



UPSTART PROJECTS & VOICE MAGAZINE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



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Charity number: 1157864
59 Trinity Street, Shrewsbury, SY3 7PQ



WELCOME

It has been an exciting year for Upstart Projects and Voice Magazine as we have welcomed new staff members into the team as well as delivering a wide range of activity. Creative Pathways Project Manager, Judy McFall has worked with local partners in disadvantaged communities to support 58 young people to become Local Reviewers and has helped them step up to opportunities on the magazine (see p.7). Judy has now joined the team as Voice Company Manager and Participation Lead.

In August Tom Beasley joined us as Voice Editor, bringing his experience as an entertainments and film journalist. Tom hit the ground running and has relished training volunteer Voice Contributors and Voice Reviewers and supporting university interns. Dayna Hewitt, as Voice Co-ordinator since 2022, is our third core team member and is a vital support to the staff and our projects.

Judy and Tom had their first opportunity to work together on Voice's action research project creating a podcast with a group of young people in Local Authority care in Dudley, part of a region-wide training and research programme led by Arts Connect and The Mighty Creatives. We plan to place work with young people in care at the heart of our Creative Pathways programme and we're already running several projects across the Black Country.

Upstart's founding team have played a key role in supporting and mentoring the newcomers, welcoming new ideas and energy. This has been especially valuable at a time when raising funds for a small arts charity is very challenging. Staff and trustees are now engaged in forging new partnerships and developing sales of our services alongside ongoing grant funding.

Our Friends of Voice donors and patrons play a key part in our survival as an organisation and our work to open doors into the arts and media for disadvantaged young people. Do join me as a Friend! Find out more at www.voicemag.uk/friend.



Holly Howe, Chair of Trustees, Upstart Projects

OUR MISSION

Voice Magazine supports young people aged 13-30 to develop their creativity, skills and confidence by taking part in arts and media projects and training.

Our community projects open doors for young people with fewer opportunities to explore arts activities and creative jobs.

Our training supports them to build skills and portfolios for future careers.

We champion youth voice, leadership and co-production through all our work.





OUR KEY PROGRAMMES

Voice Magazine is an online culture magazine and an open platform for young people's views on the arts and society. Voice provides work experience, training and first jobs for young people interested in careers in the arts and media, focusing on those from diverse and low income backgrounds.

Voice attracted **285,000 readers** and our community of young users has grown to **9,201**.

Young people have posted **496 reviews** | **517 blogs** | **91 interviews** | **19 features**

Visit **voicemag.uk**

Creative Pathways reaches out to young people in disadvantaged communities or facing personal challenges, including those in Local Authority care. They explore the arts on their doorstep, meet professionals, become local arts reviewers and work as young journalists on Voice Magazine.

78 young people became local arts reviewers or undertook work experience on the magazine.

Youth Voice Training offers courses and services to organisations, helping them embed youth voice in their work.

We trained **201 professionals** and worked on major projects with **9 organisations**, running bespoke training, facilitating youth participation and undertaking consultation and research.

VOICE MAGAZINE HIGHLIGHTS



In 2024, we welcomed Tom Beasley as our new Voice Editor. Tom is an experienced writer, having spent the previous eight years working in the world of entertainment journalism as a film critic, interviewer, and feature writer. His bylines have appeared in The Guardian, Metro, New Statesman, and the i, as well as Yahoo UK where he is still a regular contributor.

Tom shares some of his highlights from the year:

'I have really enjoyed working with talented young people in our Voice Contributor training programme, as well as introducing a Guest Editor opportunity, and providing a step-up for Elisha and George to work on their own editorial series 'After Pride' and 'Trans in the UK'.

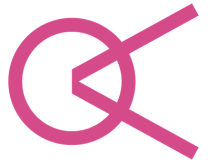
It has been a delight to see passionate, creative young people take centre stage when it comes to steering the magazine editorially.

I am also immensely proud of the 'Kick Some Class' series we ran last year, shining a spotlight on the working class heroes of the culture world, as well as the challenges they continue to face. It's vastly important to show that everybody has a voice in the arts and I'm determined that Voice will create opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds to build their own voice.'



Tom Beasley, Voice Editor

CREATIVE PATHWAYS



Creative Pathways is funded by Arts Council England to support young people with fewer advantages to explore the arts at local level, before progressing to wider opportunities with Voice magazine.

Judy McFall, our Company Manager & Participation Lead, explains how it works:

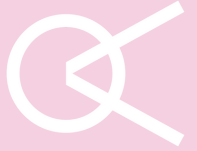
'This year we developed Local Arts Reviewer groups in Mansfield, Shropshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Participants had very diverse abilities and backgrounds, with limited access to cultural events and opportunities. Each group had weekly training sessions working with creative professionals including event programmers, podcasters, theatre directors, film-makers, editors and journalists. They attended local arts events, found out about arts careers and learned how to write reviews and publish them. They also met young people now working on Voice Magazine who shared their own journey and promoted opportunities to become an official Voice Reviewer or join Voice's training and work experience programme.'

58 Local Reviewers collectively produced 123 reviews and features and many continue to attend events and post reviews. 9 participants have joined the Voice Reviewers network, gaining access to press tickets and becoming official reviewers for Voice. Our local partners offer opportunities for young people to attend a variety of events, opening doors to new experiences, breaking down barriers to access and building younger audiences.



Judy McFall, Company Manager & Participation Lead

CREATIVE PATHWAYS: CASE STUDIES



Naomi Johnson

Local Reviewer

Naomi joined Voice as a Local Reviewer at the New Vic theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, through outreach work to attract new and diverse participants. She then applied successfully to become a Voice Contributor, developing her writing, interviewing and journalism skills. She is now an active member of the national Voice Reviewer group.

'Training with Voice has opened my eyes to the opportunities available within the journalism sector. The support and advice I've received has really built my confidence and the opportunities to go and review an abundance of shows has been invaluable.'



George Okonkwo

Voice Contributor

George joined the Voice Contributor programme to build his confidence and gain hands-on experience and skills. He grasped every opportunity, really developing as a writer throughout the process. He attended the inaugural Voice Collective event in order to hear from established journalists and link up with other members of Voice programmes.

'My time as a contributor for Voice Magazine was very enjoyable and enlightening. I got to learn a lot from writing blogs and reviews to interviewing and honestly, communication skills. I learned a lot, not just from my editor/tutor, but from the friends I made from Voice. It was an overall good experience and I am definitely going to keep being a part of it.'



Hannah McCormack

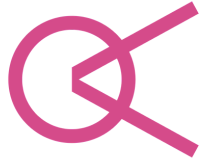
Local Reviewer

Hannah joined the Mansfield Local Reviewer group as she was struggling to find arts opportunities where she lived. She is an aspiring writer with a keen interest in live music and produced both reviews and opinion pieces.

'Having a platform like Voice has really developed my confidence in my writing. Through Voice I've been offered so many great opportunities, hearing about a huge range of events in my local area that I would never have attended, and meeting likeminded young people.'

I've also been really encouraged by the Voice team to venture outside my comfort zone - for example by contributing to the political "One Year of Starmer" editorial series in July. I've learnt a lot about what it's like to be part of a professional magazine, and I also just love reading the other articles from the Voice community.'

VOICE IN NUMBERS, 2024/25



VOICE READERS

448,000+ visits

285,000+ unique visitors

Location Readers are spread across the UK; 60% are outside of London, dispersed throughout regional cities as well as more rural areas.

VOICE MEMBERS & PARTICIPANTS

9,201 Voice users registered users who post and comment

3,502 Arts Award participants using Voice for guidance and to post work for assessment

52 Local Reviewers exploring the arts where they live

50 Voice Reviewers reviewing the arts for Voice at national level

DEMOGRAPHICS ACROSS PARTICIPATION PROJECTS

30% of participants are or have been eligible for **Free School Meals**

35% share that they are **LGBTQIA+**

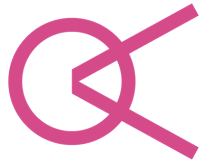
37% are or may be **neurodivergent**

36% are only **educated to GCSE level** when they join a Voice project

27% are from the **global majority**

15% of participants record that they **have a disability**

TRAINING & COMMISSIONS



This year **201** people have accessed our training in youth voice, which participants rate at an average of **9.2/10**. Our Youth Voice Training has reached Flexus Youth Dance, the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, the Royal Ballet & Opera, Kids in Museums, Kew Gardens and The Mighty Creatives.

We have also undertaken research for Trinity College London, youth engagement in strategic planning for the Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature and supported various conferences and events. In Barking & Dagenham we are contributing to a new Creative Alternative Education Provision, developing educational opportunities and supporting young people in care.

We continued to maintain and promote Ampify (amplify-voice.uk), an online resource showcasing youth voice in creative settings, and to facilitate the Nottingham Youth Cultural Partnership (connectingnotts.co.uk).

We have maintained Arts Award Voice for Trinity College London, a minisite supporting young people working towards their Arts Award qualifications. As a remote Arts Award centre, we have supported six young people to achieve their award when their own adviser was no longer available to assess their work.

TRAINING & COMMISSIONS



Case study: Kids in Museums Young Trustee Development Programme

2024-2025 saw the delivery of a national young trustee development programme that we devised for Kids in Museums and delivered with participating museums including the National Football Museum, St Barbe Museum, Elizabeth Gaskell Museum, Bradford, Nantwich and Wiltshire Museums, New Forest Heritage Trust and Towner Eastbourne. We ran training for board members, recruited and supported young trustees, created case studies for inspiration and guidance, and crafted a handbook on chairing inclusive meetings. Our package of resources has enabled a repeat of the programme with more organisations this year.

Participant feedback

'The friendly, personal approach of the team who made a distinct effort to understand us and our work to ensure relevance of the course.'

'I really enjoyed the use of theory crossing with practical experience.'

'An engaging combination of theory, examples, discussion. It felt less dry and more accessible than other trainings I've been on.'

Actions participants have made since the training

'We have implemented a youth feedback postcard that will feed into a youth event in the summer. This will also feed into a hospital feedback session led by the young people.'

'I'm going to share what I learned with the rest of my team so my learning and expertise can apply to the organisation more broadly, beyond my remit as project staff.'



GOVERNANCE



Upstart Projects board

We are grateful for the expertise and commitment of our board members who bring a wide range of skills and perspectives to the charity, including arts education, enterprise, environmental awareness, fundraising, HR, journalism, marketing and youth participation. In March 2025 we said thank you and farewell to four trustees and we are delighted to have since welcomed two new trustees to the board.

[Meet our trustees](#)

Upstart and Voice staff team

Our team this year has consisted of 3 core part-time roles supported by a charity director and 3 associates leading particular areas of work.

[Meet the Voice team](#)

Trustees serving during 2024-25

Holly Howe (Chair)
Phoebe Hill (Deputy Chair)
Tom Edwards
Beth Troakes
Charlie Rainer
Michael Zdanowski
Nikeria Tannis
Amy Clewlow

CIO Governing Document

The CIO Foundation Constitution
Trustees are appointed through recruitment and invitation.

Reserves Policy

To build reserves of 3 months of core running costs (£17,278)
At 31 March 2025 our reserves were £18,019

Charity number: 1157864

Registered office: 59 Trinity Street, Shrewsbury SY3 7PQ

Independent examiner: Community360, Winsley's House, High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1UG

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank, P.O. Box 250, Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT



FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

I report on the accounts of Upstart Projects for the year ended 31 March 2025 which are set out on pages 14 to 21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Charity's Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 (The Act) but that an independent examination is needed).

It is my responsibility to:

Examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes considerations of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters.

The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of the accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 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.

I 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.

Signed:

David Courtier FMAAT AATQB
For and on behalf of Community360 Winsley's
House, High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1UG

Date: 24th November 2025

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



	Note	Unrestricted Total £	Restricted Total £	Designated Total £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
<u>Incoming resources</u>						
Donations & legacies	2	3,210	-	-	3,210	3,066
Charitable activities	3	43,356	60,009	-	103,365	73,254
Investments	4	639	-	-	639	519
Total incoming resources		47,204	60,009	-	107,213	76,839
<u>Resources expended</u>						
Charitable activities	5	52,916	58,644	-	111,560	83,979
Fundraising costs		2,250	-	-	2,250	1,925
Total resources expended		55,166	58,644	-	113,810	85,904
Net incoming resources before transfers		(7,961)	1,365	-	(6,596)	(9,065)
Transfer between funds		-	-	-	-	-
Net incoming resources after transfers		(7,961)	1,365	-	(6,596)	(9,065)
Total funds brought forward		8,946	-	18,019	26,965	36,030
Total funds carried forward		985	1,365	18,019	20,369	26,965

Signed:

Holly Howe
Chair of Upstart Projects' board of trustees

Date: 5th November 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	4,777	1,775
Cash at bank and in hand		44,318	43,637
		<u>49,094</u>	<u>45,412</u>
Current liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	28,726	18,447
		<u>28,726</u>	<u>18,447</u>
Net current assets		20,369	26,965
		<u>20,369</u>	<u>26,965</u>
Total assets less total liabilities		20,369	26,965
		<u>20,369</u>	<u>26,965</u>
Income funds	11		
Designated funds		18,019	18,019
Restricted funds		1,365	-
Unrestricted funds		985	8,946
		<u>20,369</u>	<u>26,965</u>
		<u>20,369</u>	<u>26,965</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



1. Accounting policies

Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement on 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 January 2019). (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Cash flow

The financial statements do not include a cash flow statement because the charity, as a small reporting entity, is exempt from the requirement to prepare such a statement under Financial Reporting Standard 1 "Cash flow statements".

Assessment of going concern

Preparation of the accounts is on a going concern basis. The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Incoming resources

Grants receivable are recognised in the accounts when conditions for their receipt are satisfied. Grants with conditions attached to their use are included in restricted funds. Donations, legacies and other forms of voluntary income are recognised as incoming resources when receivable.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES



FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Tax reclaims on donations and gifts

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the SOFA in the same financial period as the gift to which they relate.

Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is recognised when there is a legal or constructive obligation to pay. Expenditure has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to a particular heading they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted Funds are funds received which have no restrictions placed on their use and are available to spend on activities that further any of the purposes of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds of the charity which the trustees have decided to set aside to use for a specific purpose.

Restricted Funds are funds which are to be used for purposes as specified by the funder.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



Taxation

As a registered charity, the organisation is exempt from income and corporation tax to the extent that its income and gains are applicable to charitable purposes only. Value Added Tax is not recoverable by the company and is, therefore, included in the relevant costs in the Statement Of Financial Activities.

Going Concern

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

2. Donations & legacies

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Donations	3,210	-	3,210	3,066
	3,210	-	3,210	3,066
2024	3,066	-	3,066	

3. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Commissions to run activities	43,356	-	43,356	32,987
Grants	-	60,009	60,009	40,267
	43,356	60,009	103,365	73,254
2024	32,987	40,267	73,254	

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



4. Investment income	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2025 £	2024 £
Interest	639	-	639	519
	639	-	639	519
2024	519	-	519	
5. Total resources expended	Staff costs £	Other costs £	2025 £	2024 £
Charitable activities				
Management team	14,078	-	14,078	26,072
Delivery of activities	44,717	50,484	95,201	55,422
Accountancy	-	781	781	794
Trustee expenses	-	421	421	563
Administration	-	1,078	1,078	1,129
	58,794	52,765	111,560	83,979
2024	51,500	32,479	83,979	

6. Staff costs

The average number of employees for 2025 was Nil (2024 - Nil). No employee earned more than £60,000 in the financial years being reported on in these accounts.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



7. Trustees

The trustees were reimbursed £421 (2023 - £563) for travel expenses.

8. Related parties

There were no related parties during the period.

9. Debtors

Trade debtors

2025	2024
£	£
4,777	1,775
<u>4,777</u>	<u>1,775</u>

10. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

Trade creditors

Accruals and deferred income

2025	2024
£	£
3,401	5,657
25,325	12,790
<u>28,726</u>	<u>18,447</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



11. Statement of funds

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
Unrestricted funds	<u>8,946</u>	<u>47,204</u>	<u>(55,166)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>985</u>
Restricted funds					
Trinity College	-	19,733	(19,733)	-	-
Arts Council	-	32,216	(31,415)	-	801
University of Wolverhampton		3,060	(2,496)	-	564
Nominet grant		5,000	(5,000)	-	-
Subtotal	<u>-</u>	<u>60,009</u>	<u>(58,644)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,365</u>
Designated funds	8,000	-	-	-	8,000
Reserves	10,019	-	-	-	10,019
Subtotal	<u>18,019</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>18,019</u>
Total	<u>26,965</u>	<u>107,213</u>	<u>(113,810)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,369</u>