

Our mission is 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.

## **ABOUT US**

Our vision is that Scotland's youngest children, those from birth to 5 years, fulfil their right to access arts and creative experiences that give inspiration, joy and wonder to early childhood in Scotland. Our work is designed to connect with babies, toddlers and young children, and their grown-ups, in the communities that support them.

## **VALUES:**

Creative & Curious

Bold & Brave

Collaborative & Connected

Reflective & Responsive

## A welcome from Starcatchers' CEO



A very warm welcome to our annual report for 2022 to 2023, a collection of highlights of an eventful and transformative year for Starcatchers. What a year it has been, full of inspiring and unforgettable creativity thanks to an incredible team of people who make it all possible. To our artists, staff, practitioners and Board – I am forever grateful for your energy, commitment and talent. Thank you.

If I was to give this year a title, a way to connect all the activity between the four pillars of our work, the headline would be **Amplifying the Voice of the Child**. The rights of babies and young children, particularly their rights to arts and culture, to be heard and

to express themselves are the cornerstone of our work, and in 2022 we were delighted to begin researching an arts-based methodology for the participation of pre- and non-verbal children in decision-making. This is a pioneering step forward for our country's youngest children.

As we forged ahead with this work, we continued to embed our organisation in the community of Wester Hailes. With our team working from our base at Whale Arts Agency, and Starcatchers' flagship project, **Expecting Something**, taking place each Thursday in Whale's garden, we were delighted to begin **Starcatchers' Saturdays** for local families in the Culture Collective space in Westside Plaza.

This deepening of our community engagement is a core Starcatchers' value. You will see throughout the report that we have recognised how Our Values are put into practice, ensuring we never lose sight of what drives our work and organisational goals.

Our annual report is a celebration of many things, above all it celebrates the babies and very young children Starcatchers engages with and makes work for. We continue to be humbled by our audiences, and the impact that access to the arts and creativity has on their young lives. Here you will read, among other things, about ground-breaking artist residency project **Wee People Big Feelings**, newly developed works supported through our artist development programme, our suite of inspirational Creative Skills resources, immersive and engaging community work, and three touring productions - **Spike!** – a dinosaur caper by Andy Cannon and David Trouton, **Little Top** by SUPERFAN, and **Mixed Up** by Katy Wilson.

We are hugely grateful to you, our funders and supporters, for working with us to keep bringing the magic of the arts to children across Scotland.

Rhona Matheson

## **Our Impact**

Engagement across all activity

Babies and young children ...... 2,967

Artists ......92

Families engaged in community projects ............ 318

Local Authorities reached .......31

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

Community Engagement projects ...... 6

Expecting Something in Wester Hailes, Creative Kin in North Ayrshire, Oot Playin' in South Ayrshire, Play & Explore in Fife, Wonder Studio in Edinburgh, Creative Wellbeing in Gigha

Productions and new works in development .......... 6

SPIKE! - a dinosaur caper, Little Top, Float, Fallen Star, Mixed Up, and Sit, Stand, Lie

**646** Early Years practitioners engaged across our Early Years
Development programme, reaching an approximate **25,840** children through their work



## Our Reach

## **Little Top tour**

Edinburgh International
Children's Festival
Platform in Glasgow
FTH Theatre in Falkirk
Cumbernauld Lanternhouse Theatre
Birnam Arts
Eden Court in Inverness
The Barn, Banchory
MacRobert Arts Centre in Stirling
Regal Reconnect Theatre in Bathgate
Beacon Arts Centre in Greenock
Boat of Garten Hall in the Highlands
Tramway in Glasgow
Perth Theatre
Lemon Tree in Aberdeen

## Community engagement projects

Expecting Something
in Wester Hailes
Creative Wellbeing in Gigha
Play & Explore in
Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline
Oot Playin' in South Ayrshire
Creative Kin in North Ayrshire
Wonder Studio in Edinburgh
Lemon Tree in Aberdeen

## Spike! - a dinosaur caper tour

Perth Theatre
The Byre Theatre
in St Andrews
Cumbernauld Theatre
at Lanternhouse
Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh
Catstrand as part of
Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival
Centrestage in Kilmarnock
Regal Reconnect
in Bathgate

## Creative Skills training

Thurso
Fort William
Angus
Inverness
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Perth
Kent\*
Kirkcaldy
Falkirk



Starcatchers' work is realised through four central pillars of activity, with our Values at the heart of our organisation and its commitment to our audience.

In the development, design and delivery of our work, we recognise and celebrate how our Values are put into practice.

## Creative Connections | Community Engagement

Am I allowed to do this? Am I allowed? Yes, course you are. Yes, yes. The answer is yes. The answer is not going to be no. It's going to be yes." Oot Playin Assistant Artist Rosi Nyamakanga



With a focus on outdoor play and responsive, inclusive delivery, our artist-facilitated groups tackled evolving health and wellbeing concerns with unstoppable Starcatchers creativity, providing emotional and practical support for families and introducing wee ones across the country to the therapeutic value – and sheer joy – of the arts through creativity and play.

## **SOUTH/ NORTH AYRSHIRE:**

Oot Playin' >>> 64 sessions, 79 families and 190 babies
Creative Kin >>> 36 sessions, 8 community events and 19 families

- I think they're absolutely brilliant. Like really, for the thought that they actually put into it, for the time that they spend, for how welcome they make you feel."

  Oot Playin' participant
- It's been so positive. We genuinely believe the impact on our grandson's development has been immense. The entire approach to play adopted by Kirsty and Jane allowed him to develop and experience so much."

  Creative Kin participant

FIFE:

Play and Explore

>> 66 sessions over 33 weeks,24 babies and their families

In 2022 Lead Artist Roz McAndrew gained Fife Gingerbread's Award for 'Trust', nominated with these beautiful words from a Play and Explore participant:

(Roz) has gone above and beyond, and she's emotionally involved in the situation. She makes me feel like her help and advice comes from a place of love and honesty. She's wiped my tears and my son's snot and she's hyped me up on my small victories that usually go unseen. I look forward to each play session knowing she will be there, ready, in any form I need her whether that be a laugh or an offload. She reminds me of sunflowers, honey and all things yellow truly a great person. We love her."

GIGHA:

Creative Wellbeing >>> 13 sessions, 12 adults, 19 children and 5 families

Various one-off **outreach sessions** took place across the year to engage local artists and families in Starcatchers' work

>>> 19 outreach sessions, 467 adults and 502 children

Read the full project reports:

- > Read Oot Playin Report here
- > Read Play & Explore Report here

Creative Kin report will be published in Autumn 2023 on our website

#### Starcatchers in Wester Hailes

In 2022 we continued to put our vision of embedding ourselves in this vibrant community into action. Starcatchers operates from Whale Arts Agency, with **Expecting Something** continuing weekly creative play sessions in the Whale Arts' garden for local families. In Oct 2022 – working with the Community Wellbeing Collective – **Starcatchers' Saturdays** was born, a weekly weekend artist-facilitated creative play session in the Westside Plaza Shopping Centre.

#### STARCATCHERS' SATURDAYS

## >>> 21 sessions, 50 families engaged

More here > starcatchers.org.uk/work/starcatchers-saturdays

#### **EXPECTING SOMETHING**

Outdoor play has become the norm with our well-established Thursday group. We enjoyed visits to cultural spaces and events throughout Edinburgh, and we removed the upper age limit for adults to facilitate continued support. Always ambitious, a Narnia-themed winter trail was created for the community, directly inspired by participants' ideas. The performance was staged at WHALE Arts in December and the sense of pride and ownership from participants was palpable.

## >>> 44 sessions and 25 families engaged

We love the group and each week that we attend we make the best childhood/ parenthood memories to remember, we make happy mess, we get to do stuff we'd never get to try otherwise, we get to be silly and have fun, and we get to do it with the best, supportive, most welcoming, caring group of people ever. Am so glad to have found Expecting something and it's been such a big part of mine and my babies lives. ES has made me and my life better in more ways than I can put into words."

Participant





In 2022 Starcatchers was truly back on the road, with extensive national tours of two productions: **Spike! A Dinosaur Caper**, by Andy Cannon and David Trouton for 3–5 year-olds, and **Little Top**, a magical circus performance for babies from birth to 2 years, co-created with SUPERFAN. Both shows truly capture the artistic excellence and unbounded imagination possible in performance for young audiences.

#### Discover more

- > starcatchers.org.uk/work/spike
- > starcatchers.org.uk/work/little-top

**Spike! A Dinosaur Caper** was the next evolution of Andy Cannon's *A Dinosaur Tale* from 2021. The show utilised a 'slow touring' model in a move towards more sustainable producing. A Dinosaur Caper was many youngsters' first post-pandemic theatre experience.

## >>> 18 performances, 1584 total audience

It was fantastic! My 3-year-old was enraptured throughout and we've spent the afternoon being fish, clocks, tigers and most importantly DINOSAURS! Thanks for another great show."

Audience member

Read audience feedback here

> Spike feedback

Value:
Creative &
Curious
Bold & Brave

Starcatchers' and SUPERFAN's remount of Little Top, visited 14 venues around Scotland, including 8 sold-out performances at Edinburgh International Children's Festival. Little Top was designed as a first circus experience for babies, drawing heavily on baby development stages and schema play.

## >>> 44 performances, 1862 total audience

Little Top was so warm and gentle and beautiful, almost as beautiful as the faces of the babies delighting in the spectacle all around me. Giggles and gurgles and gasps... the best."

Audience member

Read audience feedback here

> Little Top feedback

**Mixed Up**, by Katy Wilson, continued touring its vibrant, interactive playground experience for 3–8-year-olds around Edinburgh schools in partnership with Theatre in Schools Scotland. **Mixed Up** explores emotions and feelings through painting, music, and dance.

## >>> 6 performances, 180 children

> Discover more about Mixed Up here

Value: **Creative &** Curious

## Captivating Our Youngest Audiences | **Artist Development**

The team worked with artists, both upcoming and established, to explore new works for young children relating to topics as disparate as climate change, the night sky and the healing power of water. Artist Kirsty Pennycook developed magical new show Falling Star in collaboration with the participants of Creative Kin.

### **ARTIST DEVELOPMENT**

The 2022/23 programme included a masterclass with international artists Alicja Morawska-Rubczak and Barbara Małecka, as well as taking a deep dive into essential performance skills such as storytelling and character building, plus introductions to emerging fields such as Ecoscenography. With travel restrictions lifted, artists participated in networking, learning and creative inspiration at festivals across Europe: the Fratz Festival in Berlin, El Mes Petit Tots, Sabadell and 2Turvenhoog in Almere, the Netherlands.

>>> 10 sessions, supported 61 artists



## Inspiring and empowering the early years workforce | Early Years Development

Alongside artist-residency projects, Schema Play Days, and the ever-popular Wee Inspirations, the team continued to develop Creative Skills' hybrid delivery model, creating online resources, including our popular Podcast now in its third series. With the increased accessibility of an online component, we worked with local authorities, colleges and early years settings across the country, building bespoke training programmes delivered by our experienced in-house team and Starcatchers' Artists.

Creative Skills Commissioned Training Play Days >> 70 sessions, 377 attendees
 >> 13 settings, 269 attendees, 19 sessions
 >> 235 children attended
 >> Reached 11 local authorities

Participant feedback

## **Erasmus+ Arts & Early Childhood**

Our Arts and Early Childhood project, funded by Erasmus+, encompassed a varied programme of international visits, exploring early years best practice at a local level and on a European scale. Following completion of the project, and with our partners and participants, we will publish our findings of best practice to guide us in providing the best in artistic experience for our youngest citizens.

## >>> 4 partner organisations across 4 countries, 8 Scottish participants

> Read more about the project here

Connect with us @starcatchersuk to read the published report in 2023.

Edinburgh City Council Quality Improvement Education Officer, Bex Ewart, reflects on her recent visit to Almere, Netherlands, as part of Arts and Early Childhood

> starcatchers.org.uk/arts-and-early-childhood-the-importance-of-play



## Wee People Big Feelings

I've worked in early years for 20 years, and I've never seen things like this before."
Staff member

We were proud to break new ground this year, with the Ministry of Defence, Strathclyde University and Scots Corner Early Learning and Childcare Centre on Wee People Big Feelings. Artists worked alongside the practitioners and families of Scots Corner ELC to explore how creative and big movement play nurture emotional literacy in the youngest children of Armed Forces families. The practitioners undertook several professional enquiries, and in 2023 Wee People Big Feelings was nominated for an International Play Association award.

## >>> 1 artist in residence, 23 early years practitioners, 44 children

> Read the full project report for Wee People Big Feelings here

Browse our suite of resources here:

- > starcatchers.org.uk/work/wee-people-big-feelings
- As soon as we entered the hall C attention was drawn to the instrument being played. She sat very quietly watching and listening, emotionally appearing calm and relaxed. As a result of her being calm she was able to join in with the other children moving around the hall without getting upset."

  Parent

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fantastic for my practice."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Can definitely use within own teaching and learning experiences."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Was so much FUN!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Very informative & allowed me to look at learning experiences in a different way."

## Babies Voices Matter | Advocacy

We have an urgent commitment to amplify the voices of Scotland's babies in matters that affect them. It has always been an essential part of our work to give voice to Scotland's next generation: the babies and young children who may not yet be able to speak for themselves, and whose lives are directly and intrinsically affected by the choices we make now.

#### THE VOICE OF THE BABY

With the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) currently being incorporated into Scots law, Starcatchers and Dr Rachel Drury, with Research Assistant Claire Ruckert of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, began work on a major new piece of research: Towards an Arts-based Methodology for Participation for Pre-verbal and Non-verbal Children.

What does this mean for Scotland's babies?

Phase one involved lots of conversations, with artists, cultural venues, and organisations across Scotland. We wanted to understand what practices exist in the industry for listening to the voice of the youngest children in arts settings. Alongside a literature review as part of this phase, we identified a strong shared understanding between early years artists of what the 'voice' of the child might mean, and how to offer an inclusive space for pre-and non-verbal participants. We presented our initial findings at an event in September 2022, and were encouraged by good attendance and engagement from professionals across the arts and early years sectors.

We were delighted to commence phase two of the project in early 2023 and hope you will join us on this journey of discovery. Connect with us @starcatchersuk to stay up to date with our research.

#### Podcast link

- > starcatchers.org.uk/work/the-voice-of-the-child/lets-talk-about-the-voice-of-the-child Webpage link
- > starcatchers.org.uk/work/the-voice-of-the-child/where-is-the-voice-of-scotlands-babies
  Report link
- > starcatchers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/VOC-Summary-Research-Report-5.pdf



# Greener future for the next generation | Sustainability

Scotland in 2045 will be a net-zero country. We are making a commitment to reduce our impact on the planet through collaboration, working with other organisations, artists, our audiences...everyone! Creative Carbon Scotland's 4-day Springboard: Assembly was a great space to re-imagine this new Scotland; how we grasp the opportunities and overcome the challenges of the journey towards it.

We are part of a cohort of organisations working together to build a green arts charter for the sector.

We have contributed to Arts Resource Management Scotland's report on shared storage, and how we can share resources as a sector.

In 2022-2023, a third of Starcatchers team were carbon literacy trained.

In 2023-2024, we will train Starcatchers' team, some of the Board, and offer free training to freelance artists.

We provide sustainability training for artists and offered an Intro to Ecoscenography session online.

We have also implemented a bike mileage scheme, to encourage staff and artists to get on their bikes!

## Read Starcatchers Environmental Policy

> starcatchers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Sustainability-Policy-2023.pdf

## **FINANCES**

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS 2023	RESTRICTED FUNDS 2023	TOTAL FUNDS 2023	TOTAL FUNDS 2022
DONATIONS	£405	-	£405	£669
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES INCOME	£70,698	£684,913	£755,611	£719,881
INVESTMENTS	£853	-	£853	£451
OTHER INCOME	£25	-	£25	£18,388 (restated)
TOTAL INCOME	£71,981	£684,913	£756,894	£739,389 (restated)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£106,359	£734,815	£841,174	£768,033
NET INCOME	(£34,378)	(£49,902)	(£84,280)	(£28,644) (restated)
NET MOVEMENT OF FUNDS	(£54,723)	(£29,557)	(£84,280)	(£28,644) (restated)
TOTAL BROUGHT FORWARD	£91,168	£135,404	£226,572	£255,216

## 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 2022-2023 for full details.

Principal Funders: The Scottish Government

**Creative Scotland** 

Argyll & Bute Council, Cattanach, BBC Children in Need, Erasmus+, Henry Duncan, Perinatal Infant Mental Health, The National Lottery Improving Lives, The National Lottery Young Start, Prism Charitable Trust, The Robertson Trust, William Grant Foundation and smaller funders, to all of whom we are hugely grateful.

## Starcatchers' activity would not be possible without the support and expertise of our valued partners.

2turvenhoog in Almere (Netherlands)
Abbotsgrange ELCC,

Grangemouth ACTA in Villiers-le-Bel

(France) Angus Council

Army Welfare

Art Fraction Foundation (Poznan / Poland) Arthurlie family centre

Battery Park Pavillion,

Greenock

Camelon Education Centre

Canal View, Wester Hailes

Children 1st

Children in Scotland

Conference

City of Edinburgh Council

Craigroyston Community

High School Culture Collective

East Renfrewshire Council

Edinburgh College

Edinburgh Council Falkirk Childminders Fife Gingerbread

Fruitmarket

Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector

Glasgow Kelvin College Glen Family Centre Greengables Nursery

School & Family Centre Hailesland Early Years

Centre

Happitots Nursery Hillview Children and

Family Centre, Stirling Horsecross Arts

Imaginate

LaSala in Sabadell

(Catalonia)

Lyra

Ministry of Defence Muirton Community

Nursery

Nurture Nursery, Bathgate Our Lady of Loretto ELC

Park Drive Nursery Platform

Playground,

Kent County Council Queen Street ELC, Falkirk Raploch Nursery, Raploch

Red Note Music

Royal High Primary School, Edinburgh

Scots Corner Early

Learning and Childcare Centre

Sistema

St Cadoc's Primary Stockbridge Nursery

Strathclyde University

Strathmore Primary School

The Cottage Family Centre
The Royal Conservatoire

of Scotland

Village Storytelling Centre

WHALE Arts Woodlands Nurture

Centre

Our work would not be possible without the input and creativity of the exceptional artists we work with.

Andy Cannon Anna Newell

Arron Sparks

Ashley Jack Dance Aya Kobayashi

Barbara Maleka

Becky Minto Benjamin Winger

Brian Hartley
Callum Douglas Finlay
Callum Younger

Catherine Idle Charlie Farrally

Charlotte Allan
Chris Gorman

Claire Docherty Corrie McKendrick

Danuta Ramos David Trouton Dr Rachel Drury

Emily Reid Ellie Dubois Emma Campbell

Esther Huss Ethelinda Lashley Ewan Sinclair

Fergus Dunnet Fiona Ferrier Gabrielle Cook Geraldine Heaney Greer Pester

Hailey Beavis Hannah Edie

Harri Pitches Hayley Earlam

Hazel Darwin-Clements

Heather Fulton Jane Truss

Jennifer Steele
Judith Williams

Julia Darrouy Kate MacKay

Kenny Macleod Kerry Cleland

Kerry Pearce Kim Donohoe

> Kirstin Abraham KJ Clarke Davis Laura Booth

Laura Dryburgh Liam Chapman

Lisa Wilson Lorna Gallagher Louise Montgomery

Lucy McGreal Madeleine Wood Megan Adair

Michael Graham

Michaella Fee Mona Kastell

Monica de Ioanni Morgan Njobo

Natalia McDonald Nathaniel Whittingham

Niloo Far Khan

Pearl Kinnear Peter Lannon Philip O'Shea

Rachel Colles
Rachel Still

Ronan McMahon

Rory Clark Rosi Nyamakanga

Ruxandra Cantir Samuel Watson

Sara Stroud Sarah Rose Graber Sarmed Mirza

Shiori Usui Skye Reynolds Sophie Wright Susan Appelbe

Suzie Normand Therese Kearns

Tuesday McPhail

Ursula Manandhar

#### Starcatchers Staff

Judith Anderson Head of Operations & Development
Eilidh Akilade Early Years Development Coordinator

(until Jan 2023)

Heather Armstrong Head of Early Years Development
Kerry Cleland Creative Babies Coordinator
Anna Downie Community Engagement Manager

(until Dec 2022)

Amy Hall Gibson Early Years Development Manager Natalie Gibson Senior Marketing Coordinator

Christine Irvine Communications and Marketing Manager

(maternity cover from May 2022)

Sarah Leary Communications and Marketing Manager

Rhona Matheson Chief Executive

Roz McAndrew Play & Explore Lead Artist Corrie McKendrick Oot Playin' Lead Artist

Suzanne Oliphant Digital Media Assistant (until Aug 2022)

Kirsty Pennycook Creative Kin Lead Artist Jennifer Phillips Head of Artist Development

Gemma Smith Associate Producer

Katy Wilson Expecting Something Lead Artist

### Starcatchers' Board

Leah Duncan-Karrim (appointed Feb 2023)

Stuart Farqhuarson Ben Fletcher-Watson

Adrian Harris Kirsten Hogg

Jane Miller

Lucy Morton (appointed Feb 2023)

David Munn (appointed Feb 2023)

Gemma Statham (retired Sep 2022)

Mhairi Taylor (retired Sep 2022)



## starcatchers.org.uk







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