

A close-up photograph of two young women with brown hair, wearing white t-shirts, smiling and drawing on a green board with markers. The woman in the foreground is using a white marker, while the woman behind her is using a blue marker. The background is blurred, showing other people and colorful elements.

**house**  
of IMAGINATION

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

[houseofimagination.org](https://houseofimagination.org)





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# 1. Introduction

This year, Covid-19 put a stop to physical arts events, collaboration, and work on school premises. Emergency funding from Arts Council England (ACE) helped us to mitigate the immediate risks to the Charity. It enabled us to continue working on existing commitments with artists and partners on our high-impact programmes such as School Without Walls and Forest of Imagination as well as other partnerships and projects, including those designed to support the community during the current crisis such as Bath Cultural Education Partnership's (BCEP) Unboxed project.

**Our collaborations and programmes were re-imagined.** With the support of funding from ACE, Forest of Imagination became Virtual Forest of Imagination and continued to share its creative ideas and inspiration online. We have been responding to schools' direct needs in response to Covid-19 including creativity, oracy and wellbeing in relation to the reconnection curriculum, still maintaining the arts at the centre of the process. Responding to the Covid-19 situation has also given us opportunities to be innovative in working creatively with digital technologies, to enquire into digital engagement, and to work with new partners in the creative digital technologies field.

House of Imagination provides a range of spaces for children and young people to collaborate with creative professionals. It is a home for improvisation, creativity and innovation and a place to make those things visible to an international audience through research.









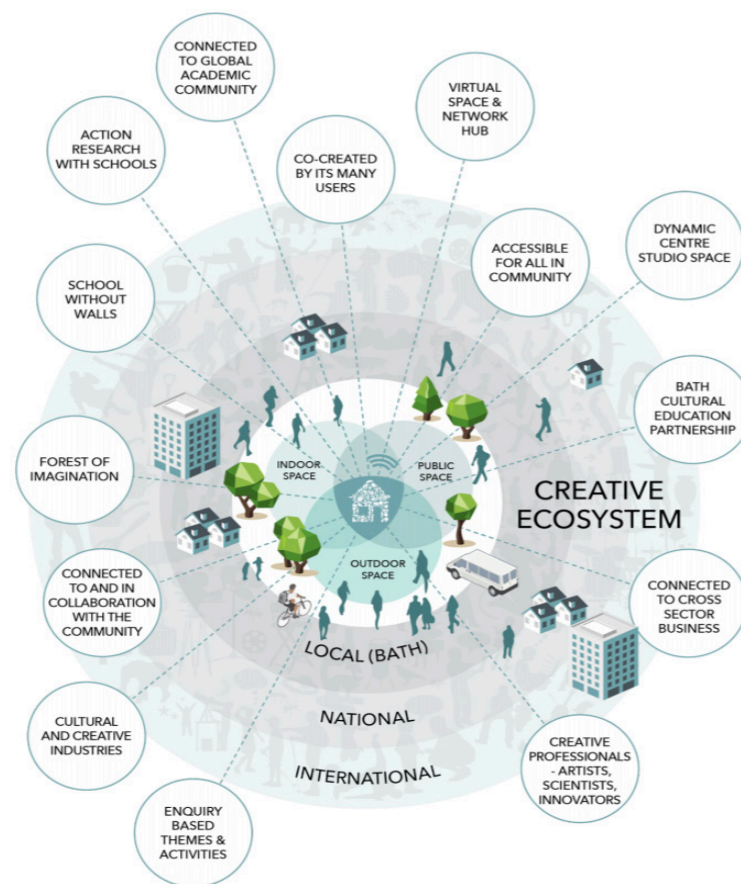
## School Without Walls

SWW is an ongoing initiative launched in 2010. We have been supporting schools with Continuing Professional Development and Learning in response to identified needs in their school development plans, all online since March 2020.

## Bath Cultural Educational Partnership

The partnership currently involves House of Imagination, Bath Spa University, egg theatre, Bath Festivals, Mentoring Plus, the Music Hub, Bath Philharmonia and local schools.

The BCEP team is working in partnership with local schools and organisations in the area to reach out to those in need. BCEP has commissioned two artists Lucy Cassidy (School Without Walls) and James Baldwin (egg Incubator) to co-design 2 magical boxes, one for 4-9 years, Society for Protection of Magical Creatures and the second, Innocentville for 13-16 years. Rocket Makers, a team of award winning designers and software engineers, are providing initial pro-bono support for tech requirements until we can raise more funds to support this development. This first iteration of these digital platforms is an opportunity to look at the engagement with the digital creative aspects with children and young people, in order to shape subsequent iterations.



## Comino South West Creative Education Hub

Comino South West Creative Education Hub involves representatives from Bath Spa University, University of Bristol, University of Gloucestershire, alongside local education partnerships in Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham and Gloucester and creative professionals from partner organisations including Knowle West Media Centre, Cheltenham Festivals, Bath Cultural Education Partnership and House of Imagination.

Together we are co-designing Continuing Professional Development and Learning opportunities for educators and creative professionals. Meetings with heads and creative partners took place online (from March 2020). Proposed events for 2021 include further meetings (initially online) to June, and an online Summer School focusing on Creative Leadership (for schools and creative professionals) at Dartington Hall in early July.

### Currently the Foundation's priorities are:

- **Social opportunity** – which to the Foundation means finding approaches/initiatives which help young people, whatever their background, to live fulfilling and productive lives in whatever ways have meaning and value for them
- **Personal capabilities** – developing approaches which enhance young people's personal capacity to cope with the demands of growing up and with adult life
- **Improving practical capability** – especially that which relates to designing and making, to innovation and to manufacturing."

Meetings with heads and creative partners took place online (from October 2020) with local education partnerships in 5 areas (Bath, Bristol, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Cheltenham). Proposed events for 2021 include further meetings (initially online) to June, and a Summer School focusing on Creative Leadership (for schools and creative professionals) at Dartington Hall in early July.

*"The Foundation looks for better ways of developing young people's capabilities, their capacity and desire to make things happen – their zest and appetite to learn, to create, to change things for the better, for themselves and others. It encourages and supports innovative ventures designed to enable people to function effectively and to thrive."*

### Teachers have identified a series of priorities:

- Recovery and reconnection curriculum
- Wellbeing and mental health
- Tackling disadvantage and raising aspirations
- Creativity creative education, creative pathways for learning
- Place based curriculum broadening education for all
- Climate crisis and the sustainable development goals
- Black lives matter and decolonising the curriculum
- Supporting teachers with digital technologies in a creative arena

## Re-Imagining Libraries

Re-Imagining Libraries vision group are working with Bath Spa University, University of Bath, Bath College to re-imagine the city centre Library as a space for thinking, creating and innovating.

This is linked to the WECA funded iSTART (Innovation, Science, Technology, Arts, Research and Training) project and proposed £20m new centre on Bath Quays. The Re-imagining Libraries group met with Nick Poole CEO of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) to discuss a common approach to re-imagining the library in Bath in partnership with the WECA Istart/Restart projects. We met with Sarah Crown (Director of Literature, ACE), Sue Williamson (Director of Libraries ACE) and Lynne Taylor (Libraries Relationship Manager ACE SW) who have invited a bid to the ACE Strategic Fund for Libraries.

## Expanded Performance

The Bristol and Bath Creative R&D Fund supported House of Imagination as an Expanded Performance Industry Partner which developed our work around the digital, focusing on the dilemmas of liveness and togetherness in a Covid-19 world. Working with BBC Creative R&D team and the new BBC Creative Development Unit Bristol we have been experimenting with ideas for using adaptive audio to enable all, but especially young people, 'to metaphorically fall down a rabbit hole' to connect more deeply with the natural world.

## Thinking Differently

Thinking Differently is a research project in partnership with Meadow Arts, Worcestershire, the Educational Research Department University of Leicester and House of Imagination. The project explores how contemporary visual arts and artists can support the way children with Neurodiverse and Special Needs uniquely approach the world. The project is currently working with children in 3 schools across Worcestershire, Hertfordshire and Shropshire and 3 artists.

House of Imagination has been supporting the research through Continuing Professional Development and mentoring. Artists going in to the schools to work with the educators and children was halted due to Covid-19 restrictions and learning moved online. Further mentoring and Professional Development support is planned for 2021 (initially online).

## My Place, Our Place

My Place Our Place is an early years and family project is a creative collaboration between Bristol Architecture Centre and 2 Children's Centres in Bristol. This research is currently on hold pending further funding.

### Artists Now

A pop-up creative studio space in city/schools/forest with a focus on more vulnerable learners and marginalised young people. Recent liaison with Rising Arts focused on young people's creative leadership, co-production and co-governance. This work is informing a future bid to ACE for House of Imagination to work alongside Rising Arts on co-mentoring 2021-2.

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## St John's Foundation

Foundation's meetings with Director of St Johns Foundation, Louise Harvey, Professor Sue Rigby VC, Professor Andy Salmon, Pro VC, Bath Spa University and Headteachers took place June- October 2020 to discuss needs around the recovery curriculum and wrap around care.

## Advisory Groups

Dr Penny Hay is working closely with national and international advisory groups:

- Associate member Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy
- Institute of Education Cultural Learning Alliance Advisory Board and Continuing Professional Development and Learning and Curriculum task groups
- HundrED Ambassador and Innovator 2020
- APPG Art Education 29 September/ 17 November 2020 to discuss future of arts education post C19 BSU and Paper Nations
- Associate Director of Transnational Centre for Creativity in Education (TRACE) Bath Spa University
- RSA Bath What Next? West Chapter with Margaret Heffernan 9 September 2020;

- Forest of Imagination and TEDxBath 8 October 2020; Kenneth Olumuyiwa Tharp, 4 November, Suzanne Alleyne, 7 December
- Celebratory event of Sir Ken Robinson's legacy with Kate Robinson and RSA 15 December 2020

## National Conferences and Seminars

- Podcast with Clayhill Arts re Creative Thinking and Creative Education in response to COVID -19 May 2020
- Forest team online seminar with Clayhill Arts, 16 September 2020
- Teacher Education for Environmental Sustainability (TEESnet), 17 September 2020
- Continuing Professional Development and Learning event 'Adventures in Learning' with Sightlines Initiative, 9 July, 6 October and 21 October 2020
- National Arts Education Continuing Professional Development and Learning 29 September 2020
- Big Draw with Andrew Amondson, 8 October 2020
- Bath Digital Festival 19-22 October
- Creativity Culture and the Arts, Tybed Wales, 22 October/ 26 November
- Creative Industries Federation | Creative Coalition Festival | Finding the Creativity in Education Panel 10 November 2020
- Eco-creativity and activism | Open University 13 November 2020

## International conferences

Roundtable online meetings were held with HundrED and UNESCO Futures of Education team to discuss a South West Roundtable for the Futures of Education. Recent meetings with key partners including the Creative Industries Federation and the Cultural Learning Alliance were also held, in each case focusing on creative and cultural education; pathways for children and young people; and aligned professional development for teachers and cultural/creative professionals.

Creative Generation, House of Imagination and Rising Arts Agency hosted a focus group on creative leadership in arts/ cultural education on 1 October 2020. Following our recent focus group seminars with Jeff M. Poulin, Creative Generation, House of Imagination, Bath Spa University and Rising Arts, have been selected as regional (international) partners for the new global research study on leadership in arts and cultural education. Creative Generation has invited us to work with the team as a UK site of innovation and develop an international case study on creative leadership.

## Other International Activity

- Reggio Children, Reggio Emilia, Italy
- HundrED, Finland
- University of Agder, Norway
- Art Education Summits in Delhi/ Kolkata/ Mumbai, India
- International Society for Education in Art, Czech Republic
- University Autònoma Barcelona
- World Alliance for Arts Education

- Collaboration with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and 4 Universities/ arts organisations across Europe and Scandinavia: 'INTERSTICE. Encounters between artists, children and educators'.



## HundrED Global Collection: 2021



## 3. Social Media Engagement

### Twitter

=Our twitter accounts directly correlated to the amount of tweets we produced and engaged with online - we had a huge upturn during June 2020 when we reached an astonishing 238K impressions, gained 258 mentions, had 6,185 profile visits and added an extra 98 new followers in one month. The year built up into a crescendo beginning in February with impressions of 23.9K, rising to 54.3K in March, 40K in April, 101K in May, 238 in June, 91.6K in July, 39K in August, 27.1K in September and 90K in October when we worked with TedX.

Some of our most engaging tweets - earning from 5,000 to 7,000 impressions include students who contributed to the activities and shared their work, videos showing artists making pieces of work including Jess Palmer,

Helen Lawrence, Perry Harris and Andrew Amondson.

### Instagram

Instagram is a growing social media platform for Forest since the beginning of this year we have increased our followers on Instagram by almost 100% growing from a few hundred to to date having a total of 1,477 followers. Impressions during the peak of Virtual Forest saw each daily post reaching from 200 - 900 impressions. Following promotions of two of Andrew Amondson's videos at a cost of £28 over a five day period we reached a broader 6,934 pages and impressions.

### Facebook

During the Virtual Forest event we had from 200 organic engagement reach to up to 900 with specific posts including Matt Leece's Virtual Vines, Helen Lawrence's videos and engagement and Perry Harris's videos. Forest has 1,946 followers and 1,829 people Like the page.

This year the charity had recorded an upswing and growth in its social media presence. Currently, House of Imagination has 7,026 followers across all of our platforms.

## A Note from Hannah Newton

### (Social Media, Forest of Imagination)

“During Virtual Forest, I was able to engage on a daily basis for almost seven months across our major social media platforms. This daily engagement significantly increases brand awareness, audience connection and communication with followers, both building communication networks and growing audience share. Daily social engagement is key for any brand - but it is of course timely and costly - so it is not easy to implement for a charity like Forest of Imagination.

Having content from a wide range of artists, thinkers and makers was fundamental in showcasing Forest as a diverse and broad minded charity - this was also key to our success and often one of the things I struggle with during ‘normal’ forest is getting enough content to engage with the public regularly.

A consistent brand message from Forest is also key - but we were a little grey as we partnered with various other organisations such as Big Draw, TedX etc in keeping a clear message - it can be hard to keep a clear key message throughout and this needs to be considered, agreed on and used very early on in future.

However, collaborations with other organisations were vital to getting our brand message further than our usual audience and was a huge aid to our increase in followers particularly on Twitter & Instagram.

Videos have consistently been shown to engage an audience for longer and is a widely used marketing tool, we had far more videos this year, thanks to a number of artists which gave us a broad and interesting use of various types of content to use, which keeps us fresh and unique and therefore keeps our engagement with our current audience and potential new followers at its best”

**FOREST OF  
IMAGINATION  
IS A CREATIVE  
ECOSYSTEM  
FOR ART AND  
PARTICIPATION**



## 4. Financial Overview

**Despite the ongoing pandemic, we have been cautious in our financial commitments and have maintained future viability.**

We have been able to sustain our research activity with support from regular funders including Comino Foundation, Bath Spa University and Grant Associates. Arts Council emergency funding in May 2020, enabled the charity to continue to be able to operate. We were able to mitigate the immediate risks to the charity, giving it time to adapt agilely and re-emerge tempered to meet the challenges ahead. We were able to safeguard the team and gave assurance to partners and pivotal networks that HOI was able to continue to provide the crucial facilitation and leadership role it plays.

For very many individual artists, creative practitioners, families and cultural organisations across Bath and Bristol, HOI acts as the 'glue' holding together an accessible and creative cultural offer. Without these funds, existing commitments to artists and partners would have been under threat and high-impact programmes such as 'Forest of Imagination' halted. We continue to invest in the quality of our work and thereby to increase its impact on the participants in our research in the South West and also on policy and practice further afield.

## 5. Key Learning

As most of 2020 has been dominated by the Covid-19 situation this has inevitably thrown up new challenges that the House of Imagination community has risen to, and has resulted in new opportunities for learning.

**Successful and inspirational partnerships such as with Big Draw championed the value and strength of a working partnership.** The nature of going digital meant a slower pace, in which the process could be seen and analysed; organisations could gain through exploring what working successfully in partnership means and looks like; and new initiatives could be developed in collaboration.

**Covid-19 restrictions meant research projects, long established processes, strategies, and ways of collaborating had to be reformulated as they could not take place on site.** It created opportunities for exploring new ideas in a digital and virtual space. The artists found it challenging not being able to come together with children, families, and schools in the same space and time. They were not able to be alongside in the making process, could not see something come to life before their eyes, and could not see responses and engagement in real time. This resulted in a delay in knowing and less feedback compared to live work, resulting in the artists having less sense of how they were connecting with children, educators and families. There was also a sense of people possibly being touched by artists works in ways we don't always know about. Artists nevertheless tried to make connections with people they were working with virtually, to make this feel authentic and to build a sense of community.

For several of the artists it was a leap to take their work into a digital and virtual realm, for example, it was a challenge to share their love of materials or how to communicate emotions or conceptual work through this virtual sphere.

**It was challenging to work with schools in a virtual way** rather than artists, teachers, children and mentors co-enquiring and co-creating in the same physical space on site. Online teaching resources were created that aimed to give space for interaction with ideas that drew upon the inspiration and body of Forest of Imagination artists' work and thinking; and shared collaborative, co-enquiry processes; through visual, written and digital mediums.

The challenges gave rise to new ambitions, realised and visible as the creativity and thinking came together through the Forest of Imagination website, the 10.10.20 event and online teaching resources for schools, including the BCEP Unboxed creative adventures.

**Working online created new opportunities for collaboration and interconnectedness between artists** Artists worked with openness and transparency, sharing their thinking, giving inspiration to each other's ideas, processes, and art forms. Many opportunities were also created for handing on the baton from artist to artist throughout. The processes contributed to new perspectives for artists on their own practice and the expansion of ideas.

**Working online created opportunities to engage with wider communities and to work with artists from further afield.** Working remotely opens up opportunities to further diversify the House of Imagination and Forest of Imagination artist community beyond the local demographic and to further widen and diversify participation.

Working in closer collaboration online with Forest of Imagination artists has meant it has been easier to get greater access to their work, earlier and increased the opportunities for sharing these through digital platforms, albeit with a limited budget.

Artists have been able to see how effective sharing ideas e.g. simple call outs or pieces of content can be and to explore different ways of engaging people through online platforms. It has raised the questions of how to build on this in future through further research and also how to further upskill artists in working with digital and virtual platforms?



## 6. Concluding remarks

House of Imagination continues to work directly with the principles of social inclusion, artistic and educational excellence, relevance, community engagement, creative partnerships, co-enquiry, creative collaboration, creative ambition and environmental responsibility. We place emphasis on the value of creativity and a desire for a more democratic and equitable cultural offer for everyone, celebrating 'everyday creativity'.

The charity benefits from a range of integrated strong partnerships at both a local, regional and international level. It is actively connected and has responded to different communities and contexts. It attracted and showcased artists and creative talent from across sectors.

Crisis engenders real change, it is a catalyst to hone thinking around new ways of working, now and post Covid, on how we extend meaningful digital engagement responding dynamically and collaboratively to best meet the challenges head-on.

We pivoted to a digital programme and offered rich, interactive content engaging existing and new partners. Forest of Imagination was an online virtual festival with spotlights on artists worldwide whose practice focuses on environmental issues and climate change.

Building on our experience of school and home education, we created a new creative learning programme, a resource designed to be applicable to other settings including refugee/asylum centres, specialist schools for children at risk.

This has included co-designed online creative activities for children and families with our team of creative professionals and artists, with opportunities for feedback and engagement through our websites. For those homes with limited or no internet access, we co-designed beautiful creative adventure boxes to send by post to families across the Bath area most impacted by Covid 19. This gave real purpose to our creative educational work in a world full of uncertainty.



## 7. Tribute to Patron Sir Ken Robinson

### A Personal Note From Penny Hay

"I was deeply saddened to hear of Ken's death from Kate, his daughter. It seemed only a short time ago that he spoke at Bath Spa University with Kate at his side and then on a live video link at the Forest of Imagination, Re-imagining Childhood. Well, I have never met anyone quite like Ken, he was an extraordinary human being. He has been a constant inspiration since the moment I met him in 1989, always full of humour, kindness and wisdom. I got to know Ken well in the 90s during the consultation with the National Advisory Committee for Creative and Cultural Education, running up to the 'All Our Futures' report. Sir Ken and Dame Tamsyn Imison then became great supporters of my work in creative education both in London and Bath.

Ken led national and international projects on creative and cultural education across the world, unlocking and igniting the creative energy of people and organisations. Ken has written extensively on the need to radically reform education, championing an environment that cultivates creativity and divergent thinking rather than exam success.

Ken's passion for creativity and his belief in children and young people's creative potential has inspired millions and changed lives across the world. Ken's support as Patron for our charity House of Imagination for 20 years has been absolutely invaluable. (he always joked about our other name 5x5x5).

So, in his memory and on behalf of the thousands of children, families, artists and teachers that we have worked with over the many years of our friendship, we will continue with our creative revolution. Ken's amazing legacy will live on, we will be sure of that. Ken is our forever hero."

### Kate Robinson's Speech (Delivered at the RSA Tribute Event)

"We aren't here today because he died. We are here because he lived. And because while he was living he made a difference. He changed the way so many of us thought, he validated how we felt. He championed our work, and gave voice to so many people who intrinsically knew that it wasn't that something was wrong with them, it was wrong with the system. He was a relatable voice of truth and reason that for so many of us cut through the chaos with, essentially, a simple thought - that we could do things differently. And if we did them differently, so many more people would benefit and flourish.

One of the reasons his message resonated with so many people around the world is because it was sincere, because he was sincere. He never sold out, he never compromised on his mission or vision in order to get ahead. I've often been asked what he was like in real life - and the truth is he was exactly the same in person as he was in the TED talk, but better. The man on stage wasn't an act, a carefully curated alter ego, it was him, and I think everyone speaking here today can attest to that.

At its core, his work was a celebration of human potential, of our potential as individuals and as a species. He often pointed out that we don't live in the world as other creatures do, we create the worlds in which we live, and we do that through our incredible power of imagination. Imagination is a power that, as far as we know, is unique to human beings, and it is through our imagination that the world as we know it has come to be - our systems of democracy, our works of art, our ability to travel globally, our ability to do this - to come together as we are, digitally.

Every moment of progress we as a species has had, began as a spark of imagination, an "imagine if..." moment. Even the big, complicated systems, many of which we take for granted, like education, for example, were designed and created by people. He called them human systems, and as we created them, we can recreate them. In a talk he gave as part of the Call to Unite in May of this year, he said that the pandemic had forced us to hit pause on many of our social systems, and it is time to hit reset on them as well. Inspired by this, and inspired by his passionate advocacy on behalf of imagination, we are putting out a provocation to re-imagine.

**Imagine if** we did things differently. Imagine if we didn't group children by age in school, **imagine if** our education systems valued each and every child for who he or she is. **Imagine if** every adult was deeply connected with his or her passions, and was in his or her Element. A seed, a moment of imagination. We created these systems, these ways of living... **imagine if** we did them differently."





## 8. Acknowledgments **Patrons of House of Imagination**

Special thanks to all the children and adults involved in House of Imagination, to the parents of the children and young people, all those in the educational, creative and cultural organisations involved who have given their support and to all sponsors.

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### Trustees of House of Imagination

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Sir Christopher Frayling  
Sir Ken Robinson (in memory)  
Professor Iram Siraj  
Professor Richard Wentworth  
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Peter Clegg  
Andrew Grant  
Martyn Ware  
Mike Young

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### Websites

<http://houseofimagination.org/>  
<http://www.forestofimagination.org.uk/>  
<http://www.schoolwithoutwalls.org.uk/>  
<https://www.compound13.org/>

