



About Cartwheel Arts

Cartwheel Arts is one of the leading participatory arts companies in North West England. The company is a registered charity, established in 1984 and based in Heywood, in the borough of Rochdale. Cartwheel staff and Trustees are passionate about the role which the company can play in providing opportunities for development in low income neighbourhoods, making a positive impact for both individuals and groups, and in bringing about a socially just society. This is our mission:

Cartwheel is committed to promoting social inclusion, cohesion, diversity and regeneration through community participation in vibrant, innovative, high-quality arts projects building healthier, stronger, safer communities.

We call this Art for a Reason.

Led by an experienced board of eight Trustees, we operate currently with a team of 5 staff (3.6 FTE) plus our two Kickstart apprentices. Our work is supported by a large pool of freelance artists and volunteers who assist in delivering projects which bring communities together, break down barriers, build capacity in the neighbourhoods we serve and promote a sense of ownership and pride, through community publishing, celebratory events, new media, environmental projects, exhibitions and conferences.

We work with all age groups in a wide range of settings.

In a normal year we would expect to run 250 activity sessions, with 2,500 participants, who participate on 4,000 occasions with audience figures of over 30,000.

The recent period has not been normal. The staff team were frenetically busy throughout the pandemic, producing a wide variety of creative activity packs to our communities in print runs ranging from 50 to 6,000, offering remote in-person support to vulnerable participants, conducting doorstep interviews and photoshoots, publishing a series of books and resource packs, producing over 30 videos and exhibiting our work on billboards. Here are links to our Impact reports for the [first six months of COVID](#) and for [the year as a whole](#).

Hybrid delivery continues – small group activity has resumed but we are also continuing with, for example, our series of postal projects having discovered that remote activity is preferable for some people with severe anxiety, chaotic lifestyles or access issues.

The work

Our delivery style may be improvisational at present but it has not affected our commitment to communities in Rochdale and neighbouring boroughs.

We have an impressive track record of working collaboratively with partners to develop vivid, highly acclaimed and successful projects with some of the most disadvantaged communities in the North West. We do not shy away from addressing difficult and unpopular issues. The Trustees have determined that all the company's projects must demonstrate impacts in one or more of the following areas:

More cohesive communities; Skills, employability and worklessness; Improving health and wellbeing; Involved and engaged young people

We involve people actively, aiming to build their confidence, to raise self-esteem, to develop ambitions and widen horizons. We design projects which challenge prejudice and promote community cohesion, both within and between communities.

Some projects benefit whole communities in low income neighbourhoods, while others are targeted at particular groups. Darnhill Festival involves many hundreds of people on a deprived estate in Heywood, and Art for Wellbeing serves children, young people and adults with mental health problems in Rochdale and GM more widely.

We aim to ensure that longer term projects are developmental, sustainable and leave a legacy, for example an independent group controlled by local people which will take the project forward.

We group our work into four strands:

- **All Well & Good**, a series of arts and health initiatives including **Art for Wellbeing** promoting wellbeing, increased confidence and independent living.
- **Stronger Communities**, which is the largest strand and includes Darnhill Festival.
- **Youth & Diversity**, a programme of work with young people, promoting inclusion and cohesion.
- **You Live & Learn**, which focuses on learning through doing.

Our Anti-Discrimination Action Plan

Cartwheel Arts has, from the very start, been committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The disproportionate effect of the pandemic on minority communities, combined with the impact of Black Lives Matter, has led us to translate our commitment into a practical action plan which guides the artistic programme and sits alongside the Business Plan. We aim to create an environment for learning and working that is accepting and respectful of differences and encourages all Cartwheel participants/staff and partners to promote diversity. Our policies, processes, procedures and practices all contribute to our anti-discrimination strategy. Fair treatment for all who work for and with us, use our services and facilities must be a given. More than that, Cartwheel projects must be explicitly committed to promoting equality of opportunity.

Our reputation

The company has built a strong reputation in the communities we serve, from predominantly white former Manchester overspill estates, to town centre neighbourhoods with majority South Asian populations.

We aim to be an outstanding organisation, widely recognised for the consistently high quality of our work by participants and stakeholders and demonstrating our impact in disadvantaged communities across the region. We have a talented and committed team of people who are learning all the time. We base our work on identified needs and do the groundwork necessary to ensure the widest possible participation.

We are a highly resilient organization with a broad income base. However we must acknowledge the exceptional flexibility of funders during COVID and the extraordinary support we have received, particularly from The National Lottery, during this time. We expect a gradual recovery in earned income through commissions and sales of our successful creative wellbeing 'game' Wellbeing Dominoes.

The Cartwheel team

We are a small staff team, and all members play an active part in the life of the company. We share tasks and responsibilities in running the company, from housekeeping to strategic planning. Practical experience is more important to us than formal qualifications.