Headway ArtSpace
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Blyth
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01670351962

Creative Director

Headway Arts
Location: Blyth, Northumberland
Salary: £42,000 per annum
Contract: this is a permanent full-time position subject to a 6 month probation period
Hours: 35 hrs pw

The role will occasionally require evening and weekend work, particularly around performances, events and creative activity. Time off in lieu (TOIL) will be provided for additional hours worked.

Annual Leave: 30 days per annum plus bank holidays
Reports to: Chief Executive Officer
Responsible to: Board of Trustees through the Chief Executive Officer

About Headway Arts

Headway Arts is an award-winning and pioneering arts organisation creating ambitious, inclusive and accessible arts opportunities and events for and with our local communities.

We make art. All kinds of art.

At Headway Arts, we believe that everyone is creative and that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to and experience the arts.

We work with the whole community, with particular expertise in inclusive practice and a strong focus on working with neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities. For us, inclusion means everyone.

We are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and the winner of the North East Culture Awards 2022 for Best International Collaboration.

We are also the UK partner for ACCAC Global (Accessible Arts and Culture Global), connecting our work with an international network committed to making arts and culture more accessible and inclusive.

Through our programmes, projects, performances, exhibitions and partnerships, we work alongside artists, participants and communities to create distinctive work rooted in lived experience. We work across all art forms, creating safe and supported environments where

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people can work together in equity, and where everyone's contributions are encouraged, facilitated and celebrated.

We value diversity and actively support equity in our creative practice and decision-making. We believe that the best work happens when different perspectives, experiences and ideas come together.

Headway Arts is a small, ambitious organisation with a strong reputation for inclusive arts practice. As we look towards the next stage of our development, we are seeking a Creative Director to provide focused artistic leadership, champion our creative ambitions and help shape our future.

This is an exciting time to join Headway Arts and help shape what comes next.

The Role

The Creative Director will be the artistic and creative lead for Headway Arts, responsible for developing and delivering the organisation's creative vision and ensuring the quality, ambition and relevance of our artistic work.

This is a senior creative role within a small organisation. You will work closely with the CEO, who retains overall responsibility for the organisation's strategic, operational and financial leadership. The role of Creative Director has a clear focus on artistic leadership, creative development, artists, participants, partnerships and the quality and impact of Headway Arts' programme.

You will bring creative ambition while understanding the realities of working within a small NPO, where collaboration, flexibility and making the most of limited resources are essential.

Key Responsibilities

Artistic and Creative Leadership

- Lead the artistic vision and creative direction of Headway Arts.
- Develop and maintain a clear creative strategy aligned with Headway Arts' values and organisational strategy.
- Ensure that the organisation's creative work is ambitious, high-quality, inclusive and relevant.
- Champion the voices, ideas and creative agency of participants and artists.
- Encourage experimentation, innovation and creative risk-taking.
- Keep Headway Arts connected to developments and opportunities within the wider arts and cultural sector.
- Act as a visible creative ambassador for the organisation.

Creative Programme Development

- Shape and oversee an engaging programme of creative activity across Headway Arts.

- Develop new artistic projects, commissions, performances, exhibitions and collaborations.
- Identify opportunities for Headway Arts to develop and present work regionally, nationally and, where appropriate, internationally.
- Work with artists and participants to develop ideas from concept through to delivery.
- Ensure that creative projects have appropriate artistic ambition, purpose and quality.
- Contribute to the evaluation of artistic outcomes and impact.
- Balance creative ambition with the resources and capacity of a small organisation.

Artists and Creative Practitioners

- Develop strong relationships with artists, creative practitioners and collaborators.
- Identify and commission artists whose practice aligns with Headway Arts' values and creative ambitions.
- Support artists to develop their practice within inclusive and participatory contexts.
- Create a supportive environment in which artists can experiment, learn and take creative risks.
- Build opportunities for artists with lived experience of disability and neurodivergence.
- Develop and maintain a network of artists and creative partners.

Participants and Inclusive Practice

- Ensure participants are central to the creative process and are recognised as artists and creative contributors.
- Champion inclusive and participatory approaches across all artistic activity.
- Ensure that creative practice reflects the experiences, ambitions and perspectives of people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people.
- Support participants to develop their creative voice, confidence and artistic practice.
- Challenge barriers to participation and representation within the arts.
- Help Headway Arts remain at the forefront of progressive and inclusive creative practice.

Partnerships and External Profile

- Develop meaningful creative partnerships with artists, cultural organisations, venues, communities and other organisations.
- Represent Headway Arts within relevant artistic and cultural networks.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, commissioning, touring, presentation and knowledge exchange.
- Develop Headway Arts' profile as an organisation producing high-quality inclusive arts practice.
- Contribute creative expertise to funding applications, tenders and partnership proposals.
- Develop relationships that strengthen the organisation's artistic sustainability and reach.

NPO and Strategic Contribution

- Work with the CEO to deliver Headway Arts' organisational strategy and NPO commitments.
- Contribute to the development and monitoring of artistic objectives and outcomes.

- Provide creative insight to organisational planning and decision-making.
- Contribute to reporting and evaluation for funders and stakeholders where required.
- Support the CEO and wider team in identifying opportunities for future funding and income generation.
- Ensure that artistic activity is planned realistically within the organisation's available resources.

The CEO retains overall responsibility for organisational strategy, finance, operations, fundraising, governance and business management.

Team Leadership and Culture

- Provide creative leadership to staff, freelance artists and creative practitioners.
- Foster a collaborative, supportive and inclusive creative culture.
- Encourage staff and artists to contribute ideas and develop their practice.
- Contribute to team planning and organisational development.
- Model Headway Arts' values in all aspects of your work.
- Work collaboratively across the organisation rather than operating as a separate artistic function.

About You

We are looking for an experienced and inspiring creative leader who understands the power of art to change perceptions, create opportunities and give people a voice.

You may currently be working as a Creative Director, Artistic Director, Producer, Senior Creative Practitioner, Theatre Director, Visual Artist, or in another senior artistic role.

You will combine creative ambition with pragmatism. You will be comfortable working within a small organisation, where senior staff need to be hands-on, collaborative and willing to get involved.

You will be:

- Artistically ambitious - committed to producing and supporting excellent creative work.
- Inclusive - passionate about disability arts, neurodivergence, participation and equality.
- Collaborative - excited by working alongside artists, participants, communities and partners.
- Visionary - able to articulate where Headway Arts could go creatively.
- Curious - interested in new ideas, art forms, artists and approaches.
- Pragmatic - able to turn creative ambition into achievable projects within limited resources.
- Hands-on - willing and enthusiastic to get directly involved in creative activity and workshops where appropriate, desired or beneficial to the work.
- An excellent communicator - able to engage with participants, artists, staff, funders, partners and audiences.
- A strong relationship builder - able to develop productive and lasting creative partnerships.

- A confident advocate - able to champion inclusive arts practice within the wider cultural sector.

Above all, you will share Headway Arts' belief that people with fewer opportunities, those with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people have the right to be artists, audiences, collaborators and leaders within the arts.

Essential Experience

We are looking for evidence of:

- Significant experience in an artistic, creative or cultural leadership role.
- A strong understanding of contemporary arts and/or disability arts practice.
- Experience developing and delivering high-quality creative programmes or projects.
- Experience working with artists and creative practitioners.
- Experience of inclusive, participatory or community-engaged arts practice.
- Experience developing creative partnerships and collaborations.
- The ability to articulate and deliver a compelling artistic vision.
- Experience managing creative projects within budgets and available resources.
- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills.
- The ability to work strategically while remaining hands-on in a small organisation.

Desirable Experience

It would be advantageous to have experience of:

- Working with disabled artists, people with learning disabilities and/or neurodivergent people.
- Working within an NPO or Arts Council-funded organisation.
- Developing commissioned work.
- Producing or presenting work in professional cultural venues.
- Touring or presenting work nationally and internationally
- Developing artists and creative practitioners.
- Working with funders and contributing to funding applications.
- Working across different art forms.
- Advocacy and influencing within the cultural sector.

What We Offer

This is an opportunity to take a significant creative leadership role within an established and respected North East arts organisation.

We offer:

- Salary of £42,000 per annum, pro rata where applicable.

- 30 days annual leave per year plus bank holidays.
- The opportunity to shape the future artistic direction of an established National Portfolio Organisation.
- The chance to work alongside talented artists, participants and creative practitioners.
- Opportunities to develop ambitious new work and creative partnerships.
- A collaborative, supportive and values-led working environment.
- Opportunities for professional development.
- Pension Contribution
- Flexible/Hybrid working where possible.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Headway Arts is committed to creating an inclusive organisation and welcomes applications from people from all backgrounds.

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people, neurodivergent people and people who are underrepresented within the arts and cultural sector.

We recognise that lived experience can bring valuable perspectives and expertise to this role. We are therefore interested not only in formal qualifications and career history, but in the experience, insight and creative perspective you would bring to Headway Arts.

We are committed to removing barriers throughout our recruitment process. If you require adjustments or support to make an application, please let us know.

How to Apply

To apply please submit:

1. A CV outlining your relevant experience.
2. A supporting statement explaining:
    - Why you are interested in becoming Creative Director of Headway Arts.
    - Your experience of creative and artistic leadership.
    - Your approach to inclusive and participatory arts practice.
    - Your vision for the future creative development of Headway Arts.

To: admin@headwayarts.co.uk

Deadline Extended: ~~5pm Saturday 31st October 2026~~ Friday 6th November 2026

Interviews: Friday 6th November or Friday 13th November 2026

If you would like an informal chat before applying phone Fran 01670 351962 or email fran@headwayarts.co.uk

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