



## STAR AND SHADOW SOCIAL AUDIT 2023 - 2024

Star and Shadow is an extraordinary 100% volunteer run cinema, venue, cafe, creative space and community hub. Since our new building opened in 2016, we have inducted hundreds of volunteers of which 1465 are considered active. In the month of March alone there were 104 different volunteers working in the building. During the year of this report, we created and facilitated 600 public events. Star & Shadow is a wholly unique space built for and by volunteers.

‘As each new person joins, the Star and Shadow changes ever so slightly. ‘The Star and Shadow’ becomes whatever we all talk about; ideas brush up against each other and it just takes someone to say, “Hey why don’t we make that happen?” for a new strand/class/project to begin.’

- Sally

At Star and Shadow anything is possible. That is inspiring but can also be challenging. It can be a place to create, explore, share, connect and learn. It can also feel daunting for new volunteers. With so many different people coming in and out of the cinema, it can be difficult to know where and how to get support.

‘It was surprisingly both difficult and easy. Difficult because, without a traditional management structure, it's hard to know who to consult to ensure you're doing things right. But it became easier once I realised how supportive everyone is.’

- Joao writing about starting film workshops

Through this report we want to reflect the full story of Star and Shadow, honouring all our contradictions and different perspectives. We are Star and Shadow; we are all these things. Our report draws from the following sources with quotes, statistics and ideas shared from each source throughout. The focus of this year's report is the volunteer experience as last year we focused on our wider community and events. The end of the report includes full transcripts of the volunteer interviews, surveys and writings. The report is our summary and interpretation of this information but it is important for everyone to have access to the whole story and draw their own conclusion.

- Interviews (3)
- minutes from meetings
- volunteer survey results (34)
- The public program
- volunteer rota
- volunteer list servers
- volunteer writing (5)
- volunteer photographs



People who volunteer at S&S come from all walks of life - artists, scientists, students, community workers, educators, activists, solicitors, nurses - the list goes on. The reasons why people start to volunteer is equally diverse but many centre around the search for community:

‘I was in a bit of a dark place, at a loose end. Stumbled upon the build, met some very kind and friendly people on a totally bonkers project to build a cinema & gig venue all by volunteers’

- volunteer in survey

Volunteer inductions are the first step to becoming a volunteer. They are held monthly and give you a whirlwind introduction to the building, volunteering process and general ethos. There have been 253 new volunteers inducted this year. Both the CAFÉ and BAR have their own inductions with 85 people being inducted in the Cafe and 43 in the Bar.

‘I am very involved in new volunteer inductions. I find this one of the most rewarding things I do at the Star and Shadow. I was once asked when doing a tour of the Star and Shadow what my role was. After a moment’s thought I said “Passing on enthusiasm”. Through inductions I introduce the Star and Shadow to around 20 plus people a month who are interested in participating in our collective. I do part of the presentation and my intent, in addition to the practical knowledge, is to try and help people understand that when they join the Star and Shadow it belongs to them. They are not volunteering for the Star and Shadow; they ARE the Star and Shadow.’

- Joe

We have noticed that many people come to inductions, but some people don’t come back to become active volunteers. Many people in the survey identified lack of time and other commitments being a barrier but other people have talked about feeling daunted by signing up for their first shifts. One new initiative we have created to support new people are the VOLUNTEER HANGOUTS which will happen monthly:

‘We wanted to provide a bridge from initial induction to becoming more involved with the many opportunities available across Star and Shadow. We recognise that, even after a general induction, many volunteers may still be a little unsure of how to engage with other, more experienced volunteers and how best to develop their own ideas for events. The volunteer hangouts created a more informal and fun space, where people were able to ask a range of questions, discuss some ideas for events and get to know each other a little more. The idea for each of us to bring food to share certainly helped to break down some barriers.’

- Steve



## WORKING GROUPS:

After inductions, volunteers join different working groups that collectively run different aspects of the organisation. Through autonomous groups interested volunteers come together around ideas, with shared skills and knowledge to realise ideas. Working groups are great places to learn, connect, grow ideas and keep our program/building/vision going.

The different working groups are:

Café -190 members

Bar - 83 members

Tech – 88 members

Programming - 120 members

Film Programming - 94 members

Community Kitchen - 72 members

How we treat each other: 5 members

Marketing: Small rotating group from film programming group

Inductions: A flexible working group led by various volunteers

The following groups are closed groups, but anyone can request to join if they want to support the work. Some groups have specific training and experience needed. Ask at meetings if interested.

Operations - 32 members

facilitates the general day to day running of the building

Keyholders - 35 members

keeps building and volunteers safe during events

Finance - 13 members

oversees finances

Safeguarding 2 members:

statutory role to ensure children and adults at risk of harm are safe

Mediation/ 7CZs: 2 members

Supports conflict resolution

## MEETINGS:

Star and Shadow has no management or formal hierarchy, so we make decisions through consensus at regular meetings. This year we facilitated 62 meetings which were open to any volunteer. We also facilitated countless more meetings within each working group. Every working group holds its own meetings to plan, problem solve and carry out their tasks. Then each group sends representatives to the monthly general meeting to reflect back how things are going and talk through any issues that have arisen.



'A young woman got a free bike which Dan had fixed. She had been looking for one to get round town while back at uni but didn't have a lot of cash. She had popped into the cinema to ask about volunteering and left with a bike. I watched her walk down the slope to leave, pushing the bike with a massive grin on her face.'

Survey response about best experience this year

#### TRAINING, WORKSHOPS and regular GROUPS

A lot of the learning and skill sharing happens during the doing with the working groups and the event planning. We also provide opportunities to learn specific skills so any volunteer can, if they would like, be able to be involved in any aspect of the organisation.

#### AV TRAINING

We hold regular training to run all aspects of our This year we have:

- 18 People attend DJ training
- 9 people were trained as projectionist
- 20+ people attended training to programme films
- 5 People were trained as keyholder
- 16 keyholders had first aid training

#### FILMMAKING WORKSHOP:

Volunteers have held free film workshops covering all aspects of filmmaking from script to working with cameras. 35 people took part in the workshops

'It's exciting to create and film at the cinema because this is exactly what I had hoped for when I first walked through its doors. I wanted to make films with other volunteers, and now I'm working to make that a reality, with the support of fellow volunteers. To me, this is what the Star and Shadow Cinema is all about.' - Joao

#### WRITING GROUP:

Free, sociable, writing group, composed of beginners and pros alike, meets weekly.

'We convalesce in the spirit of sharing ideas; reading out independent writing to the group; giving thoughtful feedback to peers; learning from guest workshops; recommending books; group meditation; group writing exercises and telling stories'



#### FRIDAY CLEANING CLUB:

Communal cleaning, hoovering, wiping and washing. It is a great way to learn about the nuts and bolts of the Star and Shadow and where everything is. Knowledge is empowerment. Also we sit down together and break bread over a shared, cooked vegan brunch.

‘Come along to the Star and Shadow at its most relaxed and its most accepting, do some simple, structured tasks, feel a sense of a job completed (ah, the sweet smell of resolution to an autistic brain), be reassured that you have been genuinely useful (always novel to an ADHDer) and then get the utter joy and nonsense of eating communally (ideally food made by Sarah, washed down with some of Joe’s mint tea) with people who become very quickly like family.’

- Sally

#### GARDENING (63 members)

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.

‘And it’s just brilliant here. I feel really calm. There’s a real sense of belonging and you can just be yourself. I’m kind of empowered to lead a group and get people involved, to share knowledge especially with gardening. I’ve shared a lot of knowledge about composting and regenerative growing.’

- Dominika

#### ART CLUB

SUNDAYS 12pm-4pm / café opening times in the Star & Shadow meeting room. Free medium, skill-sharing social art group, for pros and beginners alike. Free to attend and a variety of free supplies available. Sewing and knitting groups also meet monthly.

#### COMMUNITY KITCHEN

A welcoming space for local people and Star & Shadow volunteers to share a hot meal together once a month & take part in a number of different activities. The activities may include Fix It (help to repair your bike, laptop, small appliances, etc), Make & Mend, Knitting, Films, Crafts, Workshops & Free Haircuts.

‘(My best experience of the year was) our final Community Kitchen event of the year - reflecting on how many wonderful evenings we’ve had cooking, eating, watching films, mending things, getting haircuts etc... and also on how many people from the local Shieldfield community have become regulars in the S&S space. A night full of joy, kindness and solidarity.’

- Survey response



## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

We are a minimalist organisation - meaning we don't have any HR, official internal hierarchy or decision-making group other than the General Meeting. This means we come together around ideas to make things happen. This is unlike anywhere else and very exciting, but it is also challenging.

With 100's of volunteers moving around the building with different personalities, different ideas and different ways of being, conflict is inevitable. It's how we handle the conflict that is vital. The majority of the challenges people reflected on in the survey were around facilitation, communication and interpersonal dynamics. As one volunteer put it in the survey, the most challenging thing about S&S is when 'good people don't get along'. Though not every volunteer will get along with everyone else, we all have a shared commitment to Star and Shadow and to working towards making our building a safer space.

'(I would like more) facilitation of consensus decision making processes, conflict mediation processes, thinking about and challenging hierarchies. Setting up a process for new volunteers in which they can more easily find their place in the Star and Shadow.'

- Volunteer survey

## SAFER SPACES AGREEMENT

We all agree to follow our Safer Spaces Agreement when we become a part of S&S. At its heart is the intent to work towards helping everyone to feel welcome, safe, respected and able to be themselves. The policy is built on understanding that creating a safer space is an ongoing process and that reflecting on the way we treat each other is all our responsibilities. Anyone might cause hurt but through taking responsibility for our actions and making changes, trust can be restored. This policy only works when we all take responsibility to support each other.

## MEDIATION

Our approach to mediation is about accountability and restoring trust. Currently only one volunteer is working in this capacity which is unsustainable. Wider training and external support are needed to help create more collective ownership.

## HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER COLLECTIVE

This is a new working group set up to address some of these concerns directly. Anyone will be welcome to join. Check the rota for meetings. The areas of focus will be:

- S&S wide training on how to call out difficult behaviour
- Creating better procedure for conflict resolution
- Recruitment and training for mediation collective
- Signpost saferspaces/ mediation support
- Create listening circles



## IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

The surveys and interviews offered great suggestions for ways to support our volunteers, grow our programme and improve communication. All suggestions are found in the surveys and interviews available to anyone but we have highlighted a few:

Ideas to support collective growth and volunteer wellbeing:

‘A re-affirmation of our Cooperative, DIY and Creative principles.  
Better facilitation of meetings and a greater understanding of what is consensus.’

‘The setting up of a regular peer-led, safe-spaced, wellness-focused support and supportive learning group to help provide the revolutionary tools and skills for self-empowerment and self-determinism and to help individuals unlearn and unpick the internalised oppressions of authoritarianism, behaviourism and capitalism.’

‘more open meetings, strategies to keep volunteers coming back’

‘Training for chairing meetings. more physical copies of guides on things like flow charts of how to do stuff/processes or general guides to how things work.’

‘I appreciate this ongoing, difficult, messy work that many people are already deeply committed to, but I think we can still do better as a community at making sure that more people gain the relevant knowledge, experience and skills to be involved in the decision making processes!’

Programming ideas:

‘I really liked the crafty stuff. There are so many classes like that we could set up and do and then potentially sell the artwork. It fits in well with the art club.’

‘I'd like to see the art club and gardening club grow. Some special art events, life drawing, guided classes maybe. Also, would be cool to see the activities expand to allow opening on a Saturday as well if it was popular enough.’

‘Fundraiser/cultural events to support FreePalestine. Art exhibitions, more art workshops, life drawing. More live music of all genres.’

‘More open mics and a variety of events’

Solidarity community collective Creative inclusive entertaining Necessary  
Brilliant Impressive Wonderful loving supportive collaboration freedom art  
authentic varied exciting often hard nut Warm belonging supportive Has  
great potential casual creative community Collective creative cool Fun safe  
inclusive Inclusive creative safe Community unique home Awesome  
community space Life-affirming soul-restoring occasionally maddening  
Problematic toxic discriminatory Unique inspiring chaotic Full of heart fun  
empowering welcoming DIY volunteer-run friendly Welcoming community  
social WE not ME Entertaining unique safe Amazing community film Open  
Alternative Free DIY collaborative breathing! Volunteer run Film gigs friends

Above image is all survey responses to 'Sum up Star and Shadow in 3 words'

#### SURVEY RESULTS:

There were 34 people who answered the survey which was emailed out to the 800+ members of the volunteer email. Though it was a low level of engagement, it was consistent with past surveys. The volunteers who answered had been volunteers for anywhere between 1 month and 10 + years. The respondents were involved in all aspects of the cinema which, in that context, feels representative.

The questions were open ended, focusing on both positive and negative aspects with questions looking towards future planning. We have chosen to share all submissions, so everyone's voices are heard equally.

#### INTERVIEWS:

Sally set up a desk one Sunday afternoon and invited anyone interested to come and chat. There are three interviews included in this report.

#### VOLUNTEER WRITING

We invited anyone who wanted to contribute to offer up some writing about their experiences. Sally, Joe and Joao offered to write about their experiences in Star and Shadow. Richard and Andrew chose to share about their S&S experiences in our wider Shieldfield community.

The REPORT was collated by Dawn with support from Sally. Jo supported the process of gathering data from the list server, rota and fellow volunteers. Joe, Dawn and Dominika contributed photographs for the main body of the report while Joao and Richard submitted photographs to go along with their writing.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO GAVE THEIR TIME