

IMPACT REPORT 2023

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01. Introduction

Founded in 2020 by Alison Garner, Elevator Arts CIC emerged in response to Southend's vibrant cultural community, addressing a gap in free-to-access, high-quality participatory arts projects, particularly in performing arts, for young people.

Incorporated in February 2020, Elevator Arts faced immediate challenges from the pandemic and national lockdown. Responding to the crisis, the organisation shifted focus to tackle the mental health crisis for young people and address pandemic-exacerbated inequalities.

Since 2020, Elevator Arts has navigated these challenges, building strong community relationships and measurable positive impact. Positioned at the intersection of cultural enrichment and social impact, the organisation aims to advance to the next level, ensuring viability and adaptability in a changing environment.

In 2023, Elevator Arts delivered diverse creative projects through its BLAST programme and other activities, collaborating with key partners and supported by local and national funders.

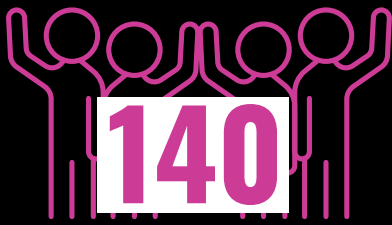
BLAST Youth Theatre thrived, engaging members in Southend's Halloween Parade and Arts Award. Collaborations with Southend Adult Community College and Barons Court Primary School led to positive transformations in well-being and confidence through drama activities. Hidden Voices, developed with Kool Carers, showcased impactful artwork by young carers at Towngate Theatre. Sound ON 23, designed for children experiencing homelessness, offered therapeutic creative activities during school holidays.

Elevator Arts' commitment to positive change through the arts is evident in the multifaceted successes of its work in 2023.

“
**TAKING PART IN THE
PROJECT MADE ME
FEEL NORMAL.**”
Hidden Voices participant



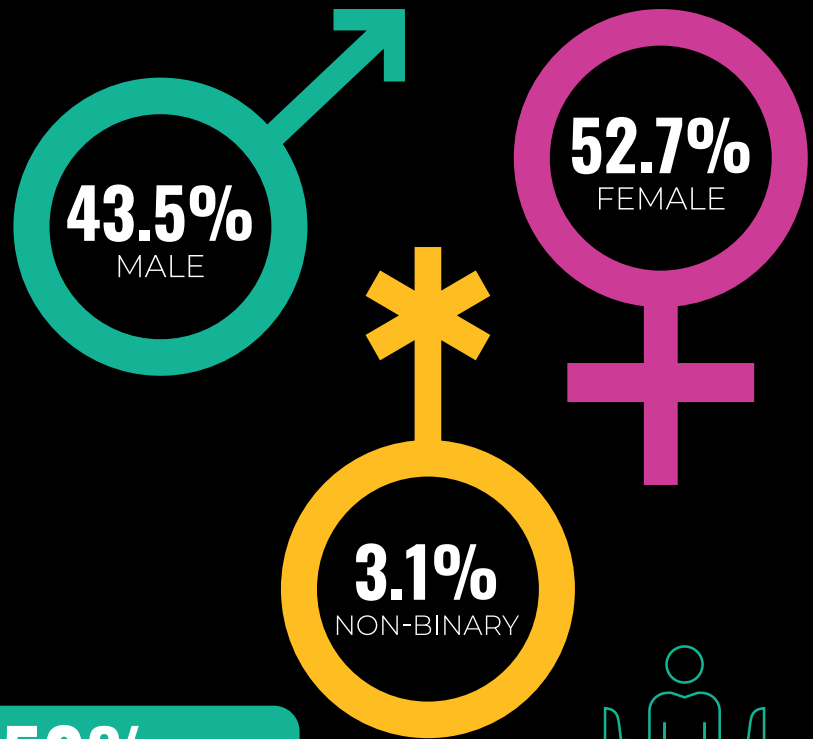
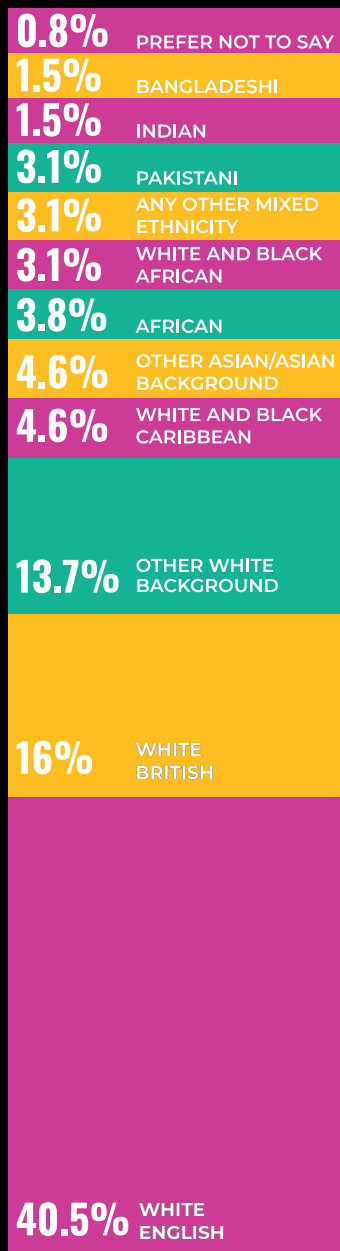
02. Data: 2023 in numbers



IN 2023 WE WORKED WITH 140 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



ETHNICITY





OUR WORK



02

02. BLAST Programme 2023

BLAST is an innovative programme featuring diverse drama projects aimed at enhancing spoken language skills and fostering overall well-being. The initiative successfully integrated the expansion and enrichment of our existing BLAST Youth Theatre with the introduction of new projects in educational settings. The primary objectives of the BLAST programme were:

- Empowering and enabling young people to improve their communication and language skills, boost confidence, and enhance overall well-being.
- Developing a more significant presence and impact within schools and educational settings.
- Facilitating organisational and artistic development for Elevator Arts.

“
**TAKING PART MADE ME
FEEL HAPPY, CONFIDENT,
JOYFUL, CALM, NO
WORRIES NOT STRESSING**
”

Participant



02. BLAST Youth Theatre



Partner: Welcome To The UK

Funders: The National Lottery through Arts Council England & The Co-op Community Fund

Elevator Arts launched BLAST Youth Theatre in autumn 2021 when we joined forces with Welcome To The UK, a Southend-based charity dedicated to guiding newly arrived immigrant families on their journey to embracing life in the UK.

BLAST Youth Theatre is a vibrant hub for youngsters aged 8-12, focussed on those with English as an additional language. Through dynamic and exhilarating drama activities, we ignite the spark of confidence, develop language skills & support well-being.

In 2023 BLAST Youth Theatre members performed their own production to family and friends, created masks, costumes and lanterns & took part in Southend's Halloween Parade plus undertook Arts Award Discover & Explore.

“

IT FEELS LIKE BEING PART OF A FAMILY. IT HAS HELPED ME WITH MY CONFIDENCE A LOT

BLAST Youth Theatre member

”



02. BLAST @ Southend Adult Community College

“
ONE LEARNER EVEN SAID HE WOULD NEVER HAVE DARED BEFORE TO SPEAK, LET ALONE PERFORM IN FRONT OF SUCH A CROWD AS HE DID YESTERDAY!
”

Southend Adult Community
College staff member

As part of our BLAST programme we worked with Post-16 Special Educational Needs (SEN) learners at Southend Adult Community College during spring 23. Participants took part in drama activities to improve wellbeing, build confidence & self esteem and develop communication & social skills.

The young people grew over the six weeks - from needing encouragement to engage with drama games to being self-assured and confident enough to create their own comedy improvisation show and perform in front of an audience.

Partner: Southend Adult Community College

Funders: The National Lottery through Arts Council England, The National Lottery Community Fund & Southend Education Trust through Community Investment Board



02. BLAST @ Barons Court Primary School

“

I LEARNT TO BE CONFIDENT IN SHARING MY IDEAS TO A WHOLE CLASS

BLAST participant

”



During the Autumn term 2023 Elevator Arts collaborated with Barons Court Primary School, engaging Year 4 and 5 pupils in transformative drama activities. The focus was on enhancing language skills, fostering confidence, and creating a positive impact on overall well-being.

The drama activities significantly boosted students' confidence, encouraging them to share ideas and opinions confidently and respond thoughtfully, both crucial skills in school and for personal growth.

Partner: Barons Court Primary School

Funders: The National Lottery through Arts Council England & Community Investment Board



02. Hidden Voices

“ I ENJOYED TAKING PHOTOS, BEING CREATIVE & MAKING NEW FRIENDS. I FELT HAPPY & PART OF A TEAM.

Participant

”



APRIL - JUNE 2023

Partner: Kool Carers & Towngate Theatre

Funders: Essex County Council's Arts & Culture Fund

Hidden Voices, a collaboration with Kool Carers, addressed the growing need for impactful creative projects supporting young carers facing mental health challenges and neurodivergence. Over the past two years, Kool Carers noted an increase in referrals, with many young carers experiencing mental health issues and/or neurodivergent conditions like autism.

Caring responsibilities deeply impact the physical and mental well-being, social lives, and self-confidence of children and young people. Balancing education and caregiving roles often leads to pressure, stress, anxiety, and loneliness.

Professional artists George Morgan (writer and director) and Laurence Harding (photographer) worked with young carers to sensitively explore their experiences, aspirations, and self-image. Through this collaboration, participants created original artwork capturing the complexity of their lives, sharing their stories to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

The young carers produced striking images, incorporating text and spoken word to craft personal portraits revealing their often hidden narratives. Their work was showcased at Towngate Theatre as part of Carers Week 2023.

02. Sound ON

APRIL & AUGUST 2023

Partner: South Essex Homes

Funders: The National Lottery Community Fund

Sound ON 23 was a development of our ongoing creativity & wellbeing project with children & young people experiencing homelessness.

During school holidays, children and young people facing homelessness encounter unique challenges. Sound ON 23 stepped in to address these difficulties by providing creative activities to promote mental health and well-being, all while nurturing crucial communication skills.

The positive impact of creativity on mental health is well-documented. Engaging in creative activities such as art, drama, and writing can be therapeutic, offering an outlet for emotions and a sense of accomplishment. For the young participants of Sound ON, this meant an opportunity to channel their feelings, reduce stress, and build resilience during a time of uncertainty.



“HE LEARNED NEW TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING HIS FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS. I REALLY APPRECIATE HOW MUCH EFFORT YOU’VE PUT IN TO MEET HIS INDIVIDUAL NEEDS & INTERESTS.”

Parent of participant





MAKING A DIFFERENCE

CASE STUDIES



03

03. BLAST @ Southend Adult Community College

In Spring 2023 students at Southend Adult Community College with Special Educational Needs (SEN) participated in BLAST drama sessions. Students were given choices about the activities they wanted to do & the facilitators worked with the students' individual needs and challenges, including ADHD, speech difficulties, mental health, and anxiety. They were open and accepting, and didn't restrict the students in any way.

One student, K, took the opportunity to relax and express their humorous side, which is not often seen. K was often reluctant to take part in certain games to begin with and always focused on "dark" humour and themes. Towards the end, he often volunteered to take part in activities and was happy to play group games. He acknowledged at the end that he is more self-aware of his "dark" humour and understands that it's not always appropriate or suitable in bigger groups of people.

Another student, C, became more involved as the sessions went on and appeared to enjoy it even though he was adamant he would not. C spent the first few weeks sitting out and not taking part in the exercises. However, the facilitators continued to acknowledge him and his voice and came up with the role of "props department" for him. He took this responsibility on really well, which also encouraged him in the planning of the final show and contributing feedback to his peers.

R was very nervous in the first few sessions. As he found his stride, there were moments when he volunteered to step in for people who were absent from the class. He also took on a directorial role when planning the final performance and was confident in putting forward ideas in the improv games.

BLAST successfully provided a safe and accepting environment for students with diverse needs to express themselves and develop their skills. The facilitators' patience and awareness were key in helping the students overcome their initial hesitations and become more involved in the sessions.



“ I ENJOYED WORKING WITH EVERYONE, IT WAS FUN AND MADE ME FEEL HAPPY. ”

Participant

03. BLAST at Barons Court Primary School Drama Project

During the BLAST drama project at Barons Court Primary School Elevator Arts witnessed significant shifts in engagement, confidence, and collaboration, showcasing the positive influence of creative expression.

Initially hesitant participants gradually became active contributors, volunteering for activities, engaging in group work, and confidently participating in class-wide activities.

Participants demonstrated eagerness in presenting their work, maintaining focus during group activities, and expressing newfound confidence in sharing ideas and performances.

J's remarkable personal growth included active collaboration, volunteering for performances, and participation in whole-class activities—an impressive journey from initial hesitation.

M overcame self-consciousness, embracing drama play, taking pride in sharing work, and actively participating in class presentations—a transformative shift from initial reluctance.

E showed positive behavioural changes, becoming more supportive, patient, and demonstrating self-control and increased self-awareness.

Children expressed pride in their work, actively congratulating themselves, reflecting a sense of accomplishment and growing self-assurance. The group eagerly anticipated visualisation exercises, reflecting sustained enthusiasm and a positive outlook towards the sessions.

The project's success was underpinned by the creation of a supportive atmosphere, fostering collaboration and encouragement among participants.



“

AT FIRST I WAS AFRAID TO SHARE IN FRONT OF PEOPLE BUT I OVERCAME IT BY REALISING NO ONE IS JUDGING ME.

”

Participant



OUR PEOPLE



04

04. Our Team

Elevator Arts is a female-led organisation with leaders and staff embedded within our community and often with shared identity or lived experience that reflects the communities we work with.

Elevator Arts are proud to work with a diversity of freelance artists, facilitators and educators to deliver our projects.

Elevator Arts employees and freelancers monitoring data 2023:

- 45% - non-White British with 22% British Black African/ Caribbean
- 44% - LGBTQ+
- 13% - disability/ long-term health condition
- 22% - neurodivergent

04. Our Board

Alison Garner - Director & Founder:

Alison's multifaceted role encompasses project development and management, steering the organisation toward innovative and impactful projects. Alison is responsible for strategic development and takes the lead on fundraising.

Michelle Barrington - Non-Executive Director & Delivery Lead:

Michelle's primary focus for Elevator Arts is on project delivery and facilitation. Michelle is Director of BLAST Youth Theatre, developing creativity and personal growth among the young participants.

Eleanore McCann - Non-Executive Director & Compliance & Safeguarding Lead:

Eleanore's role encompasses project coordination, ensuring that all aspects of our projects run smoothly inline with our objectives. Eleanore oversees compliance & is our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Eleanore is committed to ensuring a safe and inclusive creative space for all participants & staff.



PARTNERS & FUNDERS



05

05. Partners and Funders

Over 2023 Elevator Arts is proud to have worked in partnership with:



Barons Court
Primary School and Nursery



southend adult
community college



Elevator Arts projects have been gratefully supported by:



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



ARTS
& CULTURAL



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CONTACT US



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06. Contact Us

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