

Company Registration Number 08102487

Registered Charity Number 1153400

# **MORTAL FOOLS**

(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

## **REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

**For the year ending 31 March 2024**



**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**TRUSTEES' REPORT**  
*For the period ended 31 March 2024*

**NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**

Mortal Fools has successfully navigated a year that has been beset with economic uncertainty, continued political upheaval and ever more complex procurement challenges. Our primary objectives have been achieved and our reach has extended to a larger number and more diverse group of young people. We have continued to co-create high calibre artistic work and sustained our focus on the quality of our output and programme content.

Our growth over recent years has demanded more effort than ever from the senior team, to ensure that content and delivery is consistent across all we do. Structures within the organisation have continued to improve, so that the tone of voice and ownership cascades beyond leadership. We do, however, remain heavily reliant on the tenacity, appetite and at times the sheer determination of this team and the Board of Trustees to maintain our success.

It is evident that this investment has improved ownership and pride at all levels within Mortal Fools. Whole company away days have been extremely well received and the Board attendance where feasible appreciated. This along with internal policy reviews has enabled us to react to the pressures we all face and maintain good levels of staff morale and wellbeing, as well as on rare occurrences challenge unacceptable behaviours in a fair and equitable way. We continue to provide unrivalled working conditions in line with the real living wage in what remains a difficult climate.

Throughout 2023/24 we continued to mature and increased our impact while managing the budget. The contribution to the Board from our younger Board members has been refreshing, and our Board recruitment drive has seen the depth, breadth, and skill base of our Trustees increase. This along with the establishment of subgroups prepared us well to meet the challenges of the year effectively.

It would belittle our effort to say this year has been about consolidation and fine tuning the organisation. The efforts have at times been seismic and as anticipated the comfort of obtaining multiyear funding, particularly our first full year as an Arts Council England regularly funded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) has brought a different dynamic and significant pressures to bear on the organisation. These were anticipated and well prepared for, but as with all new endeavours there has been a hiatus of activity required to dovetail ACE's systems and information demands into our own.

The shift to seeking multi-year funding was always our ambition and is undoubtedly right for Mortal Fools. The funding cycles are however further apart, funds are tighter and competition greater than ever, so the hard knocks feel harder when they land. We have always resisted total reliance on NPO funding as this would stymie growth and make us over cautious in our ambitions beyond the boundary of that funding. It is therefore critical that the funding regimes are sustained.

We have continued to create some new substantive posts and increased some core team members' working hours. This has improved our capacity and enabled us to maintain a high-quality of service and reach, while securing our financial position. At times the pace has felt relentless and reflects the need for some further strategic recruitment to support the next steps. This will free up our senior team to focus on their strengths, to increase our reach and impact and make our content second to none. To do this we are looking to recruit an Executive Director by January 2025.

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**NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES (CONTINUED)**

The national economic situation has remained stagnant, and the upcoming budget is an unknown but will be presented against the backdrop of funding shortfalls in all sectors of government and a 'broken NHS'. The money markets are more volatile than ever, but inflation is now back within the desired target and interest rates may begin to reduce. But these shafts of hope will not greatly impact the realities of the lives we strive to support. The real cost of living still goes up.

The health of the nation seems to be the new focus and there does appear to be a greater understand of a holistic approach to health and a focus on the fundamentals of access to effective education, healthier living, emotional wellbeing and improved diets. Mental healthcare is thankfully no longer seen as a fringe activity and prevention is now being recognised as an economic necessity rather than a nice to do. This aligns more than ever to the core ambitions of Mortal Fools reinforcing the continued relevance of what we do.

This is our third year in Ashington and has undoubtedly spread our impact further. We have maintained our delivery in Tyne Valley and our reach beyond Northumberland is increasing. The digital content we have created around the Melva programme had played a big part in this. Our ultimate ambition is still to operate from our own purpose-built premises which does slowly get ever closer to reality.

On behalf of the Board and beneficiaries, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the team and its leadership for another excellent year.



Richard Wise, Chair of Trustees

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The Trustees, who are also Directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year to 31 March 2024.

**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

<b>Registered charity name</b>	Mortal Fools
<b>Charity registration number</b>	1153400
<b>Company registration number</b>	08102487
<b>Registered office</b>	YMCA Northumberland, North View, Ashington, NE63 9XQ

**Trustees**

For the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, the Board of Trustees is the Board of Directors of the charitable company and is referred to as "the Trustees" throughout this report.

The Trustees of Mortal Fools during the period and to the date of signing this report are as follows:

Mr R Wise (Chair)	
Mrs R A K Barclay	Resigned 11 December 2023
Mrs K Crawley	Appointed 17 June 2024
Mr P Douglas	Resigned 26 September 2024
Mr M Gate	Appointed 1 July 2023
Mrs L Jobson	Appointed 11 December 2023
Ms N Leyden	Appointed 25 September 2023
Mrs K Martin	Appointed 18 March 2024
Ms R Pattinson	
Mr S Rutherford-Orrock	Appointed 25 September 2023
Miss M Saunders	Appointed 26 June 2023
Ms S Spencer	
Miss K Stanforth	

**Company Secretary** Ms S Allen

**Bankers** Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5AS

**Independent Examiner** Mr P O'Hara FCA, Chartered Accountant, 26 La Sagesse, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AF

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**STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

**Governing Documents**

Mortal Fools is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 12 June 2012, as Northern Arts Enterprises Limited, and registered as a charity on 14 August 2013.

It was established under the Memorandum of Association that established its objects and powers and is governed under its Articles of Association, as amended by special resolutions registered at Companies House on 5 July 2012, 3 September 2012, 8 August 2013, 12 May 2016, 22 February 2018, 1 December 2020 and 28 February 2022.

The Directors of the company are also Trustees of the charity.

Eligibility for membership of the charity and membership of the Board of Trustees is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association. There are no restrictions in the governing document on the operation of the charity other than those imposed by general charity law.

**Charitable Purpose**

Mortal Fools charitable objects are for the benefit of the public particularly but not exclusively in the north of England, through the teaching, practice and showcasing of the arts in all their forms:

- (1) To help children and young people develop their skills, capacity and capabilities to enable them to participate fully in society as responsible, mature and fulfilled individuals;
- (2) To advance the mental health education of children, young people, their significant adults and the general public to improve mental wellbeing;
- (3) To promote, support and improve the social inclusion of children and young people who are socially excluded by providing them with opportunities to access activities and develop their skills and experiences in such a way that they are better able to participate more fully in society;

For the purposes of this clause 'socially excluded' means children and young people (up to aged 25) who are excluded from society, or parts of society (like social circles) as a result of one or more of the following factors: socio-economic circumstances; race; gender; poor educational or skills attainment; mental health; disability; bullying and harassment and ethnic origin.

- (4) To maintain, improve, and advance arts education of children and young people, professional artists and the general public.

**Board Structure & Operation**

The charity currently has eleven Trustees, having undertaken a public recruitment drive to bring new professional expertise and relevant lived experience to the Board. Trustees have participated in governance development through external training, including Anti-Racism, LGBTQIA+ Awareness and Safeguarding.

The full Board meets quarterly, has at least one additional full away day for strategic planning with leadership team staff and participates in a company development day with the whole staff team.

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**STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)**

**Board Structure & Operation (Cont.)**

For accessibility and inclusivity, regular Board meetings are offered as hybrid – with some folks meeting in person and some dialing in via Zoom. The charity invested in technical conferencing equipment to make these meetings as high quality as possible.

Three Sub-Groups meet quarterly – usually online – between full Board meetings. They are a combination of leadership team staff members and trustees. The current Sub-Groups are:

- Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) group - financial management, company risk register, business planning / operations, legal compliance.
- Artistic, Delivery & Practice (ADP) group – creative programme development, delivery practice, multi-sector partnerships, safeguarding.
- People group – HR, EDI and company culture, Ethical Business Practices.

Minutes are taken from all Sub-Group meetings.

For all full Board meetings, an agenda, detailed written business reports and specific subject papers are prepared by senior staff and circulated to trustees in advance of Board meetings, integrating notes from sub-group meetings.

The charity has almost filled the number of trustees allowed within its current governing document. To accommodate a greater number of young people as trustees (18-25), in 2024-25, the charity will amend the governing document to allow this.

The additional focus for Board recruitment in the next year is to increase professional representation from Legal, Finance and Health backgrounds.

**Appointment and Induction of Trustees**

Trustees are recruited via a combination of open advertising and contacts via personal and professional networks. In all cases, Trustees are elected to the Board following the same process:

- Submission of an application letter and CV
- Interview by two Trustees (considering skills, experience, alignment with company values, gaps within current governance)
- Opportunity to observe a Board meeting and a meeting with Chair of trustees and CEO
- Recommendation of appointment to full Board and appointment at general meeting

New Trustees are inducted by other trustees and senior staff. The Trustee Induction Pack will be reviewed and updated in 2024-25. It includes a range of resources to support newcomers' understanding of their role and the charity's activities, and signposting to training by external providers, with the Company covering any costs associated with the training.

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**STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)**

**Reserves Policy**

The Trustees have reviewed the charity's needs for reserves in line with the guidance issued by the Charity Commission.

The Trustees aim to hold a level of Unrestricted Reserves which enables the charity to have sufficient financial resources to meet various liabilities which would occur if Mortal Fools were unable to continue operating, together with an allowance to enable the charity to respond flexibly to issues or appropriate initiatives which might be identified outside of its annual budgeting process.

At present, the Trustees estimate that the Unrestricted Reserves required to cover all known liabilities for a period of 3 months amounts to approximately £135,000 and that this should be the minimum Free Reserves Target held in the accounts. The Trustees recognise that these liabilities will increase as the charity continues to grow.

Mortal Fools currently holds total Unrestricted Reserves of £209,256 at 31 March 2024.

'Free Reserves', defined as total non-designated Unrestricted Funds minus the value of unrestricted Tangible Fixed Assets, are £208,916.

Although this exceeds the minimum target level at 31 March 2024, the Trustees have committed £30,000 of Unrestricted Reserves to be spent on Youth Theatre delivery costs in the first quarter of 2024/25. Additionally, another £40,000 of Unrestricted Reserves has been ringfenced towards initial salary costs of a new senior post to support the charity's long-term strategic development aims. Recruitment for this position is planned for late 2024/25 with a prospective start date early in 2025/26.

This ringfencing leaves a balance of £138,916 unallocated Unrestricted Reserves, which is close to target level.

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustees on an annual basis as part of the charity's budgeting processes.

**Grant-making**

The charity does not currently engage in grant-making activity.

**Contribution of Volunteers**

The charity makes limited use of volunteers within its productions and to support its activities.

**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

**Aims & Objectives**

Mortal Fools' core purpose is to support people to have better quality inter-personal relationships with one another – as a fundamental component of wellbeing – and to use participation in creative and performance-based activities as the methodology to achieve this.

We specialise in the co-creation of compelling, dynamic, socially-relevant and high-quality creative and performance-based work with children, young people and communities.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**Aims & Objectives (Cont.)**

We work with 1,000s of children and young people every year, mostly in the North East. We develop our skills, knowledge and approach through dynamic multi-sector partnerships (Youth, Community, Health, Education, and Arts and Culture), jointly co-designing work to meet the contemporary needs of children and young people.

We are champions of theatre and performance produced by young people and for young people. We advocate for this work to be recognised and supported as an important art form in our sector, touring our work nationally, supporting participatory artists to train in co-creation, and embedding the achievement of positive wellbeing outcomes across all our work.

Utilising digital technology for engagement of beneficiaries and to share our work with more diverse audiences continues to be a great success and will continue to form a core part of our work.

**WHY we do what we do**

We are a purpose-driven organisation. Our work must be relevant to and matter in wider society and make a demonstrable and measurable difference to those we work with.

We recognise that the presence of positive and secure interpersonal relationships is a key factor in personal wellbeing, motivation, civil engagement and life fulfilment. We use drama and theatre-based approaches – interpersonal by nature – to support people to build the skills and knowledge to form and maintain better relationships. This work is positive action against the shift towards the divided, competitive and aggressive societal changes seen in the UK and wider world in recent years.

Through all our work we advocate for, demonstrate and give people ways to form better relationships and learn how positive connection and shared positive experiences with one another can be used to prevent those things which drive us apart. Positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes are an integral part of our work. We use the ratified PERMA™ Framework as our approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating the impact of our work on wellbeing outcomes.

Our work helps people to bring about changes in behaviour and outlook, increasing in confidence, experiencing personal accomplishment, building their personal resilience, shaping a more positive self-image and setting themselves up for a more positive future.

**HOW we work**

We use high-quality drama and the process of making and performing theatre-based work as our primary tools for change. Our work explores contemporary concerns facing children and young people and the realities of the world we're living in right now – inviting positive change.



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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**We have 4 key values that shape everything we do:**

**1. CONTRIBUTING - *Everyone Matters***

Co-creation is at the centre of everything we do. All our team and everyone we work with contributes to shaping our programmes and our activities, helping us to learn and make an impact.

Our activities are participatory, with ideas being supported, acted upon and recognised from all involved. Our activities are an asset in the lives of the people we work with, making a positive contribution and influence in both grassroots and strategic multi-sector settings.

We consistently evaluate our work so we remain relevant to wider society and make a tangible positive contribution.

**2. GROWING - *Becoming more***

We are bold, ambitious and entrepreneurial. We embrace challenges and are not afraid of failure. We champion a *growth mindset* and constantly look to learn from others. We are committed to continuous reflection and development, supporting everyone with the right level of challenge to become more.

We receive feedback graciously and gratefully and use supportive and constructive ways to give and respond to feedback.

**3. WITH OTHERS - *Better Together***

Our activities bring people together – to achieve, to learn and to have fun – with curiosity, co-creation and kindness at the heart of everything we do. We seek out people to work with who know things that we do not, integrating ongoing input from our beneficiaries, artists and others we work with or whose work relates to our own. We prioritise working with partners who share our values and whose work has similar motivations.

We support the development of key interpersonal skills like empathy, teamwork and resilience for all who work with us. We care for one another, and this compassion helps us to build strong, lasting and fruitful relationships.

**4. AS OURSELVES - *Always authentic***

We create safe spaces which support and encourage everyone to be their authentic, imperfect selves - with individual strengths, vulnerabilities, lived experiences, emotions and needs. We recognise, respect and embrace our differences, understanding that this makes us all stronger, more empathetic and wiser.

We strive to meet the needs of everyone we work with, making sure our company is welcoming and inclusive to people from all walks of life. We create environments that are genuinely supportive and accessible, where everyone feels valued as an individual, and is enabled to contribute.

As a company, we do not copy or try to compete with others. We confidently walk our own path, and we seek to work with those who also value authenticity and openness.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**WHAT we do**

We have several programmes of activity. Each of them achieves a combination of the following objectives:

- Enable children and young people to co-create with professional artists, treating young people as artists in their own right.
- Inspire people to make positive behavioural change through dynamic youth-led theatre productions, short films, creative digital assets and workshops.
- Learn through working with multi-sector organisations, schools, individuals, and artists who share our values.
- Co-construct drama and theatre-based approaches which enrich the provision within formal education settings, including training teachers and improve the personal, social, and educational outcomes of pupils.
- Make dynamic, engaging, and relevant contemporary theatre for young audiences, especially those who are under-served.
- Programme exciting theatre by other companies and artists – prioritise bringing this to under-served settings.
- Raise the profile of artistic work produced by young people.
- Improve mental health and wellbeing of beneficiaries and embed this at all stages of projects.
- Embody and champion inclusive approaches to co-creation, collaboration and creativity including providing a broad range of activities, working in-person and digitally designed to accommodate a range of access needs (e.g. special educational needs, logistical, age-specific, low cost).
- Reduce barriers to taking part by using in-person and digital engagement and producing our work in a range of settings, community buildings, schools, outdoor spaces, and professional theatre venues - prioritising areas of socio-economic disadvantage or rural isolation that are under-served.
- Create new pathways into participatory arts careers including work experience, internships, training, mentoring, volunteering and employment.
- Run practical skills training for multi-sector businesses supporting them to learn how to connect better interpersonally in the workplace, with clients and as leaders.
- Provide opportunities for participants to work with a diverse range of dynamic professional artists and companies and other specialist practitioners.
- Signpost young people to other available arts activities through our networks.
- Provide training, mentoring, volunteering and employment for young and/or early career participatory artists and practitioners, especially those working with young people.

**OUR ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES**

**PROGRAMME 1: YOUTH THEATRE (objectives achieved are: a,b,e,g,h,i,j,m,n)**

**Youth Theatre**

A term-time programme of activities with 6 groups in West and South East Northumberland and online, providing a fun, safe and active environment where young people aged 7-19 explore their own lives and their wider world through drama and theatre. In these sessions, young people co-create dynamic, thought-provoking, original theatre alongside professional theatre artists - with the young people's ideas, emotions and experiences at the heart.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

The 6 groups are:

- Tyne Valley, West Northumberland: Stage 2 (school years 3-6); Stage 3/4 (school years 7-11) and a resident Youth Theatre partnership with Highfield Middle School in Prudhoe, West Northumberland.
- Ashington, South East Northumberland: Stage 2 (school years 3-6); Stage 3/4 (school years 7-11).
- Online: drawing young people from across the North East region (school years 5-11).

In 2023-24, our MFYT groups created an original film series 'The Bigger Picture' and two live performance nights, 'Fools Fest'.

**Ensemble Young Company**

This 5-month annual project (school years 9-13 and up to age 19) supports teenagers to co-create and tour original theatre in a process closely aligned with professional theatre production.

Young company members originate from our two main operational locations.

In 2023-24, the Ensemble Young Company toured their completed production 'Flux' (Apr 2023) and created their new production – 'Inevitable?' – which was created within a national Youth Theatre partnership project called 'Grow Up', involving Company 3 (London), Prime Theatre (Swindon) and Beyond Face (Plymouth) – including a weekend development residential for participating organisations.

**PROGRAMME 2: FUTURE READY (a,b,c,d,h,i,j,m,n)**

**Young Cultural Leaders**

Supporting young people in their broader personal development through social action projects, event management, Peer Facilitation training, volunteering and work experience. This includes opportunities to do higher level Arts Award qualifications.

**Creative Interventions**

Working with Education settings to use participation in creative activities to support young people to develop confidence, creative and social skills. Young people are referred into the groups by the host partner, using criteria like high levels of school absence, mental health or behavioural challenges or inter-sectional needs.

The structure is 12 weekly 2-hour sessions with an informal sharing at the end and young people completing an Arts Award qualification.

In 2023-24, our Creative Intervention partners were Duke's Secondary School in Ashington and Duchess's Community High School in Alnwick.

**Employability Skills**

In 2023-24, we worked with The Prince's Trust to pilot a co-delivered employability skills week supporting young people aged 16-25 with career development in the creative industries.

Later that year, we were commissioned by North of Tyne Combined Authority to pilot a new programme of employability skills delivery focused on young people aged 16-25 in and around Ashington, Northumberland. This work will be delivered in 2024-25.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**Cross-sector Partnerships**

Working with youth sector partners, we are testing co-delivery models combining creative practices with traditional youth work practice. The focus is on using a creative approach to develop employability, social action and leadership skills.

In 2023-24 we trialled 'Creative Mondays' arts drop in sessions with YMCA Northumberland.

**PROGRAMME 3: Professional Theatre for young audiences (b,c,e,h,j)**

We work with professional theatre artists (writers, directors, actors, designers and production staff) to create social-change theatre that is relevant to the lives of our core beneficiaries.

**Melva**

This digital online creative intervention programme has evolved from an original theatre production in 2017 to the current multi-media programme for schools. The digital package supports children's, teachers' and parents' mental health education and strategies for self-management of worries and anxiety and includes:

- Digital captured version of the original stage play – in five episodes
- Online storytelling game
- Animation Series, with themes aligned to the NHS 5 Steps for mental wellbeing (launched in September 2023)

In 2023-24, we agreed a commission with North of Tyne Combined Authority to provide annual programme licences free of charge for 50 schools in the North of Tyne area.

We also continued to develop Melva sponsorship packages with private businesses to provide free licences to schools that the businesses nominated.

We integrated a new evaluation approach into the programme structured to the PERMA™ Framework, generating a combination of teacher and pupil feedback and wellbeing data demonstrating impact.

During the year, we began development of a new component for the Melva programme – an illustrated novel for upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 children. The novel is being co-written by original Melva writer, Danielle Slade and Mortal Fools Artistic Director, Kiz Crosbie. The novel will address mental wellbeing themes pertinent to the target age group including transition and change, friendships, puberty, grief and loss and self-harm and suicidal ideation.

**PROGRAMME 4: CONNECT (b,h,l)**

This is our business training programme for multi-sector organisations, which generates earned income to subsidise our delivery with young people. The CONNECT training approach combines practice from actor training and theatre rehearsals with business thought leadership and social science and neuroscience content and research.

The CONNECT programme is a hybrid model of in person and online delivery and is a fast-growing strand of our work and income stream.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**PROGRAMME 5: Sector Development (c,d,f,g,i,j,k,n,o)**

**Running a Youth Theatre**

In Autumn 2023, we, together with 6 other Arts Council NPO Youth Theatre organisations (Beyond Face, Theatre Factory, Burnley Youth Theatre, Prime Theatre, Company 3, 20 Stories High), co-designed a year-long series of online training / practice-sharing sessions, covering subjects emerging from a national survey of Youth Theatre organisations.

These aim to improve Youth Theatre delivery across the UK, cultivate working partnerships and a mechanism for practice sharing and is a shared move towards raising the profile of Youth Theatre within the wider Arts sector. The programme launched in January 2024 and is being delivered throughout the year.

**National Youth Theatre Census**

Together with Company 3, Beyond Face and Prime Theatre, we devised plans to secure funding (from Arts Council England) to complete a national census of Youth Theatre organisations.

**Artist and Practitioner Development**

We are a sector leader in the North East in supporting professional cross-sector practitioners to develop their practice with, by and for children and young people.

We do this by providing training, mentoring and employment opportunities for practitioners and theatre-based artists, with a particular emphasis on those who are early career stage. We also work in partnership with cross-sector organisations working with young people, facilitating practice sharing via co-delivery of projects and activities.

**Entry Level Employment**

We currently have a full-time Marketing Assistant and introduced a part time (currently 0.8FTE) Assistant Practitioner & Coordinator in 2023-24.

We are working on the development of further entry-level positions in the coming year.

**Public Benefit**

The Trustees understand and have discussed the implications of the provisions of the Charities Act 2006, which state that all charities must demonstrate that they are established for public benefit, and have had due regard to the public benefit guidance issued by the Charity Commission. The Trustees believe that the charity meets both of the key principles.

Principle 1 - There must be an identifiable benefit, or benefits

Principle 2 - Benefit must be to the public, or a section of the public

The charity's principal public benefits are:

**1. Education and development of young people**

The charity's participatory arts activities focus on strengthening the social and emotional capabilities and mental health of young people – such things as confidence, resilience, creativity, communication, managing feelings, problem-solving, relationship-building, responsibility and perseverance, through participation in performance-based activities.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**Public Benefit (Cont.)**

**2. Education and development of adults**

The charity delivers professional development skills workshops with adults that utilise similar approaches to those used with young people but made bespoke for the particular setting e.g. teacher CPD and masterclasses in creative leadership and managing imposter syndrome.

**3. Events and plays for the general public**

The charity runs c. 20-30 events and performances per year with its various groups, which are delivered to a high standard and directed by paid professional staff. Those in partner settings are primarily for the young people, families, and staff associated with the setting. They also use community venues and / or in regional theatre venues for performances and events such as Gosforth Civic Theatre and YMCA Northumberland.

There is a safeguarding policy in place, which includes online working, and is reviewed at least annually (including a review of statutory guidance). There is a safeguarding link trustee and they, together with staff members as Designated Safeguarding Officer and a deputy, are all trained with a Level 3 Safeguarding accreditation, refreshed every 3 years.

As per our policy, we undertake the following Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and procedures:

- Ensuring that everyone who works directly and frequently (more than 3 days in any 30-day period) with children and young people under 18 on our behalf including paid employees, freelancers, volunteers or in any other capacity has an enhanced check with a children's barred list check from the DBS no more than 12 months old (including checks via the DBS update service).
- Ensuring trustees have an enhanced check from the DBS no more than 12 months old (including checks via the DBS update service)
- DBS checks are recorded, monitored and managed using our company management software.

The main beneficiaries are:

- Children and young people aged 7-19 in North East England who attend our activities e.g. our Youth Theatre groups. This includes both in-person and digital participation.
- Children and young people aged 7-19 in North East England who we work with in partnerships with other settings; arts, education or community organisations like in our Co-Creation Exchange and schools and our Melva programme. This includes national and international participants.
- Adults who participate in our work; artists and practitioners from other settings e.g. teachers and Youth Workers.
- Adults who participate in our professional development training – including national and international participants. This includes both in-person and digital participation.
- Members of the public who attend our performances and events. This includes both in-person and digital participation.

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**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**Public Benefit (Cont.)**

We prioritise working with beneficiaries in locations of socio-economic disadvantage and rural isolation and which are under-served by cultural provision. From our base in YMCA Northumberland in Ashington, we operate a satellite model of delivery including a secondary base in Prudhoe in west Northumberland and a growing number of residential partnerships with cross-sector partners.

**Risk Management**

The Trustees regularly review the major governance, operational and financial risks which the charity faces as part of its annual business planning process and confirm that systems have been established to mitigate these risks.

The charity has a comprehensive risk management framework. It comprises:

- an annual review of the strategic risks the charity may face via the business plan
- the establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

The charity has a comprehensive approach to risk management, comprising:

- Whole company risk register, reviewed quarterly by senior staff and the Board
- Delegation of risk management responsibilities between staff, detailed in the risk register
- The establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified, reviewed by the FAR Sub-Group
- The implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

The Trustees are satisfied that appropriate financial systems and controls and employment policies and practices are in place. They consider the key risks facing the charity currently to be:

- **Competition for Grant Funding**  
Competition for grant funding within the charitable, youth and arts sector has increased throughout the year, with the charity receiving rejections from funders who were previously reliable supporters and several large current multi-year grants entering their final year in 2024.

The multi-stream income generation model the charity operates has maintained financial resilience, but the trustees recognise the need for the charity to decrease its reliance on grant funding (c68% of income in 2023-24) by maximising income from other income generation streams e.g. Melva commissions, CONNECT sales.

**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**TRUSTEES' REPORT**  
*For the period ended 31 March 2024*

**OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

**Risk Management (Cont.)**

- **Staffing Capacity**

Demand for the charity's services continues to increase, especially in key operational areas. The charity has successfully grown its delivery core staff team during the year, and staff retention and satisfaction is high.

The Trustees recognise the importance of investment in key areas of staffing in the coming year, specifically increasing capacity in the senior leadership team and income generation programmes and this will be a focus in the coming year, with Unrestricted Reserves designated to support this.

- **Escalated and changing needs of young people**

Public Health England states that in 2023, 1 in 5 children and young people between 5-16 had a diagnosable mental health condition. This has been exacerbated by the social, economic and political landscape in the UK including the cost-of-living crisis and post-pandemic legacy.

The development of our working practices with young people has resulted in us attracting and retaining higher numbers of young people with complex challenges – creating additional profound, complex and changeable challenges in our delivery contexts.

The Trustees recognise the importance of supervision and support of delivery team staff as part of the charity's duty of care to staff, alongside safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. This will be an area for further development in the coming year.

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

**Overview**

Mortal Fools has successfully accomplished another year of growth, supported more young people than ever before and continued to co-create brilliant artistic work with a growing diversity of young people in the North East region.

In April 2023, we joined Arts Council England's National Portfolio of regularly funded organisations (NPO). This, together with continued support from trust and foundation grant funders and the securing of some new commissions, has maintained the financial resilience of the charity.

Becoming an Arts Council NPO positioned Mortal Fools on a national stage, amplifying the voices and needs of the young people we work with in the wider sector, supporting the establishment of new national partnerships and providing a step-change for the organisation. We were visited by the Chief Executive and regional colleagues from Arts Council England in February 2024, who were unreservedly encouraging about our development plans.

Ashington continues to be an exciting place for us to be operating – partly because of the demonstrable impact our work has on local young people and the excellent reputation we have cultivated amongst the community, together with the wider regeneration plans and funding secured for town centre developments. Our place-based approach has proved very successful in achieving these outcomes, with the marketing and delivery teams leading audience development.



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**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)**

**Overview (Cont.)**

Delivery commissions have proved increasingly successful during the year, generating new income streams and providing new practice-development contexts. Notable successes have been:

- **A pilot project commissioned by and co-delivered with The Prince's Trust** as part of their national 'Get Started...' programme. We used creative methodology to deliver employability skills for young people wanting to enter the creative industries. This was noted by Prince's Trust as one of the most successful of these programmes.
- **A commission by North of Tyne Combined Authority to provide annual licences for the Melva digital programme** free of charge to 50 schools in the area. This resulted in c.4,000 children using the programme and – together with the new evaluation approach embedded into the programme – has generated data, testimonials and case studies to provide a compelling case for future support.
- **A commission by North of Tyne Combined Authority to design and deliver a programme of employability skills weeks in and around Ashington** – as part of their innovation funding. This was a new income source and supports the development of programmes of work which, if successful, could become a long-term component of our delivery programmes and a new entry point into our organisation.
- **The development, testing and independent evaluation of our *Wellbeing Practice Guide and Toolkit*** in four Northumberland cultural education settings has proved invaluable to the next stage of development of this work – providing a toolkit to prove impact on wellbeing in delivery contexts with children and young people.
- **Youth Music Trailblazer funding secured** - the first time we have applied to this funder, with the focus of embedding more music making across our programme delivery (music is often a more accessible art form than drama) and supporting practice sharing with our team and specialist musicians.
- **Creative Mondays** – a pilot of creative activities co-delivered between our staff and Youth Workers from YMCA Northumberland, supporting a new creative entry point for young people and practice-sharing opportunities between two organisations.

We remain committed to fighting for better futures for young people, working with cross-sector partners to improve systems, services and settings that support young people and building referral pathways with a range of organisations working with young people.

*"Mortal Fools continued growth and success is fabulous news for Northumberland and for children and young people. As well as co-creating powerful theatre productions and films of resonance and relevance, they are an excellent and inspirational training agency working across many diverse sectors. This is testament to their clarity of vision and the effectiveness of their approach in supporting strong, dynamic individuals and the leaders of tomorrow."* - **Cultural Development Manager, Northumberland County Council**

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*For the period ended 31 March 2024*

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)**

In summary, in 2023-24, the charity:

- Reached approximately **5,000 young people** who actively participated in our work. This includes young people participating in our weekly sessions, attending our live events and workshops, participating in our *Melva* programme, or participating in workshops run by external partners using our digital content and resource packs.
- Delivered creative activity directly with approximately **480 young people** through our programmes, including deep to light engagements facilitated by Mortal Fools.
- Delivered activities for young people in **44 weeks** of the year.
- Delivered **355** weekly sessions to **215 young people** in Mortal Fools Youth Theatre, school & youth settings, averaging **110 young people per week**
- Had live audiences of c.**1,120 people** at our performance events and screenings, and a further c.**1,500 people** watching our content at their own screenings.
- Achieved **3.4k views** on our YouTube totalling **117.1 hours watch time** (views only counted where average is at least 1 minute+ or 90% of short form content), and engaged approximately **50k people** via our Mortal Fools digital channels
- Supported **77 young people** to achieve an **Arts Award** qualification.
- Created **17 short films & animations** with young people.
- Engaged approximately **4,000 young people in our Melva Digital** programme for mental health between April 23 – Mar 24, and provided mental health focused training to over **50 teachers** in the North East. This equated to over 600+ online sessions delivered in school, and all evaluation data received demonstrated a notable improvement in children's knowledge, understanding and recall of self-management techniques (average 90% improvement from baseline to end of programme assessments).
- **Led an evaluation of our Wellbeing Evaluation Practice Guide & Toolkit** with the Northumberland Cultural Education Partnership and a freelance evaluator.
- **Provided 21 CPD / training sessions** for artists and producers both internally and externally.
- Delivered **51 CONNECT training interventions** and **engaged 470 training participants**, including 12 sessions for young adults on our employability project with Prince's Trust.
- Contracted **28 freelance professionals** to work with us.
- Recruited two young people into paid assistant practitioner roles, continued to work with our two existing young assistant practitioners, and created two volunteer assistant roles.
- Were nominated for two awards: 'The Third Sector Award' at the Pride Action North Awards (won) and 'The Hearts & Minds Award' for Curious Minds Northern Cultural Education Awards.
- Had work featured in national publications including The Guardian, The Stage, North East Times, Northern Insight Magazine, BDaily, Schools North East, and many other press publications.
- Continued to see and hear evidence of the positive impact our work is having on the children and young people we work with.

*"As a disabled young person, I was struggling to find a place that would accept me and that I would be comfortable working in. Mortal Fools is just so inclusive for everybody, from all different backgrounds. [...] the way a session is structured helps us loads [...] I always walk away with my head held high."* Ilana, 18, Ensemble Young Company Member & Assistant Practitioner

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**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)**

The main creative projects this year were:

**Ensemble Young Company – FLUX 2023 Tour**

A northern tour of our reworked Ensemble Young Company play, performed by 11 young people from Northumberland.

*"Absolutely blew me away. So powerful and emotional. Had me in tears! Each performer was exceptional. This should be in every school and also on the West End in London. Would be a sell out! Would recommend to everyone!"* FLUX 2023 Audience Member

**Ensemble Young Company – Inevitable? & Grow Up Project**

Participation in the national 'Grow Up' youth theatre NPOs collaboration project, attending a residential and practice sharing sessions with 3 other youth theatres and co-creating and premiering a new play *Inevitable?* with 11 young people from Northumberland.

*"Mortal Fools has really changed my life for the better. Before I didn't leave my house or see anyone but now, I'm pretty much out every day. They taught me to be confident and trust in my ideas as well as good social skills and team leading skill."* Ensemble Young Company Member, 16

**Youth Theatre – The Bigger Picture**

Co-creating a series of 6 short films with our 6 youth theatre groups from Ashington and the Tyne Valley about socially engaged themes young people want to talk about. Included community filming/activity days and community screenings and workshops.

*"Mortal Fools has helped me build up my confidence, make connections with new people and make new friends. I've been much happier from the friends I've made at Mortal Fools and I've been so proud of all the times I've helped people out. I really love entertaining people and making them happy with my acting."* Youth Theatre Participant, aged 12.

**Youth Theatre – Fools Fest: Through the Wardrobe**

Two live events of short theatre performances from our 6 youth theatre groups in Ashington and the Tyne Valley – inspired by the themes and imagination of the Narnia stories.

*"The work yous have done with my daughter at the Ashington YMCA after losing her mum has been astronomical. I cannot thank you enough and if I was able to live an eternity then it still wouldn't be long enough for all the thank yous I need to say."* Parent of Youth Theatre Member

**Youth Theatre – Sounding Board R&D**

A research and development term integrating music and sound into our theatre process and learning new skills.

**Creative Interventions Youth**

Two pilot projects of creative drop-in activities at YMCA Northumberland youth work project – *Creative Mondays* – a light touch intervention to engage more young people facing barriers in the arts in Ashington.

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**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)**

**Creative Interventions Education – Duke's Secondary School & Duchess's Community High School.**

Four 12-week creative intervention projects in secondary schools to support young people referred because they have specific needs or challenging circumstances. The groups experimented with different creative activities, created theatre & audio pieces, presented a showcase of their work and achieved Explore Arts Awards. Included one partnership project with Natural England exploring young people's relationship with the outdoors.

*"It's just made me less of a shut off – I am way more of a person – I don't know how to explain it, but I am just more of a normal person around people now, it's like wow!"* - School Intervention & Creative Mondays Youth Group Participant

**Melva Digital – Explore Scratchicle Town**

A new 8-week intervention launched for academic year 2023/24, using short form animation and storytelling to educate young people on the NHS 5 ways to wellbeing. The new content was launched at the start of the academic year 2023/24, alongside a new programme of Teacher support and training, and evaluation tools.

*"This is a very worthwhile programme which was a pleasure to deliver to our children. Children who wouldn't normally speak about their fears and emotions have had the confidence to overcome this by listening to others."* – Participating Melva Teacher

**OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

We trained and supported 4 new **Peer Facilitators** into voluntary and paid roles helping run our younger youth theatre groups and worked with 2 existing Peer Facilitators. These roles provide an entry route into part-time creative employment and volunteering for young people from our youth theatre programmes.

*"Mortal Fools is the greatest and most welcoming theatre group anyone could be a part of"* Connor, 18, Ensemble Young Company Member & Volunteer

We created a new **early-career employed role** of Assistant Practitioner & Coordinator, supporting a recent graduate into their first role in the arts. They have brought much-needed resource to our delivery team, and have learned new skills in co-creation, facilitation, coordination and fundraising.

*"I can thrive the most when I am part of a close-knit, supportive team, who will help encourage me to be the best version of myself [...] Mortal Fools has provided me with the stability, consistency, and support I need to find my feet in the industry in my first job."* Jess, 21, Assistant Practitioner & Coordinator

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**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)**

We have delivered **creative outreach sessions** with organisations like:

- Curious Arts
- Hirst Welfare Centre & Hirst Park, Ashington
- Gosforth Civic Theatre
- Ashington Town Council (Pride in the Park, Family Day, Christmas Lights switch on)
- Duke's Secondary School, Ashington
- Northumberland College
- YMCA Northumberland

*"The families and young people who engaged with Mortal Fools thoroughly enjoyed their experiences. Several parents commented that having free and accessible activities for all ages has been really helpful for their families. Another told me she was happy to see children getting access to technology (cameras, voice recording, animation software) because schools have ever decreasing budgets for arts and drama. The excitement for self-expression has been palpable!"*  
Parks Officer, Hirst Park, Ashington

We **distributed digital content (films & resource packs)** to 20+ settings which hosted screenings and workshops (schools, colleges, youth work settings, arts organisations).

**PARTNERSHIPS**

**Local Authority & Strategic:**

- **North of Tyne Combined Authority** – several commissions secured, as detailed above.
- **Northumberland Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)**  
Our CEO is the Chair of Northumberland LCEP group, an initiative established by Culture Bridge North East to deliver the Arts Council's Cultural Education Challenge at a sub-regional level.  
The most notable achievement in this setting was the support for developing, testing and evaluating our *Wellbeing Practice Guide and Toolkit*.
- **Creative Health** networks and initiatives  
This is growing area of work nationally – signalling the coming together of the Arts and Health sectors, recognising the profound impact that creative participation can have on people's health and wellbeing.
- **Ashington Town Council** – local funding support, contribution to their community events and advocacy.

**Voluntary Sector and Community-Based:**

- **North East Youth Alliance** – contributions to their conferences, commissioned workforce development training and membership of their Culture and Youth partnerships steering group.
- **YMCA Northumberland** – collaborating on joint employment of early career staff and jointly developing creative activity programmes for young people.

# **MORTAL FOOLS**

## **(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT**

*For the period ended 31 March 2024*

#### **PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS**

The overall focus for the coming year is creating the conditions within the charity to support the next stage of organisational growth and development.

**Place-based working** continues to be a key strategic focus, considering our place within the Northeast region and Northumberland and our alignment with strategic development objectives for both areas.

Our localised approach will focus on our hometown, Ashington. Local developments in the coming years that we will pursue are:

- The opening of the Northumberland Line railway service, providing a direct link between Ashington and Newcastle city centre. This will increase social mobility for the young people of Ashington, together with increasing the ease with which people can travel to Ashington to take part in our activities.
- Animating Ashington – a commission we are applying for listed by Northumberland County Council to provide a programme of creative and cultural activity, with a focus on children and young people (decision late Spring 2024).
- Place-based programme development – looking to work with creative health colleagues and local partners to apply for investment in a strategic place-based application to Arts Council England.
- New cultural community hub building at Wansbeck Square – which we will jointly apply for operation of with YMCA Northumberland in 2024. We aim for this to become our new home, within a high-spec creative facility at the gateway to the town centre.

#### **Business Development**

There are several focus areas of this work, including:

- Creation of **new staff roles** to increase capacity in senior leadership and income generation within the business
- Building on the success of our digital audience engagement by launching a new **Digital Strategy** to include a fit-for-purpose website and digital engagement and content creation plans for the coming years.
- **Income generation** – specifically moving towards less reliance on grant income and maximising income from our earned income streams.

For Melva, this means:

- Building on the success of previous local authority commissions with a new relationship with the new North East Combined Authority.
- Pursuing avenues for profiling this as a case study for national UK commissions.
- Developing the Melva programme systems so it can accommodate delivery at scale.

For CONNECT, this means:

- A relaunch of the programme with new content.
- Growing the delivery team.
- Building new multi-year client relationships.

We will also develop other earned income streams, including:

- Employability Skills delivery models and commissions.
- Developing our *Wellbeing Practice Guide and Toolkit* into a saleable package.

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**PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS (CONTINUED)**

**Creative Health Initiatives**

This is a field of work gaining national momentum, which our work has long been well aligned with. Working with colleagues at Northumberland County Council, the National Centre for Creative Health and via a range of Creative Health networks, we will take steps to advance this work, including:

- Submitting our relevant work for peer review and to form part of strategic developments regionally and nationally.
- Seek funding to develop Creative Health practice and delivery in Northumberland.
- Launch our comprehensive *Wellbeing Practice Guide and Toolkit* for use in multi-sector delivery settings, providing a proven method to develop delivery practice and generate compelling data.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES**

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Mortal Fools for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (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 year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

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

Signed on behalf of the Trustees



**Richard Wise**  
**Trustee**  
**9 December 2024**

# **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS ON THE UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS OF MORTAL FOOLS LIMITED YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

I hereby report to the Trustees of Mortal Fools (Charity Registration Number 1153400) on my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 set out on pages 25 to 39.

## **Responsibilities and Basis of Report**

As the charity's Trustees (and also its directors for the purposes of company law), you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

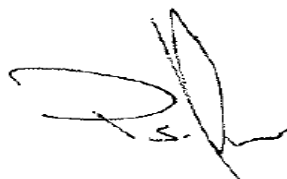
## **Independent Examiner's Statement**

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000, your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountant in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods or principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



**Pete O'Hara, FCA, Chartered Accountant**  
**Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales**  
26 La Sagesse, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AF

9 December 2024



**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
<b>Income</b>					
Income from Investments	3	5,392	-	5,392	1,241
Income from Charitable Activities	4	307,178	248,579	555,757	409,913
Income from Donations & Legacies	5	31,640	-	31,640	23,500
		<b>344,210</b>	<b>248,579</b>	<b>592,789</b>	<b>434,654</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Expenditure on Charitable Activities	6	274,428	336,364	610,792	492,393
		<b>274,428</b>	<b>336,364</b>	<b>610,792</b>	<b>492,393</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>		<b>69,782</b>	<b>(87,785)</b>	<b>(18,003)</b>	<b>(57,739)</b>
Balance brought forward		139,474	249,970	389,444	447,183
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>£209,256</b>	<b>£162,185</b>	<b>£371,441</b>	<b>£389,444</b>

The notes on pages 27 to 39 form part of the financial statements.

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing.

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION/BALANCE SHEET**  
**AS AT 31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2023 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Tangible Fixed Assets	9	2,572	13,125
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Debtors	10	104,501	159,650
Cash At Bank & In Hand		293,103	235,303
		<u>397,604</u>	<u>394,953</u>
<b>Creditors – Amounts Falling Due Within 1 Year</b>	11	(28,735)	(18,634)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)		<u>368,869</u>	<u>376,319</u>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	12	<u><b>£371,441</b></u>	<u><b>£389,444</b></u>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Unrestricted Reserves	13	209,256	139,474
Restricted Reserves	13	162,185	249,970
		<u><b>£371,441</b></u>	<u><b>£389,444</b></u>

The notes on pages 27 to 39 form part of the financial statements.

The Trustees are satisfied that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the charity was entitled to exemption under section 477(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees also confirm that the Members have not required the charity to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

(i) ensuring that the charity keeps adequate accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act, and

(ii) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of section 393, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charity.

**These financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 December 2024 and signed on their behalf:**



**Richard Wise**  
**Trustee**  
**Company Registration Number 08102487**

**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

**1. Accounting Policies**

**Basis of Preparation**

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable United Kingdom accounting standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 – 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland' ('FRS 102'), and with the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP FRS 102) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" and the Charities Act 2011.

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, modified to include certain financial instruments at fair value.

Advantage has been taken of the provisions in the SORP for Charities applying FRS 102 Update Bulletin 1 not to prepare a statement of cashflows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity.

**Income**

All income is included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is entitled to the income, any performance related conditions attached have been met or are fully within the control of the charity, the income is considered probable and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- Donations and legacy income is received by way of donations, legacies, grants and gifts and is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Where legacies have been notified to the charity but the criteria for income recognition have not been met, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset and disclosed if material.
- Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.
- Investment income is included when receivable.
- Income from charitable trading activity is accounted for when earned.
- Other income is accounted for when receivable.

**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

**1. Accounting Policies (Continued)**

**Expenditure**

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered, and is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates:

- Costs of raising funds comprise the costs associated with attracting donations, grants and legacies and the costs of trading for fundraising purposes.
- Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.
- Other expenditure includes all expenditure that is neither related to raising funds for the charity nor part of its expenditure on charitable activities.

**Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation**

Depreciation is provided on any fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the assets over their remaining useful lives as follows:

- IT Equipment - 33% per annum straight line
- Office Equipment – 25% per annum straight line

A full year's depreciation charge is applied in the year of acquisition and no charge is made in the year of disposal.

**Impairment of Fixed Assets**

A review for indicators of impairment is carried out at each reporting date, with the recoverable amount being estimated where such indicators exist. Where the carrying value exceeds the recoverable amount, the asset is impaired accordingly. Prior impairments are also reviewed for possible reversal at each reporting date.

**Financial Instruments**

A financial asset or a financial liability is recognised only when the charity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at the amount receivable or payable including any related transaction costs.

Current assets and current liabilities are subsequently measured at the cash or other consideration expected to be paid or received and not discounted.

Debt instruments are subsequently measured at amortised cost where there is a material adjustment.

**MORTAL FOOLS**  
**(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**  
**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

**1. Accounting Policies (Continued)**

**Fund Accounting**

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the purposes of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for specific purposes.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor.

**Taxation Status**

Mortal Fools is a Charity registered under the 1960 Charities Act and is accorded exemption from liability to taxation on its income under S505 Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

**Going Concern**

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

**Judgements and Key Sources of Estimation Uncertainty**

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported. These estimates and judgements are continually reviewed and are based on experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

There are no significant judgements or estimation uncertainty included within the financial statements.

**2. Legal Status**

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £1.

**3. Income from Investments**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Interest on cash deposits	5,392	-	5,392	1,241
	<b>£5,392</b>	<b>£-</b>	<b>£5,392</b>	<b>£1,241</b>

The 2023 total of £1,241 relates wholly to Unrestricted Funds.

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**4. Income from Charitable Activities**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Grant Income</b>				
#iWill Youth Social Action Fund at the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland (CFTWN)	-	-	-	10,000
The 1989 Willan Charitable Trust at the CFTWN	-	10,000	10,000	-
Arnold Clark Community Fund	-	-	-	1,000
Arts Council England: National Portfolio Organisation (NPO)	180,000	-	180,000	-
Asda Foundation	-	294	294	-
Ashington Community Development Trust at the CFTWN	-	10,000	10,000	-
Ashington Town Council	-	5,000	5,000	-
BBC Children In Need	-	29,370	29,370	30,570
BBC Children In Need: Youth Social Action Fund	-	-	-	26,000
Bernicia Foundation	-	-	-	10,000
Carroll Savage Fund at the CFTWN	-	2,500	2,500	-
Co-op Local Community Fund	-	-	-	3,268
The Curtin PARP Fund at the CFTWN	-	-	-	(12,283)
Garfield Weston Foundation	25,000	-	25,000	25,000
Hadrian's Wall 1900 Community Grants and National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	-	-	4,999
High Sheriff of Northumberland Youth Against Crime Award Scheme at the CFTWN	-	1,000	1,000	1,000
The Ironmongers' Company	-	-	-	4,411
John D Endowment Fund at the CFTWN	-	-	-	2,500
The Joicey Trust	-	2,000	2,000	-
Kavli Trust	-	52,789	52,789	105,012
Kerry Grassroots at the CFTWN	-	-	-	4,987
Key Fund Federation	-	-	-	168
Lady Betty Martin Fund within the North East Fund for the Arts at the CFTWN	-	-	-	5,000
Linden Family Fund at the CFTWN	-	5,000	5,000	-
Muckle LLP at the CFTWN	-	1,000	1,000	3,000
The National Lottery Community Fund: Awards For All	-	-	-	10,000

Continued overleaf...

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**4. Income from Charitable Activities (Cont.)**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Grant Income (Cont.)</b>				
The National Lottery Community Fund (RC North East and Cumbria Region) in partnership with the Ballinger Charitable Trust: Reaching Communities	-	-	-	10,000
Newcastle City Council TWAM – LCEP	-	10,000	10,000	-
North of Tyne Combined Authority: Small Grant Programme	-	49,598	49,598	-
North of Tyne Combined Authority: Inspire	-	20,000	20,000	-
North of Tyne Creative England	-	-	-	12,500
Northumberland Children's Trust	-	5,000	5,000	5,000
Northumberland County Council: Arts & Heritage SLA	-	8,748	8,748	9,721
Northumberland County Council: Cultural Investment Project	-	5,000	5,000	-
Northumberland County Council: Community Chest Scheme	-	-	-	5,000
Northumberland Public Health: Creative Northumberland	-	-	-	9,999
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	-	6,000	6,000	-
Prime & Spriggs Family Fund at the CFTWN	-	-	-	4,965
Ridley Family Charity at the CFTWN	-	-	-	3,000
Robert Wood Trust at the CFTWN	-	2,000	2,000	-
Sir James Knott Trust	10,000	-	10,000	10,000
Youth Music Trailblazer Fund	-	23,280	23,280	-
Wellesley Trust Fund at the CFTWN	-	-	-	10,000
	<b>215,000</b>	<b>248,579</b>	<b>463,579</b>	<b>314,817</b>
<b>Earned Income</b>				
Box Office Takings	1,596	-	1,596	1,734
Drama Session Fees	11,389	-	11,389	13,754
Partner Contributions	14,238	-	14,238	29,133
Refreshment & Other Sundry Sales	1,110	-	1,110	1,136
Statutory Contract Income	36,874	-	36,874	-
Training Fees	26,971	-	26,971	49,339
	<b>92,178</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>92,178</b>	<b>95,096</b>
	<b>£307,178</b>	<b>£248,579</b>	<b>£555,757</b>	<b>£409,913</b>

Of the 2023 total of £409,913, £134,289 relates to Unrestricted Funds and £275,624 to Restricted Funds.

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**5. Income from Donations & Legacies**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>2023 £</b>
Donations & Gift Aid	4,875	-	4,875	13,265
Donation In Kind	4,500	-	4,500	-
Theatre Tax Relief	22,265	-	22,265	10,235
	<b>£31,640</b>	<b>£-</b>	<b>£31,640</b>	<b>£23,500</b>

The 2023 total of £23,500 relates wholly to Unrestricted Funds.

**6. Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>2023 £</b>
<b>Production &amp; Activity Costs</b>				
Salaries & On Costs	188,438	234,342	422,780	328,524
Freelance Project Worker Fees	11,999	24,089	36,088	32,889
Production, Hire & Staging Costs	12,274	15,409	27,683	41,876
Design, Print & Promotional Materials	20,709	17,015	37,724	26,860
<b>Support Costs</b>				
Administrative Costs	33,358	17,582	50,940	43,861
Consultancy Fees	957	4,070	5,027	-
Staff Training	2,042	4,301	6,343	3,331
Depreciation	347	10,206	10,553	11,181
Website Development	-	9,350	9,350	-
<b>Governance Costs</b>				
Accountancy & Payroll Fees	2,857	-	2,857	3,219
Board Costs	650	-	650	-
Legal & Professional	797	-	797	652
	<b>£274,428</b>	<b>£336,364</b>	<b>£610,792</b>	<b>£492,393</b>

Of the 2023 total of £492,393, £142,140 relates to Unrestricted Funds and £350,253 to Restricted Funds.

**7. Net Movement in Funds**

	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>2023 £</b>
The net movement in Funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Depreciation of Owned Fixed Assets	10,553	11,181
Independent Examiner's Fees – Independent Examination	900	900
Independent Examiner's Fees – Other Services	300	-



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**8. Staff Costs & Directors' Remuneration**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Gross Salary Costs	383,743	300,115
Employer's National Insurance	28,132	20,133
Employer's Pension Contributions	10,905	8,276
	<b>£422,780</b>	<b>£328,524</b>

No employee received remuneration of more than £60,000 during the year (2023: Nil).

The average number of staff employed during the year, calculated as full-time equivalents, was as follows:

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>
Artistic Production and Support	13	11

No remuneration was paid to any Trustees in the year.

No travel and subsistence expenses were reimbursed to Trustees in respect of their attendance at meetings of the charity (2023: £Nil).

**9. Tangible Fixed Assets**

	<b>IT &amp; Office Equipment £</b>	<b>Total Fixed Assets £</b>
<b>Cost</b>		
At 1 April 2023	37,197	37,197
Additions in year	-	-
At 31 March 2024	<b>37,197</b>	<b>37,197</b>
<b>Accumulated Depreciation</b>		
At 1 April 2023	24,072	24,072
Charge for year	10,553	10,553
At 31 March 2024	<b>34,625</b>	<b>34,625</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>		
At 31 March 2024	<b>£2,572</b>	<b>£2,572</b>
At 1 April 2023	<b>£13,125</b>	<b>£13,125</b>

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**10. Debtors**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade Debtors	5,300	22,726
Other Debtors	5,000	12,998
Accrued Income	90,749	119,159
Prepayments	3,452	4,767
	<b>£104,501</b>	<b>£159,650</b>

All sums are due within 1 year.

**11. Creditors – Amounts Falling Due Within 1 Year**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade Creditors	12,512	7,291
Other Taxes & Social Security Costs	8,859	7,239
Other Creditors - Pension Contributions Due	1,700	1,381
Income Received In Advance	1,100	-
Other Creditors	40	40
Accruals	4,524	2,683
	<b>£28,735</b>	<b>£18,634</b>

**12. Analysis of Net Assets between Funds**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Fixed Assets	340	2,232	2,572	13,125
Debtors	10,563	93,938	104,501	159,650
Cash at Bank and In Hand	220,142	72,961	293,103	235,303
Creditors – Due Within 1 Year	(21,789)	(6,946)	(28,735)	(18,634)
	<b>£209,256</b>	<b>£162,185</b>	<b>£371,441</b>	<b>£389,444</b>

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**13. Analysis of Charitable Funds**

	<b>Fund at 1 April 2023 £</b>	<b>Income in Year £</b>	<b>Expenditure in Year £</b>	<b>Fund at 31 March 2024 £</b>
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>				
Charity General Fund	<b>139,474</b>	<b>344,210</b>	<b>(274,428)</b>	<b>209,256</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>				
#iwill Youth Social Action Fund at the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland (CFTWN)	10,000	-	(10,000)	-
The 1989 Willan Charitable Trust at the CFTWN	-	10,000	(3,092)	6,908
Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants: Co-Creation Exchange	18,994	-	(18,994)	-
Asda Foundation	-	294	(294)	-
Ashington Community Development Trust at the CFTWN	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
Ashington Town Council	-	5,000	(5,000)	-
BBC Children In Need	-	29,370	(29,370)	-
DCMS Youth Investment Fund	6,712	-	(6,520)	192
BBC Children In Need Youth Social Action Fund	23,400	-	(23,400)	-
Carroll Savage Fund at the CFTWN	-	2,500	(2,500)	-
CBNE: Capacity Building	5,000	-	-	5,000
CBNE: Partnership Investment (PI)	22,566	-	(5,524)	17,042
High Sheriff of Northumberland Youth Against Crime Award Scheme at the CFTWN	-	1,000	-	1,000
The Ironmongers' Company	4,411	-	(4,411)	-
The Joicey Trust	-	2,000	-	2,000

Continued overleaf...

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**13. Analysis of Charitable Funds**

	<b>Fund at 1 April 2023 £</b>	<b>Income in Year £</b>	<b>Expenditure in Year £</b>	<b>Fund at 31 March 2024 £</b>
Kavli Trust	54,833	52,789	(62,279)	45,343
Kerry Grassroots at the CFTWN	2,602	-	(2,602)	-
Linden Family Fund at the CFTWN	-	5,000	(5,000)	-
Muckle LLP at the CFTWN	3,000	1,000	(4,000)	-
NCC: Community Chest Scheme	4,937	-	(3,079)	1,858
Newcastle City Council TWAM: LCEP	-	10,000	(2,470)	7,530
North of Tyne Combined Authority: Inspire	-	20,000	(12,640)	7,360
North of Tyne Combined Authority: Small Grant Programme	-	49,598	-	49,598
North of Tyne Creative England	6,322	-	(6,322)	-
Northumberland Children's Trust	-	5,000	(5,000)	-
Northumberland County Council: Cultural Investment Project	-	5,000	(2,658)	2,342
Northumberland County Council (NCC): Arts and Heritage SLA	91	8,748	(8,839)	-
Northumberland Public Health: Creative Northumberland	19,998	-	(18,350)	1,648
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	61,438	6,000	(67,438)	-
Prime & Spriggs Family Fund at the CFTWN	4,965	-	(4,965)	-
Ridley Family Charity at the CFTWN	367	-	(183)	184
Robert Wood Trust at the CFTWN	-	2,000	(2,000)	-
The Rothley Trust	334	-	(334)	-
Youth Music Trailblazer Fund	-	23,280	(9,100)	14,180
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>249,970</b>	<b>248,579</b>	<b>(336,364)</b>	<b>162,185</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>£389,444</b>	<b>£592,789</b>	<b>£(610,792)</b>	<b>£371,441</b>

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**13. Analysis of Charitable Funds (Cont.)**

<b>Name of Restricted Fund</b>	<b>Purpose &amp; Allocation of the Restricted Fund</b>
<b>Cross-Project / Core Funds</b>	
<i>Paul Hamlyn Foundation (Arts Access and Participation Fund)</i>	Contribution to staff salaries, with the aim of helping the organisation to improve its staff structure, develop its practice and support socially excluded young people.
<i>Kavli Trust</i>	Towards Melva, Future Ready and Core Funding, to support creative interventions using theatre and performance-based approaches to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.
<i>BBC Children in Need / 1989 Willan Charitable Trust / The Joicey Trust</i>	Towards core programme costs associated with supporting young people with intersectional needs and experiencing disadvantage, including salaries.
<i>Ashington Town Council</i>	Towards core costs associated with supporting Young People living in Ashington
<i>DCMS Youth Investment Fund / The Rothley Trust</i>	For the purchase of digital equipment and resources to enable the charity to reach more young people and provide a better service to them including hybrid (in person and online) sessions. Any remaining balances relating to these funds reflect fixed asset values.
<i>N'land CC Community Chest Scheme / Ridley Family Charity at CFTWN</i>	For the purchase of office and IT equipment for new Ashington office base, followed by support in purchasing technical theatre equipment for activity in Northumberland. Any remaining balances relating to these funds reflect fixed asset values.
<i>N'land CC Arts and Heritage SLA / Northumberland Children's Trust / Muckle LLP at CTFWN</i>	Towards core running costs related to activity taking place in or with young people from Northumberland.

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**13. Analysis of Charitable Funds (Cont.)**

<b>Name of Restricted Fund</b>	<b>Purpose &amp; Allocation of the Restricted Fund</b>
<b>Project-Specific Funds</b>	
<i>BBC Children in Need Youth Social Action Fund / #iWill Social Action Fund at CFTWN</i>	Towards the cost of developing and embedding youth-led social action within Mortal Fools Youth Theatre, including running weekly sessions, community outreach sessions, and creation of social action focused creative outputs.
<i>North of Tyne Creative England: Culture and Creative Investment Programme</i>	Towards support of full-time income generation Producer role.
<i>Muckle at CFTWN</i>	Towards the cost of providing 5 schools with Melva licenses, to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.
<i>Prime &amp; Spriggs Family Fund at CFTWN</i>	Towards the costs of running Stage 2 Mortal Fools Youth Theatre group in Ashington.
<i>Culture Bridge North East Partnership Funding / Northumberland Public Health / Newcastle City Council TWAM</i>	Towards the cost of <i>Creative Northumberland</i> , a collaborative project between schools and cultural organisations testing the impact of cultural activity on wellbeing. Mortal Fools are acting as budget holders for this project on behalf of the <a href="#">Northumberland LCEP</a> .
<i>Ashington Community Development Trust via CFTWN / ASDA Foundation</i>	Towards the costs of running 3 x Mortal Fools Youth Theatre groups in Ashington, to support the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 7 to 19
<i>Carroll Savage / Linden Family Fund / High Sheriff Northumberland Youth Against Crime Scheme (2024) – all at CFTWN / N'land CC: Cultural Investment Project</i>	Towards the costs of running our Ensemble Young Company group in 2023-24, including the creation and touring of 'Inevitable' as part of the 'Grow Up' partnership project with Company Three.
<i>Culture Bridge North East: Capacity Building</i>	To fund a dedicated Producer for <i>Creative Northumberland</i> .
<i>The Ironmongers' Company / Robert Wood Trust at the CFTWN</i>	Towards Creative Interventions in Schools.
<i>ACE PG Co-Creation Exchange / Kerry Grassroots at CFTWN</i>	Towards the cost of the <a href="#">Co-Creation Exchange Network</a> and Ensemble Young Company group in 2023, including: the co-creation and production of the original <a href="#">FLUX</a> live performance in Ashington (2022); the filming and distribution of digital version of the show; the updated and re-worked <i>FLUX tour</i> (2023); related outreach work; and cross-sector development work.

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**13. Analysis of Charitable Funds (Cont.)**

Name of Restricted Fund	Purpose & Allocation of the Restricted Fund
<b>Project-Specific Funds (Cont.)</b>	
<i>Youth Music Trailblazer Fund</i>	Towards the costs of piloting new approaches to music making across all of our Mortal Fools Youth Theatre groups and outreach groups in 2024.
<i>North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA): Small Grants Programme. Commissioned by North East Combined Authority funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.</i>	Funding for 'Future Ready' - our pilot employability skills project supporting economically inactive and/or socially isolated young people aged 16-30 in Northumberland.
<i>NTCA: Inspire Project</i>	Towards the cost of developing new wellbeing education content for the <i>Melva</i> programme.

**14. Related Party Transactions**

There were no related party transactions during this year.

**15. Taxation**

The company is a registered charity and no provision is considered necessary for taxation.

**16. Financial Commitments**

No material financial commitments have been made in respect of future financial years.

**17. Company Limited by Guarantee**

The charity is incorporated under the Companies Act 1985 and is limited by guarantee, each member having undertaken to contribute such amounts not exceeding 1 as may be required in the event of the company being wound up whilst he or she is still a member or within one year thereafter.

There are currently 11 members of the company (2023: 10).