

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements

For the year 1st April 2024 to 31st 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 17th December 2008 and commenced trading on 1st April 2009. Curious Minds became a registered Charity on 6th August 2009.

Trustees

Ms. Kathy McArdle – Chair

Mr. Jonathan Robinson – Vice-Chair (Retired 23rd October 2024)

Ms. Samira Al'Obaidi

Mr. Mustafa Hassan (Resigned 10th June 2025)

Mr. Matthew McCallum (Appointed 22nd October 2025)

Ms. Janet Madden (Appointed 12th July 2024)

Ms. Jennifer Mutch (Appointed 3rd September 2025)

Ms. Kara Orford (Appointed 12th July 2024)

Ms. Alicia Smith

Ms. Abby Symonds (Appointed 12th July 2024)

Mr. David Wearing (Resigned 3rd 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

3rd 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

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



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.

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:

"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."

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:

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	INNOVATE in the field of creative and cultural education	1 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 EVERY child's learning and life.
	INVEST in a diverse cultural education workforce	2 Workforce & Leadership Development		
	INFLUENCE cultural education partnerships and policy	3 Learning & Advocacy		
		4 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

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:

"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."

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.

"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

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:

"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."

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:

"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."

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:

"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

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.

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.

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 2nd 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

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

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 31st 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 31st 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.

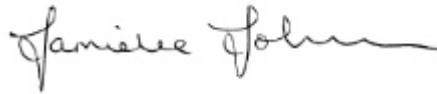
We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

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. 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
3rd 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 31st March 2025 (Including income & expenditure account)

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

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

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2025

	Note	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
CURRENT ASSETS					
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>	
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due in one year	9	<u>56,492</u>		<u>60,032</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			1,474,306		1,360,330
TOTAL NET ASSETS			<u>1,474,306</u>		<u>1,360,330</u>
FUNDS					
Unrestricted	11		1,263,167		1,140,542
Restricted	11		211,139		219,788
TOTAL FUNDS			<u>1,474,306</u>		<u>1,360,330</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 22nd October 2025.

And signed on their behalf by

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

Kathy McArdle

Statement of Cash Flow for the Year Ended 31st March 2025

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Cash used in operating activities			
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)
Net cash flow from / (to) operating activities		8,260	116,604
 Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest income	2	47,330	36,846
Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		47,330	36,846
 Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		55,590	153,450
 Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,386,376	1,232,926
 Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		1,441,966	1,386,376

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 31st 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 31st 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	-
		354,822	406,739
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
		925,534	932,337
Total		1,280,356	1,339,076

3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

a. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	Direct costs	Support costs	Direct costs	Support costs	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
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
	891,901	274,479	842,431	301,448	1,166,380	1,143,879
% 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
	865,656	300,724	826,567	317,312	1,166,380	1,143,879
% of total expenditure	74.2%	25.8%	72.3%	27.7%	100.0%	100.0%

b. Grants payable by programme

	Number of grants to institutions		2025	2024
			£	£
Programme	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
	12	3	20,039	16,735

3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

c. Analysis of institutional grants

Grantee	Purpose	2025	2024
		£	£
ACE - Artsmark BeeWell Programme grants			
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	-
	Sub total	24,470	-
	Sub total number of grants	7	-
ACE - Bridge grants		£	£
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
	Sub total	(12,731)	16,235
	Sub total number of grants	-	2
ACE DfE Extension grants		£	£
United Learning Trust	SLiCE Programme	-	(250)
	Sub total	-	(250)
	Sub total number of grants	-	-
Curious Minds		£	£
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	-
	Sub total	8,300	750
	Sub total number of grants	5	1
	Total Grants Payable	20,039	16,735
	Total number grants	12	3

4 Analysis of governance and support costs

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

	2025		2024		2025	2024
	Project Delivery	Gover-nance	Project Delivery	Gover-nance	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Support Costs						
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
Total Support costs	272,961	1,518	300,898	550	274,479	301,448
% 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
Total Staff costs	768,792	691,230

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>

9 Creditors falling due within one year

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

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.

10 Deferred income

	2025	2024
	£	£
Buxton Opera House	7,960	-
	<u>7,960</u>	<u>-</u>

Movement in deferred income

Balance as at 1 April	-	14,548
Amount released to income	-	(14,548)
Amount deferred in year	7,960	-
Balance as at 31 March	<u>7,960</u>	<u>-</u>

11 Statement of funds

11 Statement of funds										
	Balance		Fund		Balance		Fund		Balance	
	01/04/2023	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/3/2024 & 1/4/2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	31/03/2025	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Unrestricted Funds										
General Fund	500,968	932,337	(826,135)	14,699	621,869	925,534	(861,611)	(185,253)	500,539	
Designated Funds:										
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	
Restricted Funds										
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	
Total Funds	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	1,263,167	211,139	1,140,542	219,788	1,474,306	1,360,330
	1,263,167	211,139	1,140,542	219,788	1,474,306	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.