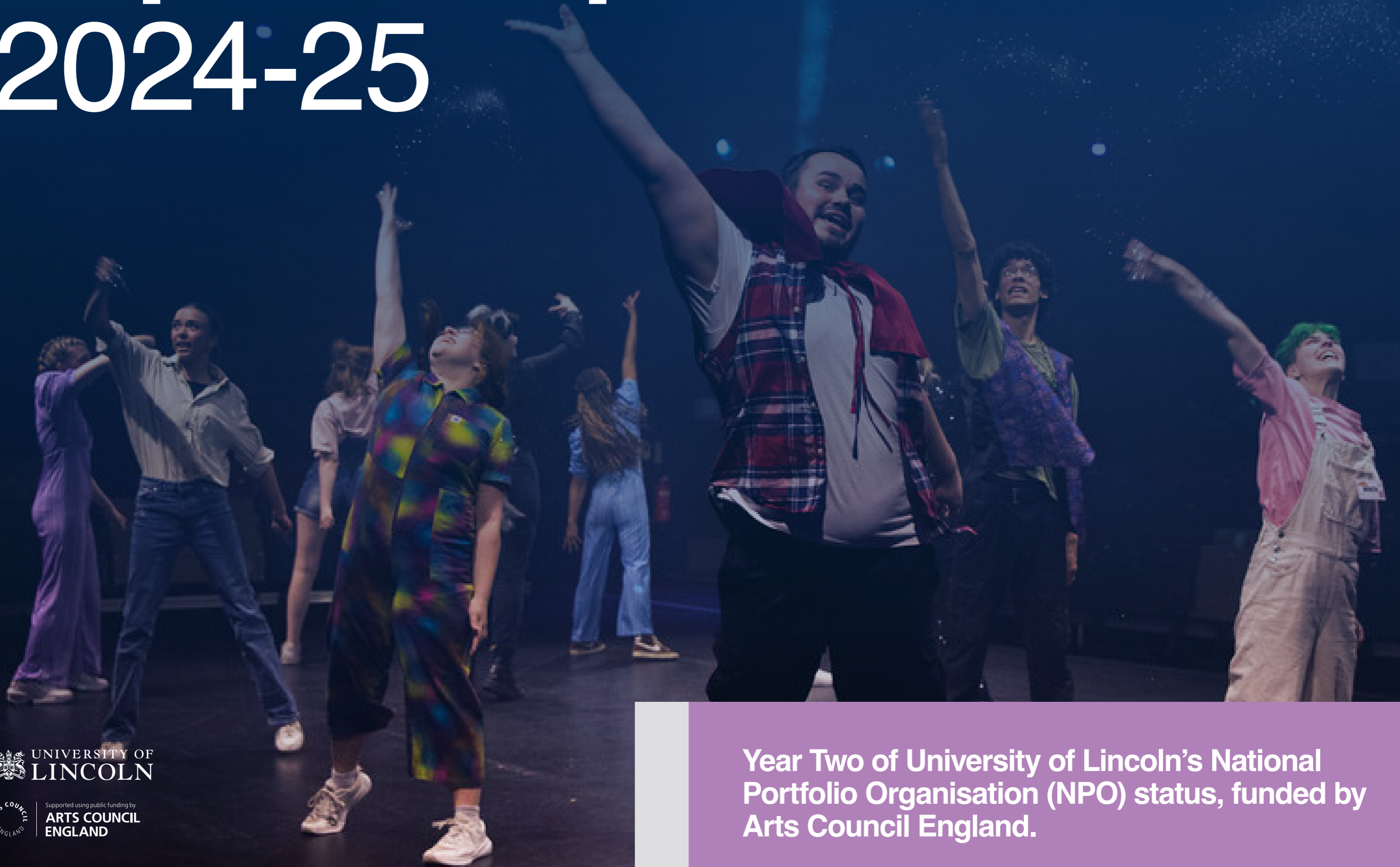


Impact Report 2024-25



The University of Lincoln is one of twelve universities to be included in Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations (NPO), having joined the portfolio for the first time in 2023.

This recognition, from the foremost agency for creativity and culture, means that the University of Lincoln is considered one of the premier venues for arts and cultural provision in the UK.

As part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations, the University delivers projects and activities through the Lincoln Arts Centre and Barbican Creative Hub.

This is all made possible and powered by the Centre for Culture and Creativity at the University of Lincoln, a 'think and do tank', researching and leading on cultural programmes and creativity.

This report details the impact becoming an NPO has had, with a focus on year two of the programme (2024-2025).

Who we are

Centre for Culture & Creativity

The Centre for Culture & Creativity is a 'think and do' tank, researching and leading on cultural programmes and creativity. It acts as a dynamic force, powering new conversations, collaborations and creative journeys. The Centre is a home and catalyst for a suite of cultural assets and organisations.



Lincoln Arts Centre

Lincoln Arts Centre is the University of Lincoln's public arts centre, with a focus on contemporary visual and performing arts. We nurture the next generation of artists and artistic ideas to create work that challenges, inspires and delights audiences across the campus, county and country. Re-opened in 2023, the organisation is undergoing transformation across four areas (People, Place, Perception and Programme) as part of its 2023-26 Strategy: 'Lincoln's Future Arts Centre'.

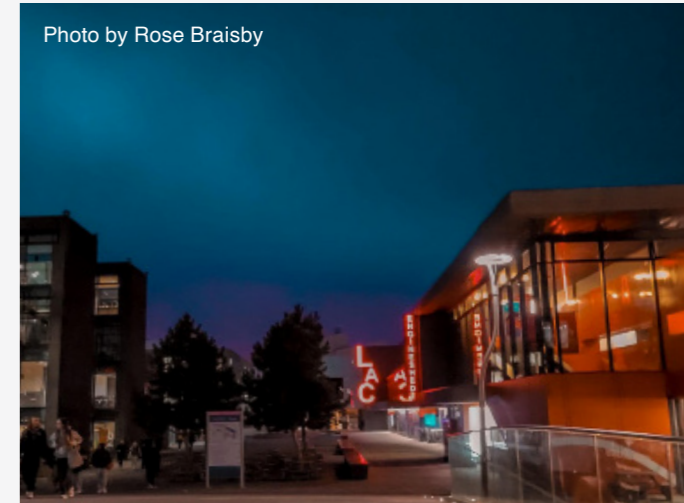


Photo by Rose Braisby

Barbican Creative Hub

Barbican Creative Hub is already proving to be a vibrant new addition to Lincolnshire's cultural and creative landscape, supporting individuals, businesses, and the creative ecosystem through a mix of projects and activities. The hub will provide a mix of studios, a members' lounge, flexible co-working spaces, 'white cube' event space, meeting rooms, and stunning café bar, all housed within the iconic Grade II listed Barbican building.



Our impact so far (2023-2025)

Supporting creative talent

Investment in artists*

£114,705

2023-2024

£166,670

2024-2025

£281,375

2023-2025 combined

Artists directly supported

37

2023-2024

41

2024-2025

78

2023-2025 combined

Reaching new audiences

First-time bookers**

3,661

2023-2024

2,910

2024-2025

6,571

2023-2025 combined

Free 'Every Child' tickets

447

2023-2024

373

2024-2025

820

2023-2025 combined

New 'Live Pass' members

212

2023-2024

575

2024-2025

787

2023-2025 combined

Photo by Andrew AB Photography



Dynamic programming 2024-2025

02

new seasons of work ('Hope & Joy' and 'Home is where the Art is')

15

brand new original works supported

100%

of tickets were made available for £25 or less, with an average ticket price of £6.76.

Visioning the future

07

conferences and events

43

national and regional speakers

666

attendees

272

online attendees

Creating new opportunities

02

'Routes In' internships

01

Engagement Producer

01

Book Festival Project Manager

02

paid postgraduate (MA) placements

*through commissions or fees.

**across all performances and events presented by Lincoln Arts Centre and Barbican Creative Hub.

Artistic highlights



Photo by Greta Zabulyte

Inside Odds On

Nominated for Best Creative Exhibition of the Year at the *We Are Creative Awards*, *Inside Odds On* was a powerful pop-up installation by Dante or Die that brought the real stories behind online gambling to life. The interactive experience, staged in local shopping centres, invited visitors to immerse themselves in a fictional gambling world through the award-winning film *Odds On*. It explored the emotional impact of gambling on real people and their families, featuring heartfelt accounts and research from charities. The exhibition also offered behind-the-scenes insights and resources for further support. Commissioned by Lincoln Arts Centre, *Inside Odds On* featured talks from researchers, workshops from charity partners, and fostered crucial conversations about gambling harm as the installation toured Derby, Harlow, Rochdale, and Lincoln.

Autumn 2024



Photo by Greta Zabulyte

“I watched the film on my phone and whilst it doesn’t fully connect with my type of gambling it has kept me off slot machines for three days now - longest time in a while. I want to come back tomorrow and explore more of the exhibition.”

267

people watched the film

374

people visited the exhibition

44

engagement participants

Hope & Joy

A diverse range of events focused on hope and optimism. Highlights included Georgie Jones’ spoken word premier of *How to Stay Hopeful* (17 Oct), the *Calendar of Hopeful Things* exhibition (24-31 Oct), Dante or Die’s immersive *Inside Odds On* (Oct-Nov), and Shlt-faced Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (24 Oct). Additionally for families, the season featured *Room on the Broom* (14-15 Nov), *Science: Live on Stage* (28-29 Nov), and *The Snow Queen* (12-21 Dec).

Autumn 2024 season



Photo by Grant Archer

Science: Live on Stage

Returning for its second year, a home-grown collaboration between scientists and creative artists from Lincoln brought to life this exciting show for children, where STEM challenges are specifically addressed within pupil premium statements. This innovative project continues to bridge the gap between science and creativity, engaging young audiences in a fun and educational experience.

Autumn 2024

Home is where the Art is

A season of artistic works exploring the theme of home - celebrating the diversity and resilience of local communities. Highlights included a community film screening (17 Jan) showcasing the dedication of local volunteer organisations and a *Community Resilience* exhibition celebrating our diverse communities. The season also featured *A Seat at Our Table* (6-7 March) by Maison Foo, a celebration of food and friendship with global friends seeking sanctuary. These events fostered connection and understanding, strengthening a sense of home in the community.

Spring 2025

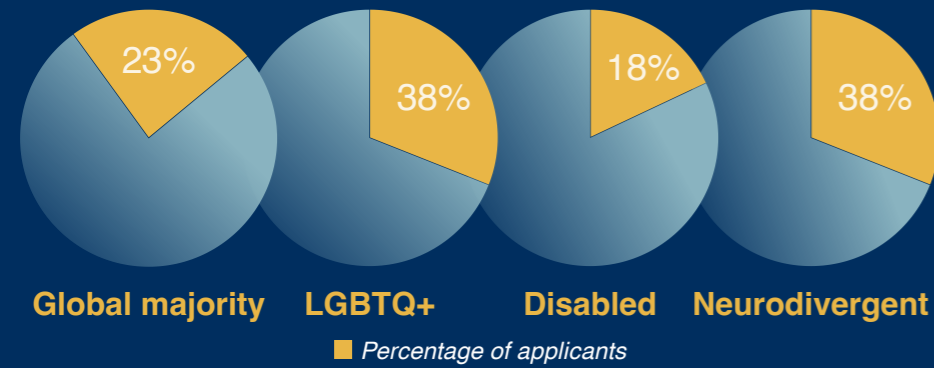


Photo by Jon Legge

Supporting local

Creatives in residence

Barbican Creative Hub confirmed five creatives-in-residence to take up a studio in the hub's inaugural year for free. **Forty applications were received from a diverse range of artists:**



Of these applications, twelve were shortlisted for interview and five were selected for the programme (including 1 x artist collective) from a range of disciplines including sustainable fashion, photography, illustration, and mosaic art.



Photo by Hannah McGowan

Demo

Featuring artists from across Lincolnshire and regionally, *Demo* has developed the ambition and quality of locally-created new work. Artists spent the day at the arts centre, where their work was documented by professional photographers. They also received advice from technicians and facilitated feedback from supportive peers.

University alumni made key contributions to *Demo*: of the seven participating companies, five included graduates; undergraduates from the School of Creative Arts performed in a number of works on the night; postgraduate Arts and Cultural Management students were commissioned to develop the concept further with *Demo Deconstructed*.



Photo by Phil Crow

07
companies

78
attendees

14
performers

5
graduates

Associate Artists

In year two, Lincoln Arts Centre collaborated with Casson & Friends to bring *Arcade*, a fun dance game, to life on campus. Created with B.A. Dance students from the University of Lincoln's School of Creative Arts, this project energised the campus and engaged students in a dynamic, interactive experience.

Casson & Friends were also commissioned to create *Shed Stories*, a performance addressing men's mental health. They spent time in residence at Boston Men's Sheds, along with thirteen other Men's Sheds across the country, and will soon embark on a subsidised tour across Lincolnshire - focusing particularly on priority areas.

Meanwhile, Joss Arnott Dance went into production on *Meet the Hatter*, a new dance and multimedia production blending live performance with digital technology to bring the Hatter's magical wonderland to life. Both projects successfully secured additional funding to support their work.



Photo by Richard Hall

Meet the Hatter

15
practitioners employed

492
young co-creators

306
industry attendees

Shed Stories

06
practitioners employed

79
community co-creators

91
industry attendees



Photo by Phil Crow

Innovate Artists

Lincoln Arts Centre also announced five new Innovate Artists, each receiving seed commissions to develop exciting new projects. These commissions reflect the Centre's ongoing commitment to supporting and fostering fresh, dynamic creative talent. This diverse group of artists has created a range of innovative work, including:

02
new creative exhibitions

01
new gig-theatre show for families

01
new spoken word show

01
new short dance film

01
new workshop series

01
new musical for family audiences, made in collaboration with B.A. Musical Theatre students

Lincoln Book Festival

Lincoln Arts Centre partnered with *Lincoln Book Festival* to support the volunteer-run event in securing investment, scaling its operations, strengthening its business model/governance - and delivering a larger, more ambitious festival that reached a younger and more diverse audience.

“Lincoln Arts Centre’s involvement with The Book Festival has made a significant impact, helping to deepen connections with a diverse audience. While the Centre continues to develop new, contemporary work, it recognises that supporting and uplifting existing infrastructure is key to broadening its reach and engaging communities who may not traditionally participate.

The festival attracted a balanced age range, with a third of respondents under 40, another third between 40-60, and the final third over 60, showcasing its broad appeal across adult age groups. Over 60% of attendees visited with friends and family, including children aged 0-16, highlighting the event’s strong intergenerational appeal. Crucially, more than half of the respondents were first-time festival-goers, underscoring the success of the 2024 programme in attracting new audiences.

Through these efforts, Lincoln Arts Centre is helping to create lasting relationships with groups who may not have engaged previously, contributing to the festival’s growing role as a welcoming, inclusive space for all.”

External evaluation



Photo by Richard Hall



Photo by Richard Hall

04

festival days

07

venues

27

events (incl. 5 x online)

05

participatory activities

12

volunteers

973

ticket-bookers

~1000

audiences at non-ticketed events

367

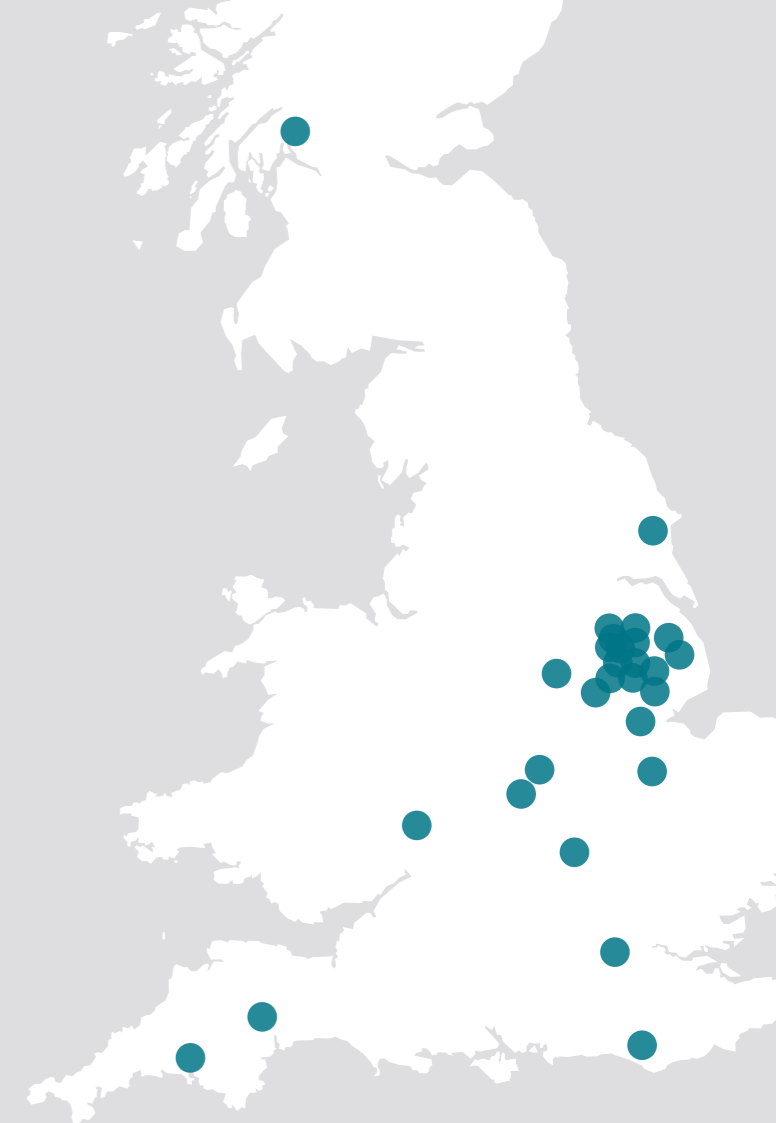
participants

35

days of employment across three new roles

£22k

funding secured



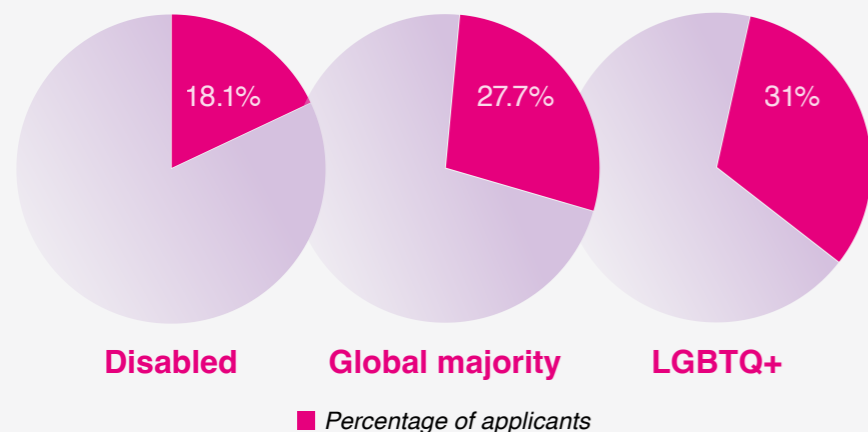
Geographic distribution of attendees/participants



Photo by Richard Hall

Routes in

Two brand new job roles as part of an innovative scheme to develop people's skills, open pathways into employment, and kick-start careers in the creative industry. The scheme, entitled *Routes In*, aimed to provide the first step on the ladder to a creative career, retain more talent in Lincoln and bring new, diverse perspectives to the workforces of Lincoln Arts Centre and Barbican Creative Hub. 169 people applied for the scheme:



“Routes In has given me an open-door into the arts in an industry that can feel full of closed doors. **The workplace culture here is equal parts honest and kind**, and having that support in the same office has motivated me to work harder and with more detail, so I can meet my potential not only for myself, but the team, artists and audiences of Lincolnshire!”

“My experience has been incredible so far. Routes In certainly speaks for itself in the sense that I feel really confident that I finally have a ‘route’ into the labyrinth that is the creative industry. **Having the opportunity to learn and develop a whole set of skills in Arts Marketing while feeling supported by the amazingly skilled LAC team is unheard of in this climate. I can’t praise them enough.**”



Photo by Richard Hall

routes in

Big thinking



The Barbican Creative Hub and Lincoln Arts Centre produced another series of conferences, each offering an ambitious platform for national and local thought leaders to address some of the challenges and opportunities for the region.

Art of Good Governance

On Thursday 12 September 2024, Lincoln Arts Centre hosted the *Art of Good Governance* - an event for members of governance boards or oversight groups of National Portfolio Organisations working within an accountable body (e.g., a university or local authority where there are multiple 'layers' of accountability). Conversations from the day explored innovative approaches to good governance and developing dynamic peer networks with organisations across arts, libraries and museums. Speakers included Clore Leadership and Inspire Libraries.

“The most wonderfully inclusive event.”

Audience member



Photo by Richard Hall

Decoding Greater Lincolnshire

A special event in July 2024 brought people together to explore important information about Greater Lincolnshire, highlighting local habits, characteristics, and challenges. Over fifty attendees joined the event, including both freelancers and representatives from organisations. The insights gathered and shared by Data Culture Change have since been used to plan creative and cultural activities, helping strengthen and connect the community.



Photo by Richard Hall

Technically Speaking

Co-designed with the Technical Theatre and Stage Management Course at the University of Lincoln, *Technically Speaking* in January 2025 showcased an inclusive line-up of speakers and panellists exploring how technical roles and equipment is changing to help more people access live performance. A legacy of the conference is that the arts centre has since joined the *Ramps on The Moon* Change Programme, to move towards becoming 'anti-ableist' rather than simply 'inclusive'.



Photo by Richard Hall

Future Perspectives: Technology / Sustainability

Exploring diverse perspectives and a multidisciplinary approach to topical issues, these two events featured thought-leaders in circular, regenerative, slow, and de-growth practices - in addition to the latest developments in virtual reality, extended reality and augmented reality. Events included case studies from Ellen McArthur Foundation, Royal Shakespeare Company, POor Collective and more.

Navigating the Storm

Navigating the Storm in November 2024 empowered arts and cultural professionals with strategies to support marginalised artists, mitigate risks, and manage potential backlash, all while maintaining the integrity of their programming, in age of cancel culture and online trolls.



Photo by Richard Hall

What's Next for Social Prescribing

The most recent event took place on 18th October 2024, a conference titled *What's Next for Social Prescribing: Pathways to Tomorrow*, focused on international examples of creative health solutions, paired with tangible demonstrations of local provision.

The conference included keynotes, panel discussions and workshops led by researchers and artists. Dr. Robert Dean explained how our health is connected to both our environment and the health of others - and understanding this can uncover new ways to tackle problems like health inequity and the rural-urban divide. He also explained that learning from different cultures and ways of thinking can help us solve these challenges.

Delegates were offered the opportunity to participate in creative workshops, directly experiencing the health and mood benefits of nature, mood and music. Activities included sound therapy with soundLINCS, aerial explorations with Firefly, nature walks, and drumming workshops led by socially-focused innovators.

07

events

666

attendees

272

online attendees

42

speakers

12

National

25

Lincolnshire

06

East Midlands

05

internationally renowned



Photo by Andrew AB Photography



Photo by Richard Hall

Hitting the brief

Securing NPO status has also enhanced our ability to support the University's Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategy and wider Strategic Plan. This is evident throughout the impact report, in addition to the examples below.

#1

Transform our campus into a vibrant creative hub – a destination for students, residents, and visitors that offers year-round cultural enrichment, excitement, and challenge.

- Transformed campus through ambitious and immersive activities
- Two new seasons of work, twenty new pieces of art, and ground-breaking projects - all bringing young people onto campus for high-quality experiences
- Diverse range of high-profile conferences attracting a large audience of thought-leaders, industry professionals and students
- New public gallery programme.

#2

Serve and develop the local cultural ecology and its creative and heritage industries, contributing to their future success.

- Graduate outcomes enhanced through more home grown commissions, increasing opportunities to find work or develop own practice. Significant proportion of commissions (e.g., *Demo*) secured by graduates.
- Delivered year-on-year largest direct investment into artists and Lincoln-made creative projects
- Supported the sector, through knowledge-transfer of research, expertise, and resources, whether grassroots or community-led to other Lincolnshire NPOs
- Ensured the *Lincoln Book Festival* was saved for future generations.
- Opening new Creative Industries Hub in the heart of the city.
- Commissioned useful research.
- Coordinated large-scale partnerships for bid writing, to secure a greater slice of investment for the local area.



Photo by Andrew AB Photography

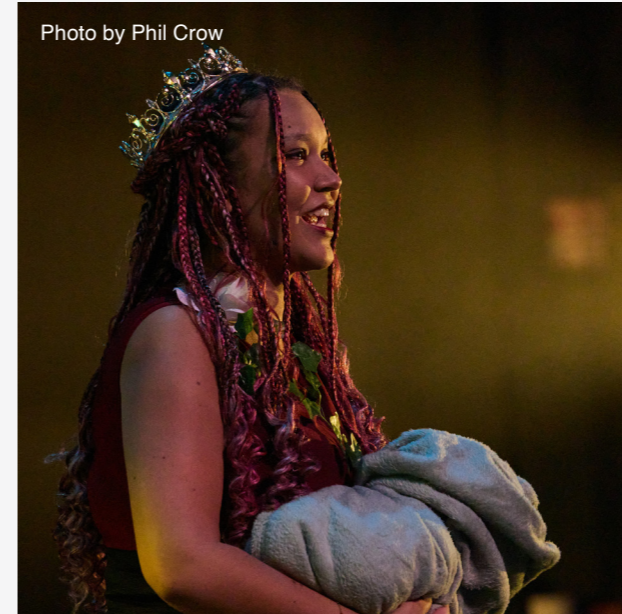


Photo by Phil Crow

#3

Pursue innovative, synergistic approaches to teaching, learning, research, and professional practice that bring arts, heritage, and culture into mutually productive interchanges with science, health, business, and social scientific disciplines.

- 160 submissions so far to Open to Ideas, which has active engagement from academics in shaping the programme, developing links between submissions received and teaching and research.
- Development of artists who can respond to and animate research outcomes.
- Connections strengthened across academic schools.
- Hosted well-attended creative meet-ups to foster culture of collaboration with campus community and external stakeholders.
- Associate and Innovate Artists developing brand new work with students, providing professionalising experiences.

Photo by Richard Hall



Keeping it relevant and inclusive

At the heart of our work is Arts Council England's Inclusivity & Relevance Principle; a commitment to achieving greater fairness, access and opportunity across the cultural sector. The Inclusivity & Relevance Principle is based on three pillars that define the change they want to see.

Communities

From working with thousands of people at risk of gambling harm through innovative projects in non-performance spaces like *Inside Odds On*, to bringing some of the poorest and most diverse school groups to the building through *Every Child*, our programmes are both connecting with communities where they are and widening access and participation at the venue. In the last year we undertook a refresh of membership for our Critical Friends to reach new communities too.



Photo by Emma Jones

The Creative Case for Diversity

Artists from diverse backgrounds are achieving greater success with commissions and opportunities. While the number of artists on shortlists remains consistent, the demographic diversity of those selected is expanding. In Year Two, we saw an increase in global majority and disabled artists. We aim for this progress to continue over time. We are also improving representation at conferences - with 20% identifying as having a global majority background, while 14% are disabled. We are supporting other local organisations, such as Lincoln Book Festival, where our efforts in reaching new audiences in priority areas were commended. Additionally, we've established an open and transparent programming policy, which has been praised by the sector.

Workforce, leadership and governance

We've transformed our recruitment practices which has led to a significant increase in the diversity of applicant shortlists and continues to manifest itself through our staff team and within leadership. Although there is still a great deal of work to do here, we are building on the strong foundations of the first two years.

Our staff team demographics are broadly stable from previous years - with 16% identifying as having a global majority background, while 19% are disabled. This is notable for being commensurate with national averages for working age people and above average for the local area.

Our leadership is proudly diverse with working class, LGBTQ+, female, and global majority representation within our senior leadership team.



Photo by Richard Hall

Joining the dots

As part of our ongoing commitment to championing the region's creative ecology, we were able to come together to share new research and best practice, undergo team training and development, and host several sector meet-ups with both partners and individual artists.

As a result, we:



Undertook significant regional and sectorial data analysis with Data Culture Change.



Convened other NPOs, arts organisations, freelancers and local authorities across Greater Lincolnshire in a series of meetings to enhance our work through collaboration and attract more investment into the region.



Diversified our 'Critical Friends' group, a self-organising group that inform and shape programming decisions, organisational activity plans and strategic direction.



Hosted three 'Creative Meetups' for artists to boost connectivity and belonging.



Informed national government policy by being part of an inter-disciplinary team of experts from the University of Lincoln who made a significant contribution to the *CreaTech Report* published by the Royal Anniversary Trust.



Submitted baseline environmental data to Julie's Bicycle for the first time.



Submitted six new funding bids.



Supported the emergence of the Indie Producers WhatsApp Community.

Some of the people we've worked with:

78 education settings (primary and secondary)

AGE UK Lincoln and South Lincolnshire

Ancaster Day Centre, Lincoln

Author Melissa Struas

Ben Glover

Blackfriars Arts Centre

Bramhall Residential, Tattershall

Braeburn Lodge Care Home, Market Deeping

Cafe Scientifique

Casson & Friends

Centre for Robotics and Autonomous Systems

Clore Leadership

Counter Culture

Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN)

Data Culture Change

Dante or Die

Doulton Court Care Home, Mablethorpe

Electric Egg

Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Fatt Projects

Firefly

Future Arts Centres

Futurist Holly Friend

GAM Care

GAM Learn

Gloucester Culture Trust

Green Synergy

Indie Lincs

In Good Company

Jo Cope

Joss Arnott Dance

Lark Books/Lindum Books

Lincoln Book Festival

Lincoln City of Sanctuary

Lincoln Music Service

Lincoln Record Society

Lincoln Society

Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire Gambling Harm Stakeholders Group

Lincolnshire Police

Maison Foo

Mind

Musical Theatre Network

New Art Exchange

North East Lincolnshire District Council

North Kesteven District Council

NHS

Old Hall Care Home, Spilsby

POor Collective

Project Fashion Fix & ReThread Denim

Prototype

Ramps on The Moon

Re-Right Design

Royal Shakespeare Company

Sandbeck House, Skegness

Scunthorpe Hospital

Sessions House

Sense

ShIt Faced Shakespeare

Society of Lincoln

SoundsLincs Lincolnshire

Voluntary Engagement Team

Southside

SO Festival

St Marks Shopping Centre

Storytellers NPO

Survey of Lincoln

Tall Stories

The District Herbalist

The Hub and North Kesteven District Council

The Spark Arts For Children

The Order of St Johns Care Trust

Threshold Studios

Transported

Tiata Fahodzi

toumaranke Percussion

True Motion

Usher Gallery and Lincoln Museum

Voluntary Centre Services

Waterside Shopping Centre

Waterstones Lincoln

Wainfleet Care Home, Skegness

Wolds Care Centre, Louth

West Lindsey District Council

Will Monks

YMCA Lincoln

Z-Arts

Zest

20/21 Gallery and North Lincolnshire Council

TedX Brayford Pool

Frozen Light Theatre

What's next?

Being awarded NPO status in 2023 has been a huge achievement for the University of Lincoln and is testament to the growing strength of the sector in the region.

Having built upon the strong and impactful start to our NPO programme, we will continue to be intentional and relevant - with the aim of achieving longer lasting impact and an equitable approach to delivery.

The Barbican Creative Hub will also open its doors in 2025, adding a new cultural asset to the region, and boosting the overall offer of the university and working alongside its partners.

Key priorities

#1

Lead the sector

Unite local government, policymakers, freelancers, and communities to drive collective impact and leadership in the sector.

#2

Build resilience

Secure long-term investment for future growth and support others in accessing funding opportunities.

#3

Leverage data

Deepen impact measurement and use data-driven insights to guide strategic decisions.

#4

Solidify commitment to newness

Deliver brave and bold programming by showcasing fresh talent and ideas.



Find out more:

c4cc.org

lincolnartscentre.co.uk

barbicancreativehub.com