



## STAR AND SHADOW SOCIAL AUDIT 2022 - 2023

The Star and Shadow Cinema is a 100% volunteer-run space in Shieldfield, Newcastle. It is an open-to-join co-operative housed in our own building, dedicated to culture, events and activities coming from and/or organised by us: you, me, everyone. In the last twelve months, 227 people were inducted as new volunteers. We screen films, host live music & club nights. There's a cafe, library, gallery & print-making room. Community groups hold workshops and meetings here. The building is fully accessible with adapted toilets, baby-changing facilities and a Changing Places bathroom.

The Star and Shadow is more than a venue. It's a welcoming place that's a real community. In a world that's often hard, we believe becoming stronger together gives us hope for the future.

We aim to positively impact our communities through our activities and actions. This annual Social Impact Report provides a summary of how we have put that mission into practice over the past year. This report aims to capture the depth and breadth of our commitment to our people and communities.

This report takes into account the perspectives of our volunteers, friends and visitors as we share stories as a powerful way to track our efforts and outcomes; to amplify our successes and highlight future actions for the year ahead so we continue to grow stronger together.



## ACCESSIBILITY

Everyone should be able to be a member of the Star and Shadow community, to interact with and access all of our facilities; this was a fundamental goal of the Co-op when we designed and constructed our new building. We realised that a standard accessible toilet (which we also have) would not provide sufficient amenities to enable those people who require extra support, hoists and bathing facilities to access our spaces so a Changing Places toilet was planned & built.

On Friday 25th November the Changing Places Toilet was officially opened with a celebratory evening featuring disabled artists and a club night. Following the opening, all keyholders have been trained in its functionality as they have overall responsibility for it during a shift.

The Star and Shadow is one of only thirteen venues in Newcastle to have a Changing Places toilet.

Parent of disabled child who attended the opening in November 2022:

*"I wanted to thank everyone for their hospitality on Friday night. Everyone was so welcoming and generous with their time and both Isaac and myself had a lovely time.*

*It was great to see how inclusive and accessible your venue is and the new Changing Place toilet is a real game changer for people who need a facility like that. It deserved a celebration! All the best."*

## CAFE

Our vegan cafe is open every Sunday afternoon from 12:00pm to 4:00pm, serving organic, Fairtrade coffee and teas, scrumptious vegan fayre from Big River Bakery in Shieldfield, such as chocolate brownies, flapjacks, savoury mushroom rolls, crisps and soft drinks.

The cafe is a popular volunteering route, last year 81 people undertook a Level 1 food hygiene induction, which also acts as a platform for those interested in food prep with Community Kitchen to go on to gain a Level 2 certificate in food hygiene.

*'The cafe is central to the cinema - it's the first thing you see when you arrive and everyone always feels warm and welcoming'*



*'From my very first time, as a volunteer I have always felt well supported and, as my experience has grown so I have been able to help others learn new skills as well as growing my own knowledge and have also benefited from being able to "Network" with individuals both from within as well as outside of the S&S.'* - Volunteer Survey response.

## **VENUE**

Our venue space buzzes with energy - from gigs to the regular market, from community kitchen to club nights, from our Electric Disco to theatre performances. We've had Cricket Noises, a play which explored the isolation and repressed madness of the English countryside and local singer songwriters have held album launches, such as Callum Pitt's debut LP 'In The Balance'. The Shieldfield Talent Show brought in local families to watch their own stars perform songs and sketches.

## **CINEMA**

Star and Shadow has a rich and diverse programme grown from our film collective with 90 members registered as part of the email forum and numerous other volunteers. Our programming has seen sold out cinema screens featuring LGBTQ+ films, international cinema, independent films directed and starring people from the global majority and rarely screened cult classics. Films are programmed by a wide range of volunteers and are only screened once - meaning we have one of the most eclectic and culturally diverse film programmes in the North East.

## **PRINT ROOM/ DARK ROOM**

We have opened our print room and our dark room and have started volunteer training. 56 people have been inducted into the print room by taking part in a print workshop. 22 people have been trained to use the dark room - this is only just a start with more training to come. We print our programmes and some of our fantastic movie posters designed by our volunteers.

## **GARDEN**

A committed group of volunteers have turned the concrete wasteland of our parking lot into a sea of green with an array of vegetables and brightly coloured flowers. We have harvested Swiss chard, courgettes and tomatoes and more - a cornucopia which we have shared with our neighbours. The last community kitchen before the summer break featured a salad made from our freshly grown produce.



## COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The first Community Kitchen was held on Wednesday 18th October 2022 with the aim of a monthly events to provide a warm space where people can take part in a wide range of activities, have a free hot meal, and access a free community larder. The impetus for Community Kitchen was the deepening cost of living crisis with the Shieldfield community as well as many volunteers being some of the hardest hit. Over fifty volunteers have been part of Community Kitchen, many of them being new to Star and Shadow Cinema.

Community Kitchen evenings have proven to be a delight, providing a real sense of community and attracting people who would otherwise never have attended the S&S. We are now firmly a destination for the local community with local people expressing surprise at the friendliness and welcoming ethos of the Star and Shadow.

*'I REALLY enjoy coming along to the community kitchen. It's incredible to see so many people bonding over a meal. I'm sure there must've been over 100 people at the last one? It feels like it's how life should be and insight into how life will be as the capitalist paradigm continues to crumble!' – volunteer survey response.*

## CANNY LIBRARY

The Canny Little Library is a free library that stocks radical, informative, alternative books, including sections on politics, global struggles, DIY, info for action, Queer, anarchism, feminism, workers' struggles and more. It is located in our cafe and anyone is welcome to come and check out books, grab a cuppa and settle down in our snug for a long read.

## ART CLUB

The Star and Shadow Art Club is a free, relaxed social art group, for pros and beginners alike, which takes place every Sunday from 12pm to 4pm. There is no formal teacher or tutor, instead attendees are free to do whatever they want around visual arts in a supportive environment.

*'I enjoy the sense of community at Art Club, which provides motivation for my creativity'.*



## MARKETS

The Star and Shadow markets are going from strength to strength as one of the highlight events at the venue - we have hosted five during the year. It is a chance for our volunteers to sell artwork, crafts, second hand clothes, books, collectibles and more. We have recently added a plant sale and a fantastic busker's corner. Everyone; stall holders, visitors and volunteers make our markets such a friendly, amazing experience.

## FIXIT CAFE

The Fix-It Cafe is a place to learn how to fix anything from kettles to eyeglasses. The Fix It crew bring boxes of glues, driver bits, soldering irons, needle and threads and tools – the public is invited to bring their broken things. There is an opportunity for people to learn from each other and the fixers or just simply hang out and enjoy the company while they fix what needs fixing.

## RE-JIG SEWING AND RE-CYCLING WORKSHOP

RE-JIG is a free monthly drop-in to learn skills to repair, alter, recycle or decorate all kinds of clothes and household fabrics into something completely new. There are hand and electric sewing machines, lots of support, ideas and recycled fabrics and tools to use.

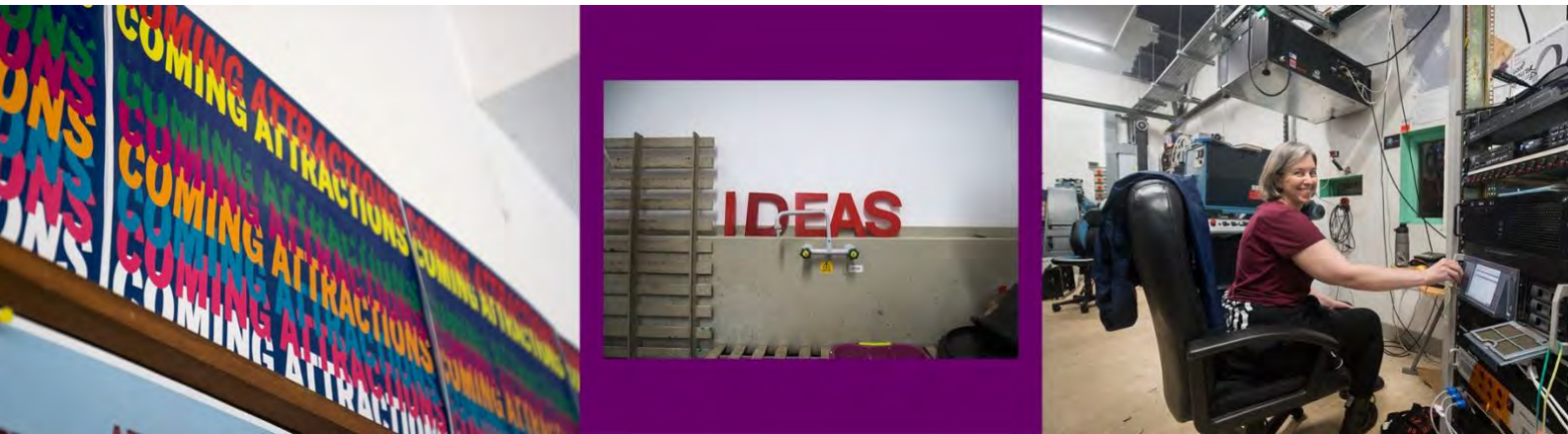
## WOOLY MAMMOTH KNITTING CLUB

A free, drop-in knitting club, Wooly Mammoths provides materials for any age, ability or gender to learn knitting skills or for knitting experts to share their knowledge. Like Fixit Cafe and RE-JIG, it is more than just the activities offered, there are connections and communities being formed in a supportive space.

*'Love the small, shared moments, eg giving a refugee the opportunity to rediscover her creative skills by trying to knit again after 10 years when she thought she had forgotten. Her smile and pride were priceless' - Volunteer Survey Response*

## BILAL'S HAIRCUTS

As part of Community Kitchen, one of our volunteers offers free haircuts from his pop-up barbers (also known as the Star and Shadow meeting room). It's a recent development that has really captured the imagination as well as helping people look and feel their best.



## **PARTNER EVENTS**

Star and Shadow has a vibrant programme of events and thought-provoking discussions; providing a supportive space to connect and to explore.

The following are some of the things which took place in the last twelve months...

### *Newcastle SOLFED Dispute Drop-In*

SOLFED held a drop-in during November to provide advice and support about housing and workplace disputes. The focus is on workers who want to help other workers, and who expect to be helped by other workers.

### *Extinction Rebellion*

XR Tyneside, the local branch of Extinction Rebellion UK, hosts a monthly meeting in our venue space. They are part of an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse. It's a space to connect with people who want to do something about the biggest crisis facing humankind.

### *Community Protection In Cost of Living Crisis*

A series of events with the aim of building a group that is able to respond at short notice, protecting our community around the cost of living crisis. Discussions explored debt, the #dontpayuk campaign, and the history of similar campaigns including the poll tax non-payment campaigns, and utility strikes in Bolivia and South Africa.

### *Ewan Brown Anarchist Bookfair*

May saw the return of the Anarchist Bookfair; an annual, all-day event inspired by the life and politics of Ewan Brown. Ewan was a comrade and friend whose art, music and words inspired those in the north east and further afield, furthering the cause of a world worth striving for. Through stalls, film screenings, radical history, workshops and music the event celebrated Ewan's interests, as well as bringing together many groups from the region and across the UK.



## SURVEY SUMMARY

As an organisation run by volunteers the Star and Shadow regards the act of volunteering as a 'social good' that can have a profound impact on the communities to which we belong. This survey sought to explore our volunteers' views with the purpose of enabling our ongoing social impact through improving our volunteer experience. The survey was emailed to all volunteers on the email list and we received thirty five responses. This is a summary of the feedback and we recommend everyone read the full individual feedback.

### ***What does volunteering at the Star and Shadow mean to you?***

All volunteers talked about feeling part of a community through S&S volunteering. Many volunteers see S&S volunteering as a way of being involved in the wider community, meeting new people and supporting cultural and social endeavours.

A common response was centred around the Star and Shadow as a place where people of different outlooks and backgrounds can come together and find common ground. Volunteers also view the Star and Shadow as an empowering space where creativity can flourish; a resource in common where people can be authentic & empowered within a collective framework.

There is also an understanding of how volunteers learn from one another, sharing skills and experience for the benefit of our communities.

Several volunteers talked about how the S&S helps them experience film culture in a different way through programming and discussion.

Volunteers talked about being part of something that prefigures the kind of caring, collaborative society they want to live in as an antidote to current 'commodity culture'.

*'I love the Rejig sessions alongside the Art Group which often have great free-ranging conversations, ideas, kindness, good humour and a lovely atmosphere but my best experience so far was last week's Community Kitchen event with all the happy crowds of people, eating together, enjoying all the activities, the choir & Latin band - so marvellous and hopeful for the future of communities people can build together'*

- Volunteer Survey Response



## VOLUNTEER SURVEY CONTINUED

### *Are there any barriers to getting involved at the S&S?*

Although many responses said there were no institutional barriers to involvement or identified personal time commitments as an issue, just as many raised collective S&S problems.

A common theme is the amount of activities can be overwhelming and that makes it difficult to navigate. It was felt that more could be done to support new volunteers acclimatise themselves to the breadth of experiences & how to engage with them. Similarly, it was felt that we can do a better job of explaining how the S&S functions: meetings, back-office tasks & operations to enable volunteers to find a route into getting involved. Perhaps related to this is that we should ensure meetings are friendly and that attendees understand how they operate.

Another key issue is the need for more general & cafe inductions and at different times.

A serious issue raised by some is that S&S is very white. There is a struggle to ensure that we are a safe and accessible space for people of colour, different ethnicities and cultures.

One response also observed that there was a predominance of older men who exercise power & control whilst also noting that there were some women who took on organising roles.

It was noted by several respondents that our website - the Toolkit? - isn't very user-friendly.

Importantly, respondents also raised the issue of a gap between our policies around personal behaviour and their practical application. There is a sense that we can improve in this area by having clear information for volunteers, greater awareness of these issues, improved training and a clear reporting and accountability structure.

However, there was also some sense that the S&S can be judgemental at times, and this leads to people feeling they can't express themselves due to preconceived ideas.





*'The enthusiasm and smilliness of volunteers doing the mundane tasks; the sing-along / dressing up films where visitors throw themselves into the night and go home laughing; the thank yous from visitors when all you've done is point them to their cinema seat with a friendly smile' – Volunteer Survey Response*

## **VOLUNTEER SURVEY CONTINUED**

### ***How can the volunteering experience be improved?***

A relatively common thread is that there are unacknowledged hierarchies that need to be addressed; these are predominantly around experience, knowledge and how much time you spend volunteering. Alongside this is the need for greater transparency regarding who keyholders and 'decision-makers' are.

A lot of volunteers ask for more training especially around consensus decision-making and facilitation. A need for trained mediators was highlighted.

More information for volunteers about roles & structures and time commitment was required. Related to this was the thought that there are only a few volunteers who do the majority of the day to day organising and a way should be explored to encourage burden-sharing.

Alternative communication channels such as WhatsApp were proposed, alongside a buddy/mentoring system and more information for new volunteers - a handbook?

Greater frequency of inductions with more notice i.e. better planning in advance were requested. Several responses said they thought the 'first come, first served' basis of the rota meant it was difficult for them to volunteer and it could be made clearer that you could still just turn up to help out. Generally, there was a plea for better communication.

### ***When we talk about a "S&S community" what does that mean to you?***

Most responses identified 'community' as being greater than what happens within the S&S. There was a recognition of our place within the neighbourhood, the city and the region.



## **VOLUNTEER SURVEY CONTINUED**

Volunteers see the S&S as a welcoming place of safety, compassion and warmth.

Volunteers say that our community is created and developed through the actions of individuals coming together to create something greater than themselves.

Volunteers use terms such as family, diverse, quirky, inclusive and supportive to describe the S&S community. There is a sense of reciprocity where through shared experiences we learn from each other.

One respondent implied that the S&S was a community 'on paper' only and that there was an unacknowledged disconnect between reality and our ideals.

Several responses agreed that we have created a community where people can find solidarity and hope; where all contributions are accepted and valued.

### ***Anything else you think is relevant, such as your favourite S&S moment?***

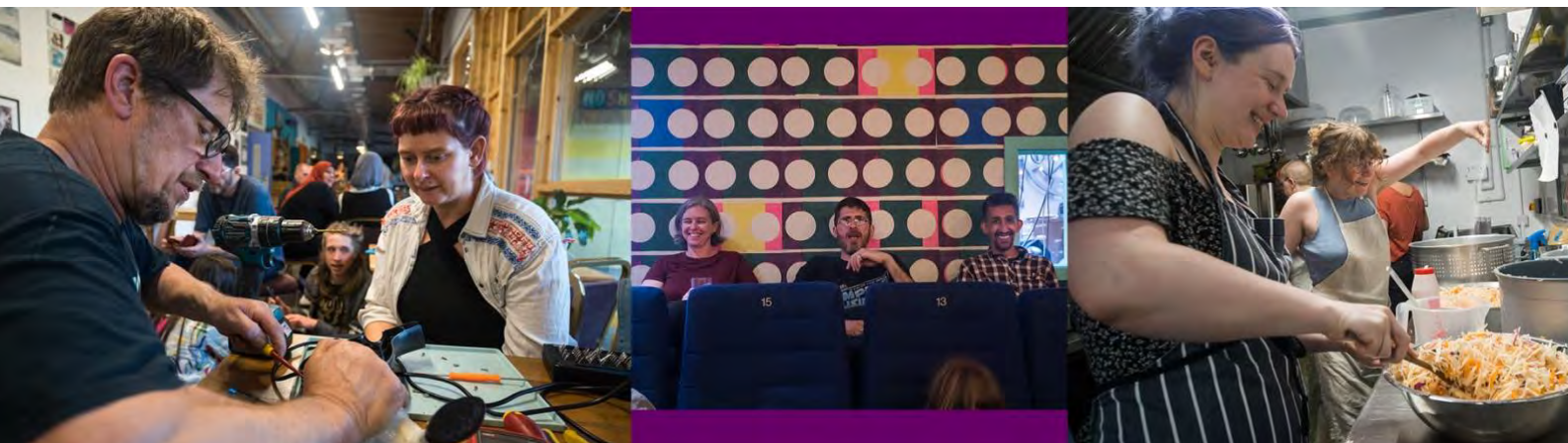
The poor state of the front of the building was mentioned frequently: it is viewed as being unwelcoming and unattractive; that it needs a good clean & paint.

The Community Kitchen seems to be very popular with volunteers who enjoy the building full of people, the food & the welcoming atmosphere. Furthermore, the influx of new volunteers inspired by Community Kitchen is viewed positively.

Several volunteers spoke about people coming together to solve problems and leading to taking ownership of the space as a highlight.

Attending parties, gigs and meeting new people were favourite moments for many volunteers. Sunday activities such as cafe, Rejig, art club, knitting group and the market provide pleasure to many volunteers.

The opening of the Changing Places toilet was noted as a strong message that everyone is welcome at the Star and Shadow.



## **COMMUNITY KITCHEN SURVEY SUMMARY**

During the year the CK Collective has conducted regular surveys using written feedback forms. Here is a brief summary of the latest results:

### ***Should Community Kitchen continue and why?***

Everyone said yes.

Reasons: meeting people, sharing food, making friends, saving money, good food, welcoming, connecting different people, volunteering opportunities & learning new things.

### ***What is working well?***

Everything, delicious food, helping people, creating a space people can call their own, vegan food, lovely/friendly volunteers, sense of community, sharing tables.

### ***What new ideas/changes could be incorporated?***

Nothing, recipes to take away, more variety of food, be more explicit about vegan food (vegan positive), wider range of activities e.g. more board games - chess, live music, learning experiences e.g. ESOL, cooking and making the S&S frontage more welcoming.

### ***Are there challenges/opportunities in continuing CK?***

Challenges: reaching more people & how to pay for it, having enough volunteers

Opportunities: having a monthly CK, more less serious films, hearing about S&S events.

### ***Anything else?***

Thank You, donation jars on tables, love, share our CK model to support other groups, vegan food means everyone can be included.

In June it was agreed that Community Kitchen would continue for another year on a monthly basis and would adopt a 'pay what you can' model in line with other S&S pricing. The Community Kitchen Collective would like to thank the Star & Shadow for its continued support as it continues to provide a unique and essential programme that benefits our communities and demonstrates the cooperative ethos of the Star and Shadow.



## ORGANISATIONS SURVEY SUMMARY

We sought the views of organisations we work with for the purpose of enabling our ongoing social impact through improving our external relationships. The organisations were selected by volunteers and we received responses from Lawnmowers, Dwellbeing, Generator & Cap-a-pie.

*“We really enjoy working with S&S. It's nice to have the connection with an organisation that shares many of our values.”*

*“The Star and Shadow team are supporting, encouraging and helpful. They communicate well with us and our members have found them to be cooperative and supportive.”*

*‘It has provided additional opportunities for our members and the local community and working as a partner organisation, helping to raise the profile of the neighbourhood and address concerns of residents.’*

Feedback from these organisations’ partners and beneficiaries has always been positive whenever they have used the cinema as a base for their delivery; they see Star and Shadow as being important in offering a safe and accessible venue to consistently deliver their programmes from.

*“It's been great to have a space in the community we work in that we can perform in. We were so happy many local families came to our last show there. It's also really useful to have a space that can be used for tech rehearsals and filming - there aren't many of them in the city.”*

Members of Lawnmowers Theatre who put on the monthly Krocodile Klub, a disco run by and for people with learning disabilities, said:

*‘I like the venue, it's warm friendly, safe and inviting.’*

*‘I would feel comfortable to come to gigs and events outside of KrocKlub’*

In terms of specific ways that Star and Shadow can improve how we engage & work together with friends, the main point from the survey was that we could focus on the promotion of more Shieldfield specific activities and encourage more local people to engage with local projects and organisations. There was also mention that daytime gigs would be welcome.

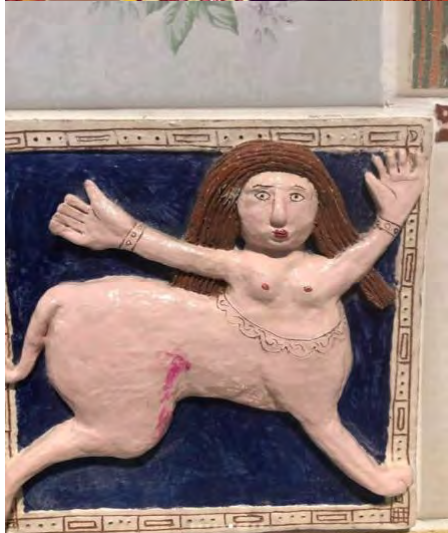


“Star & Shadow Cinema is a place of hope, for me it is a safe space, an opportunity to thrive again, somehow.”



“There’s me, I see her again. Getting back to me after years out of the working world due to a long term chronic health condition, a dynamic disability.

I can suddenly see myself again, somewhere to fit in, to belong.”



“Inspiration can be found in the simplest of places. This must be the place, a place where such care and beauty is spent on the most basic facilities, somewhere it shows, cares about the people who visit there.

What a beautiful installation. My first impression was really positive, it felt like a calm & inspiring space, overall.”



“Two buses or a bus and a train is a lot for me sometimes, and I wish I was nearer so I could feel that sense of belonging more often, but maybe it’s a good thing as I want to be involved in everything, yet have to hold myself back to avoid relapse and P.E.M.



Here, there’s a chance for more advocacy, for people like me, to bring awareness and creativity to stories untold. To give something back. To make a difference somewhere, somehow”



“The feeling of diversity here which is celebrated offers a sense of safety and understanding.

Trust is built where people are united in the cause for community for all.

This is felt strongly here and is one of many reasons why I want to come back each time.”



“To feel involved as much or as little as I’m able takes the pressure away from the usual volunteering opportunities. I’m taking steps towards volunteering, however regularity or consistency is a luxury for me. I prefer the term ‘helping out’ when I can which means I can still be involved within my own limitations without feeling like I’m letting the side down.”



“Star & Shadow has given me hope. This is something I’ve not felt for a while as I try to fit societal shapes.

I had to stop doing the job I loved 15 years ago and have not yet found anywhere I can fit back in to society for years, due to constant limitations of my dynamic disability.

I’m still unsure of how I can best fit, to be of value, for both the Star & Shadow & myself, but I’m working on it. At last I feel properly supported in my journey back.

I know it’s always there, beating in the heart of the community. Thank you for existing S&S”