Imaginate

Annual report

April 2025 – March 2026

Jassy Earl

Participant at the Children's Summit

Highlights

302

artists were supported through the Creative Development programme

Brian Hartley

311

delegates from 30 countries attended the 2025 Festival

Julie Howden

11,570

tickets issued for the 2025 Festival and Festival on Tour

Brian Hartley

7,460

children and their families attended the Festival Family Day

98.1%

of families rated their Festival experience as either excellent or good

Brian Hartley

Matthias Kramer

57

artists commissioned to produce new work

108

children commissioned and co-created three new performances as part of Creative Encounters

695

children took part in a creative learning project

Brian Hartley

Julie Howden

5,429

pupils all over Scotland enjoyed a TiSS performance in their school

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Objectives and activities

Who we are

Imaginate is the national organisation in Scotland, which develops, celebrates and presents theatre and dance for children and young people.

Why we exist

Imaginate's purpose is to enrich the lives of children and young people in Scotland through theatre and dance.

We want more children in Scotland, from a wider range of backgrounds, to experience work that is absorbing, innovative and inspiring to them, as we know that experiencing high-quality theatre and dance develops children's confidence and self-expression, broadens horizons, and can raise aspirations. We want to give all children the opportunity to develop their creativity, emotional intelligence and reach their true potential.

What we are trying to do

Our mission is to connect children, artists and teachers in the creation and presentation of exceptional theatre and dance that resonates, reflects and extends their world, and to ensure that more children from all backgrounds in Scotland can access and enjoy more high-quality theatre and dance, more often. To nurture, support and encourage artistic excellence by offering a range of opportunities to Scottish based artists, producers and freelancers.

How we do it

Our work falls into three interwoven strands.

The Edinburgh International Children's Festival

An annual celebration of exceptional Scottish and international theatre and dance for young audiences which gives children the opportunity to watch work that is high-quality, relevant, reflects their identities and stories as well as inspires and expands their world. The Festival is attended by 18,000 children, their teachers and families, as well as artists and professionals from all over the world.

Schools and Communities engagement work

A year-round programme working with schools and communities to inspire children and teachers through live performance and artist-led projects, including a long-term commitment to collaborating with children in North Edinburgh.

The schools programme also includes Theatre in Schools Scotland (TiSS), a national touring programme of high-quality performances specially designed for school settings, in partnership with National Theatre of Scotland.

Artists Development and sector support

A year-round programme to support the creative development of artists and freelancers involved in the theatre and dance for young audiences' sector, including (but not limited to) residencies, workshops, mentoring, professional development programmes and international projects.

Grown Ups

Children's Summit

Flocked

Jassy Earl

Participant at the Children's Summit

Our values and commitments

Imaginate is a value-led organisation, and this is integral to all its work, from fundraising to programme delivery. The values that we share as a team are kindness, equity, inclusion, integrity and courage, and we endeavour to ensure these are at the foundation of all our work. Imaginate strives to be an organisation that is open and welcoming and where different views can flourish. Our mission is one of equalities, diversity and inclusion and at the heart of everything we do is the passionate belief that children are a minority population and their rights need to be protected.

Children's Rights Approach

Our mission is one of equalities, diversity and inclusion. At the heart of everything we do is the passionate belief that children are a minority population and their rights need to be protected.

Since 2021, Imaginate has been developing a children's rights-based approach that places children and young people at the centre of the planning, delivery and evaluation of our work. This means consistently upholding their rights, responding to their views and creating opportunities for them to feedback throughout projects. The approach is guided by the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, helping to ensure that children's best interests are respected and that they are involved in decisions that affect them. We use the Lundy Model when working with and consulting children, and continue to learn from the children we work with as well as from research and best practice. We have also been working to embed the five principles of the children's human rights approach set out by the Scottish Government, and continue to strengthen this practice across all areas of Imaginate's work.

Anti-Racism Commitments

Imaginate is committed to being an anti-racist organisation, as we recognise that this is essential to delivering work that nurtures and supports young audiences and those who work with them.

Building on the learning and initiatives from the last few years, we have continued to work with anti-racism consultant Rekha Dosaj of EDJI Arts, to advise us on an ongoing basis, ensuring anti-racism is embedded into the whole organisation. We now provide a refresher course to all staff every other year, as well as a basic anti-racism training programme to all volunteers and FOH staff before each Festival.

We have allocated 10% of our management and admin budget to anti-racism costs and are committed to increase the number of Global Majority professionals working for our organisation, including employees, freelancers and board members. We hosted a 6 month placement through the Mo Siewcharran Fund which supports internships for young talent from ethnicities that are under-represented in the arts.

We worked with Shakti Women's Aid, an organisation for black minority ethnic women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse, to bring a groups of young people and their mothers to the Festival.

As part of the Creative Development programme, we make sure selection and recruitment panels regularly include people from the global majority and ensure global majority artists are well represented across our artists development and schools' projects.

Our flagship school programme is delivered in partnership with two North Edinburgh schools (Forthview and Granton PS) who both have a very large percentage of global majority pupils.

Socio Economic Access

At the core of Imaginate's mission is ensuring equal access to our programmes, which guides both our planning and delivery. We know that children living in areas of high deprivation often face lower educational outcomes and poorer emotional wellbeing. We have therefore made it a priority to partner with schools in these areas, with a particular focus on long-term engagement in North Edinburgh.

Children living in this part of the city are negatively impacted by poverty, with most residing in Scotland's 20% most deprived postcodes (SIMD 1–3). As a result, they have limited opportunities to access or engage with the arts outside of school.

We are now in year 7 of developing our long-term relationship with Forthview Primary, most recently through Creative Encounters, and have widened our reach by working with Spartans Community Foundation as well as helped set-up the North Edinburgh Youth Arts Collective for children aged 11–13 yrs with North Edinburgh Arts. Our first ever Children's Summit was designed and hosted by children from North Edinburgh.

Our initiatives are helping positively impact participating pupils' confidence and wellbeing as well as developing their self-efficacy (belief in their own ability to succeed) which research shows is essential for personal growth and future educational outcomes.

"You can actually talk freely, you can state your opinions, and it feels better when you're here than other places. I can express my emotions better here than anywhere else and it feels like I'm free"

Forthview Primary pupil

We also offer bus subsidies for all state schools to attend the Festival, and have a long term partnership with community organisations including Lyra in Craigmillar and Pilton Youth and Children's Project to enable children and their families to attend shows and the Family Day at the Museum.

Through our Go & See Fund, we support artists to attend shows relevant to their practice, and have also offered financial support throughout our Creative Development programme to cover travel, childcare or other costs to remove any economic barriers to taking part in our programme. We always ensure that artists are paid for preparation time and evaluation time within their contracts, and that pay rates are updated annually.

The Festival's delegate programme offers 50% discount of delegate registration for freelance artists or practitioners, and there is a comprehensive digital programme for those who cannot afford the cost of travelling and staying in Edinburgh.

Accessibility

Imaginate has a strong commitment to accessibility and equality. As an organisation, we believe in the Social Model of Disability which recognises that people are disabled by the barriers present in society, rather than by their impairment or difference.

We have continued our long-term commitment to programming work created specifically for autistic children or those with complex needs, as part of the Children's Festival, and presented Oily Cart's *When the World Turns* in May 2025. Every effort was also made to facilitate visits by children with special needs, from advice given at the time of booking and free spaces for wheelchair companions to support on arrival at the Festival.

We offered relaxed performances at the Festival, which were supported by Accessibility consultant Zoe Halliday, and produced a BSL video guide to help D/deaf audiences identify the Festival's BSL interpreted performances. Some of the festival performances were also captioned.

For the third year running, an ASN work (*Buff and Sheen*) toured for 2 weeks as part of Theatre in Schools Scotland. We also toured disabled-led work *A Home for Hamish* by Just Us.

We are part of the *Shifting the Stage* Nordic collaboration which provides artist development opportunities for disabled, D/deaf and/or neurodivergent artists, to support the development of new disabled-led production ideas for children, and hosted the first artists Lab in Glasgow.

All Imaginate staff took part in a one-day anti-ableism training course with Rekha Dosaj, who also ran it for the *Shifting the Stage* partners at the start of the project.

We also commissioned disabled artist Marc Brew to develop a new dance piece for children for the 2026 Children's Festival.

Imaginate partnered with Unlimited to offer the Unlimited UK Partner award celebrating the creative spirit that drives the disability arts scene, to artist Ellen Renton.

We offered two Disabled Production and Technical Traineeships, specifically designed to support individuals experiencing barriers to entering a career in theatre due to a disability or long-term health condition, and secured FST funding to host a disabled artist as Creative Engagement Associate.

When the World Turns

LGBTQI+ rights

Imaginate is committed to being an LGBTQIA+ inclusive organisation. We also want to make sure that everyone we work with feels safe, respected and able to be their authentic selves.

We have achieved the Silver LGBT Charter with LGBT Youth Scotland and continue to work and be shaped by its principles.

We consistently employ, platform and support LGBTQIA+ people, including in our artist development programme and at the Children's Festival. As a LGBTQIA+ ally, we clearly let our stakeholders know where we stand in terms of trans rights and actively share supportive posts on social media.

Achievements and impact

Inspiring children, families and teachers through high-quality performances

Edinburgh International Children's Festival 2025

24 May – 1 June 2025

The Edinburgh International Children's Festival showcases exceptional theatre and dance from around the world, with performances that are deeply engaging, innovative and inspiring.

The 2025 Festival was a great success and a joyous experience for many children experiencing live theatre and dance for the first time. A total of 19,030 children, their teachers and families as well as delegates from around the world took part in the 9-day programme of 13 shows from 7 countries featuring dance, music, puppetry and theatre. The free delegate-only programme event included panel discussions and networking as well as a keynote by Lyn Gardner, work in progress presentations of *The Runaway Pea* by Bear Hugs and *Black Joy* by Dorine Mugisha, and rehearsed reading of *The Creeping Snake* by Ross MacKay.

School sales came from 41 schools from 9 local authorities and had increased since 2024, in part due to the larger availability of shows for younger age groups (which are always more popular), as well as consistent bookings from some loyal schools bringing most of their pupils to the Festival.

It is a shame that many schools couldn't take part due to lack of funding, increased children's needs (esp. ADHD and ASD), and not enough staffing to support outings, as those who did stated they'd had an excellent experience (83.3%).

"The opportunity for the children to attend a live performance is a vital experience for their personal development. My class absolutely loved the show and were engaged throughout. I am delighted that we were able to give them this experience as it was different to anything else they have ever attended."

Teacher

Game Within a Game

The Show for Young Men

Tongue Twister

The Unlikely Friendship of Feather Boy and Tentacle Girl

Delegate numbers increased significantly to 311 in-person and 56 online delegates from 30 countries. This confirmed a new pattern of delegates attending every two years, and not annually, because of the increased cost of accommodation. The fact that this was outgoing Festival Director Noel Jordan's last festival may also have played a part in the increase in numbers. High profile venues such as Sydney Opera House and Adelaide Festival in Australia, ASK in Shanghai and Southbank Centre in London were all represented.

A digital programme was available for those who couldn't attend the festival in person (88% of digital delegates citing the cost of travel and accommodation), which included recordings of all delegate events, filmed versions of Imaginate's commissions as well as 7 other Festival productions.

Commissions

The Festival featured two new Scottish commissions funded by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund in partnership with Aberdeen Performing Arts, which toured Scotland to reach children beyond the central belt. However, once again, booking the tours was very challenging, with many venues reluctant to commit ahead of Creative Scotland's regular funding decision.

Tongue Twister by Greg Sinclair toured to four venues before and after the Festival. *The Unlikely Friendship of Feather Boy and Tentacle Girl* was booked to tour to two venues but the show was cancelled a week before the Festival due to performer injury. The Glasgow performances were rescheduled to August following the show's successful run at the Fringe.

Family Day

The Festival opened with a Family Day at the National Museum and was attended by 7,460 people, with a majority (79.2%) coming with children aged 0–7 yrs. The event featured three commissions in partnership with Merchant City Festival, OneRen and Aberdeen Performing Arts, as well as existing works showcasing the talent of Scotland-based artists.

The vast majority of families (92%) had a great experience, enjoying free site-specific pop-up performances throughout the day.

"Wonderful to have so many free performances for families to explore together. The kids didn't want to leave! We stayed till the bitter end."

Parent

Theatre in Schools Scotland (TiSS)

Theatre in Schools Scotland, our national touring programme delivered in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland, presented a programme into schools across Scotland.

TiSS made 56 visits to 48 schools, with 94 performances reaching 5,429 children across 17 local authorities, including Shetland with a first visit to Mid Yell Junior High School, and the Orkney mainland and islands. Of the 48 schools, 17 had never had TiSS visit before, including 2 ASN schools.

TISS partnered with North Lanarkshire, Orkney, and Shetland councils, and with Old School Thornhill, Clifftop Projects, Spotlight Shotts, and The Touring Network.

A Home for Hamish toured for 6 weeks to Nursery–P4 classes; *Lightning Ridge* toured for 6 weeks to P5-S1 classes; and *Buff and Sheen* toured for 2 weeks to ASN pupils.

98% of teachers surveyed after the project agreed that TiSS had provided their pupils with a high-quality arts experience and 100% would recommend it to other schools. 97% agreed that the performances generated classroom discussion while 95% that they were useful for teaching in multiple areas of the curriculum. 100% agreed that experiencing live performance can improve mental health of children, while 97% agreed that experiencing live performance can improve academic attainment.

Watch Buff & Sheen's visit at St Crispin's special school in October 2025.

"It was highly sensory and inclusive, which meant it met the varied needs of our classes and allowed all learners to access the story and participate. The children were especially inspired by the use of sign language, which led us to introduce a 'Sign of the Week' in class. As staff, it also encouraged us to think more intentionally about inclusive communication."

Teacher

"The subsidy you offer rural schools in invaluable...The quality of performances, the creative staging and the learning around the show enhanced our expressive arts curriculum beautifully. Access to good quality expressive arts is vital to our learners' experience of the world and particularly important for children who live in a very rural setting."

Teacher

Jassy Earl

Spartans Community Foundation Wee Connections member

Embedding theatre, dance and creativity into schools

Creative Encounters

2025 was the final year of this three-year project in partnership with North Edinburgh Arts, which enabled children and artists to explore what it means to put children's rights at the heart of the creative process and decision making.

From Oct 24 to June 2025 (Year Three of the project), we worked with three groups of children from North Edinburgh who took a lead role as decision makers and creative collaborators on the project – from commissioning artists to shaping the works presented at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival Family Day and North Edinburgh Community Festival. The project was entirely shaped by the children's views and interests.

Creative Encounters – a children's rights project

P5–P7 pupils from Forthview Primary commissioned *Wig Waltz* by Dan Brown and Minnie Crook. They took part in a series of workshops exploring character development, movement and narrative and learnt more about the time period which inspired the character design.

The Youth Arts Collective (YAC), a new creative group for 11–13 year-olds in partnership with North Edinburgh Arts, commissioned *ELECTION* by Bishop May Down. Through a series of workshops, the children explored political speeches by real-life politicians, made their own manifestos and performed the final production which offers a child's perspective on what is valuable in the world.

The performance was such a success that it was programmed as part of the opening of The Children are Now exhibition at the Talbot Rice Gallery in October 2025.

Spartans Community Foundation Wee Connections, a group for children with additional support needs and their families, commissioned poet Ellen Renton to create *FREEDOM: a living poem*. Together, they decided that the poem should focus on the feeling of "freedom", and they explored what that meant through poetry exercises, collaging activities, and foley/noise making workshops.

"When you're in creative Encounters you feel like you're allowed to speak your opinion and you get heard with your ideas. You feel like you can get more confident with your voice and speak up."

Forthview Primary pupil

Wig Waltz

ELECTION

FREEDOM: a living poem

Festival press launch

As our work with young people deepens, they have become more present at the Festival and throughout Imaginate's work. A group pf pupils hosted the Festival press launch, performing on stage and interviewing the Minister for Children and Young People. Some children recorded the main Front of House announcement. Others formed their own 'documenting team' and filmed their peers performing at the Family Day.

By the end of the project, 77% of children said they believed themselves to be a confident person, in comparison with 46% at the start of the project.

Documenting team

Children's Summit

The Creative Encounters project culminated with a Children's Summit held on World Children's Day (20 November) at North Edinburgh Arts.

The day was co-designed and co-hosted with children from North Edinburgh, to celebrate their hard work and everything the project had achieved in three years. The organising team welcomed children from other schools to the day with a programme of arts activities in different themed rooms, followed by round-table discussions about children's cultural activity in Scotland. The discussions were observed by "VIP adults" including the Children's Commissioner, Imaginate's new Festival Director and representatives from Scottish Government and Creative Scotland.

"We spoke to a very important person, Nicola, the Children commissioner. Her job is to listen to us and try to persuade the government to respect the rights of the children. This is so important because children's voices should be heard, and we should have a say in how we want our future to look."

Granton Primary pupil

Children's Summit

Creative Encounters Manifestation

In order to capture learning from the project, Imaginate collaborated with children from North Edinburgh to develop the Creative Encounters Manifestation – a mash-up of "manifesto" and "invitation".

The Manifestation is for artists and adults who are looking to collaborate with children. It includes a series of invitations from children for artists to consider before embarking on collaborative projects with young people. The Manifestation was designed by children and is available as a PDF document and an animated video.

The project was supported by Baillie Gifford and Young Start.

Watch the animated video presented by the children

Download the PDF

Jack Arts exhibition

We took part again in a joint-festivals project led by Jack Arts, the outdoor posters distributors, to celebrate the children involved in Creative Encounters. Artist Mark Kirkham (aka the Edinburgh Sketcher) attended Election at the Talbot Rice Gallery and then created a series of sketches, which were transformed into postcards which were displayed on outdoor sites in early 2026, alongside posters from other Edinburgh festivals.

Jack Arts exhibition

Imaginate's Teachers Club

Imaginate Teachers Club aims to encourage teachers to see more live performances, become more confident in discussing what they have seen and in turn, inspire pupils to do the same. Taking part in the project also fosters connections between learning professionals, allowing them to build community and share ideas for teaching expressive arts at school.

The club has grown to a network of over 40 teachers who regularly attend performances and social events at the Children's Festival and other Edinburgh venues year-round. They also take part in post-show discussions and meet theatre and dance professionals including artists, designers, programmers, critics and production staff.

Supporting artists, freelancers and the young audience sector

Launchpad and Accelerator

Launchpad offers vital support to early career artists interested in making performances for young audiences, through mentoring, paid research time, opportunities to see lots of work for young audiences, an international festival visit, a platform to share a scratch with industry peers and networking opportunities. There is also ongoing support and advice that continues well beyond the end of the funded period.

In 2025, Andrea Cabrera Luna joined Imaginate as a Launchpad artist to explore a new, playful, absurd, and physically demanding devised interdisciplinary performance idea for children. Using chairs as a central element, she experimented with transformation – chairs becoming people, obstacles, and objects, to create shifting configurations and new contexts.

Andrea attended the Edinburgh International Children's Festival in May and EXPORT/IMPORT in Brussels, and presented a 10 minute sharing of *The Chairs* to industry professionals at Imaginate's Scratch in October 2025.

Accelerator supports established artists in similar ways but offers more research and development funding alongside producing support to create new theatre and dance works for young audiences to be shared as works-in-progress at an Imaginate event. With support from Imaginate, several artists involved in Accelerator have now had their work produced and some have toured with Theatre in Schools Scotland or been presented at the Children's Festival.

In 2025–26, artist Robbie Synge (who is based in the Cairngorms), was selected to develop a project focusing on children's place in restoring nature. Working locally with young people and artistic collaborators, he worked on co-creating a performance blending real conservation work with playful, participatory experiences. The project drew on actual landscapes, habitats and species, alongside imagined encounters, and was shaped through sessions with local schools, with the ultimate goal of bringing young people closer to nature. The project culminated with a performance in June 2026.

Andrea Cabrera Luna

Accelerator

Brian Hartley

'The Chairs' by Andrea Cabrera Luna

Platforms

Imaginate offers a number of opportunities for artists to share work at different stages of development, from early performance ideas to more developed works in progress. These platforms are excellent opportunities to try out a new ideas with an audience of like-minded peers and receive constructive audience feedback.

In October 2025, we presented an evening of early-stage scratch performances for young audiences at Platform (Glasgow), which enabled artists to share short extracts of work to an audience of peers and gain some constructive feedback. The programme included *Squeak – the Cats Away!* by Kirsty McDuff and Andy Cannon, *Chairs* by Launchpad artist Andrea Cabrera Luna, *Flocked* by Jo Rush, *The Umbrella* by Julia Chan and Robyn Grey (which was subsequently commissioned for the Festival Family Day) and *Toast with Lots of Butter* by Florence Logan & Hope Kennedy.

Flocked by Jo Rush, Sarah Miele, and Fergus Dunnet

The Umbrella by Julia Chan and Robyn Gray

Toast with Lots of Butter by Florence Logan and Hope Kennedy

Squeak by Andy Cannon and Kirsty McDuff

Shifting the Stage

Shifting the Stage is a Nordic collaboration between four partners in Sweden (bibu), Norway (Showbox), Finland (Bravo!) and Scotland (Edinburgh International Children's Festival), who all produce an international theatre and dance festival for children. The project offers professional, international artist development opportunities and exchanges for disabled, D/deaf and/or neurodivergent artists, to support the development of new disabled-led production ideas for children. It began with an Artist Lab in Glasgow in January 2026 co-led by artists Ellen Renton and Luke Pell. Throughout the week, disabled artists from all four countries connected, shared their experience and explored performance ideas.

The project also includes networking opportunities, artistic residencies, presentation of disabled-led productions at partner festivals and festival visits, and will culminate with a symposium in Norway in November 2026.

This partnership will create a Nordic community of disabled artists interested in young audiences. It will also ensure that the young audiences sector is talking about disabled-led performances as well as about accessible productions for disabled audiences.

Shifting the Stage

Ellen Renton

Unlimited UK Partner Award

Imaginate partnered with disability arts organisation Unlimited to offer one of two awards in Scotland to poet, performer and theatre maker Ellen Renton.

Ellen worked with Imaginate to develop PALS, a musical theatre piece for young audiences, about a lifelong friendship between two young girls, one sighted and one visually impaired (VI), told through text, song, and movement. The team explored how to create a flexible space that de-centres vision and which would be created by the audience for each production. She also worked with blind and VI young people through a series of writing workshops, and made a recording of them talking about friendship to be played pre and post performance.

Professional workshops and international visits

The Creative Development programme also delivered a series of workshops, training sessions and international visits aimed at artists and practitioners based in Scotland. In August 2025, we ran a dance workshop and 5 members of staff volunteered their time as part of the *Welcome to the Fringe: Palestine* programme.

We took artists Andrea Cabrera Luna (Launchpad), Robbie Synge (Accelerator), Fiona Manson, Faye Guiffo and Minnie Crook to the EXPORT/IMPORT festival in Brussels in November 2025. The group watched performances and attended delegate events and had many opportunities to network with other international delegates.

Advocacy in the young audience sector

Advocating for children's rights to the arts is key to our mission to increase access for more children to enjoy high quality arts. Evidence is integral for this, and our CYAA research and two Arts and Humanities Research Council funded PhDs support this objective.

Children and Youth Arts Advocacy (CYAA) Research

CYYA and Creative Scotland commissioned Imaginate and Starcatchers to carry out international desk-based research and to lead direct consultation with babies and children. This research explored what an arts strategy, genuinely influenced and codesigned with children aged 0–12 years old could look like, and how adults can create the conditions for children's voices to shape it. Starcatchers focused on babies and children aged 0–5 yrs and Imaginate on children aged 5–12 yrs.

PhDs

Sian MacGregor is in the final phase of writing up her PhD on "Valuing Young Audiences" in partnership with Aberdeen University. Thérèse Kearns is also in the writing phase of her PhD on "How does putting children's rights at the heart of cultural policy and practice have an impact on an arts organisation in terms of structures, process, and working practices?" in partnership with Queen Margaret University and University of Aberdeen. Both are due to finish in March 2027.

A healthy young audience sector

In order to help people feel connected to the young audience sector, we organise regular networking and socials opportunities for artists to meet up and celebrate the amazing theatre and dance created, produced and presented for young audiences in Scotland. This includes a Meet the Programmers event to help artists discuss opportunities with programmers, venues, producers and organisations who offer artist development across Scotland.

Placements

We have also been working to facilitate entry into the young audience sector and have sought funding to support a number of artists as trainees or placements.

We recruited two Disabled Production and Technical Trainees to work on our Festival commission and delegate programme. The traineeships were specifically designed to support individuals who have experienced barriers to entering a career in theatre due to a disability or long-term health condition. The programme provided structured, practical training across a range of creative, technical and production disciplines, working closely with experienced professionals in a supportive environment.

Ink Asher Hemp joined Imaginate on a 6-month FST Bursary placement. They worked alongside a number of disabled artists at different stages of their career, learning about their creative practice and how access shaped their work. They also helped with CYAA consultation in schools and community settings.

Gaia Silvan, a self-described black-mixed race, neurodivergent, queer artist from Kintyre, worked as a Creative Facilitator Trainee, supporting our Creative Encounters project.

We supported Mugiko Yamamoto, a Japanese producer to do a placement as Assistant Producer from Jan–June 2026, working on the Festival delegate programme.

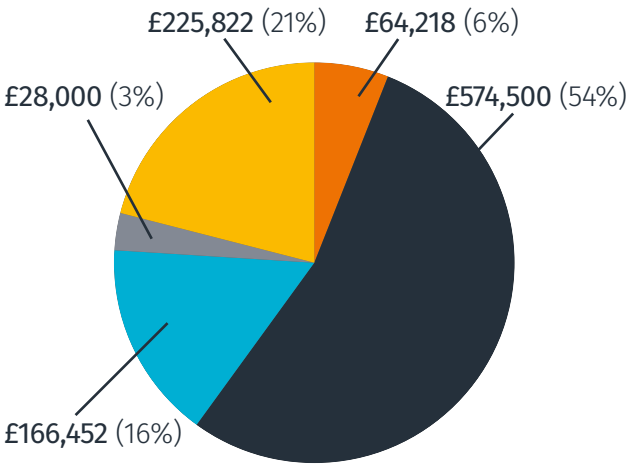
Over the period of this report, we also hosted a number of university placements, including two students from Queen Margaret University and two 6-month marketing trainees from Napier University.

Julie Howden

Pupils enjoying a TiSS performance

Financial review

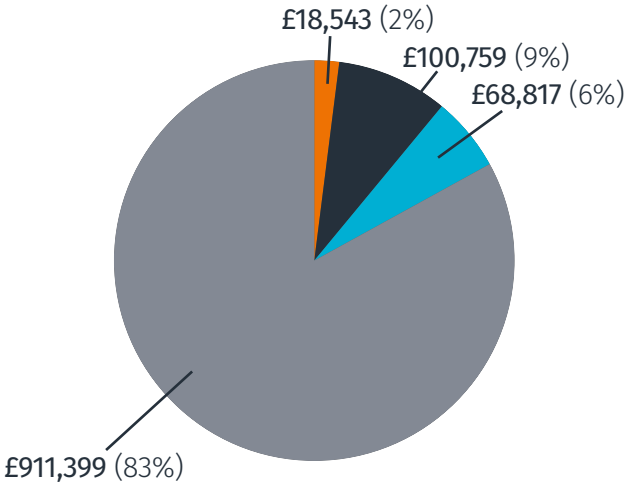
Income



Total income: £1,058,991

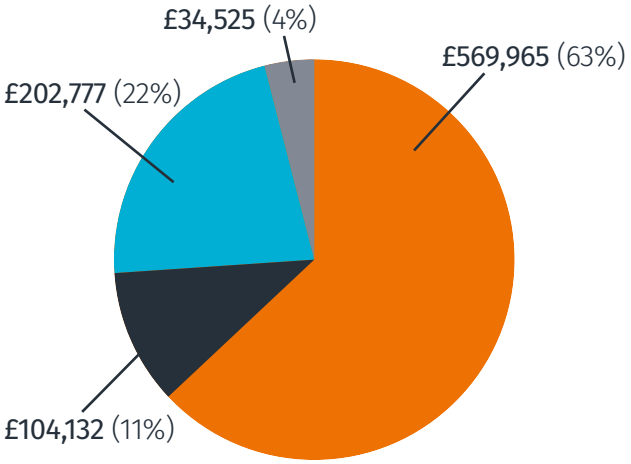
- Trusts and foundations
- Public funding – core
- Public funding – project
- Sponsorship
- Earned income

Expenditure



Total expenditure: £1,099,519

- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Support costs (overheads)
- Charitable activities *(breakdown below)*



Charitable activities

- Festival
- Creative development
- Schools
- Sector support

"I never cease to be impressed by the annual Edinburgh International Children's Festival. Boasting a programme of brilliantly diverse theatre and dance for children and young people, it is – to my mind – simply unsurpassed among Scotland's performing arts festivals."

Mark Brown, The Herald

Imaginate

30B Grindlay Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9AX

Tel: 0131 225 8050
Email: info@imaginate.org.uk

www.imaginate.org.uk

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