

Cambridge Curiosity & Imagination

Review of year, 2021-22



Forest of Imagination, Wandlebury Country Park, November 2021
© Gerry Weatherhead

Wonder and education are two of the essential survival skills. We cannot wish our way out of the ecological crisis, but we might be able to grow our way out of it — and surprisingly fast, too. Things are changing from the ground up: new generations emerging who are holding government to account, calling for us to be better ancestors.

CCI is part of this work of growth. Sometimes I think of what CCI does as a kind of 'practical dreaming': imagining new and fantastical ways of being in the world which root deep in minds and imaginations, and from there grow into reality. Nothing makes me despair as much as resignation: there is always good to be done somewhere, whether it is flourishing a Forest of Imagination on Christ's Piece, or re-mapping a spinney or copse in a scrap of edgeland so that it becomes a fairy-tale world of impossible extent and adventure.

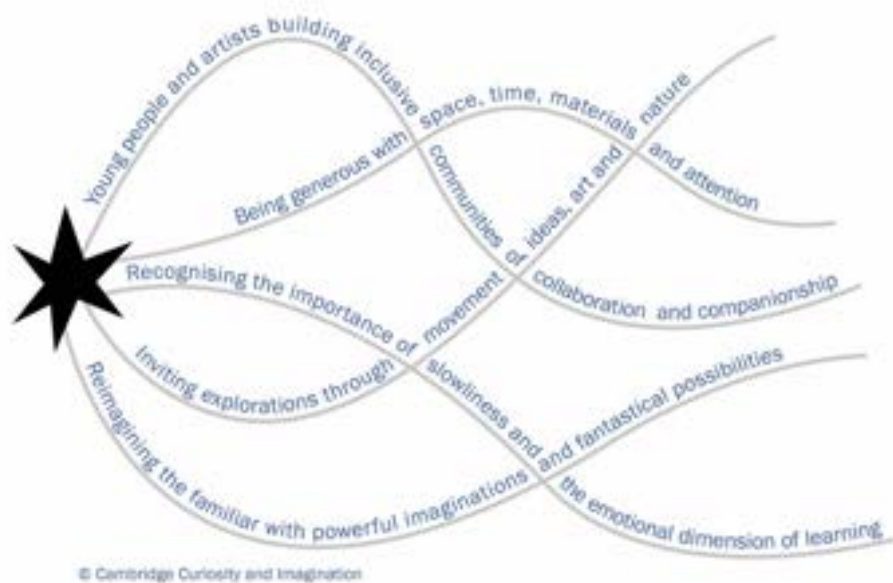
Truly, this is the work. Lives are changed by it. So please do support it in any ways you feel able — the problems we find ourselves in as a planet have been made by many hands working together, and they can only be undone by many hands working together too.

Robert Macfarlane, CCI Patron, November 2021

Registered Company Number: 6301716

Registered Charity Number: 1126253

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What makes a place? Artscapers commission from TOWN and U+I to consult with young people about a changing Cambridge

Snapshot of our year, 2021–22

Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (CCI) is an innovative, socially-inclusive arts and wellbeing charity whose collaborative practices actively engage children and adults of all ages in order to nourish their creativity and connections to themselves and their community. At the heart of our work is an understanding of the importance of creativity and its value as a critical life skill that enriches people, communities, and our society as a whole.

Creative relationships

CCI engaged creatively with a total of 1,437 participants. This included 809 children and 197 educators, which is an increase of nearly 200% from last year.



Working in local spaces

Alongside our online programmes, work took place in 24 different local spaces in this year including primary school playgrounds, nature reserves, woods, community spaces and Addenbrooke's Dialysis Unit.



Digital

Our dynamic websites were visited by 16,007 visitors during the year, an increase of 46% on last year.

Co-creation

CCI has co-created three new resources to support the amplifying of artscape practices.



Images from top left: artscaping in Shirley Community Primary School, children from Galfrid School visit their local chalk stream, Shirley Pocket Adventure Cards, Fantastical Forest in Cambridge

Creative Activism – A Call for Being Together Differently

*Step in/try out/open up
Adventure takes hold
Lightfulness...giggling
Together side-by-side
Playful magic sparks joy
Vulnerability to value-ability
(word fragments from 'A Call for Being Together Differently')*

We added a new artput to our collection of resources to support reflection and dialogue about creative practice – *A Call for Being Together Differently*. Designed and created by the same team who had worked on *A Call for Spaces for Liberated Learning* last year, this resource has already travelled far and wide through events and workshops, including as the opening provocation for the Power of Partnerships Conference, May 2022, which gathered practitioners from across the midlands and eastern regions.

What a great way to start the day today – thank you so much. It created a lovely atmosphere and I loved the start, imagining what it would be like if we were all together. Great feedback from the team here at ARU too. Steph Peachey, NNF



'A Call for Being Together Differently' has its roots in our work with PHACE (the local cultural education partnership for Peterborough) as part of Fullscope's Creative Care programme. Two pilot projects for practitioners from schools and educational settings focused on growing their confidence and skills to work creatively with the families they support. The many rich threads of learning from these projects - including reflections from participants, data from school, feedback from families, and observations from colleagues - were shared with researchers Gabby Arengé and Emily Dowdeswell as material from which to create this new CCI 'artput'. The process was beautifully supported by artist Susanne Jasilek, who helped realise their ideas in a sculptural form. Unlike reports or presentations, with their tendency to not quite convey the power of the work plus their propensity to gather dust, we wanted an output from this work that sparked new conversations and continued to open up these new ways of working for colleagues.

It was the perfect messaging and activity. Fiona Brice, Funding Officer, National Lottery

This is magic & important & really made me quite emotional. Rachel, teacher

Images: *A Call for Spaces for Liberated Learning* and *Being Together Differently* with a workshop response

Co-creation with young people - enabling their voices and ideas to influence change

Co-creation is a core value for CCI and was richly evidenced across many programmes this year, particularly in our work as part of the Fullscope consortium. Our shared vision is for a relevant, accessible and inclusive mental health system for all children and young people and we have been working with statutory and voluntary partners across the region to influence this since 2019. CCI leads on the Fullscope Creative Care programme, which this year invested in CCI's innovative Branching Out programme to train new community artscapers to build capacity in primary schools.

We commissioned new artistic resources to support this plan for amplifying artscapers in order that many more can experience and be nourished by this practice. These included Shirley Pocket Adventures, a series of cards to support families exploring local nature spaces, and the Companionship Compass and Guide to Artscaping, new training materials produced as part of the Branching Out programme.

For many children and young people, the current mental health system is over medicalised and overstretched. Fullscope is focusing on how we can prevent mental health issues as well as offer support much earlier. CCI's work is fundamental to this. With their wealth of knowledge, we can provide opportunities for all children to flourish, and design new programmes that bring this thinking to many more people across our county and beyond. Eva Acs, Director, Fullscope

CCI has also connected children's voices and ideas to the work of politicians, developers and planners in the City during the year, opening up conversations about how we can re-imagine the future in ways that enable everyone and everything to thrive.

Images from top: showing Brookgate Developers a local nature reserve, young artscapers discuss what makes a place with TOWN, Daniel Zeichner visits Shirley Community Primary School; Companionship Compass (p6)



Companionship Compass

for ArtScapers of all ages



Growing our Fantastical Forest

This is brilliant!!! It is by far the most impactful outcome of our efforts to show people the hidden fungi under their feet. Jen McGaley, researcher Crop Science Centre, Dec 2021

Our collection of magical forest hangings co-created with children and their communities continued to flourish this year. New work was seeded through our collaborations with our research partners and other commissions to work with communities and by November 2021 the collection numbered over 50 hangings, made with nearly 400 children and young people and those who work with them from across the county.



The forest has its origins in 2019. CCI was commissioned to cocreate a Forest of Imagination for a production of Hansel and Gretel by Cambridge Youth Opera with children from two local primary schools. Lockdowns meant the opera couldn't happen, but we were able to curate events to mark the signing of the Tree Charter by Cambridge City Council in November 2020. The impact of this work and its capacity to make visible in beautiful and memorable ways our wider work with communities led us to commit to making the Forest an annual occurrence and so – thanks to generous sponsorship from Software Acumen – in 2021 we hung the ever-growing collection back in Wandlebury Country Park and also in Cambridge City Centre and in the University of Cambridge Pitt Building as part of an event for corporate partners sponsored by our media partner Kiss Communications.

I think you should go outside and do nature because it's fun and you are free. Indianna

Art helps you do what you choose. It shows you what you feel. Felicity

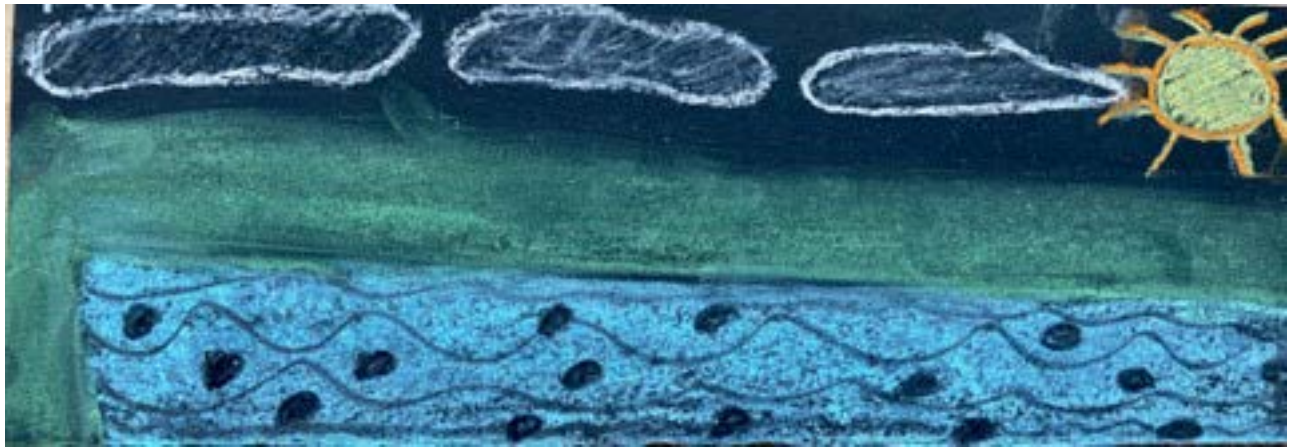
If you get outside you can concentrate. Millie-Nic

Working with nature makes everyone happy. Bea

Messages from 8/9 year olds to business people in City, Nov 2021



Tree Charter Day, Wandlebury, Nov 2021; Celebration of CCI and Fantastical Forests at University of Cambridge Pitt Building, Dec 2021, hosted by KISS



Work by 7 year old at Galfrid School
inspired by chalk streams. May 2022

Report from the Chair

The past reporting year (from August 2021 to July 2022) has been a successful year for CCI, throughout which the charity – together with its network of artists and partners - has followed its values and helped more people than ever to develop their creativity and imagination.

As with the previous two years, our income was again over £100k. This is the first time ever that the charity has sustained this level of annual income over three successive years. As part of our efforts to ensure the sustainability of the charity, we have successfully cultivated relationships with a broader range of donors and funders in this region. The charity now has a consistency of funding and breadth of funding base which it can be proud of. Crucially, 88p in every £1 raised by the charity is directly invested in our charitable activities.

The positive funding situation has meant that the charity has been able to do more work with artists to create magical moments for communities and touch more lives. CCI engaged creatively with over 40% more people than last year. In carefully selected opportunities, and in a thoughtful and considered way, the charity is experimenting with new ways of working and managing the tricky balancing act of maintaining the quality of quality of our interactions with people, whilst broadening the breadth of our work. CCI worked with 197 educators this year, an increase of nearly 200% from last year, which has the potential to positively impact even more children as we work alongside these important professionals.

Whenever I'm close to what CCI does, I come away inspired, and when I look back over the year, they provide many personal highlights. Here are a few of the moments that particularly stood out for me:

- Seeing the Fantastical Forest grow and grow – a beautiful and expanding collective artwork that prompts the imagination and fosters that connectedness with nature that is so important for our wellbeing. The Forest started as a one-off and – thanks to generous sponsorship from Software Acumen – we were able to expand it this year, stretching it across multiple months and settings. And now we're planning for it to continue to develop every year.
- Listening to the charity present some of its work at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art Craft and Design in Education, where they shared a child's poem and the sound of a ladybird crawling along a leaf, reminding us of children's extraordinary creativity and nature's power to amaze.

- Hearing that the charity, together with our partners, had been successful in their funding application to UKRI (the UK Research and Innovation Council) to carry out a capacity-building programme to support primary schools tackling health inequalities and seed local voluntary artsclapers in communities. Watching this 'branching out' project then develop from an idea to reality brought me joy and hope.
- Watching the video of three children talk so fluently about the value of artsclaping at another Westminster APPG - *Learning isn't sitting in the classroom learning your 12 x 12, learning is discovery, finding out new things.*
- Seeing an early version of the companionship compass (the final version is on page 6) , which was co-created with children and which beautifully encapsulates how to be with each other in the world
- The charity's amazing work on a project related to the North East Cambridge development, which involves artsclaping and imagining future spaces with students from a local primary school and secondary school, highlighted for me the benefit of listening to children in projects where their voices may not often be heard
- Reading the inspiring 'Call for Being Together Differently', which is the most creative and imaginative project evaluation that I've ever seen.

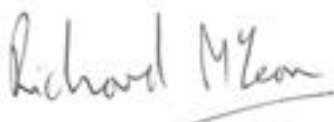
As we move into a new reporting year, we confidently begin our new year with a large number of projects already funded and planned. I'm looking forward to seeing the next version of the Fantastical Forest, I am excited to watch the Branching Out project develop, and I'm curious to see how the opportunity to share the charity's approach and materials more widely online develop.

Thanks to a generous benefactor, the charity received a significant sustainability grant during the year, which means that, for the first time, CCI now has a three-year plan, and we are working to sustain the organisation's work beyond that period. Even planning with CCI can be a creative and uplifting process – the series of meetings we've had to shape our three-year plan brought together a community of wonderful people who share a set of values.

I'd like to thank all the wonderful artists who work with CCI, our volunteers, and the other board members. I'd also like to thank Chris Doddington & Helen Taylor, who retired from being trustees, and I was very pleased to welcome to the board Emily Dowdeswell and Zoe Gilbertson, two new trustees who joined this year.

I'd also like to thank KISS Communications, one of our region's leading marketing and PR agencies, as their generous work on our websites makes it possible to sharing the charity's work online – and this year we've had more website visitors than ever before.

Finally, I want to recognise the tireless and terrific work of the fantastic team behind the scenes who make it all possible – and in particular Neil Parker, Jo Diver, and our wonderful director, Ruth Sapsed.



Richard McLean
Chair, CCI



Report from the Board of Trustees

Every one of its projects makes me see things strangely again,
tips a little more wonder back into the world.

Robert Macfarlane, CCI Patron

Background

Our work is driven by a vision of an inclusive, accessible and creative society.

CCI is an arts and well-being charity working to support cohesive and collaborative communities in Cambridgeshire and beyond through our locally-based creative arts experiences. We came together as a group of artists, educators, parents and researchers in 2002 with a shared passion for how the arts can transform lives and a belief in the power of democratic forms of community activism. Our programmes foster deep connections and a sense of togetherness for everyone involved.

We believe that curiosity and imagination matter.

We create spaces where ideas can flourish and solutions to our problems be found, spaces with creative and engaged citizens of all ages able to collaborate effectively together. We work through exchanges: with children, their friends and families; with schools and everyone who works in them; with communities and their connections; with artists, scientists, architects, musicians, experts and enthusiasts of every kind. We have worked with people of all ages in all sorts of spaces, including most recently woods, hospitals, libraries, playgrounds, new developments and recycling centres.

Children are at the heart of our work; their ideas and questions lead the way.

CCI is a founding member of the FullScope consortium, established in 2019 and coordinated by seven leading charities that support the mental wellbeing of children and/or young people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. FullScope champions, collaborates with, and is inspired by the voices of children and young people, taking their lead in order to deliver its aims. Supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, with development support from Arm Limited and Norfolk & Norwich Festival Bridge, Fullscope presents the first consortium of its kind in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and has been able to have significant influence in the system.

We seek to empower active citizens of all ages to be creative and share ideas.

CCI became a charity in 2007 and has established a significant track record for creating unique impactful programmes of activity, working in partnership with many of the major organisations including: University College London's Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education (UCL's CCCSE); University of Cambridge; Addenbrooke's Hospital; Cambridge City Council; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Council (CCC); Anglia Ruskin University (ARU); and many school communities across the county. Research links have also been established with Universities beyond the region, particularly Goldsmiths, Royal Holloway and Bath Spa Universities.

Key advocates for CCI's work are Michael Morpurgo and Robert Macfarlane (Patrons), and Rob Hopkins, Jackie Kay and Dame Fiona Reynolds – all passionate defenders of the rights of children, the arts and the outdoors.

Our Year August 2021 – July 2022

CCI's work is built around three key strands – connect, research and reflect, share, all underpinned by our environmental pledge. We work with partners to find innovative and impactful ways to:

- Connect people of all ages with their creative selves
- Research and reflect on our practice
- Share outcomes and resources widely in order to advocate for creative freedoms and opportunities for all

Our commitment is to a strong local focus for our work and this year we offered creative experiences in 24 different spaces across the city and county, including 14 schools and 3 conservation areas.

Place-making with communities:

- Fantastical Forests forged new links in 2021 with the Crop Science Centre and through our Chalk Dreams Public Art Project in 2022 with Abbey People including links with Galfrid School, the Dialysis Unit, Cambridgeshire Past Present and Future and Cambridge Canopy Project
- What makes a place? Consultation with young people in two areas of disadvantage in Cambridge, commissioned by Town and U+I developers for North East Cambridge coresite

School-based programmes:

- Shirley Pocket Adventures with Shirley School and Cambridgeshire County Council, focusing on access to Bramblefields Nature Reserve and building families confidence to access nature and use the 50 things to do before you're five app (a free resource sponsored by the County Council)
- North Cambridge Academy Artscapers with Cambridge Acorn Project and City Council, focusing on access to Highfields, a space dedicated for education near the school, for small groups of vulnerable children.



Images: Children aged 4 – 8 years old work together at Shirley Primary School; Abbey People Community Coffee morning create work inspired by Chalk Streams

Working in partnership with CCI has significantly enhanced how we can support the schools we work with. The simple truth is that the children we are working with are very vulnerable – many don't have a place they can go in their community where they feel safe. Many spend little or no time outside. Many speak regularly about death and sadness. Yet the children who have joined the projects often say that these are their favourite two hours of the week, that they notice how happy they feel outside. This work is therapeutic, but not therapy.

Matt Edge, CEO, Cambridge Acorn Project



- Thongsley Fields Primary School, Huntingdon - offering Artscapers to small groups of vulnerable children with Cambridge Acorn Project

Educators capacity building/cpd

- Creative Care, our Fullscope programme, focused on the scaling of opportunities through Branching Out (with Fullscope and CAP and IOE and Mayfield Artscapers) and Creative Parenting links with PHACE. Branching Out works with primary schools, training volunteers and teaching assistants as community arts capers to support small groups of children in school. Our research partners are UCL's CCCSE and ARU.

Providing time and space early on for children to reconnect (or connect for the first time) with nature and art is the actual "medicine" that's required. Giving children a fresh start, with the adults seeing them a-new with talents that were previously under the surface is huge. Thing of what could be achieved if more children worked with CCI. And that of the money that would potentially be saved in staff time, paediatrician referrals, expensive therapy.....'

Paula Ayliffe, Headteacher, Mayfield Primary School, Cambridge and Branching Out partner

I appreciated the opportunity to reflect on my own practice and to spend important and useful time as a 'participant'.

I have valued most seeing the way in which people's response to a variety of words, activities and mediums is so beautifully diverse and how the conversations generated from the activities are so rich and meaningful.

Feedback from participants at Peterborough City College Creative Parenting course with PHACE, June 2022

- Supporting the dissemination of Eco-capabilities research through shared events and publications with UCL's Centre of Climate Change and Sustainable Education

Our findings in the Eco-capabilities programme on the impact of CCI's work demonstrate significant changes among the children including increased resilience and capacity for risk-

taking, greater collaboration and empathy and strengthened relationships between children and teachers. Professor Nicola Walshe, UCL

Income diversification and Trading initiatives

These included continuing to offer A Day in the Woods experiences to teams, selling publications and building our base of donors and supporters.

Capacity building

CCI recognises the importance of the freelance artist community we are part of. We have been working to develop a Mutual Respect Pledge with Cambridge Community Arts, Arts and Minds, CUH Arts and University of Cambridge Museums. This has been co-created with city based artists and shared at Cambridge Art Network's conference.

Sharing our learning and Advocacy

- The Branching Out project was invited by the new National Centre for Creative Health to open an All Party Parliamentary group discussing young people, co-production, creativity and mental health services. Three children who had taken part in the project joined Ruth Sapsed (Director of CCI) and Paula Ayliffe (Co-Headteacher, Mayfield Primary) to share their thoughts on having time to make art outdoors. The children advocated passionately about the learning and wellbeing benefits of being creative outdoors:

You can be with yourself, find a nice quiet spot and just relax.

Outside the sky is open, there are trees, and if you have all of your sense on [...] it's so much more memorable, you are much more likely to remember and enjoy your experience.

They also discussed how important the open-endedness of Artscaping was to finding their own creativity:

They didn't tell us what to make, or how to make it, they just said make some artwork with it.....You don't need set rules, just a framework [...] a loose structure to build on, you can then build around the structure.

The session, chaired by MP Rachel Hopkins, was online, with over 100 people tuning in. Many commented on how articulate the children were in describing the benefits of this work and the impact it has had on their wellbeing.

Partners this year included:

Abbey People
Cambridge Acorn Project
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Community Arts
Cambridge Nature Network
Cambridge Past Present and Future
Cambridge University Hospitals (incl. Addenbrooke's Arts and The Dialysis Unit)
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambs Youth Panel
Fullscope – YMCA, Blue Smile, Arts and Minds, CPSL Mind, The Kite Trust, Ormiston Families, Centre 33
National Centre for Creative Health
Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge
PHACE (Peterborough local cultural education partnership)
Research – Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education at the Institute of Education (UCL), Faculty of Education (UofC), Anglia Ruskin University, Goldsmiths University, Bath Spa University
Schools - Mayfield Primary, Shirley Community Primary, Galfrid Primary, North Cambridge Academy, Thongsley Fields Primary, Howard Primary plus Branching Out schools
Town and U+I
University of Cambridge Museums



Reference and Administrative Detail

Registered Company Number: 6301716

Registered Charity Number: 1126253

Registered Office

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Directors and Trustees:

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Chris Doddington (Resigned 13th July 2022)

Emily Dowdeswell (Appointed 8th June 2022)

Owen Garling

Zoe Jane Gilbertson (Appointed 8th June 2022)

Karen Horowitz

Karen Lingley

Richard McLean (Chair)

Helen Taylor (Resigned 26th April 2022)



Images: families in Bramblefields as part of Cambs Nature Festival June 2022, fundraising concert by Nicky Webb and Robert Ziegler, December 2021