

Annual Report 2018 – 2019

Theatre has the power to change lives

We know this from our own personal experiences and observations, but also from extensive research that shows how participation in drama can improve mental health and wellbeing.

Our Vision

To set up an independent community theatre organisation that is run for (and ultimately run by) people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues.

Our Mission

For the public benefit, the relief of those in need, in particular but not exclusively, people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues in the Coventry, Warwickshire and surrounding area through the provision of drama/performing arts workshops and other activities or forms of training/support.

Our Aims

- To offer regular, structured drama workshops and more informal, member-led Creative Cafés, in a relaxed and friendly environment for a diverse range of people.
- To provide opportunities for performance.
- To run one-off workshops/short programmes eg. practical skills sessions using drama to help enhance confidence (for job interviews, future training or employment).
- To run leadership/facilitator training, enabling participants to support and lead groups, support other participants, and actively take part in the running of the organisation (eg. specific training for participants to become future trustees).
- To run programmes to develop general leadership skills for use in different contexts outside of the organisation.

Our Ethos: developing a member-led approach

'User-led' or member-led approaches have their roots in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the disability rights movements of the early 1980s. Recent research in this area states that peer support and member-led initiatives are vital for people's wellbeing and self-management. For people who are consistently marginalised by society, we believe that it is important to develop approaches where control shifts away from 'professionals' to the individuals themselves, and where the focus is on people's lives, rather than any specific condition, category or diagnosis. Following on from these principles is the value that everyone has a great deal to contribute – they have the assets to understand themselves and help each other as members of a group with a shared goal.

Welcome

Welcome to our first Annual report!

It was a stunning twist. As the raw noise of the wolf howls died away a frisson of electricity shot through the audience as the climatic twist of the performance sunk in. A moment's silence and then the applause began. It was the end of the first Underground Lights Community Theatre performance kindly hosted by the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry.

Pursuing a vision and setting up a charity is not for the faint hearted. The seed of an idea for a community theatre in Emma Ormerod and Lewis Ford has taken years of growth and hard work.

We knew that we wanted Underground Lights to work with people who have experienced homelessness or mental distress and produce high quality theatre.

We knew we wanted a strong member led ethos, to work to a high standard and be clear about what we did so we could work in a constructive partnership with others.

We also knew and still know that human relationships are messy and difficult. That drama can be messy and difficult. That setting up a Community Theatre company aiming to combine these elements would be anything but straight forward. But we have seen that theatre and performance can create memories, bonds and a powerful sense of achievement that transcends those difficulties.

I want to say thank you to Emma, Lewis, the trustees, all of our members and the many people from other organisations for generously watering that seed of an idea over the past 2 years and bringing it into flower at that first thrilling performance.

Our first annual report is an opportunity to look back at how we've attempted to put our aims into practice and set a culture that will stand us in good stead for the future.

If you're reading this you probably have some connection or interest in Underground Lights. When you've finished please do be in touch with us. Your ideas for partnership, constructive critique, encouragement (and of course funding) are always very welcome.

Jonathan Chilvers
Chair of Trustees

"I lost everything... all confidence. But after coming here, coming across so many people, it started bringing up my confidence and I thought I might come back. [...] after coming to this drama [...] it brought my confidence back".

"I haven't been able to get to all the rehearsals because of the cancer I've been going through, but when I've come I've found that I've had something else to think about and [...] it has been like a healing process in a way for me, because of what I've been through".

Our history and co-founders

Underground Lights was set up by Emma Ormerod and Lewis Ford in March 2018, becoming a registered charity in August 2018. Both Emma and Lewis have their own personal experiences of mental health issues, and Lewis has experienced homelessness.

As a drama tutor for Crisis Skylight in Coventry and Warwickshire, Emma has worked with people experiencing homelessness in the community, teaching Open College Network Levels 1 and 2 in Performing Arts. Her ten years' experience working with socially excluded adults includes work at a homeless drop-in centre in Leamington, Crisis in Birmingham and a PhD in Criminal Justice, involving research into mental health.

"As a teenager, I struggled with my mental health just after finishing my GCSEs. But when the Northcott Theatre in Exeter put out a call for people to join an acting chorus, I decided to sign up, and pretty soon I found that theatre was the glue that was holding me together. As well as giving me a focus, an outlet for creativity and opportunities to meet people, it gave me a space where I could put everything else I was feeling to one side. I think that was a big part of what led me towards this – it felt important to me personally. And then when I met Lewis, who had experienced homelessness, it was clear that was something that we shared – he just got it."

(Emma, co-founder of Underground Lights)

Lewis has been a member of Crisis in Coventry since 2016. Attending drama classes at Crisis he achieved his OCN Level 2 Award in Performing Arts and subsequently worked as a volunteer teaching assistant in the drama class, supporting members with learning disabilities. Lewis was asked by Crisis UK to voice over and appear in the #EverybodyIn video for the national campaign to mark their 50th anniversary year. Most recently, Lewis was one of 30 candidates selected by the BBC to attend their Class Act development workshops for actors with disabilities.

"Theatre changed my life. In the time between starting drama with Emma at Crisis and her leaving, I went from being a shut-in near-mute who was scared of just about everyone to wanting to run drama sessions for quite large groups of total strangers. I think that says it all. Doing theatre built my confidence in myself and social skills so I was able to get on in other areas of life much better. Now I'm able to chase my dream of an acting career. So when Emma told me she was leaving Crisis to start up her own theatre company and invited me along for the ride, I had to say yes because I knew it just had to happen and I had to be part of it".

(Lewis, co-founder of Underground Lights)

"One of the things I found, I worry a lot and get paranoid about acceptance and stuff [...] what I've got out of it is the acceptance and you've allowed me to feel accepted and that really means a lot to me. I don't have any anxieties about coming to this group. I'm really looking forward to going forward with the next one, because everyone is just amazing".



Our team

Emma Ormerod, Underground Lights Manager
Lewis Ford, Project Assistant

Our trustees

Jonathan Chilvers (Chair)
David Calvert (Treasurer)
Chris Campbell (until 18th March 2019)
Emma Ormerod (until 18th March 2019)
Lewis Ford
Tracy Villiers (appointed 18th March 2019)
Emma Marks (appointed 18th March 2019)

Our governance

The Trustees are responsible for the governance and strategy of Underground Lights. The trustees bring a mix of skills and experience. Our commitment to being a member-led organisation means that it is important to recruit individuals to our board who have experience of mental health issues and/or homelessness. Of the five people who will be serving on our board from April 2019, three have lived experience of either mental health issues or homelessness.

The Board aims to meet at least four times per year and delegates day to day responsibility for the running of Underground Lights to the staff team. Following an application and interview process new trustees are appointed by the Board at one of their meetings.

As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) our governing document is our Constitution (foundation model, where the voting members of the organisation are the Board of trustees).



Our work – summary of our first year

March 2018

- Underground Lights Community Theatre becomes a constituted organisation on 23rd March 2018.

April 2018

- We submit our application to become a registered charity.

May 2018

- The Belgrade Theatre agrees to support our work by offering free office space and rehearsal space for our first set of workshops.

August 2018

- We become a registered charity, no. 1179553.
- The board of trustees develop policies and procedures in preparation for our future work.
- Several bids are submitted in order to secure funding.

October 2018

- Underground Lights is officially launched at the National Survivor User Network (NSUN) AGM in Derby.
- We develop our online presence through our new website, twitter account and Facebook page. We currently have 135 followers on twitter and 51 on Facebook.

November 2018

Our funding bids are successful and we receive:

- £1,933 from Heart of England Community Fund
- £9,867 from National Lottery Communities Fund
- £750 from William Cadbury Charitable Trust
- Along with donations of £2050 we are able to run our first set of drama workshops.

December 2018

- Preparation for our workshops begins.
- Tracy Villiers is appointed as our new drama workshops volunteer.

January 2019

- Co-founder of Underground Lights, Lewis Ford is appointed as our new Project Assistant.
- We start running our first set of ten weekly drama workshops.

February/March 2019

- We work with 14 people who have experienced homelessness and/or mental health issues over the course of the term. 8 members attend over half the sessions.
- 11 members (including our volunteer) take part in our end of term performance in the Patrick Suite at the Belgrade Theatre.
- 'Werewolf' (a piece devised by the group) is performed to an audience of 32 people. It receives positive feedback and marks the official launch of the new Belgrade Springboard companies.
- Our application to become a Belgrade Theatre Springboard Company is successful! This means that the theatre will support us as we continue to grow and develop.
- Beth Fiducia-Brookes is appointed as our new Drama Facilitator for the summer and autumn terms.
- Emma Marks and Tracy Villiers join the board of trustees. Of the five board members, three have personal experience of mental health issues and/or homelessness.



"I think a lot of what we've achieved as a group is down to the inspiration that we got from Emma and Lewis. Without them, we wouldn't be where we are now. I was inspired, right from the start. All the things we did right from day one, I was inspired to do more. And it has been almost an epiphany. It's something I want to do more of".

“Before I started coming here I was stuck in the house 24/7. I never got out or anything 'cos I didn't know anybody. So its helped me get out and about and make new friends”.

Our Finances

Our initial fundraising activities have been successful and we have received £12,550 in grant funding and £2050 in donations. Because we are a new charity and have only recently started our fundraising activity our financial position is relatively insecure. We do not have a reserves policy at present. However, we do have a surplus of £11,633 enabling us to continue in operational existence until the end of December 2019. For this reason in preparing the financial statements the trustees believe that Underground Lights is able to continue as a going concern for at least the next nine months. Fundraising will continue to be a priority for the coming year.

Income 2018 - 2019

Grants – Heart of England	£1,933
Grants – National Lottery (Awards for All)	£9,867
Grants – William Cadbury Charitable Trust	£750
Donations	£2,050
Total income	£14,600

Expenditure For 2018 - 2019

Salaries and fees	£1,971
Rent/venue hire	£0
Utilities	£0
Equipment	£0
Volunteer/trustee expenses	£12
Performance & rehearsal costs	£209
IT costs	£128
Phones	£64
Marketing & Publicity	£360
Fund raising expenses	£0
Office & admin expenses	£186
Insurance	£38
Total expenditure	£2,967



Theatre has the power to change lives

The Underground Lights Board of Trustees submits its statutory Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2019.

The Trustees' Report and Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, and Charities Act 2016 and comply with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (GAAP). They also comply with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard, also known as the Charities (FRS 102) SORP.

The trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). Exemptions from disclosure: this annual report does not omit or withhold any reference or administrative details.

Public benefit statement

In reviewing our aims, objectives and activities, the Trustees have taken into account the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Trustees ensure that the activities undertaken are always in line with the charitable aims and objectives as set out in Underground Lights' constitution.

With thanks to our supporters

Underground Lights would like to thank all the people who have given their time and money to help us begin our work, and particularly:

The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
National Survivor User Network
Heart of England Community Fund
National Lottery
William Cadbury Charitable Trust

We would also like to thank Marie Calvert, Sarah Yiannoullou, Kirk Teasdale, David Crepaz-Keay, Graham Downie and Rebecca Thomas.