Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust

Annual Report 2021 to 2022







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Chair of Trustee's REPORT

Sue Vincent Chair of Trustees

As we began this turbulent year, the 'stay at home' order, alongside social contact rules were still in place that set out no indoor mixing between different households were allowed. Whilst on a 'roadmap out of lockdown' these continuing pandemic rules negatively impacted on the ability of Dragon Hall to raise income, with bookings at only one third of pre-pandemic levels. More importantly, however, was the inability to bring people together across all age groups and across all educational and social activities.

Our strong programme of social and educational activities would have been impossible without the financial support of: the London Borough of Camden; Ageing Better in Camden; CAPCO, Mercers Trust; St Giles and St George Charity, Strand Parish Trust; City Bridge Trust; Shaftesbury Estates; Jack Petchy; Awards for All; Camden Recovery Fund; Young Camden Foundation and Tesco Bags of Help. Our thanks to these organisations.

Our artistic and educational programme at Soapbox continues to deliver music, performance and digital activities to young people, and we are grateful for the partnership with SoundSkool and the financial support from Peabody, the London Community Foundation and Peabody.

We are also grateful for our regular space hirers: our local community members for booking birthdays, anniversaries and other celebrations; Theatre Academy London; Florida State University; City Academy; Easton Swing; Drury Lane Tap; Team Tactics; Disney and Butlins. Our activities, in partnership with Covent Garden Community Centre and Phoenix Garden, involve all ages from a toddler drop in, 8 to 18+ year old after school clubs, the over 55s, intergenerational groups; all taking active part in sessions that ranged from addressing holiday hunger, isolation and digital exclusion to Pilates, Yoga, badminton, line, tap and ballroom dancing, not forgetting the gardening clubs, afternoon teas, BBQs and holiday play schemes taking place throughout the year. Our thanks to all users, volunteers and partners.

Dragon Hall this year has been ably assisted by a dedicated staff group of amazing individuals, and Trustees, who meaningfully contribute to its success. We gratefully note that our Finance Officer, Chris Farrant, has steadfastly devoted 14 years of sound financial guidance to the Team and Trustees.

We are pleased to report that both commercial and community bookings towards the end of this year have begun to pick up and attendance is increasing across all social and community activities. We are financially stable, with an unrestricted reserve of £263,819 and confidently look forward to the year ahead. Thank you for being a part of our ambition to serve our local communities, and beyond, and ensure people are given opportunities, the means to work, rest and play and encouragement in doing so.

Sue Vincent Chair of Trustees and Local Councillor

Dragon Hall Trust - 2021 to 2022



Sue Vincent Chair Holborn & Covent Garden ward Councillor for LB Camden and local resident



Jeff Hopwood Treasurer Former Camden council officer and supporter of the voluntary sector.



Tim Lynn Secretary Sound Engineer in West End Theatres and former resident of Covent Garden.



Alex Lloyd

PhD student in Psychology at Royal Holloway, University of London researching when and why teenagers take risks.



Claude Asgill Trustee Experienced fundraiser and

mental health advocate working in the construction industry.



Simon Breugger Trustee Local resident, merchant banker. Used to be a teacher & continues to support young people.



Kate Matheson Trustee A local resident in Covent

Garden, member of West End Women's Institute, retired.



John Quigley

A data protection lawyer advising companies of legal obligations on personal data and an experienced independent mediator.



Francis Go Trustee VP of Engineering at Distributed Ltd, a Technology Startup changing the future of work. P.03



Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust

Delivering a wide range of social, educational & recreational activities & events, developed & delivered in partnership with users, to serve the needs of our diverse communities.

Aims

To benefit the inhabitants of Inner London by associating local authorities, voluntary organisations and such inhabitants in a common effort to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupations with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants.

To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the said inhabitants and in particular the advancement of education & skills (with particular but not exclusive reference to technology & the arts).

To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area and to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of buildings or features of historic or public interest in London to enable them to be enjoyed by the public.

To establish or secure the establishment of community centres and to maintain and manage the same in furtherance of the above objects.

Over 55s - 2021 to 2022

John Hayes - Community Development Manager

The decision to end lockdown and reduce social distancing was received with enthusiasm and a sense of relief. For many older people, who had been living in isolation for many months, the news was treated with hesitancy. Fear of catching COVID remained a high concern, confidence in meeting people, travelling on public transport and to be in crowds again was at an all time low.

Despite the lifting of restrictions, Dragon Hall continued to provide online sessions and slowly started to provide inperson classes in small groups at Phoenix Garden. With numbers limited to six at a time in an open space venue with open windows, Phoenix Garden proved to be very popular. As the year went on and the weather improved, activities taking place in the outside world were very much in demand and requested. Dragon Hall worked in partnership with Outings to Art and offered a wide range of 'Walk and Talk' tours. Members felt safe outside and the walks helped people develop their confidence.

Kew Gardens became increasingly important. As part of their generous 'community access' scheme, we were able to organise monthly visits to the garden. The wide open space provided an escape from the crowds and cramped spaces.

In June, Dragon Hall rekindled its partnership with Live Music Now and provided a concert for twenty people. Taking place in the main hall, Rosie Bowker and Aleksandra (flute and piano) entertained members. The concert was the first time that music had been played for nearly eighteen months and it was a very emotional, special moment. People sang, smiled, tapped their feet and even danced. Afterwards people applauded, literally with tears in their eyes.

Supporting people coming out of lockdown was harder than supporting people through lockdown - a lesson that I and Dragon Hall learned very quickly. The challenges were different for everyone. These difficulties were fluid, complex and, in some cases, painful. During the lockdown, we lost members of our community, individuals lost partners, friends and other family members.

Membership to Dragon Hall continued to grow at a steady

rate. In July 2021, there were 250 registered members, by December this had increased to 297. This significant increase was due to the many learning opportunities that were provided with the support of the West End Community Trust, Camden Adult Learning and working with individual tutors.

We expanded the timetable to provide jewellery classes, digital photography, aromatherapy and dance classes. Dragon Hall worked with MOLA (Museum of London Archeology) and supported their local history studies.

Following on from our Food Bank initiative we established a weekly, affordable lunch club. This was in partnership with Covent Garden Community Association. The lunch club has grown from its initial 15 lunches to now providing 40 meals each week.

The lead up to Christmas proved as popular and as busy as always! Wreath-making sessions and tea dances were incredibly popular as older people, remembering the difficulties of the past winter took part in many of the offered





Dragon Hall Trust - 2021 to 2022

sessions - getting used to being out and socialising once again.

The young people of Dragon Hall put on a Christmas play, our christmas lunches attracted 150 people and 2021 ended the year on a high. The early part of 2022 was a busy time. Membership increased from 297 to 385. New sessions were being introduced all the time; badminton and table tennis were welcomed by many as a way of getting fit.

Partnerships with the London Zoo and Queens Gallery were cemented as trips to Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace, and the Zoo were organised.

The first quarter of 2022 has been a very successful and busy time for the Over 55's Project. A total of 173 activities took place, with nearly 1800 attendances from 322 members. However this amazing start to the year could not have been achieved without the support of the following staff and volunteers

From the youth team - Keeley Reed, Elliot Hughes & Eugenia Kay. The youth team have provided an incredible amount of support by continuing with the telephone befriending scheme, organising in-person sessions and dealing with members who drop in.

I am also grateful for the support of the following volunteers -Richard Wilson, Caroline Dowdell, Sarath Thenabadu, Helena Lee. Richard and Caroline have played a huge role in the success of the lunch club, welcoming members, providing refreshments, sitting down and talking to those who are new to the club.

Sarath has provided support with our Tea Dances, welcoming new members and dancing with those who are a little shy or have no confidence. Helena continues to provided online Tai Chi and has helped so many people regain their confidence, balance and strength via her gentle exercise.

There is still much work to be done and membership to the over 55 project continues to grow (currently at 428), finding new ways to support older people is a daily challenge. The Over 55's Project will continue to develop its partnership with other organisations, increase

the number of volunteers and provide a wide range of activities, classes and workshops, ensuring that older people have opportunities to increase their personal connections, improve links with their local communities and reduce loneliness and isolation. I just wanted to tell you how pleasant and positive Marcos sessions are (meditation and yoga). We relax, enjoy and the fact that we can see people helps. It's not just meditation and yoga it's also enjoying other people.







After School Clubs

Keeley Reed - Youth Manager



At the start of 2021 we were open but still following the covid compliant measures, whilst supporting families, young people and the community in the best way possible

Our After School club continued to run with our two primary schools in separate rooms to ensure we could reduce the spread of COVID 19 within our centre. During this period we delivered a whole host of Men's Euros activities including running a raffle of countries, watching the games within sessions, running football drills, learning about the countries involved and playing football.

During the summer, we were part of the Camden Holiday Activities Food (HAF) Programme, with funding enabling us to run workshops and activities for both primary and secondary school-age young people. We ran 40 sessions, supplied over 30 hot meals a day and included snacks to take home.

We topped off our summer with our annual beach trip, as planned by young people. 28 young people and staff visited Clacton-on-Sea for the first time and we were fortunate to see the red arrows perform. For 35% of the group, this was the first time they had been to a beach in the UK and for over 50% it was the first time they went into the sea in the UK. This was a great way to finish off the summer, solidify the relationships which had developed during this period and be ready to start the new school term. September was the first taste of life after the pandemic, our young volunteers returned, supporting our After School Club and we were able to mix the two schools together for the first time in 18 months. The joy on the faces of the young people when they came back together was amazing.

We started off the school year running group games, to reintroduce the young people to each other. Firm favourite activity was the Egg Drop. Young people had to work together to build protection for an egg so it wouldn't crack upon being dropped. This was a great opportunity to use their creative skills, work as a team and use their problem-solving skills as they were only given a few materials.

With our intermediates, we ran two projects with Soapbox, one was a project exploring young women from the BAME and the stigma on Mental Health, as well as a Young Leaders Project where young people created a social project bringing basic necessities to the local homeless community.

We have had a great 2021-2022 so far and are looking forward to ensuring we continue to extend our services to the local community and increase opportunity.



Dragon Hall Trust - 2021 to 2022

Elliot Hughes

This past year was my first full year as a Youth Worker here at Dragon Hall and, as someone who used to attend as a young person, I could not have enjoyed myself more. It has felt like normality has been



re-started after the last 2 years of pandemic. The Summer program was my highlight so far, as it was full of activities and group trips which saw high attendance levels every single day.

My personal favourite activity over the summer was basketball, games which were always intense with all of the young people getting stuck in!

Another highlight was our yearly Christmas play which we performed at short notice, a hit for all the Seniors, young people and parents who attended to show their support. I'm looking forward to next year, and seeing what activities we can add to our program next!







Michaela Crivello

Since returning after so much time online during Covid, it has been an absolute pleasure to see the young people back

into their routines and socialising in groups again, which is pivotal for their development into adulthood.

Many of our young people, who had spent months without seeing their friends during the pre-pandemic days, were at last together again.

We've done our best to fill their time with interesting activities and encourage them to pursue their individual interests. For example, we have a very keen Ping Pong group that has actually become quite skilled at the sport. Similarly, the arts and crafts table is flourishing, and more and more kitchen enthusiasts helping with snack preparations.

We are very much back in the swing of things at Dragon Hall and the staff are enjoying it just as much as we hope our young people are!

Dragon Hall After School Clubs

'Without Dragon hall allowing me access to their resources I wouldn't have been able to print out homework; revision sheets and the practice papers that I needed in order for me to work effectively. This has provided me with the support I needed to take my end-of-year exams and hopefully better prepare me for year 13 and my application to medical school. Not only did Dragon hall provide me with resources, it gave me a quiet place to study.' **MI aged 17**



'Dragon hall has been such a great benefit to N. The opportunities they offer the children, such as coding, socialising with other children and so much more. The staff are just incredible! They really take an interest and care about the children. My daughter loves dragon hall.' Parent



'E and C are so lucky and privileged to have you all in their lives. It makes an inmense difference and this is an example of how not only parents raise children, it is also the community and services like yours that make a difference and give our children a great start in life.'





'During the last couple of weeks of year 6, I was excited to go through a whole new experience but was also upset to leave some of my friends as I was going to a secondary school where I knew no one. Dragon Hall helped me with the transition by supporting me and guiding me through what I will need for secondary and what it will be like.' **GO aged 12**

'Dragon hall is a welcoming and helpful place, Keeley and Michaela will do your hair if you want, and paint your nails if your parents will let you. So you will be lonely if you don't come to Dragon Hall!!' **RRT aged 11** **Statistics**

348 Sessions

5285 Attendences

250 Young People

18%

Residents

13%

Other Boroughs



Young People - Case Studies

Ben Kinsella Trust Award 2021

Jayden, a young person from SoapBox, received the Ben Kinsella Award (2021) in celebration of his outstanding contribution and his positive actions as a young role model in leading the 'Stress on the Brain' project and the impact that has had on the local community, his peers, and our organisation.

https://www.islington.media/news/islingtons-community-heroes-celebrated-with-mayors-civic-awards-and-ben-kinsellaaward

Stress on the Brain was a partnership audio-visual and mental health project involving SoapBox, The Peel, New River College and CAMHS who worked with 9 students from Islington's Pupil Referral Unit to produce a music track and accompanying video called 'Stress on the Brain'.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhI9KLwfpbM&t=7s

The feedback this video received was phenomenal, with clinical psychologists, Counsellors, NHS staff and youth workers adding comments like these ones:

'This is just brilliant. The most amazing way to get the message across. I am going to share this all over the place. As a mediator and trainer I shall be including a link to this video for evermore. True genius!'

'I'm a psychotherapist working with adults, children and teenagers and we definitely be signposting people to this resource. An informative, creative piece which excellently depicts the neuroscience in an accessible way.'

'T'm a psychotherapist for children and young people, and will be adding this to the list of team resources in my NHS job as highly recommended.'



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Young People in Paid Roles

During 2021, against the backdrop of a youth unemployment crisis, SoapBox employed 14 young people to support the development, delivery and evaluation of our work. Not only did this make sure that SoapBox continues to place young people at the heart of everything that we do, but it also continued the pipeline for young people from participation through to employment. All of these amazing individuals started their journey at SoapBox by attending our programmes and they worked their way up to securing paid employment with us.

This is really important, both for these young people and also for those who look up to them as role models - because they all know that SoapBox provides support and opportunities for them to make a real difference and to realise their potential...

Young People

Danielle - administrative support for No Ceilings; Sema - leading on Games Design work with young women; Sans - eWaste, VR and Video support work; Mahla - Coding for young women; April - dance choreographer for No Ceilings; Daniel - Music production and Studio Engineer; Kase - Music production and Studio Engineer; Aleksandra - Leading on SoapBox Live; (Whitecross Yewts) - Event Curation; Faith & Joe - SEND Work Placements.

Area Leads/ Tutors/ Volunteers

Jordan Sterling - Music / Accreditation Lead Bradley Watson : Outreach/ Sports Lead Pierre - Virtual Reality Lead Emma Charlton - Dream it Real Coordinator Mikey Bharj - Video/ YouTube Lead Andrea - Film Production Lead Gergana Popova - Young Women's Filmmaking Lead Alessio - Studio Engineer Paul Pobi : Dream it Real

Placement Students

Lorna, Nagma, Sonal, Samii, Dawn

White

30%

British

8%

Asian

SoapBox Programme Highlights





The summer programme included the HAF project, a nutrition programme for young people on Free School Meals delivered in collaboration with Eat Club and Prior Weston Primary School, alongside Summerversity, with our first accredited courses in games design & music production, Discover Tech workshops and an audio-visual project.



Video Production

Alongside the work with the Mencap Placements, Mikey (SoapBox's resident Video & YouTube tutor) and Andrea (former MTV Producer and Video Production Lead @ SoapBox) have supported SoundSkool students to create, film and edit videos for their formal assignments.

They have also provided in-person and online support to young people around content creation, storyboarding and getting ahead in the film industry.



iFixit

Lucas, our Infrastructure Technician Apprentice has wanted SoapBox to play a role in environmental work since we opened. During 2021, Lucas helped SoapBox to secure funding from the North London Waste Authority and our local Councillors to develop an eWaste and recycling programme. He worked with Sans to get this work out into the local community, schools and colleges, with plans to work with the Old Street Partnership in 2022 to help small businesses with their environmental impact.

SoapBox Programme Highlights

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Online Provision

Our online provision from January to July delivered over 30 activities per week, including employment support, online courses, digital outreach, our online gallery, live music events, SEND work and work experience to name just a few.

MEET A LOCAL MENTOR MENTOR

No Ceilings

Pre-pandemic, SoapBox set up its work with young women, dedicating the whole building to this on Mondays. That work really took off during lockdown, with online work exploding and engaging 30+ young women every week.

Genia successfully transitioned the No Ceilings project from online to in-person work from September, with Sema, Mahla, April, Olivia, Rachel, Samii, Dawn and Sonal supporting the development of a new after school club, coding workshops, games design activities, guitar lessons, studio time and 1-2-1 support.

Music Production

Despite the challenges presented by Covid, Daniel, Kase, Alessio and Yosias have found a way to provide young people with the chance to make music, both online through courses in Logic and Ableton and also in-person through our studios, helping young people to learn new skills, practice and record their own music.

Virtual Reality

Pierre from partner Metaxu Studio is the longest-serving supporter/partner of our work and this year saw him develop and deliver on the YoVR and Dream it Real projects, as well as creating an accredited VR course for 2022. As an example of why we do what we do, this would cost over £3000 commercially, but will be free to young people at SoapBox.





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After School Clubs

After School Clubs- SoapBox is very lucky to be surrounded by some wonderful local primary schools, including Hugh Myddleton, Moreland, Prior Weston, St. Luke's and St. Peter & St. Paul's. We have been working with them to develop 3 After School Clubs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays to provide local young people in Years 5 & 6 with access to free activities including Code Clubs, Cooking with Eat Club, Virtual Reality, Fil Making, Music Production and much more.

SoapBox Live Lounge

Rather than sitting on their hands following the Islington Young Volunteer of the Year Award, Aleksandra and Jordan have further developed our work to support young musicians by launching SoapBox Live Lounge.

This is a year long programme, with support from the Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust, will offer new artists the opportunity to record their music and have it promoted via SoapBox's YouTube channel.

Tech in Foodball

Dragon Hall and SoapBox have a long-standing relationship with London Youth and they continue to be our most important London network. Their support during the pandemic helped us to build SoapBox in VR and to develop our After School provision.

And through their Sport Development Grant, SoapBox has worked with Bradley from Wipers and Emmanuel from Get Engaged to create a Tech in Football initiative. This project will give young people an understanding of how technology is being used throughout football, from Smartballs to Virtual Reality and Fitness Trackers to Artificial Intelligence. It will also connect young people into professionals and organisations who are creating these innovations, so they can start exploring a career within the Tech in Football industry.

We are piloting this work with Central Foundation and hope it will become a regular part of our programme going forward...







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Partnerships, Collaboration & Digital Media

University Placements

During 2021 SoapBox supported 15 university students to complete work placements from UEL, Brunel and Middlesex Universities, totalling 3080 hours. The placements involved support across our No Ceilings, Music, Filmmaking, Games Design, YouTube, SEND, employment and wider Youth Work.

No Limits

SoapBox has been chosen as 1 of 3 national hubs for PlayStation's No Limits Zones, we will receive a range of cutting edge digital tech and it will also place us firmly as one of the leading digital, media and technology centres for young people in the UK.

With technology covering areas such as eSports, media production and games design, alongside bespoke furniture and fittings, the No Limits Zone will provide a £35k investment in the centre in Q1 of 2022.

YouTube

SoapBox's YouTube Channel provides a window into our work and the lives of the young people that we support. Launched in June 2020 to coincide with Stress on the Brain, SoapBox Online has now seen 99 videos shared with over 1900 subscribers, covering music production tutorials, electronics repair workshops, creative content from young people, online cooking sessions and live performances.

An example of how and why this channel is important can be seen with the Covid Awareness event from black & minority ethnic young people that we hosted in November 2021. This was recorded and shared via YouTube, with over 20000 views, showing how the Channel extends and amplifies the impact of our work.

All this content showcases the breadth of SoapBox's work and we will be growing this to include daily uploads during 2022.



Funding

Since 2010 there has been a 73% real-terms funding cut for youth services, the sector has been decimated and 1 in 4 youth centres are now closed or at-risk of closure.

SoapBox couldn't function without the additional support we receive from our funders

Peabody Housing supported SoapBox across 4 programmes during 2021 (4 x Young Leaders projects; Young Ambassadors; Wave 5 Funding & Innovation Fellowship).

This shows incredible commitment to providing young people with access to digital, media and tech provision.

Thanks to **Bunhill Ward Councillors** with their support for SoapBox's CIL application, which has upgraded equipment and provided employment opportunities for 6 young people. The Julia & Hans Rausing's Youth Centre Recovery Fund covered running costs and overheads.

UK Youth supports 3 pieces of work: UK Youth's Guardian Appeal; EmpowHer and Dream it Real.

London Youth provided funding through their Good 4 Girls, Getting Active and Sports Development programmes.

North London Waste Authority funds a youth-led eWaste and recycling programme.

SoapBox is supported by **Derwent** to develop an accredited Virtual Reality programme.

Cripplegate Foundation are supporting our SEND work placement programme.

Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust

Dragon Hall Trust also runs SoapBox Islington on a 15 year contract with Islington Council to deliver youth services for the young people of Islington, sharing strategy, resources and staff members, administration tasks, maintenance and fund raising initiatives.

Dragon Hall Staff Team



Nicole Furre Director



Chris Farrant Finance Manager



Keeley Reed Centre & Youth Manager



James Dellow SoapBox Manager



John Hayes Community Development



Nicholas Crivello Deputy SoapBox Manager



Eugenia Kaye Girls Club Coordinator



Michaela Crivello Youth Worker



Michael Mathura Youth Worker



Muhammad Bello Premises Officer



Bea Furre Bookings Admin



Yosias Desta Youth Worker Music Support



Lucas Lane Youth Worker Tech Apprentice



Elliot Hughes Youth Worker



Pickle Therapy Dog

Funding Support

The work that we do at Dragon Hall Trust and Soapbox would not be possible without the support of all of our funders. We are very proud to be considered for their support - this year and in past years.







Contact Us



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