



## **YVAN Annual Report**

**01 Apr 2024 - 31 Mar 2025**

### **0. Cover page**

#### **YVAN**

A research-led support network for the visual arts sector in the region.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **Who are YVAN**

YVAN is made up of visual arts workers, individual artists and makers, studios, collectives, higher and further education departments, researchers, visual arts organisations and artists networks.

#### **Mission**

To be a voice and advocate for the visual arts sector in Yorkshire & the Humber, delivering a programme that effects change in the profile, reputation and sustainability of the visual arts and artists in Yorkshire and the Humber.

#### **Vision**

Yorkshire and the Humber is a place where the visual arts thrive through the collective strength and collaboration across the sector, founded in the creative vision of individual artists.

#### **What we do**

Support artists, makers and arts workers to identify issues and priorities for action focusing on: equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility; Climate Justice, and sector research to inform national policy.

Collaborate with organisations in supporting the visual arts through professional development, advocacy, research and promotion

Champion & Advocate for the role of the visual arts in leading on social and political change, and amplifying the impact from our region.

YVAN is a voluntary-led organisation, managed by part time freelancers and 2 employees.

## **Team**

Sharon Gill - CEO - Sculptor

Sarah Yaccabe - Administrator - Clothing and Crafts Maker

Hannah Burgess - Communications & Marketing - Ceramicist

Melissa Burntown, Newcastle University - PhD collaborative doctoral researcher - Artist (Oct 2021 - 2024)

Alice Chandler, University of Leeds - PhD collaborative doctoral researcher - Artist & Jewellery Maker (Oct 2021 - 2024)

Kisha Bradley - PhD collaborative doctoral researcher (from Sept 2024)

Thomas Moore - Social Sciences Student Placement - (July 2024 - Sept 2024)

Azadeh Fatehrad - Researcher - Professor Artist Curator (from Feb 2024)

## **Board & Working groups**

Helen Nakhwal - Co-chair & Finance - Finance Director of Pilot Theatre

Michael Barnes-Wynters - Co-chair - Multi-disciplined audio visual artist

Lucy Dunhill - Director - Design for Disability

Laura Biddle - Director - Curator and Writer

Zanib Rasool MBE - Director, Research & Learning working group -

Rotherham United Community Sports Trust, Partnership and Development Manager

Sue Ball - Director - MAAP, PhD

Hafifa Ahmed - Research & Learning working group - Artist and Youth Worker

Ingrid Bale - Research & Learning working group - Artist, PhD (Northern Bridge Consortium) CDA with Northumbria University and Changing Lives

Rina Arya - Research & Learning working group - Professor of School of arts - University of Hull

Yuen Fong Ling - Research & Learning working group. Artist, curator, researcher and lecturer.

Glynis Nelsen - Research & Learning working group. Artist & Curator

Bailey Revill - Research & Learning working group. Artist & Technician  
(from Sept 2024)

## **2. Organisational summary:**

Throughout this year YVAN has continued to demonstrate its value to the sector through our research-based approach to programme and support, and through our national connectivity as part of the Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) network. Our ability to feed grassroots information into the national picture is invaluable, especially in light of proposed greater devolution and we are supporting CVAN in its advocacy and campaigns to influence policy and decision-making, working to gather sensible and relevant data, both quantitative but also qualitative, to ensure that the voices of artists and arts workers are heard and valued, and that the visual arts sector thrives.

We are delighted that after years of working with CVAN, the UK museums and visual arts sector, Arts Council England and DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)

, the sunset clause that proposed the cessation of MGETR (Museum, Galleries and Exhibition Tax Relief in 2024, was finally lifted by HM Government in the Spring Budget. From 1 April 2025, the rates for MGETR will be permanently set at 40% for non-touring productions and 45% for touring productions. Spring Budget. There is still some work to do in securing edits and amendments to make the MGETR accessible to more organisations, but this is a great start.

We are particularly proud of the work around the Artists Survey carried out early summer. While there are perhaps few surprises in the findings, it does enable a baseline to measure against in future years.

Starting in September 2024 we partnered with BEAM in delivering the Unbound programme, a bespoke artist development programme designed to support Wakefield and West Yorkshire artists in developing their skills

and confidence to deliver public art commissions. The programme included mentoring by established public realm artists, and some of the relationships formed have continued. We will be conducting a longitudinal study to assess the impact of participating in the programme.

The Beyond artists social event in Bridlington brought people from across the region together on a cold dark December evening. Beyond provides an open and safe online and occasional in person space for Artists and Arts Workers to make connections, friendships, request feedback on recent work and a place to share resources, whilst being encouraged to test out ideas or shared experiences from the creative sector, to find peer support and discuss challenges. The attendance at the event showed us that people really do want to be in a room together and we will make that a goal of our work moving forwards.

As an organisation we remain committed to supporting the artist-led and the artist's voice in Yorkshire and Humber through research, projects, communications and investment. We are working towards ensuring we can provide equity of opportunity and are constantly evolving and changing to be as inclusive and accessible as our resources enable, taking advice and guidance from our peers.

Helen Nakhwal, Co-chair, July 2025

### **3. CVAN**

As one of the nine regions culminating in CVAN England, a large part of our work is to amplify and advocate for the amazing creative output of the visual arts sector in the Yorkshire and Humber region. This year as well as attending monthly managers meetings and quarterly Chairs meetings, we have provided some financial investment for the national policy work around artist studios to ensure we have sustainable provision in the UK. The work is wide ranging and incredibly complex, and there is further attention required to bring the report findings into an executive summary and actions.

We also spent some time in online campaigning and communicating with all of the region's MP's lobbying for their support for the Reframed proposal.

In 2024, the Contemporary Visual Arts Network England (CVAN) spearheaded significant advocacy initiatives to bolster the UK's visual arts sector. These efforts encompassed coalition-building, policy engagement, and strategic partnerships to foster a more sustainable and equitable environment for artists and arts organisations.

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## 1. Coalition Manifesto: A Unified Call to Government

In June 2024, CVAN, alongside The Artists Information Company (a-n) and the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), led a coalition of over 4,200 artists, curators, and arts professionals in presenting a comprehensive manifesto to the UK Government. This document underscored the visual arts sector's £9.7 billion contribution to the UK economy and outlined key recommendations, including:

- Establishing the Smart Fund to generate collective licensing revenue for visual artists.
- Appointing a Freelancer Commissioner to advocate for the rights and needs of freelance artists.
- Incorporating exhibition payments into copyright law to ensure fair compensation.
- Providing financial stability for disabled artists.
- Integrating visual literacy into the National Curriculum at Key Stage 2.
- Exploring a tourist levy to fund cultural projects.

These proposals addressed systemic challenges and reinforced the sector's integral role in the UK's cultural and economic landscape.

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## 2. Strengthening Parliamentary Advocacy: The APPG Secretariat

In December 2024, CVAN, in partnership with a-n and DACS, assumed the role of Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Visual Arts and Artists. This cross-party forum of MPs and Lords focuses on:

- Advancing understanding of visual artists' practices and career development.

- Ensuring fair pay and safeguarding intellectual property rights.
- Recognising the sector's value to society and the economy.
- Fostering an environment where visual artists can thrive.

The APPG serves as a vital platform for informing parliamentarians about the visual arts sector's contributions and advocating for policies that support its growth and sustainability.

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### 3. Responding to the Government's Industrial Strategy

CVAN actively contributed to the consultation on the UK Government's 10-year Industrial Strategy, highlighting the visual arts as a growth-driving sector. The response emphasised the sector's unique strengths, such as its role in the global art market and significant contributions to the UK's gross value added (GVA). However, it also addressed systemic challenges, including:

- Low fees and pay for freelance artists.
- Declining arts funding in real terms over the past decade.
- The economic impact of AI on artists' ability to control and monetise their work.
- The need for better data and sector definition.

Proposed solutions included establishing a Freelancer Commissioner, improving contract and payment terms, expanding creative education, and enhancing investment in both public and private funding streams.

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Through these concerted efforts in 2024, CVAN demonstrated its commitment to advocating for the visual arts sector, aiming to create a more equitable, sustainable, and vibrant cultural landscape across the UK.

Paula Orrell, National Director CVAN

### 4. Highlights:

Partnerships x 10 (Impressions Gallery, Our Big Picture, Bradford Producing Hub, BEAM x Wakefield Council, Sheffield Galleries and

Museums, Government Art Collection, FLUX, Disability Arts Network, DISrupt)

Locations x 5 (Bradford, Rotherham, Bridlington, Wakefield, Sheffield)

Publications x 2 (Locations of Hope, Annual Report)

Events in person x 4 (UNBOUND x2, Beyond Bridlington x 1, Identity and Creative practice: Bradford x 1)

Events/meetings online x 50 ( Beyond x5, UNBOUND x 4, EDIA x2, 11 x Research meetings, Community fund x 4, 24 x artist support)

Artist organisations directly supported x 7 (BEAM x UNBOUND, Artworks, Bradford Producing Hub, Steel City Community, Apna Haq, YAWR, BME Young People and Carers )

Artists x 40 (UNBOUND x12 artists + 7 x mentors, 4 x Uncover Cultural Skills, 17 x Locations of hope)

Programme Audience

Attendance online 63 (Beyond x 53, EDIA x 5, Community Support workers x 5, MP x 1)

Attendance in person 134 (Beyond - 40, UNBOUND - 30, Uncover Cultural Skills x 60, Identity and Creative practice: Bradford - 3 artists, 1 arts worker)

Internal meetings 56 (Board away day x 1, Board meetings x 4, Team and HR x 37, CVAN x 13, ACE x 1)

## **Social media stats / Marketing and Communications**

YVAN acknowledges the importance of dedicated marketing and comms role to fulfill our ambition as an advocate for the region. We are able to offer support in kind to projects that align with our core objectives and ethos of working, putting the artist led first and foremost.

### **Instagram**

471 new followers (a huge boost in followers this year)

1.1K content interactions (+100%)

Reach 29.9k, 982% rise from last year (due to ads for the survey)

461 Stories, 55 posts (average of over 1 per week)

We have been consistent with stories highlighting opportunities in the region and beyond for artists and art workers. These are then put into monthly highlights for followers to reference back to.

## **Facebook**

69 new followers (+25%) - this gradually increases each year.

Content interactions at 508

Reach 21K (+390%)

The researcher role advert had several shares which meant just that post at 2K reach, opportunities (especially for paid work) tend to elicit more shares.

## **Website**

11k visits

Most people visiting Home, Job Opportunities (Researcher role), Survey and Resources

Average time spent on our pages- 166 seconds which has gone up from last year's 133. Could be due to the information included in the Researcher role and Survey required more time spent.

According to [Contentsquare's 2021 Digital Experience Benchmark report](#), the average time on page across all industries is 54 seconds so we still exceed this by a long way.

## **Mailchimp**

16 newsletters sent (averaging over 1 a month)

51.26% open rate, up from last year.

7.5% average click rate - according to Mailchimp our peers' average is 6.4% so we exceed this click rate. This is likely down to the variety of opportunities in our roundup email, we curate to try and spread across the region and various focuses within visual arts.

Most popular post: Both the survey statistics stating '20% of respondents make all their income from visual arts' and '60% of respondents earn less than 5k per year from visual arts, 21.6% of these earn nothing at all from the sector' performed the best with 12K reach each. They had a £60 ad on each.



## **Comms summary**

The survey was the largest piece of work for 24/25 and from a marketing/comms perspective this included expanding the reach of the survey call out both physically and digitally so we had as many full responses as possible so the results could be most meaningful and impactful.. We had 248 responses which was a great accomplishment. Then came the survey report design and producing a suite of statistic-led graphics (which performed the best on social media this year). To ensure the key findings resonated, we placed great importance on how these insights were visually communicated to our network and beyond.

It was wonderful to support the delivery and communications of the UNBOUND programme in 24/25. As part of this, I interviewed eight participating artists for our Artist Spotlight series, providing space to reflect on their practices, their experience within UNBOUND, and their future aspirations. We also featured interviews with Michael Barnes-Wynters (Beyond) and Yuen Fong Ling (We Are Monument, Sheffield), further broadening the artists we want to spotlight in our network.

In 24/25 we had a focus on improving the usability and accessibility of our website. After an inhouse review, we adapted the breadcrumb navigation, page structure, and headings. We then had three independent reviewers, who gave both positive feedback and suggested actions for improvements. We had an artist, an expert in accessibility and a digital communications professional. The majority of their suggestions have been actioned (e.g. updating our Accessibility Resources page, increasing some text size, hyperlinking emails, including a tagline on the homepage), with a few impossible within our Squarespace template (arrow and button sizing). However, we have met with Disability Arts Online who has since supported with advice for further improvements we can do within the template and after a brief audit saw our Accessibility widget as functional.

This year has been shaped by skill-building and a strong commitment to artist advocacy, shown not just in the statistics but in the work we have produced and supported in our programme . Our activities have consistently centred individual visual artists, supporting them to thrive

through the power of collective networks. From amplifying artist voices through interviews and partnerships to drawing attention to key issues through the survey, this work continues to feel both necessary and rewarding.

Hannah Burgess, Comms

## **5. Research**

Our two Collaborative Doctoral Award researchers are approaching the end of their funded placements.

Alice Chandler has delivered a final artist workshop exploring how we create and are influenced by key events and individuals in our professional career and how we can identify them and their impact. Alice has secured employment with the Department for Works and Pensions while finalising her thesis.

“The first part of my year was spent on a UKRI policy placement in the Department of Work and Pensions, working for three months as a social researcher in the Universal Credit Analysis Division. While not directly related to artists, this experience gave me space to think broadly and critically about how government policy approaches employment support, welfare systems, and inequality—and how these frameworks shape ideas of career development, as well as what counts as good, meaningful, and sustainable work.

For the rest of the year, I focused on data analysis and writing my thesis, *Negotiating Value: Social Relations, Practice and Development in Artists’ Networks*. This meant engaging deeply with the interviews and focus groups I carried out earlier in the project with artists across Yorkshire and The Humber, alongside reviewing literature and refining my methodological approach. Some of the themes I explore include how artists’ social relations shape their identities and ideas of development, the tensions between community and competition within institutional settings, and cooperative models for sustaining practice, along with the conflicts these can sometimes involve.

Alongside this, throughout the project I have developed a participatory network-mapping tool that is designed to facilitate reflective conversations with artists about their development. In April 2025, I ran a workshop with YVAN, sharing early findings and testing this method in a group setting. It was an afternoon of generous conversation and shared reflections on the challenges and possibilities of pursuing an artistic career, and the feedback will feed into both my analysis and the tool's next iteration."

Alice Chandler (she/her) Postgraduate Researcher, AHRC WRoCAH funded

Melissa Burntown has recently completed a placement with the Arts Councils collection, and is now developing her final presentation for her Practice based research. We are working together to print a redacted summary of her research as an accessible participatory workshop script.

We were successful in securing further funding through WRoCAH for a third CDA with Leeds University. We are delighted to have recruited Kisha Bradley, who will be exploring the YVAN research question:

**Artists Networks: Whose Voice Counts? Researching the disconnects with and for artists from the Global Majority in the Yorkshire region.**

"In this first year of research, I've been focused on developing my anticolonial research practice. This has included reframing the research questions to decenter colonial systems, learning about the generations of racialised diasporic artists who've built communities of nourishment, and embedding myself in these diaspora-led arts and culture communities.

This learning has deepened my understanding of the many forms knowledge creation and education occupy. The groundwork of knowledge in year one will enable me to begin a community-led research phase in the coming year." Kisha Bradley, PhD Researcher

### **Research and Learning Working Group (R&LWG)**

With the conclusion of the Action Research across the region next steps were discussed with the possibility of a region wide project supporting artists of the global majority. Some tough questions were asked about

whether we were the right organisation to do the work, and this evolved into, what do we really know as an organisation?

Rather than forging onwards, it was agreed to take time to reflect on the last seven years of YVAN's work and understand what it is we know as an organisation, what we are well placed to achieve and help inform the next phase of our work.

An independent researcher was recruited, Azadeh Fatahred, who had access to our reports, evaluations, and research.

How is our research and knowledge beneficial to artists? An independent review of YVAN from 2017-2025 by Azadeh Fatehrad

The Research and learning Working Group, along with the YVAN wider team will now analyse the report to help us learn from our own learning and put into practice some of the recommendations.

A go and see visit to strengthen the R&LWG was organised to visit the cultural offer in Sheffield.

“As part of the Research and Learning working group I attended meetings and supported the CEO in the recruitment process of the artist/researcher. The artist/researcher was commissioned to look at YVAN as an organisation and how to plan for the future.

As a researcher my PhD looks at Crafting Self-Care, Wellbeing and Resilience for Staff Teams. I spent this past year planning and running making workshops. ”

Ingrid Bale, Research working group

### **Our Research questions:**

Q1. How do we most effectively gather and share knowledge that's embedded in the cultural networks and communities that we work with - or want to work with - to increase support for artistic practice?

Q2. Can artists' networks define their own development needs and act on them, and how is this best supported?

Q3. Addressing the Wellbeing, Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (WIDE) of artist practice in the region is vital and we must ask - Whose Knowledge (Q1) is it and Who speaks for Whom?

## **Artists and Art workers Survey**

Recognising the benefits of having comparable data across the UK, we decided to use the template developed by Visual Arts South West (VASW) with sector consultation and financial investment. It seemed sensible to use their survey so the responses could be compared.

Visual Arts South West (VASW) were incredibly generous sharing their survey questions and methodology.

We added a couple of questions that are bespoke to our region's interest around the benefit of networks.

This work was complemented by an opportunity through the Sheffield University Methods Institute, who would pay a second year student to have a full time summer placement. We successfully recruited Thomas Moore who was then able to analyse the Artist Survey response and deliver a report.

The survey report and findings we share on our website and social media have seen the highest engagement this year, with the Survey being in the top 3 pages most visited on our website. We also shared with many organisations and partners of ours, who went on to share with their networks to help increase awareness.

We hope to repeat the survey every three-five years, depending on the development of other data evidence systems, i.e. the National Cultural Data Observatory.

Find the report here: [Artists and Art Workers Survey Report](#)

**Some key findings from the report:**

- 60% of the respondents earn less than £5,000 from visual arts, 21.6% of these artists earn nothing at all.
- Only 4.4% of respondents make over £30,000 from visual arts, despite the average salary for the region being £36,900.
- 73.2% of artists said that they are a member of a network or group.
- 47.6% of funding applications are successful.
- More artists have seen their income decrease in the last two years, rather than increase.
- 20% of the respondents make all their income from the visual arts, showing how difficult it is to pursue the visual arts full time in the region.
- 28.7% of artists state explicitly that a lack of affordable studios is a barrier to working in the visual arts.
- Over half of artists feel a lack of finances and funding is a barrier, often citing a shortage of available funding in the local area.
- Over a quarter of artists described a lack of opportunities as a barrier to working in the visual arts.
- Over 25% of artists who were commissioned to make work last year felt their fee didn't reflect time they spent.

## **Sector Support**

Part of our role is to ensure there is equity of opportunity in the region, and we address that by working with projects and initiatives seeking partners or local information in the region. This can be a meeting or two or an exchange of online communications.

While this does not sound like a huge piece of work it is quietly going on all the time, and we respond to all enquiries in a timely manner.

We also attend and visit events across the region when feasible, to support, learn and network to support our advocacy work.

Some examples are:

- 'House of Weaving' by the dhaqan collective, introducing the organisers to potential partners to build a touring schedule and funding application.

- 'Saturday Club' spoke at a CVAN managers meeting and then reached out to all the regions to discuss support with partners and creatives.
- Attended the sector launch for the Bradford exhibition opening- Where it Began by Osman Yousefzada at Cartwright Hall.
- Contributed to the extensive consultation process for the Sheffield Cultural Strategy.
- Attend the 'Power of Collaborative Action' online from the National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange.
- Decommissioning of an icon of the North: Light on Neville Street, Leeds. 2009-2022
- We attended the Sheffield Hallam University Fine Arts Degree Show.

We continue to support and advocate for associates and partners from previous projects.

## **6. Programme**

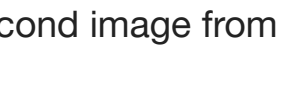
### **Gov Art Collection**

CVAN and the Government Art Collection have an agreement to work together over a five year period to help the collection learn about artists in the regions through selection panels, to help diversify their collection. This strand of work is called Art X-UK. Each year they collect from one county and one country. 2025-26 is Yorkshire's turn, so YVAN have helped pull together a panel from all areas of the region and the visual arts to short list proposed artists suitable for the collection.

December happened to see the 125th Anniversary of the collection, and our CEO was invited to a reception at Downing Street and to hear Rachel Reeves explain her brief for the art in No 11, all by women artists.

YVAN previously supported Nepalese artist Manish Harjan, who had a photographic work titled 'Shaman' collected. With thanks, he also donated a print of the work to YVAN who in turn bequeathed the piece to the Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust for public benefit. We were excited to attend the opening at the Graves, which was also the opening of our friend and associate Yuen Fong Li's exhibition, We Are Monument.

Elizabeth Lindley of SMGT and CVAN have further extended their support of Manish with his successful application for permanent leave to remain in the UK.

Yuen Fong Ling (We are Monument, Sheffield)  Insert second image from [Yuen's artist spotlight](#)

Artwork photo credit: Yuen Fong Ling/ Lumo Film

## **UNBOUND**

YVAN were invited to partner with BEAM (aka Public Arts) to submit a tender to support artist development for the Our Year 2024 in Wakefield. To complement a series of mural commissions, professional development was offered to 12 regionally based artists working in various media, to learn how to move their practice into the public realm. The commissioned mural artists were partnered up as mentors, offering real life experience, which ran alongside a series of information sessions, artist talks, and discussions covering topics from submitting proposals, health and safety, environmental considerations and how to work with multiple stakeholders.

YVAN plan to carry out a longitudinal study for the project 12 - 18 months after the end, to gather information from all participants regarding the impact on their professional development and research the benefits of the social capital the programme provided.

The project was a delight to work on, and all the artists involved are moving onto bigger and greater projects. There has been interest in the programme for other areas of the country as a testament to its need in our sector.

## **Uncover Cultural Skills**

“At YVAN, we are passionate about supporting creatives from diverse communities and helping them to promote their identity and culture through the arts, and connecting them with art networks.



The Uncover Cultural Skills initiative, delivered in Rotherham, highlights the cultural and creative talents of South Asian women. This project uncovered hidden talents and nurtured confidence in women who are artists in their own right. Whether they are self-taught or have learned creative skills from previous generations, such as textiles, embroidery, and weaving.

I was delighted that we received funding from Awards for All to pilot a project aimed at finding community creatives in the heart of the community from underrepresented groups in the arts.”

Zanib Rasool, Board director

The project bid was put together by Zanib Rasool and Sharon Gill, YVAN CEO. Sarah Yaccabe, the Administrator, took on the role of Project co-ordinator. We worked with community development worker Noor Salih who has experience with several organisations and communities in Rotherham specialising in Community work. Community groups were supported with venue hire and refreshment costs and support workers and bilingual support where needed.

4 community groups were matched with 4 artist facilitators who delivered 6 sessions for each group. Discussions around whether artist facilitators could also be global majority were had but we found the creative skills the groups wanted to practice didn't match the available global majority artists who applied.

Some feedback from the callout was that local people didn't apply because of the amount of information requested on the application and the fee being too high. Comparatively with experienced artists there was an expectation of additional preparation time in addition to the fee. This highlighted a gap in experience and confidence levels between artist facilitators locally and regionally.

Themes

Apna Haq - decided they would like to make a collaborative banner based on the learning they did during training from Apna Haq about freedom. The banner shows their thoughts about what freedom means to them and also features the word 'freedom' in different languages spoken by the group.

YAWR (You Asked, We Responded)- explored natural materials and embroidery, inspired by chapati plates that are used in Pakistan. Sessions ignited conversations of home and culture, with some very skilled sewers in the group.

BME Young People and Carers group - were really interested in trying a few different art forms and liked the idea of exhibiting their work. They explored mixed media artforms including painting and clay.

Steel City Community Group - were approached 5 - 6 months later than the other groups. Their workshops are due to begin in May/June 2025.

Midway through the programme the artists, community workers and programme team met online to discuss progress and ideas going forward reflecting on the groups preferences. From this we decided to focus on:

- A stand providing workshops for the community in the local market in May/June 2025, workshops run by community group participants who want to share their creative skills and develop more confidence showcasing their practice.
- An exhibition and preview event at Rotherham riverside gallery in June/July 2025.
- Hidden creatives peer support and confidence building workshops partnering with ROAR

The programme will continue until funding ends in October 2025. We plan to review how it could develop following on from this.

## **Beyond the Mainstream**

In response to the research on the impact of belonging to networks by Alice Chandler we set up the Online Artist Socials, which evolved into 'Beyond the Mainstream' a bi-monthly social facilitated by Michael

Barnes-Wynters. The shift in how the socials were run increased attendance and engagement from artists and arts workers. Attendees were invited to submit entries into a publication developed specifically from the socials. The 'Locations of Hope' publication included submissions from 17 artists.

[Locations of Hope publication.](#)

"The 'Locations of Hope' phrase was coined by Michael Mayhew (The Food Library) as a suggested theme at our August Beyond session following on from July 2024's far-right, anti-immigration protests and riots here in the UK.

During the meet there was warm interest in an artists printed publication collating the ideas and experience of the creatives in attendance as a response to the protests and so YVAN, agreed to co-produce this in collaboration with the interdisciplinary studio, uKUNST Creative Production.

The publication theme explores places and spaces for hope, inspiration and aspiration. It considers food (as something that we share) and that brings us together, self-sufficiency and perhaps DIY including grow your own.

The edition was released at our in person Beyond session on Wednesday 04 December at The Old Lifeboat Station in Bridlington, a new creative space with food at its heart, here in Yorkshire."

Michael Barnes-Wynters, Board director

The in person social attracted 40 attendees. Many came to see what was happening and get any news from the sector. Some came for the food by chef michael Mayhew. Some were looking for funding and resources for their creative practice and some local business owners wanted to connect with artists for artwork to decorate their venue.

Spoken presentations included· Crescent Arts, Sally from Disability Arts Network and Drakemusic and Humber Street Gallery; sharing news, commissions, artist residencies and current opportunities.

The theme of locations of hope continues across the online socials. With discussion around how to connect different places across Yorkshire and Humber and beyond. Bridging distances to collaborate and support 'forgotten' 'end of the line' locations.

"I felt the online meeting was a good session where we felt we could speak freely from our sofas! So interesting to hear others' experiences and ideas. Ed's group really seems to be highly organised and well on with addressing a wide range of cultural issues."

"I think each area (however you define them!) will have its own ideas on tackling their problems/issues related to promoting and supporting the arts in the widest sense of the term and we need to start identifying what are the specific priorities where we are based."

Comments from Beyond attendees

### **Beyond the Obvious: Action Research**

The Action Research workshop held in Bradford focused on Identity and creative practice: 10 signed up, 4 attended. Cancellations were a mix of illness, commission deadlines and caring responsibilities.

The small group attending gave very positive feedback, rating the event between 7 and 10 out of 10. Motivations for attending were networking and learning, enjoyable aspects were talking to other artists, friendliness and openness and the discussion on identity. Suggestions for improvement were to include more examples of working practice and how to bring more results to their own practice.

Discussions circulated around stereotyping, labelling and approaches to discussing identity. Discussions on our own identities included heritage, race, lived experience, occupations, studies, creative and cultural practice. A mapping exercise allowed the group to map their journey as an artist/arts worker, assessing barriers along the way. Support needed from the sector highlighted marketing, defining niche/usp as an artist, creating an artist statement, approaching galleries and finding curators to network with.

[Add Identity workshop images](#)

## **Artist Network Log**

The Artist network log attracted 4,500 views in April 2024, which steadily increased to 10,000 by the end of the year.

Updates and new additions were made over the year. An Arts organisations specific Log was created to allow YVAN to easily connect with NPOs (National Portfolio Organisations) in the region.

A short questionnaire designed by student placement Tom was sent round to networks on the log to find out how it benefits them and why they use it. We also used results from the Artists and arts workers survey to get any insights on how the artist network log might benefit artists and arts workers.

Respondents reported using it to explore art spaces within Yorkshire. When asked what changes respondents would make about the log, it was mentioned that the log would benefit from a clearer explanation of the purpose of the log, for both the user and the networks featured and ensuring information on the log is accurate and kept up to date.

“From the 1st of August 2023 to the 25th of July 2024, the artist network log was the second most viewed page on the YVAN website with 917 views (16.1%), only behind the homepage on 1911 views (33.5%). These numbers clearly show that people are engaging with the network log, and

this sentiment is reflected in the artist and artworker survey conducted this year. 73.2% of respondents said that they are a member of a network or group: 15.4% in person, 27.6% online, and 30.1% both online and in person. Access to opportunities is a big factor in why Artists in the region are joining networks, with 66.1% of network members stating it was a reason why they joined a network.

Artists in the region clearly value networks and the benefits they bring, and are actively engaging with them. This shows that there is a clear demand for a place where people can go to explore and connect with opportunities in their local area.” Thomas Moore, Student placement

The next steps are to look at how tech, software and potential collaborators could improve the usefulness of the log and what costs this could add to the budget.

A studio holders section is to be added as it has become a topical issue from recent reports from CVAN. CVAN requested a Studio spaces analysis of the region in March; we noted approximately 66 spaces that offer studios.

## **Bradford 25 networking**

YVAN joined the Bradford Visual Arts Social in January, set up and managed by Bradford Producing Hub to support inclusions into the Year of Culture.

'It was really well attended- at least 30 people from across the Bradford district. Lots of people wanted to talk, it was a really buzzing great community. Lots of paid opportunities on offer for Bradford artists.' Sharon Gill, CEO

As an outcome YVAN have agreed to financially and with some capacity support the visual arts content for the 2025 activities and will be working with South Square on the visual arts festival learning and networking during the autumn.

[Bradford Producing hub images](#)

“I joined YVAN to be involved in a network and improve my confidence to apply for opportunities. This resulted in me applying for the ‘Nowthen’ programme.” Hafifa Ahmed - Artist/Researcher

## **EDIA - AWP - Art Working Parents Alliance May 2024**

The last EDIA meeting was held in May, consistently low numbers meant the sessions couldn't continue. During the AWP session the conversation was led around challenges for art working parents in:

- Jobshares /hybrid working
- Attending private views - how to change the timing to make them accessible
- parental leave
- best practice guidelines – legislation
- Changing attitudes and stigma around the feeling of having to hide the ‘parent’ label.

“Confidence building happens through conversations, suggestion to connect informally, socially for future meeting” comment from attendee

Image of Jo Harrison (AWP) from [artist network spotlight](#)

## **7. Finance**

Finances are in a healthy position. An investment programme was agreed at the Board Away day to support YVAN to achieve our objectives for equity of access, promoting projects, raising awareness of Climate Justice and building on previous investment and partnerships.

### **Income**

£37,354

### **Expenditure**

Accountancy and audit £1,649

Core Team £13,579

Communications £1,404

Bank charges £117  
Travel and subsistence £868  
Administration and office expenses £3,303

Net income and expenditure  
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2024 £13,167  
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2025 £13,167

## **8. Organisational and future development**

YVAN is an independent company limited by guarantee, incorporated in 2016 with not-for-profit Memorandum and Articles.

YVAN connects at a sub-regional, regional, pan-Northern and national level through CVAN. This structure facilitates YVAN in its role to consult, gather data and produce impactful reports to amplify the voice of the visual arts sector and affect policy development at governmental levels.

YVAN Directors bring specialist arts and cultural experience with artform knowledge and offer access to arts and curatorial networks at local and national levels.

As well as maintaining good governance through quarterly Board meetings, AWAY Day planning sessions, update and review of our Policy Suite we are also committed to staff development. Each year we conduct staff reviews and help to identify any training needs or areas of development that would be of benefit. This impacts on our budget setting and we support our staff's own personal professional interests where we can.

The CEO completed their Carbon Literacy Training.  
Admin completed training on a 2 day course Project management for the arts with Artsworld professional, a 2hr session with UNLIMITED on Audiences and Accessibility and a free Evaluation course online from Centre for Cultural Value.

Marketing has developed their accessible marketing knowledge through UNLIMITED and Artsadmin online guides and training.



As a funded organisation we have to regularly report back regarding our achievements against agreed outputs.

## **Anti Racist Framework update**

Something we are very keen to maintain is our peer review against an Anti Racist framework. We have been using the Western States approach, however, this year we will be assessing whether there is a more applicable framework to use, that accommodates the scale of our organisation and the sector we work in. It is also really important to have an independent look at our self reflections in this area so we can be held to account.

Suggestions for new formats to use for future reviews are: [CVAN Fair and Equitable Toolkits](#) and [ACE Reflecting on Inclusivity in your organisation](#)

The current version of the [Anti-racist summary](#) can be viewed here. It is evaluated inline with the definitions ([Four Types of Organisation](#)) set out in the anti-racist organisation framework. Questions provided [here](#) are used as prompts to aid decision making. This framework is used to create a benchmarking system in order to define our KPIs, and to evaluate the progress of the organisation's journey and our commitment to becoming anti-racist.

## **EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility)**

“As part of [UNLIMITED](#)’s training offer for arts organisations and freelancers, I attended a 2 hr in person session on Audiences. Training was around ways to include more disabled people in organisation programs. The main discussion highlighted sensitivity around approaching interest groups and how disability intersects across interest groups.

Reflections on changes our organisation could make included:

- having a rolling ‘Welcome’ video at events to re-inforce the message all are welcome
- keeping a record of groups contacted and noting successes and failures

- Finding more guidance on what a reasonable access budget amount is
- Specifically targeting audiences with adapted marketing flyers/social posts
- Audio described videos

The [Accessibility statement](#) on the website was updated in October along with the [online](#) and [in person](#) events guide. I converted the Annual report into a Large print word doc as an accessible option and will do the same for reports going forward. This means they can be accessed by screen readers, used by blind and visually impaired readers.”

Sarah Yaccabe, Administrator

We contacted previous attendees of EDIA meetings to consider “what next?” in a Think Tank meeting. By sharing insights, experiences, and resources, we aim to collectively contribute to a more fair and equitable arts landscape. These conversations are an important part of shaping the future of the arts community. A small focus group was formed, including; Disability Arts Network; DISrupt; and an artist researcher; they directed the discussion, making suggestions about what YVAN could do to make changes in our EDI practices, such as;

- Encourage better access costs across the region - Create a standard statement for commissions, projects and programmes.
- Be explicit in what access services we can provide - Add it to our website - E.g Lifting art works, transport costs included. Create a set of clear standards.
- Assess our Knowledge gaps

We made a start from their suggestions by: adding BSL links for signposting to the accessibility resources. We are also looking at updating this section of our website and continuing to make additions to our resources and improve our knowledge.

We are trialling collecting audio recordings from our current project 'Uncover Cultural skills' working with community groups in Rotherham.

These will be available on a dedicated project page on our website nearer the end of the project end Summer/Autumn this year.

### EDI Internal survey

**YVAN Team members  
completed EDI form**



Completed Not completed

**Ethnicity**



White Global majority

**Gender**



Female Male

**Sexuality**



Heterosexual LGBTQ+



The EDI survey was sent to the 17 people that make up YVAN's core team including the board and working group members. 11 completed the form. The age range was varied between 16 and 64. Ethnicity showed 45% White, 55% Global Majority. 20% identified as Disabled or with a long term health condition. 91% Female, 9% Male. 72% Heterosexual 27.3% LGBTQ+ or prefer not to say. Socio economic background varied across occupations, 27% were senior managers or administrators, variation across modern professional, technical and craft, semi routine, routine middle/junior, traditional professional, No responses to short or long term unemployed or retired. In current occupation 36% are senior managers or administrators and 36% modern professionals.

## Evaluation plan

An [Evaluation framework](#) was created on Miro after discussions around our Evaluation practices took place. The free course [Evaluation for Arts, Culture and Heritage: Principles and Practice](#) by Centre for Cultural values also directed our approach to evaluation.

The Project team made actions to:

- Develop an evaluation house style
- Add an internal data section on our events attendance data spreadsheet from staff reviews and board working group meetings

- Audio program or training needed to create accessible audio alternative to reports
- After care at end of programs – mentoring time offered and follow ups

## **Policy updates**

Our policies are reviewed on a rotating basis by the project team and then approved by the board every quarter. This year we updated our [Anti-racism statement](#). Updated the Lone working policy to include risks of working from home including stress and mental health.

Added a diagram of an example as an alternative to all text on the [Bullying and harassment policy](#). Our Data and privacy policy was updated at a project team meeting in April. We strive to update our knowledge on best practice using ICO's guides and NCSC reading. The EDI policy includes updates to be reviewed.

## **Team Paid hours: 1,236hrs**

27 a week = 3.5 days 0.7FTE

3 staff. 2 on PAYE.

1,236 core hours a year of work time in total.

## **Added Value: 600hrs**

Tom Moore full time 4 weeks minimum wage. (148hrs)

Mel- stipend £16k? + tuition (100hrs)

Alice (100hrs)

Kisha (Oct) (50hrs)

## **Volunteer hours: 200hrs**

Board directors (72hrs)

Research and learning Working Group: (100hrs)

## **Carbon Footprint**

We are keen to measure our environmental impact as an organisation. Due to all employees, freelancers, directors and working group members

working from home, with no physical office and the in person meetings and events taking place in various locations, measuring our carbon impact is complex. We have used Julie's bicycle as a template to highlight the areas we are able to measure and made an approximation using their tool.

The creative climate tool at a glance shows a 1 tonne CO2e usage with 33% from project materials and waste 17% Energy and 50% Audience travel.

### [Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools](#)

Specific areas where we have tried to improve our carbon footprint are by:

- Sourcing 60% of our printing from a sustainable printer using recycled paper
- Sourcing an Eco banner made with recycled and recyclable materials, the frame is re-usable when we need to print a new banner
- Buying vegetarian refreshments for the majority of meetings and events
- Around 40% travel by public transport 10% cycling 40% by car
- Members of the project team completed the WWF Carbon Calculator for raised awareness of individual carbon footprints
- Digital storage is reviewed to reduce unnecessary storage
- CEO and Admin hold Carbon Literacy training
- £1K Financial support pledged to ecology and art festival\_Artbomb

Areas we could improve are by:

- Printing our publications with a sustainable printer
- Encouraging car shares for events and more travel by public transport
- Using recyclable or compostable containers for all events

### **Looking forward:**

- Locations of Hope area based project and publication
- ArtBomb in Doncaster,
- Situation Leeds,
- Bradford 2025

- Yorkshire Sculpture International partner
- New data collection framework
- National studio provision work with CVAN
- Government Art Collection future development in the regions
- Communications and dissemination of research
- Face to face sector event
- Publications
- Revised research strategy
- AI- feed the machine- artistic response
- Accessibility to our website and resources

## **YVAN**

**Registered Company number: 10387805**

## **Links**

[Artbomb](#)

[Artists Union England](#)

[Arts Council England](#)

[Artworks South Yorkshire](#)

[Axisweb](#)

[BEAM](#)

[Bradford Producing Hub](#)

[Centre for Cultural Policy](#)

[Contemporary Visual Arts Network & Regions](#)

[Corridor8](#)

[Disability Arts Network](#)

[East Street Arts](#)

[Failspace](#)

[Flux Rotherham](#)

[Government Art Collective](#)

[Hatch - WOVEN](#)

[HMRC](#)

[Impressions Gallery](#)

[Manish Harijan](#)

[Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief Scheme](#)

[National Lottery Community Fund](#)

[Northern Bridge Consortium](#)

[Our Big Picture](#)

[RMBC](#)

[Sheffield Galleries and Museums](#)

[Trades Union Congress](#)

[UNLIMITED](#)

[White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities](#)

[Working With Lara Monro](#)

[Yorkshire & Humber Visual Arts Network](#)

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@YVANetwork

## **Thanks**

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We acknowledge the volunteer hours the board and research working group commit to the organisation, their support is a vital part of what we do and is highly valued. Special thanks for their enthusiasm and passion to support the sector.



Logos: ACE, Northern Bridge Consortium, White Rose (WRoCAH), CVAN, BEAM, Community Fund



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