

THE BRIGHT  
FOUNDATION

INSPIRING  
YOUNG  
MINDS  
THROUGH  
ARTS,  
FILMMAKING  
AND CREATIVITY



Trustee Recruitment Pack – Spring 2026

# A word from our founder

It is my firmly held belief that the arts and creativity can shape happier and healthier children and enable young people to reach their full potential.

To honour this belief, I have established **The Bright Foundation** and funded the purchase and conversion of two properties in the Hastings area. I have bequeathed most of my estate to the Foundation including my business, Cosprop and the property associated with it alongside my collection of toys, puppets and theatre sets. The collection dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and has been amassed over 50 years. It is displayed at the **Museum** at Rodgers Farm in Hastings. The **Barn Theatre** provides free access to puppet shows and other performances, doubling up as a space for creative workshops, lectures and masterclasses.

To further nurture young talent and to provide free creative opportunities for the local community, The Bright Foundation has also opened the **Benbow Arts Space**, a converted Georgian pub in St Leonards-on-Sea, which is a creative learning hub dedicated to the art of film-making.

My life's work has been committed to costume design for film, tv and theatre and I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to pursue this path. My vision is to inspire children and young people, who would not normally have access to the creative industries, whilst at the same time showcasing the importance of nurturing creativity and free play through the ages.

**John Bright** (Benefactor and Chair of The Bright Foundation / Founder and Director of Cosprop)



# A word from our CEO



**Do you want to make a difference to the lives of children and young people? Are you passionate about arts and creativity? Would you like to join our Board of Trustees?**

The Bright Foundation is actively seeking new Trustees to join our Board as we plan for our long-term future. It is a great time to join this ambitious arts education charity, backed and championed by some of the leading figures of UK theatre, cinema and TV.

Since launching in Summer 2022 and subsequently opening our second venue, the Benbow Arts Space, in May 2024, we have quickly established ourselves as one of the leading arts education providers in Hastings and St Leonards and grown a broad and diverse network of participants, partners and artists.

At a time when funding for the arts and youth services is so stretched, the generous investment by John Bright and Cosprop is a shining beacon of arts philanthropy. The support has enabled the creation of two beautiful and inspiring venues, has helped us to launch the charity, and to test and grow the programme and engagement. As we prepare for our fourth year of delivery, we are now consolidating our learning and strategically planning to ensure we are as impactful as possible. It is the right time to welcome new Trustees to the Board to help us shape this future and genuinely make a difference in children and young people's lives across Hastings and beyond.

**Polly Risbridger** CEO, The Bright Foundation



# Vision and mission

The Bright Foundation is an arts education charity founded by Academy and BAFTA Award winning costume designer John Bright. From two venues in and around Hastings, we provide a programme of creative learning to children and young people experiencing disadvantage, inspired by John's lifetime work in film, tv and theatre.

## Why we care:

We believe in the power of the arts and creativity to shape happier and healthier children and young people.

## Vision:

For all children and young people to have their imaginations sparked and their wellbeing nurtured through a quality cultural education, regardless of their background.

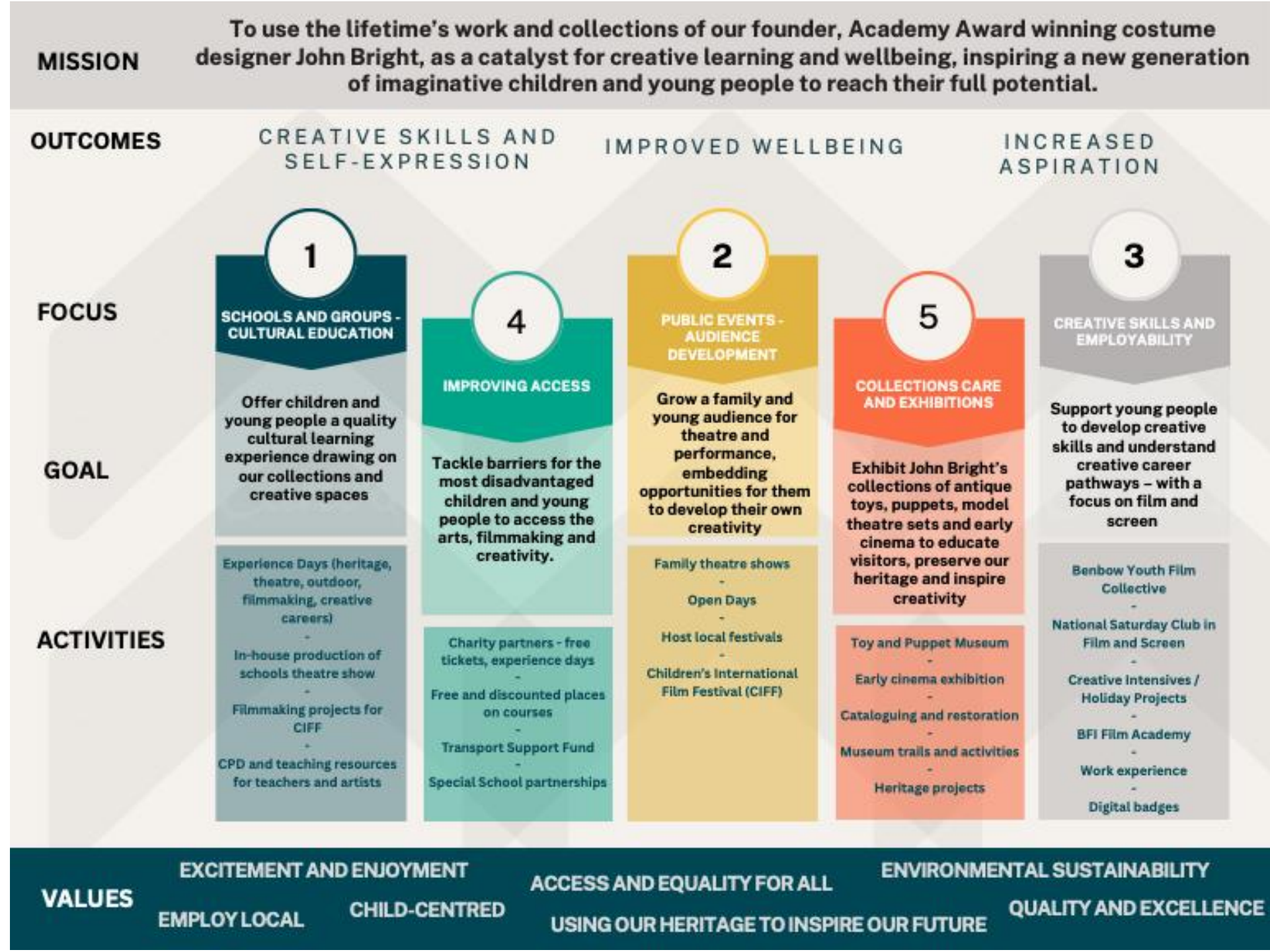
## Mission:

To use the lifetime's work and collections of our founder, Academy Award winning costume designer John Bright, as a catalyst for creative learning and wellbeing, and to inspire a new generation of imaginative children and young people to reach their full potential.

To find out more read our [Impact Report here](#)



# Programme Goals



NB. Goals 4 and 5 underpin Goals 1-3

# Charity Overview

## Legal Structure

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – Constitution last amended 28 Nov 2025

Registered Charity No. 1179452 - Registered 3 August 2018

Read more [here](#)

## Finance

The core annual turnover (not including capital spend) is in the region of £550k a year. We receive an annual donation of £400,000 from Cosprop and raise the rest through grants, donations, box office and course fees.

## Venues

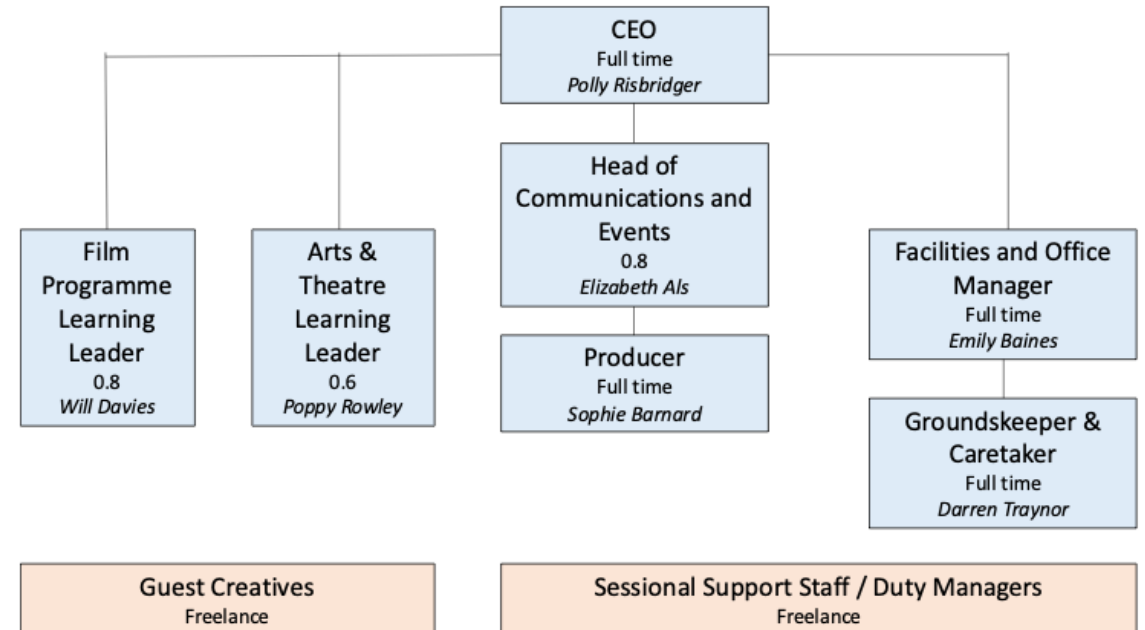
We run two venues based in and around Hastings, East Sussex:

- Barn Theatre and Museum – featuring a 50 seat childrens theatre and toy museum set in 24 acres of countryside
- Benbow Arts Space – a creative learning hub for young people dedicated to filmmaking, featuring an early cinema exhibition, events space, workshop space and film production suite.

We have peppercorn rent for both these venues, which are owned by John Bright, and bequeathed to the charity.

## People

The Bright Foundation has a core staff team of 7 people working across the two sites, plus a group of dedicated trustees, a wide pool of freelancers and volunteers, and 32 ambassadors from the world of TV, film and theatre.



# Charity Overview

## Context for our work

The Bright Foundation is located in Hastings – the 3<sup>rd</sup> most deprived local authority in the country (2025 Index of Multiple Deprivation). Hastings was recently revealed in the bottom ten areas of The Sutton Trust's Opportunity Index 2025, showing poor educational attainment and social mobility for the high number of children on free school meals. However Hastings is a truly creative town with a vibrant programme of festivals and events and burgeoning community of artists and makers.

## Target Audiences and Participants

Our target beneficiaries are children and young people aged 4 – 19 years. Our priority are those living in Hastings and Rother but we are not limited by geography. John Bright's mission in founding the charity was to focus resource and opportunity on those experiencing disadvantage and with less access to arts and culture. We aim that at least a third of our overall beneficiaries experience disadvantage. We specifically target the following disadvantages:

- Facing economic hardship
- Neurodivergent
- Looked after children
- School refusers / at risk of refusal
- Refugees and people seeking asylum
- Experiencing mental health challenges
- Have experienced racism, homophobic or transgender discrimination
- Not in employment, education or training

## Partners

In order to effectively reach and engage with our target audiences and participants we have built a range of partnerships across the region and play an active role in a range of networks. This includes:

Strategic networks - such as Arts Hastings, Coastal Catalyst / Talent Accelerator, Hastings and Rother Arts Education Network

Programme partners – such as Children's International Film Festival, BFI Film Academy, National Saturday Club, 18 Hours, Artswork, Holiday Activities and Food programme

Charity / Statutory Services / Education partners – such as East Sussex Looked After Children, FSN, Hastings Council, local schools



# About John Bright OBE

As one of the world's leading costume designers and costumiers, **John Bright** has captured the imaginations of audiences around the globe over the past five decades. The attention to detail in the costumes he has created have brought people, places and moments in time, vividly and authentically to life on both stage and screen. In 1987 he was awarded an Academy Award and BAFTA for Best Costume Design for *A Room with a View*.

John has been a lifelong collector, and in 1965 his personal costume collection formed the beginnings of his company **Cosprop**, one of the world's leading period Costume Houses. He continues to run **Cosprop**, as well as now being deeply involved in **The Bright Foundation**.

Over the past sixty years, John and his team at **Cosprop** have collaborated and made costumes for a wide range of designers for productions ranging from *Pirates of the Caribbean* to *Downton Abbey*. He has fitted generations of actors and the list reads like a 'Who's Who' of stage and screen.

In the mid 1980s, John began collecting children's toys and childhood artefacts and has amassed a vast collection, dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that is exhibited within the Toy Museum at Rodgers Farm in Hastings.

John's generosity has enabled **The Bright Foundation** to be formed and he will continue to fund the operations of the charity during his lifetime. He has bequeathed most of his estate to the Foundation, including Cosprop, to support the charity in perpetuity.



# Being a Trustee

A Trustee is a voluntary position, in which you offer your expertise and experience to help guide the charity and ensure its long-term stability and growth.

## Current Board

The current board have been in place since the launch of the charity and bring a range of experience and skills, as well as a connection and strong understanding of the vision of our founder, John Bright. Current Trustees are:

- John Bright – Founder and Co-Chair
- Lyn Fletcher – Co-Chair (former Social Worker)
- Chris Garlick (Managing Director, Cosprop)
- John Hayward (Landscaping and ecology specialist)
- Jenny Ireland – stepping down in April (worked at Cosprop)
- Gay Nebel (Finance and pensions specialist)
- Una Nicholson (Organisation development and HR specialist)
- Sean Williams (Neurodevelopmental therapist and educator)

## What we are looking for

We are seeking to expand our current board and bring on people with the following skills and experience:

- Legal expertise with knowledge of charity / property / employment or inheritance law
- Heritage, collections and museums
- UK arts and/or education sector
- Film industry with knowledge of training and career pathways
- Charity finance and fundraising
- Digital technology and AI
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

## Trustee Responsibilities

- Setting and maintaining The Bright Foundation's vision, mission, values and goals
- Upholding the founder, John Bright's vision and wishes for the charity
- Ensuring The Bright Foundation complies with its governing documents, charity law, company law, HMRC and any other relevant legislation and regulations
- Contributing to the long-term strategic direction of the charity
- Managing The Bright Foundation's financial stability and solvency, including overseeing annual budgets and accounts
- Regular review of the programme, policies, venues and staffing, and monitoring risk
- Managing and supporting the CEO
- Being engaged with the charity's work and representing The Bright Foundation at relevant events and/or meetings

## The Commitment and Practicalities

There are 4 in-person board meetings a year. These are typically held on Friday afternoons at the Barn Theatre and Museum, Hastings. Meetings usually last 3 hours. Additionally there is one online meeting a year to approve the accounts, and an annual staff and board development day. Travel expenses will be covered.

We have a Finance sub-committee and form other sub-committees according to need, which Trustees volunteer for additionally.

Trustees are also asked to attend occasional events and are required to allocate time to read papers and accounts before meetings. Papers are usually circulated a week ahead of the meeting.

# Trustee Role Specification

A Trustee term is 3 years with an opportunity to review and renew for another 3 years.

We are looking for people who share our values and vision and are passionate about inspiring children and young people through arts, creativity and filmmaking.

## Essential criteria

All Trustees should have the following:

- Knowledge of or interest in arts education and/or charity and voluntary sector
- Understanding of, and commitment to, the charitable objectives of The Bright Foundation
- Experience or understanding of budgets and accounts with the ability to review and analyse finances
- Ability to contribute to strategic decisions
- Ability to work constructively and supportively with other Trustees and the staff team
- Ability to act with integrity and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of our funds and assets
- Commitment to supporting and developing fundraising, income generation and marketing and PR activities
- Commitment to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ability to commit sufficient time and energy to the role

## Desirable criteria

We aim to ensure that the following skills, knowledge and experience is represented within the Board, though appreciate not everyone will have all the requirements:

### Governance

- Experience as a trustee / knowledge of how charities and boards run
- Experience of working with John Bright and understanding of his vision
- Legal expertise with knowledge of charity, property, or employment law

### Finance

- Charity finance and/or investment/endowment management
- Fundraising and income generation experience

### Programme and Communities

- Heritage / collections / museums
- Education and/or family and youth services
- Knowledge of the UK arts sector with understanding of Arts Council England and best practice and funding models
- Knowledge of film industry and training and career pathways
- Lived experience of some of the disadvantages our participants face
- Knowledge of Hastings & Rother and their diverse communities and networks

### Operational

- Land management and biodiversity preservation
- Property / venue management
- Marketing, PR and communications
- HR and people management
- Digital technology and AI

# What do you gain by being a Trustee?

Being a Trustee of a charity offers a whole range of benefits:

- Personal fulfilment and a chance to give back
- Professional development and a chance to develop new skills and understanding
- Building new networks and connections
- A chance to contribute to the strategic direction of an organisation and ensure it delivers as much impact as possible



# To apply

If you would like to apply, please email your CV or LinkedIn profile and a short covering email saying why you are interested in joining the board of trustees and what skills and experience you could bring to the organisation.

Please email to Polly Risbridger, CEO at [polly.risbridger@thebrightfoundation.org.uk](mailto:polly.risbridger@thebrightfoundation.org.uk)

**Deadline to apply:** Wednesday 20 May 2026, 12noon

**Interview:** w/c 1 June 2026

**Induction:** June / July 2026

**First Board Meeting:** Friday 17 July 2026

This is our ideal timeline but can be flexible according to personal circumstances.

We welcome and celebrate all protected characteristics and wish to build an inclusive board that reflects the rich diversity of our UK communities. We will work with applicants to ensure an accessible selection and induction process relevant to individual needs.

If you would like an informal conversation about the role, please email Polly on [polly.risbridger@thebrightfoundation.org.uk](mailto:polly.risbridger@thebrightfoundation.org.uk) or call 01424 559020.



[www.thebrightfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thebrightfoundation.org.uk)

**The Bright Foundation  
Barn Theatre and. Museum**

Rodgers Farm, Stonestile Lane, Hastings, East Sussex,  
TN35 4PH

**Benbow Arts Space**

2 London Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN37  
6AE

**Registered Charity No.1179452**

