



# 2024

# Annual Report

Date:  
1 October 2025

Dream Lab Foundation

Registered charity no. 1205675  
(England and Wales)



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Unlocking potential.  
Igniting futures.



## A letter from our Chair of Trustees and CEO

### **We have launched 🧨!**

Dream Lab Foundation was officially registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in November 2023, with 2024 marking our first full financial year. Although we have been running programmes for some time, gaining charitable status represents an exciting new chapter in our journey.

### **2024: A foundational year**

This year was all about building a strong foundation – organisationally, strategically, and relationally – so we can scale our impact in the years ahead. In 2024, we strengthened our infrastructure, forged meaningful partnerships, and prepared our flagship programme, Dream Lab®, for large-scale delivery.

In 2025, our dreams step into the classroom!

# Introduction

**"It is important to have dreams.  
We are capable beyond measure  
to achieve our dreams." - Dream  
Lab graduate, South Africa**

## **Thank you!**

We are grateful to our volunteers, supporters, and partners who made this first year possible. Thank you for your commitment and belief – we look forward to the exciting work ahead!



**Michael Pluess**  
Chair of Trustees &  
Co-founder



**Karen Pluess**  
CEO & Co-founder




# Trustees' Annual Report 2024



# Who We Are

Dream Lab Foundation is an international youth development charity founded in 2023.



**We nurture, champion,  
and enable the dreams  
of the global youth**

- ✦ Running programmes since 2020
- ✦ Registered charity in England & Wales from Nov 2023
- ✦ Operating in South Africa + UK

**How?**

**By using evidence-based tools to equip young people with the skills and confidence to shape their own futures.**





*"It gave me a clear understanding of how to tackle challenges towards my dream." – Dream Lab graduate, South Africa*

## Charitable Objectives

We help young people discover their strengths, build confidence, and prepare for positive futures through education, personal development, and access to opportunities.

In legal terms:

*"To advance the education of young people, and to advance them in life, by developing their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as independent mature and responsible individuals in particular but not exclusively, through personal development programmes and courses, resources, and advice, and by facilitating access to employment, volunteering and training opportunities."*

## Public Benefit Statement

The trustees confirm they have complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.





# Why We Exist

Young people – particularly those in underserved communities – face daunting challenges.

In South Africa:

High youth unemployment

> **60%**

Youth (15-24) unemployment is even higher when including those who have given up looking for work. This is especially concerning in the context of Africa's youth bulge, with more than 60% of the population under 25.

Rising mental health needs

**70%**

of youth (15-24) need mental health support.

High school dropout rates  
& disengagement

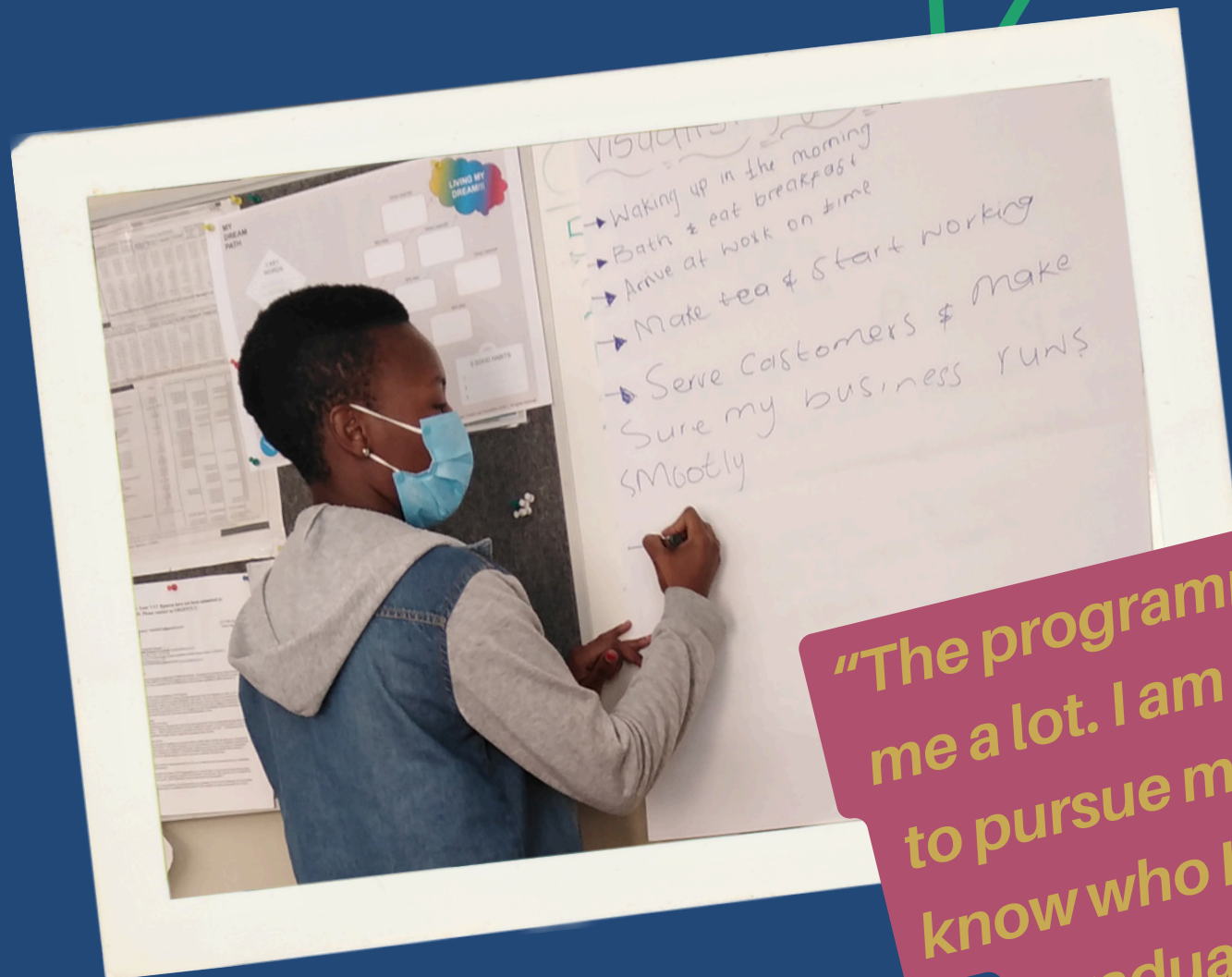
**1/3** of children do not finish school.

Many lack hope or a clear vision for their future

These challenges inspired the creation of the Dream Lab® programme

>>>





**"The programme really helped me a lot. I am now determined to pursue my dream and also know who I am." - Dream Lab graduate, South Africa**

**Unlocking potential.  
Igniting futures.**

### **Designed By**

- Psychologists, educators, & young people

### **Designed For**

- Young people aged 13-25
- Low-resource settings
- Scalable delivery by teachers & facilitators

### **Format**

- 10 interactive, 1-hour sessions
- Small-group, youth-led approach

### **Core Themes**

- Identifying strengths & passions
- Turning dreams into goals & action
- Building resilience through setbacks

# **Our Dream Lab® Programme**

**And the results speak for themselves >>>**


## Evidence & Impact

Grounded in research on future orientation, which is linked to **motivation, mental health, resilience, & reduced risky behaviour**

**96%** had a better understanding of their dreams

**100%** felt better equipped to pursue their dreams

**96%** rated the course 4/5 or 5/5 overall



*"The boy who is my neighbour who dropped out of school (...) started a car mechanics apprenticeship after he got inspiration from Dream Lab project. He is grateful about the project. He says it gave him time to reflect about his future." - Netsai Gwata, Dream Lab leader, South Africa*

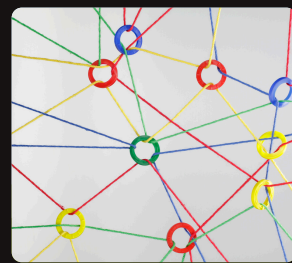
See [dreamlabfoundation.org/research](https://dreamlabfoundation.org/research) for the science behind Dream Lab®

# 2024: A Year of Preparation

In our first full year, we focused on building strong foundations, achieving key early milestones in:

## 01.

### Organisational Development



- Established key operational infrastructure: banking, tax registration, safeguarding and other core policies.
- Launched the charity's website.
- Onboarded initial volunteers.
- Defined roles and working practices for the founding team.

## 02.

### Building Relationships



- Networked with prospective partners including schools, universities, charities, and government bodies.
- Explored collaborations in the UK, South Africa, and beyond.
- Initiated discussions with SA's Department of Basic Education to plan a 2025 schools pilot.

## 03.

### Programme Development



- Prepared the Dream Lab® programme for secondary school learners aged 13-18.
- Reviewed research from previous pilots and integrated learnings into programme design.
- Prepared training and evaluation frameworks for the 2025 rollout.



# Looking Ahead to 2025



## Capacity Building & Pilot in Schools

- Train teachers from 3 schools in South Johannesburg and SA Department of Basic Education representatives.
- Pilot the Dream Lab® programme with 1,000 learners aged 13-18.

## Evidence & Partnerships

- Collect robust evaluation data with academic partners to inform future rollout and funding.
- Expand strategic partnerships in South Africa, the UK, and beyond.

## Early Funders & Engagement

- Strengthen our engagement to communicate our mission and impact.
- Explore a Vision Fund to fuel growth and attract mission-driven early funders.



# Financial Review & Governance

## Financial Review

- **Income:** £2.9k (primarily from individual donations)
- **Expenditure:** £1.2k (minimal, focused on organisational set-up, networking, and programme and partnership development)
- **Closing balance:** £1.7k (cash in bank, unrestricted funds)
- **Reserves policy:** As the charity is in its early stages, reserves are currently minimal. The trustees aim to build reserves sufficient to cover at least three months' core operating costs.
- **Other notes:** Funds secured (contract and funds pending) to deliver the Dream Lab® programme in South Africa in 2025, reaching 1,000 learners.



## Risk Management

The trustees have identified the key risks facing the charity, including:


- Financial sustainability in the early years,
- Reliance on a small volunteer base,
- Operational risks of international delivery.

Mitigation measures include diversifying income sources, expanding our volunteer network, and working with trusted local partners, including academic institutions and state bodies. We also operate on a project-by-project basis, allowing us to manage risk carefully and scale activity in line with available resources.

## Structure, Governance & Management

Dream Lab Foundation is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission in November 2023. The charity is governed by its constitution, which sets out its objects and trustee appointment procedures. Trustees are recruited for their skills and experience relevant to the charity's mission, with induction covering constitution, policies, and strategy. Day-to-day operations are managed by the founding team under trustee oversight. As we grow, we plan to expand the board with diverse expertise, including representation from countries where we operate.





**"What I've learned is a dream is supposed to start somewhere." - Dream Lab graduate, South Africa**

## **Trustees' responsibilities**

Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and UK accounting standards. They must ensure proper records are kept and that the accounts give a true and fair view of the charity's affairs.

The Trustee's report was approved by the Board of Trustees on 1 October 2025, and signed on its behalf by:



**Michael Pluess**  
Chair of Trustees  
1 October 2025



**Charlene Chen**  
Trustee (Treasurer)  
1 October 2025

# Annual Accounts 2024

For the period 10 November 2023 to 31 December 2024



## Receipts and payments account

For the period 10 November 2023 to 31 December 2024

Receipts	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Donations	1,833.24	-	1,833.24
Other income	1,055.11	-	1,055.11
Total receipts	2,888.35	-	2,888.35

## Receipts and payments account (continued)

For the period 10 November 2023 to 31 December 2024

Payments	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Charitable activities	595.88	-	595.88
Raising funds	518.80	-	518.80
Governance costs	98.21	-	98.21
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>1,212.89</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,212.89</b>



## Receipts and payments account (continued)

For the period 10 November 2023 to 31 December 2024

Net of receipts/(payments)	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,675.46	-	1,675.46 surplus

Net movement in funds	Total funds £
Cash funds at start of period (10 November 2023)	0.00
Cash funds at end of period (31 December 2024)	1,675.46

## Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 31 December 2024

Assets	£
Cash at bank	1,675.46
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>1,675.46</b>

Liabilities	£
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>



## Notes to the accounts

### 1. Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) for small charities, as permitted for charities with gross income under £250,000. As this was the first accounting period, no prior year comparatives are provided.

### 2. Nature of funds

All funds at 31 December 2024 are unrestricted and available to be used at the trustees' discretion to further the charity's objects.

### 3. Trustees' remuneration and expenses

No trustee received remuneration or expenses during the period.

### 4. Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the period.

As the charity's gross income is under £25,000, no independent examination or audit is required. One can be undertaken post-publication or upon request if required by funders or partners.

Approved by the trustees on 1 October 2025.



**Michael Pluess**  
Chair of Trustees



**Charlene Chen**  
Trustee (Treasurer)



**Charity name:** Dream Lab Foundation

**Charity registration number:** 1205675

**Registered address:** Flat 17 Bovet Court, 164 Harford Street,  
London E1 4GE, UK

**Board of trustees:**

Michael Pluess (Chair, appointed 10 November 2023)

Charlene Chen (Treasurer, appointed 10 November 2023)

Hannah Elwyn (Safeguarding Lead, appointed 10 November 2023)

Tobias Fluck (appointed 10 November 2023)

Katherine Tait (appointed 10 November 2023)

**Management:**

Karen Pluess (CEO & Co-founder)

**Principal bankers:** Barclays Bank

# Legal & Administrative Details



# Thank You

*Thank you for reviewing our 2024 journey.*

## CONTACT US



[hello@dreamlabfoundation.org](mailto:hello@dreamlabfoundation.org)



[www.dreamlabfoundation.org](http://www.dreamlabfoundation.org)

SCAN ME

