

THE VILLAGE STORYTELLING CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24





The Village Storytelling Centre's vision is for a world where people and communities are inspired, connected and heard.

Our mission is to improve and enrich lives across Scotland through the power of story.

Strategic Aims

- To increase access to storytelling and creative opportunities for communities
- To provide platforms for people to share their voices
- To promote the artform of contemporary oral storytelling across Scotland and beyond

Outcomes

- People will have improved mental health and wellbeing
- People will feel better connected to each other and their communities
- People will actively shape their communities and influence decision makers
- The diversity of voices in contemporary oral storytelling will be improved
- Audiences for contemporary oral storytelling will be increased and diversified



Cover Photo: Andy Gunn

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INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to introduce our annual report for the period April 2023 to March 2024. This has been another busy but impressive year at the Village Storytelling Centre with some exciting new changes.

Our work in Greater Pollok and neighbouring ward of Newlands Auldburn continued to develop through our Community Stories programme, Artist in Residency and new project, Connecting Pollok: Past, Present & Future. We held several successful events and launched our Citizen Storytellers model, increasing our reach and deepening our impact across these communities.

We developed new collaborations, such as a new two-year partnership with Wheatley Care, as well as further developing existing partnerships with local and national partners. We were also delighted to launch our first Emerging Voices in Storytelling programme, providing three paid placement opportunities for aspiring storytellers with barriers to inclusion.

There were some new changes to our structure with two team members being promoted to Lead Storytellers. Dan Serridge will now lead on Artform Development and Colin White will lead on Community Stories. Naomi O Kelly rounded off the year in the new post of Accessibility Coordinator, a role which we hope will ensure that our approach to inclusion, accessibility and equality will continue to evolve and improve.

We closed the year busy with plans for our upcoming Village Storytelling Festival 2024, held in Glasgow alongside the Federation of European Storytelling (FEST) Conference, and by finalising our new Strategic Plan outlining our aspirations and objectives for 2025-2028.

I wish to thank all our funders and partners for their wonderful support throughout the year. And I thank our fantastic staff members, associate artists, volunteers and trustees for their amazing contributions and achievements across our programmes.

Helen Mill, Executive Director



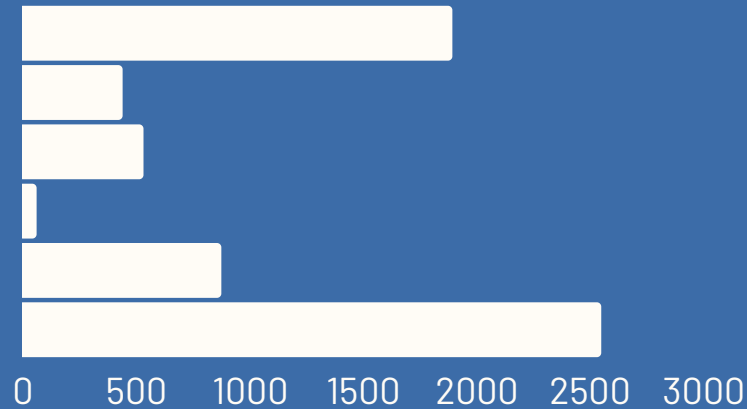
OUR IMPACT



6200

People engaged in our
events, performances
and workshops

Village Community Stories Programme
Collaborative Projects
School Programmes & Events
Training
Performance Events
Engaged through Creative Resources



3800

direct beneficiaries

1492

adults

2308

children &
young people



*"I love this group
and I will never
forget this"*

-Young Storyteller



COMMUNITY STORIES

This story-led arts programme has been designed to be accessible to people of all ages within the communities of Greater Pollok and Newlands Auldburn. Its benefits are wide-ranging and include: reducing isolation; improving mental health and wellbeing; building confidence and self-esteem; developing skills; and providing opportunities for social connection. The programme is highly valued by the people who access it locally and it is continually evaluated, both formally and informally, to ensure that it responds to changing needs and wants.



Imagine Lab & Connecting Stories

In 2023, we launched our first Early Years Artist Residency, working alongside Noah Thomson who explored sound, voice and movement with our youngest participants and their families. The end of the residency resulted in the creation of a digital resource for families, encouraging play through different sound making techniques. You can explore the resource on [our website](#).

After a very successful pilot, we continued the Artist Residency programme, working with Ishbel McFarlane, who brought her specialism in the Scots language, to explore multilingualism in Early Years arts settings.

In addition to our regular weekly Imagine Lab & Connecting Stories sessions, we also welcomed Eco Drama with their production of *The Whirly Bird*, to a full house at The Village Studio!

"Keep doing what you do best."

- Adult participant, Imagine Lab

Case Study: Connecting Stories

A young mother (C) and her one year old daughter (M) started attending Connecting Stories on a Fridays this term. During their first week M stayed with her mother the whole time and would look quite scared and upset if encouraged to engage with others or activities. Now, each week they return we have observed that they both grow in confidence. The adults have engaged in conversations about teething, breastfeeding and sleeping and give each other a sympathetic ear and advice. We have had local community links practitioners join us to give information about other opportunities of which C was interested in. We have also had a support worker from Breastfeeding Support Scotland who listened to C's breastfeeding journey and the group shared tips on baby led weaning. C said that she didn't know the area very well as she had moved here a few years ago from another neighbourhood in Glasgow. The club has helped her know more about the area, meet friends and broaden her family's horizons. C and M are now regular participants who feel comfortable in the space and with staff. They are able to walk to the club as we are situated in the community and access our quality arts programme and support networks for free. This is a good example of connecting families to the local area and laying the groundwork to be a consistent form of support and creative opportunity in both adults and babies lives.

Story Clubs & Story Makers

These groups explored stories, themes and ideas in line with two exciting large-scale events delivered by VSC – The Kite Festival and Doors Open Day 2023 at Crookston Castle.

Participants discovered stories exploring the origins of the Kite and created their own kites ahead of Pollok's first ever Kite Festival. Participants moved on to generate creative responses to Crookston Castle in the form of artwork and devised performance pieces to be showcased at the event. This culminated in a site-responsive storytelling performance staged at Crookston Castle, featuring the young people in collaboration with our adult storytelling participants. The performance involved a dynamic sensory tour of the castle, weaving together elements of history and fiction. Participants invited their family, friends and the local Pollok community to share their work.

Both groups were able to celebrate their hard work and successes of 2023 by attending our free festive events. Story Clubs attended our 'Christmas Spider' event at VSC delivered and performed by our in-house Storytellers, followed by a participatory winter workshop. Story Makers attended the King's Theatre Pantomime and had a wonderful time – oh yes they did!

We introduced new themes of 'language & identity' at the start of 2024, enabling groups to begin shaping the term content alongside their group leaders ahead of VSF24.

"The Village feels a bit like home"

-Story Maker, VSC



Young Storytellers

VSC Young Storytellers worked hard to create and self-publish an original graphic novel titled 'Break a Leg', exploring Neurodiversity, based on the lived experiences of members of the core group and of local Neurodivergent Artists. They worked in collaboration with Colin White, Artist Jillian Mendoza and Neurodivergent Creative Consultant Emma Greer to develop the story and illustrate/design the final publication. By taking part, they were able to develop an increased understanding of applied storytelling methods, including safe story gathering/presenting and the 'one step removed' process.

They were also keen to create a live storytelling performance inspired by the novel and so began scripting, staging and rehearsing their piece to be premiered at VSF24 in conjunction with their book launch.

Mansewood Young Storytellers continued to grow in numbers and in confidence. Their weekly sessions focussed mainly on the development of core performance skills and story-led play. This year involved exploring storytelling through half-mask work, helping enhance their physicality, expression and stage presence. They were excited to attend our Easter Holiday Programme at VSC, allowing them to collaborate with new artists and extend their networks of interaction. They also attended Mansewood Summer Fayre to enjoy some outdoor storytelling and games alongside VSC staff.

We play games, do art, have storytelling, and have fun... I've gained confidence. I work better in a team. I've met new people. Everyone's nice and the teachers are amazing."

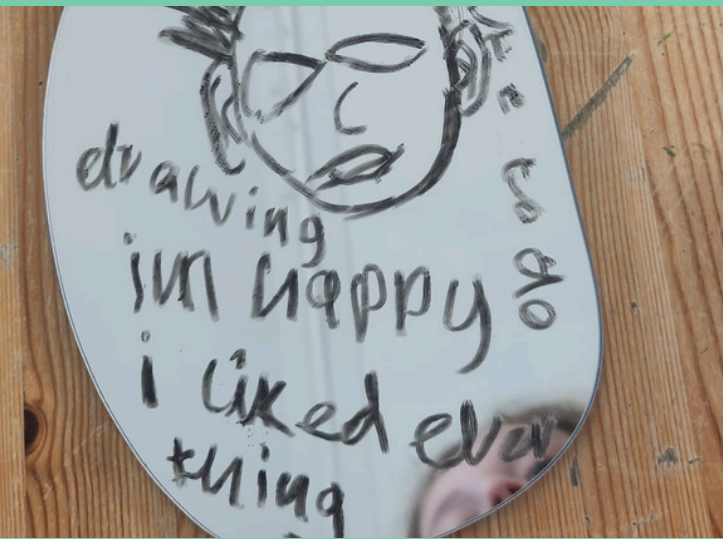
- Young Storyteller, Mansewood Community Centre)



COMMUNITY STORIES PROGRAMME



Early Years, Children & Young People



Our Stories, Our Voices- Local

Our Stories, Our Voices is our programme of workshops for adults in Greater Pollok and Newlands Auldburn. We delivered three weekly groups:

- Pollok Voices open to all adults
- Voices of Peace for women from migrant, refugee and global majority communities
- This Women's Voice for women and people with lived experience of womanhood

In May 2023, all three groups celebrated the launch of 'Oh, The Stories We Could Tell', a book of their stories, poems and artwork. This event was filled with joy and pride for participants and their friends and families. In June, Voices of Peace presented 'Tree of Life' as part of the Refugee Festival. This event explored the story of migration experiences through art, movement and storytelling performance.

Later in the year, Pollok Voices participated in the Glasgow Doors Open Day Festival at Crookston Castle, offering engaging tours and interactive storytelling. The latter half of the year saw all our groups begin to reflect on the themes of 'Identity and Language', leading up to their exhibition and performance at the Village Storytelling Festival in July 2024.

In addition to our regular groups, we delivered 12 Story Cafes across the Southside of Glasgow, introducing storytelling in a relaxed setting and in collaboration with a range of wonderful partner organisations.



“ Participant Quotes ”

I feel not lonely. My husband encourages me not to miss a single week, as I feel so different afterwards, here I can meet my sisters.

I feel hope and enjoyment listening to memories and stories.

I have learned to trust (...). To be able to open up. There was nobody that was, in any way, argumentative.

Whenever I come to the Village Storytelling Centre, I feel very relaxed doing art and sharing stories because it takes away my stress and the problems of my everyday life and this is my “Me Time”.



"Who would ever have thought, I will be the guest performer at the Castle and it's a big story for me to tell to other people"

- Pollok Voices participant



Connecting Pollok: Past, Present and Future

Thanks to some generous funding from Inspiring Scotland, we launched our new project Connecting Pollok: Past, Present and Future, which will involve the delivery of several events, development of a new arts and creativity strategy for the community and pilots a new community led approach to story gathering with our Citizen Storytellers programme. This pilot programme sees local people trained in applied storytelling so they can gather shape and share the stories of the wider community ensuring greater inclusion in decision making and celebrating Pollok's Past Present and Future.



COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Age Scotland: About Dementia



Associate Storyteller Shona Cowie collaborated with the About Dementia team to develop a resource which will be used by services to support those with lived experience to shape Government Policy and Strategy. This was launched in Autumn 2023 for trial with a select number of services with an event held in the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh.

Photo Credit: About Dementia

Dunterlie Community



Following on from our collaboration with the Scottish Storytelling Centre to deliver their People's Parish project in the Dunterlie area of Barrhead, we have continued our relationship with the community, receiving funds from the National Lottery Awards for All to support a community-driven creative programme which will enable the community to thrive creatively beyond our involvement.

Our Stories, Our Voices - Wheatley Care Partnership

This year we extended our adult programme across wider Glasgow, in partnership with Wheatley Care. We delivered a series of Story cafes across their service and two 10-week projects with; the Maryhill Self Directed Support Service for adults with complex disabilities and Marfield Livingwell, a supported housing service for older adults. The creative outputs from both groups went on to be shared at an exhibition as part of the Village Storytelling Festival in June 2024 and can be viewed digitally on [our website](#).

Photo Credits: Andy Gunn



Commissioned Work

We were also commissioned to deliver projects, training and events in partnership with:

Changes (East Lothian)

Spider Arts

Maryhill Burgh Halls Trust

Interfaith Glasgow

No.1 Befriending Agency

Flourish House

Renfrewshire HSCP

Glasgow Life

Esplora Science Centre (Malta)

Dementia Friendly

Orkney Council

Sniffer/ Open University

FEST

Scottish Refugee Council

Hyndland Secondary

Children's Health Scotland

Cardonald Primary

Historic Environment Scotland

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Say Women

East Renfrewshire Culture & Leisure

East Renfrewshire SDS Forum

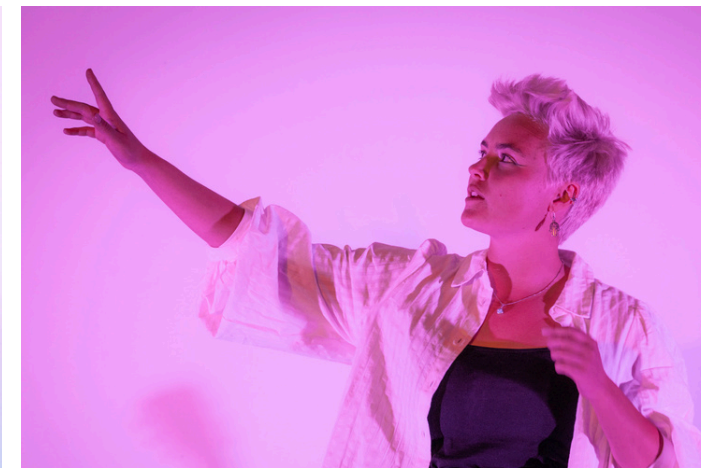
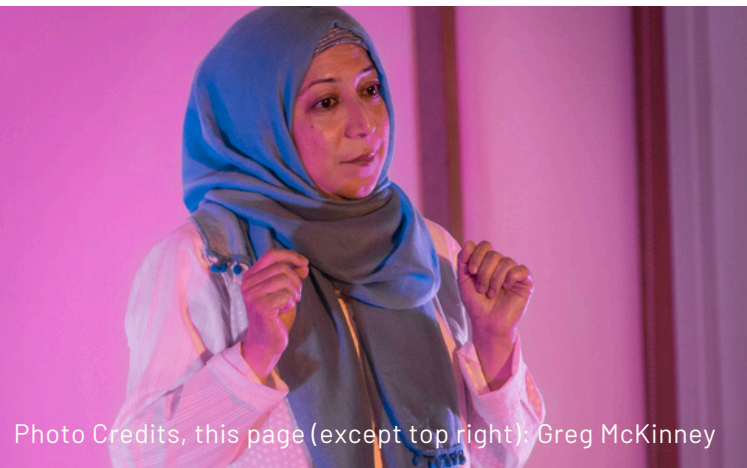


Photo Credit: Andy Gunn

Artform Development

We used this period as a way of growing and exploring the Artform Development opportunities that we could offer and how we could begin to build connections with fresh voices interested in developing skills and techniques within the field of oral storytelling. We had recognised the essential need to be proactive in this, as a way of futureproofing the organisation and to begin the process of inspiring others to build a burgeoning scene across the city.

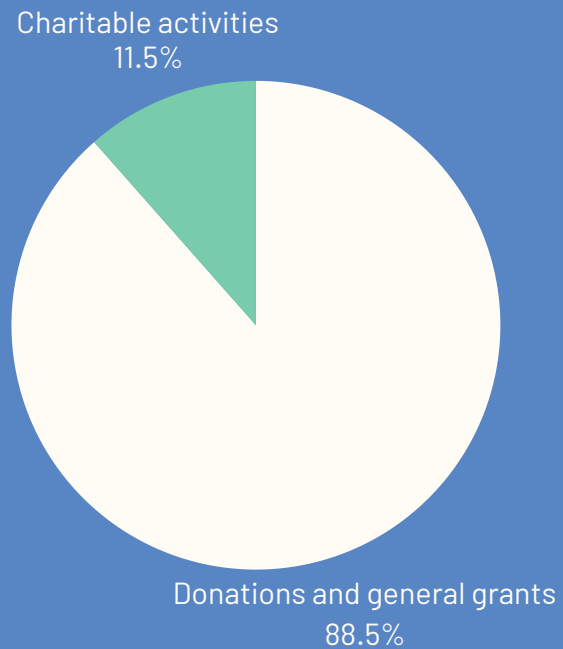
The initial steps of this began with a cohort of Emerging Storytellers. Eilidh Traynor, Lababa Naqvi and Genna Allen were employed to participate in a 12 week placement that culminated in a performance at the CCA in June '23. The placement consisted of training, mentorship and shadowing with a variety of team members, building skills to hopefully supporting new professionals to take professional strides. The application process was designed to attract those with barriers to work. Following the placement, two have gone to extend their work within and outside of the organisation, taking positions in storytelling across the city and developing a collective of young storytellers across the country. Lots was gained from this first placement, from its popularity to its uniqueness across the country as well as some key learning regarding the recruitment and mentorship processes. This learning was taken forward into the second placement, recruited for in March 2024.



Finances

£358,806

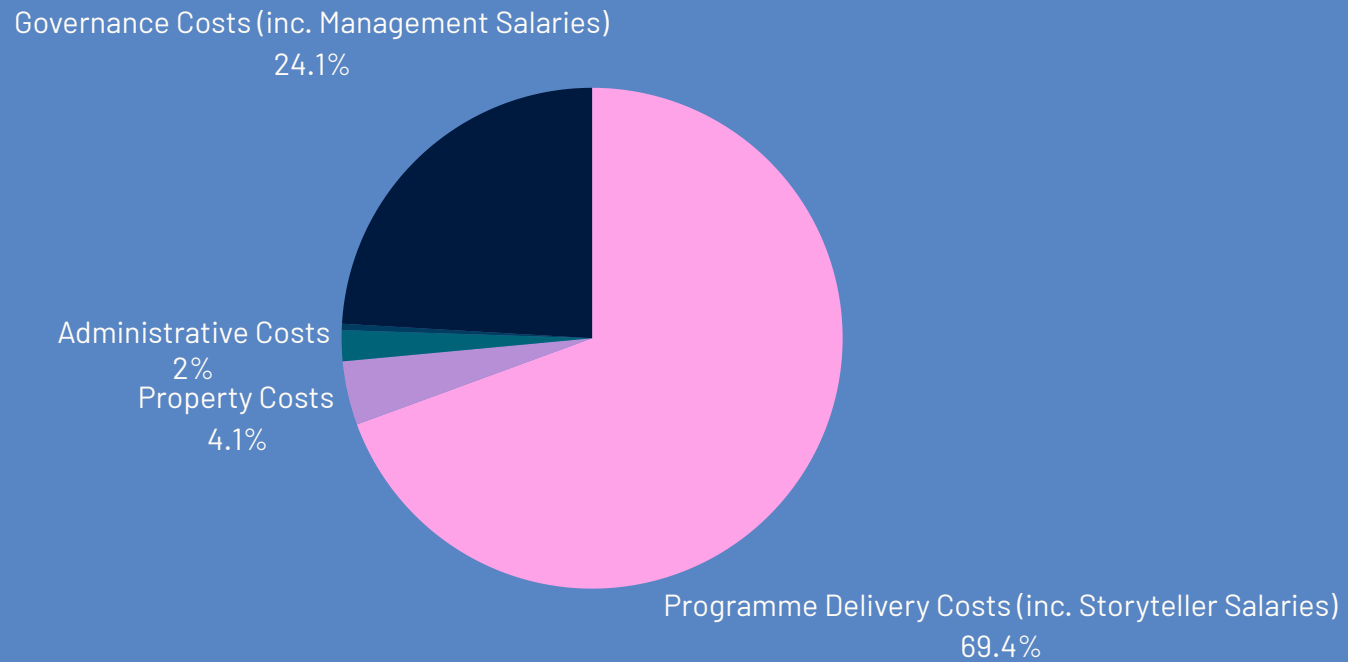
Total income



Income sources

£282,675

Total expenditure



Expenditure

Funders

We are grateful to each and every one of our Funders, Partners and Supporters who enable us to deliver and expand our services. Thank you for your support.



Area Partnership

Awards For All

Glasgow Communities Fund

Glasgow Mental Health & Wellbeing

Fund

Hands Up For Trad

NHS

Scottish Book Trust

Scottish Children's Lottery

Scottish Refugee Council

Tasgadh

The Stafford Trust

staff team

Helen Mill, Executive Director
Alison White, Operations Manager
Colin White, Storyteller - Community Stories Lead
Dan Serridge, Storyteller - Artform Development Lead
Sarah Carlin, Community Storyteller - Early Years
Storyteller (until November 2023)
Sarah Wedderburn-Ogilvy, Community Storyteller - Early
Years (from Jan 2024)
Isobel O'Donovan, Community Storyteller - Children &
Young People (from Jan 2024)
Trinidad Cabezón Droguett, Community Storyteller - Adults
Daiva Ivanauskaitė, Community Storyteller - Adults
Miriam Doren, Storyteller
Naomi O Kelly, Accessibility Co-Ordinator
Barbara Morrison, Cleaner

trustees

Fiona Rich (Chair)
June Couper
Victoria Doig
Phil Philpott (Treasurer - until Feb 2024)
Elizabeth Morrison
Alan Milson
Dina Sidhva
Cinzia Ciaramicoli
Elizabeth Scott
Gladys Dumashie
Amadu Khan
Rebecca Dunne (Treasurer - from Feb 2024)

associate artists, freelancers & volunteers

Greer Pester
Shona Cowie
Lauren Bianchi
Lababa Naqvi
Hannah Brackston
Daniele Sambo
Emma Greer
Dawn Campbell
Andy Gunn
Genna Allan
Ellidh Traynor
Gaynor Barradell
Sam Rowe
Hannah Justad
Steph Morris
Noah Tomson
Ishbel McFarlane
Suzanne Brady
William Coleman
Daniel Calvert
Jillian Mendoza
Joanne Waddell
Neil Wood

partners

We would like to express our thanks to all the partner organisations we work with from third and private sectors and to our amazing local community. We couldn't run our amazing projects without you!

Staff team

Trustees

Associate Artists Freelancers Volunteers

Partners





the village storytelling centre

www.villagestorytelling.org.uk



At The Village Storytelling Centre, we use the power of storytelling to bring people together and to provide a space for creativity and connection.

We use storytelling to support people to increase their confidence and self-esteem by fostering the belief that each of us has stories to tell and that they are worth hearing. We offer people the opportunity to look at their lives differently, to understand that the stories we have always told ourselves or been told about ourselves aren't set in stone – we can change and shape them.

