

Arts Emergency

Impact Report 2024

Welcome to Arts Emergency's Impact Report

Another year, another newspaper article confirming what we already know: "working-class people are underrepresented in every area of arts and culture" ([The Guardian](#), May 2024). Real change will only come when barriers are dismantled. That's why Arts Emergency remains as vital today as when I co-founded it over a decade ago.

In 2024, we continued opening doors for young people - providing opportunities, networks, and the confidence to shape their futures. We also refined our programme based on their needs. Our 12-month mentoring programme is at the heart of our work, but mentees can access up to ten years of support through our Young Community. Recognising the need for in-person

networking, we started laying the groundwork for monthly events in London, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside.

We also took a major step forward in reviewing our expansion strategy to ensure our programme is sustainable for the long term. While our reach continues to grow, there's more to be done - particularly in recruiting more mentors in Merseyside, a crucial step towards deepening our impact in the region.

Our mentoring team formed strong relationships with 50 partner schools whose students have a high level of need for Arts Emergency. This is only made possible thanks to the dedication of teachers who, despite working under continuous pressure of funding and subject cuts, champion their students and encourage them to pursue their ambitions. This passion, combined with the generosity of our supporters and volunteer mentors helped us create 251 mentoring partnerships, which have the potential to change a young person's life choices. The impact has been profound: 100% of mentees gained opportunities they wouldn't have had without Arts Emergency and 85% reported feeling clearer about their career path.

Most inspiring of all is that we saw members of our Young Community complete their 10-year journey and join our Network. This is the Arts Emergency ecosystem in action: a thriving community of creatives lifting each other up.

I hope you enjoy reading about our 2024 achievements. To our mentors, donors, and supporters - thank you. Your generosity makes our work possible. Together, we are building a future where young people face no closed doors to creativity and the creative industries!

Neil Griffiths,
Arts Emergency
Co-Founder and CEO

About us

Arts Emergency was set up in 2013 by activist Neil Griffiths and comedian Josie Long to act as an 'Alternative Old Boys' Network' for young people who have creative ambitions but don't have the existing connections who can open doors for them.

Since then, we have been redistributing cultural capital and opportunity, empowering over 2,000 under-resourced young people to be their best, most aspirational selves through 1:1 mentoring with hand-matched industry professionals, and up to ten-years' worth of tailored assistance, real-life opportunities, network connections, and peer support.

The Arts Emergency Network of nearly 10,000 professional creatives are the driving force behind everything we do. They are the volunteer mentors who generously give their time each month to share knowledge, offer guidance, and become the first industry connection for a young person. They are the donors and fundraisers who make it possible for more young people to access our life-changing programmes. They are our

cheerleaders - standing with us, speaking up for us, and sharing our vision for a fairer, more inclusive future.

Members of our Young Community are taking centre stage - starring in hit TV shows, earning places at top universities and conservatoires, launching exciting creative projects together, and becoming influential voices in the arts, media, and wider cultural sectors. They're forging their place in the industry and redefining what the future looks like.

[JOIN THE NETWORK](#)

Who we support

In 2024 our mentoring team matched 251 young people across London, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Brighton, with a professional working in an industry they're interested in learning more about. To ensure our mentoring programme is reaching the young people that need it most, we ask our mentees aged 16-18 to meet at least one of our eligibility criteria.

Of our 2024 mentees:

- **88%** are from a lower socioeconomic background
- **59%** describe themselves as from an ethnic minority background
- **30%** are disabled or have a special educational need
- **66% of mentees met at least two of our eligibility criteria**

The impact of mentoring

At Arts Emergency, we believe every young person deserves a fair shot at a creative career. Our mentoring programme pairs 16-18- year-olds from underrepresented backgrounds with passionate volunteer mentors who help them navigate their next steps after school or college.

Our mentors come from all corners of the creative world, from film and fashion to music and media. They know how tough it can be to break into the industry, so they're here to offer guidance, share insider knowledge, and, most importantly, keep the door open for the next generation. With thorough training and year-round support from our team, mentors are set up to make a real difference.

Over 12 months, mentoring pairs meet for an hour each month in cafés, museums, galleries, and parks across London, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside. It's a chance to set goals, explore ambitions, and get practical advice on creative careers. In January 2024, we welcomed 251 new mentoring pairs into the programme,

each embarking on their own journey of support and discovery.

For young people, this is more than just mentorship - it's a gateway to opportunities they simply wouldn't get otherwise. They receive tailored advice, unwavering encouragement, and connections that can help turn dreams into reality. Many even step into the industry through workplace visits, role shadowing, and paid placements.

We're not just running a one-and-done mentoring scheme - we're building a future where talent, not background, determines success.

Joe Burton,
Head of Programmes

2024 Mentoring Programme

- **251** young people were matched with a volunteer mentor:
 - 156 in London
 - 62 in Greater Manchester
 - 28 in Merseyside
 - 5 in Brighton
- **100%** of mentees said they gained opportunities they wouldn't have got otherwise
- **98%** of mentees showed improved knowledge of routes into industry, experiences of the industry, and confidence and self-belief
- **50** mentee referral partners across the country
- **£210k** worth of volunteer time by our mentors
- **85%** of mentees said they feel clearer about their career direction after the programme

Davonte's mentoring experience

Davonte, aged 19 from London, was looking for a mentor who could help prepare him for studying game design at university.

When I applied for an Arts Emergency mentor I was in my final year at college studying Creative Media which includes games, animation, and visual effects. One of my teachers introduced our class to the mentoring programme, and I thought it sounded like a great opportunity to get support and advice because I'm especially interested in the creative side of gaming like character design and different visual styles, rather than the more technical aspects we were learning about at college.

I was matched with my mentor David, editor of 'A Place To Hang Your Cape' - a superhero/comic book website that promotes comic creators. David was a great match for me because he could introduce me to artists who I talked to and got a better understanding of the creative side of making games.

We mostly met online via Teams, which worked well for me as I could fit it round my college coursework. In each session, David and I talked about a new topic related to games art and he'd give me a task to work on. At the following meeting, we'd go over the set task and he'd give me feedback on what I'd done, which I found really helpful.

We also met in person a few times - one highlight was going to the comic book convention, Comic Con. That was my first time attending, and I got to meet loads of artists through David and saw some examples of games art which I found really inspiring.

Before mentoring, I knew I wanted to go to university but I didn't have much experience with creating my own artwork. David really helped me feel prepared. I'm now in my first year of Game Development at the University of Westminster, and I don't think I'd feel as focused or confident if it wasn't for the mentoring. It gave me direction, motivation, and an insight into the industry that I want to be part of.

Davonte, 2024 London mentee

Laaibah's mentoring experience

Laaibah, aged 18 from Manchester, was looking for a mentor who could share insights about creative writing and script writing.

I was in my last year of sixth form when I applied for a mentor with Arts Emergency. I'd been doing a creative writing enrichment course at college and I already knew I wanted to go to university and do something creative and literary but I wasn't sure what that would look like long term.

I was paired with Naomi, a Manchester-based playwright, screenwriter and dramaturg who could not only share industry knowledge, but also has lived experience of what it's like to be a person of colour trying to break into creative spaces, which was really important to me.

Naomi and I met once a month in cafés and bookshops around Manchester. She gave me advice about applying for writing competitions and improving my CV as well as giving me useful feedback on my work.

Through our mentoring meetings I discovered I enjoyed writing for screen so Naomi introduced me to a games writer, which stirred an interest in me and encouraged me to explore different writing formats. I wouldn't have got the chance to make this connection without my mentor.

My favourite thing about having a mentor was just having a regular time to work on creative goals beyond my college work. Having someone, outside of college and family, to bounce ideas off gave me motivation to keep developing my writing.

Having a mentor like Naomi definitely gave me a clearer idea of how to develop ideas, write pitch documents and develop screen plays. I'm now in my first year at Manchester Metropolitan University studying English Literature with Creative Writing and hope to have a future in writing for television and animation.

Laaibah, 2024 Greater Manchester mentee

Ruben's mentoring experience

Ruben, aged 18, is an aspiring filmmaker based in Merseyside. He was looking for a mentor who could help him understand routes into the film industry and expand his professional network.

I was in Sixth Form College when I first applied for an Arts Emergency mentor. At the time, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in the film industry, but I wasn't sure how to get started.

My main goals were to learn more about different routes into film and get advice on how to approach writing and directing my first independent short film. I didn't have access to people in the industry, so having a mentor felt like a good way of gaining some insights.

I was paired with Sam who is a video producer. He's really knowledgeable about the industry and has had experience working in television and creating digital content.

One of the biggest barriers for me is accessing film equipment which can be really expensive but Sam introduced me to organisations, like Into Film and FilmHub North, that support young and emerging filmmakers.

Even though Sam is based in Devon and we met online, our mentoring sessions were always productive and encouraging. I was able to share my ideas with him regularly, and he gave honest and practical feedback. He advised me on making films on a budget, and shared tips on lighting, directing actors, editing, and more. We also looked at building a professional network using platforms like LinkedIn, researching university courses, and he even helped me prepare for interviews by giving advice on what skills employers in the industry are looking for.

I'm really proud that I fulfilled my goal of making a short film during my mentoring year. I'm now planning to go to university to continue studying film and have received an offer from one of my top choices, but have also explored the possibility of going straight into the industry and what that path might look like.

Having a mentor like Sam - someone with professional experience who's gone through the challenges of the film industry firsthand, has been really valuable. I now have a much clearer understanding of how the industry works and I feel far more confident in my ideas and filmmaking.

Ruben, 2024 Merseyside mentee

Amplifying youth voice

When a young person begins their relationship with Arts Emergency they are welcomed into the Young Community and can access up to 10 years of tailored support.

During this time they're sent regular newsletters which include exclusive paid work opportunities and ticket offers, access to travel bursaries, useful resources, and information on how to get extra support when they need it. In 2024, the Arts Emergency Community Team shared 260 opportunities through the monthly newsletter. Members are also invited to connect with peers at Arts Emergency-hosted events throughout the year.

Highlights this year were taking a group of North West-based mentees and Young Community members to meet the team behind the hit musical SIX at The Lowry, and facilitating a trip for our London based Young Community members to the V&A's NAOMI: In Fashion exhibition and hear a talk by two of the curators. Experiences like these give young people the opportunity

to connect with each other and feel part of a wider creative community.

Melissa Wong, Director of Programmes

Youth Collective

Arts Emergency envisions a future where young people face no closed doors to creativity and the creative industries. To make this a reality, it's essential that the programmes are shaped by the voices and experiences of young people themselves. One way this is achieved is through the Youth Collective, which is made up of 12 passionate young creatives, including myself. All of us are either studying or working in the arts and have benefited directly from Arts Emergency's support.

We meet regularly with the Programmes team to input into plans for the Young Community and we represent AE at events. Two members also sit on the Board of Trustees to ensure that the organisation's strategic direction continuously reflects and responds to the needs of young people.

My highlights from 2024 include having the opportunity to showcase our creativity and collaboration skills by creating a [zine](#) inspired by our [2023 Manifesto](#). I also loved welcoming a new wave of members, kicking things off with a residential trip to Shropshire. They've brought

fresh energy and ideas to the future of the Young Community programme, which is really exciting!

For me, the Youth Collective is a space where I can speak up about the things I care about, surrounded by support and free from judgement. It's helped me grow in confidence - both personally and as an advocate. I'm looking forward to working with the Collective and the AE team closely to curate events that truly bring our Young Community together to connect, share, and learn.

Amie, former mentee and coachee, and current Youth Collective member

2024 Highlights

- **January:** 251 mentoring pairs met at the introduction events around the UK
- **February:** Held an online celebration for our 2023 mentoring cohort
- **March:** Raised almost £25k in our Big Give Arts for Impact appeal
- **April:** Released our 2023 Impact Report
- **May:** Members of our Young Community were interviewed on Channel 4 News for a report on the lack of working class creatives in film and TV
- **June:** The Youth Collective released their Art is Joy zine
- **July:** Launched our 2025 mentor recruitment drive
- **August:** Recruited new Youth Collective members
- **September:** Printed our Arts Emergency newspaper which included articles and artwork by our Young Community
- **October:** Revealed our 2nd limited edition screen print to raise money
- **November:** Matched our 2025 mentoring pairs
- **December:** Raised over £20k in our Bursar Appeal

From mentee to Youth Collective member: Louis' journey with Arts Emergency

Louis, 22, from Manchester, first joined Arts Emergency as a mentee in 2020. Four years later, he's now a member of the Youth Collective and is well on his way to becoming an architect.

My journey with Arts Emergency started in 2020 when I applied for a mentor and was paired with Manchester-based architect Lorenza, who was wonderful!

At the time, I was at college and knew that I liked art and design. I'd thought about studying architecture at university but I had no idea about the route to get there. Although my teachers and family were supportive, they didn't have any knowledge of the best pathways either. Lorenza gave me so much clarity and direction, it really was a blessing having a mentor like her.

We met in-person a couple of times but then Covid lockdowns hit so we met online. Even after our mentoring

year had finished Lorenza gave me the opportunity to do a week's work experience at her architecture firm post-lockdown. This was invaluable and gave me the chance to feel the energy of the workplace and connect with industry professionals who shared advice I still carry with me.

I struggled to think about the future during the Covid lockdowns because it felt like everything was on pause, but my mentoring partnership gave me the push I needed to get motivated and ambitious about my future. I'm now in the final year of Part 1 of my Architecture degree at the University of Liverpool and plan to continue with Part 2. Lorenza has been an integral part of my journey, she even advised me on the best university to go for facilities and opportunities.

After completing my year of mentoring, I stayed connected through the Arts Emergency Young Community. In 2024, I joined the Youth Collective to play a more active role in decision-making and to support others like me - those with potential but without connections. Being part of Arts Emergency has given me

a network, confidence and the ability to communicate with industry professionals.

Louis, former Greater Manchester mentee and current Merseyside-based Youth Collective member

How you can help

Hey fellow Arts Emergency comrades!

You likely already know just how vital the work of Arts Emergency is - it's nothing short of a lifeline for driven, talented young people with creative ambitions who just need a fair shot. It's the friendly voice that says "Hey kid, you have the same right as anyone else to dream big. We'll help you make it happen."

For those without connections or privilege, the creative and cultural industries can feel completely out of reach. If we don't support and nurture these voices, we risk losing the lived experiences that make the sector so rich, vibrant, and truly representative of the world we live in.

I support Arts Emergency because working-class and marginalised people are still underrepresented in the

creative sector and, let's face it, we can't rely on the government to help change this - cuts to arts funding and arts subjects in schools are affecting those that need access most. Arts Emergency provides tangible support including mentoring, network connections and real-life opportunities that can truly change the choices someone has in their life.

There's loads of ways you can make a difference with Arts Emergency, from volunteering to be a mentor - giving up time to chat to a young person and share advice, to donating what you can spare or fundraising for the cause - it's all massively important in kicking down those barriers that so many young people face.

Times have been tough and Arts Emergency has really felt it. It relies on the generosity of its donors - every single penny fuels its bold, transformative work.

So, if you can, please consider joining me in donating to this wonderful cause, whether it's £1000 a month or £1,

your contribution will power a fairer, more creative future
that we can all enjoy.

Rob Delaney

Actor and writer

[DONATE TODAY](#)

Thank you

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead, we want to say a HUGE thank you to our major donors, bursars, monthly and one-off donors, trusts and foundations, and organisations. Your support makes our life-changing programmes for under-resourced young people possible.

Emma Kendall, Head of Fundraising

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Tony, Yomi, and Zoe.

Plus all our anonymous Bursars.

Bursar organisations

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Thank you to all the anonymous donors.

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Photo credits

Front cover: Mentor Georgia and mentee Christelle at the Arts Emergency celebration event at The Place, 2023.

Photo by Rob Greig

Page 3: Neil Griffiths speaking at Christie's London, 2025. Photo by Stephen Akinyemi.

Page 5: Mentoring introduction event at Central Saint Martins, 2023. Photo by Rob Greig.

Page 9: Mentee Davonte meeting his mentor David at the mentoring introduction event at Central Saint Martins, 2024. Photo by Arts Emergency

Page 9: Mentee Davonte.

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Page 13: Merseyside mentoring introduction event at Museum of Liverpool, 2024. Photo by Arts Emergency.

Page 14: Young Community at Queens: The Exhibition, The Lowry, Manchester.

Page 15: Youth Collective member Amie. Photo by Neil Eskins.

Page 19: Youth Collective member Louis. Photo by Neil Eskins.

Page 21: Rob Delaney. Photo by Lily Craigen.

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