

Cobalt

(2023)

Studios: Social

**COR
ALT**

Impact

& Cultural

Who we are?

Cobalt is a Community Interest Company (CIC) with 3 unpaid directors.

We exist for culture & community & not for profit, we believe in community & the transformative power of affordable/accessible culture.

We are DIY – this means we build everything ourselves, we largely manage to exist within public funding & self-sufficiency is our aim.

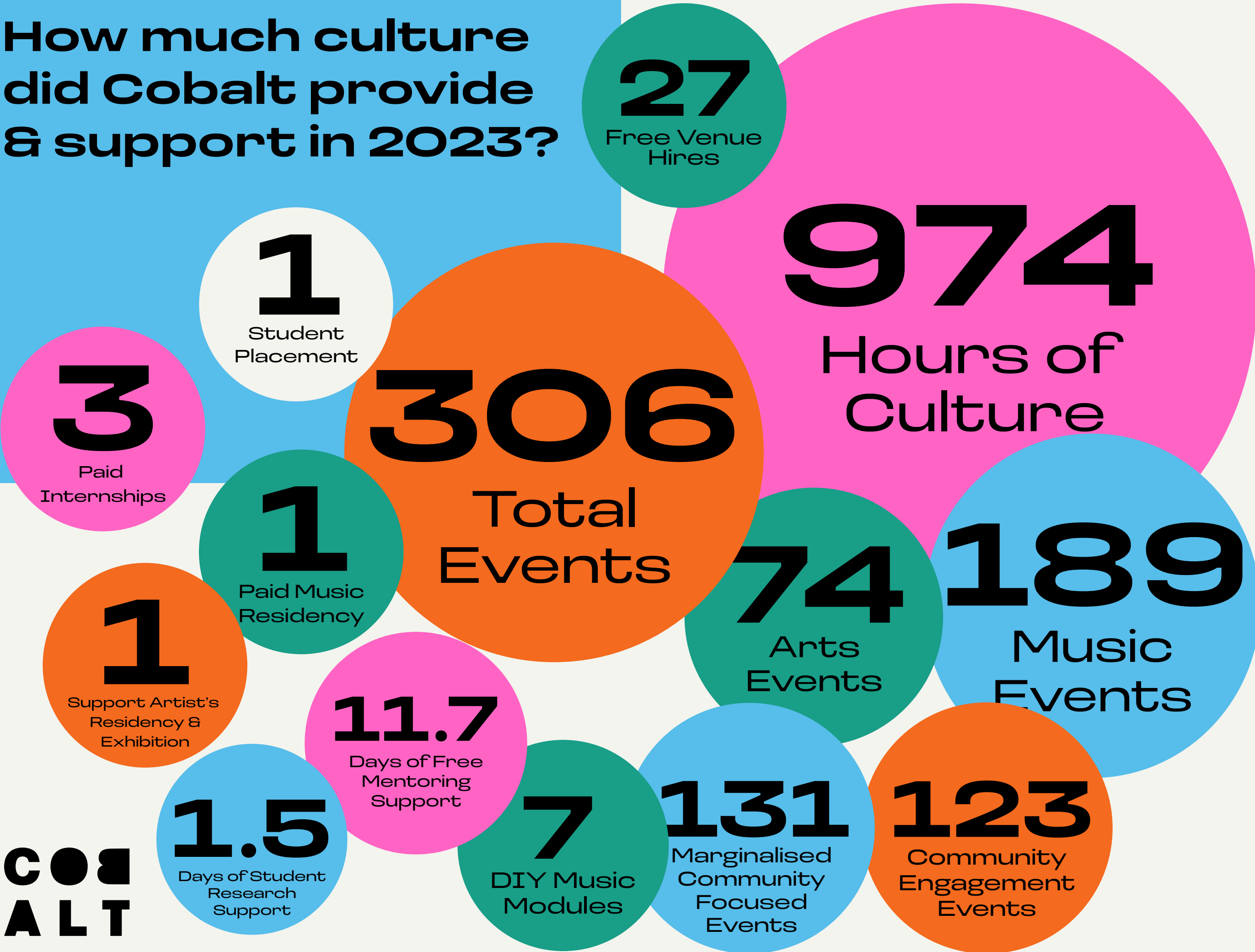
In the event of making a profit, after everybody is paid a fair wage, any excess would be reinvested into culture & community.

We do not receive any regular programme funding, we rely on voluntary work, ticket sales, studio rent and drink sales.

We have received some grants & loans for capital development of our co-working space, more studio spaces and some very small amounts of program funding compared to the income we generate ourselves. Our intent & aim is self sufficiency. However, currently this is proving almost impossible.

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How much culture did Cobalt provide & support in 2023?



Was Cobalt affordable in 2023?

We offered free use of the venue for **27 seprate events** to enable others to make their cultural event affordable and accessible.

81 (26.5%) of our events were **donation-based** or had an honesty box option. We operate a **sliding scale** system for the majority of our ticketed events.

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Average Ticket Price

£8.52

Spring	£8.35
Summer	£8.36
Autumn	£8.84

Free Tickets

2899

Donation Tickets

397

'Surviving' Tickets (£10 <) sold

7751

'Driving' Tickets (£10 - 12) sold

2831

'Thriving' Tickets (£12 - 16) sold

1850

How much education did Cobalt provide & support in 2023?

Cultural & Social Impact (2023)
Cobalt Studios:

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In addition to 47 educational events on our programme, we offered:

200

Hours of free access to DJ decks

for young people from the local community

15

Life Drawing sessions

delivered by local artists for Northumbria University's Design Foundation Year Students

7

Free Introductory Sessions for Young Women in the Music Industry

delivered by Cobalt team members & sound technician and covering programming, advancing, marketing, lighting & sound, artist hospitality and safeguarding.

1

Free venue hire for Drug Harm Reduction training

delivered by The Loop and attended by representatives & teams from 5 independent late-night venues in Newcastle

1

1/2 day free consultancy on Creative Regeneration

How many people
benefitted from
Cobalt in 2023?

1148

Artists

(13% increase from 1019 in 2022)

18,284

Audience

(3% increase from 17,675 in 2022)

Cobalt Studios: Social & Cultural Impact (2023)

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Is Cobalt diverse?

- 10% of our Artist Survey respondents identify as **Disabled**
- 25% identify as **Neurodivergent**
- 35% identify as **LCBTQIA+**

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In 2023 we made opportunities for:

494 Female Artists

581 Male Artists

75 Non-Binary & Gender
Non-Conforming Artists

A quick Google search confirms gender inequality in the music industry is still way too prevalent - we are proud of being almost 50% men v 50% women & gender non-conforming.

Writers signed to 106 UK music publishers:

14.18% female, **85.82 %** male

Artists signed to 2019 UK labels:

19.69% female, **80.31%** male

The Gender Gap Report (2019)

Women and non-binary people claimed **less than 5%** of producer and engineer credits across the top 50 streamed songs of last year.

Fix The Mix Annual Report (April 2023)

How much do we
contribute to the
cultural economy?

Cultural & Social
Impact (2023)
Cobalt Studios

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£87,961

Paid to Artists &
Musicians

£87,154

Paid to Cobalt staff,
technicians & other
freelancers

The Building

Co-Working

Studios

Venue

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**Do we own the
building?**

NO

**We wish we did! More
than anything...**



£30,600

Our rent per annum

26 Years

Our remaining lease

NCC have given us a provisional price to buy the building which takes into account all of the self-building we have done to improve it – we currently have no idea how or where to raise the money. All suggestions and wealthy benefactors welcome to get in touch...

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Our hope & dream is to make cobalt a ‘forever project’ a sacred space for culture that can’t be touched by capitalism or financial predators.

What other income do we have for the venue?

Voluntary Hours (worth £62.4K)

**4160 Hours /
£62,400**

Total Ticket Sales

£93,264

Bar Sales (after VAT & sale costs)

£91,114

Youth Music Grant (to provide 2
DIY Music Internships)

£23,000

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Our focus for 2024

Cultural Impact (2023) Studios : Social & Cobalt

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To protect what we have created to date by getting better at ASKING FOR HELP – urgently!

To with harder to reach communities via off-site workshops and events that helped to drive up awareness of Cobalt, and an understanding of it as a safe space for ALL to visit and enjoy culture.

In line with the objective above – to reevaluate our governance structure and consider the merits of adding a charitable element for educational & outreach work in order to help us secure program funding , which is now much needed.

To develop a membership offering flash sales & discounted tickets our loyal core community
To activate a stakeholder group and a core community membership.

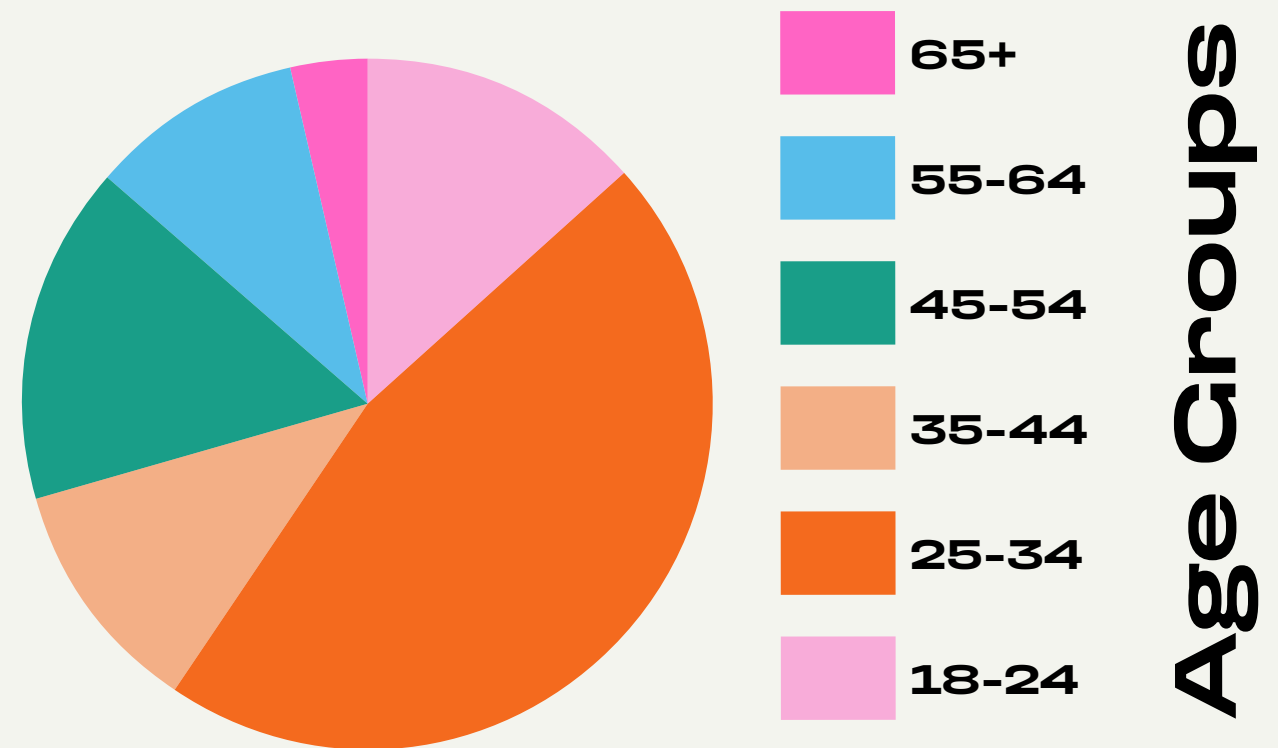
To complete our backyard studios and communal creative space.

To develop & grow our co-working community.

To continue collecting as much data as possible in order to ensure cultural quality, diversity & inclusivity is authentic and evidenced.

What does our Audience say about us?

In October 2023 we launched our **Audience Survey** with an aim to more accurately collect vital data and feedback.



*based on 89 responses.
Cobalt Studios Audience Survey (December 2023)

98.9%

agree that Cobalt is a **safe, inclusive** and **diverse** space

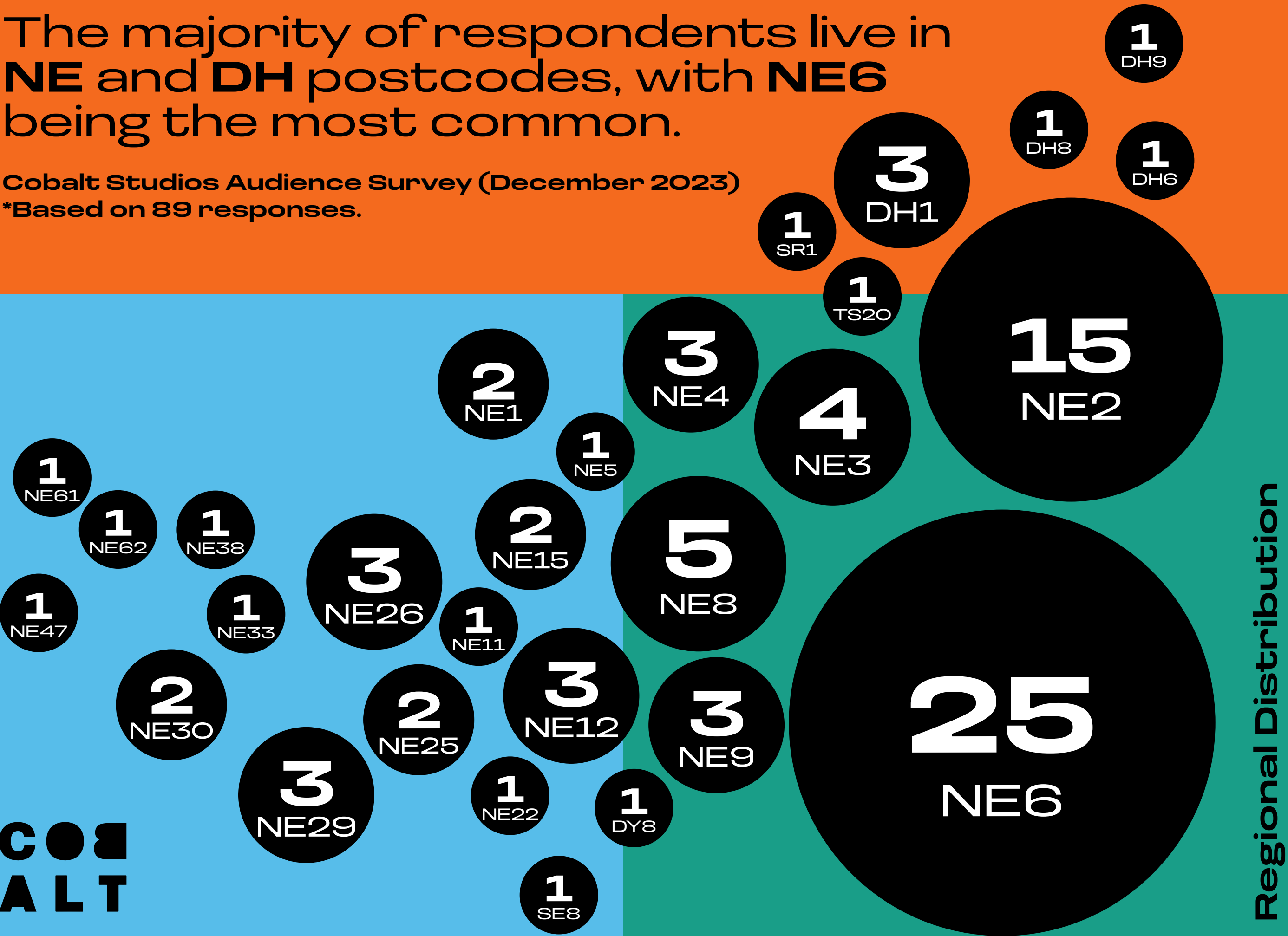
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While the sample size is still small, the responses are already providing us with invaluable insights about our community:

- **38.2%** of respondents consider themselves **LCBTQIA+**
- **30.34%** identify themselves as **Neurodivergent**
- **19%** recognised themselves as **Disabled**

The majority of respondents live in **NE** and **DH** postcodes, with **NE6** being the most common.

Cobalt Studios Audience Survey (December 2023)
*Based on 89 responses.



Cobalt is...

(in a few words of our community)

a place where I go to
to be introduced to
brilliant experimental unknowns
and my favourite
forms of art

space to
fully be myself
without judgement

the safest place
in Newcastle for
the LGBTQIA+
community

unique

the heart and
soul of Ouseburn
and our lives
in Newcastle

refreshing

an amazing
cultural
touchstone

home

a gateway to
new, diverse
music

wholehearted

creative
outlet

integrity

freeing

joyously,
beautifully
inclusive

welcoming

a place to
discover and
be authentic

an accessible,
dynamic amplifier of exciting
and diverse voices

a place that
understands the
importance of care
and compassion
within arts spaces

what the
world needs

COBALT

an
essential part of
alternative culture
in Newcastle

radical

a queer utopia
where I know
I can live freely and
comfortably

Our support for New Music in 2023

One of the core parts of our mission is contributing to the creation of new music by providing the resources and safe space for artists to develop & present new work.

87.4%

Of our Artist Survey respondents presented new material during their performance at Cobalt

22.4%

Performed for the first time as the act presented

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“Cobalt supported new music in creating an atmosphere of possibility and comfort for us to create in, and in providing the venue for us to write and rehearse for the week as well as the live performance opportunity at the end of the week which we could work towards for the rest of the time, gave us a clear goal so that our creative work was focussed and purposeful.”

“Cobalt gave full confidence to our new band/project to premiere music to a growing and thriving music scene as well as allowing us access to the space throughout the week to write, rehearse and fully commit to the creative process which individuals and bands rarely get the opportunity to do.

It has allowed us a band to get off the ground in terms of developing a live show and strengthening our vision for the future. Often bands and projects never get off the ground for the simple reason that there just isn't the space, resources and opportunities for artist and bands to practise, write and perform.”

“Cobalt is one of the only places where I feel as though I can perform freely and have full artistic expression a lot of other venues you have to make yourself more palatable.”

What do Artists say about us?

As part of our effort to establish better avenues for feedback, we started an anonymous **Artist Survey** which is shared with every artist who performs here.

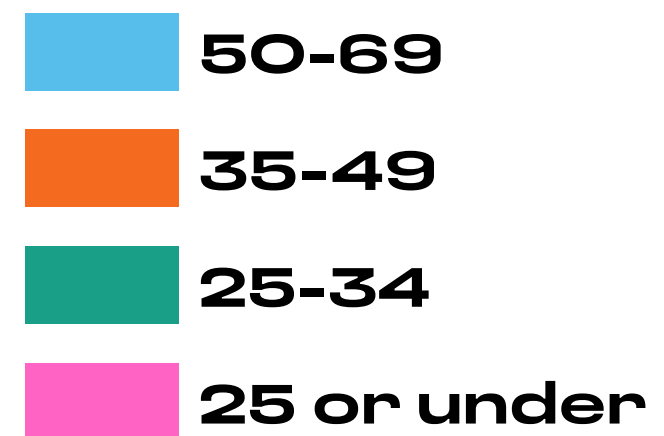
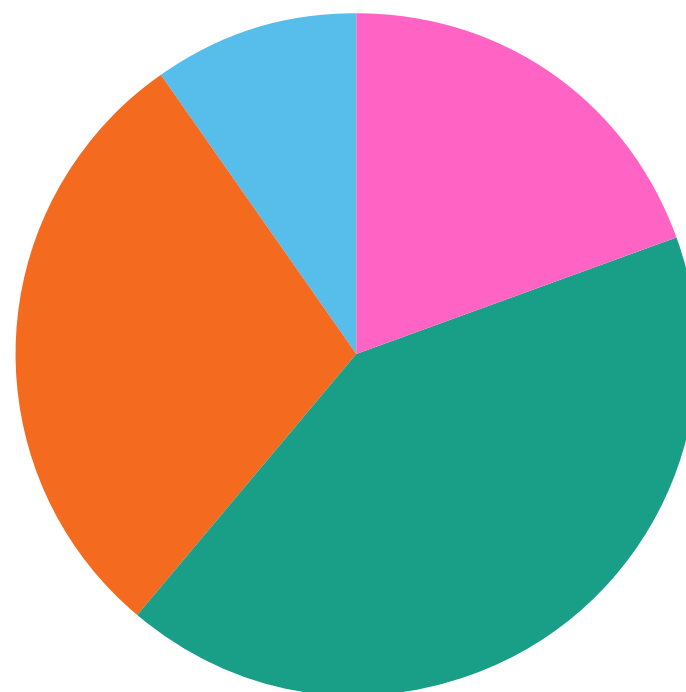
Here's what it reveals after the first year:

- **98.61%** of respondents said Cobalt feels like a **safe space** to showcase new work
- **77%** stated that Cobalt has given them an opportunity hard to find elsewhere
- **90.6%** felt that they were paid **fairly** (average/above average fee)
- **100%** found the audience respectful

99.3%

Felt **well looked after** and **respected** during their time at Cobalt

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Age Groups

*based on 144 responses.
Cobalt Studios Artist Survey (December 2023)

“Cobalt is one of the only places where I feel as though I can perform freely and have full artistic expression.”

“I would like to say that in ten years as a gigging musician I have never been made to feel as welcomed or valued as I did whilst at Cobalt.”

“I have some physical disabilities and was well supported not just in the legal way but in the way that made it so I could save my oomph for the gig. I really appreciate that in a work night. I found the same to be the case when I attended workshops; I was able to focus on doing the workshop.”

“Cobalt is a unique venue in so many ways. Your compassion and care feeds into the music we perform and the way the audience listens.”

“It's the most open and diverse programmed venue in the city.”

“Nowhere else in Newcastle provides that uniquely democratic one-table shared meal experience, it's really special and very much appreciated. Great team of staff too, and clearly a lot of love and dedication involved in the whole enterprise. Just brilliant.”

“Cobalt and the existence of places like it is a vital service to culture in this country.”

“Cobalt is a magic space that prioritises the artist and community higher than anywhere else that I have visited, both as a performer and an audience member. I felt so looked after and cared for. Such levels of hospitality are quite rare!”

“I consider Cobalt to be one in a small few of the most important places in the North East.”

“I think it’s a breath of fresh air in a place where queer venues are sort of in line with this ideal of the pink pound and putting an absolute lack of effort to consolidate the variety of queerness - not everyone wants to be in Rusty’s, the environment at Cobalt is so more coded to nightclubs and raves with great vibes and great people.”

**“Thank you for making us so welcome and creating such an amazing and safe space for so many people , a home for the misfits is always a good thing. I love being part of the Cobalt family”
(key member of the Newcastle LCBTQ+ community)**

“Last night was fantastic, the kings and queens absolutely loved it, the crowd and welcome from you lot is the absolute best. I’m getting so much positive feedback about the venue and particularly from the performers who love everything about it!”

“Anyone who walks through the door is instantly treat like family and is seen as equal. It's undoubtably evident the passion and dedication of the owners Kate & Mark and staff who pour their hearts into Cobalt's non-profit mission. “

“There's not a more deserving venue and team for being supported.”

“At this level, cobalt is the best I've ever been treated as an artist by a venue. My only comments is that I wish there was the money to alleviate some of the time pressures and stress for the team/staff that work there.”

“Keep doing amazing things when its not easy. All our artists love coming up there. Thanks so so much.”

“Cobalt is run by great people & long may it continue!”

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“In a world increasingly defined by consumerism, Cobalt Studios stands as a haven for the arts, music, and culture. It is a place where people of all ages can connect, transcending the boundaries that often divide us. Music, culture, and the arts have always been common ground for humanity, and Cobalt is the epicentre of this unity for people in the North. It provides a safe space for people to escape the demands of modern life and come together through creative, cultural and self exploration.”

“Thank goodness for Cobalt. Very lovely place, keeping to its ideals and vision”

“It has been such a wonderful privilege to become part of the Cobalt family for a little bit. Also been amazing to see the positive impact you have upon the Newcastle community, but also the arts/ nightlife culture as a whole. Can’t wait to see what you’ll do next.”

“I'd also just like to say how much we enjoy club nights at the Cobalt, it has a fantastic atmosphere and energy. Reminds me of the best nights of the early 90s.”

“Cobalt Studios is one of the greatest clubs and spaces in Europe at the moment. And EVERYONE involved should be very proud. The future of clubbing. Dripping with soul and love. No bullshit. No try hard... No hype. The DNA is real. Almost wholesome but always intuitive and pure. <...> every dj should be literally fighting to play here. at ANY cost. a holy grail outpost. They will talk about this place in 50 years time.”

“Cobalt Studios is not just club; it's a sanctuary for the soul, a testament to the power of community, and a guardian of art and culture in the North East of England. Sacred spaces like these need our support and protection.”

“I wanted to send you some words of affirmation because I am still feeling so much love for the tentative caring nature you all shared with us the moment we walked through the doors last night. We felt so at home with you all throughout the night. Thank you for the lovely meal and wonderful hospitality. You’ve built such a unique and special space, a hub for people to feel safe and express themselves. You are all wonderful people and I’m already looking forward to being back again in the near future and seeing you again.”

“Feels like a second home.”

“You guys are amazing. Every time that I’ve performed at Cobalt I have been welcomed with a warm plate of food, genuine interest and support in my musical journey, and a full feeling of support. It’s like visiting a not too distant aunt and uncle!”

“Simply a wonderful experience, it reminds me of touring in places in continental Europe with its focus on art, getting to know everyone, eating communally, very optimistic space”

“We have toured many places across the UK. Never have we experienced the kind of family hospitality and care that Cobalt has provided.”

“Hospitality second to none. Creative, knowledgeable welcoming staff. Well thought through in everything from layout to atmosphere to food and drink.”

“Cobalt is absolutely one of my favourite venues in the country. It's rare and wonderful to be treated as an artist, to be fed, to spend time with the staff and promoters, to play to such an appreciative audience.”

“It's a much needed space for newcastle art scene to give people the opportunity to perform. The crowd is always supportive and I always leave with an elevated mood.”

“Amazing staff, the most inclusive and diverse lgbtq+ safe space in Newcastle”

“It's a wonderful place and I feel so supported and looked after as an artist. I feel less nervous performing here than other venues because I know I'll be supported.”

“I find the team very open and transparent and incredibly welcoming of the queer community”

“I had so much fun and honestly didn't feel judged by anyone at all. First club I've been to without any hassle and had a genuinely care free night.”

“We were treated incredibly well, no other venue we have played gave us a home cooked meal that we got to share with the audience, let alone the amount of leftovers we were sent back to Leeds with!

It was a comforting and inclusive space, and we loved to see the huge range in age and culture of the audience we were fortunate enough to play to.”

**“You really are the loveliest people.
Thank you so much “**

“Cobalt is my favourite venue to play at. The band always gets properly looked after, we get fed delicious food, communication with the venue is good, the buzz is always top”

“This is one of the most incredible diy venues i’ve been to in numerous cities! The aesthetic creativity and community is second to none.”