

Artist brief

Hidden Spire Collective 2024



HIDDEN
SPIRE

Hidden Spire is a Collaboration

Hidden Spire is a unique collaboration between an arts centre and a homelessness centre.

In 2011, at the Old Fire Station in Oxford, two charities decided to move in together and experiment with how to share a building. This meant finding new and innovative ways to meaningfully include people experiencing homelessness in the day to day life of a public arts centre.

The result is Hidden Spire. It works like this:

- People experiencing homelessness are invited to take part in, and lead, high quality artistic work in our theatre and gallery.
- They are trained, in any element of the arts centre they are most interested in, in a way which works for them. This doesn't need to relate to art.
- They watch shows for free - complimentary theatre tickets are available to people experiencing homelessness to be a part of our audience alongside other members of the public. They can also usher shows as part of our volunteer team.

All of this means people who have been through an incredibly difficult time can choose to take off the label of being 'a homeless person' and become who they really are: an actor, a poet, an illustrator, a theatregoer, a volunteer, a trainee.

Art is for everyone. Everyone has potential.

You can find out more here: <https://oldfirestation.org.uk/our-work>



Who are the Hidden Spire Collective?

Since 2020, we've been gathering a group of creative people. They came together during lockdown to make art – writing, photography, and drawing. This group is now known as the Hidden Spire Collective. In 2021, they produced our Hidden Spire show, *Atlantis*, and in 2023, they produced two exhibitions, *Ritual* and *Your Story*.

The collective is open to current and ex-Crisis members and anybody from the community over the age of 18 who is interested in being creative with others. There is no membership fee to participate in the Hidden Spire Collective; however, those who can afford to donate anything from £1 - £100 directly to the Old Fire Station.

The collective works together to create publicly shared artworks. These could be anything—poetry readings, plays, musical performances, or art exhibitions. The Hidden Spire Collective always decides together what kinds of artwork they make. Each project is facilitated by a Creative lead and led by a visiting professional artist.

You can find out more here: <https://www.hiddenspire.co.uk/>

Hidden Spire Staff

Rowan Padmore, Crisis Arts for Wellbeing Coordinator, is responsible for supporting Crisis members with engagement in the project. Rowan is also a professional writer and will be leading the writing segments of the workshops.

Lizzy McBain, Hidden Spire Creative Lead. Lizzy will attend all workshops and have creative planning oversight of the project and sharing in collaboration with other staff and participants, helping to ensure the project is co-creative.

Charneh Watson, Inclusion Coordinator, Arts at the Old Fire Station. Charneh will support all participants to attend and engage, particularly from an administration perspective.

The brief

We are seeking an emerging photographer/facilitator to lead 8 creative photography sessions for adults as part of the Hidden Spire Collective, exploring the theme of Hidden Histories. This project proposal has been shaped in response to the ideas shared by Hidden Spire Collective participants.

Theme - Hidden Histories: Some ideas that we have already discussed are;

- Untold stories - of families / hidden people
- Historical objects
- Empty or historical shops or buildings, and what they used to be and what they are now
- Second-hand / previously worn clothes or accessories and who they previously belonged to

Workshops: Workshops will use both photography and writing to explore the theme of Hidden Histories. Each session will be co-facilitated by the photographer alongside the writer. How this is shaped and structured will be planned together.

For example:

- A walk around Oxford taking photographs
- Writing in response to found photographs
- Taking photographs of contemporary scenes of Oxford found also in historical photos
- Making an artwork collaged from multiple photographs

Project logistics

Aim: For each individual to explore the theme through combined writing and photography workshops, and to have the opportunity to create something which they could share in an exhibition and live event. This could be performing/reading a piece of writing, and/or exhibiting a photograph they have taken.

Participants: Approximately 12 participants in each session. Adult members of the Hidden Spire Collective from across the Oxford/shire community, including current Crisis Members (homeless / vulnerably housed adults, who will be supported to engage by Crisis staff). Some people will have participated in the Hidden Spire Collective in 2023, others will be new to the Collective. We aim to be as inclusive as possible, including welcoming new members to join at any point throughout the project therefore attendance may not be consistent.

Sharing: An exhibition of work created, including at least one piece of everyone's work. Participants could also be invited to talk about their work, read and/or perform a piece of writing created in the workshops.

Equipment available for each session:

- 7 laptops
- Approx. 7 Canon & Sony DSLRs plus the potential to borrow some more.
- There is also the potential to purchase enough disposable cameras for the whole group.
- Participants could use their own smartphones to take photographs. However, not all participants may own a smartphone.

Workshop activities should consider the limitations of the equipment available. Given the number of laptops available, more time should be given to the skills needed to take a photograph (composition/lighting/focus, etc) rather than computer-based editing.

Project timeline

The project will run for 10 sessions, including a finishing-off session, sharing event, and evaluation session. The sessions will take place in the Art Room at the Old Fire Station on Wednesdays from **2.15 to 4.30 pm.**

May

15

22

29

June

5

11

19

26

July

3

10 - Sharing event - time TBC.

17- Evaluation session - TBC.

About you

The selected artist must be skilled at collaborating with other artists (including other lead artists and artist participants) and open to a co-creating process. The Hidden Spire Collective aims to be as co-creative as possible, with participants collectively shaping the projects they participate in, and the artwork they create.

As the lead artist, you will need to be an emerging photographer/facilitator and have :-

- Adaptability to respond to individual ideas alongside having a structured and organised approach to leading a group
- Experience leading creative sessions
- Experience engaging and working with people with different levels of skill, experience, and knowledge
- Experience of collaborating with others to work towards a final outcome
- Excellent verbal communication skills
- Excellent time management skills
- A passion for making art accessible to everyone

Desirable;

- Former experience of working with vulnerable adults, including the vulnerably housed and homeless, and/or adults with additional needs such as mental health, neurodivergence, and (dis)abilities.

You will need to live within easy traveling distance of Oxford.

Artist Fee

Artist Fee £1325

Fee for leading co-facilitating workshops.

£128.125 x 8 sessions (including planning, delivery, set up, and pack away)
= **£1025**

Fee for attending meetings.

£25 x 8 sessions of 1 hour (to debrief and discuss planning for the next workshop)
= **£200**

Fee for sharing and evaluation sessions.

£50 x 2 sessions (including attendance at the sharing event and evaluation session)
= **£100.**

The total Artist fee for the full project is £1325

How to apply

Please answer the following 3 questions.

- **What makes you the right photographer/facilitator for this position?** How will your creative skills and/or experience ensure you are the best artist to facilitate the Hidden Spire Collective group and collaborate with the rest of the team? Please give specific examples of previous creative work.
- **What creative approach might you take to respond to the theme of Hidden Histories?** What kind of activities and exercises might you lead across the 8 sessions? How will you ensure the group is ready to exhibit a piece of work at the end of the project? How might your photography approaches interact with and inspire writing?
- **What experience or understanding do you have of working with people who face disadvantages?** What relevant work and/or life experience would inform your approach?

You are welcome to submit either:

- A written application of no more than 500 words per answer.
- Audio or video recording of your answers, lasting no more than 4 minutes per answer.

Deadline for applications **12noon on Wednesday, 24 April 2024**

Interviews will take place on **Wednesday, 1 May 2024**

Please send all applications to **lizzy.mcbain@oldfirestation.org.uk**

If you have any questions, please email:

charneh.watson@oldfirestation.org.uk and **rowan.padmores@crisis.org.uk**



Thank you for Appying!

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