



Theatre has the power to change lives

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



Underground Lights is a Belgrade Springboard Company, running workshops in association with the Belgrade Theatre Click Spring Programme. We are run by and for adults experiencing social disadvantage, homelessness and/or mental health issues in Coventry, Warwickshire and the surrounding area.

OUR TEAM

STAFF

Emma Ormerod (Artistic Director/ CEO)

Beth Fiducia-Brookes (Drama Facilitator)

Lewis Ford (Project Assistant, April 2019 – December 2019)

Wes Finch (Projects & Activities Assistant, from February 2020)

TRUSTEES

Jonathan Chilvers (Chair)

David Calvert (Treasurer)

Lewis Ford

Emma Marks

Tracy Villiers

Colin Tysall

VOLUNTEERS

Chris Campbell (IT, marketing and website)

Tracy Villiers (drama group)

Hayley Harman (drama group)

Darren Bird (lead volunteer, Creative Café)

Malcolm Cave (Creative Café)

Debbie Bridgeman (Creative Café)

Underground Lights
c/o Belgrade Theatre
Belgrade Square
Corporation Street
Coventry
CV1 1GS

Email: info@undergroundlights.org
Website: undergroundlights.org
Twitter: @ULtheatre
Instagram: [undergroundlightscov](https://www.instagram.com/undergroundlightscov)
Charity number: 1179553

Our Objectives



- To offer regular, structured drama workshops in a relaxed and friendly environment for a diverse range of people.
- To provide opportunities for performance.
- To run outreach work through our Creative Cafés, where people new to performing arts can drop in, take part in different activities and share their creative work in a safe space.
- To provide mentoring and training for our members, enabling them to support and lead groups, support other participants, and actively take part in the running of the organisation.

Our Ethos: a member-led approach

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 – people have the assets to understand themselves and help each other as members of a group with a shared goal.

19

Members who performed at the Christmas Creative Café

Welcome



As I write this, the Covid-19 pandemic means that we are all in 'lockdown'. We are unable to meet together and run our groups as usual. However, as a team we are continuing to stay true to our ethos and aims; encouraging creativity, increasing social connections and empowering our members.

It feels like a strange time to be looking back over the past year, which feels so long ago already, but in our first full year of activity as a charity we achieved so much!

In April 2019 we were still finding our feet. We had run 10 weeks of drama workshops with 12 members and were looking to grow and develop, so we were delighted to welcome Beth Fiducia-Brookes to our staff team as our new Drama Facilitator and more recently, Wes Finch as our Projects and Activities Assistant. Together they have worked so hard to support and develop the wonderful creativity and talent of our members.

“There is so much for us to be proud of and we would never have come this far without our supporters.”

Over the past year we have run over 30 drama workshops and 25 Creative Cafés. Our membership has grown from 12 to 28 and working as a team they have created some wonderful performances; *The Time Jump Adventure*, *Mona Lisa!* and *No Time For Christmas*. 19 members also performed at our Christmas Creative Café which

featured poetry, dance, drama, and songs written and performed by our members. We loved performing at Shop Front Theatre and would like to thank the team for all their support for us and our work this year. As a Belgrade Theatre Springboard Company we have also received valuable mentoring and support from the Click Spring team. Our members have had the opportunity to watch a variety of professional plays (including *Under the Umbrella* and *Crongton Knights*) and have also explored backstage and met the cast of *Frankenstein*.

There is so much for us all to be proud of and we would never have come this far without our supporters; our grant funders, the Belgrade and Shop

Front Theatres, our trustees and all our wonderful volunteers. I am tremendously grateful to everyone who has given so much of their time and their love to a project that only three years ago was just a dream in my notebook.

And of course, Underground Lights is nothing without the energy and enthusiasm of our members who care so much about our work. This may have started as 'Emma's Idea' but we are now a growing collective with a shared vision. The coming year will no doubt bring many challenges as we learn to do things differently in a post-pandemic world, but it will also bring new opportunities and new hope. And as we grow and develop as an organisation and celebrate Coventry as City of Culture in 2021, the creativity of our members will continue to flourish.

Emma Ormerod
Artistic Director/
CEO





Welcome

In April 2019 our Creative Café group where people could dip their toe in new artistic waters was still an idea on paper. A good idea, but not an idea that had come face-to-face with practical reality. We just didn't know if it would work or if anyone would come. We've been amazed and delighted about how successful it's been and in many ways have been running to keep up ever since.

funding didn't come through. Coming through these harder parts of the story have made us stronger together and made the successes worthy of extra celebration!

I want to finish by giving a huge shout out of deep respect and admiration for Emma, Beth, Wes, the trustees and most importantly every single one of Underground Lights' wonderful members. We've seen over the last few months that none of us knows where the next part of the story will take us, but it's a privilege to be on this journey alongside you all as we keep finding that theatre really does change lives.

Jonathan Chilvers
(Chair of Trustees)

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 seven people serving on our board, five 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).

Annual reports rightly focus on the positive and are a chance to reflect on just how far we've come. But let's not pretend that turning a vision into reality or running a charity are easy. They're not, especially when you don't know what will happen next. There were times in 2019 when Underground Lights had to look at some really difficult worst case scenarios in case our grant

Coming through these harder parts of the story have made us stronger together.

As a trustee I work with Emma O and Jonathan regarding safeguarding, and with Emma M for Equality and Diversity. I'm also able to convey members' thoughts and ideas, as I was a volunteer with the drama group from the beginning. Recruiting members was a very exciting opportunity.

During the past year, I have had the privilege of witnessing first hand the drama group grow in confidence and enthusiasm, bond and support each other during drama sessions. The performances have been absolutely fantastic and I have felt honoured to share the pride and elation of the drama group when all their hard work has been a real success. I also enjoyed meeting the cast of *Frankenstein* and being invited behind the scenes.

In August 2019 Tudor Trust came to visit us about our funding application. Many of the drama group members attended and each expressed how much Underground Lights means to them; how their confidence and self-esteem had massively improved, learnt new skills and bonded with each other like a family. Without Underground Lights they would never have had the opportunity to be involved in drama or acting. Needless to say everyone was totally delighted to have funding from Tudor Trust for two years.

Tracy Villiers
Trustee



Our work this year

2019

April - May

Beth Fiducia-Brookes, our new drama facilitator, begins in post and works with 11 members in our drama group to develop a piece for performance at the end of term.

June

We begin to run our Creative Cafés at Shop Front Theatre. We recruit our lead volunteer, Darren Bird and two member volunteers, Debbie Bridgeman and Malcolm Cave. All our volunteers have personal experience of homelessness and/or mental health issues.

Seven people attend our first Creative Café session and over the coming months we begin to grow rapidly. 16 new members join us over the coming months and by August between 14 and 16 people regularly attend the Creative Cafés (a mixture of drama group and Creative Café members).

11 drama group members perform *The Time Jump Adventure* to an invited audience of 35 in the Patrick Suite at the Belgrade Theatre.

July - September

Our weekly Creative Café workshops continue and include creative writing (led by Theatre Absolute), song writing (Wes Finch), drumming (Vic Guillamon), singing (Sally Greenaway) and shadow puppets (Tony Fisher). One of our new members, Julianne, also ran a dancing session with us. At the end of each session there is time and space for members to share their own creative work.



October

Two new members joined the board of trustees. Of the seven trustees, five have lived experience of mental health issues or homelessness.

November

The drama group performs *No Time for Christmas* and Creative Café members perform *Mona Lisa!* at Shop

Front Theatre to an audience of 43 people. 19 of our members perform at this event.

Our funding applications to Tudor Trust, Heart of England Community Foundation, Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, Eveson Charitable Trust and The Albert Hunt Trust are successful. Together with other donations and fundraising efforts we are able to continue our work into 2020 and beyond.

We launch our new website and develop our online presence. This grows to 261 followers on Twitter and 116 on Facebook.

December

19 members perform at our Christmas Creative Café. This is a celebration of all our work over the year and features poetry, dancing, drama and songs written and performed by our members.

● Continued on next page

Over the past year

Two members have been supported to become Creative Café volunteers.

One member who joined our Creative Café last year as a member has now been recruited to be our new drama group volunteer.

Four members have been supported to apply to and

attend Voluntary Action Coventry's 'Improving Lives' course that addresses barriers to volunteering. As a result of this, one member is now volunteering at Hillz FM.

Six members were supported to sign up to the Belgrade Theatre's 'Arts Gym' for people aged 50 and over. One member participated in the Belgrade Theatre's 'Adult Acting Class'.

One member was supported to attend a day for short listed candidates for the Coventry City of Culture Leadership Programme. Three of our members were shortlisted and two have been offered places on the programme.



Our work this year

2020

January

Emma, our Artistic Director/CEO, is interviewed on BBC Coventry and Warwickshire about Underground Lights' plans for City of Culture 2021.

Our trustee away day gives us a chance look back at our achievements and plan for the future. It is led by Sarah Yiannoullou of the National Survivor User Network (NSUN).

• The spring term is our busiest yet.

Our drama group and Creative Cafés continue and we organise theatre trips to see *The Gift*, *Crongton Knights* and *Like There's No Tomorrow* at the Belgrade Theatre.

All trips are well attended with an average of 13 people attending. Creative Café members also go on a backstage tour of the Belgrade and drama members go on a trip to Coventry Cathedral, the Cathedral ruins and the Herbert Art Gallery to get ideas for their end of term performance.

February

Wes Finch is appointed as our new Projects and Activities Assistant. Two of our Creative Café members are involved with the recruitment process on the day.



March

We hold our first Member Forum on 4th March. 14 members attend and we discuss our plans for the future.



Hayley Harman (who joined as a member in August 2019) is appointed as our new drama group volunteer.

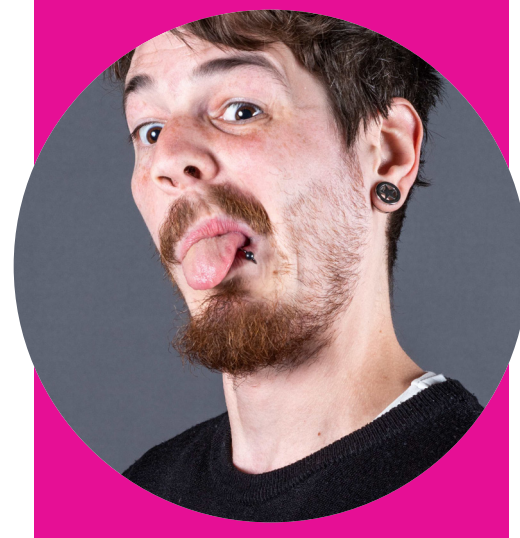
Our spring performance is cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a team we respond rapidly by changing our model of working. We set up a 'Stay Creative and Connected' Facebook group for members to share their work and introduce small team Zoom groups for creative practice. We also begin one-to-one work with members, calling those who do not have internet access each week and providing extra staff support via WhatsApp for members with additional needs.

Additional activities

In addition to our regular groups and performances we have also met with our members one-to-one and worked with people to identify what they would like to do next. We have supported members with application forms and attended sign up meetings to enable people to more easily attend different groups. As part of the progression and development of our members we also support people outside of sessions with their learning needs and interests.

Our members are also introducing each other to new projects within the city. For example, the New Vibes inclusive club night developed by Grapevine was attended by one of our members who then invited other Underground Lights members. Several of our members now regularly DJ as part of the project. Other members of our drama group are now also involved in the Bold As Bard project at EGO Performance.



Supporting people on their journey - Joe



I've found Underground Lights has continued to be everything I was looking for when originally wanting to join up. The drama classes have continued to help with my personal creativity, self-esteem, confidence, team building skills and massively with my mental health problems post-traumatic stress and physical health.



I'd like to call us more of a family than a team – the support we all try and offer to one another is priceless. What Emma and Lewis put together when forming Underground Lights, I

don't think they could have imagined themselves; the power of the support and self-worth it would be giving to people, the positive individual changes it would bring about, and its power to bring people together and stop isolation.

Our plays last year not only brought comedy, slapstick, music and drama, but such a wide range of appeal to our audiences. To be part of those performances not only

at The Belgrade, but also at Shop Front Theatre with the other members from Creative Café, bringing us all together as one, was amazing. It made me feel so proud and honoured to be a member and be able to participate, whilst at the same time watching every individual involved as their self-worth and confidence was growing all the time.



I love being involved in all the projects that Underground Lights do and I truly do feel that it does everything I believe it was set out to do and way, way more for its members and truly believe it has saved lives by bringing people out of isolation along the way.

Supporting people on their journey - Bengy

I started my journey with Underground Lights just before losing my mum. How I found out about UL was through Crisis Skylight – a homeless charity that got me a space in the drama group. I was so nervous because I didn't know anyone except Lewis (who also was a Crisis Skylight member). I also didn't have much hope of achieving my dreams, so in my head I was in a negative space. I had the drive but no way to explore one of my passions: acting.



charity based in Spon End).

The drama group have compiled all the plays like *The Time Jump Adventure* and *No Time For Christmas* together (with a little help from the staff members), right down to sound effects. We've also seen plays together as a group, like *Crongton Knights* and *Frankenstein*. Afterwards, we had visits from the cast (or met them in the lobby by chance), and each showed us how to become better actors.

We also got to do a writing competition for *Frankenstein*. My poster for that show is proudly hanging on my wall, and the pin badge is now on my favourite black jacket: bonus!

I was in a negative space. I had the drive but no way to explore one of my passions: acting

Each and every part of our journey has been an amazing experience.

The self-confidence I have gained has rewarded

me with further good

news: I have a place at Coventry City of Culture Leadership programme! Our working space will be The Box at FarGo Village, and I know one of my fellow actors and friends has also got through.

Several of our members have also been invited to the Houses of Parliament by Baroness Barran. I have countless ideas through speaking with so many people: two catwalk shows (one in London and one in Coventry), two photography groups that I'm running with a leader of the Royal Society of Photographers, a 3D art gallery and a scheme to teach blind people to take photographs. I've also begun creating an artists' directory – because artists are being overlooked in Coventry. I'm working on these projects with minimal help.

So, as you can tell – this is a journey, a great journey.

Since being a member and connecting with the rest of Underground Lights, we have become quite close both inside and outside the group. I've even discovered help when needed: like Cecelia, who is also amazing at prop making. We're now part of each other's groups outside of Underground Lights – including Godiva Speakers and New Vibes DJs (a project by Grapevine, an isolation



Supporting people on their journey - Susan

I have been with Underground Lights for over a year now. When I first joined I was a bit nervous as I didn't go out very much. I soon found they were a friendly group and made me feel welcome. We do drama and arts classes and visit the theatre to see plays. It has been a great time and we've put on plays which we've done together as a group.

We've learnt new skills about using the stage and voice projection, plus how to play different characters. We all share our thoughts and ideas

“It has been a great time and we've put on plays which we've done together as a group”

as a group to make the work and it has been fun at the same time.

Since lockdown first began I worried that I may go back to being isolated, but



Underground Lights came to the rescue again and provided arts and craft materials to keep us busy which we post onto the Facebook group and comment on each others'

work. We also have various plays which we can watch at certain screening times. We do a video call where we can all chat together and we've even written a song between us about our feelings and the lockdown.

I have found this group to be beneficial to my health and wellbeing. It has been a great pleasure to be a part of Underground Lights and what they've done to help us in these times and keeping us in a focused mind which I am grateful for. I am really looking towards us all being back together again. Can't wait.

Supporting people on their journey - Andrea

Underground Lights came into my life summer of 2019 when Emma visited the Voluntary Action Coventry to tell us about it. There were some other people on the course who loved it, who were already members and on top of that I liked that it was for people experienced with homelessness and mental health problems. It does feel like a safe place to be able to express yourself and not have to hide mental health issues.

The Creative Café has been really imaginative and physical, moving around a lot and warm-ups. I like the large group activities, then splitting into smaller groups to work on a project. Coming back as a group to perform



and critique each other is really helpful and usually very funny or profound.

We have had lots of workshops, like singing, or other music, drama etc. One of the best experiences was being able to do a small performance in front of an

audience. Going to the Belgrade Theatre for a backstage tour was FAB! It's a fantastic group and Underground Lights should go on forever, everyone who is involved will have their lives improved.

“One of the best experiences was being able to do a small performance in front of an audience”

Supporting people on their journey - Debbie

I am a volunteer at Creative Café. It's so rewarding. I meet and greet all the lovely members who come along to the café. I make drinks along with the lovely Darren and Malcolm, who also volunteer. People who come here might not be feeling their best and I am there as part of the team, to make them feel as welcome as possible.



The Creative Café is a safe space where everyone can enjoy themselves through weekly music, singing, creative writing, drama, and drumming. Emma Ormerod, Underground Lights' wonderful Artistic Director, just wants us all to have fun and enjoy ourselves! At the same time, I think her love of drama has passed down to all of us. Wes Finch, our Projects and Activities Assistant, has led song writing sessions

with us. In one session he asked us, to the delight of everyone, to write down words that had meaning to us. Then he put the words to music that he wrote. So beautiful. We were all singing along with our percussion instruments!

Vic Guillamon who visited us to lead the drumming session was brilliant! He has so much energy and drive! Members of the Café have given great feedback about Vic's techniques and teaching abilities. I found drumming a great release for life's everyday stresses.

Sally Greenaway, a singing teacher, has also brought her talent along to share with us. We have sung 'Let It Be' and 'Seasons of Love' from the musical *Rent*. It's so exhilarating! I feel like I have really achieved something too and have spoken to members who

have said it was incredible. There have been some beautiful, moving and even tragic stories written by members. The talent is outstanding.

A writing competition was launched by the Belgrade Theatre and everyone was given the opportunity to submit a story inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Some members' stories were read at an event at the Big Comfy Bookshop in FarGo Village and some of the cast members of *Frankenstein* visited the drama group and Creative Café!

“There have been some beautiful, moving and even tragic stories written by members.”

The Creative Café gives people a place where they can come and listen to some great music being made or play an instrument. They can take up writing again or take it up for the first time! It's where someone can be free of isolation and where we can connect with other.

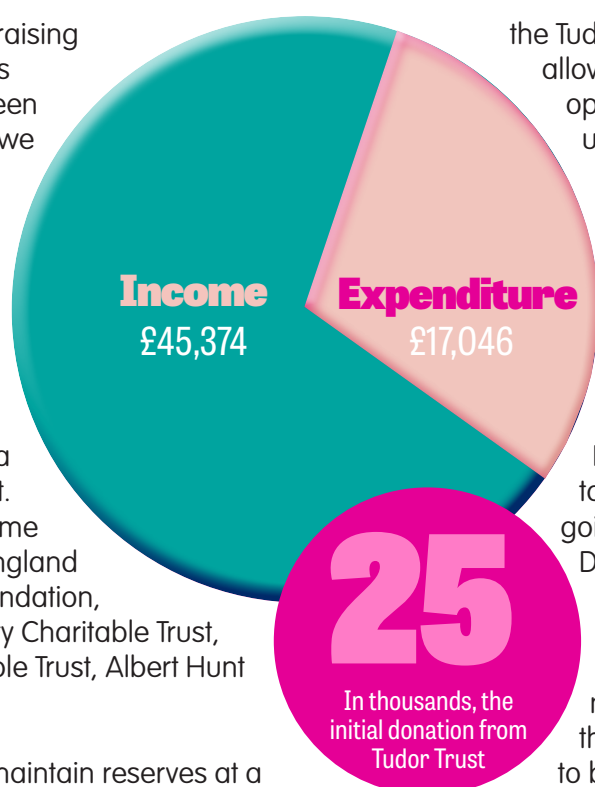


Our finances



Our fundraising activities have been successful and we have received £44,162 in grant funding and £1,212 in donations. Grants include £25,000 from Tudor Trust as the first year of a two year project. Other grants came from Heart of England Community Foundation, Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, Eveson Charitable Trust, Albert Hunt and Waitrose.

We will aim to maintain reserves at a level that allows us to continue with our operations for a period of at least three months. The reserves are part of our normal cash held in our bank accounts. We do have current resources and a further grant committed next year by



the Tudor Trust, which will allow us to continue in operational existence until the end of December 2021.

For this reason in preparing the financial statements the trustees believe that Underground Lights is able to continue as a going concern until December 2021.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic means that there are likely to be unexpected demands with regard to our capacity and resources as an organisation. Therefore, fundraising both for the medium and longer term will continue to be a priority for the coming year.

Income

Grants	£44,162
Donations	£1,212
Total income	£45,374

Expenditure

Salaries	£12,197
Expenses (venue hire, admin and IT, etc)	£4,592
Marketing	£116
Insurance	£141
Total expenditure	£17,046

■ Figures from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

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 2020.

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.

With thanks to our supporters

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

The Belgrade Theatre	Eveson Charitable Trust
Tudor Trust	Albert Hunt Charitable Trust
Heart of England Community Foundation	National Survivor User Network
National Lottery	Shop Front Theatre
Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust	



We would also like to thank Sarah Yiannoullou, Rebecca Thomas and Paul Okey. Photographs by Jamie Gray, Nicola Young and Mandip Seehra.



Click
Spring

the
Tudor trust



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.