

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

MARCH 2025

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WITH THANKS
TO OUR
SUPPORTERS

INTRODUCTION

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st March 2025

The trustees of Underground Lights present their report with Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2025. The trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Status:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Charity number 1179553 (Registered 14th August 2018)
Registered Address:	c/o Belgrade Theatre, Belgrade Square, Corporation Street, Coventry CV1 1GS
Trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows:	Mandip Seehra (Chair) Benedict Davenport Nadine Holdsworth Sophie Hall Tracy Villiers Benita Belgrove (from May 2024) Jan Winter (to July 2024) Georgia Dee Jaji (from October 2024)

INTRODUCTION

Reference and Administrative Details

Staff:

Beth Fiducia-Brookes, Artistic Director/CEO
Emily Jenkins, Membership Manager
Liz Churchill, Drama Facilitator
Hayley Harman, Projects & Activities Assistant (to August 2024),
Creative Facilitator (from September 2024)
Wes Finch, Sessional Facilitator
Indie Prasad, Sessional Facilitator (to September 2024)
Becky Eccleston, Finance Officer
Chris Campell, IT Officer

Volunteers:

Cecelia Stower (Drama)
Francesca Rogers (Volunteer Executive Assistant)
Susan Sadler (Drama)
Thomas Smith (Creative Cafe)
Emma Burke (Creative Cafe) (from September 2024)
Nikola Cahil (Drama) (from September 2024)
Tracey Kenny (Finance) (from September 2024)

We write this in memory of Arshak, long-term member of Underground Lights, a true gentleman and kind soul, who sadly passed away in July 2024.

Independent examiner:

Alan Rylett

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Underground Lights is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It became a constituted organisation on 23rd March 2018 and a registered charity on 14th August 2018.

The trustees as a group are responsible for the overall governance of the Charity and the constitution requires there to be a minimum of three trustees. The trustees are not remunerated for their work. They aim to meet at least four times per year and are responsible for all major financial and strategic decisions, and the establishment of major policies.

Apart from the first trustees, every trustee is appointed for a term of three years. In selecting trustees the board has regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the Charity. Our commitment to being a member-led organisation means that it is important to recruit individuals to our board who have experience of mental health issues and/or homelessness.

Individuals interested in joining the board complete an application form which the board then reviews, if the board votes to progress the application the candidate is then invited for a telephone or face to face conversation with a designated board member/ Chair of Trustees. The role and responsibilities of a trustee are discussed in more detail at this point. If both parties wish to pursue the application a new trustee is appointed by resolution at a convened meeting of the board of trustees. New trustees are required to sign a Code of Conduct and are given a pack containing our constitution, strategic plan, latest annual report and accounts and links to the Charity Commission's advice relating to the roles and responsibilities of trustees.

Day-to-day management of the Charity has been delegated to the Artistic Director/CEO. The Artistic Director/CEO is supported by a Membership Manager, Drama Facilitator, Projects & Activities Assistant, Finance Officer, IT Officer Sessional Facilitators/Assistants and volunteers who are in turn responsible for the delivery of our work.

Grant applications prior to consideration by the trustees are handled by the Artistic Director/CEO.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Underground Lights is an independent community theatre charity that is run for and by people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues.

Our charitable purpose is for the public benefit, the relief of those in need, in particular but not exclusively, people experiencing homelessness and/or mental distress in the Coventry, Warwickshire and surrounding area through the provision of drama/performing arts workshops and other activities or forms of training/support.

The trustees confirm that in setting objectives and planning activities, they have given due consideration to general guidance by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit and in particular to its supplementary public benefit guidance.

Our vision is to be a safe and inspiring creative community, for people on the margins of society, that is owned and run by us.

THE MISSION OF THE CHARITY IS AS FOLLOWS:

- To bring together people experiencing (or at risk of experiencing) homelessness, mental or emotional distress, trauma, social isolation and marginalisation.
- To develop confidence, skills and friendship networks by providing creative opportunities and empowering people to explore their own creative identities through theatre, dance, poetry and music.
- To support each other and create a safe and caring space where people can belong.
- To challenge assumptions and stereotypes through the creation of high-quality artistic work.



Our vision is to be a safe and inspiring creative community, for people on the margins of society, that is owned and run by us.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year has seen vibrant and meaningful engagement across our creative programmes, with members and audiences alike benefitting from inclusive, inspiring, and culturally rich experiences.

SUMMER 2024

Creative Café at St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry

A highlight of the year, the Creative Café project brought members together to create and perform original work inspired by the Guildhall's medieval history. The Open Mic performance in the Great Hall was a resounding success, attended by 35 audience members. Workshop attendance averaged 17. Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with comments celebrating the energy, imagination, and bravery of performers in such a magnificent historic setting. Member reflections highlighted personal growth, increased confidence, and appreciation for collaborative creativity.



Drama Groups

Both drama groups explored medieval themes, visiting the Herbert Art Gallery and the Belgrade Theatre for inspiration. Creativity flourished and feedback acknowledged the inclusive environment and the confidence-building impact of participation. The theme was well received, particularly the use of humour and historical context in performances.





EXTRACT FROM THE GUILDHALL SONG

This building has a long history
Built long ago in the 14th century
Rich men, merchants and royalty
Have trod on these stone floors

Built for the guild of St Mary
St Michael and Holy Trinity
When Coventry was a capital city
Many years ago

Chorus
Guildhall in the heart of the city
Many years of history
Rich and poor, old and new
Side by side like you and me

Halls and corridors to roam
Built with the bricks of the red sandstone
Dungeons and passages down below
But we don't know where they go

Original song co-created by Wes and UL Members

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Autumn 2025 Term Overview

The Autumn Term was filled with creativity, community spirit, and national recognition for our inclusive work. Activities across our Creative Café and drama groups flourished, while our staff team continued to prioritise development, training, and reflective practice.

National Reflection

We were proud to win 'The Welcoming Award' at the National Insight Awards by Expert Citizens. The award was accepted by staff members and volunteers, and reflects our ongoing commitment to creating safe, inclusive, and inspiring spaces for all.



ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

AUTUMN 2025

Creative Café

Creative Café returned to Coventry Central Hall and continued to thrive, with strong attendance and a supportive atmosphere.

- The group selected 'Seasons' as their creative theme for the term.
- A member-only Open Mic on 23rd October provided an informal space to practice.
- The public Open Mic on 4th December featured 18 performers and welcomed 18 audience members.
 - Audience feedback highlights:
 - "The way everyone supports each other so beautifully."
 - "Made me feel a lot better, away from difficulties at home."
- Special thanks to Benita for her regular presence and support, and to all trustees who attended workshops and events.
- We also welcomed new volunteers Emma and Thomas - thank you both for your contributions.



**"Bravo everybody!
Always a pleasure to
see the range of talent –
songs, poetry, drama –
everyone was brilliant and
brave."**

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Drama Groups

Both groups had a fantastic term, continuing to develop original work and deepen engagement.

- Members explored the theme 'Who is Theatre For?', conducting interviews and using verbatim theatre techniques.
 - One group created a short video piece (available on our YouTube channel).
 - The second group devised a short live performance, with support from the Sir Barry Jackson Trust.
 - End-of-term sharings took place at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry Central Hall, and homeless hostel Harnall Lifehouse.

Member Feedback Included:

- "I learned how to work as part of a team and thoroughly enjoyed the session."
- "Confidence improved because I'd not done acting before."
- "Drama – I come out of the house. It helps me to see other aspects of life instead of just my view."
- Thanks to Mandip for documenting the work through photography.
- We were also thrilled to enjoy a successful pantomime trip, made possible by donated tickets from the Belgrade Theatre.
- Interest in joining has increased, and our waiting list is growing once again.



Member feedback:

**"If it wasn't for
Underground Lights, I
would be doing nothing."**

**"Turning up on time,
meeting new friends, a
social circle within the
team. And I am getting
recognised."**



Photo from 'Who is Theatre for?' Q&A

SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Members and Outreach

- At Harnall Lifehouse, Beth and UL member Andy conducted a workshop and interviews with residents, helping to inform drama content. One drama performance also took place at the venue.
- The Recovery Academy online workshop 'Creating Characters', delivered by Hayley and Emily, was well received and supported further engagement.

This term reflected the best of Underground Lights - collaborative creativity, mutual support, and inclusive opportunity.



SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Creative Groups

The Spring Term was a vibrant and productive period, marked by strong creative development, and increased public engagement across our Creative Café and drama groups. We also deepened our outreach and visibility through external partnerships and public events.

Creative Café

This term featured an exciting series of song-making workshops, funded by Warwick University Institute of Engagement. A former member was paid to lead one of the sessions - an important milestone in our ongoing commitment to member progression. The project was also featured on the BBC, bringing wider recognition to our work.

- Members-Only Open Mic (12th February): 17 performers, approx. 15 audience members
- Public Open Mic (2nd April): 21 performers and 41 audience members
 - Feedback:
 - Excellent: 45.45%
 - Very Good: 45.45%

Audience comments:

- "Realised that every person can have a confident performance, the best, regardless of their illness and disability."
- "Thank you for the opportunity to get out and enjoy myself and witness everyone enjoying each other's company. Bravo."
- "I enjoyed every part of this event, most especially the singing part."

Special thanks to Benita and Nadine for their consistent support, and to all trustees who attended workshops and events. Placement students also provided valuable assistance and took some fantastic photographs.



SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Drama Groups

Members selected their own themes this term, leading to two distinct and imaginative explorations: one group focused on aliens, the other on mistaken identity.

- End of Term Sharing (28th March): 18 performers, 26 audience members
 - Feedback showed high engagement, with a majority rating the event as "Amazing" using our feedback dot system.
 - Descriptive feedback included: Entertaining, Hopeful,

- Colourful, Authentic, and Wholesome.

- Member reflections highlighted:
 - Increased confidence, skills, and community connection
 - Regular engagement in creative tasks and performance
 - Goals met in teamwork, vocal clarity, and creative expression
 - Sessions described as: fun, inspiring, magical, hopeful, imaginative
- Prop-making workshops for both groups were very well received.



SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Members and Outreach

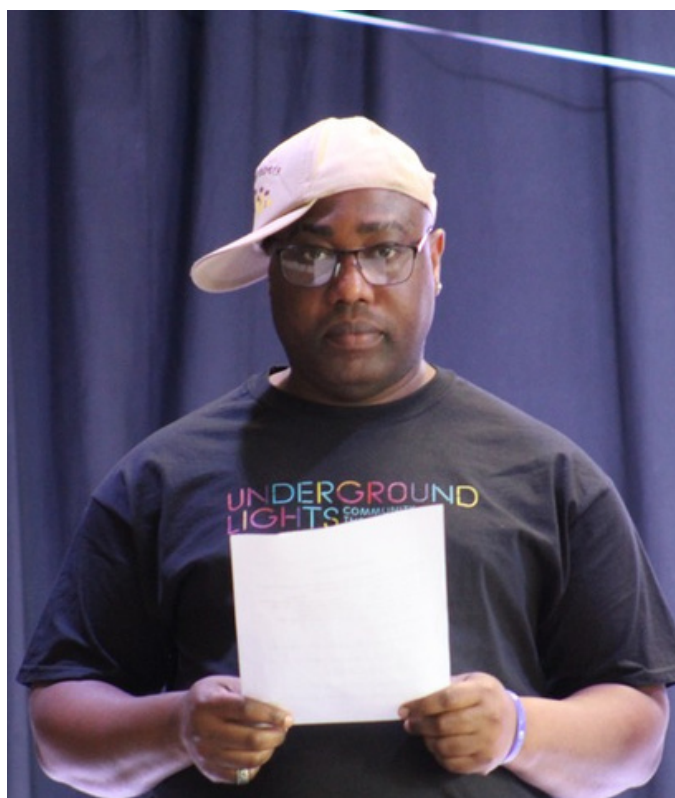
- Kairos Workshop led by Emily and Liz, with 8 attendees.
- Community Wellbeing Day at the Belgrade Theatre:
 - Postcard Art drop-in led by Beth and Benita
 - Information stand hosted by Francesca and Tracy
- Beth & Hayley presented at the Collective Encounters Online Artist Showcase, representing Underground Lights' innovative approach to community arts.

Spring 2025 was marked by creativity, confidence building, and visibility across platforms and communities. We are incredibly proud of our members' achievements and the continued support from staff, trustees, partners, and volunteers.

Other Activities and Achievements

Training and Staff Development

Our team has actively engaged in a range of training opportunities this year, ensuring we continue to provide a safe, supportive, and informed environment for members, volunteers, and staff.



SPRING 2025 TERM OVERVIEW

Other Activities and Achievements

Safeguarding Training: Termly in-house safeguarding sessions were held with Ben – thank you for your continued support. Emily completed Safeguarding for Young People, Children & Vulnerable Adults training via CAVA.

- Online Safety: completed by staff team.
- Trauma-Informed Practice: Emily completed Trauma Informed Practice. Beth and Liz attended Trauma Informed Practice Part 2 with Kazzum Arts. Beth also participated in a 2-hour session on Understanding Trauma, delivered by Migrant Mental Health.
- Supervision and Leadership: Beth completed Staff Supervision Skills

training with WMCA, supporting the development of reflective and effective team leadership.

- Reflective Practice: A group reflective practice session was held, providing staff with a valuable space for shared learning, emotional support, and strategic thinking. Individual sessions were also carried out. In addition to our post-workshop debriefs.

These activities reflect our ongoing commitment to professional development and to creating a safe, trauma-informed, and empowering space for everyone involved with Underground Lights.



GENERAL UPDATES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Trustee Nadine Holdsworth received the 'Warwickshire High Sheriff Award' in recognition of her support at Underground Lights and Arts and Homelessness International
- In-Kind support from the Belgrade Theatre - Our relationships with the Belgrade Theatre continues to be a supportive one where we are able to use workshop and storage space and ad hoc staff support.
- Strategy - The Core Strategic Group is operating as a drop-in space with all members, staff and volunteers welcome to join and feed into the discussion about UL and our future, meetings have been ad hoc but well attended.
- School workshops – outreach workshop at King's High School in Warwick



UL MEMBER CASE STUDY - ANONYMOUS

What do you enjoy about Underground Lights?

- I've had a mad journey, I have been homeless more times than you can imagine. I have been in 10 prisons, addiction, suffered sexual abuse, rape, but Underground Lights has given me something positive to focus on. It has stopped the flashbacks and nightmares and start looking to the future. And also I like the people in the groups. Everyone has their own little quirks and I think we bounce off each other and make something special happen. Finding these people has meant I have support around me and it is these people that have stopped me going back to my addiction because I am always in recovery. The more I focus on Underground Lights the better things have been going for me. I saw my sister recently who I haven't seen in 20 years. [...] It's made me happy and made me come out of myself and realise there is more to life than smoking drugs. I am starting work at a soup kitchen soon where I will be supporting people that I used to be in prison with, or smoked drugs with, and they can see I have gone in a different direction with my life. With the support of the staff and the people at UL I have really. [...] There should be more set ups like UL.

What has been the highlight of performances?

- Out of all of them it was performing at Harnall Lifehouse. I was there myself (using the service) 20 years ago. It was just great to walk in there, see all the old staff, and they all see me with like my new clothes. And obviously a lot of the people there I used to do drugs and hang out with on the street. I was so nervous. It was like I was naked. But it was wicked! It felt amazing when it was done to see my journey from that time to now. It was a really good experience.
- Through doing UL I got community spirit, friends, a bus pass which is so helpful and the buzz for performing.
- It brings people out of their shell. Brings people together with shared lived experiences. I like the community part of it. I know for a fact people look forward to Friday.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Annual Reports 2024 - 2025

During the period April 2024 – March 2025, Underground Lights received total income of £78,294 including donations from individuals gifts in kind. Total expenditure for the same period was £63,842 which meant the balance held at the end of this period was £44,076. Of this, £4,842 was restricted for use on the Project, salaries, workshops or training.

Reserves are held to cover three months' running costs in case of future unsuccessful fundraising.

In preparing the financial statements the trustees believe that Underground Lights will continue as an ongoing concern until April 2026.

This report was approved by the trustees on 25/07/2025 and signed on their behalf by:



GEORGIA DEE JAJI
Acting Chair of Trustees

FINANCIAL REVIEW

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES Year ended 31st March 2025	Unrestricted fund	Restricted fund	Year ended 31/03/25 Total Funds	Year ended 31/03/24 Total Funds
Income				
Donations	14,381	-	14,381	1,415
Charitable Activities	25,719	34,876	60,595	10,627
Other Income	3,318	-	3,318	1,485
Total Income	43,418	34,876	78,294	13,527
Expenditure				
Staffing Costs	12,459	34,134	46,593	49,596
Volunteers' costs	14	194	208	255
Operational/ Activity	13,218	857	14,075	11,406
Publicity / Marketing	616	225	841	1,243
Other Administration	1,313	812	2,125	3,034
Total Expenditure	27,620	36,222	65,842	65,534
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)	15,796	(1,344)	14,452	(52,007)
Total funds brought forward at 31st March 2023	23,438	6,186	29,624	81,631
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	39,234	4,842	44,076	81,631

FINANCIAL REVIEW

BALANCE SHEET

Year ended 31st March 2025

	Unrestricted fund	Restricted fund	Year ended 31/03/25 Total Funds	Year ended 31/03/24 Total Funds
Current Assets				
Cash at Bank	47,751	4,842	52,593	62,705
Total Current Assets	47,751	4,842	52,593	62,705
Creditors: amounts falling due within One year	(8,517)	-	(8,517)	(33,081)
Net current assets/(liabilities)	39,234	4,842	44,076	29,624
FUNDS				
Unrestricted fund	-	-	39,234	23,438
Restricted fund	-	-	4,842	6,186
TOTAL FUNDS	-	-	44,076	29,217

For the financial year ending 31st March 2025 the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Charity Trustees Responsibilities:

- The members have not required the charity to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- The charity trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

The financial statements on pages were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue and signed on their behalf by:

GEORGIA DEE JAJI

17/08/2025

Acting Chair of Trustees



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the CIO have been prepared using the accruals basis together with the statement of recommended practice for charities 2011.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund Accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Volunteer help

The value of any volunteer help received is not included in the financial statements but is described in the trustees' report.

Trustees' Remuneration and Benefits

No Member received any remuneration or other benefits for being a trustee.

Trustees' expenses - No expenses were paid to trustees

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds held at 31st March 2025

FINANCIAL REVIEW

EXPENDITURE

Year ended 31st March 2025

	Balance B/F	Received	Spent	Balance C/F
Expenditure				
Events and Workshops	-	7,376	(7,176)	200
Core salaries	-	27,500	27,500	-
Development & Capacity Building	4,688	-	533	4,155
Member training and Upskilling	1,011	-	1,011	-
Wellbeing Fund	487	-	-	487
Total	6,186	34,876	36,220	4,842

Restricted funding received from:

- A&HI - Creative Cafe and Open Mic events
- Cole Charitable Trust – Member Training and Up-skilling
- Heart of England Charitable Foundation - Creative Cafes and Open Mic Events
- Tudor Trust - Salaries and Wellbeing grant

FINANCIAL REVIEW

STAFFING

	This year	Last year
Gross Salaries	45,778	48,743
Employer's NICs	2,492	2,698
Employment Allowance	(2,492)	(2,698)
Employer's Pension	815	853
Total	49,596	49,596

The average number of employees over the year was 5 (FTE in 2024:5).

DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

There were no debtors or pre-payments.

CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS

£

Income in Advance	6,970
Pension, PAYE and NICs	1,547
Total	8,517

TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

No member received any remuneration or other benefits for being a trustee.

Expenses of £105 were paid to Jan Winter to attend a training day (2024: £0)

The fee for the Independent Examination was £nil.

VOLUNTEER HELP

The value of any volunteer help received is not included in the financial statements but is described in the trustees' report.

RELATED PARTIES

There were no transactions with related parties

FINANCIAL REVIEW

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Report to the trustees

On accounts for the year ended **31st March 2025**

Charity Name **Underground Lights**

Charity no (if any) **1179553**

Set out on pages **One**

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2025.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

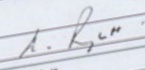
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Name: **Alan Rylett**

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address: **1 Borrowdale Dr
Leamington Spa, CV32 6NY**

Date: **26 July 2025**

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

The accounts were examined and to the extent that papers have been provided are correct.

The computer records have made the accounts clear and precise.

IER

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Oct 2018

October 2018

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Review

During the period April 2024 – March 2025, Underground Lights received total income of £78,294 including donations from individuals gifts in kind. Total expenditure for the same period was £63,842 which meant the balance held at the end of this period was £44,076. Of this, £4,842 was restricted for use on the Project, salaries, workshops or training. Reserves are held to cover three months' running costs in case of future unsuccessful fundraising.

In preparing the financial statements the trustees believe that Underground Lights is a going concern.

This report was approved by the trustees on 25th July 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

CDJ
Georgia Dee, Acting Chair of Trustees

BALANCE SHEET For the year ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted fund	Restricted funds	Year ended 31.03.25 Total Funds	Year ended 31.03.24 Total Funds
Current Assets				
Cash at Bank	47,751	4,842	52,593	62,705
Total Current Assets	47,751	4,842	52,593	62,705
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(8,517)		(8,517)	(33,081)
Net current assets/(liabilities)			44,076	29,624
FUNDS				
Unrestricted fund			39,234	23,438
Restricted fund			4,842	6,186
TOTAL FUNDS			44,076	29,624

The financial statements on pages were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue and signed on their behalf by:

Name: Georgia Dee Jaji
CDJ
Acting Chair of Trustees

Date: Approval: 25th July 2025
Signed: 17th August 2025

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WITH THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Throughout the year, our work has remained rooted in creativity, community, and collaboration. We thank our members, audiences, and partners for their continued support and participation.

Underground Lights would like to thank all the people who have given their time and money to help us continue our work, and particularly:

Players of People's Postcode Lottery

The Belgrade Theatre

Tudor Trust

Sir Barry Jackson Trust

Warwick University Institute of Engagement

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry

Everson Trust

Tesco Groundworks

Coventry Church (Municipal) Charity

Expert Citizens

Coventry Masonic Fund

Central Hall Coventry

Mill Gardens, Warwick

Arnold Clark Community Fund

Coventry & District Charitable Trust

Access to the Free Bus Pass Support scheme, enabling thousands of member journeys

Members, audiences and our community supporters

These contributions have played a vital role in supporting our creative programmes, member access, and community events.

Photography by Mandip Seehra, Fai Banks, and staff & members of Underground Lights

**“I used to
think I wasn’t
any good at
anything...
but now,
well now
I’m a
star!”**

MARCH 2025

