



ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



MAGIC ME'S VISION

A world without ageism, where everyone can enjoy their unique creativity and full potential.

MAGIC ME'S MISSION

To inspire change, for individuals, communities and systems, through extraordinary art, sparking magic between generations.



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***“I’m lost for words,
it’s fantastic.
It’s such a good
idea, all coming
together as one.”***

Older participant



Message from Chair and Director

**Welcome to our Annual Report 2022/23.
The past year has been one of fresh
beginnings and exploration.**

It has been wonderful to have Magic Me groups meeting in person again! To see our younger and older participants making and laughing together with our artists. To witness their pride in sharing their photographs, prints and poetry with audiences live, as well as online. This Report is all about their achievements and stories, and the lasting benefits of these creative gatherings.

During lockdown we all experienced sometimes what it feels like to be isolated. But for too many older and younger people in east London, loneliness and isolation were the everyday reality before covid, and continue to be so today. A tough, cold winter made that harder.

So, more than ever, our activities this year have been designed to bring people together. Whether people living on the same estate, or down a corridor in a nursing home, creative moments have sparked new connections and rekindled those lost in lockdown. The arts have the power to transport us to new places and imagined possibilities. And as one older lady put it, working on a group artwork offers space and time "to forget for a while about Bills! Bills! Bills!"

"We all managed to come together. Community is about you, me, everyone, bright colours not darkness."

Older participant

Throughout the pandemic, with meeting impossible, our artists and staff worked closely with our partner care home and school staff to invent and test new creative approaches. Our plans and projects this year have grown out of that lockdown learning, building on decades of intergenerational arts expertise.

In February 2023 we reviewed and refreshed our Strategic Plan, honing in on three vital strands of work. The Report groups last year's achievements under those new headings. Underpinning our project plans, the past year has also been about establishing ourselves in our 'new' office (we moved in early 2021) regrowing our staff and artists team and securing the funds to move forward with confidence.

We are very grateful to the many funders and supporters who have again made our work possible this year, and their continuing understanding and flexibility during tough times. We are thrilled that Arts Council England invited us to become a National Portfolio Organisation from 1st April 2023.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of Magic Me through this year. We look forward to our continuing work together.

David Russell

Chair of Trustees

Susan Langford MBE

Founder/Director

Introduction

At the start of the year our East London communities were still adjusting to post-pandemic life with many remaining anxious about mixing in public after so long in isolation. The subsequent cost of living crisis with soaring inflation, fuel poverty and food insecurity further compounded hardships affecting these communities. 1 in 2 children are living in poverty and 1 in 3 older people are living in income deprived households. These conditions exacerbate social isolation and loneliness and as always, Magic Me was driven to respond and help make a difference.

Consultation with our regular participants and local on-the-ground organisations told us that, as lockdown eased, many people felt more disconnected than ever, affecting their physical and mental health. Locally accessible services for older people, including the arts, have been cut due to Covid-19 and tightening budgets. Older people yearned for a sense of community, access to the arts,

and the comfort and stimulation they bring, but remained fearful of infection, and after two years of isolation, felt less confident to venture out.

In order to meet these needs, through 2022/23 we successfully grew a series of new creative arts projects, with intergenerational groups, reconnecting with older individuals and local partners. The positive response and our learning from these has inspired current and future activities.

In the following pages we describe Magic Me's work and impact during this time, grouping project stories under two main categories: *Depth & Inclusion* and *Increased Reach*.

Read on to find out about how we harnessed the power of the arts to bring about improved well being to our diverse local communities and residents in care homes, all the while using intergenerational activism to fight ageism and grow mutual understanding across generations.



DEPTH & INCLUSION

Tower Hamlets has the ninth highest proportion of residents born outside the UK with more than two thirds of the population coming from racially minoritised backgrounds. Considering our local population, we ensure our work welcomes and includes people with diverse lived experience. This includes typically underserved communities and people who may be socially isolated or excluded. Using co-design we bring arts opportunities to where people are, such as community centres, housing estates and care homes. Our programmes generate a deep and meaningful exchange of ideas and perspectives and support a celebration of difference in diverse intersectional communities across different ages, cultures, races and beliefs.

“A warm space in terms of heating and warm in how it makes you feel!”

Younger adult, winter project



Highlights in 2022/23 included

Creative Get Togethers

From July to October, 31 older people joined artist-led creative sessions, designed to rebuild peoples' confidence to mix with others and combat social isolation in a friendly, safe environment. The group also co-designed future activities at Pott Street Meeting House. These activities looked forward to future programming that best met local needs. We collectively identified the need for intergenerational sessions which led to a second winter phase of creative workshops for younger and older adults. This resulted in a photography exhibition and celebratory event, which we called *Searching for Community*. In evaluation we found that 94% of our older participants overwhelmingly agreed that attending the workshops increased their sense of community with neighbours with 88% agreeing that they felt more confident in meeting new people. Many reported that they were eager for the 'Get-Togethers' to continue but also wanted an intergenerational component. This informed our plans to grow and maintain a regular programme of intergenerational events at Pott Street and neighbouring venues from Autumn 2023.

“Community is never finished. It is always evolving. Community is all about communication, negotiation. These representations show what ‘Searching for Community’ means.” – Younger participant

“A project highlight for me has been other committee members taking more of an active role talking to the community as well as taking ownership of the issues that were important to residents – I would highly encourage all members to be part of future projects.”

Bancroft Estate Mural

Bancroft Tenant Management Co-Operative (BTMC) reached out to Magic Me to support the creation of a community mural on the estate after receiving feedback from residents that they wanted to see a reduction in anti-social behaviour and more opportunities to come together as a community.

Led by artist ATMA and using Magic Me’s intergenerational expertise, consultations welcomed people of all ages and encouraged conversations between different generations. The final mural design was based on the natural world, celebrating diversity, and creating a positive impact.

Once completed, the mural was revealed at Bancroft’s Annual Fun Day in August 2022 which was attended by 300 residents. Following the installation, BTMC observed a marked reduction in anti-social behaviour, with attitudes of both residents and neighbouring communities shifting to a more positive view of the estate with many reporting a new sense of pride in their home area. There were also unexpected outcomes such as increased resident engagement with other aspects of the estate including recycling management and the formation of a youth sports club.



“The mural gives a very welcoming & positive feel as you enter the estate now from Globe Road.” – Resident, Bancroft Estate

“It’s giving joy to a lot of people”

“The design has enabled everyone to relate to it, and the artist managed to pull together so many elements that mean so much on different levels.” – Resident, Bancroft Estate

“A project highlight for me has been talking to and connecting with people on the estate we would never have met.”



“I have gained skills here, the range of jobs I can apply for is much much wider now.”

Artworks

Inequality and lack of diversity are an ongoing issue in the arts sector with racialised people and those from working class backgrounds facing the biggest barriers to employment and career development. In an effort to make the sector fairer, we ran our paid community arts trainee programme for the third year. Designed to support young people in Tower Hamlets from ethnically diverse working class backgrounds, we supported a total of six trainees in two cohorts in 2023.

Artworks provided practical work experience, mentoring and skills development workshops to trainees who were able to gain knowledge

of the theory behind participatory arts practice. Trainees also had opportunities to deliver their own intergenerational community arts event, with support from Magic Me. We received positive feedback from the trainees regarding the programme structure, content and management as well as reports on improved self confidence and prospects for the future. After completing the programme, one trainee was hired by Magic Me to fill the role of Project Coordinator in August 2023.

“The experience has changed the way I think about the future. When I first started I thought I wouldn’t find any way through the industry but having heard experiences from Mika and artists, plus staff here, this gave me hope and changed my perspective of me getting work in the arts.”

“Although you’re constantly learning, you’re progressing and thinking about next steps. I learnt the importance of self-reflection and having a greater understanding of what you want to achieve and what your own values are.”

“Being able to see how much their work impacts a lot of people in the community, makes the work extra rewarding.”

Coopers Court

After so much lockdown, older people living at Coopers Court extra-care scheme in Mile End were keen to re-establish relationships with their local community and see fresh faces. Three of our *Artworks* trainees recruited local younger adult neighbours to join with

residents. Working with Magic Me artists, the intergenerational group met weekly to create poetry, artworks and lino prints on the theme of ‘Welcome’. These artworks were then combined into one piece, to permanently decorate a wooden arch in the communal garden. The project successfully connected and facilitated relationships between the resident and visiting adults, growing sense of community and improving the mental and emotional well-being of the residents.

“I have a rare condition, and my memory is increasingly failing. This will be my last hurrah, so I’m especially thrilled to have been part of it. This experience has been very precious to me.” – Resident



INCREASED REACH

Drawing on Magic Me's specialist knowledge of bringing arts into care homes we are able to connect meaningfully with residents, particularly those living with dementia. Our creative activities offer new experiences for people living in care homes, improving their day-to-day quality of life while also helping build positive relationships between residents and staff.

Highlights in 2022/23 included

Magic Moments

Magic Moments was initially commissioned by Essex County Council to combat loneliness amongst older care home residents during

"The activities created a new dynamic, they unlocked so much."

Care Professional

lockdown. In 2022/23 we focused on work with care homes and Rights Made Real in Scotland. Working with 27 care home staff across Scotland, we developed ways of supporting creative activities remotely, which showed us the value of working in this way with care staff across a wide geographical area.





Residents and staff observed increased well being and more meaningful connections between care staff and residents, which led to improved positive perception and understanding of one another. Residents and care staff also reported an increased appreciation of the value of creativity in care homes and expressed desire to see and participate in more in the future.

During 2023/24 our artists and staff are continuing to develop this innovative, distance learning model, aiming to roll it out wider in the future. This year 18 care homes will participate, across Waltham Forest, Tendring in Essex and wider London.

“What you think you’re gonna get is not always what you’re gonna get from the box and it’s nice to see their reactions, the element of surprise” – Care Professional

Artists’ Residences in Care Homes

Over the past four years our Artists’ Residencies in Care Homes programme has teamed up high profile arts companies with Excelcare homes across Essex. Supported by Magic Me, the arts organisations and care homes have delivered innovative participatory arts experiences for residents and staff, even through the disruptions of the pandemic.

From April 2022 our arts partners, New Adventures, Fevered Sleep, curious directive and Gecko, were again able to visit in person their four partner care homes. They worked with residents and staff through a wide variety of mediums from movement and dance, to weaving and science-based arts. The different partnerships created films, artworks, photographs, installations and so much more.

“We can do the basic stuff... But what I’ve found with this... was the impact it has had on everybody... It was art to another level.” Care home post-residency



Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University tracked and evaluated the work over the four years around the question: "How can artists and care home staff build great working relationships to best serve older residents through the arts?"

Their Evaluation Report, Dare to Imagine, will be launched with a showcase event at the University on 27 September 2023 and features information on best practice within the care and arts sector. During the current legacy phase of the project a resource pack of activity ideas and successful approaches will be shared throughout Excelcare, and then more broadly across Essex care homes and online.

"I passionately believe that just because someone lives in a care home they don't stop being entitled to high quality arts and culture, or to a participative experience that is more than just something to pass the time."

Susan Langford, Magic Me Director



LEADERSHIP & ACTIVISM

For 35 years Magic Me has pioneered intergenerational arts in the UK. Our success and growing national recognition of the value of this work, in building community, combatting isolation and improving wellbeing, means others have taken up the approach. As society continues to age and change, Magic Me remains pioneering, inventing fresh approaches and bringing intergenerational thinking to emerging situations and dynamics.

Younger and older people will be at the forefront in that. All too often they are overlooked, or seen as problems to be solved, when actually they have the insider knowledge, experience and ideas to create change.



And ageism still colours the way older arts audiences are viewed: as less important, not open to new work and even, not 'on brand' by some arts organisations. Statistics show people aged 75+ are some of the most marginalised in terms of arts participation. We are committed to challenging and changing that.

During 2022/23, working with 36 partner organisations, we championed the role of the arts, challenging and supporting care homes, arts and community partners to be adventurous in their offerings. In the coming years we will continue to hone our practice, publish and share our learning.



Projects

Artists' Residencies in Care Homes

Partnerships: curious directive and Longfield, Maldon; Fevered Sleep and Sherrell House, Chigwell; Gecko and Lime Court, Harwich; New Adventures and St Fillans, Colchester.

Dementia Specialists: Sally Knocker and Mike Phillips

Partners: Anglia Ruskin University, Excelcare UK

Funders: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Excelcare UK

Artworks

Artworks Trainees: Hamida Begum, Shazna Begum, Jan Biedrzycki; Maryam Deria, Chloe Latchford, Isobel Lehr

Freelance trainer: Lewis Greener,

Funders: London Borough of Tower Hamlets; Westfield East Bank Creative Futures Fund, supported by Westfield Stratford City and Foundation for Future London

Bancroft Estate Mural

Artists: ATMA

Partners: Bancroft Tenant Management Co-Operative (BTMC)

Volunteers: Dina Chehrazi

Funders: National Lottery Community Fund



Coopers Court project

Artists: Sue Mayo, Mia Harris

Artworks trainees project managing: Hamida Begum, Shazna Begum, Jan Biedrzycki

Partners: Coopers Court, Sanctuary Care; Allen & Overy (volunteers)

Funders: Artworks funders

Creative Get Togethers / Searching for Community

Artists: Chuck Blue Lowry, Amanda Mascarenhas, Sue Mayo, Anita McKenzie

Artworks trainees project managing: Chloe Latchford, Isobel Lehr, Maryam Deria (Searching for Community)

Partners: St Hilda's East Community Centre, Bank of England (volunteers)

Volunteers: Pat O'Leary

Funders: The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, London Community Foundation, French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust, Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust, M&S

Magic Moments

Artists: Georgia Akbar, Lily Ash Sakula

Partnerships: Rights Made Real in Care Homes

Funders: My Home Life, our Big Give Christmas Challenge donors



Thank you

Grants & donations in 2023

Argo Global
ARUP
Bancroft Tenant Management Co-operative
Bank Of England
The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington
Edward Gostling Foundation
Excelcare
The ExPat Foundation
Foundation for Future London
French Huguenot Church of London
Charitable Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
London Borough Tower Hamlets
London Community Foundation
M&S
My Home Life
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust
The Tudor Trust

Our sincere thanks also to all the individuals who generously supported our work in 2022/23. Your many named and anonymous one-off and regular gifts are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for in-kind support

34SP for website hosting
Project volunteers from Allen & Overy and Bank of England
Alex Deane, Jacqui Christian and Alison Harvie for volunteer professional expertise

ALLEN & OVERY



We Remember

Magic Me participants who passed away in 2022 and 2023 including:

Tony Leen of Coopers Court

Our Finances

This summary is taken from Magic Me’s full, independently examined accounts. If you would like a copy, please visit our website www.magicme.co.uk or contact Magic Me on info@magicme.co.uk or 020 3222 6064

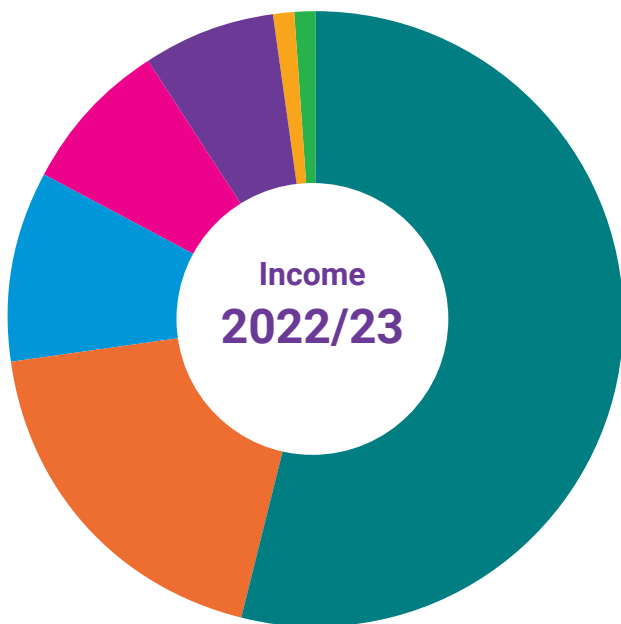
Income during the year 2022/23 was £272,092, with £211,689 carried forward from the previous year. As you can see from the pie charts, the majority of our expenditure of £372,897 is on people – staff and freelance artists who make our programmes possible – plus arts materials, venues and other activity costs.

The generosity of our donors and the ongoing support of our funders has enabled us to keep

our finances stable during a challenging year of rising prices and increasing demand for charitable funds. We are extremely grateful to all of you.

Fundraising is ongoing throughout the year to ensure that our income stream matches our plans for the future. We hold a certain amount of money, in reserve, to ensure that we can cover unexpected expenses.

If you’d like to be part of the Magic, whether it’s through financial support, in-kind donations of materials or expertise, or you want to fundraise for us, please contact Veena on veenajosephmcbride@magicme.co.uk



■ Trust & Foundations	54%
■ Livery Companies	19%
■ Local Authority, Government and Other Public	10%
■ Individual Donations	8%
■ Project Partners and Other	7%
■ Earned Income	1%
■ Business Donations	1%

■ Staff Salaries and Costs	62%
■ Fundraising	12%
■ Artists Fees, Arts and other Project Partner Fees	10%
■ Rent, Office and Communications	8%
■ Materials, Venues, Production, Transport, Volunteer costs	4%
■ Governance inc: Accountancy, Anti-Racism Action Plan	4%

Our People

Associate Artists

Georgia Akbar
Lily Ash Sakula
Chuck Blue Lowry
Mia Harris
Amanda Mascarenhas
Sue Mayo
Anita McKenzie

Current Staff

Audrey Aidoo-Davies - Project Manager
Emily Bird - Project Manager
Chloe Davies - Head of Operations
Kate Hodson - Programme Director
Asma Istwani - Communications Officer
Veena Joseph-McBride - Fundraising & Development Manager
Susan Langford MBE - Director
Chloe Latchford - Project Coordinator

Former Staff during 2022/23

Catherine Connell - Senior Project Manager
Tham Huynh - Fundraising Coordinator

Trustees during 2022/23

Yaa Adansi-Pipim
Afsana Begum
Hugh Blacklock - Treasurer
Harriet Cheng
Hazel Gould
Damian Hebron - Secretary
Louisa Joseph
Jimena Meza Mitcher
Dominique Moore
Thomas Nowacki
David Russell - Chair

Trustees who stood down during the year

Caroline Gellatly
Max Glazer-Munck - Treasurer

Thank you to

Our good neighbours and landlord at Bethnal Green Meeting House, Pott Street

D.R. ink

Photo credits:

Georgia Akbar, Anita McKenzie, ATMA, Emily Bird, Dina Chehrazi, Catherine Connell, Stephen Daly, Chloe Latchford, Rich Rusk, Lily Ash Sakula

Front cover: Anita McKenzie with *Searching for Community* project group



Get Involved

We hope that our mission resonates and inspires you to get involved with our important work.

If you would like to support us, here are some ways to get involved.

Help raise our profile online

One of the easiest and most immediate ways you can support Magic Me is to interact with us online. If you're on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn or X please follow us. Share our posts and help us to spread our mission far and wide! [@MagicMeArts](#)

Donate

Times are tough, but if you are able to, please donate to support Magic Me's vital work through 2024. Just visit www.magicme.co.uk or we still take cheques, made out to Magic Me! If you donate during our Big Give Christmas Challenge, 28th November to 5th December, every pound you give will be doubled by generous supporters. Sign up on our website.

Fundraise for us

Fundraising is a fantastic and rewarding way to get involved and support Magic Me's work.

Why not try organising a bake sale or training for a fun run? These classic activities always prove successful and no amount raised is ever too small to make a difference. Contact Veena with your ideas or questions on veenajosephmcbride@magicme.co.uk

Volunteer

As we grow our programme through 2024 we'll be promoting new volunteering opportunities for hands-on help at events. Keep a look out on our newsletter, website and social media. We also welcome professional or admin support behind the scenes. Contact info@magicme.co.uk to join us.





**Launch of mural on Bancroft Estate,
Bethnal Green E2**

Thanks to Allen & Overy LLP for printing this report

ALLEN & OVERY

26 Pott Street, London E2 0EF

Tel: 020 3222 6064

info@magicme.co.uk

www.magicme.co.uk

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