

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT PACK

DECEMBER 2024

OCTAGON THEATRE



Hello,

We are looking for a Creative Engagement and Impact Director – a new role at the Octagon that will be central to our vision of a healthier, happier community with more creativity at its heart. You will work closely with the Artistic Director and Chief Executive to make this vision a reality.

It's an exciting time to work in Bolton. We are Greater Manchester's Town of Culture 2024, and the borough has a new cultural strategy that is focused on growing the offer and reaching more people in our communities. Bolton is an Arts Council England 'Levelling Up Place for Culture' with the opportunity to bid for substantial investment. We see this role as a strategic agent, not only working for the Octagon, but working for our communities and partners to identify opportunities for more people to take part in culture. You will play a leading and influential role in our partnerships and networks, and you will work closely with Bolton Council and others to initiate and collaborate on a range of programmes across multiple organisations.

We are looking for someone who can combine ambition, imagination, outstanding project management, and empathy with Bolton's socio-cultural-economic context to drive up engagement in both the Octagon and in culture more widely. The ideal candidate will have a track record of initiating and leading creative engagement programmes, often by working with multiple partners inside and outside the cultural sector. They will be entrepreneurial: identifying opportunities, building relationships, and turning ideas into meaningful impact. They will work with others internally and externally to secure investment and have a collaborative and inclusive leadership style that allows everyone to succeed. A background in arts/cultural engagement is essential, and we are open to applications from outside the theatre sector as well as those with a theatre background.

The Octagon is a thriving and award-winning regional producing theatre that produces and co-produces new work, musicals, classic dramas and work for families. Last year, we had over 12,000 attendances in our engagement programme which currently offers a wide-range of creative, life-enhancing opportunities. These include being a Theatre of Sanctuary, welcoming refugees and asylum seekers; Sharing Stories, which is improving literacy and communication skills for young people across the borough; and Bridges, our programme for children and adults with additional needs.

As the major independent cultural organisation in a large and diverse borough, we have a responsibility to lead and champion culture for everyone. With that in mind, we especially welcome applications from people whose backgrounds are currently under-represented in cultural leadership positions.

This new role represents a step-change in how the Octagon makes a sustainable creative impact with communities. The role is initially part-funded by Bolton Council as part of a wider ambition to create more opportunities for people to take part in the arts and culture.

If you would like to have an information conversation about this role with either me or Lotte Wakeham, our Artistic Director, you can find contact details in the recruitment pack.

Thanks for your interest in the Octagon, and if you decide to apply, then I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roddy".

Roddy Gauld
Chief Executive



Our vision and values

Our vision is for our community to be stronger, happier and healthier with more creativity at its heart. Our mission is to use theatre and arts to create unforgettable experiences that celebrate, inspire and elevate our community.

The Octagon's values are:

- **Creativity** – We are imaginative, playful, artistic and resourceful. We are storytellers and we encourage everyone's potential to express themselves.
- **Inclusivity** – We listen, learn and change so that we can become more inclusive. We want everyone to feel safe and at home with the Octagon. We are richer and stronger together.
- **Care** - We care about people, their feelings and wellbeing. We care about our work and doing the best that we can. We care about our community and our environment.
- **Curiosity** – We are open minded, brave and willing to take risks. We enjoy learning and create a safe space for ideas and debate. We choose curiosity over judgement.
- **Integrity** – We are authentic and honest. We treat people with respect and fairness. We are responsible and accountable. We deliver on what we promise.



Our goals to 2027:

- Improve our resilience by maximising our brand, using our data and resources efficiently, and increasing our audience.
- Value our people in a culture where they can thrive, contribute, learn, and are able to balance work and life effectively.
- Stage work we are proud of, making and programming bold, adventurous and popular theatre, supporting others to flourish, and contributing to a diverse and resilient creative ecology.
- Enrich families, communities and young people through creativity and relevant collaboration, with evidenced impact.
- Octagon for everyone, ensuring that people feel we are for them, embedding inclusion, diversity, and access in our work.
- Environmental responsibility, taking action to reduce our impact and contribute towards Net Zero by 2038.

Our history:

Situated in the heart of Bolton, the Octagon opened in 1967, as a bold idea by five students and their college lecturer, Robin Pemberton-Pilling. They created the first flexible professional theatre in the UK and the Octagon's construction was paid for by a huge public fundraising appeal as well as generous support from Bolton Council and a grant from what is now Arts Council England.

The concept – as well as being an intimate, flexible theatre – was that the Octagon would be “an integral part of the cultural life” of Bolton. They had four objectives that still inform our thinking today: education; high quality and relevant productions; reach into the community; and inclusive access.

In the five decades since, we have entertained an estimated 3.5 million people in Bolton, and our shows have toured and transferred across the UK and beyond. Countless children, families and adults have taken part in creative activities and benefited from the transformative experience. Many have had their first taste of live performance or performing, and some of those, such as Danny Boyle, Christopher Eccleston, Maxine Peake and many others who have trained and worked here, have gone on to inspire new generations.

The Octagon itself has gone through many changes, more recently between 2018 and 2021 to make the building larger, more accessible and more environmentally friendly. The Octagon sits at the heart of ambitions to regenerate Bolton and place culture at the heart of the borough.

OUR CURRENT CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

What drives our engagement work:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving access and inclusion to culture• Giving a voice to people and communities• Opportunities for personal development and social mobility for those taking part
What shapes our engagement work:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The high number of children and young people living in poverty in Bolton• The need for greater community cohesion in Bolton• The high levels of health inequality in Bolton• Opportunities to work with partnership on 'place based' initiatives to improve prosperity• Continuing and building on our existing strengths and experience
Our current engagement priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families with children, especially those living in area of deprivation• People with learning disabilities and additional needs• People facing racial inequality and systemic barriers to arts engagement• Young people at risk of socio-economic exclusion

Examples of our current work include:

Sharing Stories

We work with partners across the town to reach families who might not otherwise access the arts, providing storytelling and creative activities. This includes working in libraries, schools and community settings as well as events in the Octagon. Sharing Stories is increasing literacy and oracy skills whilst creating opportunities for first time arts engagement. The programme is led by the Octagon, working in partnership with the Bolton Library and Museum Service and others, and funded by the Oglesby Charitable Trust.

Bridges

Our regular programme for children and adults with learning difficulties, provides opportunities for expression, confidence building and making friends in a creative setting. Winner of the 2020 Music and Drama Award for Best SEN provision.

The Agency

First conceived in Brazil, [The Agency](#) is an innovative creative entrepreneurship model for young people aged 15 to 25 from underserved areas to generate social change projects, based on the needs they identify in their own communities. We are piloting The Agency in Farnworth from September 2024. Farnworth is undergoing substantial regeneration with further investment expected in the years ahead. The pilot is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund and Kristian Gerhard Jebson Foundation, and The Agency is a Battersea Arts Centre and People's Palace Projects programme that was brought to the UK in partnership with Contact.



Youth Theatre

We give young people the opportunity to develop their creative, performance and communication skills in a safe, encouraging environment. Our long-running Youth Theatre has welcomed thousands of young people, some of whom have gone on to have acclaimed careers in theatre, TV and comedy.

Family Festival

An annual festival with free activities for local families that runs in collaboration with the Bolton Food and Drink Festival, and the Bolton Library and Museum Service.

Adult Groups

We currently run a range of opportunities for adults to take part in theatre and the arts including ArtBeat (drama skills and performance for over 50s); a Women's Group for asylum-seekers and refugees to develop confidence, drama and language skills; and Unlocking Wellbeing, a partnership project with Bolton Carers Support and others to improve the health and wellbeing of carers in Bolton.



JOB DESCRIPTION

Creative Engagement and Impact Director

Responsible to: Chief Executive

Responsible for: Children and Young People's Lead, Family Engagement Lead, Adult and Communities Lead, Creative Engagement Administrator.

Purpose of the post

- Lead the creative engagement programme and department: ensuring the successful planning and delivery of a range of engagement projects in line with the Octagon's objectives.
- Collaborate with the Artistic Director and Chief Executive to shape the Octagon's plans and creative output including embedding co-design and collaboration with communities.
- Inspire the whole staff team, board and stakeholders to understand the value of cultural engagement and participation.
- Collaborate with partners to initiate and implement ambitious programmes that increase engagement in culture and the arts in Bolton.

Key relationships

The Creative Engagement and Impact Director will have multiple internal and external relationships.

The role reports to the Chief Executive and works in close collaboration with the Artistic Director (Deputy CEO). Together, these three roles shape the creative output of the organisation – on stage, throughout our building and in our communities. More widely, the role is part of the Senior Management Team working with colleagues from every department, and particularly closely with the Head of Development on securing and managing investment in creative engagement.

The role leads the Creative Engagement Department, and line manages the leads of each discipline as well as a departmental administrator.

The role works closely with external partners, including the cultural services at Bolton Council. This role is intended to be a strategic agent working across all partners to initiate and deliver collaborative projects. At times, the role may be expected to represent partners and partnerships and/or be accountable within different partnership structures.

Main duties and responsibilities

Strategy, planning and relationships

- Contribute to the Octagon's business and artistic planning, working closely with the CEO, Artistic Director, board and senior colleagues to shape and reach our objectives.
- Identify opportunities and strategies for engaging people in the Octagon and in creative/cultural activities; and provide ambitious, creative responses. This includes working collaboratively to increase audiences, inclusion and income generation.
- Lead the Octagon's relationships in areas such as health, education, housing, sports and voluntary sector to create opportunities for more people to take part in culture.
- Work closely with the cultural services at Bolton Council including the Library and Museum Service to integrate cultural programmes so they can achieve greater impact across Bolton.
- Play a leading role in multi-organisational partnerships and initiate collaborative approaches to creative/cultural engagement.
- Work with colleagues to join up audience development and creative engagement strategies, ensuring a genuine cross-organisational approach to growing the Octagon's relationship with the people of Bolton and beyond.
- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation and across partnerships, so that we engage and reflect Bolton's population.
- Consult and engage directly with residents and community representatives to ensure the Octagon responds to their ideas, needs and feedback.

Leading people and projects

- Lead the work of the creative engagement department and its programmes, ensuring high quality experiences, effective evaluations, and a culture of continuous learning.
- Inclusively plan the creative engagement team's work, with their collective input as well as that of Community Connectors, partners and residents too.

- Ensure creative engagement projects are appropriately defined and approved, with subsequent collaboration across all departments, and monitoring of outputs against objectives.
- Provide strong leadership for both permanent and freelance creative engagement staff. Line manage others, coaching and supporting their development.
- Champion our values and culture and contribute to workplace improvement and policy at an organisational level.

Finance, funding and reporting

- Set and manage budgets and resources for the creative engagement department. This includes being accountable for ensuring the match between resources and outputs, and the progress towards annual plans and targets.
- Work with the finance department and line reports to ensure accurate financial control of all projects and partnerships.
- In collaboration with the Head of Development, identify funding opportunities, prepare funding applications, report on funding, and manage stakeholder relationships.
- In collaboration with external partners, identify Bolton-wide needs and opportunities and contribute towards funding applications, reporting and relationships.
- Ensure robust data and evaluation systems are in place to report to funders, and to advocate for the value of cultural engagement to a wide range of stakeholders.

Safeguarding and other duties

- Be fully trained in safeguarding leadership and undertake safeguarding officer duties and responsibilities as laid out in our safeguarding policy.
- Lead the annual review of the safeguarding policy, in consultation with colleagues and external advisers, for its approval by the board.
- Be an effective representative of the Octagon in all situations, demonstrating the highest level of customer care and promoting the theatre's work and fundraising.
- Work in the best interests of the Octagon and in accordance with company policies such as Our Culture, equal opportunities, health and safety, safeguarding and IT.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	Essential <i>We're ideally looking for someone who:</i>	Desirable <i>It would also be good if the candidate:</i>
<i>Has experience of:</i>	<p>Leading a range of arts/cultural engagement programmes at a senior level</p> <p>Initiating and maintaining partnerships inside and outside the cultural sector</p> <p>Recruiting and working with a wide range of artistic and cultural practitioners to achieve high quality experiences</p> <p>Successfully engaging diverse communities who are under-represented in the arts</p>	<p>Working in a producing theatre building and/or working closely with theatre practitioners</p> <p>Working in or closely alongside local authority-led cultural services</p> <p>Working in a charity and the charity sector</p>
<i>Has skills and attributes in:</i>	<p>Working strategically and creatively to identify needs and opportunities for engagement with communities</p> <p>Effective project planning including budgets (£'000s and upwards), resources and risks</p> <p>Leading teams, managing people and effective delegation</p> <p>Communication and advocacy with a wide range of people and partners</p> <p>Fundraising including working with fundraising colleagues, contributing to bid development and reporting, and identifying strategic opportunities</p> <p>Co-design and consultation with a range of communities and audiences</p> <p>Self-motivation and self-organisation including managing multiple priorities and deadlines</p>	<p>Reporting to boards and or external stakeholders</p>

<i>Has knowledge and understanding of:</i>	Safeguarding practices and responsibilities Best practice when working in and with multicultural communities Best practice in evaluating creative and participatory projects and their impact How to demonstrate impact and value of cultural engagement/projects to a wide range of stakeholders	
<i>Is committed to:</i>	The safeguarding and safety of others Looking after our environment Diversity and inclusion for everyone Providing excellent service in all situations	

SUMMARY OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Salary:	£48,000 per annum
Pension:	The company operates an auto-enrolment pension scheme through NOW:Pensions in line with current government legislation.
Contract:	Permanent.
Place of work:	Octagon Theatre in Bolton with an option for hybrid working.
Hours of work:	40 hours per week. The working week is Monday to Friday with occasional evening or weekend working for which time-off-in-lieu can be taken.
Holiday entitlement:	20 days per year, rising by 1 day per year for every year of service to a maximum of 25 days. Public holidays are additional.
Notice period:	1 month after completion of probationary period.
Probation period:	6 months from first date of employment.

We welcome proposals for flexible working around caring responsibilities as well as job-share and part-time working.

The Octagon offers a range of other employee benefits including:

- Complimentary and discounted tickets
- Staff café discount
- Loans for travel season tickets, bicycles and parking costs (as available)

Any offer of employment is subject to:

- References that are satisfactory to the Octagon
- Evidence of the right to work in the UK as defined by the Home Office
- A valid Enhanced DBS check when working with young people

THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS

Whilst purely indicative, we expect the first twelve months for the Creative Engagement and Impact Director will look like this...

- Building strong relationships with the creative engagement team, coaching them as individuals and on the success of their programmes of work. Getting to know those programmes and participants. Immediate priorities include securing the next phases of *The Agency* and *Sharing Stories*.
- Getting out and about in the Bolton area, meeting residents, communities and partners. Gaining a knowledge of the needs and opportunities for creative activity in Bolton and thinking strategically about our priorities and how to achieve them.
- Reviewing the evidence and evaluation we currently have about our impact and enhancing how we capture and articulate this to a wide range of people.
- Leading the progress of the Creative People and Places bid (first stage being submitted to Arts Council England in January 2025) and if successful, playing a key role in establishing this programme to deliver from April 2026 onwards.
- Representing the Octagon in external partnerships. Becoming a trusted partner, especially with the cultural services in Bolton Council and identifying how to strengthen this relationship further. This might involve leading or setting up discreet projects or pilots that further Bolton's cultural strategy.
- Developing the future Creative Engagement Strategy for the Octagon, building on our strengths and opportunities. This will involve consulting and communicating with partners and residents, as well as internal colleagues. An important element will be matching ambitions with resources and working closely with the Head of Development to find the right funding partnerships and to submit successful applications.
- Contributing to our next business plan and NPO application for 2027 onwards. (The NPO submission will be made in late July and assuming it is successful, detailed work on delivery plans will follow.) Working with the CEO, Artistic Director and others to develop a well-rounded programme on and off-stage that excites our communities, is financially realistic, and meets the aims of our stakeholders including Arts Council's Let's Create strategy.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Closing date: Midday on Wednesday 15 January 2025

Please apply with a CV and a Cover Letter (no more than two sides of A4) that sets out how you meet the person specification described above. Please send your completed application to recruitment@octagonbolton.co.uk. We'd be grateful if you would also complete and return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring form that's on our website. If you'd like to apply by another format, including video, or if you are experiencing any barriers to accessing the information, then please contact our recruitment team via recruitment@octagonbolton.co.uk or 01204 520 661. Please state clearly that you are applying for the Creative Engagement and Impact Director role.

We will shortlist based on how each candidate meets the person specification shown in the job description, but we believe that even if a candidate doesn't have all the experience we ask for, they might still have the values, enthusiasm and qualities that we're looking for, so please don't be put off from applying because you don't feel you have all the experience. If you would like to have an informal conversation with either Roddy (Chief Executive) or Lotte (Artistic Director) about the role in advance of application, this can be arranged via emailing recruitment@octagonbolton.co.uk.

[If you have a disability under the Equality Action 2010, meaning you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect, please indicate in your covering letter that you are applying as a disability confident candidate. We guarantee to interview all candidates with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for the role.](#)

We aim to shortlist all applications within 1 weeks of the advert closing date. If you do not hear from us within this time, please assume that your application has been unsuccessful.

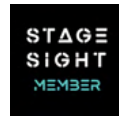
Our Commitment

We are committed to diversity and inclusion and welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds. We particularly welcome applications from people with disabilities, Black and Global Majority backgrounds as they are currently underrepresented within the sector and within The Octagon.

We also welcome proposals for flexible working around caring responsibilities and anyone looking for a positive work/life balance.

To fully embed effective equality, diversity and inclusive practices, we are working towards removing all barriers that staff and applicants may experience from underrepresented groups. We are happy to discuss any requirements that candidates may have as a disabled person; someone with parental or caring responsibilities; or other reasons, and we will always try to make any adjustments possible.

We are proud that the Octagon is registered with the Real Living Wage, Stage Sight, Parents and Carers in Performing Arts and are a Disability Confident Employer.



Interview process

We expect to hold online meetings with long-listed applicants throughout January.

Following that, applicants who are short-listed will be invited to an in-person interview day on Monday 10 February.

(This date is subject to change, and we will provide at least one week's notice.) We will reimburse travel expenses for anyone travelling further than 25 miles to attend.