



2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document summarises the activities of the charity, The Philosophers' Yard, in the 2023-24 financial year.

The mission of The Philosophers' Yard is to provide a neutral space for the exploration of life's big questions. Its purpose is to challenge the social media echo chambers and 'fake news' that are reproducing polarisation and distrust within communities and among people from different backgrounds. Through events and education, it provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to develop wisdom, fulfilling its charitable objects to advance the education of the public in general on matters of philosophy, including the inner lives of human beings, societal norms and structures, and existence and metaphysics.

The Philosophers' Yard is founded on the values of curiosity, creativity, and community:

Curiosity

- It seeks to challenge and expand attendees' thinking about themselves and the world around them, in a respectful manner.
- It values open and honest communication, including encouraging participants to ask questions and to say when they do not have answers.

Creativity

- It acts in ways that develop self-understanding and cultivate happiness.
- It provides opportunities to explore and use practices that foster greater self-awareness and promote personal growth, and to maintain a safe hub for this exploration to take place.

Community

- It values community and is committed to welcoming difference and diversity of thought.
- It has zero tolerance for any form of hate speech, discrimination, or violent language, behaviour, or actions.

Although The Philosophers' Yard joined the register of charities in September 2023, its first event was delivered – in Birmingham, UK and online - in May 2023. Its pilot events on the themes of Individualism and Collectivism, Consciousness, and Legacy, have attracted a diverse cohort of 200 attendees with largely positive feedback. Its aims for the 2024-25 financial year will focus on the sustained delivery of high-quality events and the development and introduction of an education offer for schools and corporate organisations. The Philosophers' Yard has recently secured its first grant (from the National Lottery Community Fund), which will provide financial security and ongoing viability for the upcoming financial year and beyond.

ESTABLISHMENT AND DELIVERY OF CHARITABLE OBJECTS

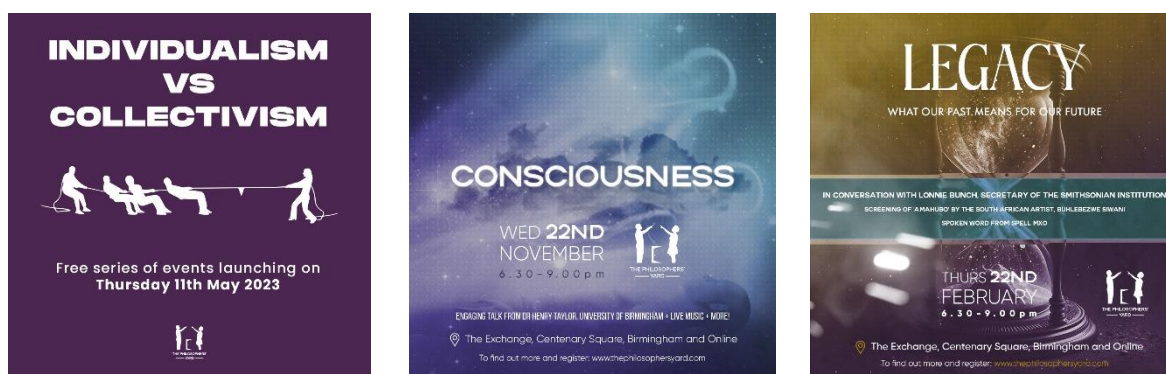
The Philosophers' Yard was established as a charity in September 2024. Its charitable objects are to advance the education of the public in general on matters of philosophy, including the inner lives of human beings, societal norms and structures, and existence and metaphysics.

It has fulfilled these objects in the 2023-24 financial year through events held in Birmingham, UK and online.

Six events took place in the 2023-24 financial year:

- A four-part series on **individualism and collectivism** held in May – June 2023.
- An event on **consciousness** in November 2023.
- An event on **legacy** in February 2024.

Further information on these events is provided in the next section.



Above: Social media poster designs for the first events.

The Public Benefit

The Philosophers' Yard aims to maximise benefit to the public by making activities accessible:

- All events are **hybrid**, allowing attendees to join and participate online.
- It provides **flexible ticketing prices**, including free tickets to ensure that cost does not provide a barrier to participation.
- Where permission is granted by speakers and contributors, recordings of talks and performances are **shared via YouTube** for people to enjoy for free after the event.
- The Philosophers' Yard employs a **democratic model** for selecting the themes of events and activities.
- All events begin with a creative activity to 'ground' attendees. Most events end with breakout rooms, tailored to attendees' prior knowledge:
 - The Study: for students of philosophy or avid readers who want to engage in depth.



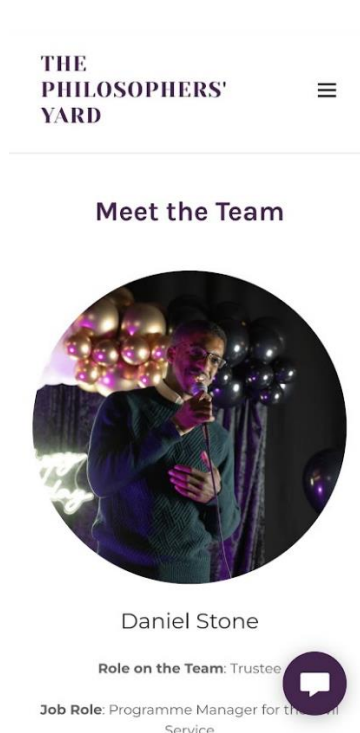
- The Living Room: for people new to the topic who want to engage in informal conversation.
- The Garden: a workshop / applied experience.
- Events follow a structured, tailored, and guided format led by knowledgeable and experienced professionals and experts and promote discourse between people from diverse backgrounds.

Trustees and Delivery Team

The delivery team is comprised of:

- Four trustees, all of whom have been in place since September 2023.
- Two volunteers.
- Three interns (funded through the University of Birmingham).

All four trustees live in Birmingham and surrounding areas and have strong ties to the city through birth, employment and/or additional Birmingham-based voluntary or trustee roles.



Above: Screenshot of The Philosophers' Yard website, which includes information on the trustees and delivery team (www.thephilosophersyard.com/meet-the-team-1)

EVENTS

The idea for The Philosophers' Yard was generated in summer 2022. At that point, a survey was sent via social media to generate comments and feedback on creating a space for discussing big ideas and to gather votes and views on potential event themes. The theme idea that received the most votes was 'individualism and collectivism'. The Philosophers' Yard has repeated this democratic process for selecting all event themes, ensuring that all attendees have a voice in the delivery of events.

All events are carefully planned and curated to ensure that complex ideas are presented in an accessible and welcoming environment. The Philosophers' Yard seeks to identify a diverse set of speakers – both academics and practitioners – to provide a breadth of perspectives on the chosen topic. All events begin with a creative activity, such as meditation, live music or spoken word, which serves to 'ground' attendees at the start of the event.

The contributors for the six events held in 2023-24 are listed below:

Individualism and Collectivism (four-part series)

- Dr Herjeet Marway, University of Birmingham
- Ana Ferreira (Researcher & Community Organiser)
- Baljit Singh, Basics of Sikhi
- Zubeda Limbada and Malik Harrison, Connect Futures
- Mac Alonge, The Equal Group
- Sobia Iqbal, Pegasus Wellbeing
- Becky Mitchell, Present Moment Meditation
- Aayushi (singer song writer)
- Diary of a Poet
- Zarah Alam (poet)



Above: Dr Herjeet Marway.

Below: Live Music Entertainment.

Consciousness

- Dr Henry Taylor, University of Birmingham
- Live Music Entertainment

Legacy:

- Lonnie Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution
- Buhlebezwe Siwani (visual artist)
- MXO (spoken word artist)



Attendance Data and Evaluation

We have had 200 attendees across these pilot events, with the following demographics:

- 57.0% women; 40.9% men; 2.0% trans/non-binary
- 38.3% white; 22.3% Asian; 29.0% Black; 9.80% Mixed heritage; 0.5% other
- 32.6% aged 18-24; 37.0% aged 25-34; 17.4% aged 35-44; 4.4% aged 45-54; 6.5% aged 55-64; 4.4% aged 65+

Our event mailing list has 200 registered recipients who receive a quarterly newsletter on Philosophers' Yard activities and early information on upcoming events.

The Philosophers' Yard is committed to learning. Evaluation activities are included in all events to determine those aspects of delivery that are working well or could be improved. Following all events, we publish a 'Feedback Friday' post via social media, to update attendees on our response to the feedback provided. Additionally, one of the interns from the University of Birmingham, was given the role of evaluation lead, and was responsible for delivering an evaluation strategy, which involved surveys, group discussions, and 1-1 conversations with attendees.

Feedback received to date has overall been positive. A selection of quotes provided below:

- "It was a chance to talk about real life topics with people outside of your normal social circle".
- The Philosophers' Yard "gives people space and time to think in a structured way. Having these gatherings provides accountability and the chance to learn from each other and to reconsider your values" and "promotes inclusivity, universality and connection in a segregated world of homogenisation".
- "I think it's really well run and is very supportive. Also, cool speakers!"
- "I enjoyed how relatable each speaker was, I didn't feel like I required a philosophy degree to attend [which] was great".
- "I liked how it wasn't just lots of talks, there was music and also aspects of different cultures and lifestyles explored".
- "Great initiative which could grow into giving leaders different ways of exploring their thoughts for action".



Above: Attendees at the Individualism vs Collectivism event.

Forward plan

As agreed by trustees, the intention is to deliver six events per year, beginning in 2024-25, with themes to be decided democratically by event attendees.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The financial statement for the 23-24 financial year is provided below¹.

EXPENSES

Staffing	3000 ⁱ
Events	1681.44 ⁱⁱ
Marketing & Communications	140.23 ⁱⁱⁱ
Educational activities	-
Overheads	-
Total	4821.67

REVENUE

Ticket sales	90.02 ^{iv}
Fundraising / donations	1731.65 ^v
Regular giving	-
Sponsorship	-
Corporate sales - Education	-
In-kind support	3000 ⁱ
Total	4821.67

PROFIT	0
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The Philosophers' Yard was recently awarded a grant of £7,850 by the National Lottery Community Fund to support the delivery of activity from April 2024 to August 2025.

Notes:

ⁱ The Philosophers' Yard was accepted onto the University of Birmingham's B-Experienced Internship programme and was granted two interns (funded through the university).

ⁱⁱ The main costs in delivering events are speakers and contributors fees and expenses, the fee for the designer who produces event marketing collateral, the cost of the event photographer and videographer, and refreshments.

ⁱⁱⁱ Outside of events, there are general marketing and communications costs, which include the hosting and development of the website and the branding of The Philosophers' Yard.

^{iv} We employ a flexible ticketing model with the option for attendees to select a free ticket, £5 ticket, or a ticket with a customisable amount.

^v Given that activities for The Philosophers' Yard began before its formal registration as a charity, early costs of running events were paid by the founding trustees, who do not expect to recoup this initial seed funding.

¹ Readers should note that given the simplicity of the accounts, this has not been independently audited. Our first set of fully audited accounts will be published at the end of the 24-25 financial year. All receipts and invoices have been retained.

AIMS FOR THE 2024-25 FINANCIAL YEAR

At the beginning of the 2023-24 financial year, no events for The Philosophers' Yard had yet taken place. The progress and accomplishments over the past 12 months have therefore been remarkable. The Philosophers' Yard is confidently providing a warm, welcoming, and suitably robust environment that is delivering its charitable objects. The confirmation of the charity's first grant will provide financial security and ongoing viability for the upcoming financial year and beyond.

The aims of the charity for the upcoming financial year are to:

Ensure the continued delivery of high-quality events that provide a platform for a host of diverse, knowledgeable speakers to audiences with the big questions of our time.

We will seek to deliver six events in the next 12 months and explore an approach for partnering with a location outside of Birmingham.

Facilitate interactions between a diverse audience that can exchange a variety of viewpoints and perspectives.

We will monitor the gender and ethnic diversity of our speakers and audiences; keeping the female-male ratio within 20% of each other (currently 57% female, 41% male) and ensuring that at least 50% of our audience is from an ethnic minority background (currently 62%). We will use feedback forms to monitor the accessibility and inclusivity of our events.

Developing educational tools and guidance for corporate organisations, community groups and schools to engage with these ideas in a variety of settings.

Over the next 12 months, we will seek to develop and pilot an approach for the educational arm of The Philosophers' Yard, engaging at least five different organisations with tailored activities.

Declaration

This annual report has been reviewed and approved by the charity trustees and signed on behalf of the trustees by the Chair.



Daniel Stone

Chair of Trustees

Date of approval: Monday 25th March 2024