



Photo Credit: Ravi Chandarana

**The Spark Arts for Children**

# **Vital Spark: The Artist Relationship Programme 2025/26**

**Information pack**

Funded by Arts Council England, Attenborough Arts Centre, Inspire.

# The Artist Relationship Programme

Looking to develop your understanding in creating work for children and families? Want the time and space to develop your artistic process, practice and producing ability?

## How will it work?

This programme is for artists who are interested in developing their artistic practice and processes to make, create and invent exciting new work for children's audiences. We'll work with four artists from England who can commit to taking part in the following:

- A four-day Artist residential in Leicester from **Monday 24<sup>th</sup>– Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025**
- Two 'Go and See' trips to watch performances for young audiences which will inspire and develop our critical thinking (**Jan–May 2026**). One will be during the Spark Festival (**16<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> May 2026**)
- Six online individual coaching sessions from (**Dec–May 2026**)
- Artist Takeover and meeting PYA delegates as part of The Spark Festival (**16<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> May 2026, exact date tbc**)

**Total Time Commitment: 10 days**

**Bursary Fee: £1890**

We ask for a commitment of **10 days**, and you'll be paid a total of **£1890** to take part in the programme.

This payment covers a training fee of £180 per day for 9 days of training and £45 for 6 x 90 minute online coaching sessions.

You'll receive training, workshops, coaching and masterclasses at no cost. All **travel, accommodation, theatre tickets, food and drink** will be paid for.

The total value of the investment in each artist taking part in the programme is approximately £5,000.

## When and Where?

### Artist Residential Monday 24<sup>th</sup>– 27<sup>th</sup> Thursday November 2025

You'll spend four days in Leicester at The Vital Spark host venue, Attenborough Arts Centre. There you'll be sharing, learning and building a relationship with the rest of your cohort and The Spark Arts. You'll take part in:

- **Masterclasses** delivered by specialists. These might include; co-creation, devising, using access, dramaturgy, storytelling, object manipulation, or cross-arts practice.
- **Informal lunches** to meet and network with local arts organisations and funders.
- **Opportunities** to visit current Spark Artists workshops or performances
- **Reflection sessions** on where you are and where you want to go in your practice
- **Evening Meals** to get to know each other outside the workspace

## Online coaching sessions

During the programme, when we're not together, there will be a series of online group coaching sessions that will support you in finding your voice, your values, authenticity and help create your action plan to propel you on your onward journey.

## Vital Spark Artist Takeover Day – May 2026

The programme completes in May 2026 with you taking part in the Vital Spark Takeover in Leicester (as part of the Spark Festival).

## Who is this for?

Vital Spark aims to make a positive change to the PYA sector by increasing representation and this opportunity is open to artists who identify as one or more of the groups below. We recognise that this is not an exhaustive list and welcome applications from people who may have faced barriers working in the arts or cultural sector in the past.

- People who identify as being from a global majority background or as ethnically diverse (including but not limited to African, African Caribbean, South, East and South East Asian diaspora)
- People who are D/deaf, Disabled and/or Neurodiverse
- People who identify as LGBTQIA+
- People from a refugee or migrant community
- Those who are care-experienced (defined as individuals who are in or have experienced care during their lives, no matter the duration)
- People who are from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community
- People from a working class/low-income background (or have identified as such in the past)

## You might be...

- An emerging artist who is keen to develop their craft in arts and culture for children and families.
- A mid-career artist who has not yet developed their practice specifically in relation to work for children and families.
- An actor, a musician, a director, a visual artist – in fact any type of artist – but with an interest in making performance work for children.
- Regardless of your experience you'll have a commitment, passion and drive to create extraordinary art for children and families!

Just a reminder. You don't need to meet all the above points to be eligible, we've created this outline as a guide. So, if you like the sound of this programme, we encourage you to apply – we'd love to hear from you!

## Access

We want to ensure that access and inclusion is at the heart of artistic development. Therefore, as a baseline, we will ensure that:

- All spaces used are accessible
- 'Go and See' trips will only involve events that are accessible
- Travel and accommodation are accessible
- We provide information in different formats.
- Info sessions and interviews will include a BSL interpreter

Additionally, the residential will be delivered through consultation with selected artists to ensure we meet individual access needs, with appropriate breaks and timings which meets the requirements of those involved.

We are aware that the above won't meet everyone's access requirements and that access requirements can vary from day to day. Therefore, we will do our best to meet all access needs of artists both in application phase and for the duration of the programme.

If you have any questions about access or if you require additional support to apply, please contact [admin@thesparkarts.co.uk](mailto:admin@thesparkarts.co.uk) or call 0116 261 6893.

## How to apply

Expressions of interest can be made by written, video or audio response. Please use the Application Guide or listen to the Audio Submission Guide for a full breakdown of what is needed.

Submissions are via the online portal for each application strand. You can find the links to each portal on our website or by downloading the Submission Guide.



## Timeframe

- Submissions must be received by midday on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025
- Thirty-minute online meetings with shortlisted artists will take place during the week of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025.
- Final decision: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 (all applicants will be contacted by this date).
- If you have any questions or any problems downloading these forms, please contact [admin@thesparkarts.co.uk](mailto:admin@thesparkarts.co.uk) or call 0116 2616893.

## Got a question about the application?

### Arrange a chat

If you have any questions about how to make your application or if you have any questions relating to the programme itself, please contact Mita Pujara on: [VitalSparkLead@thesparkarts.co.uk](mailto:VitalSparkLead@thesparkarts.co.uk) or call 0116 2616893.

### Online information session: 17<sup>th</sup> September, 6.30pm

To use

Here is the pre-registration link: [Online information session: 17 September, 6.30pm](#)

Do get in touch with any access needs you may have by emailing [admin@thesparkarts.co.uk](mailto:admin@thesparkarts.co.uk) or call 0116 261 6893.

## Who are The Spark Arts for Children?

Based in the heart of Leicester's cultural quarter in England, we are an arts organisation with over 20 years of experience of culturally raising the children of Leicester. We help children immerse themselves in the arts in a variety of places and spaces. We offer children opportunities to discover their skills, passions, and potential—both as an audience and participants.

We commission and produce ambitious, high-quality experiences that are led by the values of diversity, representation and innovation. We organise a bold and imaginative children's arts festival. And we champion local cultural activity so that children in the region can thrive!

Our child action group [The Mega Bosses of Spark](#) is made up of 8 -13-year-olds from across Leicester. They help Spark to understand what kinds of arts and creative activities children want to see and take part in, and what 'amazing' looks like for them.

## **What is Vital Spark?**

Born in 2018, Vital Spark is a movement addressing the lack of diversity, representation and innovation in the Performance for Young Audiences (PYA) sector.

## **How?**

Through Vital Spark, we share best practice with partner organisations – and provide essential support to under-represented artists – to create world-class cultural opportunities.

We care about artists, partners, and children – and recognise that they are all different, so each Vital Spark relationship is bespoke.

## **Why?**

Through development opportunities, and the commissioning and production of new work, we support artists who are currently under-represented in the PYA sector; and in turn, these artists support us in our ambition to be a more inclusive organisation which reflects the cultural make up of our city.

We believe that children and young people should be able to see themselves reflected and represented in all the shows they watch. Both in terms of the stories being told and the performers who tell those stories.

By working closely with the Vital Spark Artists and Partner Organisations, we can make this a reality.

Thank you and we look forward to receiving your application!