworld sharing this resource and programme of work with their LCEP's
- Long term: an increase in children and young people participating in Arts Award

### **1.12. Let's Craft**

Building on the Covid-19 response Let's Create and Let's Craft programmes, Curious Minds are one of nine partner Bridge organisations working with Crafts Council and sponsor HobbyCraft to deliver packs of craft materials to children across the country from 2022 to 2025. Beginning in Wigan, 500 packs will be distributed in the run up to the Christmas 2022 holidays.

## **2. Social Justice Activity**

### **2.2. Anti-Racism Group**

At the start of the year our ARG had recently been established and had begun thematic deep dives into the inner workings of Curious Minds. During Spring 2021, they looked at our recruitment processes, which led to a re-vamp and the introduction of a promise that we will not shortlist for permanent posts until we have at least 20% diversity amongst applicants. Not only has this proved consistently successful in attracting a wider range of candidates, but it has also drawn attention from other organisations wanting to replicate our methods. Together with the ARG we then created a Director of Inclusion role, and

through our new process successfully recruited Saphena Aziz who took up post in September 2021.

## **2.2. Pushing Boundaries**

This year saw a long-term ambition put into action plans to support refugee and new migrant artists to develop their skills as Cultural Educators, able to work in UK schools. In partnership with Community Arts North West, we planned a programme of work and have since recruited 8 artists from Ukraine, Ethiopia, Syria, Palestine, Iran and Iraq to our Pushing Boundaries programme, which will run from September 2022 to March 2023.

## **2.3. Inclusivity and Relevance Workshops**

During this year, Arts Council England introduced their Investment Principles, which placed great importance on 'Inclusivity and Relevance'. Whilst already firmly embedded in the ethos of Curious Minds, we seized the opportunity to 'turn the volume up' further and ran internal and external workshop sessions to help cultural educators interrogate the concepts, understand the implications for their work and push their practice even further.

## **2.4. Global Curiosity**

The ongoing impact of Covid-19 made it necessary for us to pivot our Erasmus+ project Global Curiosity programme to online delivery. Global Curiosity is a practice sharing programme to increase the involvement of cultural venues and creative practitioners in the delivery of global youth-work. We worked in partnership with The Hellenic Theatre/Drama and Education Network -TENet-Gr (Greece), and The Malopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow (Poland). We coalesce around the belief that there is a pressing need for Children and Young People to be able to think critically, behave compassionately and act democratically, and that creativity and curiosity are vital to this.

## **2.5. Curious Commissions**

Towards the end of the year, we began our Diversity & Inclusion focused Curious Commissions programme. This is a professional development programme, providing a learning opportunity to work with a mentor to develop a new area of delivery with young people through a live commission. It is targeted exclusively at Black and Brown artists, and artists with disabilities, to accelerate their learning and presence in the cultural education workforce. We received 65 applications for 19 commissions, the vast majority of whom were previously unconnected with us, many of whom have since gone on to be involved in other Curious Minds programmes and projects.

## 3. Careers and Employability

### 3.1. Kickstart Wraparound Support

During 2021/22 we delivered Kickstart wraparound support to 20 young people as part of their time working with a creative employer. One participant commented:

*"I am really grateful for all your help this year during my Kickstarter job and would love to keep in touch"*.

We participated in wider strategic conversations about Kickstart to influence DWP decision making and supported the wider sector to engage where possible. In March 2022 we successfully recruited seven young people as Creative Youth Voice Champions. Deployed in pairs across Bury, Pendle, Bolton and Salford & Trafford LCEPs, they were tasked with taking a creative approach to engaging children and young people's voices in creativity and cultural education.

### 3.2. Stage Directions Salford

Our support of Stage Directions continued, with emphasis on supporting the careers strand. This is the Youth Performance Partnership Fund programme with Salford LCEP. In October 2021 we appointed Elli Chapman as the Careers Event Producer. March 2022 saw the delivery of a large-scale creative careers event called 'Beginners Call: Starting your creative career'. Over 300 students from across Salford, from mainstream education providers, SEND provision and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), took part in a multi-site event, delivered during national careers week. Evaluation showed that as a result of this experience young people improved their transferrable and performance making skills and have a better understanding of and interest in creative careers.

### 3.3. Alternative Saturday Jobs (ASJs)

This year saw the successful delivery of 6 Alternative Saturday Jobs (ASJs) supporting museum partners to create youth employment opportunities, as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Hope Streets project. As a result, most of the museums have repeated the roles or created new opportunities, including apprenticeships. In one case, new HR processes have been implemented so young people aged 16 and over can be employed within the museum service. This creates a legacy to this work and allows more young people to be brought into their future workforce.

Together with Saul Argent and Sadia Mir (ASJ with Lancashire Museums), we presented at the Museums Futures Summit in March 2022. Together, we shared the ASJ model as an alternative pathway into museums and heritage careers and shared the long-term strategic benefits a scheme like this can offer museums and heritage organisations, as well as the young people involved.

### **3.4. Careers and Employability Advocacy**

Our Head of Careers & Employability also joined the steering group for Culture Forum North, an open network of partnerships between Higher Education and the cultural sector across the North, looking at the value and impact of partnership working. Alongside this we continued to be part of the Youth Employment Group, a national coalition of 300 organisations advocating for fair and inclusive employment for young people.

## **4. Learning and Impact**

### **4.1. Research Partnerships**

In a partnership with Goldsmiths, three postgraduate researchers analysed survey data collected from pupils at United Learning Trust schools, The Valley Leadership Academy and Bedford High School. The research explored the barriers to and benefits of engaging with art and culture, particularly in terms of character strengths and curiosity. Findings were presented back to us in November and Curious Minds supported one student's application to continue the research at doctoral level.

### **4.2. Philosopher in Residence**

Manjit Shellis joined us as our Philosopher in Residence developing our Curious Pedagogy work. Manjit facilitated a series of sessions to develop work based on the successful pilot of Cultural Citizens, an iteration we have called Curious Citizens. This draws on Manjit's knowledge and skills from her UFA (University of the First Age) and National Citizen Service experience.

### **4.3. Repurposing UFA Leadership & Learning Training**

Education charity the UFA closed in March 2021 after over 20 years of delivering learning and leadership programmes for children and young people and the adults that support them. Former National Manager at the UFA, Manjit, with the permission of the UFA worked with the Curious Minds team to repurpose a range of former UFA training programmes so that they can be delivered with the cultural and education sectors to ensure a firm legacy. These include Lead Learner Training, Peer Tutor Training and Young Researchers and Evaluators. We will be working with Manjit to market and deliver these courses in 2021/22.

### **4.4. Reviewing SLiCE (Specialist Leader in Cultural Education)**

In addition, Manjit has supported a ten-year review of our SLiCE (Specialist Leader in Cultural Education) Fellowship programme and provided 'train the trainer' input to our friends at Blaze Arts CIO.

## 4.5. Evaluation & Facilitation

In evaluation and facilitation work, six evaluation contracts were won this year with two arts organisations, two University projects and two projects with Chester Zoo. These add to our existing three-year work with Writing on the Wall.

These contracts have allowed us to pull together an internal team to develop our 'Curious Approach to Evaluation, Consultation and Facilitation'. We have developed and tested curiosity driven approaches with external clients, namely: our 'Hack Event', an online consensus workshop and evaluation focused ORID conversation technique; and an Evaluation Framework that maps theory of change to mechanisms, actions, impacts and indicators.

*"It has really helped my practice so much and you guided us through it expertly." Emma Hulme, Programme Manager, Writing on the Wall.*

Evaluation advice has been provided to three organisations this year and fundraising advice has been provided to eight organisations. Two bid-writing workshops have been delivered with approximately 60 places booked. We were invited to provide a programme of fundraising mentoring to Lancashire Music Service.

A full impact evaluation report was provided for the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to demonstrate the value of their investment in our Covid-19 response initiative Bubble Up.

## 5. Policy & Influence

### 5.1. Public Relations & Public Affairs

Throughout 2021/22 we worked with PLMR to develop our approach to public relations and public affairs work, including political stakeholder engagement. During the first half of the year, key messages focused on the role of the cultural education workforce as a valuable resource for education recovery and promoting our new Cultural Providers Map. The second half of the year focused on Levelling Up and the role of cultural education for increasing opportunity for children and young people in the North. PLMR helped us to secure meetings with Esther McVey MP (member of the Levelling Up taskforce and Northern Research group), Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Shadow Spokesperson for Education) and Julie Elliot MP (Chair of the Children's Media and Arts APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group)). They also invited us to a conversation event with the new Children's Commissioner, for which we were able to submit questions and invite key partners, including the Arts Council.

In May 2021 we provided written evidence for the Northern Culture APPG inquiry into 'What Northern culture needs to rebuild, rebalance and recover' and were invited to present at the online evidence session later that month. The Northern Culture APPG Case

for Culture report was published in January 2022, including evidence provided by Curious Minds. We are now a sponsor for the Northern Culture APPG and supporting their current inquiry 'A Question of Sport? An Inquiry into the cultural value of sport to the North's cities, towns and communities.'

In September 2021, our Curious Feast helped to develop our thought leadership role, hosting conversation and debate on the theme of cultural capital. This was a great opportunity to engage some of our key stakeholders and to profile the expertise of leading figures in cultural education. Content from the event has been used to explore cultural capital within other Curious Minds programmes, including CASE and Leading the Arts.

Towards the end of the year, we started to work across the Curious Minds team to develop a stronger focus on purposeful communication and advocacy, developing key messages and stakeholder engagement plans for different strands of work.

#### Other key pieces of work:

- Our CEO Derri Burdon was invited to join the Local Government Association (LGA) Commission on Culture & Local Government, and took up the role of Co-chair of the Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) Strategy Group.
- As well as contributing to a TES podcast on 'How the arts can help levelling up', Derri also presented at a What Next? fringe event at the Conservative Party Conference – representing cultural education within broader discussion about the contribution of arts and culture to the Levelling Up agenda;
- We were invited by DfE to support their Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) team to deliver a briefing for HAF commissioners about best practises in engaging the creative and cultural sector.
- We submitted evidence for the DCMS inquiry 'Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda, and provided feedback on the NP11 place strategy for the North.
- We were invited to contribute to a number of local cultural strategies, including West Cumbria and Oldham.

## 6. Marketing and Communications

### 6.1. Campaigning Activity

The 2021 - 22 fiscal year began with the ramping up of our campaigning activity around Covid Recovery, summer clubs and the potential of the cultural education workforce. At that point, our #PasstheBaton campaign was still very much in full swing.

April 2021 saw the launch of our *Creative Providers Map* – both as a demonstration of workforce scale and a useful tool for commissioning authorities. This is still very much part

of our digital footprint today and, so far, has over 360 published provider listings. Site page views from July 2021 to March 2022 numbered 752.

## **6.2. Thought Leadership**

Our work to campaign for and highlight best practice also extended to thought leadership pieces published on our website on topics as varied as: Reconnection, Lessons from UFA and Youth Leadership. We were also proud to be able to share a good deal of content profiling our partnerships in terms of the Goldsmiths research partnership, CASE, ULT Unlocked, and our support for the successful Creativity Collaboratives bid in the North West.

We were also delighted to announce news of field-shaping importance, such as our CEO Derri's position as co-chair of the CLA, her invite to join the LGA Commission on Culture and Local Government, and the appointment of Saphena Aziz as Director of Inclusion.

## **6.3. Rebrand**

Towards the end of this financial year, the Communications team worked closely with Derri and PLMR to initiate and bring to fruition a corporate rebranding project that has been very well received externally. This was rolled out across all external comms channels from 1st May 2022 but was the result of months of work beforehand.

## **6.4. Publications**

Also in May, an external article profiling our work with ULT (United Learning Trust) was published in Teachco's Secondary magazine. Naturally, this emphasised the role of ULT, but it comprised – in a large part – our own written content. With a large print and online readership in the education sector, this is valuable exposure.

## **6.5. Digital & Social Media**

Our expertise in the use of digital platforms accelerated significantly due to remote working and moving our entire offer of events, training and support online, developing innovative approaches to maintaining our interactive and dialogic house style. We remain committed to improving our own use of 'Digital' and to also supporting other practitioners and organisations who are keen to explore how improved use of digital platforms and approaches can help them reach more children and young people.

We will continue to grow our online presence across the full range of social media platforms to raise the profile of our work and champion the work of the wider cultural education workforce.

## Our Commitment to Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

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We want all children and young people to enjoy and contribute to the cultural life of society. We are ferociously committed to identifying and removing barriers to engagement for children and young people from marginalised backgrounds. We recognise this can only be achieved by a more diverse, resilient, and better-connected workforce. We commit to playing our part to bring about these changes – starting with ourselves. We are a Real Living Wage employer.

## Our Commitment to Quality

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We believe that quality and equality go hand-in-hand. Raising the quality of the creative and cultural learning experiences all children and young people have access to, at school and in the community, is fundamental to 'levelling up' opportunity.

Developing the workforce is key. Overcoming preconceptions and barriers to engage with previously excluded children and young people is highly skilled work, yet most practitioners learn on the job with little support. We commit to creating new and clearer pathways that lead to the professionalisation of the Cultural Education workforce.

## Our Commitment to Climate Change

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The global pandemic which struck in 2020 led to a year in which Curious Minds, and the wider world, changed. Our Action Plan and supporting Policy have been developed as we emerge from the pandemic and seize the opportunity to build on these changes to develop our environmental practices for the better.

We commit to redoubling our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our day-to-day operations and be more environmentally responsible. We seek to influence, educate and advocate for a post carbon future through our day-to-day work and programmes; including doing whatever we can to ensure children and young people see themselves as global citizens and develop the creative skills they will need to access opportunities arising from the transition to a low carbon economy.

## Our Values - The 7 Cs

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Curious Minds is a values driven organisation and we hope this is writ large throughout this plan; in how we approach our work, the partnerships we broker and the programmes we deliver.

We refer to our values as *'The 7 Cs'*: seven words beginning with C by which we hold ourselves to account for what, how and why we do things: *we are CURIOUS; we CARE; we are COURAGEOUS; we are CONSCIENTIOUS; we CONNECT; we are CREDIBLE; we CELEBRATE.*

2020 - 21 gave us a new C-word to contend with and with it came the opportunity to stress-test our values like never before.

Curious Minds stepped up to the challenge and we're proud of the difference we made to individuals and organisations over the pandemic; the alliances we forged; the partnerships we brokered; and the creative activity we helped make happen.

As we moved into recovery and revival, we continue to use the 7 Cs to navigate our journey through the challenges; listening and responding to the needs of our sector to the best of our ability. Our aim remains the same: to support the North West's cultural education workforce so that together, we emerge at the other side of the Covid-19 pandemic and the emerging cost of living challenge stronger and better positioned to respond to The Cultural Education Challenge.

## The National Bridge Network

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Our work with the nine other Bridge organisations across England has developed significantly over the last few years, driven by our desire to provide ever-increasing value for children and young people and the communities in which we live and work. We have put in place structures and systems to enable peer learning, sharing expertise and ideas, and joining up on key projects and deliverables. Our shared commitment and responsibility to meet these challenges together is enabling us to work with more coordination, consistency and quality across the whole country. Our network development accelerated and became particularly crucial and effective as we prepare for the end of the Bridge Network in March 2023.

# Understanding and Growing Our Impact

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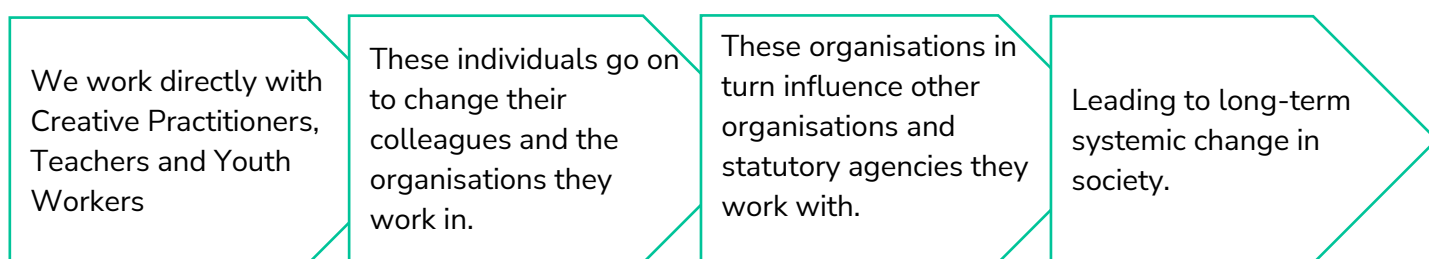
In November 2019 we commissioned Social Value Lab to conduct an independent evaluation of our impact. The review helped uncover a distinct methodology that continues to influence our planning and inform the charity's strategic direction.

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*“Curious Minds is a catalyst for cultural education, driving organisational and systemic change, one teacher, one youth worker, one creative practitioner at a time.”*

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## Our Methodology



## Our Plans for the Future

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The Trustees, Executive Management Team and staff of Curious Minds remain ambitious for the charity's future, knowing that our work is more urgent and needed than ever.

The financial year 2021/22 represents a significant period of transition for the charity, as our Bridge funding ends at the end of March 2023, and we join Arts Council England's regularly funded portfolio as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO).

We were told this change was coming in 2018 and have been anticipating and planning for it since then. It presents an exciting opportunity for us to scale our most successful offers and programmes and to think differently about how and where we work to deliver the greatest impact.

To that end staff and Trustees have worked collaboratively to develop a new seven-year strategy that will take us on a developmental journey to achieve our ambition to become a representative body for cultural educators across England. Our future plans demand a laser focus on tackling unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people often excluded by social and economic inequalities.

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*Curious Minds dream of a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant culture is a regular part of every child's learning and life.*

*Powered by curiosity, we work to tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people who are often excluded by social and economic inequalities.*

*Driving all our work is the belief that, with the right support and space to innovate, our region's incredible cultural sector can play a greater role in making the North the best place to grow up and achieve your creative potential.*

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We know from evidence and experience that quality and equality go hand-in-hand. But, despite decades of investment and good intentions, the poorest CYP are still most likely to get the worst deal when it comes to creative and cultural learning and progression.

Developing the workforce is key. Overcoming preconceptions and barriers to engage with previously excluded CYP is highly and uniquely skilled work, yet without a professional infrastructure most practitioners learn on the job with little support

The need for a more skilled, diverse and specialised cultural education is a barrier to progress. Our ambition to become a representative body for cultural educators in England is motivated by our learning during the global pandemic. We witnessed professional creative educators being woefully undervalued, underdeveloped, overlooked and under-represented at decision making tables. This is exacerbated for those working at the grassroots, in smaller organisations and as freelancers, whose livelihoods are most vulnerable and who also tend to have greatest success at reaching into marginalised communities. Freelancers alone were 68% of this workforce when last measured (2019). The quality of the cultural offer to CYP depends heavily on the quality of freelance creative educators.

#### We will:

- INNOVATE in the field of cultural education by collaborating with multi-sector partners to explore and test new approaches to the delivery of learning and leadership programmes in the North West of England. We will scale our most successful programmes nationally and internationally.
- INVEST in a diverse cultural education workforce by growing, developing and professionalising individual creative educators across the North of England.

- INFLUENCE cultural education partnerships, plans and policy by engaging with practitioners, leaders and politicians locally, regionally and nationally, to galvanize cultural education partnerships and shape the debate about the importance of creativity and culture in childhood and adolescence.

## Strategic Framework 2023 – 2026

Our Mission	Our Theory of Change	Our 2023–2030 Priorities	Our Activity	Our Vision
In order to...	We will...	By focusing on...	Through the delivery of...	To achieve...
tackle unequal access to creativity and culture for children and young people	<b>INNOVATE</b> in the field of creative and cultural education	<b>1</b> Purposeful Inclusion & Relevance	learning and leadership <b>PROGRAMMES &amp; PARTNERSHIPS</b> that bring about individual, organisational and systemic change, <b>IMPACT Social Justice</b> outcomes and 'level-up' opportunity.	a future where being creative and experiencing brilliant arts and culture is a regular part of <b>EVERY</b> child's learning and life.
	<b>INVEST</b> in a diverse cultural education workforce	<b>2</b> Workforce & Leadership Development		
	<b>INFLUENCE</b> cultural education partnerships and policy	<b>3</b> Learning & Advocacy		
		<b>4</b> Quality & Creative Pedagogy		

# Financial Review

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## Financial Results

The Trustees are pleased to report an increase in free reserves to £481,491 (2021: £458,773) placing the Charity in a stable financial position for meeting our plans for the future. We continue to plan for a new base and have therefore set aside further funds towards the cost of establishing this in the coming year.

The principal funding sources during the year continued to derive from restricted grants, with a total of £476,979 (2021: £404,387) funds carried forward at the year end to meet future activity plans.

## Core funding

From April 2012, Curious Minds has been in receipt of National Portfolio Funding and Department for Education funding from Arts Council England in respect of its status as a Bridge organisation, which runs until March 2023, extended by a year in response to Covid-19. We also received funding through government initiatives in response to the Covid-19 pandemic during the year.

## Project funding

In late March 2020, we were awarded a European Commission Erasmus+ grant for a partnership project with Poland and Greece however this was impacted by the inability to travel during the pandemic and the timeline extended to complete. The war in Ukraine has further impacted the ability for travel to Poland and we have therefore decided to draw the project to a close in spring 2022.

We continue to deliver the Hope Streets project through National Lottery Heritage funding which commenced in 2018 and will run until 2023. Total funding for the project has been increased to £1,127,000.

The Charity retains the objective to further diversify incoming resources in future periods.

## Financial Risk Management

Within the wider risk management process, the Board of Trustees monitors and assesses financial risks to which Curious Minds may be exposed and assesses their potential impact on the Charity. We have in particular reviewed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our income and are monitoring and considering potential future scenarios. Confirmation of the continuation and extension of our core funding through ACE in 2022/23 has been hugely supportive.

The awarding of the Bridge Organisation status to Curious Minds by Arts Council England for an extended period April 2018 to March 2023 secured £6.7 million of funding.

The Bridge Organisation status gives us a solid platform from which to plan and develop the organisation. That said, we are committed to retaining our independence and the ability to pursue activities beyond our Bridge remit in order to ensure that the organisation is best placed to meet and deliver its strategic objectives.

## Reserves policy

The level of unrestricted reserves has been set to meet the costs of retaining a skeleton staff for six months plus overheads. The target was reviewed in 2021 and the calculated unrestricted reserves needed to meet these costs remained at £375,000 (2021: £375,000). During the current year, this target was met and at the year-end the free reserves stood at £481,491 (2021: £458,773). At the discretion of the Trustees, the surplus above target can be designated to development work. The Trustees review the reserves policy annually.

## Investment policy

Our cash assets, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, are invested in appropriate fixed-term and notice cash deposit accounts that yield a greater return than our instant access current accounts. This investment policy is reviewed with reference to a detailed cash-flow analysis and assessment of future funding opportunities; however the scheduling of cash outgoings (including grant claims) remains difficult to predict with accuracy, as this is largely in the control of our partners and therefore timing is unknown.

## Financial control and audit

The organisation's finances are overseen by the Finance and Operations Team. They use Xero Accounts software for financial processing and adhere to finance systems which were developed in partnership with our Auditors and are reviewed annually. Relevant staff receive appropriate training for day-to-day financial systems and consistently process financial information in an accurate and timely manner.

To ensure effective financial management within the organisation, management accounts are produced on a quarterly basis for the Executive Management Team and the Board of Trustees. Performance against budgets is reviewed between the Chief Operating Officer and individual budget holders to ensure that all transactions are posted accurately and according to the principles of accruals-based fund accounting.

The Board of Trustees have a comprehensive overview of audit requirements, financial policies and procedures, including accounting policies and compliance with statutory requirements, risk management and financial planning. The Board continues to appoint the external Auditors and approve their remuneration and terms of engagement and responds to any relevant matters relating to annual financial statements raised by the External Auditors as a result of their audit work.

# Structure, Governance & Management

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## Governing Document

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 17th December 2008, as amended by special resolution dated 3rd March 2009 and 25th June 2009. The Company is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission.

## Trustee recruitment

Transparent procedures are an important element of good governance. All new Trustees to the Board are appointed through a transparent open recruitment process when skills and knowledge gaps in the Board are identified. A thorough induction to Curious Minds is given to all newly appointed Trustees and they receive a governance pack which includes the organisation's business plan and current financial budget, the organisation's memorandum and articles of association, the Trustee role and description and sub-committee terms of reference, the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee', and the publication 'Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector'.

Curious Minds' Board of Trustees is fortunate to contain a mixture of skills ranging from arts, culture, heritage, public services and education through to human resources and accountancy. This enhances the placement of the organisation as a key player within the arts and cultural sector, regionally and nationally.

Trustees are encouraged to attend events and project activity throughout the year to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of the work of Curious Minds, and they are required to attend an annual Board away day with the management team to develop their skills within the Board environment and to discuss key strategic issues for Curious Minds, which in turn informs the business planning process for the organisation.

## Related Parties and links with other organisations

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity. Trustees and members of the Curious Minds paid staff team are required to declare any interest - when considering what interests to declare, the principal rule is that if members of the general public could reasonably conclude that the interests might have an influence on an approach taken by Curious Minds to an application or contract awarded, to funding received by Curious Minds, or general organisational decisions taken by Curious Minds, then they must declare them.

Due to Curious Minds' recruitment of experienced sector leaders, it is inevitable that Trustees and Executive Management will have declared interests arising from either executive or non-executive appointments with Public, Cultural and Education Sector organisations. Where Curious Minds engages with a partner organisation in which a declaration has been made, the interested party must be excluded from the decision making processes. It is considered that these transactions do not represent 'related party transactions' for reporting purposes.

## Decision making

The Board of Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management and decision making of Curious Minds to the Chief Executive. Significant decisions that impact on, for example, staff employment, business planning, financial stability and the sustainability of the organisation, are brought to the Board for approval prior to action taking place.

## Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which Curious Minds is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Curious Minds has a thorough risk management procedure wherein risks to which the organisation may be exposed are monitored and assessed as to their potential impact and likelihood. Appropriate controls are then identified and put in place to provide reasonable assurance against their occurrence.

The executive management team, led by the Chief Executive, monitor the risks associated with the organisation regularly and the updated risk register is presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly for discussion and approval.

## Internal policies

Curious Minds have a range of internal policies that have been written in consultation with appropriate professionals and that are reviewed annually and amended more frequently according to new legislation as appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the following areas:

- Employment (including wellbeing)
- Inclusion
- Pay policy (see note 5)
- Fund Management and Financial Controls (including procurement)
- Health & Safety (including Covid-19)
- Safeguarding
- Environmental sustainability.

# Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

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The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Curious Minds for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements 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.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

## Statement as to disclosure of information to Auditors


In so far as the Trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the Auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's Auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow Directors that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they are obliged to have taken as a

Director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's Auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

**On behalf of the Board of Trustees:**

  
Karen Crowshaw (Dec 12, 2022 11:00 GMT)

**Karen Crowshaw**  
**Chair of Trustees**

Dec 12, 2022

# Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of Curious Minds

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## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Curious Minds (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flow, and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- the charitable company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement the Trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless

the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

### **Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud**

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### **Identifying and assessing potential risks related to irregularities**

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the sector, control environment and charitable company's performance;
- results of our enquiries of management about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charitable company's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
- identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in relation to the timing of the recognition of income, and the recognition of grants payable. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override and we identified a risk in relation to the posting of unusual journals and the manipulation of accounting estimates.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the charitable company operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the reporting requirements of the funding bodies and the charity commission regulations.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the charitable company's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty.

### **Audit response to risks identified**

In addition to the above, our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations described above as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- enquiring of management and members of the Board of Trustees concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;

- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and reviewing correspondence with relevant authorities where matters identified were significant;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

*Mitchell Charlesworth*

Dec 12, 2022

Jamielee Johnston CA  
Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

# Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (Including income & expenditure account)

	Note	2021/22		2020/21		2021/22	2020/21
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
		Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	62,082	1,711,485	67,623	1,824,303	<b>1,773,567</b>	1,891,926
Investment income	2	4,494	-	6,824	-	<b>4,494</b>	6,824
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>66,576</b>	<b>1,711,485</b>	<b>74,447</b>	<b>1,824,303</b>	<b>1,778,061</b>	<b>1,898,750</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Expenditure on charitable activities	3	352,281	1,263,225	385,331	1,538,195	<b>1,615,506</b>	1,923,526
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>352,281</b>	<b>1,263,225</b>	<b>385,331</b>	<b>1,538,195</b>	<b>1,615,506</b>	<b>1,923,526</b>
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>							
	6	(285,705)	448,260	(310,884)	286,108	<b>162,555</b>	(24,776)
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>	11	375,668	(375,668)	401,832	(401,832)	-	-
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR AFTER TRANSFERS</b>							
		<b>89,963</b>	<b>72,592</b>	<b>90,948</b>	<b>(115,724)</b>	<b>162,555</b>	<b>(24,776)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>							
<b>BALANCES BROUGHT</b>	11	610,070	404,387	519,122	520,111	<b>1,014,457</b>	1,039,233
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>700,033</b>	<b>476,979</b>	<b>610,070</b>	<b>404,387</b>	<b>1,177,012</b>	<b>1,014,457</b>

The notes on pages 41 to 53 form part of these accounts.

# Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

	Note	2022 £	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	8	129,636		99,126	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>1,180,041</u>		<u>1,101,276</u>	
		<b>1,309,677</b>		<b>1,200,402</b>	
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>132,665</u>		<u>185,945</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<b>1,177,012</b>		1,014,457
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<b><u>1,177,012</u></b>		<b><u>1,014,457</u></b>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted	11		700,033		610,070
Restricted	11		476,979		404,387
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b><u>1,177,012</u></b>		<b><u>1,014,457</u></b>

For the year ending 31 March 2022 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies but as this company is a charity, it is subject to audit under the Charities Act 2011.

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 41 to 53 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

And signed on their behalf by

  
[Karen Crowshaw \(Dec 12, 2022 11:00 GMT\)](#)

**Karen Crowshaw – Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Company registration number 06775402**

# Statement of Cash Flow for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

	2022	2021
Note	£	£
<b>Cash used in operating activities</b>		
Net movement in funds	162,555	(24,776)
Add depreciation charge	6 -	-
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	2 (4,494)	(6,824)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	8 (30,510)	13,916
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	9 (53,280)	28,720
<b>Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities</b>	<b>74,271</b>	<b>11,036</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest income	2 4,494	6,824
<b>Cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>4,494</b>	<b>6,824</b>
<b>Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>78,765</b>	<b>17,860</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,101,276	1,083,416
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,180,041</b>	<b>1,101,276</b>

## Analysis of changes in net debt

The charity did not hold any overdraft or loan facilities nor finance lease obligations at the start or during the period covered by these accounts or in the previous accounting period.

# Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

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## 1. Accounting Policies

### Basis of Preparation

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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102 - effective 1 March 2018), Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2016.

Curious Minds meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

### Going concern

These accounts are prepared on the going concern basis. At the time of approving the financial statements and having due regard to the impact of Covid-19 as referred to in the Trustees Report, the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the directors continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Charity has confirmed ACE grant funding to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and sufficient cashflow to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

### Incoming resources

Income is recognised in the accounting period in which it is receivable, except in the following circumstances, when the income is deferred and included in creditors:

- The income is unrestricted core funding for a specified future period.
- A sales invoice has been raised ahead of work being carried out and there is no contractual entitlement to the income until the work has been done.
- Not all the terms and conditions for the receipt of the grant instalment have been met.
- The project has been completed and the grant conditions are such that unspent grant must be refunded.

Income includes grants in respect of revenue and capital items.

## Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

## Allocation and apportionment of costs

Support costs have been allocated between the cost centres: salaries; travel and subsistence; learning, development and recruitment; marketing and publicity; premises related costs; and office, sundry costs and depreciation.

Central costs are charged to unrestricted funds with contributions to overheads levied to individual programmes as appropriate. Contributions to overheads are charged to programme funds, as agreed with funders and where funds are restricted, these are shown within fund transfers along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work.

## Grants payable and grant making policy

Curious Minds issues grants in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid out within the various funding agreements we receive. The Charity does not have its own funds for grant making purposes.

In meeting our strategic objectives (and requirements of our funders where applicable), the nature of the investments committed determines grant making as the legal form to achieving this, as they do not constitute contracts for services.

Grant commitments are recognised when the legal agreements are signed and control of the grant funds is passed to the recipient or lead partner in a partnership.

Direct grant costs are allocated directly to the grant funds. Where agreed with the funder, a management charge is levied for central overheads, administration and contribution to reserves (this is credited to unrestricted funds, where associated costs are charged).

Where agreed with the recipient, grant repayments during the year are shown as a reduction in grants payable.

## Tangible fixed assets

Single asset purchases, not forming part of a related series of transactions, costing less than £2,000 are not capitalised, but are written off as a revenue expense in the year of acquisition.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life.

Office Equipment	25% on cost
Furniture & Fixtures	25% on cost

## Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

The Charity is not registered for VAT and therefore all its input VAT is irrecoverable. Expenditure is analysed inclusive of VAT where this has been incurred.

## Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which pays 6% of gross salary. Contributions payable to the employees' personal pension schemes are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. The Charity' staging date for auto enrolment was 1/4/2017 and the scheme is compliant.

## Operating leases

Payments under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

## Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in this note to the financial statements.

## Designated Funds

- **Curious Stories:**

Funds generated from sale of the Curious Stories book, sponsorship as well as fundraising to enable disadvantaged children to better experience high quality arts and culture.

- **Curious Space:**

Following closure of our Preston base in 2020, we have designated costs saved as set up funds towards a new base as we emerge from Covid-19 restrictions and home working.

- **Development Fund:**

Funds set aside to support development of income generation activities and international opportunities.

- **Dialogic Teaching & Learning:**

A trial project to explore the impact of dialogic teaching and pedagogy.

- **Hope Streets Fund:**

Additional funds to cover the required match contribution to the NLHF programme.

- **Impact Evaluation:**

Funds allocated to a comprehensive assessment of our impact over the last ten years.

## Restricted Funds

- **ACE Bridge Organisation:**

Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of the Bridge role for the North West of England (Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester & Cheshire)

- **ACE DfE Extension:**

Grant from Department for Education, paid by Arts Council England, for Bridge network expansion activity.

- **ACE Let's Create:**

Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of creative resources to children during school closures due to Covid-19 in 2020/21.

- **Arts Connect Let's Craft:**

Grants from the Artfund and the Crafts Council via Arts Connect for the delivery of creative resources to children during school closures due to Covid-19.

- **Erasmus+:**

European Commission grant funding for a partnership project to explore arts-based youth work.

- **Esmee Fairbairn:**

Grant from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation towards the Bubble Up programme of activities for children transitioning from primary to secondary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21.

- **DWP Kickstart**

Funding through the Government Kickstart scheme towards salaries and support for six month employment placements for young people.

- **Lowry**

Funding provided through a partnership project to deliver the Stage Directions programme.

- **NLHF Kick the Dust Hope Street:**

Grant received from National Lottery Heritage Fund for delivery of the 'Kick the Dust' Programme.

- **Manchester Museum Development:**

Funding to support Trailblaze placements.

- **Paul Hamlyn:**

Grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation towards Bridging the Gap bursaries for freelance artists and grassroots arts organisations directly affected in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21.

- **Preston Cultural Collective:**

Grants from Preston City Council, University of Central Lancaster and the Brewtime Collective for micro commissions for Preston artists directly affected in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21.

- **Warrington HAF**

Funding from Warrington Borough Council's Holiday Activities and Food programme 2021 to deliver a programme of activities during the school summer holidays.

## 2 INCOME

<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities:</b>		<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Restricted Grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Funding body</b>	<b>Purpose</b>		
Arts Connect	Let's Craft	<b>4,365</b>	4,324
Arts Council England	Bridge Organisation	<b>1,359,893</b>	1,359,893
Arts Council England	Let's Create	-	15,000
British Council as National Agency for the European Commission	Erasmus+	<b>11,537</b>	9,184
Department for Education	Bridge Extension	<b>82,612</b>	82,612
Department for Work & Pensions	Kickstart Scheme	<b>4,620</b>	-
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	Bubble Up	-	50,000
Lowry	Stage Directions	<b>15,000</b>	-
MDNW	Trailblaze	<b>2,445</b>	-
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	<b>213,318</b>	279,290
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Bridging the Gap	-	20,000
Warrington Borough Council	Holiday Activities and Food	<b>17,695</b>	-
Preston Cultural Collective	Somethings Brewing commissions	-	4,000
		<b>1,711,485</b>	<b>1,824,303</b>
<b>Unrestricted Income</b>			
Bank Interest		<b>4,494</b>	6,824
Donations		<b>12</b>	5,000
Fees received		<b>62,069</b>	22,540
Government Job Retention Scheme Grant		-	15,083
Government Relief Scheme Grant		-	25,000
		<b>66,576</b>	<b>74,447</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,778,061</b>	<b>1,898,750</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2022		2021		2022	2021
	Direct	Support	Direct	Support	Total	Total
	costs	costs	costs	costs	£	£
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	281,720	-	474,192	-	281,720	474,192
Project delivery	986,060	339,378	1,079,535	361,157	1,325,439	1,440,692
Governance costs	-	8,347	-	8,642	8,347	8,642
	<b>1,267,780</b>	<b>347,726</b>	<b>1,553,727</b>	<b>369,799</b>	<b>1,615,506</b>	<b>1,923,526</b>
% of total expenditure	78.5%	21.5%	80.8%	19.2%	100.0%	100.0%

Charitable expenditure is allocated between unrestricted and restricted funds as follows:

	2022		2021		2022	2021
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	5,000	281,720	-	474,192	286,720	474,192
Project delivery	338,934	981,505	376,689	1,064,003	1,320,439	1,440,692
Governance costs	8,347	-	8,642	-	8,347	8,642
	<b>352,281</b>	<b>1,263,225</b>	<b>385,331</b>	<b>1,538,195</b>	<b>1,615,506</b>	<b>1,923,526</b>
% of total expenditure	21.8%	78.2%	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%	100.0%

#### b. Grants payable by programme

Programme	Number of grants to institutions		2022	2021
	2022	2021	£	£
Arts Council England - Bridge	24	33	183,437	335,442
Arts Council England Department for Education	2	4	19,500	22,500
NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	6	5	73,783	116,250
Curious Minds	1	-	5,000	-
	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>281,720</b>	<b>474,192</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2022	2021
		£	£
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>			
Accrington Academy	The Uncertainty Principle PI	3,000	-
Action Transport Theatre	Ellesmere Port Hyperlocal Development PI	35,000	-
ArtReach Trust	Creative Sanctuary	-	2,000
Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery	Let's Create & Let's Craft	-	4,690
Blackpool Teaching School Alliance	Illuminating Futures PI	(60,712)	29,000
Blaze Arts, Preston	Staying Curious in a Crisis PI	10,000	23,000
Cartwheel Arts	Let's Create boxes	-	3,500
Centre for Youth Impact	Outcomes Framework PI	-	5,000
Comics Youth	Let's Create & Let's Craft	-	4,400
Community Objectives CIC	Let's Craft	250	-
Cumbria Music Service	FRAME Project PI	20,500	4,500
Cumbria Music Service	Let's Create & Let's Craft	650	4,480
East Prescott Road Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,000
Festival of Making CIC	LCEP Development PI	30,000	-
Festival of Making CIC	Let's Craft	650	-
Formby High School	LCEP Development	-	500
GMCA	Autism Aware Culture	-	5,000
GMCA	Culture & Transport in GM PI	15,000	55,000
Home Start Warrington	Let's Craft	250	-
Knowsley Borough Council	Let's Create	-	2,000
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Our Place in the World PI	7,000	22,000
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Let's Craft	650	690
Liverpool City Region	Generations of Change PI	45,000	-
Liverpool Learning Partnership	Let's Craft	350	-
Martenscroft Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	1,000
Museum Development North West	Re-engaging Audiences PI	2,500	7,500
Newtown Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,000
Norfolk & Norwich Festival	Metal Support Programme	-	2,382
Odd Arts	CASE Leadership Programme	671	-
Odd Arts	Lets Create boxes	-	2,000
Oldham Enterprise Trust	LCEP Development	-	2,000
Pendle Leisure Trust	LCEP Development PI	15,000	-
Ribblesdale Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,000
Robert F Kennedy Human Rights UK	Poetic Universal Declaration of Human Rights PI	45,000	-
<b>Sub total carried forward</b>		<b>170,759</b>	<b>186,642</b>

<b>c. Analysis of institutional grants continued</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>ACE - Bridge grants continued</b>	<b>Sub total brought forward</b>	<b>170,759</b>	186,642
Royal Opera House	Youth Voice Initiative	-	2,000
St Helens Council	Let's Create	-	2,000
Stoneyholme Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,000
Warrington Borough Council	Let's Create & Let's Craft	250	4,400
Whole Education	School Ready Digital PI	3,000	12,000
Wigan STEAM	CASE Leadership Programme	778	-
Wirral Hospital Schools	LCEP Development	3,000	4,000
Ykids	Let's Create & Let's Craft	650	2,400
Young Manchester	Digital Inclusion PI	-	10,000
Young Manchester	Youth & Play Cultural Partnerships PI	-	90,000
Z Arts	Creative Curriculum PI	5,000	20,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>183,437</b>	335,442
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>24</b>	33
<b>ACE DfE Extension grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bolton School	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Egremont Primary School	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Evelyn Community Primary School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,500
Hollins	SLiCE Programme	-	10,000
United Learning Trust	SLiCE Programme	18,000	-
University of Manchester	SLiCE Programme	1,500	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>19,500</b>	22,500
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>2</b>	4
<b>NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bolton Museum		11,250	18,750
Lancashire Museums		15,000	41,250
Reform Radio CIC		4,000	-
The Atkinson		11,250	22,500
Tullie House		15,000	15,000
West Cheshire Museums		17,283	18,750
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>73,783</b>	116,250
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>6</b>	5
<b>Curious Minds</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Lowry	Youth Performance Hub	5,000	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>5,000</b>	-
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>1</b>	-
	<b>Total Grants Payable</b>	<b>281,720</b>	474,192
	<b>Total number grants</b>	<b>33</b>	42

#### 4 Analysis of governance and support costs

	2022	2021
	£	£
<b>Governance Costs</b>		
Audit fee	7,950	8,392
Support costs	397	250
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<b>8,347</b>	<b>8,642</b>

	2022		2021		2022	2021
	Project Delivery	Governance	Project Delivery	Governance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Support Costs</b>						
Salaries	262,955	-	270,217	-	262,955	270,217
Travel & Subsistence	6,979	-	498	-	6,979	498
Learning & Development and recruitment	6,414	-	6,948	250	6,414	7,198
Legal & Professional Services	16,283	-	10,781	-	16,283	10,781
Premises related costs	8,935	-	6,307	-	8,935	6,307
Office, sundry costs & Depreciation	45,762	397	74,798	-	46,160	74,798
<b>Total Support costs</b>	<b>347,328</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>369,549</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>347,726</b>	<b>369,799</b>
% of total expenditure	99.9%	0.1%	99.9%	0.1%		

## 5 Staff Costs

The payroll costs of the charity were as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Wages & salaries	787,044	824,023
Social Security costs	74,061	77,771
Pension costs	45,715	48,923
Redundancy payments	7,700	-
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<b>914,520</b>	<b>950,717</b>

One employee had earnings (excluding employer pension costs) over £60,000 during the year:

Number of employees	Band
One (2020: One)	£60,000 to £70,000

The remuneration costs during the year of the Executive Management Team as outlined on page 2 (inclusive of pension costs) was £217,172 (2021: £251,546).

The average monthly head count was 23 staff (2021: 24 staff) and the average monthly number of full time equivalent employees (including casual and part time employees) during the year was:

	2022	2021
Average FTE	20.7	22.1

## 6 Net incoming resources before transfer

This is stated after charging:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Auditors remuneration - Audit fees	7,950	8,392
	<b>7,950</b>	<b>8,392</b>
Number of trustees claiming expenses:	-	-

## 7 Tangible fixed assets

Cost

As at 1 April 2021

As at 31 March 2022

Depreciation

As at 1 April 2021

Net book value

As at 31 March 2022

As at 31 March 2021

	Office Equipment	Furniture & Fittings	Total
	£	£	£
As at 1 April 2021	16,474	3,887	20,361
As at 31 March 2022	<b>16,474</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>20,361</b>
As at 1 April 2021	16,474	3,887	20,361
As at 31 March 2022	<b>16,474</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>20,361</b>
As at 31 March 2022	-	-	-
As at 31 March 2021	-	-	-

<b>8 Debtors</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade debtors	<b>4,836</b>	2,531
Prepayments	<b>17,413</b>	28,651
Grant and other income receivable	<b>107,387</b>	67,516
Other debtors	-	428
	<b>129,636</b>	<b>99,126</b>

<b>9 Creditors falling due within one year</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade creditors	<b>11,832</b>	7,782
Contract commitments due and accrued	<b>25,002</b>	82,483
Accruals	<b>41,992</b>	46,976
Grants and income in advance	<b>28,387</b>	23,760
PAYE & Payroll deductions payable	<b>19,849</b>	19,418
Pension contributions payable	<b>5,603</b>	5,526
	<b>132,665</b>	<b>185,945</b>

Curious Minds pays all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of invoices due for payment.

Accruals include £23,250 (2021:£38,300), being the cost of staff annual leave due but not taken and carried forward at year end.

<b>10 Deferred income</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Chester Zoo	<b>11,180</b>	-
Cultural Citizens	<b>3,983</b>	3,983
DWP re Kickstart	<b>5,880</b>	-
Erasmus+	<b>6,244</b>	17,781
Heriot Watt	<b>1,100</b>	-
Trailblaze Funding in advance	-	1,996
	<b>28,387</b>	<b>23,760</b>

<b>Movement in deferred income</b>		
Balance as at 1 April	<b>23,760</b>	5,979
Amount released to income	<b>(13,746)</b>	-
Amount deferred in year	<b>18,373</b>	17,781
Balance as at 31 March	<b>28,387</b>	<b>23,760</b>

## 11 Statement of funds

	Balance				Fund				Balance			
	01/04/2020	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/3/2021 & 1/4/2021	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/03/2022			
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£			
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>												
General Fund	443,528	74,447	(380,374)	321,172	458,773	66,576	(352,281)	308,423	481,491			
<b>Designated funds:</b>												
Curious Stories	6,193	-	-	-	6,193	-	-	-	6,193			
Curious Space	-	-	-	30,000	30,000	-	-	70,000	100,000			
Development Fund	43,627	-	-	660	44,287	-	-	-	44,287			
Dialogic Teaching & Learning	-	-	-	50,000	50,000	-	-	-	50,000			
Hope Streets	20,817	-	-	-	20,817	-	-	(2,755)	18,062			
Impact Evaluation	4,957	-	(4,957)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
	519,122	74,447	(385,331)	401,832	610,070	66,576	(352,281)	375,668	700,033			
<b>Restricted Funds</b>												
ACE Bridge Organisation	520,111	1,359,893	(1,162,238)	(363,379)	354,387	1,359,893	(905,632)	(331,669)	476,979			
ACE DfE Extension	-	82,612	(61,960)	(20,652)	-	82,612	(61,960)	(20,652)	-			
ACE Let's Create	-	15,000	(15,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Arts Connect	-	4,324	(4,324)	-	-	4,365	(4,365)	-	-			
Erasmus+	-	9,184	(4,531)	(4,653)	-	11,537	(8,117)	(3,420)	-			
Esmee Fairbairn	-	50,000	-	-	50,000	-	(50,000)	-	-			
DWP Kickstart	-	-	-	-	-	4,620	(4,620)	-	-			
Lowry	-	-	-	-	-	15,000	(15,000)	-	-			
NLHF Kick The Dust Hope Street	-	279,290	(266,142)	(13,148)	-	213,318	(196,217)	(17,101)	-			
Manchester Museum Development	-	-	-	-	-	2,445	(2,445)	-	-			
Paul Hamlyn	-	20,000	(20,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Preston Cultural Collective	-	4,000	(4,000)	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Warrington HAF	-	-	-	-	-	17,695	(14,869)	(2,826)	-			
	520,111	1,824,303	(1,538,195)	(401,832)	404,387	1,711,485	(1,263,225)	(375,668)	476,979			
<b>Total Funds</b>	1,039,233	1,898,750	(1,923,526)	-	1,014,457	1,778,061	(1,615,506)	-	1,177,012			

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See notes on next page

## Notes on Statement of funds

Fund Transfers include contributions to overheads charged to programmes within individual funds, as agreed with funders, along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work in accordance with the use of those funds.

The net transfer of £375,668 (2021: £401,832) between restricted and unrestricted funds during the year is made up of £395,119 (2021: £401,172) agreed contribution to overheads and £NIL (2021: £660) permissible programme costs, less £19,451 (2021: £23,405) contribution to the NLHF Kick the Dust

The balance of restricted funds represents expenditure not due at the Balance Sheet date from grant funding received. Bridge funds carried forward within the grant period have been profiled in our agreed 2022/23 Activity Plan.

## 12 Analysis of net assets between funds

	2022		2021		2022	2021
	General Funds £	Restricted Funds £	General Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total £	Total £
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets	<b>700,033</b>	<b>476,979</b>	610,070	404,387	<b>1,177,012</b>	1,014,457
	<b>700,033</b>	<b>476,979</b>	610,070	404,387	<b>1,177,012</b>	1,014,457

## 13 Operating lease commitments

The charity has no commitments under operation leases for premises (2021: NIL).

## 14 Corporation tax

The company is a registered charity and is entitled to claim annual exemption from UK corporation tax.

## 15 Related Party Transactions

Eleanor Chapman was appointed as a Trustee in January 2022. Prior to her appointment, she has worked as a freelance youth and arts practitioner and producer for various Curious Minds programmes. From October 2021 to March 2022 Eleanor was contracted and paid £14,000 for work on a fully funded Stage Directions partnership project with the Lowry and £450 for her contributions to Curious Minds' Inclusion & Relevancy working group.

Jaffer Hussain was employed by Lancashire BME Network when he became a trustee in July 2020. In August 2021, Jaffer supported our recruitment of a new Director of Inclusion, for which Curious Minds contributed £225 to Lancashire BME Network towards his time.

Mustafa Hassan was employed by Lancashire BME Network when he became a member of our Anti Racism Advisory Group on its inception in September 2020. In 2021/22 Curious Minds contributed £218.75 to Lancashire BME Network toward Mustafa's time spent at various meetings and on ad hoc support. Mustafa also completed two sessions of our Affinity Group training project, for which he received a bursary of £90.

Derri Burdon, Chief Executive, was appointed Chair of Trustees of Blaze Arts which was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in July 2018.

Blaze Arts have received total Partnership Investment grant funding of £83,000 in prior periods and £10,000 during the year.

Curious Minds have a service agreement to provide Blaze Arts with back office support, for which fees paid during the year amounted to £5,000 (2020/21 £6,000).

Blaze Arts also reimbursed Curious Minds for salary costs of seconded staff members of £35,335 (2020/21: £45,537).

Curious Minds commissions Blaze Arts as Programme Producers for elements of Curious Minds' programmes, with commissions totalling £2,160 during the year.

Derri's daughter, Amy Burdon, runs WigLe Dance CIC, who were commissioned for an event performance at a fee of £1,200 in 2021/22.











# CM TAR & FS 2021 22

Final Audit Report

2022-12-12

Created:	2022-12-12
By:	Sue Langfeld (sue.langfeld@curiousminds.org.uk)
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-  Document e-signed by Mitchell Charlesworth (jamielee.johnston@mitchellcharlesworth.co.uk)  
Signature Date: 2022-12-12 - 12:20:28 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.  
2022-12-12 - 12:20:28 PM GMT

**CURIOUS MINDS**

England & Wales - Charity number 1130988

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# Accounts

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# Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

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## Curious Minds' Registered Office:

Colony  
5 Piccadilly Place  
Manchester  
M1 3BR

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Curious Minds is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is a Registered Charity

Registered Company Number: 06775402

Registered Charity Number: 1130988

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## Company Information

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### Incorporation

The charitable company was incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and commenced trading on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

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### Trustees

Ms. Virginia Tandy OBE – Chair (retired 22/4/2020)	Mrs. Ruth Raban
Mrs. Karen Crowshaw – Chair (from 22/4/2020)	Mr. Jonathan Robinson
Ms. Samira Al’Obaidi (appointed 22/7/2020)	Mr. Ivan Wadeson
Mr. Jaffer Hussain (appointed 22/7/2020)	Mr. David Wearing

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### Executive Management Team

Chief Executive	Ms. Derri Burdon
Deputy CEO	Ms. Caz Brader (until 29 December 2020)
Director of Finance and Operations	Ms. Sue Langfeld
Directors of Programmes	Ms. Kelly Allen & Ms. Jude Bird

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### Statutory Auditors & Accountants

Mitchell Charlesworth LLP  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

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### Bankers

CAF Bank Limited  
25 Kings Hill Avenue  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent MA19 4JQ

### Solicitors

Counterculture Partnership LLP  
Unit 115  
Ducie House  
Ducie Street  
Manchester M1 2JW

## Chair's Statement

In my first year as Curious Minds Chair of Trustees, I'm immensely inspired by the team's experience and learning over the last nine years, but especially over the past 12 months working through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through lockdown, the board of trustees were able to connect more regularly with the management team and together we learned a great deal and discovered new ways to define what it means to be a Sector Support Organisation. As the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic set in, the team responded rapidly, repurposing and leveraging resources to meet the needs of the cultural education workforce in crisis.

Our response says a lot about how seriously Curious Minds takes its role as Sector Support Organisation. This has also been a period in which the value and vulnerability of the cultural education ecology has been brought into sharper focus, especially for freelance artists and grass-roots organisations. We plan to continue to support and develop this vital aspect of the cultural education ecology.

I was delighted that Derri and Caz were able to forge relationships with new funders in the Paul Hamlyn and Esmée Fairbairn Foundations, garnering support towards our response programmes. The team was equally grateful for the grant from Sharegift which helped us to implement much needed changes to our IT systems as they adapted to a home working environment.

Naturally, elements of our programmes had to be adapted. Kelly and Saul, as the Hope Streets programme leads were shining examples in responding to both restrictions and the needs of the young people involved, to continue to deliver a quality experience throughout. Meanwhile the excitement of being awarded European funding for a Global Curiosity partnership with Greece and Poland was dampened by travel restrictions, with Alice adapting activities in the hope that the planned in-person delivery can resume at a later date.

This year we renewed our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We have been working with sector experts and a specially convened anti-racism external task-group (ARG) to explore how we can play a greater role in promoting racial empowerment and anti-racism. We are energised by what we have achieved in a short space of time and have made a commitment to continue to work with the ARG over the next two years to embed its recommendations across all our work and programmes.

As departing Deputy Chief Executive, we have much to thank Caz Brader for, not least the wonderful Lockdown Awards ceremony held virtually in November 2020 – a real high point of celebration in such challenging times! We will miss your creative energy, compassion and wit, Caz, but wish you huge success and good times, both in your new role and home life.

Looking to the future, we have revised our strategic aims and objectives and updated our business plan for 2021-22 to directly address the Post-covid needs of our stakeholders. Our plans also pivot to support the ambition of Arts Council England's new ten year strategy, Let's Create.

All that said, our overarching aim remains the same as ever - to enable creative collaboration across the education and cultural sectors so that ALL children have the opportunity to be creative and experience brilliant arts and culture, in and out of school.

Final thanks go to Derri for steering the ship through such difficult waters, motivating and supporting the wellbeing of the team to deliver some amazing results, despite personal challenges. Having navigated the last year so well, I know you will be an unstoppable force in reaching the ambitious goals we have in our sights.

Karen Crowshaw

**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

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## Trustees' Annual Report

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### Our purpose and activities

The purposes of the charity are to advance for the public benefit the education of children and young people within England in order to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals, in particular by:

- supporting them to become successful learners and responsible citizens by working with others to extend the range, amount, quality and scope of formal and informal learning opportunities in the areas of creativity, arts, media, culture, heritage, humanities and science;
- supporting teachers, practitioners, carers, performers and artists in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in enabling children and young people both inside and outside formal education to develop and apply their skills and talents and to open up to them cultural and creative activity.
- developing programmes, where appropriate, in partnership with others to deliver positive learning outcomes and encourage the recognition, enjoyment and use of culture, media and heritage;
- empowering them to be involved in the promotion of cultural and learning activities and enhancing their skills, capacities and capabilities; and
- encouraging them to visit, experience, participate in, initiate and engage in cultural activities, places and performances.

Curious Minds aims to improve the lives of children and young people in the North West of England through facilitating access to arts and culture for all. It promotes cultural education and enables creative innovation and collaboration between the cultural, educational and youth sectors.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main beneficiaries are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners and we are mindful that they are all continue to work within a challenging social, financial and policy climate.

### Charging Considerations

Our main beneficiaries/stakeholders are schools, local authorities, cultural organisations and creative practitioners, all of whom are working in a challenging financial and policy climate. Affordability and access to our programmes is important to us and remains a key consideration when we are planning our activity. Wherever possible, places on our events and training programmes are provided at low or no cost to participants using the grants we receive as subsidy. The decision whether or not to provide a service, place on training or at an event or conference is carefully balanced to ensure cost does not act as a barrier but also taking into account our experience of drop-off when offering places for free (e.g., people register but don't turn up). We cost all our traded offers on a full cost recovery basis.

## Programme Delivery

Business plan priorities were originally agreed for the four year period 2018 – 2022, these are:

1. **Widening our influence** – so that Curious Minds is positively influencing policy and practice across the entire children’s workforce
2. **Pioneering next practice** – recognising the factors impacting on children’s lives and the vital role culture and creativity play in helping them navigate a rapidly changing society.
3. **Developing autonomy and resilience** – to ensure that Curious Minds is ready to tackle future financial and environmental challenges.
4. **Making a difference** – responding rapidly and innovatively to tackle issues affecting children’s lives that we care deeply about.

In March 2020, it became apparent that we would not be able to deliver our usual programme of activities. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, we quickly repurposed our resources to respond to the crisis facing the cultural education workforce, fully incorporating these strategies in our action from the start of the year.

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## Review of our achievements and performance in 2020/21

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Curious Minds continues to punch above its weight to achieve significant regional impact with limited resources. We choose to support the sector rather than directly working with young people and it is this strategic approach that enables us to have substantial regional reach and influence as honest brokers and advocates for cultural and creative education.

Our work targets children and young people living and learning in some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the country. We continue to support cultural and education sectors to collaborate so that these children and young people can enjoy rich art and cultural experiences.

As this year began, we were reacting to the Covid–19 pandemic. We repurposed our resources as quickly as we could to respond to the crisis facing the cultural education workforce. It was a time of learning and, despite the challenges, of discovering new ways to define what it means to be a Sector Support Organisation (SSO). It was also a period in which the value of the cultural education workforce has been brought into sharper focus, along with its vulnerabilities.

Curious Minds is grateful to all the funders whose generosity and understanding enabled us to respond to the developing circumstances with flexibility, creativity and curiosity.

### BRIDGING THE GAP – RAPID RESPONSE BURSARIES

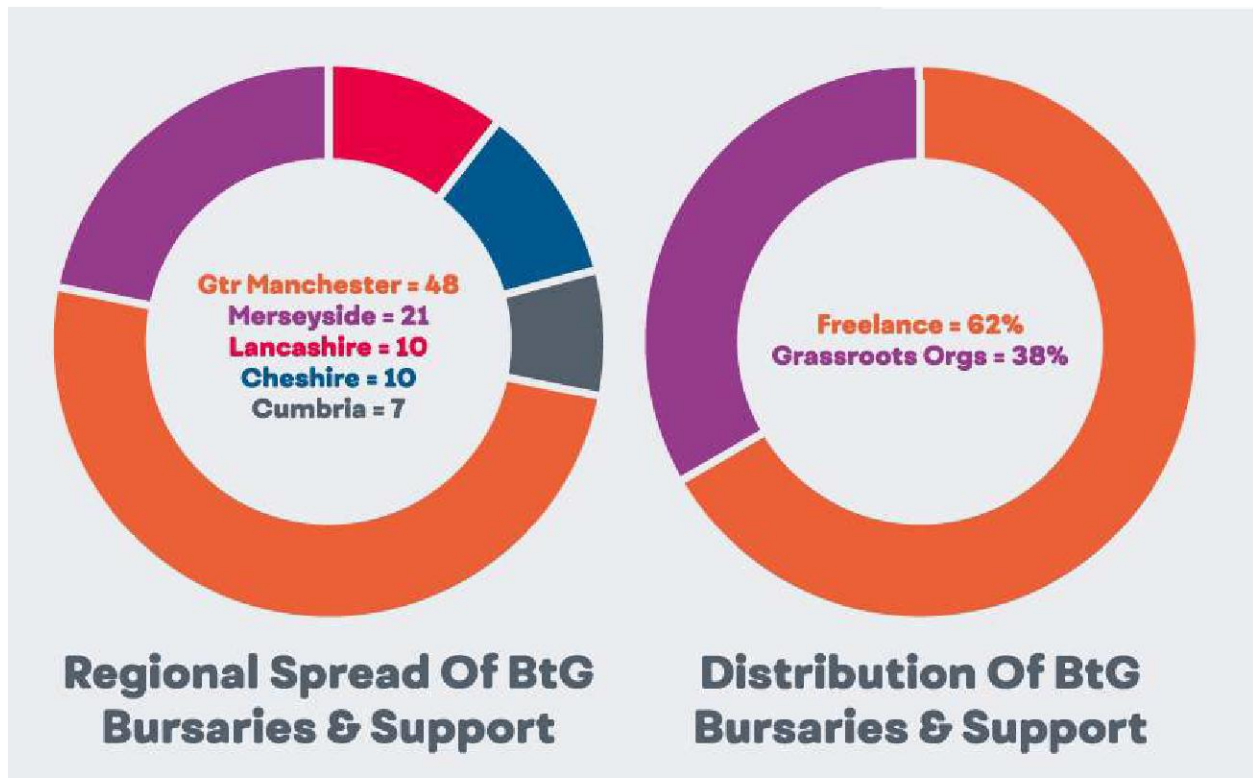
Our immediate priority, as the region’s sector support organisation, was to ensure that the cultural education sector should be able to emerge from the Covid–19 crisis in as strong a position as possible. It was immediately apparent that some national-level initiatives would prove either inaccessible or arrive too late for many grassroots and freelance workers. ‘Bridging the Gap’ was our first response. We offered bursaries to freelancers and small or community-based arts organisations outside the Arts Council England National Portfolio and received over 170 applications on the first day. The money aimed to allow those in the cultural education community the space for their own development, and a small financial incentive that ‘bridged the gap’ between crisis point and the receipt of any emergency grants or funding.

We provided every successful applicant with a ‘coach’ to support them and curated an online catalogue of free continuing professional development and learning (CDPL) opportunities.

Thanks to the generous support of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we were able to rapidly allocate 96 Bridging the Gap Bursaries to support the cultural education workforce.

*“The bursary... allowed us to develop ourselves in discovering new ways of working which, in turn, meant the work we have done since the beginning of the pandemic has been of better quality and has reached more young people and families.”*

*Clem, BtG Bursary Recipient*



#### BRIDGING THE GAP Case study:

DIY Theatre, in Salford, is an established Learning Disability Theatre Company that delivers highly valued work with both young people and adults. Director, Sue Caudle, explained that DIY's funding is predominantly linked to project delivery.

So, when the Emergency Lockdown was announced, Sue needed to quickly pivot her operating model. She began renegotiating with funders to deliver sessions online and to send resource packs through the post. With earned income unavailable, covering the immediate cost of overheads was a big challenge. The Bridging the Gap bursary cash arrived quickly and relieved some anxiety whilst Sue was looking into other funding options.

She was clear that she wanted to use the time the bursary afforded to develop the skills she would need for this new form of online engagement, as well as to work out strategies for how to deliver in future. In particular, she was keen to talk to other drama or theatre providers to find out how they were adapting.

As a result of conversations with her Curious Minds CPDL coach Emma, the idea to convene art-form specific online discussion groups was developed. This led to the series of sessions 'Delivering the Arts in a Socially Distanced World'.

*"The bursary afforded me a moment to take a breath. I've been able to invest in CPD that will stand me in good stead moving forwards and will impact and shape my future projects.*

*Thank you."*

*Lisa, BtG Bursary Recipient*

## ADVOCACY & INTELLIGENCE SHARING

Our active dialogue with freelance practitioners and grassroots organisations meant we were able to gather evidence of need, at speed, for submission to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Parliamentary Committee’s inquiry into the impact of Covid–19 on DCMS sectors. We were also able to share this intelligence with Arts Council England, which was at that time formulating its own emergency response. Curious Minds’ CEO, Derri Burdon, also contributed to high-level roundtable discussions, making the case for ‘root-to-tip’ support to protect the arts education ecosystem.

In September 2020, Curious Minds collaborated with other organisations in the National Bridge Network to survey school leaders. This research provided a snapshot of the threats and opportunities that face the cultural education sector in the coming academic year.

We also hosted a series of art-form specific facilitated online sessions, at which both education and arts professionals discussed how meaningful learning and engagement can be delivered in a ‘socially distanced’ way.

*“I have found the opportunity to discuss [these] issues rewarding.*

*As a small organisation/ individual worker, it can be difficult to find appropriate forums or networks, which offer support.”*

*Discussion Event Attendee*

## CURIOS IN A CRISIS CPD WEBINARS

Curious Minds listened to the cultural education workforce as they told us about the gaps in their skills and knowledge that threatened their survival in the new world of socially-distanced delivery.

We reached out to those on furlough from larger organisations. We also commissioned partners who we knew had particular expertise that many would find valuable.

Our volunteers brought expertise from their time working for employers across a wide and varied range of sectors, including:

• Bruntwood • Counterculture • Events Northern • Lowry Theatre • RSA • TiPP

With their help, we were able to deliver a range of online and free professional development webinars.

### WE DELIVERED 8 WEBINARS ATTENDED BY 276 PROFESSIONALS in:

- Writing a Funding Bid
- A Beginner’s Guide to Web Law
- A Beginner’s Guide to Intellectual Property Law
- A Beginner’s Guide to Marketing Strategies
- A Beginner’s Guide to Creating your Online Events
- A Beginner’s Guide to Safeguarding Online
- A Beginner’s Guide to Understanding Your Impact
- A Beginner’s Guide to Social Media Marketing

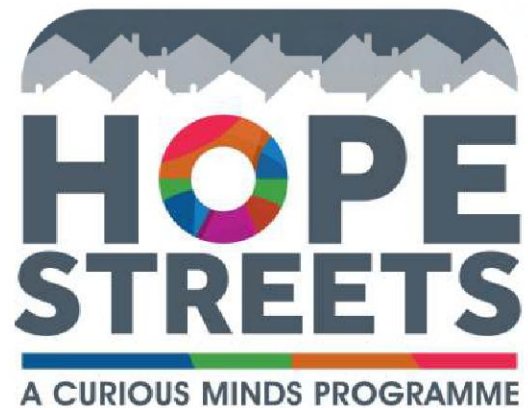
*“I was able to learn about areas outside my usual sphere as a freelance practitioner, e.g. web law and intellectual property”  
Viv, webinar participant*

## FESTIVAL OF HOPE

*A youth-led and coordinated*

*Celebration of hope and heritage*

*across the North West*



Festival of Hope 2020 was delivered through a network of five partner 'hub' museums. It is part of our Hope Streets programme funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and delivered in partnership with Blaze Arts. Many Museums responded to the Emergency Lockdown by pausing community engagement activities. The Blaze Young Producers were not ready to shelve their plans; quickly suggesting ways to make their festival viable despite the restrictions in place. With resilience, tenacity and perseverance, they pivoted enthusiastically towards online, distanced delivery. Buoyed by their hopeful spirit, museum staff followed their lead.

Regular planning meetings moved online, as the Young Producers collaborated with Festival experts and museum leads to plan, commission and deliver 40 unique and imaginative 'events'.

The young people told us how this regular connection with others gave them a sense of purpose; rescuing their wellbeing in the context of school and college closures and work lost to zero-hours contracts.

### **PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:**

- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Youth Focus North West
- Blaze Arts
- Museums Development North West

### **MUSEUM HUBS:**

- The Atkinson, Southport
- Bolton Museum
- Tullie House, Carlisle
- Chester West And Chester Museums
- Lancashire Museums (Clitheroe and Padiham)

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## LET'S CREATE & CREATIVE KITS

Digital inequality was a theme on many people's minds. We felt a call to action. Curious Minds began to identify partnerships that were addressing this area of need with the creation and distribution of creative packs or kits direct to the doorsteps of families in need.

Early on, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), a Rochdale partnership and Odd Arts had led the way and begun to organise and bring together support in several local areas to target struggling families and provide creative resources (amongst other types of support) and Curious Minds was happy to contribute. This was also beginning to happen elsewhere in the country. At a national level, Arts Council England, members of the National Bridge Network and Craft Council also began to collaborate on an initiative that would see Let's Create 'art packs', filled with resources, sent out to children across the country.

In the North West, we opened the Let's Create initiative to Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) across the wider region, who had not benefitted from the joined up approach in GMCA. More recently we have also entered into a co-investment relationship with YoungMcr to tackle digital inequality across the Greater Manchester youth sector.

## LET'S CREATE KITS SENT OUT:

**PHASE 1, IN GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY & ROCHDALE**

**28,000** OVERALL (WITH CO-INVESTMENT FROM CURIOUS MINDS)

**PHASE 2, VIA LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS**

**2,800** PACKS DISTRIBUTED ACROSS NINE AREAS

*"THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE GET LEFT BEHIND WHEN YOU'RE LOCKED DOWN" - GMCA.*



## BUBBLE UP – DOORSTEP DELIVERY PARTNERSHIPS

Bubble Up is an initiative that places cultural education as a driver of post-lockdown recovery and renewal. It was designed to nurture new forms of artistic partnership and collaboration at hyperlocal level, for the benefit of children transitioning to secondary school following 5 months of lockdown.

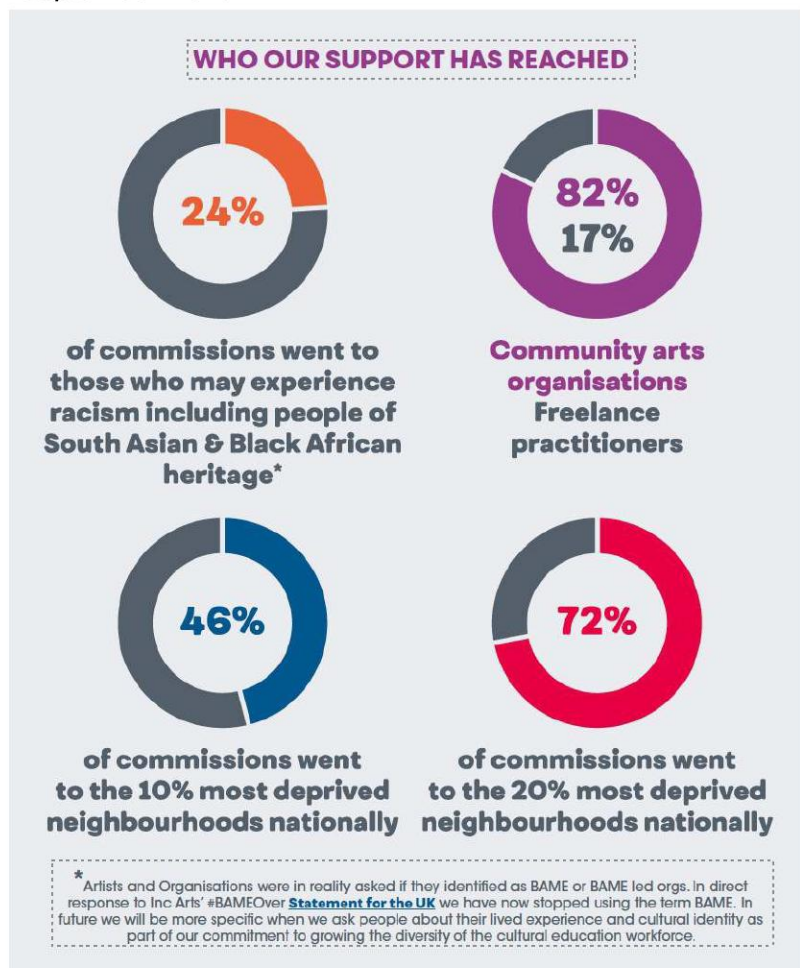
The purpose of the Bubble Up commissioning model is to put money directly in the hands of grass-roots artists, with the belief that they have the knowledge and experience to empower recovery in their local neighbourhoods.

### COMMISSIONING THE PILOT

After a competitive application process, Curious Minds initially offered 17 commissions, worth £2,200 each, to community-facing organisations and freelance teaching artists. These successful applicants would work in partnerships, forming five neighbourhood-level 'Doorstep Delivery Bubbles' to deliver extra-curricular cultural learning clubs for children who were transitioning to secondary school in September 2020.

### ROUNDS TWO & THREE

Thanks to generous support of The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and following the success and popularity of the pilot phase, we were able to extend this programme to a second and third phase of commissioning. These phases would expand the geographical reach of the project into new neighbourhoods and would see activities running through the Autumn term.



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## CASE STUDY: BUBBLE UP GORTON

In Gorton, Manchester, three local arts practitioners applied to take part in the Bubble Up pilot phase, forming a single Doorstep Delivery Bubble – Boom Bap & Breaks, Breakdance Manchester and Creative City England CIC. Together, they developed a series of summer holiday cultural learning clubs, which were specifically designed to help Year 7s transition to secondary school after lockdown.

“The Bubble Up programme has impacted positively on me as a freelancer. I was able to plan and deliver a project very quickly, which meant I was able to start earning an income again.

The project has also helped connect me with other local organisations who have similar goals but use different methods. I’ve benefitted from the opportunity to collaborate and have immediately benefitted from widening my network.

It has been challenging to deliver with ‘bubbles’ under the new Covid-19 regulations, but I’ve realised these challenges can be overcome and that the work is still feasible. Bubble Up has helped me to develop new methods in my practice and workshop delivery that I can use in future activities. *I’ve developed my practice around risk assessment for example.*

*Being commissioned to deliver Bubble Up has also enabled me to help other freelancers, by providing them with paid work as part of this project. I’ve been inspired to develop future project ideas in response to similar opportunities in the local area.”*

*Adil Khan – DJ KhanFu (Boom Bap & Breaks)*

*“It’s been interesting working with Beth from Creative Cities and KhanFu from Boom Bop and Breaks; having to pull our organisations together to then create a creative bubble that allows young people to explore many artistic disciplines. It’s the new way of thinking about organisational cohesion.”*

*Edenamiuki Aiguobasinmwin, Director of Breakdance Manchester*

## Covid-19 pandemic

At the start of the Covid pandemic in early 2020, we closed our Preston office and training room and asked the team to temporarily work from home. As our lease agreement drew to an end in September 2020, it became clear the site would not support post-pandemic working and we decided to leave. We donated some of our furniture to local arts organisations, putting into store what we need to retain and planning to consider accommodation options in autumn 2021. We regularly link as a team virtually and occasionally in small numbers physically and have placed a greater emphasis on staff health and wellbeing and colleague support.

While the pandemic has impacted delivery of some of our regular programmes, we have continued to be able to deliver our main sector support role for Arts Council England and our funding from them was not affected.

We weren’t able to deliver some of our training offers which would usually provide additional income, adapting training to meet needs via online free sessions. We did, however receive a grant awarded under the Government COVID-19 (coronavirus) relief scheme and funds through the Job Retention Scheme for a member of staff independently funded.

## Inclusivity & Relevance

The very first words of our mission statement are ‘Our vision is for an equal society’. Tackling unequal access to, and through, arts and culture are right at the heart of why Curious Minds exists. We recognise that our work is far from done, and acknowledge we have a long way to go with specific regards to ethnic and racial diversity. Until the day comes when the wonderfully diverse communities of the North West are representatively embedded in our workforce, our programmes and our sector, we will continue our effort to do more and better.

We know that our sector, and the sectors we work with and alongside are not representatively ethnically diverse. We acknowledge that, whilst our programmes reach far and wide, our own permanent staff team is not ethnically diverse. Whilst we have taken positive actions and reviewed procedures to address this, we know that we haven’t done enough until our staff team reflects the ethnicity of the area we serve.

We also know that children and young people’s access to arts and culture remains unequal. The urgent need to address systemic wrongs that cause inequality and lack of opportunity drives all our work, both as a charity and the NW Bridge organisation. We recognise that, whilst many opportunities are technically available to all, perception is a powerful barrier, which requires pro-activity to overcome.

**We know we have a unique ability to lead and influence change across the arts and culture sector and take that responsibility seriously. Our aim is to achieve justice through creative practice.**

Curious Minds’ staff and Trustees recognise and accept a dual role:

### Internally:

by creating, implementing and monitoring organisational policies and procedures that promote equality, diversity and inclusion, enabling us to engage deeply in anti-racist work, and

by doing more to be a visibly anti-racist organisation, ensuring those who work with us and for us are in no doubt about our values and expectations, and

by examining our organisational structure, our work environment and the ways we may be inadvertently perpetuating problems through who we represent, who we invite to the table, who we partner with and where our resources and energy is directed.

### Externally:

by working in partnership with others to remove the barriers that prevent some CYP from experiencing the joy arts, culture and creativity bring, and

by championing diverse practice in cultural and creative education as integral to creating a better, richer and more dynamic arts and cultural offer for children and young people which, in turn, creates a more tolerant, accepting and understanding society, and

by harnessing the power of arts and culture as a vehicle to enable children and young people to create change in their lives, and in society.

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In order to address ethnic and racial diversity specifically we have convened an External Anti-Racism Group with a remit to challenge us, hold us to account, and support us to continually strive towards becoming the representative organisation we strive to be.

Through our continued focus on being an Anti-Racist organisation, we're very aware of the current debate on appropriate language around race and ethnicity. In direct response to Inc Arts' #BAMEover [Statement for the UK](#) we have now stopped using the term BAME and will aim to be as specific as possible when we talk about cultural identity. We will always try to use terms that are respectful and we take responsibility for keeping ourselves up to date with what is considered acceptable language.

## Curious Minds and Digital

Curious Minds expertise in the use of digital platforms has accelerated significantly over the past year as we have transitioned to remote working and moved our entire offer of events, training and support online, developing innovative approaches to maintaining our interactive and dialogic house style. We remain committed to improving our own use of 'Digital' and to also supporting other practitioners and organisations who are keen to explore how improved use of digital platforms and approaches can help them reach more children and young people.

The focus for development over the next two years will be to continue to develop our approach to using a range of online platforms and tools to deliver a compelling blended events and training offer that meets the needs of our partners and stakeholders. We will also launch our own Online Learning Platform to offer asynchronous learning and resources to complement our live programme.

We will continue to grow our online presence across the full range of social media platforms to raise the profile of our work and champion the work of the wider cultural education workforce.

## Environmental Sustainability

Our Environmental Sustainability Policy commits to a redoubling of our efforts to be more environmentally responsible and to hold onto the gains made during the Covid 19 pandemic. The plan sets out our specific actions during the coming year that will reduce our impact and where possible, measure, understand and report on our progress in doing so. We intend to act as leaders within our communities and our plan prioritises communication of our environmental commitments to our stakeholders (including both partners and participants). It is our intention to step up and lead our sector by making innovative and responsive choices, and to influence, educate and advocate for Environmental Sustainability through our day-to-day work and programmes.

### Our Focus

The action plan focusses on the main areas of Curious Minds activities which have an environmental impact:

- Where we go and how we get there. Travel and transport
- What we work with and where we buy from. Procurement – Energy, Partners & Suppliers
- What we make and what we use. Production – Energy, Recycling & Waste
- Where we work and when we host. Buildings, Utilities & Events
- Who we tell and how we influence. Communicating our practice, internally and externally.

The global pandemic which struck in 2020 led to a year in which Curious Minds, and the wider world, changed. Our Action Plan and supporting Policy have been developed as we emerge from the pandemic and seize the opportunity to build on these changes to develop our environmental practices for the better.

## Our Values - The 7 Cs

Curious Minds is a values driven organisation and we hope this is writ large throughout this plan; in how we approach our work, the partnerships we broker and the programmes we deliver.

We refer to our values as ‘The 7 C’s’: seven words beginning with C by which we hold ourselves to account for what, how and why we do things: we are **CURIOUS**; we **CARE**; we are **COURAGEOUS**; we are **CONSCIENTIOUS**; we **CONNECT**; we are **CREDIBLE**; we **CELEBRATE**.

2020-21 gave us a new C-word to contend with and with it came the opportunity to stress-test our values like never before.

Curious Minds stepped up to the challenge and we’re proud of the difference we’ve made to individuals and organisations impacted by lockdown; the alliances we’ve forged; the partnerships we’ve brokered; and the creative activity we helped make happen.

As we move now from crisis into recovery and revival, we’ll continue to use the 7 C’s to navigate our journey through the choppy waters ahead; listening and responding to the needs of our sector to the best of our ability. Our aim remains the same as it was at the start of the pandemic: to support the North West’s cultural education workforce so that together, we emerge at the other side of the Covid-19 pandemic stronger and better positioned to respond to The Cultural Education Challenge.

## Working as part of the national Bridge network

Our work with the nine other Bridge organisations across England has developed significantly over the last few years, driven by our desire to provide ever-increasing value for children and young people and the communities in which we live and work. We have put in place structures and systems to enable peer learning, sharing expertise and ideas, and joining up on key projects and deliverables. Our shared commitment and responsibility to meet these challenges together is enabling us to work with more coordination, consistency and quality across the whole country. Our network development accelerated and became particularly crucial and effective over the last year as, together, we met some of the pressing challenges of the pandemic.

National collaboration across the Bridge network is underpinned by a set of agreed principles:

- being open and generous partners
- always seeking additional value for public money
- providing mutual aid to each other whenever we can
- recognising and respecting our differences
- pooling these differences to create strength.

Our framework for collaboration builds on the lessons of the *Let's Create Packs* project and other joint work carried out through the pandemic and makes the most of the opportunities created by the digital pivot we carried out as a network. We will focus on key priorities related to the pressing needs that children and young people face over the next year (e.g., wellbeing, employment and opportunity) and support the recovery of the sectors work with them.

## **Understanding and growing our impact**

In November 2019 we commissioned Social Value Lab to conduct an independent evaluation of our impact.

The review has helped us uncover a distinct methodology alongside a comprehensive Theory of Change that will inform future evaluation and impact reporting.

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## Our Plans for the future

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The Trustees, Executive Management Team and staff of Curious Minds remain ambitious for the charity's future and convinced that our work is needed more now than ever.

In light of the global pandemic funding for our role as the Arts Council England Bridge organisation for the North West has been extended a further year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, with grant conditions being relaxed during the crisis period. This has enabled us to respond rapidly in our role as sector support organisation and gives us vital room to plan for a post pandemic future. We remain ambitious for our future and have refreshed our business plan to March 2023 with some insight of what the sectors we support need from us post Covid-19.

In early 2021 we refreshed our plans for the remaining term of our business plan and agreed the following:

### Strategic Aims 2021-2023

Through our work we will:

1. IMPACT social justice outcomes
2. INFLUENCE children's services policy and practice
3. INVEST in the cultural education workforce
4. INNOVATE creative practice & pedagogy
5. INITIATE partnerships and strategic alliances

### Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Our Strategic Plan for 2021-23 has been produced in partnership with our Board of Trustees, Advisory Groups and consultation with funders and key stakeholders. It is designed to manage a smooth transition as we move out of our current Arts Council England (ACE) Funded Bridge role which ends on 31 March 2023.

We hope to continue to play a key role in helping ACE to achieve the ambition for children and young people as expressed in the new Ten-Year Strategy, 'Let's Create'. To this end, we will apply to remain part of the National Portfolio beyond March 2023.

The tables on the following pages summarise our strategic approach and how it aligns with this plan.

### Delivery Plan 2021 -2023

Over the next two years we will focus delivery and programme development across 4 key areas:

- Workforce Development
- Social Justice
- Careers & Employability
- Learning and Impact

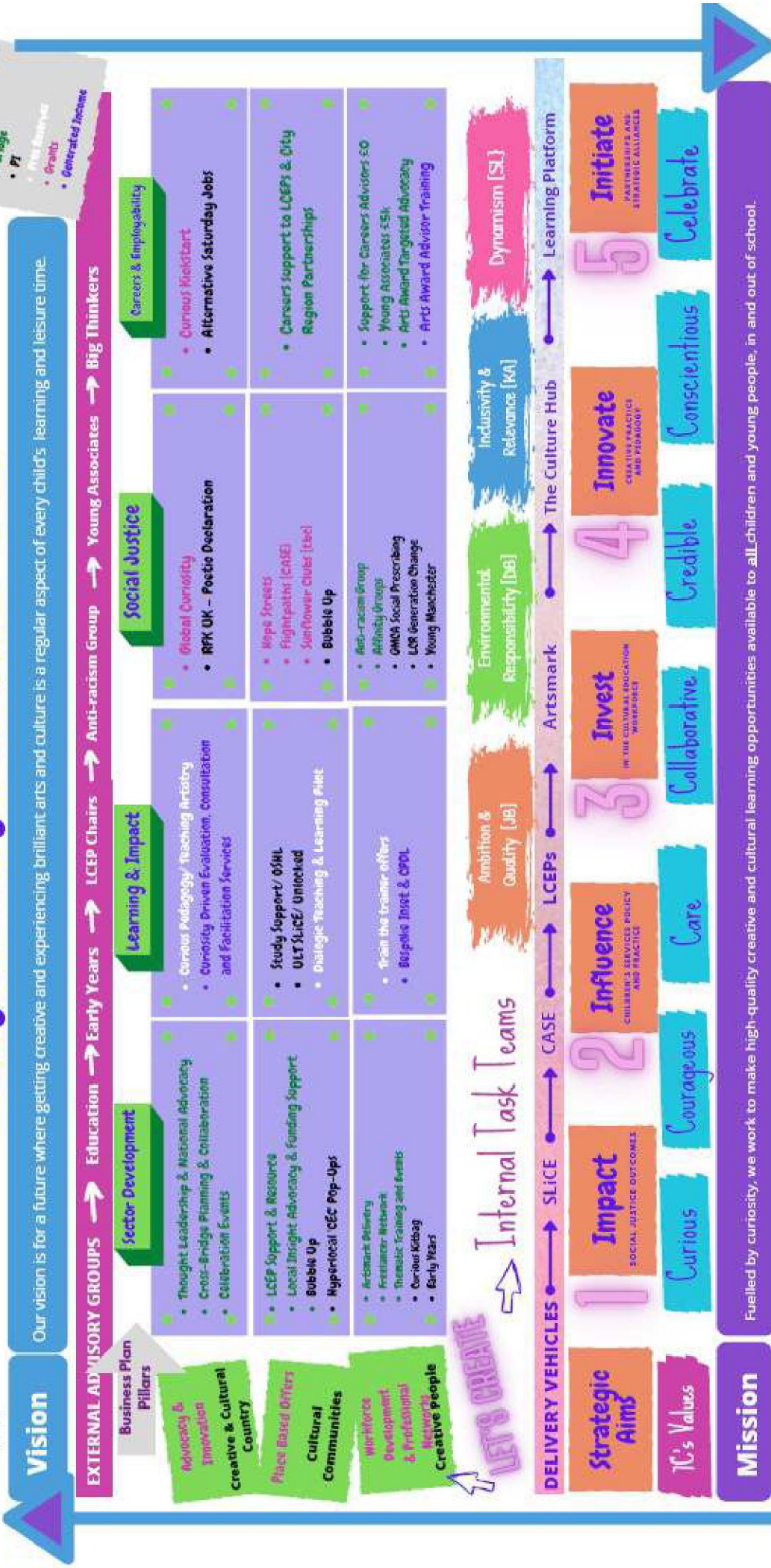
## Strategy Tree 2021-2023

<b>VISION</b>	Our vision is for a future where getting creative and experiencing brilliant arts and culture is a regular aspect of every child's learning and life.				
<b>MISSION</b>	Fuelled by curiosity, we work to make high-quality creative and cultural learning opportunities available to all children and young people, in and out of school.				
<b>OUR COMMITMENT</b>	We do this by connecting teachers and youth workers with artists and creative practitioners; giving them access to information, expertise, space and resources to facilitate collaboration and innovation in the field of creative and cultural education. We're ferociously committed to creating greater access to arts and culture for children and young people experiencing social or racial injustice. We recognise this is more likely to be achieved by a more diverse, better connected and more visible cultural education workforce than currently exists. We commit to playing our part to bring about these changes.				
<b>STRATEGIC AIMS</b>	1. <b>IMPACT social justice outcomes for children and young people</b>	<b>INFLUENCE children's services policy and practice</b>	<b>INVEST in the cultural education workforce</b>	<b>INITIATE local partnerships &amp; strategic alliances</b>	<b>INNOVATE creative practice and pedagogy</b>
<b>RATIONALE</b>	Despite decades of investment and good intention, access to arts and culture is still not equal. Too many CYP are still missing out on the social, economic and educational benefits that a rich cultural life brings.	As the country emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, we are presented with unique opportunity to demonstrate the transformational power of cultural education to policy makers and school leaders. Our response to the pandemic has laid the groundwork for Curious Minds to take a lead role in making this happen.	The Covid-19 crisis exposed the fragility of the cultural education workforce, especially freelancers and grass-roots organisations that we know are crucial to achieving fair access to arts and culture. As a sector support organisation, we have a vital role to play in growing the capacity and championing the cultural education workforce as a force for good in the lives of CYP.	The Cultural Education Challenge asks art and cultural organisations, educational institutions and local authorities to come together to drive a joined-up art and cultural offer locally, to share resources and bring about a more coherent and visible delivery of cultural education. This call to action is more important now than ever!	Acting as a bridge between the education and culture sectors, it's essential that Curious Minds maintains and grows its reputation as school experts and innovators in the field of creative and cultural education. We anticipate a renaissance of extra-curricular learning and believe we have a role to play in leading developments in this key area for creative and cultural learning.
<b>Over the next 2 years we will . . .</b>	increase and improve access to high-quality cultural learning and creative careers for CYP at risk of experiencing social injustice or discrimination.	grow Curious Minds' influence as experts in the field of cultural education, and as champions of the cultural education workforce	lever investment to build and grow the capacity of the cultural education workforce to respond to the post-pandemic needs of CYP.	support and galvanize cross-sector cultural education partnerships, thematic networks and strategic alliances.	work with big thinkers and influential leaders from the worlds of education and culture to explore key themes in teaching and learning, and school improvement.

**STRATEGIC OUTCOMES TABLE: 2021 -2023**

Strategic Aims		1. IMPACT social justice outcomes					2. INFLUENCE children's services policy and practice		3. INVEST in the cultural education workforce		4. INITIATE local partnerships & strategic alliances		5. INNOVATE creative practice and pedagogy	
Strategic Objectives	Over the next 2 years we will . . .	increase and improve access to high-quality cultural learning and creative careers for CYP at risk of experiencing social injustice or discrimination.		grow Curious Minds' influence as experts in the field of cultural education, and as champions of the cultural education workforce		lever investment to build and grow the capacity of the cultural education workforce to respond to the post-pandemic needs of CYP.		support and galvanize cross-sector cultural education partnerships, thematic networks and strategic alliances.		work with big thinkers from across education and culture to explore 'key themes' in teaching and learning, and school improvement.				
	INTERNAL	a	Continue to work with the Anti-racism group to implement recommendations and embed racial empowerment principles and practice in everything we do.	Develop and implement more robust and relevant approaches to monitoring and evaluating our work and impact.	Broker and develop at least 3 significant new funding and/or philanthropic relationships.	Shape a responsive place-based approach to Artsmark advocacy, delivery and support.	Embed 'curiosity' as a driver for learning and evaluation – internally and externally.							
		b	Grow the diversity of our staff team, board of trustees and associate pool.	Continue to grow the Curious Minds' brand, media presence and political influence	Grow and diversify our pool of Associates and delivery partners.	Broker partnerships and establish strategic alliances with charities, HEIs and MATs, nationally and internationally.	Work with staff, trustees, external advisory groups and ACE to explore and shape Curious Minds application to the next round of NPO.							
	EXTERNAL	c	Increase the number of CYP from underrepresented groups engaging in high-quality cultural learning, in and out of school.	Explore the potential for Curious Minds to take on a 'Sector Body' role for the cultural education workforce.	Provide funding advice organisational and professional development to >60 freelance practitioners and grass-roots providers.	Support and champion 20+ LCEPs across the North of England.	Work with expert practitioners to shape and deliver new interventions to meet the post-pandemic needs of CYP.							
	d	Increase the number of YP from underrepresented groups accessing quality careers advice and paid work-experience.	Develop the use of digital platforms, social media and apps to improve connection with and between our stakeholders.	Deliver capacity building activity and lever place-based investment into 5 targeted North West neighbourhoods	Grow and diversify our Freelancer network and Associate Pool, working across the North of England.	Continue to carve a role for Curious Minds' in the development and delivery of 'extra-time' learning, in and around schools.								
Organisational Objectives	I	Explore and agree future arrangements for blended working and an office/training base												
	II	Develop and implement improved systems for staff development and performance management												
	III	Develop, revise and implement existing and new organisational policies to ensure our working practices enable us to be an ambitious, dynamic, relevant, inclusive and environmentally sustainable organisation.												

# Strategic Planning Matrix, 2021 - 2023



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## Financial Review

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### Financial Results

The Trustees are pleased to report an increase in free reserves to £458,773 (2020: £443,528) placing the Charity in a stable financial position for meeting our plans for the future. Part of the increase for the year was as a result of savings through closing our base in Preston which was not considered suitable for post pandemic working. We have therefore set aside funds towards establishing a new base, but also plan to utilise £50,000 from our reserves in piloting new initiatives.

The principal funding sources during the year continued to derive from restricted grants, with a total of £404,387 (2020: £520,111) funds carried forward at the year end to meet future activity plans.

### Core funding

From April 2012, Curious Minds has been in receipt of National Portfolio Funding and Department for Education funding from Arts Council England in respect of its status as a Bridge organisation, which runs until March 2023, extended a further year in response to Covid-19. We also received funding through government initiatives in response to the COVID pandemic during the year.

We were delighted to receive a small grant from ShareGift during the year, which significantly assisted our shift to home working and online delivery by contributing to IT and digital resources, which we continue to develop as funding permits.

### Project funding

We are delighted to have received funds from a number of new sources to support our response to the COVID pandemic. The Paul Hamlyn Foundation were quick to support our crisis response and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation contributed to our recovery programme. We also received funds via the Preston Cultural Collective and Arts Connect.

In late March 2020, we were awarded a European Commission Erasmus+ grant for a partnership project with Poland and Greece, however this has been impacted by the inability to travel. We have used some of the available funding to support online activities but have also extended the project and hope to be in a position to carry out some of the planned work within the extended timescale.

We continue to deliver the Hope Streets project through National Lottery Heritage funding which commenced in 2018 and will run until 2023. Total funding for the project has been increased to £1,127,000.

The Charity retains the objective to further diversify incoming resources in future periods.

### Financial Risk Management

Within the wider risk management process, the Board of Trustees monitors and assesses financial risks to which Curious Minds may be exposed and assesses their potential impact on the Charity. We have in particular reviewed and reported to the Board on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our income and are monitoring and considering potential future scenarios. Confirmation of the

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continuation and extension of our core funding through ACE has been hugely supportive in allowing us to press ahead with some level of certainty.

The awarding of the Bridge Organisation status to Curious Minds by Arts Council England for an extended period April 2018 to March 2023 secured £6.7 million of funding.

The Bridge Organisation status gives us a solid platform from which to plan and develop the organisation. That said, we are committed to retaining our independence and the ability to pursue activities beyond our Bridge remit in order to ensure that the organisation is best placed to meet and deliver its strategic objectives.

### Reserve policy

The level of unrestricted reserves has been set to meet the costs of retaining a skeleton staff for six months plus overheads. The target was reviewed during the year and the calculated unrestricted reserves needed to meet these costs was increased to £375,000 (2020: £325,000). During the current year, this target was met and at the year-end the free reserves stood at £458,773 (2020: £443,528). At the discretion of the Trustees, the surplus above target can be designated to development work. The reserves policy is reviewed by the Trustees annually.

### Investment policy

Our cash assets, over and above those required for day-to-day working capital, are invested in appropriate fixed-term and notice cash deposit accounts that yield a greater return than our instant access current accounts. This investment policy is reviewed with reference to a detailed cash-flow analysis and assessment of future funding opportunities; however the scheduling of cash outgoings (including grant claims) remains difficult to predict with accuracy, as this is largely in the control of our partners and therefore timing is unknown.

### Financial control and audit

The organisation's finances are overseen by the Finance and Operations Team. They transferred to Xero Accounts for financial processing during the year and adhere to finance systems which were developed in partnership with our Auditors and are reviewed annually. Relevant staff receive appropriate training for day-to-day financial systems and consistently process financial information in an accurate and timely manner.

To ensure effective financial management within the organisation, management accounts are produced on a quarterly basis for the Executive Management Team and the Board of Trustees. Performance against budgets is reviewed between the Director of Finance and Operations and individual budget holders to ensure that all transactions are posted accurately and according to the principles of accruals-based fund accounting.

The Board of Trustees have a comprehensive overview of audit requirements, financial policies and procedures, including accounting policies and compliance with statutory requirements, risk management and financial planning. The Board continues to appoint the external Auditors and approve their remuneration and terms of engagement and responds to any relevant matters relating to annual financial statements raised by the External Auditors as a result of their audit work.

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## Structure, governance & management

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### Governing Document

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 17th December 2008, as amended by special resolution dated 3rd March 2009 and 25th June 2009. The Company is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission.

### Trustee recruitment

Transparent procedures are an important element of good governance. All new Trustees to the Board are appointed through a transparent open recruitment process when skills and knowledge gaps in the Board are identified. A thorough induction to Curious Minds is given to all newly appointed Trustees and they receive a governance pack which includes the organisation's business plan and current financial budget, the organisation's memorandum and articles of association, the Trustee role and description and sub-committee terms of reference, the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee', and the publication 'Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector'.

Curious Minds' Board of Trustees is fortunate to contain a mixture of skills ranging from arts, culture, heritage, public services and education through to human resources and accountancy. This enhances the placement of the organisation as a key player within the arts and cultural sector, regionally and nationally.

Trustees are encouraged to attend events and project activity throughout the year to gain first-hand knowledge and experience of the work of Curious Minds, and they are required to attend an annual Board away day with the management team to develop their skills within the Board environment and to discuss key strategic issues for Curious Minds, which in turn informs the business planning process for the organisation.

### Related Parties and links with other organisations

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity. Trustees and members of the Curious Minds paid staff team are required to declare any interest - when considering what interests to declare, the principal rule is that if members of the general public could reasonably conclude that the interests might have an influence on an approach taken by Curious Minds to an application or contract awarded, to funding received by Curious Minds, or general organisational decisions taken by Curious Minds, then they must declare them.

Due to Curious Minds recruitment of experienced sector leaders, it is inevitable that Trustees and Executive Management will have declared interests arising from either executive or non-executive appointments with Public, Cultural and Education Sector organisations. Where Curious Minds engages with a partner organisation in which a declaration has been made, the interested party must be excluded from the decision making processes. It is considered that these transactions do not represent 'related party transactions' for reporting purposes.

### Decision making

The Board of Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management and decision making of Curious Minds to the Chief Executive. Significant decisions that impact on, for example, staff employment, business planning, financial stability and the sustainability of the organisation, are brought to the Board for approval prior to action taking place.

### Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which Curious Minds is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. Curious Minds has a thorough risk management procedure wherein risks to which the organisation may be exposed are monitored and assessed as to their potential impact and likelihood. Appropriate controls are then identified and put in place to provide reasonable assurance against their occurrence.

The executive management team, led by the Chief Executive, monitor the risks associated with the organisation regularly and the updated risk register is presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly for discussion and approval.

### Internal policies

Curious Minds have a range of internal policies that have been written in consultation with appropriate professionals and that are reviewed annually and amended more frequently according to new legislation as appropriate. These include (but are not limited to) the following areas:

- Employment (including wellbeing)
- Inclusion
- Pay policy (see note 5)
- Fund Management and Financial Controls (including procurement)
- Health & Safety (including COVID)
- Safeguarding
- Environmental sustainability.

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## Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

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The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Curious Minds for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company 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 Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)
- make judgements 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.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

### Statement as to disclosure of information to Auditors

In so far as the Trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the Auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's Auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow Directors that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they are obliged to have taken as a Director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's Auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

**On behalf of the Board of Trustees:**   
**Karen Crowshaw**  
**Chair of Trustees**

Karen Crowshaw (Dec 21, 2021 16:38 GMT)

**Date:** Dec 21, 2021

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## Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of Curious Minds

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### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Curious Minds (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the trustees' annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to

read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or
- the charitable company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

### Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks,

including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the sector, control environment and charitable company's performance;
- results of our enquiries of management about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charitable company's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
  - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
  - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
  - the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in relation to the timing of the recognition of income, and the recognition of grants payable. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override and we identified risk in relation to the posting of unusual journals and the manipulation of accounting estimates.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the charitable company operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the reporting requirements of the funding bodies and the charity commission regulations.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

### Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



21 December 2021

Mitchell Charlesworth LLP  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
44 Peter Street  
Manchester  
M2 5GP

Mitchell Charlesworth LLP is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (including income & expenditure account)

	Note	2020/21		2019/20		2020/21	2019/20
		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	67,623	1,824,303	66,068	1,731,321	<b>1,891,926</b>	1,797,389
Investment income	2	6,824	-	7,694	-	<b>6,824</b>	7,694
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>74,447</b>	<b>1,824,303</b>	73,762	1,731,321	<b>1,898,750</b>	1,805,083
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Expenditure on charitable activities	3	385,331	1,538,195	449,602	1,207,542	<b>1,923,526</b>	1,657,144
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>385,331</b>	<b>1,538,195</b>	449,602	1,207,542	<b>1,923,526</b>	1,657,144
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>							
	6	(310,884)	286,108	(375,840)	523,779	<b>(24,776)</b>	147,939
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>	11	401,832	(401,832)	388,591	(388,591)	-	-
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR AFTER TRANSFERS</b>							
		<b>90,948</b>	<b>(115,724)</b>	12,751	135,188	<b>(24,776)</b>	147,939
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>	11						
<b>BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD</b>		519,122	520,111	506,371	384,923	<b>1,039,233</b>	891,294
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>610,070</b>	<b>404,387</b>	519,122	520,111	<b>1,014,457</b>	1,039,233

The notes on pages 34 to 46 form part of these accounts.

## Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

	Note	2021 £	2021 £	2020 £	2020 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	8	99,126		113,042	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,101,276		1,083,416	
		<u>1,200,402</u>		<u>1,196,458</u>	
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>185,945</u>		<u>157,225</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			<b>1,014,457</b>		1,039,233
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>			<b><u>1,014,457</u></b>		<b><u>1,039,233</u></b>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted	11		610,070		519,122
Restricted	11		404,387		520,111
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b><u>1,014,457</u></b>		<b><u>1,039,233</u></b>

For the year ending 31 March 2021 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies but as this company is a charity, it is subject to audit under the Charities Act 2011.

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 34 to 46 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

And signed on their behalf by

*Karen Crowshaw*

Karen Crowshaw (Dec 21, 2021 16:38 GMT)

**Karen Crowshaw – Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Company registration number 06775402**

## Statement of Cash Flow for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

	2021	2020
Note	£	£
<b>Cash used in operating activities</b>		
Net movement in funds	(24,776)	147,939
Add depreciation charge	6 -	2,473
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	2 (6,824)	(7,694)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	8 13,916	31,736
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	9 28,720	(77,344)
<b>Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities</b>	<b>11,036</b>	<b>97,110</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest income	2 6,824	7,694
<b>Cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>6,824</b>	<b>7,694</b>
<b>Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>17,860</b>	104,804
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	1,083,416	978,612
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,101,276</b>	<b>1,083,416</b>

### Analysis of changes in net debt

The charity did not hold any overdraft or loan facilities nor finance lease obligations at the start or during the period covered by these accounts or in the previous accounting period.

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## Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

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### 1. Accounting Policies

#### **Basis of Preparation**

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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102 - effective 1 March 2018), Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2016.

Curious Minds meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102, assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

#### **Going concern**

These accounts are prepared on the going concern basis. At the time of approving the financial statements and having due regard to the impact of COVID-19 as referred to in the Trustees Report, the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the directors continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Charity has confirmed Bridge grant funding to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and sufficient cashflow to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

#### **Incoming resources**

Income is recognised in the accounting period in which it is receivable, except in the following circumstances, when the income is deferred and included in creditors:

- The income is unrestricted core funding for a specified future period.
- A sales invoice has been raised ahead of work being carried out and there is no contractual entitlement to the income until the work has been done.
- Not all the terms and conditions for the receipt of the grant instalment have been met.
- The project has been completed and the grant conditions are such that unspent grant must be refunded.

Income includes grants in respect of revenue and capital items.

#### **Resources expended**

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

### **Allocation and apportionment of costs**

Support costs have been allocated between the cost centres: salaries; travel, subsistence, entertaining; learning, development and recruitment; marketing and publicity; premises related costs; office, sundry costs and depreciation.

Central costs are charged to unrestricted funds with contributions to overheads levied to individual programmes as appropriate. Contributions to overheads are charged to programme funds, as agreed with funders and where funds are restricted, these are shown within fund transfers along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work.

### **Grants payable and grant making policy**

Curious Minds issues grants in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid out within the various funding agreements we receive. The Charity does not have its own funds for grant making purposes.

In meeting our strategic objectives (and requirements of our funders where applicable), the nature of the investments committed determines grant making as the legal form to achieving this, as they do not constitute contracts for services.

Grant commitments are recognised when the legal agreements are signed and control of the grant funds is passed to the recipient or lead partner in a partnership.

Direct grant costs are allocated directly to the grant funds. Where agreed with the funder, a management charge is levied for central overheads, administration and contribution to reserves (this is credited to unrestricted funds, where associated costs are charged).

Where agreed with the recipient, grant commitments reduced or cancelled during the year are shown as a reduction in grants payable.

### **Tangible fixed assets**

Single asset purchases, not forming part of a related series of transactions, costing less than £2,000 are not capitalised, but are written off as a revenue expense in the year of acquisition.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life.

Office Equipment	25% on cost
Furniture & Fixtures	25% on cost

### **Taxation**

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

The Charity is not registered for VAT and therefore all its input VAT is irrecoverable.

Expenditure is analysed inclusive of VAT where this has been incurred.

### **Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits**

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme which pays 6% of gross salary. Contributions payable to the employee's personal pension schemes are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. The Charity's staging date for auto enrolment was 1/4/2017 and the scheme is compliant.

### **Operating leases**

Payments under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

### **Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the Charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in this note to the financial statements.

### **Designated Funds**

- **Curious Stories:**  
Funds generated from sale of the Curious Stories book, sponsorship as well as fundraising so as to enable disadvantaged children to better experience high quality arts and culture.
- **Curious Space:**  
Following closure of our Preston base in 2020, we have designated costs saved as set up funds towards a new base as we emerge from COVID restrictions and home working.
- **Development Fund:**  
Funds set aside to support development of income generation activities and international opportunities.
- **Hope Streets Fund:**  
Additional funds to cover the required match contribution to the NHLF programme.
- **Dialogic Teaching & Learning:**  
A trial project to explore the impact of dialogic teaching and pedagogy.
- **Impact Evaluation:**  
Funds allocated to a comprehensive assessment of our impact over the last ten years.

### **Restricted Funds**

- **ACE Bridge Organisation:**  
Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of the Bridge role for the North West of England (Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester & Cheshire)
- **ACE DfE Extension:**  
Grant from Department for Education, paid by Arts Council England, for Bridge network expansion activity.
- **ACE Let's Create:**  
Grant from Arts Council England for the delivery of creative resources to children during school closures due to COVID.
- **Arts Connect Let's Craft:**  
Grants from the Artfund and the Crafts Council via Arts Connect for the delivery of creative resources to children during school closures due to COVID.
- **Erasmus+:**  
Grant from the European Commission for a partnership project to explore arts-based youth work.

- **Esmee Fairbairn:**  
Grant from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation towards the Bubble Up programme of activities for children transitioning from primary to secondary schools during the COVID pandemic.
- **NLHF Kick the Dust Hope Street:**  
Grant received from National Lottery Heritage Fund for delivery of the 'Kick the Dust' Programme.
- **Liverpool Learning Partnership:**  
A grant to support setting up a Local Cultural Education Partnership in the Liverpool City Region.
- **Manchester Metropolitan University:**  
Funding to support BAME students through Trailblaze placements.
- **Manchester Museum Development:**  
Funding to support Trailblaze placements.
- **Paul Hamlyn:**  
Grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation towards Bridging the Gap bursaries for freelance artists and grassroots arts organisations directly affected in the early stages of the COVID pandemic.
- **Preston Cultural Collective:**  
Grants from Preston City Council, University of Central Lancaster and the Brewtime Collective for micro commissions for Preston artists directly affected in the early stages of the COVID pandemic.

## 2 INCOME

<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities:</b>		<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Restricted Grants</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Funding body</b>	<b>Purpose</b>		
Arts Connect	Let's Craft	<b>4,324</b>	-
Arts Council England	Bridge Organisation	<b>1,359,893</b>	1,335,323
Arts Council England	Let's Create	<b>15,000</b>	-
British Council as National Agency for the European Commission	Erasmus+	<b>9,184</b>	-
Department for Education	Bridge Extension	<b>82,612</b>	82,612
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	Bubble Up	<b>50,000</b>	-
Liverpool Learning Partnership	LCEP Start-up	-	12,240
Manchester Metropolitan University	Creative Internship	-	7,384
MDNW	Trailblaze	-	460
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	<b>279,290</b>	293,302
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Bridging the Gap	<b>20,000</b>	-
Preston Cultural Collective	Somethings Brewing commissions	<b>4,000</b>	-
		<b>1,824,303</b>	<b>1,731,321</b>
<b>Unrestricted Income</b>			
Bank Interest		<b>6,824</b>	7,694
Donations		<b>5,000</b>	10,790
Fees received		<b>22,540</b>	55,184
Government Job Retention Scheme Grant		<b>15,083</b>	-
Government Relief Scheme Grant		<b>25,000</b>	-
Sale of publications		-	94
		<b>74,447</b>	<b>73,762</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,898,750</b>	<b>1,805,083</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2021		2020		2021	2020
	Direct costs	Support costs	Direct costs	Support costs	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	474,192	-	326,608	-	474,192	326,608
Project delivery	1,079,535	361,157	892,741	429,142	1,440,692	1,321,883
Governance costs	-	8,642	-	8,653	8,642	8,653
	<b>1,553,727</b>	<b>369,799</b>	1,219,349	437,795	<b>1,923,526</b>	1,657,144
% of total expenditure	80.8%	19.2%	73.6%	26.4%	100.0%	100.0%

Charitable expenditure is allocated between unrestricted and restricted funds as follows:

	2021		2020		2021	2020
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Grants payable	-	474,192	5,000	321,608	474,192	326,608
Project delivery	376,689	1,064,003	435,949	885,934	1,440,692	1,321,883
Governance costs	8,642	-	8,653	-	8,642	8,653
	<b>385,331</b>	<b>1,538,195</b>	449,602	1,207,542	<b>1,923,526</b>	1,657,144
% of total expenditure	20.0%	80.0%	27.1%	72.9%	100.0%	100.0%

#### b. Grants payable by programme

Programme	Number of grants to institutions		2021	2020
	2021	2020	£	£
Arts Council England - Bridge	33	38	335,442	161,608
Arts Council England Department for Education	4	8	22,500	40,000
NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets	5	5	116,250	120,000
Curious Minds	-	1	-	5,000
	<b>42</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>474,192</b>	<b>326,608</b>

### 3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

#### c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2021 £	2020 £
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>			
A New Direction	Bridge Peer Support	-	5,000
Accrington Academy	The Uncertainty Principle PI	-	15,000
Albion Academy	LCEP Development	-	3,000
ArtReach Trust	Creative Sanctuary	<b>2,000</b>	-
Bank View School, Liverpool	SLiCE Programme	-	2,500
Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery	Let's Create & Let's Craft	<b>4,690</b>	-
Blackpool Teaching School Alliance	Illuminating Futures PI	<b>29,000</b>	67,000
Blaze Arts, Preston	Staying Curious in a Crisis PI	<b>23,000</b>	-
Bolton Museum	Artsmark Town	-	1,000
Burnley Leisure Trust	Artsmark Town	-	1,000
Cartwheel Arts	Let's Create boxes	<b>3,500</b>	-
Centre for Youth Impact	Outcomes Framework PI	<b>5,000</b>	10,000
Cheshire Dance	CASE Leadership Programme	-	1,000
Children And The Arts	START Programme PI	-	(8,003)
Collective Encounters	CASE Leadership Programme	-	870
Comics Youth	Let's Create & Let's Craft	<b>4,400</b>	-
Contact Theatre	CASE Leadership Programme	-	701
Creativity Works	LCEP Development	-	2,000
Cumbria Music Service	FRAME Project PI	<b>4,500</b>	-
Cumbria Music Service	Let's Create & Let's Craft	<b>4,480</b>	-
Derby High School	STEAM Project PI	-	(30,000)
East Prescott Road Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	<b>2,000</b>	3,000
Formby High School	LCEP Development	<b>500</b>	2,500
Fred Longworth School, Manchester	SLiCE Programme	-	3,250
GMCA	Autism Aware Culture	<b>5,000</b>	-
GMCA	Culture & Transport in GM PI	<b>55,000</b>	-
Heath School	LCEP Development	-	(4,000)
Hyndburn Academy	Creative Culture of School Improvement PI	-	(18,000)
Kelsall Primary School, Tarporley	Artsmark Town	-	1,000
Kelsall Primary School, Tarporley	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Knowsley Borough Council	Let's Create	<b>2,000</b>	-
Lancashire County Council	We Are Reading PI	-	31,364
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Our Place in the World PI	<b>22,000</b>	-
Lancashire Youth Challenge	Let's Craft	<b>690</b>	-
Lowry	Thriving Child Conference	-	1,000
Lowry	Who Cares PI	-	4,000
Manchester Camerata	CASE Leadership Programme	-	850
Manchester International Festival	CASE Leadership Programme	-	600
Martenscroft Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	<b>1,000</b>	4,200
More Music	LCEP Development	-	3,000
Museum Development North West	Re-engaging Audiences PI	<b>7,500</b>	-
New Bridge School	SLiCE Programme	-	(1,250)
Newtown Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	<b>2,000</b>	3,000
Norfolk & Norwich Festival	Metal Support Programme	<b>2,382</b>	-
Odd Arts	CASE Leadership Programme	-	670
Odd Arts	Lets Create boxes	<b>2,000</b>	-
Oldham Enterprise Trust	LCEP Development	<b>2,000</b>	-
Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool	CASE Leadership Programme	-	750

**c. Analysis of institutional grants continued**

<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>ACE - Bridge grants</b>			
Park Community Academy	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Rainhill High School, Prescott	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Ribblesdale Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	<b>2,000</b>	3,000
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester	CASE Leadership Programme	-	750
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester	LCEP Development	-	1,000
Royal Opera House	Youth Voice Initiative	<b>2,000</b>	-
Rugby League Cares	Rugby League Arts & Culture PI	-	(17,860)
Sandfield Park School, Liverpool	SLiCE Programme	-	2,500
St Helens Council	Let's Create	<b>2,000</b>	-
Stoneyholme Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	<b>2,000</b>	3,000
The Old Courts, Wigan	CASE Leadership Programme	-	688
Venture Arts, Manchester	CASE Leadership Programme	-	750
Warrington Borough Council	Let's Create & Let's Craft	<b>4,400</b>	-
Whole Education	School Ready Digital PI	<b>12,000</b>	-
Wigan STEAM	CASE Leadership Programme	-	778
Wirral Hospital Schools	LCEP Development	<b>4,000</b>	-
Ykids	Let's Create & Let's Craft	<b>2,400</b>	-
Young Manchester	Digital Inclusion PI	<b>10,000</b>	-
Young Manchester	Youth & Play Cultural Partnerships PI	<b>90,000</b>	45,000
Z Arts	Creative Curriculum PI	<b>20,000</b>	-
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>335,442</b>	<b>161,608</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>ACE DfE Extension grants</b>			
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bolton School	SLiCE Programme	<b>5,000</b>	5,000
East Prescot Road Nursery	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Egremont Primary School	SLiCE Programme	<b>5,000</b>	5,000
Evelyn Community Primary School	SLiCE Programme	<b>2,500</b>	7,500
Hollins	SLiCE Programme	<b>10,000</b>	-
Martenscroft Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Newtown Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
Ribblesdale Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	2,500
Stoneyholme Nursery School	SLiCE Programme	-	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>40,000</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>NLHF Kick the Dust - Hope Streets</b>			
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bolton Museum		<b>18,750</b>	22,500
Lancashire Museums		<b>41,250</b>	7,500
The Atkinson		<b>22,500</b>	30,000
Tullie House		<b>15,000</b>	30,000
West Cheshire Museums		<b>18,750</b>	30,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>116,250</b>	<b>120,000</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Curious Minds</b>			
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Lowry	Youth Performance Hub	-	5,000
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,000</b>
	<b>Sub total number of grants</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Total Grants Payable</b>	<b>474,192</b>	<b>326,608</b>
	<b>Total number grants</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>52</b>

#### 4 Analysis of governance and support costs

	2021	2020
	£	£
<b>Governance Costs</b>		
Audit fee	8,392	7,980
Support costs	250	673
<b>Total Governance costs</b>	<u>8,642</u>	<u>8,653</u>

	2021		2020		2021	2020
	Project Delivery	Gover- nance	Project Delivery	Gover- nance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Support Costs</b>						
Salaries	270,217	-	337,858	-	270,217	337,858
Travel & Subsistence	498	-	4,193	93	498	4,286
Learning & Development and recruitment	6,948	250	11,225	486	7,198	11,711
Legal & Professional Services	10,781	-	11,589	-	10,781	11,589
Premises related costs	6,307	-	21,084	-	6,307	21,084
Office, sundry costs & Depreciation	74,798	-	51,173	94	74,798	51,267
<b>Total Support costs</b>	<u>369,549</u>	<u>250</u>	<u>437,122</u>	<u>673</u>	<u>369,799</u>	<u>437,795</u>

#### 5 Staff Costs

The payroll costs of the charity were as follows:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages & salaries	803,827	824,023
Social Security costs	75,021	77,771
Pension costs	47,987	48,923
<b>Total Staff costs</b>	<u>926,835</u>	<u>950,717</u>

One employee had earnings (excluding employer pension costs) over £60,000 during the year:

Number of employees	Band
One (2020: One)	£60,000 to £70,000

The remuneration costs during the year of the Executive Management Team as outlined on page 2 (inclusive of pension costs) was £251,546 (2020: £235,854).

The average monthly head count was 24 staff (2020: 26 staff) and the average monthly number of full time equivalent employees (including casual and part time employees) during the year was:

	2021	2020
Average FTE	22.1	23.3

## 6 Net incoming resources before transfer

This is stated after charging:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Auditors remuneration - Audit fees	8,392	7,980
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	-	2,473
Operating lease payments	-	7,500
Director's (Trustees) expenses	-	673
	<u>8,392</u>	<u>18,626</u>
Number of trustees claiming expenses:	-	1

## 7 Tangible fixed assets

### Cost

	Office Equipment £	Furniture & Fittings £	Total £
As at 1 April 2020	32,093	32,813	64,906
Disposals	(15,619)	(28,926)	(44,545)
<b>As at 31 March 2021</b>	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>

### Depreciation

As at 1 April 2020	32,093	32,813	64,906
Depreciation eliminated on disposals	(15,619)	(28,926)	(44,545)
	<u>16,474</u>	<u>3,887</u>	<u>20,361</u>

### Net book value

<b>As at 31 March 2021</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
As at 31 March 2020	-	-	-

## 8 Debtors

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade debtors	2,531	14,653
Prepayments	28,651	10,334
Grant and other income receivable	67,516	88,055
Other debtors	428	-
	<u>99,126</u>	<u>113,042</u>

## 9 Creditors falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade creditors	7,782	21,598
Contract commitments due and accrued	82,483	76,844
Accruals	46,976	25,200
Grants and income in advance	23,760	5,979
PAYE & Payroll deductions payable	19,418	21,425
Pension contributions payable	5,526	6,179
	<u>185,945</u>	<u>157,225</u>

Curious Minds pays all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of invoices due for payment.

Accruals include £38,300 (2020:£15,928), being the cost of staff annual leave due but not taken and carried forward at year end.

## 10 Deferred income

	2021	2020
	£	£
Cultural Citizens	3,983	3,983
Erasmus+	17,781	-
Trailblaze Funding in advance	1,996	1,996
	<u>23,760</u>	<u>5,979</u>

### Movement in deferred income

Balance as at 1 April	5,979	6,308
Amount released to income	-	329
Amount deferred in year	17,781	-
Balance as at 31 March	<u>23,760</u>	<u>5,979</u>

## 11 Statement of funds

	Balance 01/04/2019	Income	Expenditure	Fund Transfers	Balance 31/3/2020 & 1/4/2020	Income	Expenditure	Fund Transfers	Balance 31/03/2021
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>									
General Fund	432,894	73,415	(430,555)	367,774	443,528	74,447	(380,374)	321,172	458,773
<b>Designated funds:</b>									
Curious Stories	5,850	347	(4)	-	6,193	-	-	-	6,193
CSNW	23,677	-	-	(23,677)	-	-	-	-	-
Curious Space	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	30,000
Development Fund	33,950	-	(3,000)	12,677	43,627	-	-	660	44,287
Dialogic Teaching & Learning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	50,000
Hope Streets	-	-	-	20,817	20,817	-	-	-	20,817
Impact Evaluation	10,000	-	(16,043)	11,000	4,957	-	(4,957)	-	-
	506,371	73,762	(449,602)	388,591	519,122	74,447	(385,331)	401,832	610,070
<b>Restricted Funds</b>									
ACE Bridge Organisation	376,723	1,335,323	(842,342)	(349,593)	520,111	1,359,893	(1,162,238)	(363,379)	354,387
ACE DfE Extension	8,200	82,612	(70,159)	(20,653)	-	82,612	(61,960)	(20,652)	-
ACE Let's Create	-	-	-	-	-	15,000	(15,000)	-	-
Arts Connect	-	-	-	-	-	4,324	(4,324)	-	-
Erasmus+	-	-	-	-	-	9,184	(4,531)	(4,653)	-
Esmee Fairbairn	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	-	-	50,000
NLHF Kick The Dust Hope Street	-	293,302	(276,844)	(16,458)	-	279,290	(266,142)	(13,148)	-
Liverpool Learning Partnership	-	12,240	(12,240)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Manchester Metropolitan University	-	7,384	(5,768)	(1,616)	-	-	-	-	-
Manchester Museum Development	-	460	(189)	(271)	-	-	-	-	-
Paul Hamlyn	-	-	-	-	-	20,000	(20,000)	-	-
Preston Cultural Collective	-	-	-	-	-	4,000	(4,000)	-	-
	384,923	1,731,321	(1,207,542)	(388,591)	520,111	1,824,303	(1,538,195)	(401,832)	404,387
<b>Total Funds</b>	891,294	1,805,083	(1,657,144)	-	1,039,233	1,898,750	(1,923,526)	-	1,014,457

Fund Transfers include contributions to overheads charged to programmes within individual funds, as agreed with funders, along with relevant permissible recharges for specific programme work in accordance with the use of those funds.

The net transfer of £401,832 (2020:£388,591) between restricted and unrestricted funds during the year is made up of £401,172 (2020: £404,353) agreed contribution to overheads and £660 (2020: £NIL) permissible programme costs, less £23,405 (2020: £15,762) contribution to the NLHF Kick the Dust programme.

The balance of restricted funds represents expenditure not due at the Balance Sheet date from grant funding received. Bridge funds carried forward within the grant period have been profiled in our agreed 2021/22 Activity Plan. Esmee Fairbairn funds carried forward are for planned activities that have been delayed due to COVID restrictions and will go ahead over the spring and summer of 2021.

## 12 Analysis of net assets between funds

	2021		2020		2021	2020
	General Funds £	Restricted Funds £	General Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total £	Total £
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net current assets	<b>610,070</b>	<b>404,387</b>	519,122	520,111	<b>1,014,457</b>	1,039,233
	<b>610,070</b>	<b>404,387</b>	519,122	520,111	<b>1,014,457</b>	1,039,233

## 13 Operating lease commitments

The charity has no commitments under operation leases for premises (2020: NIL).

## 14 Corporation tax

The company is a registered charity and is entitled to claim annual exemption from UK corporation tax.

## 15 Related Party Transactions

David Wearing, a Director and Trustee, is Head Teacher at Kelsall Primary School and has participated in the SLiCE programme, for which his school received grant funding of £5,000 in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and an additional £1,000 Artmark Town funds also in 2019/20.

Samira Al-Obaidi, a Director and Trustee, is an employee of Bolton Council. The council runs Bolton Museum which is a partner in the National Lottery Heritage Funded Hope Streets project, awarded a grant of £80,000 and contract of £23,500 from 2018 until March 2023. In 2020/21, the museum used £354 from it's Hope Streets grant to reimburse costs of secondment of two young people, employed by Curious Minds for Alternative Saturday Job placements as Community Engagement Assistants at the museum, from January to July 2021.

The museum also received an Artsmark Town grant of £1,000 in 2019 and an LCEP Development grant of £5,000 in 2017.

These transactions are not connected to Samira's role at the council and the majority took place before her appointment as a trustee with Curious Minds in July 2020.

Derri Burdon, Chief Executive, was appointed Chair of Trustees of Blaze Arts which was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in July 2018.

Blaze Arts received Partnership Investment grant funding of £60,000 in a prior period and £23,000 during the year.

Curious Minds have a service agreement to provide Blaze Arts with back office support, for which fees paid during the year were £6,000.

Blaze Arts also reimbursed Curious Minds for salary costs of seconded staff members of £45,537 (2020: £40,505).

Curious Minds commissions Blaze Arts as Programme Producers for elements of the Hope Streets programme, funded by NHLF.

Derri's daughter, Amy Burdon, runs WigLe Dance CIC, who took part in our Bubble Up initiative in 2020, contracted to deliver out of school learning clubs in two rounds and paid £4,400 in total.

Derri is listed as a debtor for £428 at year end relating to personal expenditure on a company card and leaving gifts paid for by the company for which Derri had collected contributions. She was also a creditor for £258 for expenses due. The net balance was paid to the company on 8th April 2021.






# FINAL Accounts 2020 21 for signature

Final Audit Report

2021-12-21

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