

OPEN ARTS

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and Appointment of Directors

The trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the directors are elected to serve for a period of three years after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

The trustees of the company have a mix of business and artistic skills. In the event of particular skills being lost due to retirement or resignation, suitable individuals are approached to offer themselves for appointment as trustees.

Trustee induction and training

Most new trustees are familiar with the work of the charity. New trustees are encouraged to attend suitable training courses to familiarise themselves with both the work of the charity and their responsibilities as trustees. They are also made familiar with the Open Arts' Governance handbook.

Risk management

The trustees have carried out a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and where appropriate have put in place systems and controls to mitigate the effect of those risks.

Objectives and activities

The principal activity of the company is to promote and co-ordinate arts activities of all kinds by and with disabled people in the area of benefit, in accordance with the principles as laid down in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Open Arts.

Engage

Is our core weekly programme (based on 3 terms of workshops throughout the year). This programme engages nearly 100 individuals and delivers 8 sessions every week.

Explore

We deliver additional projects so that more disabled people, particularly children and young people, can explore the arts. We will support core participants to explore their individual development as artists. We also continuously explore the future of our organisation through research and development.

Enjoy

We produce events and performances so that disabled people can enjoy the achievement of performance and that audiences can enjoy the creative and artistic talents of disabled people.

From April 2023 until March 2024, we delivered 296 creative workshop sessions that engaged 402 individuals.

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Engage

Is our core weekly programme (based on 3 terms of workshops throughout the year). This programme engages nearly 100 individuals and delivers 8 sessions every week.

From April 2023 until March 2024, we continued to deliver our core programme of activities for disabled adults:

- 3 x visual classes including one for blind and visually impaired
- Monday Players drama
- Open Arts Community Choir
- Gamelan group
- Creative writing
- Luminous Soul dance

The core programme enhances participants artistic skills and is also a safe space where individuals have great connections with each other, which creates a true sense of belonging, as highlighted in the words of participants:

"If you are thinking about joining Open Arts art classes I would say go for it with gusto and embrace it, learn from everyone, there's no pressure to perform. It is a safe space where people with disabilities are valued. You can develop your abilities and make new friends. It is great!"

"I love how in Luminous Soul we are encouraged to do our own version of a movement and how we create new ways of moving together "

"We are all the same but in different ways. We have fun and share new ideas. Come and join the Open Arts family you won't be disappointed."

Achievements for participants in our core included Luminous Soul performing at the high profile One Young World Opening Ceremony in the SSE Arena, which attracted acclaim across social media:

"Luminous Soul were class. An incredible and inspirational example of inclusion # OYW23 @OneYoungWord"

"Standing ovation, absolutely stunning performance!!"

Open Arts Community Choir also came second in a televised choral competition, Curfa, which was broadcast on TG4.

Comments from the judges included:

"With that song, you lifted our hearts and then shattered them into smithereens. I must say that every time you come out on stage, you're so kind, so generous and giving."

"It was beautiful, Leslie has a wonderful voice, it's lovely and deep. As for your harmonies the interactions you had together, the way you told the story through the words. I really enjoyed it."

"It was incredible I have to say I really enjoyed it. It's very hard to come out on stage and perform unaccompanied let alone do it well, but I think you did."

"My make up went everywhere because of the tears shed while I was listening and watching you. You're such a special choir and that was a powerful performance."

Open Arts Gamelan in Connswater

In March 2023, we relocated our gamelan to Connswater Shopping Centre. This will give the gamelan increased visibility, and we will engage with more groups and individuals from across East Belfast.

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Explore

Participant Development Programme (PDP)

We support individual participants to develop their own practice through mentoring and production support. In 2023 we worked with dancers Talia McDowell, Andy Paton, and Julie Richmond to produce a performance of their own choreographed performance, Communication.

"Beyond proud! Talia, Julianna and Andy put on a fantastic performance of their own choreographed piece - Communication, today at '#bouncefestival2023'. It was superb from start to finish and all their hard work shone through. Huge thanks to Eileen at Open Arts for supporting them to put on this performance."

"Bounce 23 you were amazing! I am so grateful for everyone who came to watch! Just wanted to say a massive thank you to Open Arts for all their support."

In Tune

We continued to work with Angel Eyes NI and Autism Initiatives NI to facilitate creative workshops for children who are blind/partially sighted or who have autism.

"This programme has been invaluable for K's mental well-being and personal growth. It has provided him with an opportunity to socialise and learn important skills, helping to build his confidence in a safe and understanding setting. K always leaves the music programme chatting and happy (this is usually a very rare occurrence when he has been in a social setting). It also gives me respite and a chance to recharge my own batteries. We are very grateful to be able to avail of this opportunity and hope it can continue as he is progressing so much. He thoroughly enjoys attending these classes, learning how to play instruments, chat about things of interest to him with people who have knowledge and genuine love for the subject. Many thanks to everyone involved in putting this together."

Movement & Mentoring

In August 2023 we began the first Movement & Mentoring project. 12 young people from Mae Murray Teen Hubs took part in a week-long dance summer scheme. Throughout the week they also had visits from members of Luminous Soul dance company. This week was followed up with more rehearsals to prepare for a performance as part of Open Arts event 'Creative Conversations' at the Crescent Arts Centre, part of Bounce Festival. The young people are also finalising their portfolios for accreditation through Arts Awards.

The sense of achievement among the young people was palpable.

Amazing performance at '#Bounce23' today from ' #MMF' young people. Showing off their skills learnt during summer dance camp - a collaboration between Mae Murray Foundation and Open Arts. Well done all! You rocked it!

"I have seen 'S' shine and come out of her shell from the start of this project. She was shy, very quiet, now she's smiling, contributes to the group work, speaks up and gives her input. Her confidence is through the roof when she's dancing. It's like she comes alive."

Identify, Identity, Impact

This is our programme to explore future possibilities for our organisation. This includes working with experts in market research & development, web design and evaluation.

In 2023-2024 we were partners in the inclusive Tourism project for Belfast City Council with Smith & Kent Consultancy. With our Lived Experience team, we facilitated Living Library events, created online training modules, and filmed 3 accessible itinerary videos. We were also part of the organising team for Belfast's first ever Inclusive Tourism seminar, Embrace the Inclusive Spirit.

This is all part of our development of our 'Chatting for Change' programme, which we will roll out as a training tool for businesses and organisations.

"Thank you to @OPENARTSNI and amazing guests for hosting the Living Library as part of the accessibility and inclusive session at our industry briefing yesterday!"

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"I thought the format was excellent. There was time and space to reflect in between discussions and a great group of people with a range of lived experiences to learn from. Pre-training day reading material was very helpful and the explanation at the start great too. Really worthwhile morning all round, thank you."

Enjoy

Takeaway Theatre

The performance is aimed at engaging and empowering the recipient and their family to co-create a drama based on a story of their making.

The experience is about engagement, empowerment and fun for the individual but it also, importantly, enables siblings, parents and family members to enjoy a shared experience.

Throughout the year, we delivered visits from Derry to Downpatrick, Bangor to Ballynahinch.

"We had the most lovely visit from Jojo and Stephanie. M is still saying their names. It was such a lovely time shared with them and so gentle to suit M's needs, which by the end of the session he was confident, excited, alert and engaged beautifully. I have some lovely photos I'd love to share with you and please feel free to share if you wish too. We are so grateful for this service. Thank you."

"We had Paul and Stephen aka Ron and Barry here last night for our Takeaway Theatre!!!! We absolutely loved it! M and E had a blast. We were delighted at how M engaged and created his own piece of theatre. We have never seen M engaged and concentrating and taking part so well. The artists guided us through each stage of creating our own little show, and we all loved performing it! Absolutely amazing, I highly recommend every family to book the Takeaway Theatre!"

"I cannot thank you, and your team, enough for the amazing time we had today; Jessica and Stephen are wonderful and brought so much joy into our home. I must say I was a little concerned as A had been in a bit of a 'twist' all morning and it was hard to know how engaging he would be. However, the pair were able to turn him around and their patience and creative imaginations were amazing. We all had a really great time. Thank you all so much again."

Creative Conversations

On Sunday 8th October we took over the Crescent Arts Centre as part of Bounce Festival!

The audience experienced performances from Monday Players, Open Arts Community Choir, Luminous Soul dancers; heard readings from the creative writing group and participated in a workshop with visual art participants. Inspired by the idea of a 'Living Library' they also had the opportunity to chat with the participants through Q&A sessions to learn about the diverse perspectives and life experiences of disabled people.

"Just a little note to thank you for a wonderful afternoon yesterday. To see all Open Arts offers and to enjoy the experience was brilliant. Congratulations to all involved and thank you to Maeve for guiding us!"

It was such a lovely vibe in the building on Sunday. The sound of the singing in the stairwell was incredible (and I particularly enjoyed having a little dance to the choir performing in the café)

That was a fab performance from Open Arts on Sunday, everyone who was here gave it raving feedback too. The performances were incredibly moving, and the choir was just stunning on the stairwell. Someone even said they should record there the sound was so good. It was amazing to see Darren and crew also so so excited about their performances, and to hear about the script writing going on during lock down etc was amazing. Well done to the whole team – you were amazing.

Pieces of Us

In June 2023, we launched our exhibition 'Pieces of Us' in Arts for All in Cityside.' This was a collective exhibition from all our visual art groups. Luminous Soul performed in the main mall and Open Arts Community Choir enticed the audience into the exhibition space. The exhibition was in place until the end of August.

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"What an amazing show of talent and so many varied art forms. It is also fantastic to have so many tactile pieces."

Other achievements

In January 2024, our chairperson Margaret Mann won the Arts and Business Award for Leaders on Arts Boards. Our Finance and Programme Officer also competed ILM Level 5 in Leadership and Management.

Financial review

The company is a non-profit making organisation. The results are set out in detail on page 5. The company had net income for the year of £17,540.

The principal funding sources of the charity are by way of grant, principally from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and by way of charging fees to various groups for services rendered.

Reserves policy

The trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the funding of the organisation. Unrestricted free reserves are currently £82,340, as detailed in note 14, and this level of reserves would be sufficient to fund the organisation's running costs for a period of six months at current levels of spending and cover redundancy payments for the current staff. The trustees consider this level of reserves to be adequate to meet the needs of the charity.

Structure, governance and management

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

I H Lindsay
S O'Donnell
C Murtagh
J McConville
M Mann
K Hughes
A Hope
S Finnegan

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Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Open Arts for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



I H Lindsay
Trustee

Date: 12/12/2024



S Finnegan
Trustee