

ATTIC THEATRE COMPANY (LONDON)
(A Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

TRUSTEES' REPORT (continued)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Trustees

Nicci Allt (resigned 10 February 2022)
Paul Adrian Baynton
Robin Belfield
Angela Jane Caldara, Treasurer
Abigail Graham
Jenny Lee
Conrad Murray (resigned 17 August 2021)
Peter Shore, Chair

Charity registered number 1041549

Registered office Mitcham Library
157 London Road
London
CR4 2YR

General Manager Victoria Hibbs

Artistic Director Jonathan Humphreys

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Accountants Ward Williams
Bay Lodge
36 Harefield Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 1PH

Bankers CAF Bank
25 Kings Hill Avenue
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4TA

Attic Theatre Company

Report of the Trustees for the year ending 2022

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Charity for the period 1 March 2021 to 31 March 2022, having converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 1 March 2021. The Trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements of the company comply with the current statutory requirements, the company's governing document requirements and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) as amended by Update Bulletin 1 (effective 1 January 2015).

Since the Charity qualifies as small under section 383, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under The Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 is not required.

The company also operates under the names "Attic" and "Attic Theatre Company". References to either of these names in the body of this document should be taken as

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references to Attic Theatre Company (London).

Mission Statement: Our mission is to make excellent live theatre and cultural experiences accessible to all, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, in Merton and across the UK. We regard these as twin strands of Attic's mission and of equal prominence.

Vision for the company at the end of this plan: To grow the audience for all our work and our local partnerships, delivering increased arts engagement in our local area.

Our report is presented under the following key areas:

Chair's Report

Purposes and Activities

Achievement and Performance

Financial Policies

Structure and Governance

Members' Liability

Chair's Report

There is a detailed summary below (see Achievements and Performance) of the many successful activities that took place during the year, the first under our new Constitution as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO).

It was a year still overshadowed by COVID-19 and its associated lockdown measures but one which saw a gradual return to normal activities. Initially, we had to continue virtually all of our activities on an online basis but, by the second quarter (July to September 2021), many of our participatory projects were able to return to be run on a face to face basis. By the end of the year, we were beginning to see progress towards achieving our usual rates. It did not prove possible to return to running a full scale theatre production in the year but the *Learning to Fly* one man show toured in a number of locations.

Our small staff group once again made huge efforts not only to keep Attic running but to ensure its vibrancy and innovative style. Great achievements in their fundraising initiatives means that Attic's participatory work is fully funded until at least April 2023. The commitment of the staff group to the organisation's success is much appreciated by the trustees.

Peter Shore, Chair

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Purposes and Activities

Attic produces theatre productions, workshops for community participants and creative events. All our work is underpinned by the aim of making the experience of theatre, participatory projects and the opportunity of expressing yourself through creativity and performance available to everyone.

In a usual year our productions tour to both traditional and non-traditional theatre spaces in both our local area and further afield, to reach as diverse an audience as possible and make our work accessible to all. In the year 2021 – 2022, as we move out of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions continued we have provided a blended offer of some face to face and some online delivery.

Our community workshops are centred on our local area and focus on two groups: young people facing disadvantage, including young refugees and ESOL groups, and older people who may be at risk of becoming vulnerable and isolated from the community as they age. The same core creative team works in both areas alongside experienced workshop leaders, maintaining the company's reputation and high standard of work in both fields.

All our work is offered either free of charge or at a subsidised rate at point of delivery and is open to UK residents irrespective of income, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation or political or religious belief. Attic positively promotes and encourages social inclusion and strives to connect with and foster a wide range of communities through its productions, workshops and creative events.

Attic is mindful that our activities are subject to personal taste and may occasionally and inadvertently cause offence. We take the views of our audiences, participants and beneficiaries very seriously and have a comprehensive set of policies and company procedures in place, including a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy, Equal Opportunities policy, Child Protection policy and Adults at Risk policy. All staff are made familiar with these policies, adherence to which is a condition of employment or engagement. Feedback from beneficiaries is collated on a regular basis, analysed formally and presented for review to the board of trustees and our funders.

Achievements and Performance

2021-2022 has seen Attic begin to rebuild our activities following the relaxation of the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Having increased our output of activities in 20-21 by 40% through the addition of a dedicated Community Engagement Producer we actively built on this in 21-22, and both

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maintained existing activities as well as building new partnerships, collaborations and piloted a series of new projects, specifically tailored to addressing needs which have arisen for young people out of the pandemic. Over the year we delivered 15 participatory creative projects in collaboration with 22 community groups (an increase of 41% on the previous year), regularly engaging over 170 people each week. We engaged 27 practitioners for our participatory work and one writer/performer for a preview tour of a new play which saw our return to live performance and touring theatre post pandemic.

Overall Beneficiary Statistics for activities in the period 1 March 2021 – 31 March 2022

Projects encompass 4 strands of work:

- 1. Theatre Productions and new writing**
- 2. Participatory work with older people**
- 3. Participatory work with EAL (English as an Additional Language), refugee and asylum-seeking young people**
- 4. Participatory work with young people facing adverse environments and experiences**

Key achievements include:

- 10 Performances of live theatre**
- 7 venues (nationally)**
- 281 Audiences**
- 404 participatory workshop sessions**
- 694 workshop Beneficiaries**
- 4399 attendances at all activities**

Our participants include:

28% elderly users

57% young users

14% reporting as D/disabled users (excluding those with Special Educational Needs)

70% Ethnically diverse users

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1. Theatre Productions and New Writing

- **Learning to Fly** – We launched a preview tour following a period of research and development of James Rowland's new play. As both writer and performer James toured the show to seven venues throughout the UK including Merton Arts Space, Arts at the Old Fire Station, Oxford, The Tobacco Factory, Bristol, The Spring in Havant, Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester, Longfield Hall, Camberwell and Harmony Hall in Walthamstow. James received total audiences of 281, with an average 40% capacity.

In our home venue of Merton Arts Space we held three performances to approximately 30 people each night which is only slightly lower than pre-COVID-19. With a large space we were able to implement sufficient social distancing measures including mask wearing and were clear that the performance was relaxed and the audience were free to move around should they feel the need. The production received an 88% positive response, with 53% saying it was their first return to live theatre since the pandemic and 89% saying they had chosen to come because of their connection to Attic and knowledge of our previous work.

In the next period this show will run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2022 followed by an autumn national tour to over 30 venues across the UK.

Feedback:

“Great that you are bravely producing such high quality work in these testing times!”

“We were completely spell-bound and absorbed in James’s life story from beginning to end: a moving friendship between a young boy and older woman.”

“intriguing, captivating and extremely well performed.”

- **All Roads** - by Roy Williams OBE. The script development has continued, and we have scheduled a tour of four venues throughout London including in our home locality (either Merton Arts Space or New Wimbledon Theatre Studio), plus the Bernie Grants Arts Centre in Tottenham, Theatre Peckham and Tramshed in Woolwich. The production is being developed in partnership with Tramshed who are going to provide rehearsal space.

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As the play centres on an experience of Black motherhood it became apparent that it would really benefit from having a director with lived experience of this. We approached Suzann McLean, Artistic Director of Theatre Peckham and she agreed to direct the show, becoming a further partner in the production.

Our intention was to mount the production in May 2022 but a lack of sufficient funding plus the legacy of COVID-19 and some continued building work with one of our partners necessitated a delay and we have moved our planning later into the year. Having now secured funding we are planning for production in spring 2023 but have a new director, Anastasia Osei-Kuffour as availability became a problem for Suzann with the new timeframe.

- **Canons House** – We were approached by members of the restoration team at the Grade II listed building in Mitcham to support their community engagement activities marking the culmination of their £4.4million National Lottery Heritage Fund award. In late 2022 we have commissioned a local writer, Daniel Ward to write a play that touches on some of the people and history of the house.

Outcomes for Theatre Productions and New Writing:

Increased partnerships and collaborations: We built relationships with three writers, solidified our relationship with two performance venues, formed relationships with 9 new venues and have built 4 new development partnerships.

Increased arts engagement: We achieved 40% average capacity on our live shows, which is a remarkable achievement given the reduced audience figures the theatre industry is seeing post pandemic

Increased arts provision: We delivered an economically viable show to seven venues throughout the UK at a time when there is heightened risk to the arts and live performance whilst maintaining our provision locally. We are continuing to develop a show that will tour next year and will support the local area with a site specific, bespoke play that brings to life the history of the area

Increased profile: We are increasing our profile by building relationships with key venues in outer London who share similar aims and by exploring shows which will reach new demographics of audiences. Our preview tour has also built connections with other audiences and localities across the UK which we aim to develop with future work leading to increased earned income and output. The commissioned play for Merton cements our profile in the borough as an organisation that is able to meet a local brief creatively working effectively with partners from different sectors.

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2. Participatory programme of creative activities

a. Participatory work with older people

	Sessions	Registered Participants	Ethnically diverse	Other
Going for a Song	65	65	26%	96% Older people 15% identifying as D/disabled
Open Dance workshops	48	33	7%	100% Older people 21% identifying as D/disabled
Dementia Dance workshops	38	31	56%	95% Older people 57% identifying as D/disabled
TOTAL	151	129	30% Av.	97% Av. Older people 31% Av. identifying as D/disabled

- **Going for a Song** - Singing workshops for the over 55s to support mental and physical wellbeing, reduce isolation and increase creativity.

We continued to deliver sessions online throughout the summer of 2021 as COVID-19 was still prevalent. In autumn we returned to face-to-face sessions with a significantly lower level of attendance which is slowly growing. We had hoped to deliver some community performances over Christmas but a spike in COVID-19 cases prevented this. In place of this, our Musical Director provided a performance to the Stroke association as part of their Christmas lunch.

The social aspect and the enjoyment of the workshops achieved a positive score of 96% and 94% reported feeling happier following the sessions.

Feedback:

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“Thank you and Christopher for your time and effort in keeping the singalong going and giving us so much fun in these difficult times that we are still living in.”

“[It] Engages the mind, It makes me happy”

“Since being at home for 2 years because of COVID-19 it is sooo nice to be among friends and to sing again”

- **Open Dance workshops/ Dementia Dance workshops** – Movement and dance workshops for older people and those suffering with dementia and their carers to support mental and physical wellbeing, reduce isolation and increase creativity.

Open dance:

We continued a full year of activity online as the group included participants from outside Merton who would not have been able to travel. A small but loyal group attended weekly and all reported the sessions as being invaluable in reducing isolation. Participants have reported increased fitness levels and wellbeing.

In early 2022 the Merton libraries team approached us to provide some healthy living and wellbeing workshops and we took the opportunity to transition back into live sessions. We delivered 6 sessions in February and March to a regular group of around 8 people per week.

Dementia dance:

Sessions for the Merton Dementia Hub in Mitcham continued online for the summer term as the Hub had not yet opened post-pandemic. We pre-recorded sessions and uploaded them onto YouTube so participants could view them at any time and could return repeatedly to any session they particularly enjoyed. This also provides respite to carers which has become increasingly scarce during lockdown.

This kind of activity has really benefited those suffering with Dementia and their families as they can do it together, and the music and movement provides joy, connection and occasionally a lucidity for some.

In September the Hub reopened its doors and we returned to face to face sessions but with significantly reduced numbers. This is steadily growing and we have noticed how beneficial the sessions are to carers as well as those living with dementia as they are given a change to express themselves alongside those they care for.

Case studies from the online Dance Facilitator:

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"Name Withheld" comes most weeks as a release from her job/situation as carer for her partner. When "Name Withheld"'s partner passed away, she came to dance on the day of his funeral as she wanted to take her mind off the day. I felt like we were an important part of her day and she felt supported and appreciated our company even if it was on Zoom! The class continues to help her to keep motivated and fit as she has continued to be a consistent regular.

Feedback (online):

"It's a brilliant, brilliant class."

"And even if you're feeling really tired, when you've done a workout with Natasha, it's a fantastic feeling afterwards."

"I like the brain workout because ... you have to remember the music, you have to remember the steps...You have to have that all in your head, and that does help keep your brain young."

"I find that my memory since I've been starting dancing has improved a lot."

"I feel my energy levels have improved a lot."

"To continue the class for health and well-being especially for seniors and promote inclusivity and around isolation"

Feedback Dementia Hub:

My wife engages in each session and has the confidence engendered by Annie to be very active. As an ex PE and Dance teacher, she finds the classes extremely stimulating. For me, as her carer, I get a lot of enjoyment in seeing glimpses of her almost being back to how she was prior to the illness taking hold."

"Thank you, I enjoyed every minute of that."

"I feel beautiful now".

Outcomes for participatory work with older people:

Increased wellbeing, mental health and happiness. Physical activity boosts mental wellness. Singing releases 'feel-good' endorphins and 'stress busting' oxytocins.

Reduced isolation and improved community cohesion. As a group classed as 'high risk' of contracting COVID-19, many isolated for an extended period of time, lost friends and relatives and found the support of the online community invaluable. Regularity of sessions and familiarity of attendees has considerably supported participants to feel less isolated

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through lockdown. It has allowed contact and check in with friends and has imbued a sense of normality. Sessions support connection between carers and sufferer and provide respite.

Improved skills and cognitive retention. Movement and musicality improve lucidity and cognitive retention. A variety of dance genres improves experience and knowledge of new dance techniques. Participants are given choreography and dance moves to improve their technique and widen their knowledge of dance styles. Singers are taught vocal skills breath and lung control exercises and gain skill in musicality and technique.

Improved physical health and energy – Physical activity helps with flexibility, strength, stamina, movement and balance; Improved immune system through increased antibodies, known as Immunoglobulin A; Provides a cardiovascular workout and is beneficial to lung capacity. This can prove a potentially useful benefit for maintaining lung function as a combatant to COVID-19's effects.

b. Participatory work with EAL, refugee and asylum-seeking young people

	Sessions	Participants	Ethnically diverse	Other
St Mark's Academy, Mitcham	33	89	100%	
Women's group at CARAS	30	58	100%	100% female 15% identifying as D/disabled
Rutlish School, Wimbledon	15	53	76%	
Sutton and District Training – ESOL group	32	72	100%	
Sutton and District Training – 'Gamers' group	25	14	54%	100and SEND/ identifying as D/disabled
Employability workshops	30	71	100%	
Integration workshops	10	26	68%	33% refugees and asylum seekers
TOTAL	175	383	85% Av.	

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- **St Mark's Academy, Mitcham** – workshops to support the integration and communication skills of young EAL students, refugees, asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors

Returning to live session in early 2021 we found that the number of students increased over the year and participants had a huge range of English-speaking ability and familiarity with life in the UK. In order to best meet the needs of this group we divided into two and extended the length of each session.

Over the summer term as well as building on their knowledge of drama games in order to increase confidence in the students, we gave them a more obvious platform to speak and express themselves. We asked them to write down phrases they wanted to teach us and we translated them in to English and then recorded them. The results were phenomenal.

Autumn term began by introducing students to British traditions such as Bonfire Night, leading to conversations about political unrest and power struggles around the world. Through drama this year students have also had the opportunity to address and ask about issues surrounding gender politics.

The Spring 2022 term focused on drawing up plans for a summer performance and movement piece. Drafting scripts and creating characters allows us to serve each student in a safe environment which encourages them to speak as much English as possible, let off steam, laugh, and express themselves through performance.

The audio recordings made over the summer term can be found [here](#).

Feedback:

“The students were absolutely ECSTATIC that they got to do drama all morning! This was evident during the games as many of them became really hyper by the end of the second session! It was a really lovely playful atmosphere and a great session for the two new boys to start off in” Facilitator

“Abdul in the second group was so talkative today, telling us lots of lovely stories of his past. At the end of the session, he wrote us a note which is worth adding here. It made both our hearts so full: ‘I’m very happy today because I have a lot benefited. I am proud all my teachers so thanks. Wish you good health and happy beautiful. The world is beautiful, amazing and wonderful. Lovely (sic)’” Facilitator

- **Rutlish School, Wimbledon** – workshops to support the integration and communication skills of young EAL students and provide mentoring opportunities for Gifted and Talented students

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Following a successful pilot series in Summer 2021, we continued for an academic year delivering the Many Voices programme to the students at Rutlish school. As part of the sessions some year 12 students were also given the opportunity to be mentored and gain leadership skills, leading the final sessions. This was a very interesting addition to the series which brought a unique dynamic to the group and enhanced the work.

Feedback:

“To see these boys come out of their shell has been wonderful. It’s a beautiful thing. [...] It’s like an escape.” Teacher

“a lot of these students don’t have the opportunity to shine.”

“It was a great learning experience.”

- **Women’s group at CARAS: Community Action for Refugee and Asylum Seekers, Tooting** – workshops to build independence, networks, employability and language skills in refugee and asylum-seeking women.

Sessions were relaunched online in 2021, moving to blended delivery in in the summer term and finally returning to face to face delivery in January 2022. Over the summer term the group worked on creating a video that incorporated as much language from around the world as possible and discussed certain emotions ie happiness, love, friendship and hope. Additionally, over the year they did drawing tasks and some creative writing. Through conversations we learnt some women wanted the vaccine but didn’t know how to book it (which CARAS then helped them with.) and the facilitator demonstrated on Zoom how to do a lateral flow test, after a session. Following this, they all ordered a kit each.

A few of the group have been dispersed from hotels to different areas of the country, but still join the weekly sessions. It became apparent how much they value that time and the friendships they have formed over Zoom. For some it has been a little bit of consistency and normality when many other things in their life are in flux.

The in-person sessions have been brilliant and the atmosphere has been electric. There has been so much joy in the room and it's been a great opportunity to facilitate new friendships between the women who are housed in the hotels, as previously most had never had the opportunity or confidence to speak to each other. We've had lots of returners from our core group from before the pandemic and online as well as new

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women from the hotel, including a trans-woman who was really nervous about joining but absolutely loved it. She'd mentioned she really wanted to make some female friends.

Feedback:

"I really liked today. It was so helpful because I could practice talking about where something is"

"Thank you so much, I learned some new words and had fun"

"Now I understand prepositions more"

"I love drama, it's my favourite day of the week"

"I'm definitely coming next week, this was so much fun and just what I wanted. I love that you give us a space to speak and are behind us"

"Thank you so much for inviting me today. I only arrived last week, and this is the first time I've laughed since entering the country. I'm looking for female friendships and felt very welcome. I can't wait for next week"

"During the check-in a few of the women mentioned how difficult this week has been after all of the images on television regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They talked about how they wanted some escapism and drama works so well for that." (Facilitator)

➤ **Sutton and District Training – EAL group/'Gamers' group**

The Many Voices sessions were also rolled out to Sutton and District Training who approached us to support their young refugees and asylum seekers to reconnect and get outdoors following restrictions being lifted and latterly their Creative Media Group who had particularly insular and had a number of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) requirements and needed support with confidence, sociability and speaking and listening skills.

Feedback EAL group:

"the most obvious outcomes we've seen in the project is more confidence in speaking, more confidence generally in interacting with others and improved teamwork. However, having the space to just play and have fun I'd say has also had a huge benefit to their mental health. Many of the students are turning 18 and have had ongoing struggles with housing, money

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and other adult issues. They were clearly under a lot of pressure, but you could see they did just let loose during the games, have fun and act like carefree children again! Facilitator

"I come from Somalia and now I have lived in England for two years. When I came to Sutton and District Training, I was scared and shy, after two months of study we entered lockdown and worked from home. When I came back to college after lockdown, I was still shy, Sutton and District Training brought in two people to teach drama, after that drama helped me with my confidence".

Feedback 'Gamers' group:

"They're a different group [since starting the project]. It's quite remarkable; it's really helping them. People who wouldn't normally speak are coming in and having conversations. The ones who are participating are changing the dynamic of the group."
Sutton and District Training tutor

"I really enjoyed this. It helped with my projection and speaking. It's been hard to speak out; this really helped a lot with that, with public speaking and presenting. The games [were my favourite]. That allows me to just speak. One year of online school made me more quiet; I wasn't speaking as much. It's helped me to be more outspoken."

"Since I was at my previous college, I was really quiet. I didn't know what answer was what. Since this course, I've been really good at speaking."

➤ **Employability workshops**

CARAS (Community Action for Refugee and Asylum Seekers), Tooting

St Mark's Academy, Mitcham

Sutton and District Training, Carshalton

– workshops to provide employability skills for EAL students and refugee and asylum-seekers

A pilot series of employability workshops delivered across three groups targeted at EAL young people who face additional challenges of gaining employment. The sessions use drama to improve language skills, build confidence and support employability through focusing on public speaking, demystifying recruitment processes, interview skills, and pitching or advocating for yourself as a candidate. Participants develop presentation skills and social norms such as eye contact and handshakes, familiarising themselves with these small elements that sell them as a prospective candidate. Q&A sessions with EAL

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professionals sharing their experiences of pursuing a career also provide participants with positive role models and real-life experiences of getting your foot on the first rung of the career ladder.

Feedback:

“Students reflected on their own skillsets and were proud to see what skills they had to offer”

“Both CV writing and requests for work experience have arisen out of the project and “students feel more prepared for applying to colleges and sixth form next year.”

“The talk was very powerful, and the students were enthralled...he gave some incredible advice about how to handle everyday life, such as ‘You can’t control what happened to you or the Home Office’s decision, but you can control how hard you work at college and what career decisions you make in the future.’ After the talk every single student worked incredibly hard to create their CV in the afternoon and were very forthcoming in asking us for help.”

➤ **Integration workshops**

St Mark’s Academy, Mitcham

– workshops to support and facilitate the integration of EAL students, refugees and asylum-seekers with mainstream pupils

A pilot series of workshops aimed at forging connections between the young students from the ‘SMART’ unit (a dedicated unit within the school to support newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers) and the mainstream pupils within the school as a result of facilitators noticing a marked lack of cohesion between the groups. As the sessions progressed the work began to focus more on difficult conversations and explore taboo subjects such as racism, sexism, cultural differences and generally create a safe space for people to ask questions they may not feel comfortable broaching for fear of reprisal.

Feedback:

“John stayed behind to ask what he should do if he finds a cultural practice “disgusting”. We discussed how what might seem gross for one person can be normal for another and vice versa. Therefore, we need to be tolerant, understanding and not cast judgement. He clearly has an interest in this topic and is curious about how to navigate it better.”

Facilitator

Outcomes for participatory work with young refugees and asylum seekers:

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Increased knowledge of the English language. Students learn English in an informal setting. The topics covered focus on their immediate environment and give them a vocabulary which allows them to interact with their peers.

Increased sociability. The sessions build friendships and trust within the group, allowing the participants to make friends outside of their background and culture and build support networks. Participants interact with their peers, learn more about each other and are able to find common ground to forge friendships and connect. Peer groups are expanded and this reduces isolation. They teach valuable social skills such as speaking and listening.

Improved skills. The participants learn theatre skills and life skills: how to express themselves, communicate their ideas and lead a group. They learn more English and learn about different cultures and backgrounds as well as learning more about the UK and their new environment. They learn teamwork, leadership and to listen, how to deal with simple social interaction, buying a coffee etc. The mentors gain experience of working as youth practitioners and gain valuable leadership, listening and teamwork skills

Employability skills. Participants learn about the recruitment process in an informal setting. The sessions give them appropriate vocabulary which allows them to succeed at interview and advocate for themselves. They learn interview techniques such as retaining eye contact and clear communication.

Improved confidence and self-esteem. Through shared endeavour and play they begin to trust in their peers and environment, building teamwork and they are proud of the work they achieve. They gain confidence to integrate themselves into the UK and begin to become familiar with British culture. The work builds on their attitude to life, gives them aspirations and encourages a tolerant and diverse community that embraces multiculturalism and they begin to develop personal values. The Jack Petchey Award scheme further reinforces this.

Improved behaviour motivation and academic achievement. The work builds on their attitude to life, gives them aspirations and encourages a tolerant and diverse community.

c. Participatory work with young people facing adverse environments and experiences

	Sessions	Participants	Ethnically diverse	Other

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Leap! Drama Workshops Haslemere school, Merton Purley Oaks primary, Croydon Morden Hall Park Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid (BCWA)	23	92	75%	9% identifying as D/disabled (excluding SEN)
Young Carer's Storytelling workshops	20	18	53%	22% identifying as D/disabled
Creative Arts Group	28	56	90%	
Wellbeing workshops Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid (BCWA)	12	6	71%	100% female
TOTAL	83	172	77% Av.	

- **Leap! Drama Workshops** - Holiday workshops to boost confidence and prepare young people for the move to secondary/back to education. Delivered to four groups:

Haslemere: We ran four series of holiday workshops as part of the Leap project. The sessions with Haslemere primary school in Merton were part of the larger HAF programme supporting young people of free school meals with extracurricular activities and easing hunger anxiety.

The sessions ran for a full day with a morning and afternoon session over two weeks and explored developing soft skills through game playing and improvisation.

The sessions feedback reported a 92% success rate overall with 100% stating the sessions had improved their confidence and their teamworking skills by 92%. 85% of the group had never done drama before.

Morden Hall Park: working in partnership with the National Trust we delivered four full days of sessions for the users at Jigsaw4U, a local charity supporting young people facing difficult family situations. Morning sessions focused on drama and interlinked to themes around the environment and nature and the afternoon sessions explored bush craft and sustainability in a practical, hands-on way. The partnership with the National Trust was a real key element of this and we will continue to build on this for the future.

Purley Oaks: Through our work at Sutton and District Training we were recommended to this primary school in Croydon to support with their holiday provision. The group were made up of much younger children than we usually work with and so it was a good opportunity to expand our provision.

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We felt again, that like the sessions at Haslemere the students had not had access to drama before and were unfamiliar with the set up but over the week and overall the group found the sessions beneficial.

Case Studies:

"Name withheld" was not wanting to join in with the rest of the young people. He was sulking in the corner. He was reluctant at first. However, by the end of the session he was really engaged. Particularly, he enjoyed the music mindfulness. This was very beneficial for him as he used that time to find some quiet and was really eager to share the thoughts he was having when the music was on. He created lots of imaginative scenes and stories in his mind which he shared with the group.

"Name withheld" - really stood out this session. In previous sessions he's been quite disengaged and often displays behaviour which suggests he doesn't want to be involved. He has been very chatty previously, often distracting others. However, today, he took on a leadership role during the Magic Shapes exercise and showed really brilliant guidance and teamwork to his team. He supported the younger ones to engage with the exercise. I praised this a lot and told the specific young person that I felt he showed brilliant leadership. I asked the group at the end if they knew what I meant by leadership and he explained this to me and seemed proud to do so.

Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid (BCWA) asked us to support the children of their users over the summer holidays. With minimal funding we were only able to provide two sessions with children ranging from 3 to 9 in age. This of course meant we had to plan very carefully our activities to engage with such varying levels of ability, energy and understanding. However, the group were all very engaged and we created a talent show which could showcase each participant's skills at their own pace and level. This was shown to the parents at the end of the session.

Feedback:

"The children got to feel, touch and listen the nature around them with their eyes close. It was very interesting to see how they trusted each other and how they interact with the nature. After, they had to write down what they felt and heard when their eyes were closed." Workshop Leader

'What else would I have done at home this week?!

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"I've never done any kind of drama before, so it was nice to be able to try something new"

- **Young Carer's Storytelling workshops** – workshops to provide respite to young carers, forge friendships and boost positive mental health

We delivered a series of online sessions to two groups of young carers: a continuation of the sessions from the previous spring plus a series of sessions for an older age range.

Younger group: We delivered 10 sessions with the younger group focusing on creating characters based on 'modern Greek Gods' and this resulted in a radio play which can be listened to [here](#). The group were very committed and enthusiastic throughout the series, attendance was exemplary and they were all very supportive of each other.

Older group: We delivered 10 sessions with the older group. By focusing on informal, very low-pressure and varied exercises that allowed for conversation to happen in between activities, the facilitators found the right structure, which supported those with higher pastoral and communication needs. Participants made small but sure gains in confidence, both in new creative exercises and in social interactions via Zoom.

Feedback:

Younger group:

"Konstantina and I were very impressed at their creativity and dedication this term...They looked very proud when they heard their final plays." Workshop leader

"I loved drawing my character today and giving him a tv head and remote control hands!"

"I really liked learning new things about the Greek Gods and making our characters"

" I don't like Mondays but I loved creating my two characters today and sharing them"
"it was great fun and very good for my confidence"

"I met other young carers"

Older group:

"Overall the process was a success as it was not just a space for YP to be creative, expressive and play games, but it was also a hub that created a safe space to be heard,

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an opportunity to reconnect with friends (and make new ones), but it was also accessible and flexible to altered needs of individuals."

"It seems that the workshops give the young carers a chance not only to engage in the tasks but to have important conversations with one another. We've been exploring the theme of friendship, with many of them making very astute comments about the joys and complexities of being a friend."

Workshop leader

- **Creative Arts Group** – sessions to support young people experiencing adverse childhood experiences and/or environments. Delivered in partnership with Shine Merton, a local organisation supporting young people at risk of underachieving.

We delivered online workshops over the summer term, returning to in person sessions from autumn 2021.

The online sessions over the summer were a real joy and it was noticeable how far the participants had come, the friendships they had made and the commitment they had to the work. The group started to share even more about how they were feeling with personal anxieties around COVID-19 and the pressure of exams and were able to support each other by listening and empathising.

Upon returning to live sessions the structure of the sessions changed to a carousel of activities meaning the number of young people we engaged with increased, but we saw them less frequently as the group rotated each week.

The autumn term focused on good sportsmanship and drama has worked really well in establishing boundaries and expected behaviour.

The spring term focused on radio plays, as a nice way to put their ideas and creativity into a piece that they can keep for the future. Over the second part of the term we recorded these and held a sharing at the end of term to listen to each other's stories. These can be found on our website [here](#).

Feedback

"So much of the stuff we talk about here helps at school, it's a nice feeling to know something the rest of the class don't and we are able to explain it. My teacher was really surprised I knew what it meant"

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"I loved meeting the others but also you guys. I feel like I got to know you all properly. I loved the team games and you all especially kept me company during lockdown. It was normal for an hour"

"I loved exploring and learning new things every week. I didn't know about a lot of these things and I found new interesting things"

"Name withheld" in particular has shown an incredible improvement in his behaviour. He no longer has tantrums generally, and in drama his focus is always good but today it was exceptional. He was the first ready in the circle multiple times and even put his hand up a few times to ask questions without shouting out first. Great to see such fantastic progress. I pointed this out to him at the end and he looked very proud!" Workshop Leader

- **Wellbeing workshops** – sessions to support young people experiencing adverse experiences and/or environments with positive mental health and wellbeing activities.

Following on from the Leap activities for the children of the users of BCWA we piloted a series of sessions working with the young women who had experienced domestic violence and were staying in safe houses. Many of these women were teenage mothers and who had been forced to move away from friends and family. This isolation was further compounded by the restrictions of the pandemic.

Feedback

"Those who were able to continue showed great progress, "Name withheld" in particular who was with us from the start. She found a love for creative writing, something she'd never considered or tried before.

[At the end of the series] She mentioned how much she'd loved creative writing and would continue with it in the future, she also asked if it was likely we would continue in the future. We could see she was extremely tired this morning. She had a massive suitcase with her and had moved out of the refuge just before the workshop. She'd gotten up at 5am to make sure she could move, drop her daughter at her mams, clean her refuge room and then be able to attend the session."

Workshop Leader

"To be honest, the workshop was amazing, Rachael is a great host and the young women and myself learned a lot about creative writing. This was a safe space to have a respite of their daily problems, the women were able to disconnect and have fun, I would not

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change anything, this was all what they needed, the positive impact that this workshop did in these young women is tremendous.” BCWA

Outcomes for participatory work with young people facing adverse environments and experiences:

Increased peer group – meeting and making friends with people from other schools, circumstances, cultures and backgrounds.

Improved sociability and social skills – opportunities to chat and play, building intersocial skills, providing frustrated and confined siblings and families with constructive tasks and positive activities to do together.

Improved emotional wellbeing and maturity – creative and mental stimulation boosting and supporting positive mental health; preparation for and knowledge of teenage and young adult life.

Improved creative skills - learning improvisation, devising and presentation and storytelling; creative writing, character, devising, storytelling and poetry; through exploring different themes and topics imaginatively and participating in creative based, related activities.

Improved confidence and self-esteem - learning to work as a team and be creative in their approach. The performance/film at the end of the week provides a sense of achievement and worth and the opportunity to lead engenders pride, self-worth and aspirational thinking. They are given a safe space to explore their identity and reflect on their attitudes and aspiration. They learn to work as a team, trust in others and be creative in their approach.

Improved understanding, empathy and tolerance – through listening to others' work and presenting their own.

Improved teamwork and leadership skills – through listening and working together on a shared theme of work as well as taking turns to lead in games and exercises.

Financial Review

Core funding awards

We continued to receive financial support from the London Borough of Merton with a core revenue grant which contributes to the costs of our overheads and our two part time staff, and which stabilises our infrastructure, allowing us to confidently seek funds from other sources to support the delivery and planning of our work.

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Trusts and Foundations

We carried forward a level of restricted funds for projects from the previous year, namely the Jack Petchey Foundation Coronavirus Recovery grant, Jack Petchey Leader award for a pilot series of Many Voices at Rutlish school, the Wimbledon Foundation Get Set, Get Active fund for the Dance workshops, and LB Wandsworth for Many Voices at CARAS.

Funds received in year include Arnold Clarke Community Fund, Magic Little Grants, Clarion Futures, crowdfunding from the Aviva Community fund and London Community Response Fund COVID-19 Wave 5 grant administered by the Wimbledon Foundation. We also received awards from the KFC Beyond the Bucket Foundation, the Jack Petchey Relgnite fund and the Princes Charles Trust for activities that will start in summer 2022.

These awards allowed us to scale up our participatory activities and exceed our annual targets, securing both the activities and the Creative Engagement Producer role which has proved essential to realise our increased operations.

Private income

Our regular corporate sponsor has maintained their annual contribution albeit at a reduced level which has been useful to cite as seed money in fundraising applications, and we have received occasional low level donations from our supporters.

Earned income

This year has seen a marked increase in our earned income. We piloted some new projects in direct response to the needs of young people following COVID-19 such as our Employability workshops and our Many Voices EAL workshops which have been particularly in demand following the restrictions imposed over the pandemic as refugees, asylum seekers and EAL young people have had reduced interaction and so have been lacking in social skills, English speaking and listening skills. We were able to offer these projects to organisations at a fee and generated 20% of our overall turnover through earned income.

Forward financial planning

The funding landscape has changed significantly particularly with trust and statutory funding bodies such as the Arts Council. There is a considerable increase in competition for funds with fewer streams available. Luckily our ethos of delivering participatory projects with a social impact and our diverse touring models reflect this change but many

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large funding schemes remained on hold. For the 2022-23 financial year we have secured funding from the Jack Petchey Foundation Relgnite fund and from the Merton Neighbourhood fund and along with restricted funds carried forward are fully funded for this forthcoming financial year. This, we hope, will allow us capacity to forward plan for future years and secure a more stable funding base over the longer term.

Reserves Policy

Attic Theatre Company requires a level of free reserves to safeguard the organisation, protect options for future development and to achieve the following:

- the option to develop new services or expand current services in line with the changing needs of the community
- to ensure that delays in the receipt of expected income do not interrupt services or cause serious financial difficulty for the charity
- to provide the ability to survive unexpected setbacks and problems arising from internal or external causes.

In June 2020 we increased our free reserves to a minimum of £20,000, to take into account inflation over the past few years and designated the free reserves over and above this to our New Projects Fund which provides seed money for new developments in both our community outreach and live performance programme.

Total income for 2021-2022 was made up of funding awards from the LB Merton revenue grant, trusts and foundations, donations and sponsorship, commissions and community subscriptions to our regular activities.

Structure and Governance

Attic Theatre Company (London) converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 1st March 2021. Charitable status was granted on 28 October 1994.

The charitable object for which the company was established is to “advance education for the public benefit through the promotion of the arts with particular, but not exclusive, reference to the dramatic arts”. There have been no changes in the objectives since the last annual report.

The charity is managed by a board of a minimum of three trustees who meet quarterly and whose powers and responsibilities are defined in the governing document. The trustees also decide on the general strategy and policies to be adopted in the pursuance of the objectives of the charity. The Board is currently made up of six trustees. The trustees

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are provided with a job description and code of conduct as well as a series of company policies and procedures as part of their training and induction and are informed of training courses and development opportunities throughout their tenure.

None of the trustees received remuneration or any other benefit from their work with the organisation, in their capacity as trustees. Any connection between a trustee or senior manager of the organisation or with any employed artist or production company is disclosed to the full board of trustees.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance on public benefit and fee charging. The charity relies on grants and other income from fees and charges to cover its operating costs.

The trustees have carried out their duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. The trustees have assessed the risk to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate our exposure to the major risks. A comprehensive set of policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly by the trustees.

Staffing

Attic operates on a daily, part time basis under the artistic direction of Jonathan Humphreys and the general management of Victoria Hibbs. The Creative Engagement Producer is on a renewable fixed term, part time contract.

The workshop facilitators for our participatory projects are freelance practitioners.

MEMBERS' LIABILITY

The Members of the company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up.

This report was approved by the Trustees on and signed on their behalf by:

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Peter Shore, Chair