

# “Transforming lives through arts and training”



## Cardboard Citizens impact report 2022-23

*“My interaction has been life changing. I saw myself move away from hopelessness into hopefulness. I connected with society, I developed HOPE, I moved into safety, growth and recovery. I became empowered, included and listened to. I found my own voice.”*

- Cardboard Citizens Member, 2023



Photos from top left, circling: 1-2: our youth music collective performing at Rich Mix (credit: Aaron Imuere) and World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens (credit: Ike Laseinde), 3: our spring production, Faun, at Theatre503 (credit: Von Fox Productions), 4-6: our year-round creative workshops programme (credit 4-5: Cesare de Giglio; credit 6: Ali Wright) 7: Artistic Director & Joint CEO Chris Sonnex with Caroline McCormick, Chair of the Cultural Philanthropy Foundation, launching the London Ticket Bank (credit: James Allan)

## Chair's thank you

**Dear Friend,**

On behalf of everybody at Cardboard Citizens, thank you so much for your support in 2022-23. Your generosity has enabled the delivery of a renewed full programme under Chris Sonnex's artistic leadership, carefully supported and driven by Lisa Briscoe as Executive Director.

The organisation has taken all the benefits of its history and experience and combined this with new energy and renewed purpose to launch a programme of work for people and audiences with experience of poverty, homelessness and inequity.

Our public productions have gathered critical acclaim and we have increased our emphasis on building great partnerships across the arts, social and academic sectors, with a view that more can be done if we all pull together in this post-pandemic climate.

We have now entered a new chapter in our history, characterised by the following:

- Community cohesion, improved wellbeing, and more opportunities for people we work with
- Widening access to, and interest in, the arts for people experiencing homelessness, poverty, and inequity
- An injection of new, high-quality talent to inspire creative output
- Elevating our work to widen attitudinal and tangible social change
- Stepping into mainstream consciousness
- Training and developing Members
- Developing a new generation of theatre professionals, artists and activists

I would like to thank everyone who has made Cardboard Citizens what it has become today - Members old and new, trustees and staff past and present, and all of the funders and donors who form part of the wonderful growing alumni that this organisation represents.

We look forward to continued development, ambition and opportunity together with you.



Prue Skene CBE  
Chair

*Prue Skene CBE has enjoyed a long career in arts management, holding top positions at the English Shakespeare Company and Rambert.*

*Prior to becoming Chair of Cardboard Citizens in 2016, Prue has held Trustee positions at, among others, Theatre Royal, Bath, NESTA and the RUH NHS Trust, and previously chaired the Arvon Foundation (2001-2005), Rambert (2000-2009) and Free Word (2000-2014).*

*Prue was also a member of the Arts Council England from 1992 to 2000 and continues to work as an independent freelance consultant for the Clore Leadership Programme amongst others.*

*Prue was awarded a CBE in 2000 for services to the arts, especially dance.*








## Our year at a glance...

*'I want to be part of the Cardboard Citizens community because it offers something positive to those who have found themselves homeless and sees people experiencing hardship as people who can contribute something valuable to society and the world of art.'*

- Cardboard Citizens Member, 2023



*A writing workshop (credit: Cesare de Giglio)*

Our flagship **Workshop Programme** reached over 200 people with experience of homelessness or poverty through year-round, weekly creative workshops and talks with acclaimed artists including **Lemn Sissay OBE** and **Jasmine Lee-Jones, Anna Jordan** and **Leo Butler**.

Our youth music programme, **Cardboard Collective** engaged **251 young people** across 35 workshops and two performances in collaboration with **5 organisations**.

We facilitated **57 employment or volunteering opportunities** for **40 people**, including as **facilitators, performers and ambassadors**.

We partnered with **International Access to Justice Institute, Groundswell** and **Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse** and **Northern Stage**.

We launched the **London Ticket Bank** with the Cultural Philanthropy Foundation, making thousands of cultural tickets available each week to those who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford them.

We recruited **four new trustees** whose experience will help our Board to achieve our new mission (read more in ***The Stage***).

Our **Citz Futures** programme offered **paid traineeships** to **8 people** working on two of our productions.

We ran **8 outreach workshops** with youth services that engaged with Bangers, reaching **113 people** aged 16-25, **32 of whom signed up for Cardboard Collective**.

Our community tour of 'Bangers' by Danusia Samuel reached **619 people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty** across all 35 performances.

We premiered our **first commission** since the appointment of Chris Sonnex in 2021. **Faun** explored the **homelessness crisis affecting trans people** in the UK and was **co-produced** with **Alphabetti Theatre, Newcastle** and **Theatre503, London**.

We continued to deliver our **Information, Advice and Guidance Service (IAG)**, providing wraparound wellbeing and progression support to **226 Members**.

## Our impact in 2022-23

100% young  
Members  
(16-25)  
developed  
new skills

76%  
Members  
report  
improved  
wellbeing

**'It brought me  
out of my shell  
and I am excited  
in starting a new  
chapter and what  
this means for  
myself.'**

Our new youth  
programme  
reached 251  
16-25-year-olds

Our  
programme  
reached over  
1,500 people

Almost 70%  
Members feel  
more in  
control of  
their lives

8 people  
took part in  
a 12-week  
paid  
traineeship

**'My mental  
health and  
recovery has  
changed  
positively. I am  
more sociable  
and feel  
confident.'**

**'It was an  
amazing  
experience  
and I feel  
really proud  
of myself.'**

40 people  
accessed  
employment,  
training or  
volunteering

100%  
trainees feel  
more  
confident  
about their  
career

**'I managed  
to complete  
a course  
which has  
usually been  
impossible.'**



## Activity summary

### Workshop Programme

We relaunched our flagship 'Workshop programme' in April, offering creative training, transferable skills, and support for wellbeing to people affected by homelessness and poverty. Our **refreshed year-round Citz Writers and Citz Theatre Makers programmes each comprised 12 weeks of training, delivered three times a year, led by established and acclaimed artists and creatives** including Anna Jordan (*Killing Eve*, *We Anchor in Hope*), Leo Butler (*Lucky Dog*, *Boy*). **201** Members have accessed our Workshop Programme and wraparound support.

### Cardboard Collective

We reimagined our offer for **young people aged 16-25 with experience of homelessness and poverty, offering music-based training**. The programme offers access to training in music production, performance, marketing, and event management. It aims to help young people **build their confidence and wellbeing with a supportive network of peers and industry experts and equip themselves with transferable skills to progress into employment or entrepreneurship in the creative industries**. Workshops are facilitated by diverse professional artists and creatives from a range of disciplines.

Cardboard Collective performance at World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens  
(credit: Ike Laseinde)



Our Autumn 2022 12-week course culminated in the Collective's performance of their original songs at Rich Mix in East London and our Spring 2023 course led to a performance event at World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens in May. [Click here to see a video from the Rich Mix performance in December 2022.](#)

### Citz Futures traineeship

We launched the Citz Futures scheme which offers paid work experience in the theatre industry for people who have lived experience of homelessness or poverty. The programme provides the opportunity for people to work alongside professionals in backstage, creative and production roles, offering employment and on-the-job learning to equip trainees with transferable skills to take their next first steps into the arts industry. In 2022-23, eight people shadowed backstage and creative teams on two professional Citz productions, *Bangers* and *Faun*. At the end of the first set of placements on *Bangers*, all trainees felt more confident about pursuing a career in the arts.

### Theatre productions

Cardboard Citizens has toured theatre to hostels and homelessness services for almost its entire 30+ year history. In 2022, we toured *Bangers* by Danusia Samal, a co-production with **Soho Theatre** tracing the highs and lows of a group of young Londoners navigating love, sex and sexuality, relationship breakdown and housing insecurity.

*Bangers* at Soho Theatre (credit: Toyin Dawudu)



The tour reached **619 people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty across 35 performances in hostels, community centres, youth, services and**

**colleges, in addition to a 3-week run at Soho Theatre.** 113 young people aged 16-25 participated in eight workshops exploring the themes in *Bangers*. 236 people came to see the show for free at Soho Theatre through a referral scheme with social sector organisations. 32 people aged 16-25 who saw the show registered to join Cardboard Citizens.

This March saw the premiere of ***Faun***, the first Cardboard Citizens commission since the appointment of Chris Sonnex in 2021. **The play explores the homelessness crisis affecting trans people in the UK**, with 1 in 4 trans people likely to have experienced homelessness. Written by actor and writer **Vinnie Heaven** (*The Nevers*, HBO) and directed by **Debbie Hannan** (*Sound of the Underground*, Royal Court), the production toured to theatres in Newcastle, London, Salford, Bristol and Plymouth. 77% of audiences surveyed said that they learned more about the causes and impacts of homelessness among transgender people through seeing *Faun*.

### Partnerships

#### **International Access to Justice Institute:**

Five Citz Members were employed to create a Forum Theatre piece for the inaugural **Access to Justice International Institute** which brought together 55 delegates from across the globe working in the criminal justice system in relation to disability. The play formed a core part of the 5-day Institute and explored the barriers faced by people affected by disabilities in accessing the criminal justice system.

*Audience member: 'I believe the play provided a way for ALL people, regardless of level of cognitive ability, to participate and think about barriers to justice. This provided a safe and equitable space for us all to meet at the same level to talk about important issues that impact people with disabilities in the criminal justice system.'*

#### **Groundswell partnership:**

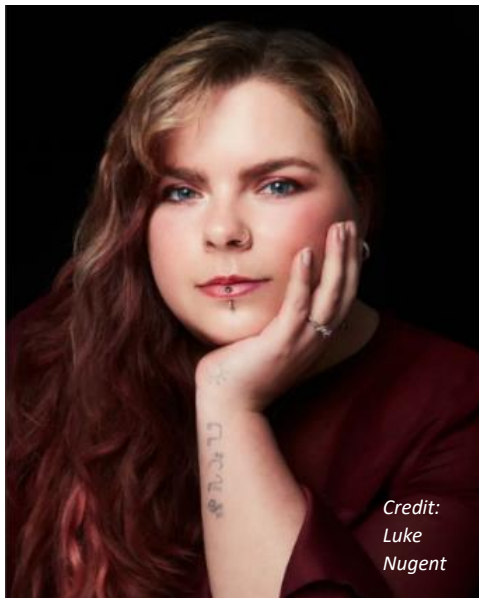
**To Whom It May Concern**, our co-production with homelessness campaigning charity Groundswell, provided an opportunity to creatively engage the social sector in a conversation about the broader systemic issues of siloed working between health, housing and welfare. The play, written by **Sophie Ellerby** and directed by **Stef O'Driscoll**, Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre, was directly informed by research gathered from people affected by these systemic failures and performed for audiences of social sector professionals including staff from the Department for Work and Pensions and Crisis. Performances were followed by a workshop through which audiences explored themes in the play and strategies to find solutions for the characters.

*Audience member with lived experience: 'I have a lot of experience of these issues through work (and some personal experiences), but sitting apart from my own experience and watching it as an audience member (rather than being involved in it) felt different... Maybe what became more obvious is the similarities between experiences, lack of empathy, lack of real support, blocks to moving forward, frustration, and yet there is still not enough done to help this and still not enough understanding'.*

*Audience member from the social sector: '[I saw] the difficulties people experience in navigating the benefits system. The impact that not having access to benefits has on health, both on managing long term conditions but also the health problems that are caused. Digital poverty and the impact of this when so many services rely on people accessing systems online.'*

#### **London Ticket Bank:**

We launched the London Ticket Bank in January 2023: a joint initiative with the **Cultural Philanthropy Foundation**, offering 1,000 cultural tickets each week on a donate-what-you-can basis to people with lived experience from venues including **The National Theatre, The Barbican, Roundhouse, and the Southbank Centre**. Tickets are offered through social sector partners including **The Trussel Trust, Centrepont, House of St Barnabas, The Longford Trust and Positive Action in Housing**. Read more in the [\*Guardian\*](#).



## ***'I do wanna say it has changed my life'***

**In 2022-23, Charlie took part in our Cardboard Collective programme for young people aged 16-25 who are affected by homelessness and poverty. Charlie tells her story so far and shares her aspirations for the future:**

*'I first met Citz when they were recruiting Members in hostels. I just wanted to try something new, and I just got stuck in and really enjoyed myself. It was out of my comfort zone, but it was something I knew that would push me... I've done music in school and things, but this is first thing outside of school.'*

*It's been a journey of experiences and just finding myself a little bit more. Before I got involved I was going through hostels, it was really hard and obviously I lost a lot of self-esteem. It's only been the past few months that I've realized how far I've come and how much confidence I've actually gained. I mean, I've still got a long way to go and it's a slow process, but I have come a long way.*

*It's always been a non-judgmental environment and it's just so easy-going and relaxed. You know that if you are stressed, you can say something about it. It's always been very supportive. I think that's the main word for it. Just the whole support and care about the whole team.*

*I'm hoping to sort out a few things this year, obviously still work with Cardboard Citz on building my confidence, like when I'm performing and start really believing in myself and what I can do and stop doubting it. I do wanna say it has changed my life. Just looking forward to something, you know, and being part of something that's amazing.'*

## **What's next?**

### Public Programme

We are currently developing our approach to national impact for our work, through which we aim to unlock potential for working with communities most affected by homelessness and poverty to create exceptional new public theatre, and for theatre to help people with lived experience to explore and challenge the causes of housing insecurity in their communities. We will build on our foundation and continue to strengthen our unique methodology, informed by our long history and experience in Theatre of the Oppressed and trauma-informed/strength-based practice.

### New commissions

We are commissioning a minimum of three underrepresented, emerging writers with lived experience, including the following so far:

- Our first play from a Cardboard Citizens Member, who has been supported through our Workshop Programme. We have recruited Chinonyerem Odimba, Artistic Director at tiata fahodzi, to mentor her during the writing process.
- A play from Soho Theatre's writers' programme focusing on women's experience of homelessness.
- A new piece through Stockroom writers room exploring unacceptable living conditions in social and private rented housing, focused on the epidemic of mould in rented accommodation.

## Workshop Programmes/Cardboard Collective

This autumn we are launching a period of intensive recruitment and outreach for both our Workshop Programme and Cardboard Collective programmes, introducing a whole new cohort of Members with lived experience to our work. Through this we aim to increase our overall reach through our programmes by over 25%. Those we reach will be invited to become Members, after which they will have the opportunity to access our regular workshops. All Members will have access to our progression support, aiming to support people in their engagement with us and moving them onwards in their lives.

## Citz Futures

This remains a key part of our programme for the year ahead as we seek to implement learnings and trial offering a number of traineeship roles internally over the autumn.

## Cross-sector working

Following our consultation with more than 40 arts and social sector partners in 2022, we've established **new theatre partners, including:**

- Being appointed an associate company with **Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse**.
- Committing to a co-producing partnership with **Soho Theatre**, including bringing a production to the theatre in 2023.
- Being commissioned to produce a wraparound programme for **Northern Stage's production of *I, Daniel Blake*** in 2023.
- Partnering with the **Almeida Theatre** on their community play for 2023.

**Social sector partners** so far for the year ahead include The Centre for Homelessness Impact, Mind Tower Hamlets, Bethany House, Capital City College, The Bridge 99 Club Café, the Outside Project, Catch 22, DePaul, New Horizons, Single Homeless Project and many more.

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**Thank you so much for supporting Cardboard Citizens to launch a renewed programme and transform lives through arts and training in 2022-23. We couldn't be more grateful.**

**With deepest thanks and best wishes,**

*AJ, Aliyah, Chris, Clare, Eniola, Jessie, Leone, Lisa, Maddie, Nasima, Poppy and Rachel*

(The Cardboard Citizens core staff team)