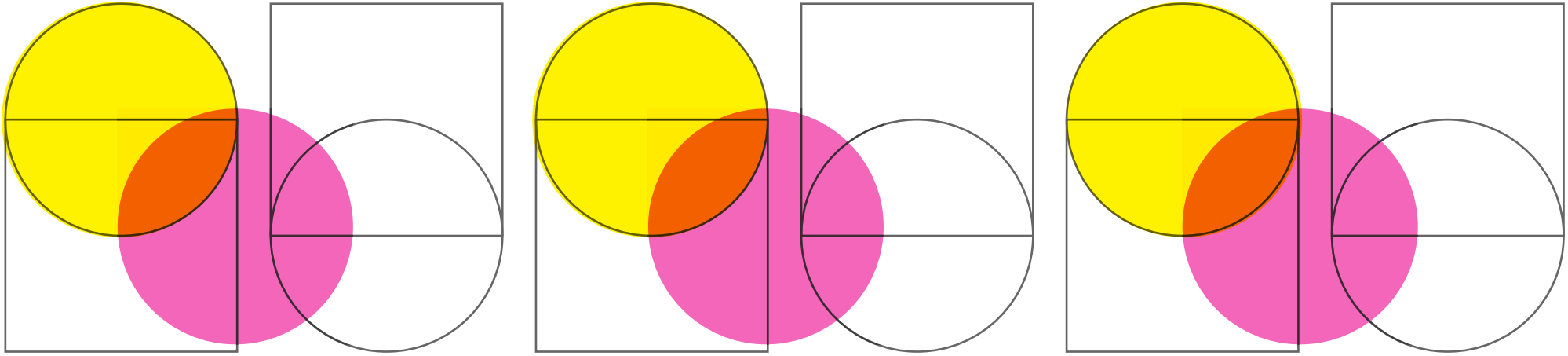


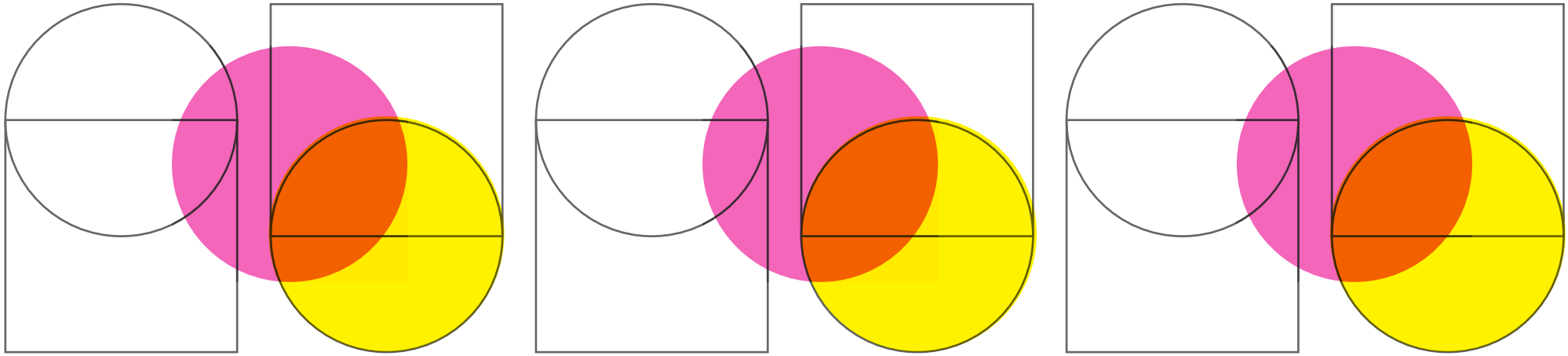
COBALT

SOCIAL & CULTURAL IMPACT REPORT (2025)

WHAT DO WE DO & WHY?



We believe culture is transformative in a million different ways & it must belong to absolutely everybody.



THIS IS HOW WE DO IT:



MAKING CULTURE AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE



ARTIST DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



PROVIDING AFFORDABLE ARTIST STUDIOS



SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS MUSIC



SUPPORTING VISUAL ARTS



UNDERGROUND CLUB CULTURE

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT:



SHOWCASING WIDER CULTURAL EVENTS



LEARNING & DOING: CREATIVE EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT



CULTURAL SKILLS, TRAINING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING



COMMUNITY BUILDING: CO-CURATION, SAYING YES WHEN WE CAN, WORKING DIRECTLY WITH MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES



PROVIDING AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY COWORKING & MEETING SPACE

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE:
How many people benefitted from Cobalt in 2025?

24,836
VISITORS
(Up 12% from 2024)

1543
ARTISTS
(Up 7% from 2024)

19
LOCAL PERFORMERS & COLLECTIVES

5
NATIONAL GRASSROOTS PROMOTERS & COLLECTIVES

141
COWORKERS

10
REGULAR VOLUNTEERS

IRO
35
OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEERS

136
STUDENTS & RESEARCHERS

1
PAID INTERN

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE:

What cultural opportunities & support did we provide in 2025?

1002
HOURS OF CULTURE

292
EVENTS

14
ARTISTS STUDIOS

3
PAID ARTIST RESIDENCIES

1
ARTIST RESIDENCY & EXHIBITION SUPPORTED IN KIND

4
FREE VENUE HIRES FOR FILM / PHOTOSHOOTS

4
INTERVIEW & PANEL APPEARANCES

159
LIVE PERFORMANCE RECORDINGS

15
DJ MIX RECORDINGS

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE:
How much did we contribute to the cultural economy in 2025?



£141.2K

PAID TO ARTISTS & MUSICIANS

£112.3K

PAID TO COBALT STAFF, TECHNICIANS & OTHER FREELANCERS



THIS IS THE **DIFFERENCE** WE **MAKE**...

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are tackling barriers to accessing culture

"Cobalt is a perfect example of the kind of spaces we need more of - affordable and supportive of both underground events and homegrown talent. I always love coming here - the staff are lush, the space is fantastic and the events help me to connect with arts and culture that inspire and revive me."



"A fun, vibrant, affordable, safe, friendly live music venue on my doorstep to get together with my friends and community and to introduce my teenage children to live music and a safe clubbing experience."

"Good exposure to varied cultural program. Entry to most events is exceptionally affordable compared to larger venues so it's easier to take a risk with an interesting but unknown artist or genre in a live setting."



"It brings art that is of a global calibre to our doorstep, things like Harness bring nights that could only be found in mainland Europe to Newcastle."



"An inclusive, safe and exciting place to experience great nights and music and meet folk from different walks of life."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:

We are focusing on accessibility of all types

"You make it possible to see so many artists that I can't imagine would entertain playing anywhere else in the city. Accessibility to culture and community."



"Cobalt were very responsive when I asked for seating because of my arthritic knee. In fact, they produced two benches to accommodate people like me, which was much appreciated. For this reason, people of my generation (older!), were included."

55%

OF AUDIENCE SURVEY RESPONDENTS SELF-IDENTIFY AS COMING FROM WORKING CLASS BACKGROUND

"It's an accessible and welcoming space that offers experience that would otherwise be hard to find."



"Inclusive music from our local community and from around the world. The venue is a safe environment that feels to me like one of the most welcoming and comfortable places that people can gather collectively."

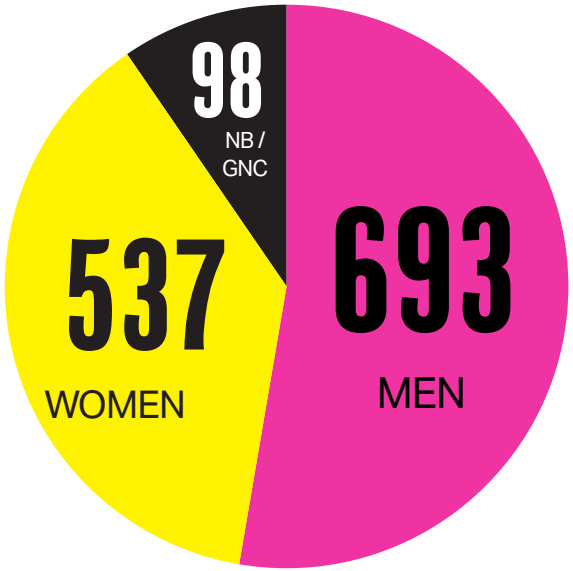


"I like the 3-tier ticket offer. It feels very accessible and makes you feel generous if you pay the top level and ok if you can only afford the bottom level."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:

We are consciously working to welcome everyone here, and believe that the best places are full of different ages, genders, sexualities and cultural backgrounds

Artist gender demographics in 2025:



48%
WOMEN & NON-BINARY / GNC

52%
MEN

112
MARGINALISED COMMUNITY FOCUS EVENTS IN 2025

"Most my friends are a part of the LGBTQI+ community, and having an event and a club where they can be unapologetically themselves is really amazing."

"A completely refreshing space that brings more diverse background and culture than any other space in Newcastle/England that I have been to. Incredible bookings and music taste and the most friendly environment for a club/dance space for people of all backgrounds and gender and culture."

"It's one of the few queer friendly spaces in Newcastle which provides a safe space and a family feel where you can express yourself freely."

"A wonderfully inclusive environment. As a 77- year old I felt instantly comfortable and welcome."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are amplifying marginalised communities



"Because I'm physically disabled the spaces and events held at Cobalt and Ernest are an important creative outlet to me, it's one of the only things that makes me feel like me these days and I and many others would be impacted if they were lost."

"Thank you for everything you all do for the community as a whole, it really does mean a lot to have a such a genuinely welcoming venue, where everyone can feel welcome and safe. It doesn't happen very often. Allies are an essential part of our community and we appreciate what you do."

"I really can't express how appreciative I am of you for offering the space and more generally for all the support and community building you do: this is the REAL THING, and 'big local venues' wouldn't understand."



"Queer-friendly cultural space that is an alternative to the trad 'scene', more welcoming particularly to trans and NB folk."



"Thank you for your feedback and above all, the courage to take on an artist like him [queer artist of colour making experimental leftfield music] in Newcastle."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are saying yes wherever possible

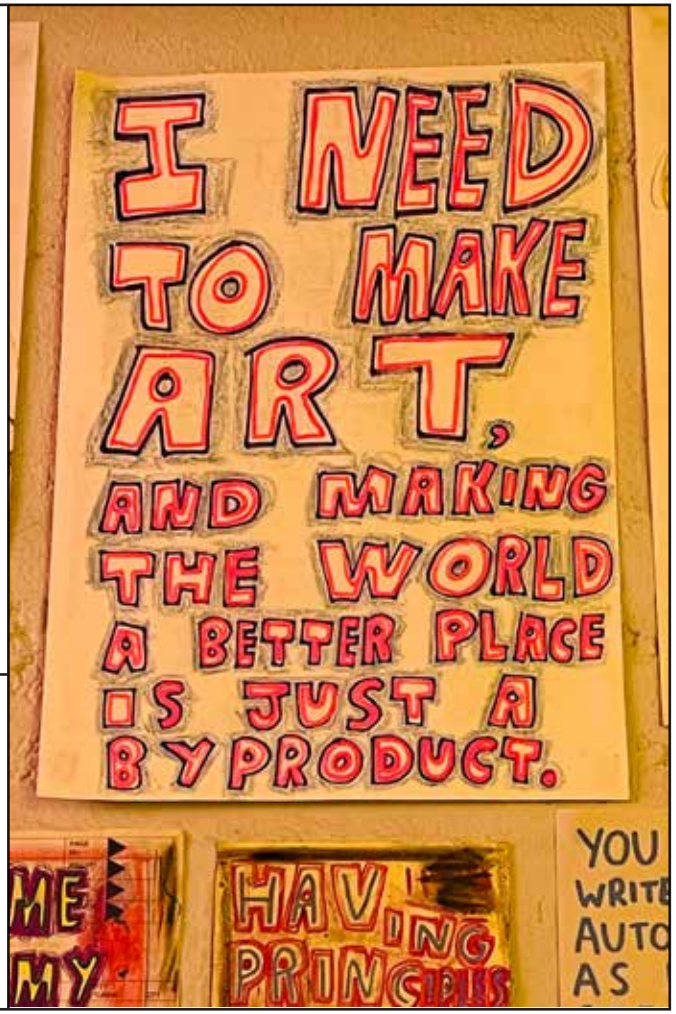
"Cobalt has given us a chance, where many others haven't! Nights like these are so important for artists and communities."

"Having the space to perform and being given complete artistic freedom is a privilege and I don't take the opportunity lightly."

82%

of artist survey respondents say Cobalt has given then an opportunity that has been hard to find elsewhere.

"Thanks to you both as well for taking a punt on a slightly unknown event. Overall it was, once again, one of the best gigging experiences I've had so thank you so much - a total vibe throughout. You should be very very proud of what you have created (and continue to sustain) at Cobalt as it's very special indeed."



THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are safeguarding and celebrating grassroots music from all over the world

"It is one of very few places that incubate creativity at the grassroots level. It is so important to the culture of the areas."

"Cobalt is one of those venues that lucky generations have, that works tirelessly to sustain culture from the ground up."



"Cobalt is such an important venue for me as a composer and cellist. It always allows me to take risks and try new compositions in a very safe and relaxed environment."

"Quality, integrity, world class cultural opportunities on my doorstep. Bands and acts I didn't know I needed in my life."

"Cobalt celebrates all communities and consistently offers a welcoming environment to its artists and attendees. <…> Grassroots venues, like Cobalt, are intrinsic to development - providing support and opportunities to a diverse range of artists wherever they are at in their career."

"Crucial for artists to get to play their music, both new and established. Cobalt also seems to be a really important player in the cultural life of the area and really cares about the young people in the city."



"Really is the core of the underground electronic music scene in Newcastle and attracts international talent that would otherwise never have visited or maybe even heard of the scene here. Artists want to come back to play at Cobalt because of how great and inclusive the venue is. Without Cobalt the scene in the North East would lack a lot of heart and originality."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are creating space for unheard, unseen and unusual culture

"Music you'd struggle to see live anywhere else in the North East."



"Access to an abundance of cultural displays. There are so many new genres of music I've discovered and grown to love and there's a great sense of respect for the acts and generally everyone there."

"You bring unique, diverse events and artists. Stuff that I'd usually have to travel to London or Manchester for. I'm very grateful for it."

"Cobalt is ESSENTIAL for the Newcastle's underground music and arts scene. It offers something to people who are tired of mainstream programmes."

"Venues like Cobalt are so important for supporting unusual, daring and passionate music, platforming innovative ideas that exist beyond the (narrow concept of) mainstream."



"Cobalt is such an important venue for underground music that pushes the forefront of eclectic sounds."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are building a grassroots music ecosystem

4

NEW EVENT PROMOTER COLLECTIVES SUPPORTED IN 2025

31

FREE VENUE HIRES FOR EVENTS IN 2025

"Kate truly embodies the spirit of grassroots venues, and it is clear that she is deeply invested in nurturing and supporting the UK's music scene as a whole, extending the same care and effort that she offers to everyone who enters Cobalt Studios."

"Grassroots venues like Cobalt are absolutely essential to the development of creative communities."

"Essential to showcase emerging talent, giving opportunities for younger people to take part and offering a sense of community and social engagement for music lovers, enriching the cultural landscape and stimulating local economies. a ripple effect of positive change in the communities and culture landscape."

"Essential for giving smaller/up and coming artists a chance to perform and hone their craft in a friendly and welcoming environment."

"The UK needs grassroots music venues to support the next generation of musicians and the music industry. Open studio days shows us behind the scenes at Cobalt and the possibility of earning a living as an artist. Great to have a co working space available locally and network with locals."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are sharing our knowledge & investing in upskilling

46

HOURS OF FREE CONSULTANCY

"Kate at Cobalt Studios has been a great support in helping me establish our new venue, Arts Club Cambridge. She has been incredibly generous with both her time and her expertise, and has asked for nothing in return. Her advice and suggestions during a critical stage of our inception were instrumental in helping me focus on the most important elements of creating a space that truly serves both the community and artists."

"As someone who had no experience in the music industry prior to working here, I'm incredibly grateful to Cobalt for seeing the value in my skills and believing in my potential rather than looking for formal qualifications."

"As women from working class backgrounds, people from our kind of background don't often find themselves with the opportunities to actually do anything in this industry – we face a lot of barriers to success, barriers to participation in general. This internship has allowed us to have an opportunity that we might not otherwise have had."

"I truly appreciate your willingness to share your insights and experiences, which have provided invaluable perspectives for my research. Your DIY spirits and the community engagement was particularly enlightening, and I am confident that the information gathered will significantly enhance the quality of my work."

"I also would like to mention the fact I wasn't successful in the traditional academic path (largely due to unaddressed ADHD/ mental health issues), yet Cobalt has provided me with full time employment in an area that I'm really passionate about, as well as learning opportunities. <…> I see this consideration and openness to people from different backgrounds time and time again in the way you select staff. Personally, I can't say enough how much this opportunity has meant to me, and what a positive effect working here has had (and continues to have!) on all aspects of my life."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:

We are promoting wellbeing & helping counter poor mental health and social isolation

"This neighbourhood is crucial to the lifeblood of Newcastle for many including myself because of the artistic communities they house and the creative relationships they foster, I personally consider them important for my wellbeing."

32%

OF AUDIENCE SURVEY RESPONDENTS SELF-IDENTIFY AS NEURODIVERGENT

"I suffer with terrible anxiety and Cobalt is the only place I feel comfortable to have a dance."

"Events allow me to socialize and unwind. To feel connected to the world and others with similar tastes."

"Honestly it saved my life coming to Cobalt, it's such a loving accepting place and everyone that works there makes sure you're safe."





"A place where my creativity finds a place to be inspired and my nervous system rests."

"A space I can come alone to and feel I belong to something bigger."

"It's such a neurodivergent friendly space too! I was in my element."

"A chance to truly express myself without judgement."

"A safe space for the community where we can express ourselves."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are working with awareness & care for our environment

Sustainability, care for the environment and 'reduce, reuse, recycle' principles are embedded in the way we work. The vast majority of building and repairs at Cobalt is done with second hand, recycled and repurposed materials. We work with what we have, and favour mending & repair over buying new.

Most of our cooking is vegetarian or vegan, we cook from local, seasonal ingredients, wonky or 'too good to go' produce & food waste.



Our programme newspapers are printed on FSC-certified paper, and sourced from producers that have met a strict set of environmental and socially responsible standards.

There are solar panels installed on the roof of our building. In 2025, they provided 9,500 KWh of electricity (20% of our usage).

In 2025, we switched to reusable plastic cups for most of our club nights and busy events, reducing the use of disposable plastics by 75%.





THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE:
We are celebrating the North East & inspiring regional pride

"Places like Cobalt that work to bring equity and inclusion to the local cultural scene make me really proud to be a Northern artist."

"Access to a whole world of arts, culture, skill-building and community that lights me up and is a major highlight of living in the North East."

"Culture, vision, independence. That thing that you love about Newcastle's music scene that you can't put your finger on? That's Cobalt."

"Cobalt might well be our favourite club in the UK now. What a special place you've created and a beacon of hope for the UK nightlife scene."

"Cobalt is one of several jewels in our wonderful Ouseburn bubble and I am always proud to show it to visitors to the city."

"Cobalt is <…> a venue that consistently appears on many tours such as Jasmine Myra, Caoilfhionn Rose, Nat Sharp, etc. and has become such a pinnacle of northern music culture that welcomes artists of any kind."

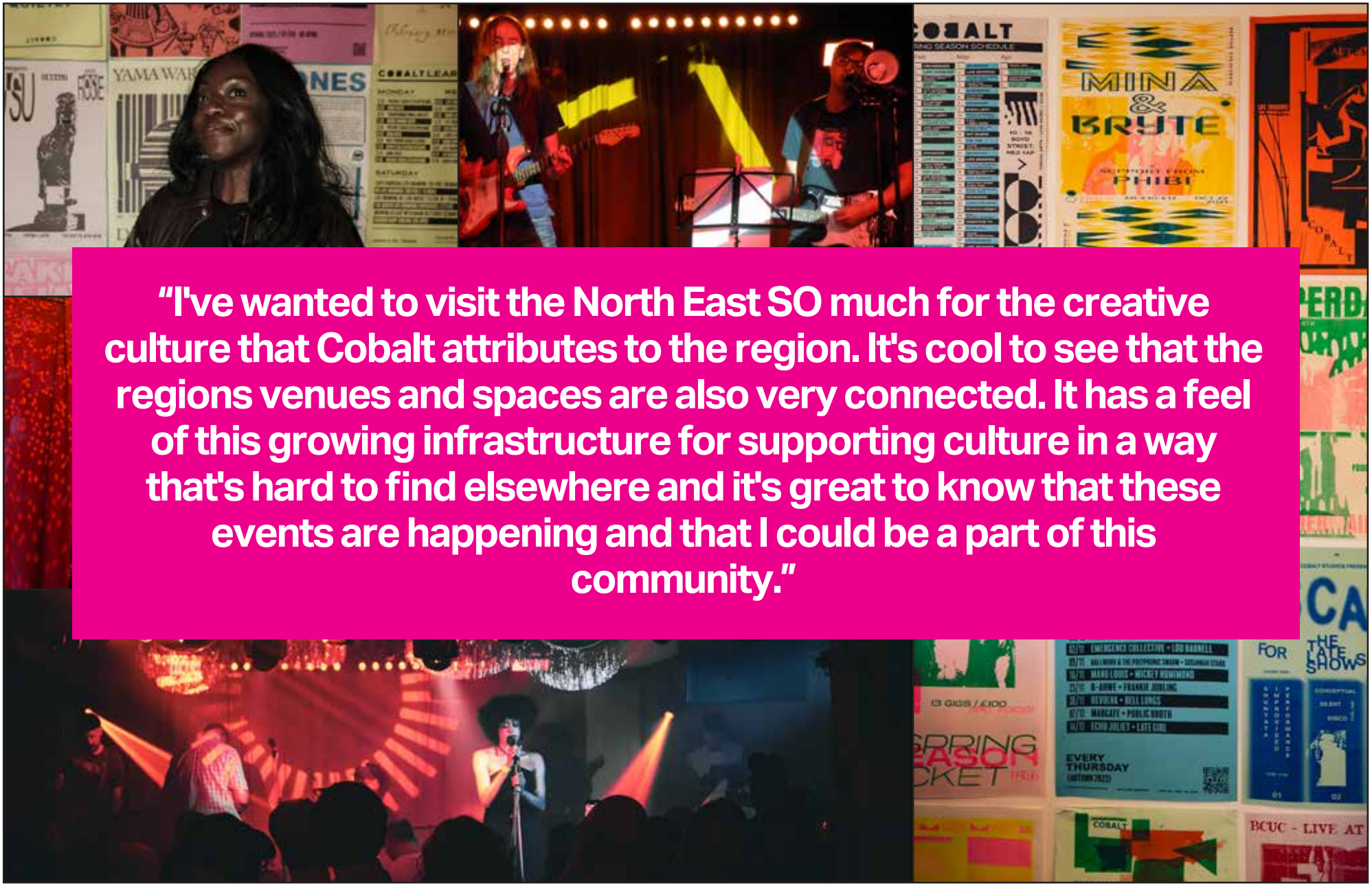
"My favourite place, and the reason I am still in Newcastle."

"Spaces like Houghton Festival, Phonoteque, Bonanza Festival, Cobalt Studios, Ring, and many more… all showed me different ways people can connect through sound." – Unai Trotti, interview with Resident Advisor.

"I just wanted to say, while I have a minute, that you're far and away one of the best promoters I've ever worked with and you and your venue are brilliant for the North East music scene and North East culture."

"[Cobalt brings] more culture and more northern artists that may not have had the light as much if not for Cobalt."

"I think one of the musicians said she had heard that there were good people at Cobalt and she was right. I am not usually free on Thursday evenings and live in Derbyshire but am very glad I found you and will look out for future events."



"I've wanted to visit the North East SO much for the creative culture that Cobalt attributes to the region. It's cool to see that the regions venues and spaces are also very connected. It has a feel of this growing infrastructure for supporting culture in a way that's hard to find elsewhere and it's great to know that these events are happening and that I could be a part of this community."

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?

A CLOSER LOOK AT LAST YEAR...

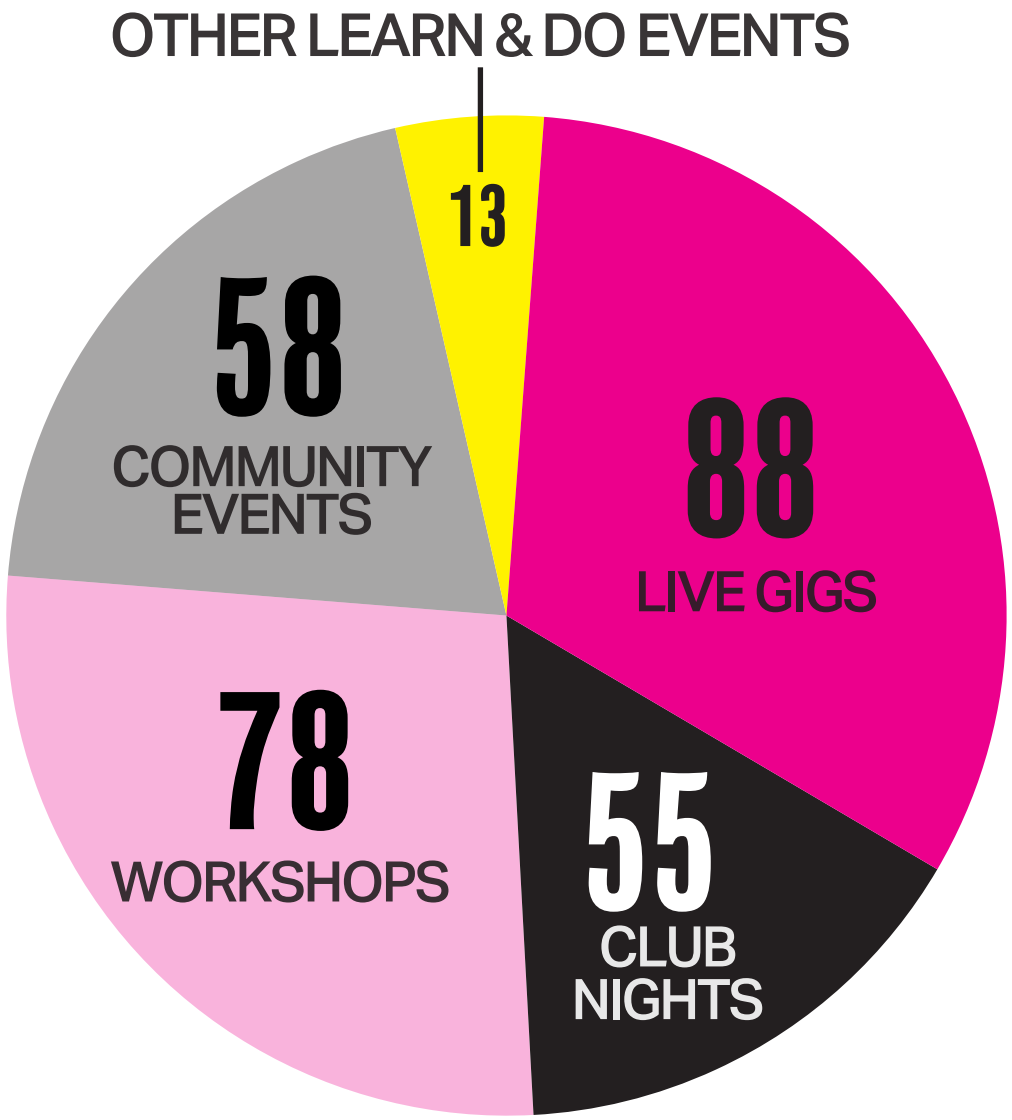
HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
A varied & diverse programme

Each year, Cobalt offers 33 weeks of diverse programming, spanning live music, club nights, creative learning, workshops, community engagement events, artist residencies and more.

Committed to diverse, experimental and left-of-centre cultural offerings, we programme harder to place music and art, blur genre boundaries and make space for new music and risk-taking creative endeavours.

There is a strong focus on bringing world-class culture and artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as supporting the local scene by offering educational, performance and development opportunities (i.e. support slots dedicated exclusively to local musicians, residencies).

We operate a co-creative approach to programming by offering free space, accessible venue hire and co-promotion opportunities to local creatives, facilitators, community leaders and collectives to put on their own events, and by maintaining an active dialogue with our community via a regular steering group and audience survey.



HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Our support for new music & artist development

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

51
NEW MUSIC EVENTS IN 2025

FRESH

Our FRESH Thursdays event series is aimed at introducing new music, or music new to Newcastle, to local audiences. It is usually a non-hierarchical double bill, with a significant number of performance slots given to up-and-coming artists from Newcastle and beyond. We also provide a home-cooked dinner from seasonal ingredients at just £3 in addition to the £8 gig ticket.

Over the years, FRESH has developed a loyal and receptive audience willing to trust the programming and discover music they are not yet familiar with.

Artist Residencies

With support from PRS Foundation via their Talent Development Network (TDN), we have been able to host 3 paid residencies at Cobalt in 2025:

In May, we welcomed Patrick Ziza whose work spans performance, installation, sound, movement, and voice.





In October, Contours (Tom Burford) & Dan Valentine undertook a residency exploring their combined creative approaches to live performance, the intersection between organic percussive timbres and synthetic textures.

In December, we invited ZINZILE to explore and deepen into their multi-medium practice.



During the week they spent at Cobalt, the artists created and presented brand newwork – see our YouTube channel to find out more.

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Our support for new music & artist development

VIDEO RECORDINGS & YOUTUBE CHANNEL

The funding from PRS Foundation has also enabled us to install a camera rig in the venue for recording live performances. The recordings are then provided to artists to use for promotion, EPKs and to aid in seeking performance opportunities.

As part of the project, we have also launched a YouTube channel, with aim to develop it into a digital platform, and enable the artists who play at Cobalt to reach a wider audience.



159

PERFORMANCES RECORDED IN 2025







HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Learning & Doing: creative education

Each season we offer a range of creative workshops and community engagement events, ranging from open mics, life drawing & crafts workshops to singing and dancing sessions.

All Learn & Do events are offered at affordable/-donation entry, open to all levels of experience and facilitated by makers and artists from the local community.

Our educational programme is largely co-curated with our network of creatives – we believe in saying 'yes' to people's ideas wherever we can and providing space and support to bring their vision to life.



142

LEARN & DO EVENTS IN 2025

HERE IS A GLANCE AT THE NEW LEARN & DO EVENTS COBALT WELCOMED IN 2025:

Creative Workshops NE CIC launched their first seasonal workshop programme at Cobalt. Over the course of 7 weeks, they delivered accessible workshops on portraiture, zine-making, weaving, ceramics and more, facilitated by local artists, creators, and designers.

RADIOPHONICx – a communal listening event that presents award-winning international radio art to a live audience, curated by Gabriele Heller, an independent sound and theatre artist.

For 8 weeks in autumn, we hosted **Photography 2.0**, an accessible weekly photography course delivered by photographer Geoff Weston. The full course was offered at a price £25, with a pay as you feel option for anyone on low or no income.

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?

L.A.D'S: our support for female & gender non-conforming DJs

L.A.D's (Ladies and Decks) is our in-house programme of workshops, open decks sessions, socials and club nights. It is aimed at providing educational and peer support opportunities for female & GNC people, as well as uplifting female & GNC DJs and artists.

L.A.D's workshops & open decks sessions are held regularly during our event seasons. With support from Youth Music, we provide 3 sets of DJ decks for attendees to practice on, guided by volunteer mentors. The sessions also usually feature a panel or informal presentation, delivered by local female & GNC DJs – topics have ranged from DJ software, mixing records, music production, to event promotion and navigating the music industry.

All L.A.D's workshops are free to attend, with an option to donate. Our L.A.D's Presents club nights are offered at a more accessible price point and/or with discounts to workshop attendees.

IN 2025, COBALT OFFERED & SUPPORTED:

12
L.A.D'S WORKSHOP/ OPEN DECKS SESSIONS

Delivered by local female & gender non-conforming DJs. Supported by Youth Music grant.

9
FEMALE, NON-BINARY & GENDER NON-CONFORMING FACILITATORS

Paid at £15/hr, in line with the real Living Wage, to plan and deliver workshops and provide input on project development.

15
DJ MIX RECORDINGS

On professional DJ equipment, with selected mixes published on Cobalt and L.A.D's Soundcloud.

28
PAID DJ SETS AT COBALT

22 headline sets and 6 support sets played by L.A.D's residents and female & gender non-conforming DJs.

48
PAID DJ SETS AT ERNEST CAFE BAR

Played by L.A.D's residents. For a number of artists, this was their first paid and/or public DJ performance, and has since led to more bookings at other venues.

"L.A.D's provides a judgement free space to just have a go! I wouldn't have had the confidence to carry on learning without L.A.D's and I'm glad I now get to represent women in the Newcastle scene as it's not always super diverse."

"It is unique and a beautiful environment where people come a couple times just to meet people or regularly to learn to mix. I've seen people progress so much by coming to lads"

"I have told my students to come to your nights. The young women I teach in particular can really benefit from inclusive electronic music making."

"[With support from L.A.D's] I recorded a mix which was picked up by Resident Advisor!"

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Our support for underground club culture

At Cobalt, we believe in the power of the dancefloor & the communal experience of electronic music to bring connection, freedom of expression and transformation. Club culture also makes space for marginalised communities more than any other cultural form. As such, club nights are an important part of our programme, built upon years of hard work establishing connections with artist agencies, electronic music labels and collectives. We programme our club nights with a deep commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion behind the decks, and an aim to introduce an eclectic range of electronic genres.

In 2025, Cobalt welcomed respected DJs and artists from the UK and beyond, such as Craig Richards, Erol Alkan, Optimo (Espacio), CCL, Unai Trotti, Beatrice Dillon, Vlada, Yu Su & more.

We are dedicated to fostering a safe(r) space that is welcoming to dancers, listeners and performers alike, and that can be a catalyst for self-discovery and free expression. Part of this includes operating a no-photo policy and having a late-night welfare team.

"This last year was the first time I went to Cobalt and it was amazing. I thought Newcastle only had sticky clubs with sing along music and this really opened my eyes. Everything from the music to the lights really made the space feel transformative and introduced to some great music."

"Real club culture."

"You bring an actual proper club venue that cares about curated proper DJ sets from some of the finest there are right now and without it, Newcastle would be massively different without that culture, which is some of the most vibrant and meaningful cultural expression and participation there is."

"A completely different "club" dynamic, it felt so inclusive and such a safe place for everyone to dance and have a good time. Every time I've been everyone is lovely and I feel no judgement."

"Exposure to music and club culture that isn't showcased anywhere else in the city – clubbing done right!!"



Club nights are also a vital financial driver for Cobalt.

The income generated by our club events largely contributes towards sustaining the rest of our programme, and allows us to heavily subsidise lower capacity, often loss-making educational & community events earlier in the week.

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Digital development

In 2025, we launched a YouTube Channel for Cobalt, where we regularly publish gig recordings, artist interviews and features on residencies. By creating a digital archive, we aim to increase accessibility and reach wider audiences who may not be able to attend our shows in person, as well as establish a platform to further uplift new music and artists who perform here.

We have also started developing SoundCloud profiles for Cobalt DJ mixes, as well as L.A.D's, with an aim to help up-and-coming local DJs increase their reach and secure performance opportunities.



11.2K
YOUTUBE VIEWS

739
HOURS OF YOUTUBE WATCH TIME

1.4K
SOUNDCLOUD PLAYS

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DIFFERENCE?
Partnership & collaborations

Cobalt exists within a wider network of grassroots music collectives and organisations, and we are proud of the connections we made with like-minded projects from Newcastle and beyond. Here are the collaborative events we worked on in 2025:

Oram/100 x Cobalt

We teamed up with the Oram Awards to host a workshop on experimental electronic music and bring the legendary Beatrice Dillon to Newcastle, as part of Oram Awards' tour honouring Daphne Oram's centenary.

Freerotation Takeover

In November, Steevio & Suzybee brought us a taste of their revered, stoutly underground, musically utopian festival Freerotation in a stellar line-up.

Bakk Heia Takeover

In March, we invited Bakk Heia, Manchester-based record label and collective, for an 8-hour takeover event, curating a night of sonic travelling from an immersive sound bath into genre-defying DJ and live sets.

Gut Level Takeover

After connecting via Field Maneuvers, we invited fellow DIYers & music heads from Gut Level in Sheffield to take over our booth and our floor to bring us a taste of their community.

Rhythm Section takeover: Future Proof workshop with Todd Edwards

In June, Cobalt collaborated with Rhythm Section, London-based label and collective, to bring house legend, DaftPunk collaborator & Grammy winner Todd Edwards to Newcastle for a club night & interactive workshop, as part of their Future Proof programme.

Field Maneuvers Takeover

We were invited to host a stage takeover by Field Maneuvers, one of the UK's most beloved grassroots electronic music festivals, inspired by the free-party movement and hailed by Crack Magazine as the 'UK's best-kept secret'.

PRS Foundation 25th Anniversary celebrations: Songwriting masterclass

After connecting via Field Maneuvers, we invited fellow DIYers & music heads from Gut Level in Sheffield to take over our booth and our floor to bring us a taste of their community.

HOW DO WE MANAGE TO KEEP OUR DOORS OPEN?

OUR TEAM



4.8K

DIRECTORS' VOLUNTARY HOURS

WORTH IRO

£72K

IN KIND

We are a small, largely voluntary team, each juggling many different responsibilities to keep Cobalt going. The organisation heavily relies on unpaid work from the directors, who run Cobalt on top of their day jobs running Ernest & Ernie, our sister businesses. Cobalt currently only has one full-time employee working the full year; our venue manager and the rest of the venue team work seasonally, and the two part-time office-based roles are supplemented and sustained by work for Ernest & Ernie.

Meet the people behind Cobalt:

JASMINE
(Digital & Marketing Manager, 3.5 days/week)

- Looks after all things digital
- Managing the Cobalt website
- Customer relations for venue and co-working
- Director of online retail
- marketing strategy, works out how to reach people & make ticket sales happen!
- Event listings and marketing, ticketing platform management
- Creative promo & video content production
- Creator of moving imagery for backdrops in the venue
- Advisor & front of knowledge on all things DIY, experimental music
- Musician and creative

KATE
(Unpaid Director & Founder)

- Programmes around 300 events a year
- Creative strategy & brainstorming lead!
- Cooks IRO 3500 meals a year
- Grant writer, grant manager
- Looks after social media
- Safeguarding & welfare lead
- Outreach, education & engagement lead
- Networking & partnership person
- PR





MARK
(Unpaid Director & Founder)

- Builds & designs Cobalt
- General direction & planning
- Fixes all the broken things all the time
- Recycles, repairs, renews & betters
- all electronic equipment and maintenance
- Accounting, cash ups, PAYE & VAT for Ernie, Ernest Cobalt
- Fire & building safety
- Looks after tenants
- Keeper of the keys
- In-house dancer!



SAMI
(Programme Assistant & Admin, Full Time)

- Programme support of all types
- General central point of all elements of organisation
- Event advancing & production
- Artist communications
- Accessibility lead
- L.A.D's & Open Circuit co-ordinator
- Impact evaluation lead
- YT & SoundCloud channel management
- Drinks orders, supplier relations & procurement, stock management
- Paperwork & payroll prep
- HR policies & procedures
- Co-working receptionist & administrator
- DJ, artist & all round brilliantly capable person



JAKE
(Lead Designer & Creative, Part Time)

- Creates all event artwork
- Designs and prints posters
- Designs our programme newspaper, drinks menus, training manuals and in-house documents,
- Illustrator, Artist, Printmaker
- Educator



BAR & VENUE TEAM
(Part Time)

- Run the bar and box office
- Help in the kitchen
- Advise on the programme
- Distribute our programme newspaper
- Help with off-season deep cleaning & maintenance work
- Look after artists & audience.



JACOB
(Venue Manager, Part Time)

- Artist liaison and venue representative
- Co-curates club night bookings
- Runs club nights and majority of event shifts
- Manages rota & staff relations
- Responsible for sound & lights on club nights
- Helps curate drinks menu
- Very good at knowing what's going on in the city and well beyond, general advisor
- Runs his own electronic music collective

We also work with a number of skilled freelancers who are responsible for sound engineering for our live gigs, and our club night security.

WHAT INCOME DO WE HAVE FOR THE VENUE?

Cobalt operates a hybrid business model with diversified income streams:

£67,190

RENTAL INCOME FROM ARTIST STUDIOS & CO-WORKING

Our artist studios are at full occupancy, generating a stable baseline income. Together with the income generated by hot desk rent in our co-working space, this helps offset our rent & utilities for the building, as well as building-wide expenses (insurance, maintenance, cleaning, waste management, etc.)

£216,047

TICKET SALES

The ticket sales for our events are Cobalt's largest source of income particularly club nights and is reinvested fully into our programme – artist fees, direct event expenses, marketing, etc.

£133,235

BAR & CLOAKROOM SALES

The income from drinks, food and cloakroom sales contributes towards staffing and a whole host of other costs of running a business and a physical space – licencing fees, internet, equipment repairs and replacement, cleaning after events, staff training etc., as well as our loan repayments.

£5,921

VENUE HIRE

Private hire & hire for promoter events currently constitutes a very small proportion of our income and also contributes towards the previously mentioned costs.

£15,178

GRANTS

In 2025, Cobalt received grant income from Youth Music and PRS Foundation. The grant money is allocated towards specific projects delivered in addition to our regular programme & activity. It allows us to significantly expand the scope of our work for the funding period, however, to date, we have been unable to secure capital funding to sustain and safeguard what we have built.

£361

PRINT & STATIONARY SALES

In 2025, we launched a web shop for risograph prints, and we also have a small stationery shop in the co-working space. Sales are very occasional and currently they do not generate a significant amount of income, however, merchandise and art sales are something we plan to expand on in the future.

GRANTS

Cobalt was set up with an intention to build a fully self-sustaining business and was never intended to be a funded organisation or rely on grants. However, as we navigate the unstable and unpredictable financial landscape post-Covid, in the face of international conflicts and cost of living crisis, it is increasingly challenging to make numbers add up. With such financial backdrop, seeking external funding has become a necessity to safeguard our present and secure our future.

However, this requires a significant investment of money and time, and the grants that we do get are usually for additional projects, not simply helping to deliver what we already do, which is really what we actually need.

8

FUNDING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED IN 2025

2

GRANTS AWARDED IN 2025

£4,382

PAID TO CONTRACTORS FOR EVALUATION TO SUPPORT AN APPLICATION FOR CRUCIAL CAPITAL FUNDING (UNSUCCESSFUL)

£8,280

PAID TO BID WRITERS (APPLICATION WRITING SUPPORT, COMMISSION FROM SUCCESSFUL GRANTS)

COUNTLESS HOURS OF WORK

SPENT WRITING & PREPARING MATERIALS FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT IT COSTS US JUST TO OPEN OUR DOORS...

EXPENSES SHARED BY THE WHOLE BUILDING:

ANNUAL RENT (INC BACKYARD)	£33,150.00
GAS & ELECTRICITY	£13, 436.21
WATER	£2,123.67
WASTE	£1,277.34
PROFRESSIONAL CLEANERS 1-2 X PER WEEK, CLEANING MATERIALS	£7,824.97
IN-HOUSE CLEANER ONCE PER WEEK	£3,417.82
INSURANCE	£6,158.86
LEGAL EXPENSES	£81.00
STUDIO REPAIRS	£227.79

£67,697.66

Partly covered by...

STUDIO & RENT INCOME:

STUDIO RENT INCOME	£43,181.61
STUDIO UTILITIES PAYMENTS	£3,918.14
SAELA SAUNA RENT INCOME	£2,200.00
CO-WORKING HIRE INCOME *(Less IT software & consumables, equipment, sundries)*	£17,890.57

£67,190.32

LOANS:

BOUNCE BACK LOAN	£6,846.77
BIG ISSUE 1	£6,732.00
BIG ISSUE 3	£9,932.28

£23,511.05

VENUE & PROGRAMME ADMIN EXPENSES

TELEPHONE & INTERNET	£2,885.79
IT SOFTWARE & CONSUMABLES (WEBSITE & MAINTENANCE ETC)	£2,241.34
SUBSCRIPTIONS	£1,694.85
AUDIT & ACCOUNTANCY	£4,345.40
LICENCING	£717.60
PRS	£1,200.00
BANK TRANSFER FEES	£549.86
PRINTING	£1,543.58
POSTAGE	£654.23
VENUE BUILDING WORKS	£1,259.21
MAINTENANCE	£1,054.57
SMALL CONSUMABLES	£184.79
SUNDRIES	£6,159.09
BAR COSTS	£5,147.24
VENUE DIRECT DEBIT EXPENSES	£2,416.31
EQUIPTMENT REPAIRS & REPLACEMENTS	£1,249.10
WEEKLY MAINTENANCE & CLEAN, OFF SEASON CLEAN/TRAINING	£8,210.25
ADMINISTRATION (SAMI'S WAGE)	£20,800.00

£54,102.96

ANNUAL PAPER DISTRO COSTS	£7,131.71
NEWSPAPER PRINTING	£5,685.00
MARKETING & ADVERTISING	£8,537.67
DESIGNER'S SALARY	£13,312.00
DIGITAL & MARKETING MANAGERS SALARY	£18,666.67

£53,333.05

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT IT COSTS US JUST TO OPEN OUR DOORS...

TOTALS:

TOTAL YEARLY OPENING COST	**£86,331.60**

TOTAL YEARLY MARKETING COST	**£53,333.05**

PER HOUR OF CULTURE	**£86.16**
PER EVENT	**£294.65**

PER EVENT (PROPORTIONAL)	
WORKSHOP (2HRS)	£172.32
LIFE DRAWING, LONGER WORKSHOP (3HRS)	£258.48
LIVE GIG (4HRS)	£344.64
CLUB (5HRS)	£438.80

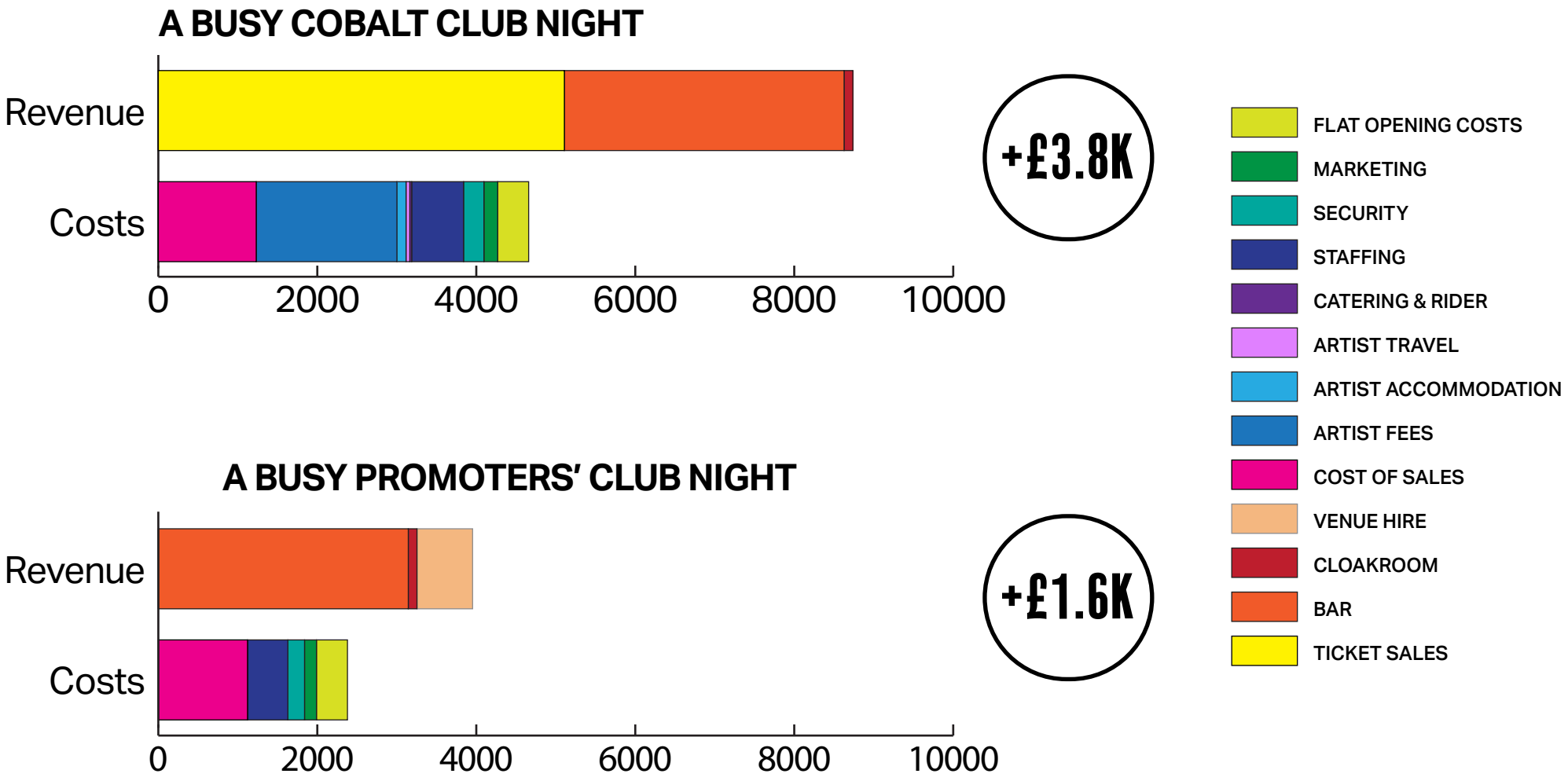
PER HOUR OF CULTURE	**£53.23**
PER EVENT	**£182.02**

PER EVENT (PROPORTIONAL)	
WORKSHOP (2HRS)	£106.45
LIFE DRAWING, LONGER WORKSHOP (3HRS)	£159.68
LIVE GIG (4HRS)	£212.91
CLUB (5HRS)	£266.13



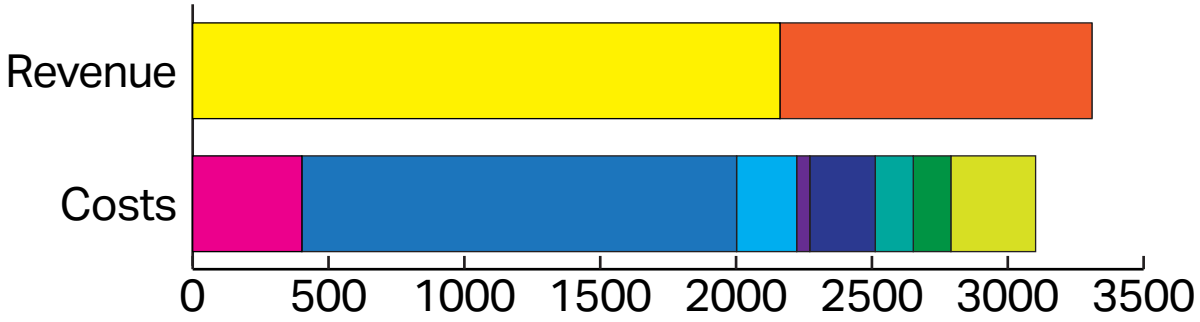
These are our baseline costs (proportional based on event duration) before and staffing or artist expenses.

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR EVENT PROFIT & LOSS...



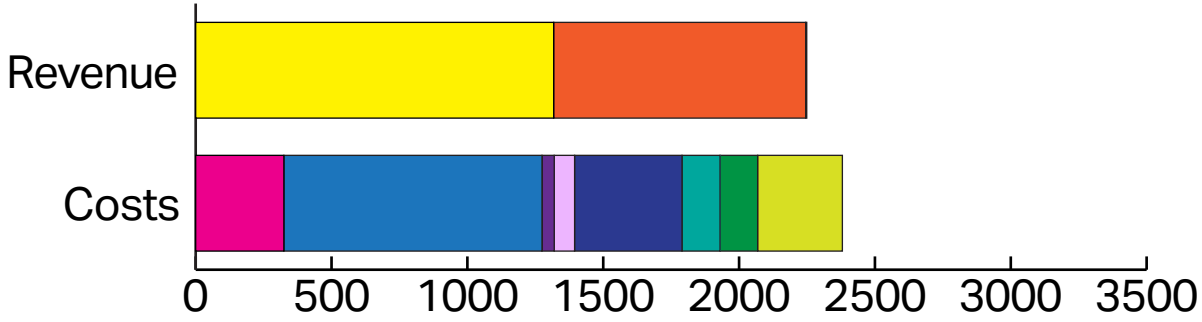
A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR EVENT PROFIT & LOSS...

A BUSY LIVE GIG



+£140

THE BUSIEST FRESH THURSDAY OF THE YEAR

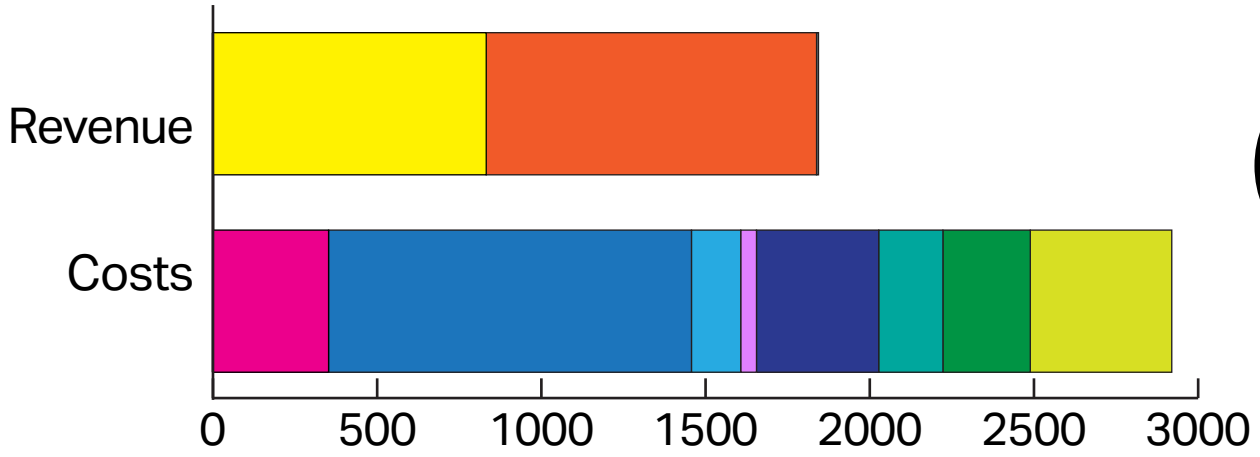


-£131

FLAT OPENING COSTS
MARKETING
SOUND TECH
STAFFING
CATERING & RIDER
ARTIST TRAVEL
ARTIST ACCOMMODATION
ARTIST FEES
COST OF SALES
VENUE HIRE
CLOAKROOM
BAR
TICKET SALES

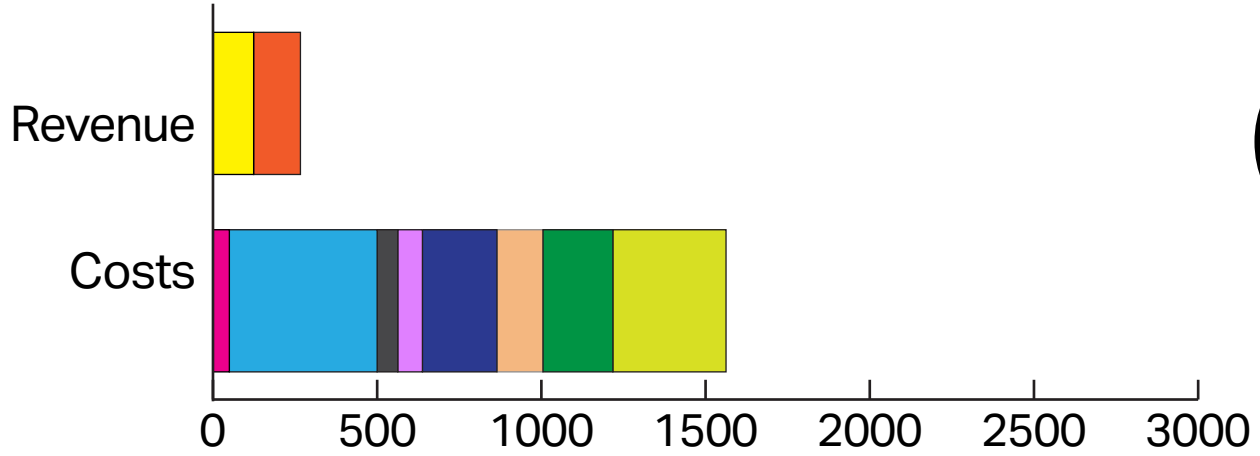
A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR EVENT PROFIT & LOSS...

A QUIETER COBALT CLUB NIGHT



-1.1K

A QUIET EXPERIMENTAL GIG



-1.2K

- FLAT OPENING COSTS
- MARKETING
- SOUND TECH
- SECURITY
- STAFFING
- CATERING & RIDER
- ARTIST ACCOMMODATION
- ARTIST FEES
- COST OF SALES
- CLOAKROOM
- BAR
- TICKET SALES

THE SAD, BUT **HOPEFUL** STORY OF OUR **BACKYARD**

THE SAD BUT HOPEFUL STORY OF OUR BACKYARD...

In 2020 using a bounce back loan, we were able to purchase 10 x 40ft containers, commission full design drawings to RIBA stage 3/4, design & undertake engineering works on the ground and gain planning permission & licencing to bring them into use as the following:

- Affordable music/arts studios
- Box office/merch or other retail space eg record shop
- Additional toilets
- Community music studio
- Community radio
- Flexible community workshop/green room space
- Café & occasional events to increase revenue & sustainably
- Community garden (& ideally some sound sculptures)





THE SAD BUT HOPEFUL STORY OF OUR BACKYARD...

However, since the initial work we have been unable to find any money or time to complete the works, money is the main issue though. The yard has been used occasionally, and currently there is a sauna business located there which pays us rent to help with the bounce back loan. We applied to ACE Capital investment fund for IRO £250K but didn't get it & we also applied for a very small National Lottery Grant which was also unsuccessful.

We are now desperate to bring this space into full use, to maximise its potential , increase what we can offer and stop to demise of the containers, which are letting in water & generally need some love, as soon as we can work out how to do it. We think that completion of this space will dramatically increase our impact and make a strong addition to the area.

Our plans for the project exist in a variety of costed formats:

Full scheme connected to the main building with step-free access	Costed by quantity surveyor at £1.2 million
Full backyard scheme undertaken by contractors, including new fencing	£500K
Cobalt self-build using recycled materials, volunteers etc	£250K



THE SAD BUT HOPEFUL STORY OF OUR BACKYARD...



COBALT CENTRAL

COBALT CENTRAL

For the past 24 months, following a successful tender, we have been working with Creative Central: NCL supporting them as they redevelop five story building on the corner of Grainger market, for which we will become the tenant late in 2026.

The building will be focused on artist studios, small event space for workshops, education and small community events, largely visual art based, as well as a café and bar. It will be a CIC & not-for-profit, just like we are now, and we will aim to make access to culture easy & affordable by subsidising costs with the café on the ground floor.

It's a very exciting opportunity for us, and though it's currently overstretching our tiny team even further, as well as requiring significant monetary investment for legal work, stamp duty and creating a prep kitchen to supply the café, we are really hopeful that once the new location is open, not only will it really increase the scope of our cultural impact and what we can offer to this city, but also will help with the sustainability of our wider ecosystem.







10 YEARS OF COBALT

A letter we received in 2025, in celebration of the 10th year of the venue being open:

"Happy 10th Birthday Cobalt!

You are the best.

Daring to reimagine what it means to be a 'space' by creating a multi-purpose warm, inviting and interesting space for everyone to enjoy.

I love how different each event at Cobalt is, stretching imaginations and viewpoints. Places like Cobalt are doing us all a favour by teaching us to be constantly open minded and try new things!

I often left cobalt with a warm glowy golden feeling as I had learnt something new (in L.A.D.S) and met amazing people doing it.

Cobalt is a very very special place and especially in a city like Newcastle, where one could often mistake it to be just a party city with no thought behind it, Cobalt shines though as one of the few places that really cares about the events it puts on and the people that come to them.

I hope it stays on forever, long enough at least for my kids to experience its warmth in years to come."

Thanks for such amazing times."

DIRECTOR'S WORD: SAFEGUARDING OUR WORK & ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

A letter from Kate, Cobalt's co-founder and voluntary director:

People often ask 'How's Cobalt? How is everything?' and I always say the same, if we don't talk about money, everything is great, really great.

I am so lucky to work with such a capable precious team of staff who absolutely get why we do this from the inside out. They are signed up, dialled in and 150% committed to keeping us moving along, there is no way in the world we could do this without our tiny mighty team.

'Community is a superpower', and our community continues to grow from strength to strength with an ever-increasing amount of very regular faces , more season ticket holders than ever & people who come alone because they feel comfortable. We love to see how relationships & friendships have started here and we are often told about this, even weddings that have happened following a meeting here! We are regularly reminded of why we do this and spurred on with words of encouragement and appreciation from our audience and community of artists & attendees, we receive written cards, emails and feedback on our surveys, and this means the world.

Our network of grassroots musicians also continues to go from strength to strength. As the current climate grows ever harder for grassroots musicians to survive in, they must stick together, talk & pass on info, and our programme largely writes itself now as musicians tell one another that Cobalt is a place to play. And it is a constant thing of wonder that despite all day jobs these people are holding down, the juggling and the very low incomes they live on, that so much incredible music is still made. These people are troubadours, griots, storytellers, compulsively creative and relentlessly resilient, we are so lucky to have such phenomenally diverse and high-quality music in the UK despite decades of no investment & the UK being one of the worst government support systems in Europe for grassroots music. We must fight for it, celebrate the music and those who make and never lose sight of how precious it is, how in the space of a few short hours we can forget the everyday, be uplifted & transformed by sonic magic!

DIRECTOR'S WORD: SAFEGUARDING OUR WORK & ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

Creating the most creative, diverse and inclusive space that we can is my life's work & there is still so much more that we want to do.
These are our goals for 2026:
We want to reach out into our local communities to take music out of Cobalt, making it much easier for people to get to know us and attend events here.
We want to create more opportunities for formal learning, skill sharing and to pass on our knowledge.
We want & need to create more jobs, to grow the team and lessen the extreme pressure that our very overstretched team is already under.
We want to reach way more young people with our mobile music studio and DJ-ing opportunities.
We would love an engagement lead able to facilitate all the requests we get for volunteers & continue to make relationships with our partners and in our local community.

We never wanted to be a funded place; self-reliance's is our preferred approach to building long term suitability and with our backyard completed, we can become much closer to this model. Currently though, we so really need financial help to stabilise what is a very delicately balanced equation that relies too heavily on unpaid labour and a very overstretched team. But what we really need more than anything is the capital funds to look after and develop the building in the sustainable forever project that we dream of. Any leads, donors, ideas, suggestions, we would love to hear from you, and in the meantime, we thank everybody reading this for all their support and input into making Cobalt what it is.

All the best,
Kate

IMMEDIATE ISSUES WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO FUND IN 2026

What	Why	How Much	Status
Backyard renovation & completion	A completed backyard will: • Cover loan repayments • Help to cover program costs • Increase our cultural offer • Stop the containers rotting and protect investments made to date	DIY entry point £250K for phase 1 (backyard only) With versions all the way to top notch, fully accessible scheme professional costed scheme joining building to backyard £1.2 million	VERY URGENT
Prep kitchen	We desperately need a prep kitchen to supply food for our new city centre location	IRO £35/40K	VERY URGENT
Broken lift	There is currently no step-free access to our upper floors	IRO £40K	VERY URGENT
No proper cellar/ drinks storage	A recent fire safety inspection has asked us to move it from current place, it's also not big enough	IRO £20K	URGENT
Inadequate air extraction & heating in the venue	Both of these are inadequate and excessive moisture related to both regularly damages electronic equipment	IRO £70-£100K	CAN WAIT FOR A WHILE BUT DOES NEED DOING BEFORE TOO LONG
Lack of artists accommodation	Booking hotels & air B&Bs costs in excess of £10K per annum and restricts what we can offer artists Onsite accommodation would also increase residency ops	IRO 20K	CAN WAIT A LONG TIME BUT WOULD SAVE SIGNIFICANT MONEY IN THE LONG RUN
Lack of a green room/dressing room	Green rooms are very important to touring artists	IRO 20K	CAN WAIT A LONG TIME IF NEEDED BUT WOULD ENHANCE OUR OFFER TO ARTISTS