

Welcome Letter from the Chair

Dear Candidate,

Thank you very much for your interest in joining the Board. Discover is looking for up to three new trustees, ideally strengthening the Board with expertise in living, learning or earning in Newham; children's publishing; and child development. We welcome those who bring difference to the Board in terms of experience and background. We want to embrace the whole person, and not appoint anyone expecting them to represent a specific group.

Discover Children's Story Centre is a place where children aged 0-11 and their families can enjoy playing, learning and making up stories together. At the heart of Discover are two floors of magical Story Worlds and a Story Garden - immersive, exploratory play spaces where children and their imaginations can roam.

When it started, Discover occupied only one and a half floors of our Edwardian building in Stratford High Street and was pleased to reach 40,000 visitors. It has steadily expanded through a series of capital projects to now offer 4 floors of inspired inventiveness which in 2023 reached over 120,00 children and their carers. Discover has matured from a struggling start-up to be a sustainable arts charity with a national reputation, a dynamic and expert staff team and a dedicated and able board of Trustees.

As it celebrates its 21st Birthday, Discover needs more Trustees who can work with the Board and the Executive Team to guide it as it prepares to support the next 1 million children and families, with developments including a new 0-2s room, a vertical accessible 'Story Tree' play space, new café and bookshop and a major community engagement programme.

Incoming Trustees will need to bring commitment, a strong and credible ability to represent Discover and support it to shine, and a passion for inspiring children's imagination. If you are excited by this opportunity, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

Alexandra Marks CBE
Chair

Our Current Board

Alexandra Marks, CBE – Chair formerly an equity partner at Linklaters, she is now a part-time judge and is involved in various charities.

Amit Rama – Treasurer

“I enjoy drawing on my professional skills to provide oversight to navigate various financial challenges including a planned major capital project. I gain great satisfaction from the quality of Discover’s offer and its impact on youth literacy in London.”

Graham Massie is COO of the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution and experienced business consultant

Giorgia Stewart is a Stakeholder Engagement Specialist working within Urban Built Environment

Helen Whiteman is Chief Executive of the Chartered Institution of Taxation.

“My childhood dreams were filled with the adventures and characters I’d met when reading books such as the Faraway Tree and Famous Five. That creative writing and imagination ensured my eyes were open to the possibilities in front of me in life from an early age. To be able to share my skills with a charity that embodies learning, creativity and fun is rewarding beyond measure.”

Joe Robinson is a primary school teacher and qualified SENCo living and working in Newham

Naseem Hossain

“I really find it fulfilling knowing that our contributions, as trustees, directly benefits children positively and the local community at large”

Oghenevese Aghoghovbia is an author, entrepreneur and customer and sales expert

Siobhan Tighe is CFO of Natural History Museum.

Vaseem Khan is a writer and Business Development Director for Department of Security and Crime Science at UCL

Victoria Dance is a PR and Communications Consultant working across arts and culture, travel and tourism, and lifestyle sectors

Further information

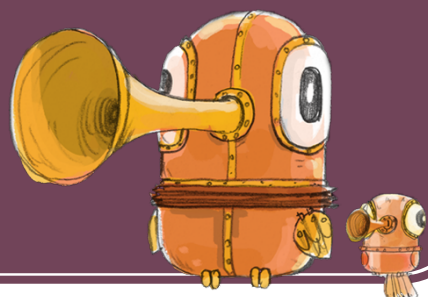
Please find below some documents which will provide further insight into the aims and operations of this exciting charity:

- Stories For All, our strategic framework 2024-2030
- Our Annual Dashboard showing achievements 2023 – 24
- Our activity report for the last full financial year, April 2023 – March 2024

We hope that you enjoy reading them and feel inspired to contribute to the work of Discover.

Stories For All

Our strategic framework 2024-2030



Discover
Children's Story Centre

Strategic Framework

2024 - 2030



Transforming lives through stories

We create wonder.



We are the UK's first Story Centre for children aged 0-11 and their families, **proudly rooted in Newham**, East London.

We believe stories are critical to child development, that they can **transform lives** and shape strong and vibrant communities.

We are committed to supporting the **curiosity, creativity and imagination** of all children through excellent artistic, creative, play and learning experiences.



In 2024, Discover comes of age and will celebrate its 21st birthday. We've welcomed over 1 million visitors so far and evolved our support for creative literacy through numerous projects and programmes with local children at their heart.

To set out on our next 21 years we've engaged with children, families, artists and strategic stakeholders and agreed that there are **five principles** that should run through everything we do:



Put children first

Create the extraordinary

Keep growing our accessibility and inclusivity

Play our part in protecting our planet

Ensure our organisation is well-run



Together, we've built this plan for Discover's next chapter and next 1 million children.

In the next five years, we have set ourselves five big objectives:



Up and Out: evolve our building to inspire the next 1 million visitors

Outside Over There: reach more people in more places

More Storytellers Like Me: ensure every child can find themselves in Discover

Play and Learn: championing Discover's approach and learning from others

No Place Like Newham: make a difference to every child in our home borough



Our annual business plans each year will make sure we are on track to achieve each of these targets. We will report our progress every year using the measures outlined for each objective.

Up and Out

Evolve our building to inspire the next 1 million visitors.

- Implement the findings of the accessibility audit
- Improve the visitor experience with better facilities
- Create dedicated spaces for 0-2s and 7-11s
- Reduce our carbon footprint by 40%
- Make more money from our building



Outside Over There

Reach more people in more places.

- Develop a sustainable touring model
- Grow our externally presented programme to deliver more income to Discover
- Deliver a minimum of two sustained engagements in a school setting per year



More Storytellers Like Me

Ensure every child can find themselves in Discover.

- Overrepresent the underrepresented voices in children's books and storytelling
- Grow our special educational needs and disabled audiences year on year
- Work collaboratively with at least two specific communities per year to develop and improve our welcome
- Develop the make-up of our team to be more representative of London's communities



Play and Learn

Championing Discover's approach and learning from others.

- Establish a programme to support parents with storytelling
- Work in partnership to develop accredited training using Discover's practice
- Champion Discover's practice in at least 25 professional networking events per year
- Create and deliver training courses, workshops and masterclasses for 1,000 people across 5 years
- Use our learning from outside the organisation to make at least 5 positive changes every year



No Place Like Newham

Make a difference to every child in Newham.

- Work with every Newham primary school
- Hold an annual festival in Newham, of Newham, for Newham
- Ensure 1 in 10 of our audience experience Discover for free
- Prioritise Newham in governance, procurement, partnerships and pricing





Discover
Children's Story Centre

Discover.org.uk

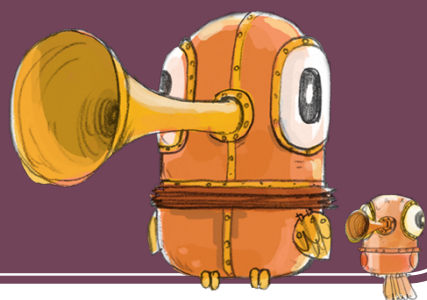
@discover_story

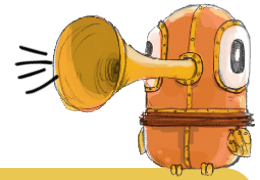
383-387 High Street, Stratford, London E15 4QZ

Registered Charity Number 1070468

Annual Dashboard

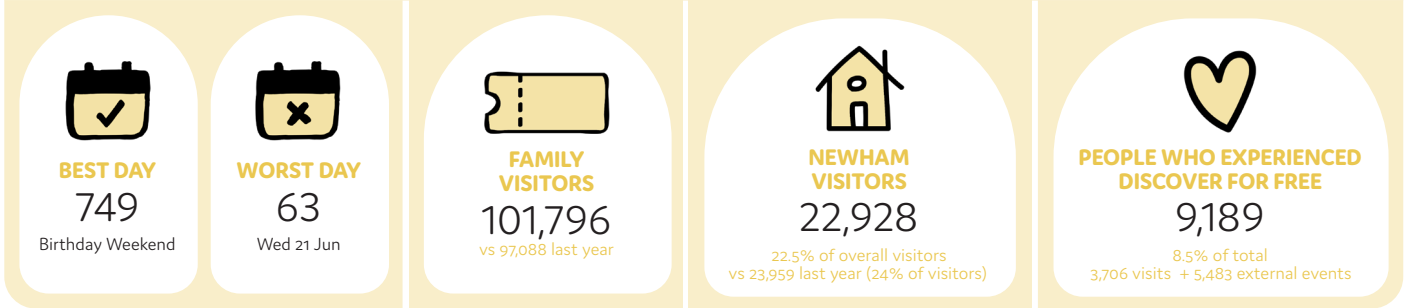
Our achievements 2023–2024





ANNUAL DASHBOARD 2023-2024

OUR VISITORS



"The Story World felt so imaginative, the props were really creative and the girls started making up a role play story within minutes of arriving."



"We enjoyed the free storytelling in the cave and my daughter re-enact it to her teddies when we got home."

EXHIBITION AND EVENTS



RUN CONTINUED INTO NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR

"The Box Rocket section was brilliant – the best £4 spent in a while! The staff were fab."

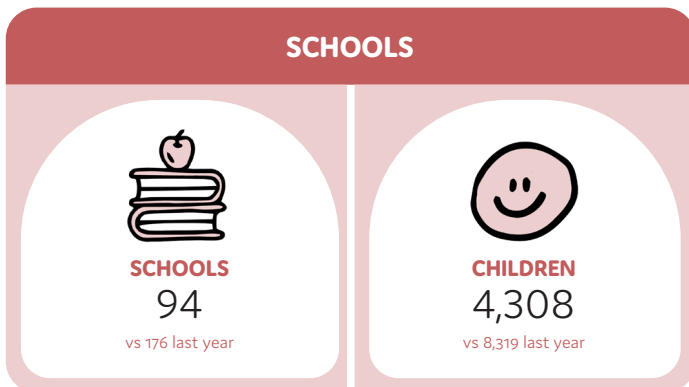


"I think the new immersive exhibition is my favourite yet (we've been to every one for the last six years)."



COMPARISON NOT AVAILABLE - BUT EXTERNAL EVENT DATA IS NOW BEING GATHERED MORE SYSTEMATICALLY

SCHOOLS



"Our kids were completely engaged the entire visit ... we have already seen an improvement in their willingness to want to sit and listen to stories being read to them and reading with an adult."

BOOKSHOP



TOTAL BOOK SALES
£40,336
vs £34,111 last year



LOOK UP!
333



CLEAN UP!
253



SPEAK UP!
237

ROCKET SERIES
TOTAL SOLD
923



"Levi was so excited when he spotted characters from Dapo Adeola's books."



"So many lovely story books with interesting and unique themes that you can't find elsewhere!"

MARKETING

WEBSITE



279,000
VISITS

NEW COOKIES POP UP ON WEBSITE MADE TRACKING MORE LIMITED (SO WEB VISITS POST-JANUARY APPEAR LOWER).

INSTAGRAM



23,160
FOLLOWERS

vs 22% increase from 19k in April 2023



230,425
ACCOUNTS REACHED

"Absolutely gorgeous morning at Discover with my mummy blogger friends testing out the new story exhibition... Always a firm favourite."



"We were invited to check out this brand new exhibition and it did not disappoint! This fun immersive experience would be ideal for any young book lover."



GRANTS



REVENUE GRANTS
£219,065



FOR CAPITAL
£883,000

FINANCE



YEAR-END OUTTURN
-£115,073



OPERATIONAL SURPLUS AHEAD OF BUDGET
£166,096

"Like a dream to children"



"He's less shy here, he talks to adults regularly here which he may not do outside"

"They get so much out of it – physically, imagination, learning to play with and take care around other children"



"Helps him to piece together things – started to read the words on the walls of the exhibition and put phonics together"

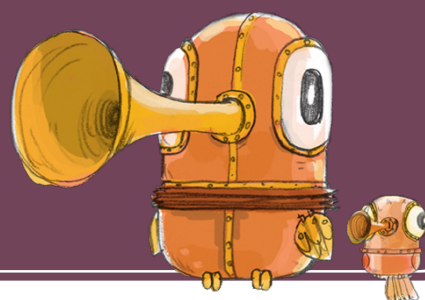
"Nice diverse mix of books which I like. Representation is key and I think you guys do a great job here"



"It's imagination on a massive scale"

Activity Report

For the last full financial year
April 2023 – March 2024



Our Activities April 2023 – March 2024

1. Up and Out: Evolve our building to inspire the next 1 million visitors

The Discover Centre offers a magical world that is child-centred and full of inspiration for children's imaginations. It is also a slightly draughty nineteenth-century building that has been operating as Discover for twenty years and requires investment in its infrastructure and layout to continue to function in meeting and exceeding the expectations of 21st century visitors.

As the building is the charity's central asset, without which the organisation cannot realistically operate, we have begun a major programme of community-led redevelopment to ensure Discover can continue its charitable mission for the next 20 years.

Case Study: Mighty Mega and the importance of a working lift

The Mighty Mega club for children with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEN) and their families was established in 2007. The club meets every Saturday morning for exploration of the Story Worlds followed by an artist-led workshop in our events space, Squiggly Diggly. New artists are appointed each term, creating new activities and themes that grow and adapt with the participants, ensuring that everyone can build their confidence as the weeks go on. And – unusually for such clubs – the workshops are for the whole family, including parents / carers and siblings; families tell us how rare and precious it is for there to be something that they can all do together. The majority of club members are local, but some families travel in from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire due to the quality of the offer.

In May 2023, our twenty-year-old lift broke down. The company that maintains it no longer keeps spare parts in the UK – the depot is in Norway! – and it was over three weeks before the lift was back in service. During the first two weeks of this period, we were forced to cancel the Mighty Mega club as we could not provide access to the second floor event spaces and could not source a suitable alternative. The lack of lift was also a significant access issue for the many family visitors with buggies.

Ensuring that our facilities do not let down the children and families we are here to support is at the heart of the Up and Out renovation plans – starting with a refurbished lift with a UK based maintenance contract.

a) Implement the findings of the accessibility audit

The Centre for Accessible Design delivered a thorough access audit of our premises in September 2023, striking a careful balance between recognising the special nature of Discover's immersive Story Worlds and our ambition to be accessible to all children.

Senior Management have carefully reviewed all findings. All five key recommendations have been incorporated into renovation plans for the building and costed, with funding bids now submitted to address each priority: communication, WC facilities, vertical circulation, internal spaces and fire escape.

We have already implemented all those improvements marked for short term attention:

- Reduced visual clutter at reception
- Installed a hearing loop in reception and café

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

- Reconfirmed our evacuation procedures with the fire service
- Minimised door pressures to allow for easier opening
- Repaired the grille at rear of garden ramp and
- Added further fire exit signage to additional exit points.

b) Improve the visitor experience with better facilities

In our ongoing visitor surveys, respondents highlight our toilets (smelly) and our café (where is it?) as facilities in need of attention.

We have fed this into our renovation plans and have designs for improved toilets - drawing significantly on guidance from our access audit – and a welcoming ground floor café. We have begun the work of business planning and fundraising for these improvements.

Meanwhile, we have delivered critical improvements in each area:

- Increased the number of cleaning hours for our toilets to help deal with lots of nappies at busy times
- Added 'The Shack' to the garden, serving hot drinks, icecreams and cold snacks and
- Updated our current café to include better signage, more books and toys and an improved menu.

c) Create dedicated spaces for 0-2s and 7-11s

Our commitment is to supporting children aged 0-11 and their families – but we know that we serve some age groups better than others.

Visitors regularly feedback that they would like a dedicated area for pre-walkers, and we know that these early years are critical for providing the interactions that drive development. Our renovation plans therefore include creation of a new multi-sensory story space for 0-2s and their parents / carers. In the interim, we have increased our delivery of baby storytelling sessions and early-years story performances to ensure this age group is well served. These sessions are running at 92% capacity, indicating the strong interest from families for activity and support for this age group.

"She is currently not talking but I'm sure she would have told us she had lots of fun!" Parent / carer

Our data shows that we receive fewer visits from children aged 9 – 11 than from younger children. National data also shows an alarming "decline by nine", with children ceasing to read, write or draw for pleasure around this age. This year we have invited a number of 9 year olds to visit and share their experiences of Discover with us to learn more about how we can engage them in stories using Discover's core principles in a way that works for them. This will feed into projects, programmes and future site development. We have also welcomed more children from this older age group via our Saturday afternoon film and story build sessions.

d) Reduce our carbon footprint by 50%

Like all organisations, we have a responsibility to improve our environmental sustainability. But as an organisation working to transform lives through stories, our own story should be one of careful stewardship of precious resources.

Discover committed to an environmental action plan and policy in 2022, and this year built upon this with an energy review from professional mechanical and electrical (M&E) consultants looking at how to reduce energy use within the building through insulation, solar panels and a switch from our gas boilers to an air

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source heat pump. Our eco-audit funded by City Bridge Foundation (funded 2023-24, delivered 2024-25) will then continue to build on this foundation and allow us to map our current usage and plan a route to a 50% reduction across five years.

As a baseline, our carbon footprint for 2023-24 (as calculated by Julie's Bicycle) was 88.24 tonnes CO₂e.

e) Make more money from our building

Our building is our core asset and ensuring that we make the most of it is essential to our ability to deliver our charitable work. We are committed to affordability for the children and families we exist to support, and aim to achieve income growth through delivering more, not through rising prices. The price for a child's lunchbox in the café, for example, has been held to £3.85 and ticket pricing is benchmarked to ensure we offer lower prices and better value for money than other family leisure options, including local soft play centres and cinemas.

Our current building-based income generation is across four main areas, in each of which we have generated significant growth this year:

- Ticket sales grew by 4.8% on 2022-23
- Café and retail grew by 113% to £209,428
- Hires and birthday parties exceeded budget targets by £12,726 and £13,194 respectively
- Tenancies returned to full occupancy as of August 2023

These figures have been achieved thanks to growth in our core offer with an enriched creative programme featuring more trails and events, ongoing investment in marketing, the additional capacity released through a revised staffing structure and superb performance by the staff team.

2. Outside Over There: Reach more people in more places

With thanks to wonderful children's author and illustrator Maurice Sendak for the title of our objective, we want to ensure that the transformative power of stories reaches everyone – that our work reaches as many people as possible, that we make best use of our investment in new work to leverage new partnerships and income, and that we are reaching out to audiences wherever they are, removing barriers to engagement wherever possible.

In 2023-24, we reached 5,483 people across 82 external events, including:

- Eid celebrations in Stratford's Westfield Shopping Centre, with storytelling from Little Hibba publishing
- Storytelling with Dapo Adeola in Stratford Library
- Two 'The Best Worst Day Ever' performances for National Literacy Trust, Peterborough
- Programmed and delivered Fabula Festival for Vision Redbridge, with 3 school events and a family day on Saturday 15th July. Artists were chosen to reflect local borough demographics and over 600 pupils from 6 schools attended in addition to a family audience of 445
- Touring shows 'Not Yet a Yeti' and 'The Best Worst Day Ever' were delivered as part of The Great Get-Together on 1 July, in the Olympic Park, for the Burleigh Fisher Bookshop Book Festival in Hackney and for the British Library Family Day
- Story workshops for Magpie, our Newham charity partner supporting families facing homelessness for their summer garden party, and for the Dovetail Community Centre's Christmas party in the nearby Carpenters Estate

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- Story performances across Newham libraries for the Newham Heritage Festival's celebration of culture and creativity
- Hospital storytelling in St Mary's Hospital
- World Book Day events in Stratford Library and Aberfeldy Community Centre.
- Performances of 'Not Yet a Yeti' in Exeter (Theatre Alibi), Basildon (Creative Basildon pop-up), Redbridge

"Discover's lovely performers created a dream start to BFDAy 23s Saturday programme, with two booked-out free events (thanks to our ACE project grant), delighting dozens of local families who are part of St Peter's caring community. The joyful sounds of audiences of all ages were a buoying accompaniment as we set up our stalls, and we loved seeing that babies and books CAN mix! We are keen to develop further partnership work with Discover to grow our connection with young story-lovers, and to introduce our Hackney customers to an incredible venue just a few Overground stops away." Burleigh Fisher Festival

Central Library and East Ham Library – attended by an unprecedented 175 people in a single session

a) Develop a sustainable touring model

Every year our creative teams develop at least three new story shows (highly sensory, interactive performances for 0 – 5s), a range of exhibitions and trails opening up and celebrating the work of children's authors or illustrators, and our unique, immersive, book-come-to-life exhibitions that transform 200m² of basement into a safe, hands-on adventure facilitated by our Story Builders.

We are thrilled that since 2016 we have worked in partnership with amazing Manchester children and family arts organisation Z-arts who have shared four of our exhibitions with Northern audiences - A World Inside A Book; The Tiger Who Came To Tea; Fairy Tales (hosted 2023); and The 100 Story Hotel (opened February 2024). Due to rising materials and installations costs – and, more positively, growing capacity in the Z-Arts team – we have now reached the end of the partnership in its current form and have begun the development work required to see how we can continue to tour our work and gain the insight and learning from other organisations that this brings.

Partners who have expressed interest in touring our work include local authorities, other arts NPOs and Creative People and Places organisations, festivals, museums, publishers and shopping centres.

We will continue to work with partners to find models that add value artistically, financially and to audiences in greatest need.

"Z-arts want to thank Discover [and local build team] for the positive impact that Fairy Tales has had for Z-arts and the families & education settings of Manchester who have visited whilst in been in situ for the last two years. When Fairy Tales landed, the larger-than-life installations captured the imaginations of the many children who spent time exploring the immersive world. Being able to share the story worlds with our audiences has helped cause a seismic shift in how families perceive exhibitions for children, taking it out of the frames and glass cases that are so often seen in galleries and museums; by allowing the children to touch, explore and play they truly have a sense of wonder and enchantment whilst in the worlds and can really let their imagination and curiosity run wild. Fairy Tales was truly magical and succeeding in bringing the much loved and well-known stories to life!" Northern partner Z-arts

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b) Grow our externally presented programme to deliver more income to Discover

Our commitment to reaching more audiences beyond the wall of the Discover centre is central to our charitable mission and identity – Discover's work is a practice and set of beliefs, not a venue.

Our ability to deliver extraordinary work for children and families with little support, space or tech requirements is also an asset and one for which there is demand from external organisations. We have no core funding that enables us to deliver this work but will seize opportunities to work with others where financing can be found.

In 2023-24, commissions for delivery of external work delivered gross income of £47,200 to the organisation, extending the value of our core funds and demonstrating growth of £22,442 on 2022-23 which represents a 91% increase.

c) Deliver a minimum of two sustained engagements in a school setting per year

In 2023-24, we received 308 school visits to the centre, including 15 from special educational needs classes – a total of 9261 children taking part in creative workshops to build their literacy, oracy, confidence and creativity.

"Reception had the most wonderful visit to The Discovery Children's Centre. The trip inspired the class to create their own imaginative and creative stories, full of trolls, planets and ginormous gummy bears! Thank you so much @discover_story for an exceptional day!" Teacher

Our Teachers' Forum of primary school teachers from across East London guides us in ensuring that our work continues to support schools' needs.

In addition to this core work we are committed to sustained engagements in school settings in order to provide the benefits of longer-term engagement to pupils and to support teachers with skills, confidence and opportunity in creative story telling.

In 2023-24 we have delivered two in-depth, artist-led projects with schools: 'Voices of East Bank', exploring spoken language around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park area with 60 pupils from Manor Primary and 'Story Seed', an environmental fable project across three primary schools.

Case study: Story Seed and 'The Fox Who Cried Human'

We are grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for funding support for a three year programme building arts-based teaching and learning in primary schools where their pupils experience systemic inequality and barriers to learning particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For year 2, our Teacher's Forum requested a move away from the year 1 focus on wellbeing and highlighted a need for exploring environmental themes through arts activities, as the topic is mainly covered by schools through STEM. Consultation with our Children's Forum provided important nuance, as they were concerned that discussion of the climate crisis is frightening, and they valued the opportunities that Discover typically provides to have fun and be creative. These two directives, from teachers and children, created a clear brief for Discover to pilot ways to explore environmental sustainability through characters, positivity and storytelling – Story Seed.

Three East London schools took part in the programme – three year 5 classes, one year 6 class and a SEN group. The programme began with workshops with Discover's creative facilitators – 'Story Builders' – who lead introductory sessions of play and exploration around the idea of an environmental fable. Artists then worked in residence with the children across six workshops, exploring different creative arts approaches to storytelling – theatre, drawing, animation, sensory communication. Story Builders then helped the children to shape and rehearse short performances incorporating different elements of the artforms explored to tell their stories. The performances – featuring music, drama, narration, illustration and props made by the children – were then shared at Rich Mix with all 120 children and 10 educators who took part, and an online CPD (Continuous Professional Development) session for teachers reinforced learning and legacy of the work.

The project evidenced a strong range of key educational and developmental outcomes:

- Improve pupils' speaking and listening skills
- Raise pupils' enjoyment of stories by providing an opportunity to see a performance from an artist
- Encourage creativity in participating pupils
- Build skills in collaborative working
- Build on vocabulary to talk about the environment
- Improve opportunities and ability to discuss concerns around environmental issues in a productive way, in line with good creative wellbeing
- Engage vulnerable children and children with SEN and EAL (English as an Additional Language)
- Engage parents and carers with their children's learning
- Affirm children's creativity by showcasing their creations in a professional environment

The project also delivered some wonderful new stories! "The Fox Who Cried Human" reimagined the classic Boy Who Cried Wolf fable, centring on a mischievous fox facing trial for causing chaos. The story highlights the environmental impact of human activities on wildlife, addressing urban issues like littering and pollution. In a semi-interactive performance, child onlookers were encouraged to question information and cheer for the foxes striving to create a safer environment, blending whimsy with serious environmental concerns. Through a variety of roles and activities for participants, the performance empowered children to recognise their voice in the climate conversation.

"The children thoroughly enjoyed the workshop. We observed such a high level of engagement from children who usually struggle to participate. The music, sensory resources, and fabulous storytelling really brought the story to life and allowed all the children to take part and be part of the session." Teacher participant

"I learned my lines and I'm more confident." Pupil participant

"It made me think more about nature and learn a new thing." Pupil participant

3. Play and Learn: Champion Discover's approach and learn from others

Discover is not a campaigning organisation. But our core belief that stories are critical to child development, that they can transform lives and shape strong and vibrant communities is one we are passionate about, and our practice of hands-on ('kinaesthetic') learning through creative, story-based play has been shown to be hugely effective. We are keen to champion this approach and share what we have learned as part of our role in the cultural, educational and child development sectors, whilst continually improving our work through insight and learnings from great practice elsewhere.

a) Establish a programme to support parents with storytelling

Our daily Baby Story Sessions are at 92% capacity and designed to enable babies and caregivers to take part in sensory storytelling together, picking up tricks such as repetition, singing, questions and tactility that can be used easily at home.

It is an important aspect of Discover that it's not just about the visit itself, but about the further impact that this can have on children and families. We have laid the groundwork this year for extending our work in this area by consulting with parents and stakeholders. In our deep dive evaluation interviews with 163 parents / carers we learned that:

- 100% enjoyed their visit
- 70% said their child had read, made up or listened to a story during their visit
- 60% said that they'd been inspired with ideas to play or read at home with their child
- 44% said that they had discovered a new author during their visit
- 43% said they had read a new story with their child during their visit

Consulting with authors and illustrators who visited, we learned anecdotally that they find a lot of parents are uncomfortable reading out loud to their children and have reported gaining confidence by taking part in workshop sessions as a family.

These findings give us a clear mandate to use our existing work as a platform to build on further opportunities that focus on the element of parent experience. We have built these insights into a number of new project plans for 2024-25 and will continue to explore how best we can deliver further support in this area with our community and partners.

"That evening at bedtime my 5 year old grandson asked me to make up a story about him and his friends, visiting planet Nan and meeting other people there. I had to make up stories on two consecutive nights developing this idea and adding his favourite theme of portals to other lands. He totally believed that he had been to a different planet and really liked going over what had happened – e.g. holding on so you don't fall over when the rocket takes off - and loved discussing it. He felt very confident putting up his hand and answering questions and said he really liked the person who was in charge of the mission." Grandparent

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b) Work in partnership to develop accredited training using Discover's practice

Discover is regularly visited by educators, cultural organisations and artists to learn more about what we do and how we do it. This year, our offer of an internship working with our Design and Exhibitions team received over 100 applications from people keen to develop their career through working with us, and over 200 applications for our Story Builder (creative facilitator) positions. We want to share proactively the opportunities that working with Discover gives more widely as part of our commitment to hands-on creative learning and storytelling.

This year we have built a strong partnerships with UEL (University of East London) through our joint research project into interactions and narrative forming within our immersive exhibition, have partnered with the London College of Fashion on a local community project and have begun conversations with UCL (University of Central London) about how to engage their students from the new East Bank campus.

c) Champion Discover's practice in at least 25 professional networking events per year

This year we have engaged professionally with the following organisations; *starred names indicate those who have visited to tour the Discover Centre, @ indicates presentations given by Discover staff.

UCL-Creative Health Newham@	Hive Curates*	Sadlers Wells East
V&A Design Team*	The Reader*	National Literacy Trust
BookTrust*	The British Library***	Paul Hamlyn India*
Goldsmiths MA Students*@	Eureeka	Children in Museums Award@
Eastbourne Council@*	Chickenshed*	ACE's Buildings-based CYP Forum
UEL Drama students	UCL – Power of the Arts	Festival.org*
Theatre Alibi	Hopetown Darlington	Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority*
Imagine Festival	NYU MA Students*	CLPE
Disney	Family Arts Conference	Foundation for Future London
A New Direction@	Gravesham Council*	Basildon Council*
Postcode Innovation Trust@*	Creative Basildon	Culture Within Newham*
National Taiwan Museum of Art*	Creative Estuary@	Oslo children's creative network@*
QK Studio	Newham Loves Creatives	Newham Council*
East London Rotary Club	The Story Museum	Museum Next@@
AMA	Art Fund	The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama*

d) Create and deliver training courses, workshops and masterclasses for 1,000 people across 5 years

In this inception year we have trained 48 people:

- 3 training sessions for teachers (attendance: 30)
- 2 days of training for Story Builders (attendance: 12)
- 3 days of intensive artist training with Oily Cart in story making with disabled children and children with special educational needs (attendance: 6).

We hope to build on this foundation with training for authors and illustrators in working directly with children and in developing our offer around our core practice of sensory storytelling for teachers, librarians and other artists.

e) Use our learning from outside the organisation to make at least 5 positive changes every year

We are committed to continuous improvement to ensure we deliver the very best support to children and families, and ensure our organisation is well run. We pay regular learning visits to peers, participate in sectoral networks and include review of such activity as a standing item in management meetings. Amongst smaller adaptations, in 2023-24 we have made the following five changes:

1. Toilets - visiting our sister story centre The Story Museum in Oxford we loved finding the story decor carried on into their toilets. We have made bringing the Discover design ethos into the functional areas of the centre an ambition for our capital redevelopment project and, meanwhile, have introduced some brilliant artwork from Sue Hendra and Paul Linnet's glorious picture book *I Need A Wee* to inspire visitors to the toilet facilities on the ground floor.

2. The Hands On Museum conference, held in Bern, Switzerland in October 2023, was an amazing meeting point for peers in hands on museum work across the world. Amidst many inspirations, a workshop gave us particular ideas for how to ensure an ever-closer connection between the views of our children's forum and our adult decision-makers.

3. Milkshakes! Our friends at Seven Stories have recently renovated their café, turning an underperforming resource into a profit centre for the organisation. And our friends The Reader, running a highly successful community café in Calderstones Park in Liverpool, shared some of their stock secrets likewise. Both venues have found that a good range of milkshakes satisfies children and adult customers' demands for treats that aren't entirely devoid of nutritional value; we have introduced a range at Discover with great success.

4. New CEO Rebekah Polding drew on her broad range of consultancy experience creating evaluation methods for organisations across the cultural and creative sector to introduce a dashboard for Board and internal monitoring. An attractively designed, one page document now presents information across a wide range of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators that allows the Board to see at a glance how the organisation is performing; a second dashboard captures key data for the Finance Committee.

5. Front of house staff with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability suggested that we replace our single-use visitor wristbands with reusable ribbon bands that they'd spotted at other venues. They also learned how to make them and set up an internal production line. After some trial and error, we now have the reusable bands in daily use and successfully collected back from the majority of visitors, saving money and environmental resources.

4. More Storytellers Like Me: Ensure every child can find themselves in Discover

The annual 'Reflecting Realities' research by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education demonstrates unequivocally the need for a more inclusive and representative children's literature. The curation of our reading spaces, bookshop, events programme and exhibitions strives to make a difference by making commonplace the representation of marginalised characters and /or authorial voices. We do not collect statistics from visiting artists on their ethnicity, the themes or characters of their books but are pleased to receive regular visitor feedback that confirms that this curation is noticed and appreciated.

"Nice diverse mix of books which I like. Representation is key and I think you guys do a great job here"
Parent / carer evaluation interview, June 2023

a) Overrepresent the underrepresented voices in children's books and storytelling

During 2023/24 Discover engaged 119 contractual artists and freelancers to work on our artistic, community and education programmes. This included authors, illustrators, creative and production teams, creative engagement practitioners, technical staff and other contractual roles. We have continued to develop an exciting portfolio of artists working on our exhibition, storytelling and events offer, ensuring our programme is representative of our diverse local area and that all our audiences can see themselves in our work.

Examples include our most recent exhibition, *The Box Rocket*, created in collaboration with renowned author/illustrator Dapo Adeola and writer Tola Okogwu, storytelling with Rabia Bahir and Little Hibba, Aisha's Choice storytelling and crafts with Juweyira, and an event with James Catchpole around his book *What Happened to You?*

Case Study: Rich and Inclusive Programming for February Half Term 2024

The best way to demonstrate how our commitment to overrepresenting the underrepresented works in practice is to share a slice of rich programming. Between 10th and 18th February, visitors could enjoy:

- *The Box Rocket* exhibition, celebrating global majority characters and creators
- *Not Yet A Yeti* story show, in which a young yeti finds his true role in life is . . . as a unicorn
- An exhibition exploring the book *Adoette* by Lydia Monks, following life in London across decades in the life of a little girl – and a tree
- *My Crown* storytelling and crafts with Erina Lewis, a rhyming picture book about learning to love curly Afro hair (Sold Out)
- A storybuild and screening of *Encanto*, in partnership with Film London and The New Black Film Club
- Baboo Drag Story Time and Crafts (Sold Out)
- A takeover day from inclusive theatre company Chickenshed (Sold Out)
- Storytelling with Sufiya Ahmed (Sold Out)
- Storytelling with Chitra Soundar (Sold Out)
- World Book Day Costume making (Sold Out)
- *Guess How Much I Love You* story workshop (Sold Out)
- Year of the Dragon storytelling and crafts (Sold Out)

"This event [My Crown] was a game-changer for my two kids. Especially my daughter she has embraced her curly hair and now tells everyone she meets she has a crown. Thank you for sharing your story and we enjoyed meeting you 🙌" Parent visitor

"Thank you so much to @discover_story for hosting a SOLD OUT drag story time for Baboo The Unusual Bee with so many magic little people joining us to celebrate being different!" Author Lliana Bird

**CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTRE EAST LONDON
TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

b) Grow our special educational needs and disabled audiences year on year

In 2022-23, we recorded 2,051 Disabled or Carer Entry tickets; in 2023-24, this figure was 2,612.

With our focus on multi-sensory experience, a low-rules environment and non-verbal storytelling the general visitor experience is a welcoming one for a wide range of children: we strive to make our core delivery an inclusive one. To ensure that the offer really can be universal however, we also ran 44 sessions of our Mighty Mega club for disabled children and children with SEN (496 attendees) and have this year introduced monthly sensory adapted exhibition sessions and monthly BSL exhibition sessions and storytelling, which have been enjoyed by 574 attendees.

"There were so many opportunities for children to allow their imagination to run free and be present in an immersive world independently or with friends. All parts of the sessions were very engaging from the moment we arrived to the moment we left. The environment wasn't too over stimulating for any of them which was a concern of ours as it is an SEN group." Teacher

c) Work collaboratively with at least two specific communities per year to develop and improve our welcome

This February we were delighted to receive funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund for 'Newham Stories', a project to work with local communities to hear their stories and storytelling traditions and bring these back to Discover to ensure that our work in the centre continues to reflect those around us. We have worked closely with lead partner organisations Stratford Library, the Dovetail Community Centre of the Carpenters Estate and the Alternatives Trust to reach out to local residents, working with artists and Story Builders to share and make up stories together. This foundational work will hopefully establish a template for how we might develop and improve a welcome with specific groups through story sharing.

d) Develop the make-up of our team to be more representative of London's communities

We are proud of Discover's diverse workforce and culture, and ensure our recruitment practices are accessible and inclusive for all people from all backgrounds, cultures and with diverse lived experiences. We aspire to recruit more posts from within our local area and aim to be as representative of Newham's cultures as possible in all we do.

5. No Place Like Newham: Make a difference to every child in Newham

a) Work with every Newham primary school

Working with the universal offer that is schools is fundamental to achieving our goal of making a difference to every child in our home borough.

At point of target setting in August 2023, we had worked with 23 out of 63 Newham primaries within the last 12 months (though have worked with nearly all Newham primaries over the longer term).

Following the introduction of our new strategic framework, we dedicated staff time to reaching out to those schools with whom we had less recent contact and, by year end, we had grown our reach to 32 out of 63 schools. In addition to class trips for workshops to the centre, we are also now delivering higher numbers of

our 'Discover In A Suitcase' sessions, co-designed with artists and teachers, in schools themselves; we hope this will prove a gateway for those schools also to visit in person.

b) Hold an annual festival in Newham, of Newham, for Newham

Case Study: The Fifth Newham Word Festival

In June – July we delivered our fifth successful edition of the Newham Word Festival on behalf of Newham Council, with support from Arts Council England.

It was a fantastic two weeks celebrating words, creativity and the Newham community, with 50 free events taking place in libraries, community centres, arts venues and schools as well as online. We commissioned 17 local artists to deliver word-themed programming, and 3,098 people took part in workshops, talks and performances – an increase of 130% on 2022. The programme mixed established talents – Michael Rosen, Vaseem Khan, Angie Thomas – with the up-and-coming and unexpected: traditional story telling in a bar, poetry workshops in the park, a new novel from a local author set amidst her family's Barbadian history.

Of 217 people completing feedback forms, 97% described the events they attended as good or very good. Our Newham Word Festival website saw an increase in usage again, up by 23% on 2022 (comparison between 1 May – 17 July). Social media reach across the festival channels increased 123% to 309,109 – thanks to a combination of increased following, paid promotion and great interaction with programmed and commissioned artists.

Sadly Newham Council have confirmed that they no longer have funding available to continue the festival. However, the need remains to provide additional creative opportunities in a borough with one of the lowest levels of cultural opportunity in the UK (Active Lives, 2018) and our strong partnerships across the borough's libraries and artist community. We have begun conversations on how to build on this legacy and hope to continue this inclusive cultural celebration of words and stories in a new guise next year.

c) Ensure 1 in 10 of our audience experience Discover for free

It is a founding principle that Discover should be accessible to everyone, and that price should not provide a barrier to entry.

Across 2023-24, our free offer included:

- Babies (0-1) and carers
- Participants in our weekly After School, Story Sandwich and Mighty Mega clubs for local schoolchildren, families facing homelessness and children with disabilities and/or special educational needs respectively
- Ticket distribution via our community partners, including other local charities, community and voluntary groups, libraries and food banks
- Partnership events in libraries and festivals

**CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTRE EAST LONDON
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We are proud that in 2023-24 at least 9,189 people – just over 8.5% - experienced Discover for free in this financial year and we again thank our partners, supporters and funders for enabling us to give so many people transformative story experiences. We note that our allocation of free tickets was larger than take-up, and will be working closely with our community partners to ensure we continue to address barriers to attendance and help more children and families experience Discover.

d) Prioritise Newham in governance, procurement, partnerships and pricing

Our Children's Forum of fifteen 8–11-year-olds are all recruited from local schools, and of our 11 trustees, five have lived experience of Newham – a quality we will continue to prioritise in future Board recruitment.

Our new Ethical Procurement Policy (July 2023) commits us to proactively seeking out local suppliers, to keep business in our community and seek short supply chains and requires larger suppliers to commit to paying Newham-based sub-contractors 10 days from receipt of an invoice.

Tickets to Discover are discounted for Newham residents (£9 as opposed to £10), and this year 22,928 visitors used this offer (22.5% of all tickets sold). This marks a drop on the 24% of all visitors recorded for 2022-23, something we will continue to monitor.

We took part in Newham Heritage Month and delivered work in the majority of Newham's libraries.

This year, we have worked with the following local community partners:

Bonny Downs Community Association	Newham Nurture	Parents in Mind
The Magpie Project	Alternatives Trust	Dovetail Community Hub
Happy Baby Community	Together! 2012 CIC	Stratford Salvation Army
The Renewal Programme	Welcome Newham	John F Kennedy Special School
Vicarage Lane Community Centre	Ambition Aspire Achieve	Empowering Deaf Society

Case Study: Discover's 20th Birthday Party

Twenty years of transforming lives through stories, in the heart of Newham, demanded a celebration with and for our Newham community with the very best of all that Discover has to offer.

Over 1,400 visitors joined us for a FREE birthday weekend on 16th and 17th September, thanks to our ticket giveaway partnership with Newham Libraries and local community groups.

Thank you to the Highways Team at Newham Council, who enabled us to host our first ever Play Street alongside the centre; to London Play who supported the street with some fabulous toys and games; and to the team at Jan Kattein Architects who designed and delivered the amazing 'Monster Talent Show' creative workshop in the street through which we consulted families on what to build into Discover's future.

A special thanks to Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho and illustrator Fiona Lumbers who shared their work in a storytelling session and left us a beautiful 'Luna Loves Dance' mural in the cafe, as well as to all the artists who launched Box Rockets, explored Maya's Market, made monsters, danced, sung and twirled ribbons.

Thank you to Stratford Original, Westbridge Hotel, pay-it-forward ticket purchasers and donors to our Childhood Trust Champions for Children campaign, who supported us to make the weekend free.

Thank you to our founders, Children's Forum and Board, who joined us for the festivities.

And thank you to every one of Discover's amazing staff team, all of whom took part in the weekend and made it wild and magical fun for everyone.