



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



MAGIC ME WHO WE ARE

Our Vision: a world without ageism, where everyone can enjoy their unique creativity and full potential

Our Mission: to inspire change, for individuals, communities and systems, through extraordinary art, sparking magic between generations

Magic Me has a 35-year track record of pioneering innovative community-based intergenerational arts projects. We offer children, young and older people ways to meet, create and spend time together to develop their individual skills and build community engagement and cohesion. Our constantly renewing programme of community project work takes place in Tower Hamlets where we are located, and we also run sensory and creative activities in London and Essex care homes.

We are proud of our growing community of younger and older people, who are building vibrant creative connections across different ages, faiths, cultures and backgrounds.



Message from Chair and Director

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2023/24. After the huge upheaval of the Covid years, this has been another year of listening to and learning from our partners and communities.

The arts have the power to transport us to new places and imagined possibilities. They bring people together with common purpose and in celebration. Care homes and community groups are looking for fresh ideas and partnerships, but with budgets and staff teams stretched like never before, activities need to match their priorities, needs and interests.

We are excited to report on the innovative, creative projects we have co-created with partners in our home base of Tower Hamlets, across London and in Essex. We've carried out sensory experiments using colour and light in care homes, we've delivered intergenerational visual arts and making sessions in sheltered housing schemes with college students, and published new research and resource packs raising expectations of what the arts can be and do for people in later life.

April 2023 marked a fresh new era for Magic Me. We were welcomed into Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations: the only intergenerational arts specialist in the group. We're grateful for ACE's substantial three year unrestricted grant and the connection to other organisations and initiatives that Portfolio membership brings.

This core financial support has enabled us to plan ahead with new confidence, and to develop and deliver a growing programme of high quality arts opportunities within east London and Essex communities. We've also been able to invest in our organisation, its people, practice and systems.

All our work is informed by our four organisational Values: Creativity, Collaboration, Inclusion and Thoughtfulness.

This year, we have also made good progress on delivering our Three Year Strategic Plan. This report describes our achievements under the plan's three objectives: Depth & Inclusion, Increased Reach and Leadership & Activism.

The needs of our communities are growing and urgent. We are very grateful to our many funders and supporters who have partnered with us this year and made our work possible: thank you all for your support. And 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

"You are the magic to bring these places to life."

Creative Mix participant

DEPTH & INCLUSION

Communities in Tower Hamlets, our home borough, have been hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis – even as many were still dealing with the after-effects of the pandemic. Despite living next door to the City and Canary Wharf, 1 in 2 children and 1 in 3 older people here live in poverty, exacerbating social isolation and loneliness. Poverty impacts people's confidence and ability to participate fully in education, community and social activity.

Our work is to break down those barriers to participation. Magic Me's intergenerational practice has always been grounded in strong co-working with partners and professionals across care, education, the arts and more.

Again this year, we harnessed the power of the arts to improve wellbeing for our diverse local communities, all the while using intergenerational activism to fight ageism and grow mutual understanding across generations.

Creative Mix

Growing out of pilot projects in 2022 and 23, Creative Mix brings together students from Mulberry University Technical College and older people from in and around Bethnal Green. The goal is to grow a core community of younger and older people who will create regular intergenerational events, building connections across different faiths, cultures and backgrounds, and increasing wellbeing. Starting in January 2024, the first phase of Creative Mix, led by three Associate Artists, ran at local Gateway Housing sheltered schemes and our Pott Street base. Through visual arts activities, participants exchanged ideas and stories about what community means to them, with a first sharing event held in June 2024.

Partnerships: Gateway Housing Association and Mulberry UTC

Artists: Amy Leung, Polly Beestone

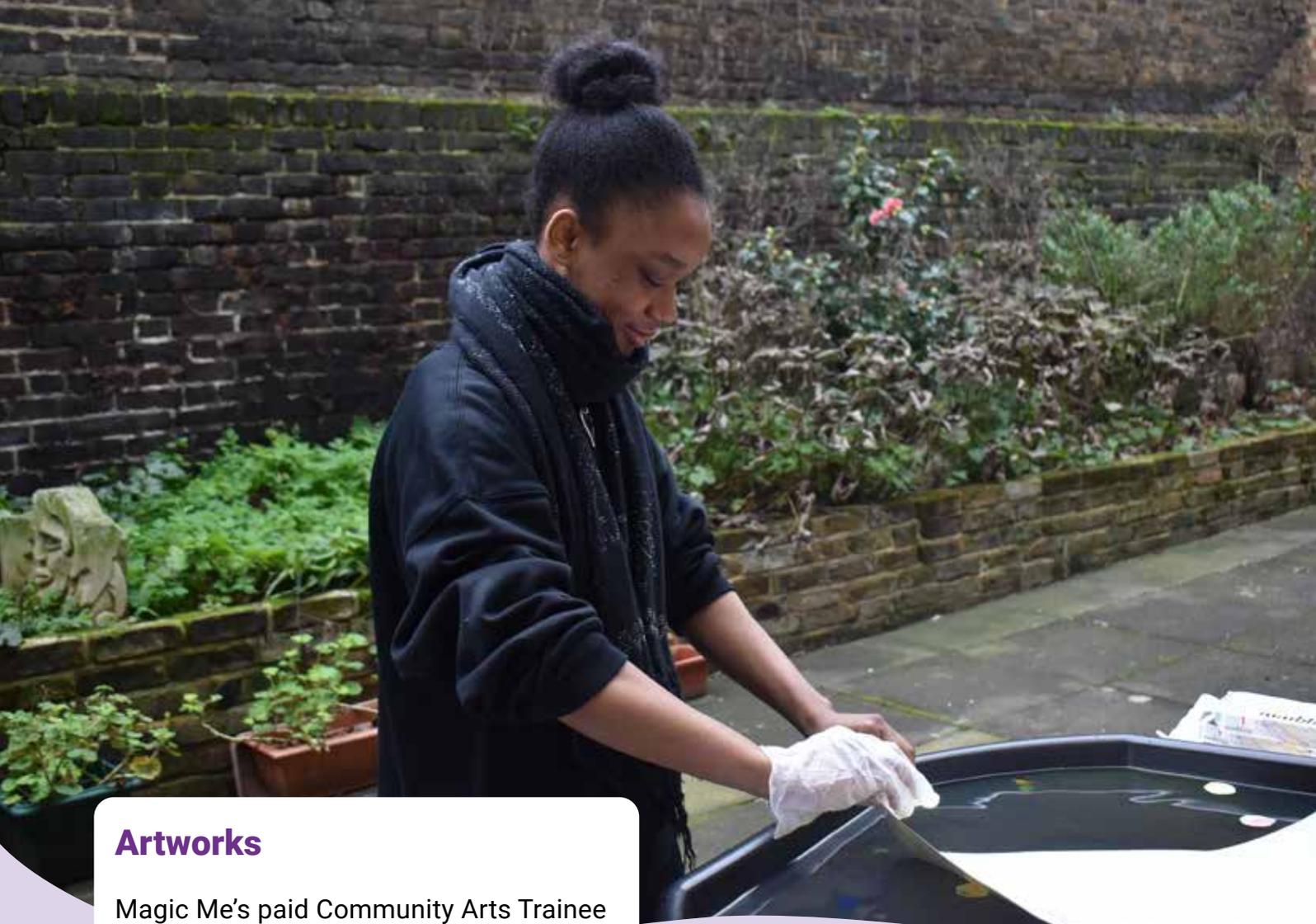
Guest Artist: Georgia Akbar

Freelance specialist: Sue Mayo

Trainees: Kimberly Johnson, Rhovie Isiko

Funders: London Borough of Tower Hamlets, The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington





Artworks

Magic Me's paid Community Arts Trainee Programme supported talented young people from Black, Asian, working-class and other minoritised backgrounds to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to access careers in the arts sector. In this third year, three cohorts of trainees living in Tower Hamlets and Hackney participated, bringing the total of trainees we have worked with so far to ten. Trainees learned much through skills development workshops, mentoring and working with our other staff and artists to deliver arts projects and intergenerational community events.

Artworks Trainees: Chloe Latchford, Isobel Lehr, Kimberly Johnson, Maryam Deria, Rhovie Isiko, Yasmin Amin

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

"I am definitely more confident and career driven than I was at the beginning of the traineeship."

Artworks Trainee



INCREASED REACH

Over more than three decades, Magic Me has become expert in co-design and delivery of creative arts activity with and for people living in care homes and the staff who care for them. The arts can offer joy, excitement, fresh ideas, new ways to express emotions and stories including through non-verbal means. Our highly skilled artists and arts partners have created innovative, multi-sensory experiences for older people, including those most at risk of exclusion – those who are always in bed, or their room.



“It’s not just about ‘doing an activity’ – any moment can be creative.”

Lifestyle Coordinator, Artists’ Residencies in Care Homes

Care homes are just that – people’s homes. They are also busy workplaces, operating 24/7 every day of the year. While residents, staff and managers all value the chance to enjoy the arts, there are many practicalities to consider when offering a truly inclusive experience.

70% of care home residents live with dementia

40% live with with depression

Severe loneliness, a debilitating condition, affects more than 2 in 5 residents

Evaluation of our projects this year shows creative interactions have brought huge benefits in wellbeing, alertness, communication skills and sense of community for a wide range of residents.



Artists' Residencies in Care Homes, Essex

We completed our five year long programme supporting leading arts organisations - Fevered Sleep, New Adventures, Gecko and curious directive - to bring creative activities including movement, dance, film, weaving, science and storytelling to their partner Excelcare homes in Chigwell, Colchester, Dovercourt and Maldon. Our goal was to raise expectations of what the arts can be and do in care settings.

Anglia Ruskin University researchers captured learning throughout the programme, exploring how artists can best work with care home staff to benefit older residents. Findings and practical ideas for care and arts professionals were published in *Dare to Imagine*, a research

report launched with two showcase events in Autumn 2023, and *A Care Home's Guide to Creativity* in March 2024. In 2024/25 Excelcare are now sharing the new approaches across their 31 care homes.

Partnerships: curious directive and Longfield Care Home; Fevered Sleep and Sherrell House Care Home; Gecko and Lime Court Care Home; New Adventures and St Fillans Care Home; Anglia Ruskin University

Partner Artists: Emily Piercy and New Adventures; Helen Baggett and Gecko; Jack Lowe and curious directive; Petra Soor and Fevered Sleep

Freelance Specialist: Sally Knocker

Funders: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Excelcare UK





Spark (formerly Magic Moments)

Spark offers high-quality, creative, sensory activities, which improve the quality of everyday life for older care home residents. Activities are delivered by care staff, who are trained and supported by our skilled Associate Artists. Initially invented to combat loneliness and social isolation during lockdown, our artists and staff continue to develop this innovative, distance learning model, which reaches the often most isolated residents – those always in bed or living with dementia.

In Summer 2023, the artists co-designed new sensory activities using colour, light and touch with two London Borough of Waltham Forest care homes, then introduced these to staff and residents at 14 more homes across

London and Tendring in Essex, serving 200+ older people. Activities were published online and shared with 79 care professionals at four training days in Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Epping run in partnership with Essex County Council. On these days, colleagues from Gecko and New Adventures also shared ideas and approaches from their Artists' Residencies.

Artists: Georgia Akbar, Lily Ash Sakula

Partnerships: Agincare, Central & Cecil Housing Trust, Essex County Council

Freelance Specialist: Sally Knocker

Funders: The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, The Childwick Trust, Essex County Council, Players of the People's Postcode Lottery, The Rayne Foundation

MAGIC ME 2023-4

6
local
authorities

15
associate
artists

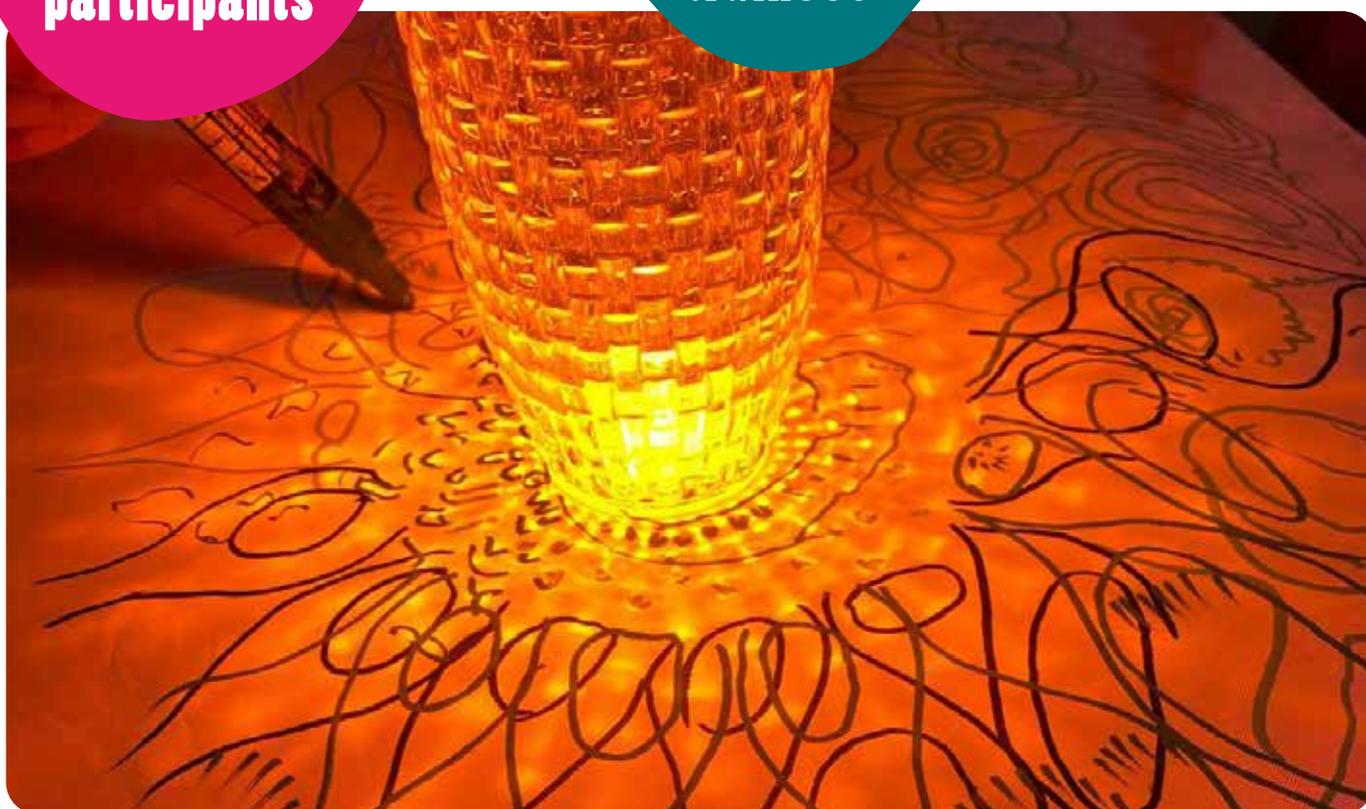
403
project
participants

20
care home
partners

4,754
online followers
and friends

79
training day
participants

6
artworks
trainees



"All homes agreed or strongly agreed there had been an increased understanding of creativity in care homes for 70-100% of residents and staff with both groups wanting to see and do more in the future."

Magic Moments / Spark in Essex evaluation report

LEADERSHIP & ACTIVISM

Magic Me believes in the power of intergenerational work and the arts as tools to challenge ageism, a prejudice which limits and undermines people across their lives. As our society continues to age and change, Magic Me remains pioneering – constantly inventing fresh approaches to emerging situations and dynamics. Our Anti-Racism Action Plan keeps us focused on making our programme and organisation truly inclusive and relevant.

With interest in intergenerational work increasing, our goal is to remain a leader within this field – sharing our expertise, and demonstrating its full potential.

Associate Artists

Our Associate Artists co-design and facilitate our projects and are the face of Magic Me for our many participants. To support our growing programme we reviewed the role of Associate Artist, ran an extensive open recruitment process and selected eight new artists to join our cohort of seven experienced Magic Me creatives, thus increasing the cultural diversity of our Artists' group to better reflect east London's communities. We are excited to be working with specialists across many artforms including puppetry, writing, theatre, visual arts, dance and combined media – that's a wealth of options to offer our partners and participants.



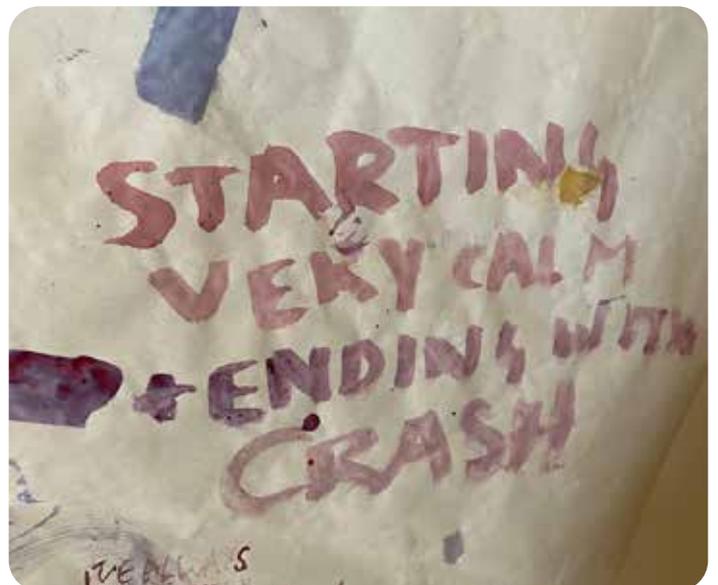


Artists & Practice

Artists & Practice is a newly launched series of four annual Learning & Development days for Associate Artists and our Programme team colleagues. Sessions enable us to examine and remake our shared intergenerational arts practice, ensuring it is inclusive and fit for the next phase of Magic Me's development. Building on our 35 years' practice, we are adding into the mix our learnings from lockdown and the vast range of experience brought by our Associates and current staff team.

Associate Artists: Amanda Mascarenhas, Amy Leung, Arji Manuelpillai, Carolene Yawa Ada, Charlene Low, Chuck Blue Lowry, Georgia Akbar, Laila Nadia Sumpton, Liane Harris, Lily Ash Sakula, Polly Beestone, Ruan Murphy, Shabnam Shabazi, Skye Baker, Sue Mayo

Funder: Arts Council England



Sharing the Learning

Keen to learn and exchange ideas, Magic Me has always shared our practice and experimental work with peers, professionals and activists across many sectors. This year we launched three best practice publications from our care home programme, all available online at www.magicme.co.uk. Project Managers and other staff presented at the UK Dementia Congress in Birmingham, the National Creative Ageing Conference in Newcastle and a range of seminars and events.

“Generosity, an atmosphere of abundance – that there is enough and more can be generated by working together.”

Magic Me Artist



Thank you

Thank you to the many trusts, foundations and other funders whose support enabled our work this year. Our sincere thanks also to all the individuals who generously supported our work in 2023/4. Your many named and anonymous regular and one-off gifts are greatly appreciated

Thank you for in-kind support

34SP for website hosting

Louisa Joseph of BAME to Boardroom, for Anti-Racism training for staff and artists

Janice Salem of Pepper Money UK, for office furniture and computer screens

A&O Shearman, for printing our Research Report, Resource Books and Annual Reports

Grants & donations in 2023/4



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Funded by
UK Government



Essex County Council



**FOUNDATION
FOR FUTURE
LONDON**



**Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION**



TOWER HAMLETS



**phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation**



**POSTCODE
SOCIETY
TRUST**



**The Rayne
Foundation**



**THE
MERCERS'
COMPANY**
Traders to the Church of St Botolph Whithout



**THE
CHILDWICK
TRUST**

**the
Tudortrust**

**WESTFIELD EAST BANK
CREATIVE
FUTURES FUND**

**Westfield
STRATFORD CITY**

and

Excelcare

French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust

The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust

GET INVOLVED

If you're inspired by our work and would like to support it, we'd love you to get involved.

Click, follow, comment

If you're on Instagram, Twitter / X, Facebook or LinkedIn, come and talk to us online. Sharing our posts is an easy way for you to help spread news of our work far and wide. [@MagicMeArts](#)

Donate

We have regular, occasional and mystery donors, and we're very grateful to them all! If you'd like to join our donor community, visit www.magicme.co.uk and click the 'donate' button. We also take cheques, made out to 'Magic Me'. If you take part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge (5-10 December 2024) every £1 you donate to us will be doubled. Sign up on our website in December.

Fundraise

From a Facebook Birthday Fundraiser to a bake sale to a sponsored fun-run, we welcome all your ideas for fundraising support. £5 buys a set of paint brushes, £50 pays for some natural inks, £500 pays for a couple of artist-led intergenerational sessions: every amount you contribute makes a difference. Talk to Julia, our Fundraising & Development Manager, about your ideas or questions – fundraising@magicme.co.uk

Volunteer

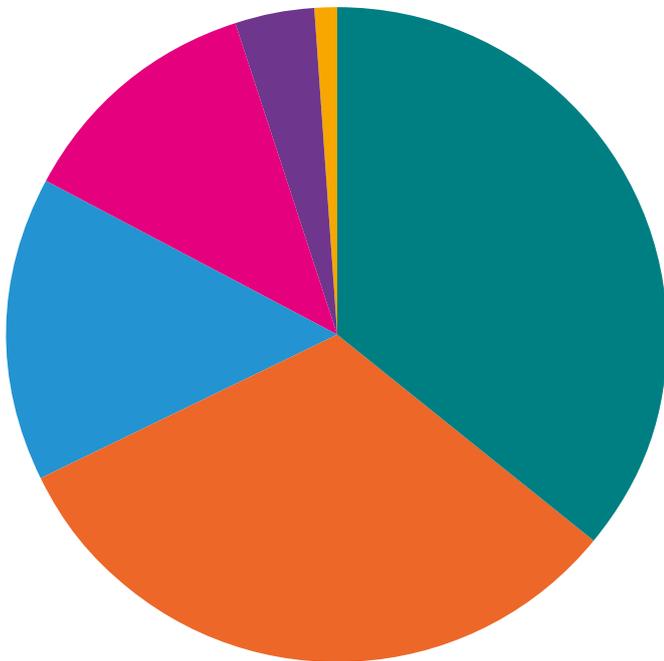
As our programme develops through 2025, we'll be promoting new opportunities for hands-on help at events. We also welcome professional or admin support behind the scenes. Keep an eye on our newsletter, website and social media for details, or contact info@magicme.co.uk

Our Finances

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

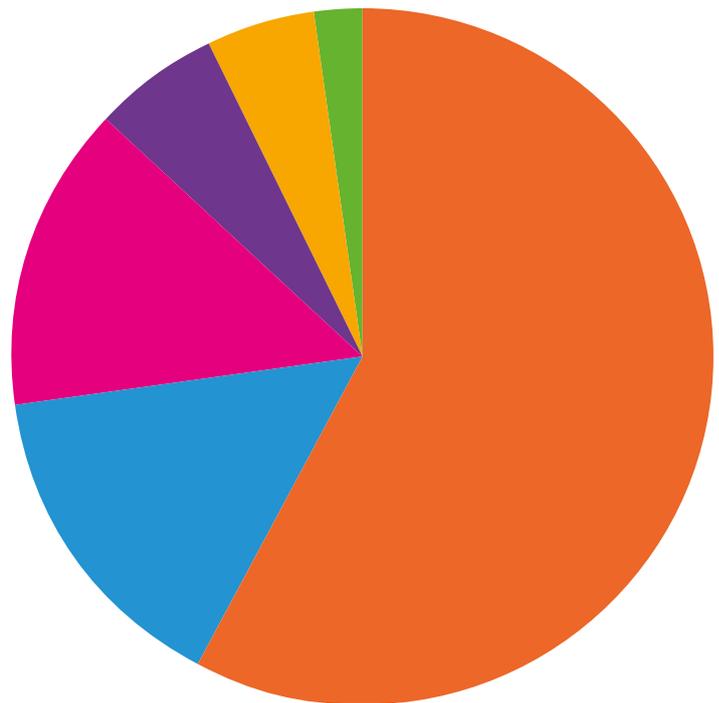
Income during the year 2023/4 was £435,978. As you can see from the pie charts, the majority of our expenditure of £413,798 is on people – the staff and freelance artists who make our programmes possible.

Income 2023/24



- Arts Council England, National Portfolio Organisation 36%
- Trusts & Foundations 32%
- Local Authorities 15%
- Livery Companies 12%
- Individual donations 4%
- Other 1%

Expenditure 2023/24



- Staff costs 58%
- Artists fees, materials & project costs 15%
- Fundraising 14%
- Administrative expenses 6%
- Rent, office and communications 5%
- Governance including accountancy 2%



OUR PEOPLE

Associate Artists

Amanda Mascarenhas
Amy Leung
Arji Manuelpillai
Caroline Yawa Ada
Charlene Low
Chuck Blue Lowry
Georgia Akbar
Laila Nadia Sumpton
Liane Harris
Lily Ash Sakula
Polly Beestone
Ruan Murphy
Shabnam Shabazi
Skye Baker
Sue Mayo

Current Staff

Audrey Aidoo-Davies, Project Manager
Ben Butcher, Head of Operations
Chloe Latchford, Project Coordinator
Julia Bird, Fundraising & Development Manager
Kate Hodson, Programme Director
Natalie Golding, Development Coordinator
Priyanka Chauhan, Project Manager
Susan Langford MBE, Founder / Director

Former Staff during 2022/23

Catherine Connell, Senior Project Manager
Chloe Davies, Head of Operations
Emily Bird, Project Manager
Tham Huynh, Fundraising Coordinator
Veena Joseph-McBride, Fundraising & Development Manager

Freelancer staff

Asma Istwani, Communications Officer
Emma Mulligan, Bookkeeper
Lewis Greener, Artworks Trainer

Trainees during 2023/24

Chloe Latchford
Isobel Lehr
Kimberly Johnson
Maryam Deria
Rhovie Isiko
Yasmin Amin

Trustees during 2023/24

David Russell, Chair
Dominique Moore
Harriet Cheng
Hugh Blacklock, Treasurer
Jimena Meza Mitcher
Louisa Joseph
Thomas Nowacki
Yaa Adansi-Pipim

Trustees who stood down during the year

Afsana Begum
Damian Hebron
Hazel Gould

Thank you to

Our good neighbours: Praxis and our landlords at Bethnal Green Meeting House, Pott Street

D.R. ink

Photo credits

Chloe Latchford
Georgia Akbar
Kimberly Johnson
Lily Ash Sakula
Mark Wilkinson
Rhovie Isiko
Susan Langford



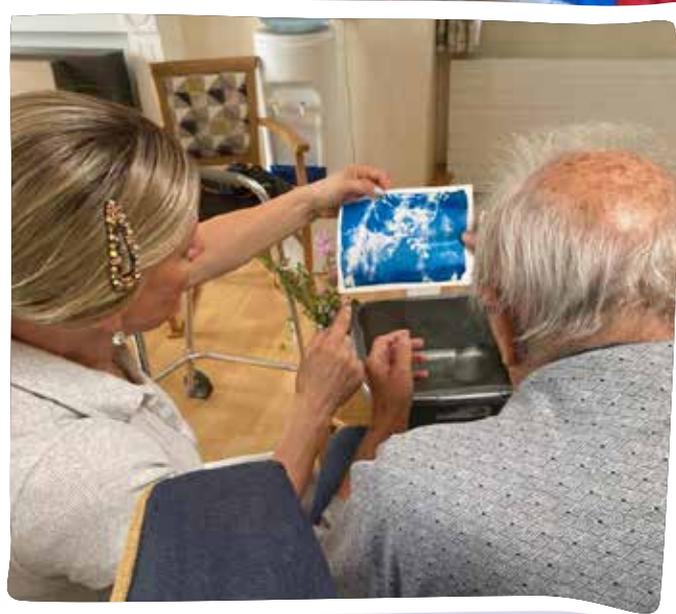
“When I saw what we were doing, I thought there’s no way I’ll be able to do that but I did.”

Spark participant



“The room is so much brighter when you are here.”

Creative Mix participant



“It was art to another level.”

Care home artist residency feedback



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As we head into 2024/25 and beyond, exciting project plans are bubbling to the surface.

Creative Mix will continue in Pott Street, welcoming more students and older Bethnal Green residents to try out new creative techniques and experiments. Our film made in collaboration with Mulberry School for Girls and local older women will premiere in the Autumn, and we hope to build on our relationship with the school to create a new photographic exhibition in 2025. Our Lab project is an ambitious 5 year scheme, which will take us back out into local community spaces in ways we haven't been able to do confidently since the pandemic. Artist-led consultations sessions followed by

residencies will result in a mix of arts projects that inspire shared creativity, expression and positive social action around the issues and ideas which matter most to individuals in their own communities.

We are particularly proud of the pioneering work we're doing around freelance artist support. Working as a freelance artist can be a precarious way of making a living, without access to the professional development opportunities often enjoyed by salaried employees. When designing our projects for the years ahead, we will include paid time for our associate artists to experiment, skill-up and reflect so that they can bring their brightest and best new ideas back to the Magic Me community.





The wider wellbeing of our staff and artists is important to us too: we design our projects and processes with their welfare in mind. Walking meetings are great for getting a new perspective on an issue. Weekly shared lunchtimes and caring for the plants in the Pott Street garden provide calming intervals on busy work days. Underpinning this wellbeing-focus is our commitment to the London Living Wage. We've been signed up to the scheme since 2019, and as soon as any new rate is announced, we adjust our pay rates immediately rather than waiting for the official deadline.

Aware of the national and global context in which we operate, we seek to play our part in minimising systemic harms and marginalisations, from our company-wide Anti Racism Action Plan to our Green Team staff committee. Our staff book club is part of this plan: we meet monthly to discuss a book, film or exhibition that deepens our understanding

of the racist pressures prevalent in society. We're always looking for ways to reduce our carbon footprint: we use refurbished tech and keep as paper-free as possible, and when we transform a creative space for project participants, we use light, colour and shadows rather than physical materials which can be environmentally costly to produce and hard to recycle.

Magic Me is a values-driven organisation – we strive to be **collaborative, inclusive, creative** and **thoughtful** in everything we do, and we are looking forward to the year ahead informed by these values.

Sign up to our newsletter or follow us on social media and you'll be the first to know about all our forthcoming plans.



Artwork: Creative Mix project participants

Thank you to A&O Shearman for printing this report.



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ENGLAND**



Funded by
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