



## **ABOUT US**

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts and Early Years organisation. For 15 years we have pioneered the development of high quality performances and creative experiences for children from birth to five years, and their grown-ups, in communities across Scotland. Starcatchers' vision is delivered through three pillars of activity all rooted in the arts and creativity and designed to connect with babies, toddlers, young children, parents, carers, and Early Years practitioners. Our advocacy work seeks to advance children's rights to engage with and participate in arts and cultural experiences from birth and, through this, amplify young children's agency and voice.

## **Vision**

That our youngest children, those from birth to five, fulfil their right to access arts and creative experiences that give inspiration, joy, and wonder to early childhood in Scotland.

## **Mission**

To inspire babies, toddlers, and young children by including them in high quality live performances and creative experiences that fulfil their right to access a rich arts and cultural life in Scotland regardless of where they live or their background.

### **Values**

Creative and Curious Bold and Brave Collaborative and Connected Reflective and Responsive

## Introduction from the Chief Executive

Welcome to the Starcatchers' Annual Report for 2021-22. It's been another jam-packed year of activity, one that saw us celebrate 15 years of our work. As ever, I am indebted to the passion and commitment of the staff, artists, practitioners and our Board – without whom we would not have been able to deliver all the work that is outlined in this document.

2021-22 was a bit of a rollercoaster as we navigated Covid lockdown restrictions whilst trying to deliver our programmes to children, families, and professionals across Scotland and connect with colleagues in other parts of the world. Some of the adaptations we had started in 2020 have remained – exploring the best ways to work outdoors with babies and young children; understanding how to develop and deliver online training and resources; and venturing into creating digital performance.

Having already had a year of living and working around Covid we were able to reaffirm our purpose and mission as well as focus on our future development. As part of this, Starcatchers is developing roots within one of the communities where activity has been delivered consistently for nearly 10 years. In Summer 2021 we found a new home at Whale Arts in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, as part of our move towards being embedded within this community. While we will retain a hybrid approach to working between our homes and the new office, we recognise that we need somewhere to call home. We are delighted to be based within Whale Arts, consolidating existing, and nurturing new relationships in the community.

A positive we have taken from the changes brought about by the pandemic has been the increase in our ability to connect digitally. Our pioneering Early Years Development work, which includes our Creative Skills programme for Early Years professionals, continued to share online resources, podcasts and films before face-to-face training restarted.

We continued to provide opportunities to support artists, including the commission of a new outdoors Early Years production, Teeny Weeny, made by Tommy Small and Shaper Caper. We also initiated a PlayFund, inviting artists to submit ideas for new work for the very young. Two rounds of the PlayFund resulted in nine projects being supported and we look forward to seeing how these evolve.

A highlight of the year was being able to start sharing performances with audiences once more. Katy Wilson's Mixed Up was shared as a film as well as a performance that toured to school playgrounds across Edinburgh, in partnership with Edinburgh International Children's Festival and the Edinburgh International Festival. We also produced Spike! – a dinosaur caper, by Andy Cannon, for children aged 3-5 which toured for four weeks across Scotland and will return for further touring along with Little Top, our production for 0-18 months,

in Spring 2022.

2021-22 has seen more demand for our work from partners and families in communities, from audiences, and from professionals working with Early Years across Scotland. Our work to champion children's rights has also evolved and we have played an important role in raising awareness of our youngest children's right to arts and culture. This is a conversation which will deepen as the process of incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child continues.

Despite ongoing challenges, this has been a year of positives and we can look forward to a future that is filled with arts and creative experiences for our youngest children, created by artists and practitioners, bringing inspiration, joy and magic to early childhood in Scotland.

Rhona Matheson Chief Executive, Starcatchers July 2022

## **OUR IMPACT**

#### Audience reach

122,523 This figure includes all Starcatchers' activity throughout 2021/22: audiences at Starcatchers' presentations and touring productions, participants, digital reach, and the estimated figure of very young children who benefitted from Creative Skills training via their early years practitioners.

#### New works in development

Exploration of these works will continue into 2022-2023.

## **New productions**

Performed in venues across Scotland and in outdoor community locations during lockdown.

#### Number of performances

SPIKE! - a dinosaur tale toured to six venues across Scotland in October 2021 reaching 592 people in 19 performances. Teeny Weeny performed four shows at two Community Engagement locations in July 2021. Mixed Up performed live to 14 schools at the Edinburgh International Festival's Play On: Stages. The Mixed Up digital film was also part of the Baboró Festival and Theatre in Schools Scotland 2021 programme and was viewed a total of 564 times.

#### **Community Engagement** projects

Expecting Something took place in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, Creative Kin in North Ayrshire, Girvan Creative Babies and Oot Playin' in South Ayrshire, Where We Are in Fife, Moray Babies in Moray, Wonder Studio in Edinburgh.

198

397

#### Families engaged

Throughout 2021/22, families engaged in Starcatchers' activity both in-person and through digital platforms across the eight community engagement projects.

#### Artists engaged

37

166 Starcatchers worked with and supported artists through Playspace opportunities, commissions, development funds, training sessions and funded places at conferences and festivals, Community Engagement and production work, and Creative Skills training delivery.

#### Early Years practitioners

Our Creative Skills programme engaged with participants online and in person. On average, each Early Years practitioner works directly with approximately 40 children in their settings, leading to 15,880 children benefitting from Creative Skills.

#### **Creative Play Packs** delivered

Starcatchers' Creative Play Packs were accessible, low-fuss, interactive activities shared with families and participants across all the pillars of activity in 2021-2022. The packs ensured access to creative experiences for the very young and ongoing communication with their families. They also served to introduce our projects to potential participants.

#### Local Authorities reached

Through Creative Skills training, touring, online Creative Chats, podcast audiences and Community Engagement projects.

#### International connections

Exciting developments took place due to easing of restrictions, allowing two international visits to France and Catalonia as part of the Erasmus+ funded project, Arts & Early Childhood. Scottish delegates attended El Mes Petit de Tots Festival in Sabadell and ACTA France in Paris with a planned visit for our international partners to Edinburgh taking place in 2022-2023. We partnered with Polish organisation Art Fraction Foundation to deliver The Great Things, a project which included giveaways of a new book for children.

25

## STARCATCHERS' 15TH BIRTHDAY

As Starcatchers reaches its 15th Birthday, our vision is unwavering: that every child from birth has the right to ongoing artistic encounters.

Our 15 Actions across the year will tell a story to our audience, one that allows us to be transparent and loud about our intentions as advocates for Scotland's youngest children as we strive to amplify their voices through everything we do.'

- Rhona Matheson, Starcatchers' Chief Executive

2021 was a milestone year for Starcatchers as we celebrated our 15th birthday. 2021 was also the Scottish Government-themed 'Year of Childhood', and saw developments in the incorporation of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law. It was a powerful moment for Starcatchers to focus a campaign on the work we do to advocate for ongoing, early artistic encounters for Scotland's youngest children and how these support the fulfilment of children's rights in services that affect their lives.

Chief Executive Rhona Matheson led cross-sectoral conversations in a new podcast series, taking a deep dive into themes such as baby theatre, children's rights in artistic practice, and what children tell us through their play. We worked with an emerging filmmaker to create content celebrating the birthday campaign, #15Actions, capturing Starcatchers' work across its lifetime.

The #15Actions campaign allowed us to share our work with audiences holistically, focusing on how each strand of activity contributes to the organisation's vision and, crucially, how we advocate for equitable, sustainable access to the arts and creative experiences for all of Scotland's youngest children.

#### #15Actions

**151** Let's Talk About... podcast series total listens

2,719 Podcast trailer views

216 Birthday video views

Our #15Actions > starcatchers.org.uk/work/15th-birthday-15-actions



## **OUR AUDIENCES**

#### **Highlights**

- > Training & Development webpages saw 2,068 unique page views in 2021-2022 against 387 unique page views on the previous year, up a total of 434%
- > Wee Inspirations remains our most viewed audience-focused pages, seeing 1,259 unique page views in 2021-2022.
- > We saw a change in demographics with an increase in male visitors to the website, with 33.7% male users in 2021-2022 vs 26% male users in 2020-2021.
- > Despite the national drop-off in digital usage post pandemic, Starcatchers' newly launched website has seen a small increase in new website visitors: 86% of our landing page views in 2021-2022 are from new visitors, against 85% in 2020-2021.

#### Make-up of in-person engagements

198 Families

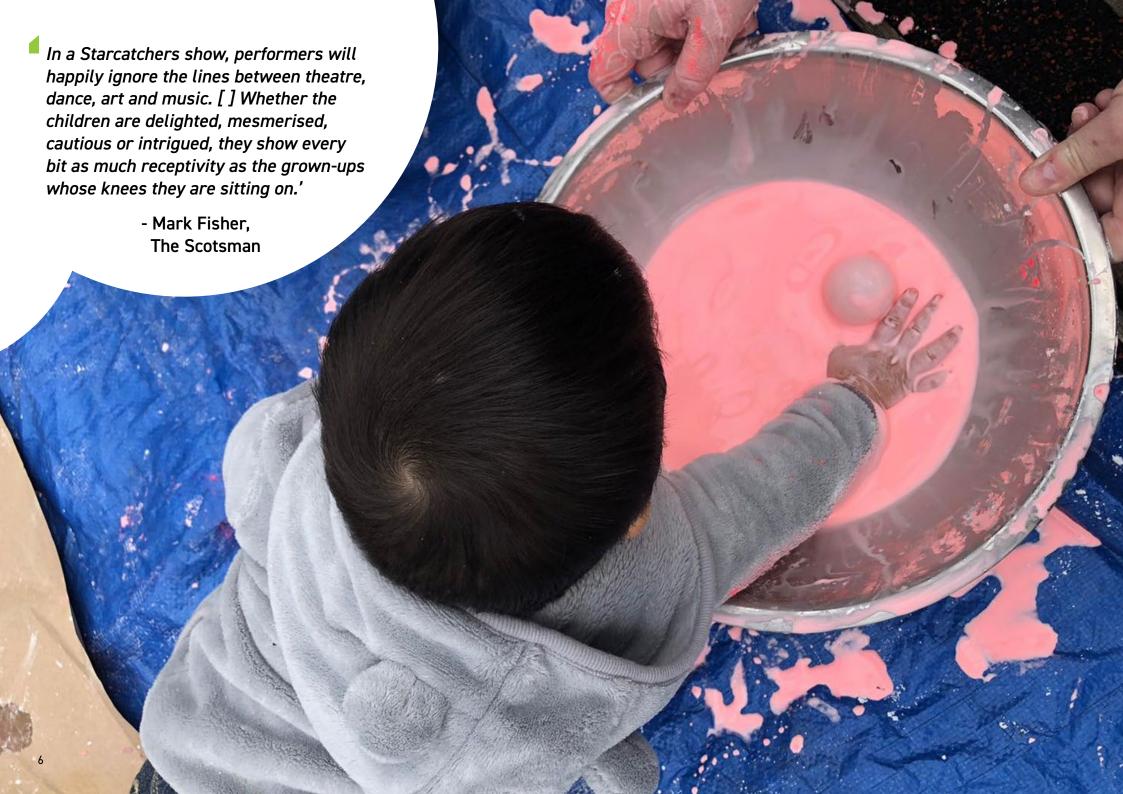
101 Artists

397 Early Years Practitioners

2,779 Performance Audiences

## In-person audience and participant engagement by location

25%	Edinburgh
15%	Glasgow
2.5%	North Ayrshire
7.5%	South Ayrshire
5%	Fife
2.5%	Moray
42.5%	Other



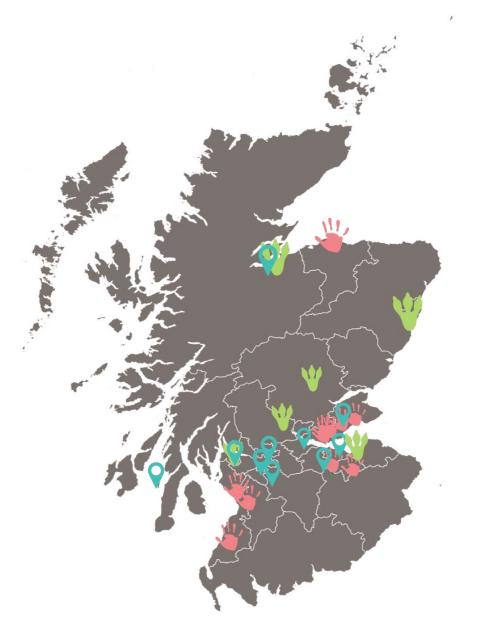
## **OUR REACH**

#### **Creative Skills**



In-person training delivered in partnership with colleges and local authorities. These sessions were developed to address the local authority and student's specific needs in their settings.

Edinburgh City Council Glasgow Kelvin College Edinburgh College UHI Inverness Fife Council Falkirk Council Glasgow City Council Stirling Council Argyll and Bute Council Inverclyde Council Midlothian Council



#### **SPIKE! Tour**



Macrobert Arts Theatre, Stirling
Birnam Arts
Eden Court, Inverness
Aberdeen Music Hall
The Brunton, Musselburgh
Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock

## Community engagement projects



Where We Are,
Glenrothes, Dunfermline,
Lochgelly, Cowdenbeath and Leven
Expecting Something,
Wester Hailes, Edinburgh
Creative Kin,
Irvine North Ayrshire
Girvan Creative Babies,
Girvan South Ayrshire
Oot Playin',
Girvan South Ayrshire
Moray Babies,
Elgin, Moray

## UNDERSTANDING IMPACT

#### **Gathering Evidence**

#### **Engagement Signals**

Our team makes careful observations of the children during face-to-face activities based on the seven pre-determined signals. These signals can be used to assess engagement in both one-off and recurring activities.

> video

#### Leuven Scale

By charting wellbeing, we can witness the changes for individuals over periods of time; from the beginning to the end of one session, or over the course of a year's consistent participation in activities.

scale for wellbeingscale for involvement

#### Participant interviews

Conducting one-on-one conversations with participants by asking a series of open-ended questions allows us to gather honest reflection on their experiences of participation in Starcatchers' projects.

#### Artist and partner reflections

Gathering regular artist and support worker reflections allows us to measure success against our project aims and ensure robust monitoring is in place for evaluation purposes.

#### Audience feedback and surveying

Recognising that parents are the experts in their children, they are asked to provide feedback and complete surveys at key stages in the projects and performances they attend. Partner feedback is key to gathering evidence for case studies.

#### **Case studies**

Focusing on an individual child/ family/setting allows for a more detailed story to be explained, demonstrating the timeline for real-life change as a result of participation or engagement.

#### Photos and film

Visuals help to bring the stats and stories to life. They also convey the non-verbal responses and emotions of the individuals.



# Evervone is so friendly and welcoming, there is no judgement, the kids are free to do what they like, it's a freedom group.' - Dad, Cowdenbeath

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Over the past year, our Community Engagement programme has been delivered in seven communities across Scotland, engaging with families in five different local authority areas. We bring creative play and high-quality arts experiences to families and communities who would otherwise not have access to such experiences.

Specific changes over the past year have been the deepening health needs of the adults attending our sessions. Starcatchers offers non-clinical therapeutic creative outlets, focused on the babies' needs, and we are now looking at how to embed Family Support workers and other professionals into our sessions, so the appropriate level of care is available for the adults. We have also observed the effect that Covid has had on young children, especially the limited opportunities to mix with their peers and other adults. One mum observed that,

At the start we had just come out of lockdown and he wouldn't go near other people or children, now he happily goes off and plays, he doesn't need me. His confidence has improved.'

We balance parental wellbeing and babies' wellbeing in our sessions, ensuring the whole family achieves a sense of creative nourishment and wellbeing.

I'm so thankful for the group, knowing I am getting out at least once a week, it does me the world of good. It builds my confidence and my child's confidence.' - Mum, Dunfermline

In all our Community Engagement work, we partner with established local organisations to facilitate stronger relationship building between Starcatchers artists and community participants. We have established excellent relationships with Fife Gingerbread and the Children 1st teams in Glasgow, Moray, North and South Ayrshire. These relationships allow our artists to access and make use of the additional support available for participant families through partner organisations, while artists augment partner organisations with their own unique artistic expertise and experience.

Starcatchers' model of outdoor working has highlighted a trend across the year; we are seeing an increase in engagement with dads who find the outdoor environment a lot more welcoming.

#### Where We Are

In Fife, Starcatchers' artists are addressing geographical barriers to access in real-time with the our group Where We Are, which is a 'mobile creative experience'. Identifying travel and safe access to spaces was a real problem in this area, the Where We Are group moves around directly in response to participants' needs. One family said they never thought they would get the opportunity to experience anything in the arts because of where they lived, and certainly never thought they would meet an artist! Another family shared they 'can be proud of where they live'. Identifying and overcoming this barrier to access would not be possible unless we were on the ground working with these families face-to-face.

#### Creative Kin

Our North Ayrshire project, Creative Kin, in partnership with Children 1st, supports Kinship families with children under the age of three. Our trauma-informed artists work with the families to support the wellbeing and development of the children, and the relationships within the family unit.

A Kinship carer shared that,

Creative kin has been a god-send to grandkids and myself. It lets the kids have great fun and I get a little time out from worrying about them. I will be forever gratefully for all the support and help my grandkids and myself have received since their daddy, my son, passed away.'

#### Total sessions

- 44 Expecting Something
- 36 Creative Kin
- 18 Oot Playin'
- 44 Where We Are
- 6 Moray Babies
- 19 Family events, pop-up, and creative play

#### **Total participants**

Expecting Something
Creative Kin
Oot Playin'
Where We Are
Moray Babies
Family events, pop-up,
and creative play
Creative Play Packs
delivered, and
families engaged
Doorstep performances
and families engaged

15 adults/families, 16 children 18 adults/families, 22 children 9 adults/families, 11 children 32 adults/families, 32 children 20 babies and 20 adults

124 adults/families, 187 children

48

8

## **EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT**

We are dedicated to sharing resources and in-house expertise in arts and early childhood to ensure robust learning and progress in early years development. Our Early Years Development team has developed a suite of resources through their **Creative Skills training programme**, designed to engage the youngest children in the expressive arts. Creative Skills pivoted to an online model in response to ongoing Covid restrictions, and saw an unprecedented increase in reach, with 25 local authorities in Scotland engaging with the programme.

Wee People, Big Feelings is a partnership project with a Ministry of Defence childcare setting. The project employs an artist-in-residence model and explores the relationship between creativity and emotional literacy in very young children.

While our Creative Skills training programme is governmentfunded, the support of The Robertson Trust allows for more cross-fertilisation between our different pillars of work – bringing together the learning from across the organisation to strengthen the outcomes for children from multiple perspectives. Starcatchers' new international project, Arts & Early Childhood, is funded by Erasmus+ and in partnership with a European network of early years arts and creative organisations from France, Catalonia and the Netherlands. Arts & Early Childhood will host a programme of visits in each country spanning a varied curriculum of immersive activity, including performance, childcare settings and creative play experiences, allowing participants to explore community-based arts and early years best practice across Europe.

Arts & Early Childhood strives for every child to experience the joy and wonder of an early artistic encounter.

Project Partners: Compagnie ACTA in Villiers-le-Bel (France)

LaSala in Sabadell (Catalonia)

2turvenhoog in Almere (Netherlands)



A lovely weekend spent at @MESPETITDETOTS in #Sabadell #Spain. Beginning our @EUErasmusPlus journey with @StarcatchersUK. Took a moment to draw a couple of audience members - because that is who it is all about.

- Arts & Early Childhood participant Nov 21, 2021

- 37 Resources
- 11 Videos
- 7 Podcast episodes
- 14 Wee Inspirations
- 7 Reflective practice worksheets
- 4 Agony Artist blogs

13 sessions, 229 participants

5 sessions, 54 participants92 participants18 sessions, 114 participants

Creative Skills training sessions for Local Authority and colleges Schema Play training days Schema Play Days In-person work Live Creative Chat sessions

- V much enjoyed being mentally in a pizza express chucking crayons across the room with @StarcatchersUK's session about schemas in early years play this morning...fascinating!!'
  - Susie McGuinness via twitter (Schema workshop)
- Such a great session with @StarcatchersUK this morning, on exploring the schematic approaches to the Arts in Early Years! Been playing with play-doh all morning:)

  Looking forward to the next one!'
  - Andre Agius via Twitter (Schema workshop)

1,043 Podcast Listeners 1,424 Video viewers

458 Reflective Practice Worksheet downloads

5 families, 7 adults, 5 children

Participants at Wee People Big Feelings family sessions

# PRODUCTIONS, TOURING & ARTIST DEVELOPMENT



**SPIKE!** Image: Brian Hartley

In 2021 we were delighted to restart our touring work, bringing live and in-person magical theatrical experiences to young children once again. SPIKE! - a dinosaur tale toured to six venues in Scotland, with further touring

planned for 2022. We recognised that, for some children, this was their first theatre experience; we introduced a slow-touring model, allowing us to stay in one place for longer, increasing performance capacity, whilst ensuring the health and safety of our audiences.

Mixed Up, our live theatre commission for Edinburgh International Children's
Festival, was re-invisioned as a film experience for children in schools, accompanied by teacher-led creative activities. It was screened as part of Edinburgh International Children's Festival, and subsequently included in the Baboró International Arts Festival for Children and as part of Theatre in Schools Scotland.

Our Artist development programme, **Playspace**, supported nine artists through our Play Fund to develop and research new concepts in performance for early years audiences. Playspace also delivered artist training including Leuven Scale training, Oxford Brain Story, and climate and sustainability events around Cop26. Artists were supported to attend festivals and networking events online, and once travel became possible, a delegation of artists attended the El Petit Festival in Sabadell, Catalonia, to develop their practice and make connections.

- 124 Artists engaged in Playspace opportunities
- 11 Artists funded through Play Fund
- 12 Number of Playspace events
- 592 Total audience at SPIKE! performances
- 19 Total SPIKE! performances
- 14 Mixed Up Live performances in schools
- 3,128 Children viewed the Mixed Up digital film in schools
- Commission, which funded development of a new early years work Teeny Weeny.

  Teeny Weeny was commissioned for a short outdoor pop-up performance, by Shaper/Caper > shapercaper.com
- 18 Funded artist spaces at Hullabaloo Festival, El Mes Petit de Tots Festival, Sabadell, Virtual Visioni Festival, Italy and the PDSW Showcase.



## **ADVOCACY**

I particularly appreciate you making sure children's voices are heard who don't even have the words to be able to express their own feelings.' - Today Museum: Play participant

#### **Events and Working Groups**

The Starcatchers team represents arts and early years work at local and national events, amplifying the voices of early years children in these discussions in order to extend opportunities for learning and networking across Scotland and internationally. In 2021-2022, we continued to participate at a wide range of events and engage with steering and working groups across the sector, including the Arts in Education Recovery Group, the Young Audiences Group, and the Culture, Tourism, Europe & External Affairs Committee inquiry.

Memberships and Working Groups
Arts in Education Recovery Group (AiERG)
Young Audiences Group
Small Size Network
Children In Scotland
Federation of Scottish Theatre
TYA UK
Together - Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights
Play Scotland
Unfearties of the Children's Parliament
Living Wage Association
Lasting Difference Symbol holder organisation

#### Today Museum: Play consultation

Today Museum: Play was a creative play project with families in the East End of Glasgow. Centred around favourite toys of children 3-8 years, Today Museum Play used sound recordings, photography, and animation to capture what's really important to Scotland's youngest, and their families, in a post-Covid future.

We know that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of children in Scotland. With funding from Scottish Government, these sessions were designed to draw out feelings, needs and hopes of the youngest children, so their voices were heard as we recover from COVID-19.

10 PLAY sessions were delivered with families based in Tollcross, Parkhead, Dalmarnock and Mount Vernon in Glasgow. During these sessions the artists met with, observed and listened to 25 children from 10 families, the youngest aged 22 months and the eldest 12 years old.

Beautiful animations were created by Ella Mclean that reflect the themes Confidence, Freedom, Creativity, Nurture, Celebration + Wonder, Nature and Movement – themes that emerged from the playful conversations.

- > final animation
- > final report

I have actual tears in my eyes! This is so amazing...
the way it champions children's voices and doesn't squish
them into questionnaires!' - Debbie, mum of Micah and Finlay

#### Climate and Sustainability

We recognise that our world is in a climate crisis. With our youngest children at the heart of all our work, it is our responsibility to find new ways of working that can reduce our impact on the planet and reduce our carbon emissions.

> Our Environmental Policy

## **FINANCES**

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS 2022	RESTRICTED FUNDS 2022	TOTAL FUNDS 2022	TOTAL FUNDS 2021
DONATIONS	£669	-	£669	£633
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES INCOME	£164,213	£555,668	£719,881	£630,490
INVESTMENTS	£451	-	£451	£408
OTHER INCOME	£50	-	£50	£40,444
TOTAL INCOME	£165,383	£555,668	£721,051	£649,135
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£189,988	£578,045	£768,033	£462,621
NET INCOME (EXPENDITURE)	(£24,605)	(£22,377)	(£46,892)	£209,354
NET MOVEMENT OF FUNDS	(£24,605)	(£22,377)	(£46,892)	£209,354
TOTAL BROUGHT FORWARD	£97,435	£157,781	£255,216	£45,862

#### THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to the trusts, foundations and grant-making bodies that support our work. Please see our Annual Accounts 2021-2022 for full details.

#### **Principal Funders:**





#### **Core Funders:**

Cattanach, The Robertson Trust, William Grant Foundation



Starcatchers' activity would not be possible without the support and expertise of our valued partners. Children 1st WHALE Arts Fife Gingerbread Lyra **Imaginate** East Renfrewshire Council City of Edinburgh Council Scots Corner Early Learning and Childcare Centre Fruitmarket Greengables Nursery School & Family Centre Platform Today Museum Parkhead ACTA in Villiers-le-Bel (France) LaSala in Sabadell (Catalonia) 2turvenhoog in Almere (Netherlands) Art Fraction Foundation (Poznan / Poland) Edinburgh College Edinburgh City Council Glasgow Kelvin College Hillview Children and Family Centre, Stirling Nurture Nursery, Bathgate The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Royal High Primary School, Edinburgh Abbotsgrange ELCC, Grangemouth Raploch Nursery, Raploch Queen Street ELC. Falkirk Canal View, Wester Hailes Battery Park Pavillion, Greenock Hailesland Early Years Centre Ministry of Defence

Partnership working:



#### **Board of trustees**

Adrian Harris (Chair) Stuart Farquharson Ben Fletcher-Watson Kirsten Hogg Jane Miller Gemma Statham Mhairi Taylor

#### Team

Rhona Matheson Chief Executive

**Heather Armstrong** Head of Early Years Development

Kerry Cleland Creative Babies Coordinator

Anna Downie Creative Kin Coordinator (to July '21),

Community Engagement Manager (from Aug '21)

Natalie Gibson Administrative Coordinator

Sarah Leary Communications and Marketing Manager
Suzanne Oliphant Digital Media Intern (from Sept '21 - Feb '22),

Digital Media Assistant (from Feb' 22)

Katy Wilson Expecting Something Lead Artist

Kirsty Pennycook Creative Kin Lead Artist

Jennifer Phillips Head of Artist Development

Catherine Wilson Early Years Coordinator (to March '22)

Judith Walsh Head of Development and Operations



## starcatchers.org.uk







@starcatchersuk @starcatchersCS

Starcatchers Productions is a limited company, registered in Scotland (SC392561), and a Scottish-registered charity (SC042222).

Registered and mailing address: 64a Cumberland Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6RE



