

# Kingsley & Co



## Impact Report 2022-23

# Introduction

In 2019 Ykids launched a new project, Kingsley & Co, a Victorian Explorer Steampunk themed children's literacy and arts project.

Addressing the low rates of literacy in Bootle, the project sought to engage children and their families in a love of all things story, promoting literacy through creativity, storytelling, reading and writing, and thus improve wellbeing, literacy and life long outcomes for children in Bootle.



A lot has been achieved over the last few years thanks to the help of multiple funders, volunteers and supporters. This report outlines our achievements, the challenges we have faced and the impact of our work over the last year. We are grateful to all those who have believed in us and invested in our vision to transform the lives of children and young people in Bootle and Merseyside.



# What we have achieved

Kingsley and Co is a children's bookshop and literacy project with a Victorian Explorer Steampunk theme. Based in the Strand shopping centre in Bootle it makes literacy, storytelling and the arts accessible for children and families, and promotes education and well being through fun, imagination and discovery.

Initially we had just one shop unit but we rapidly needed to expand and knocked through an entrance into the unit next door, creating a larger classroom and converting the previous classroom into a discovery room. This hugely increased our ability to offer workshops to schools.

Kingsley and Co opens to the public 3 days a week during the school term and 4 days during school holidays.



## The shop facilities include :



A large bookshop selling second handbooks for just £1 with on average around 10,000 books on the shelves at any one time.

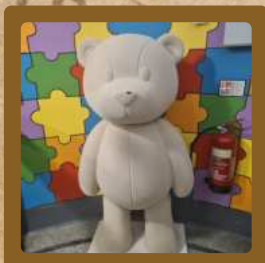
A small coffee shop - or 'parent creche' encouraging parents to linger while children engage with the activities and facilities available for them to explore.

Story doors, dressing up area and story themed exhibits and art installations

A range of fairy tale themed products such as dragon ear wax, mermaid pearls, and the 'Emperor's New Socks'.

A classroom/workshop room themed as a Victorian sitting room with moving portraits, fire and hearth and large smart screen. The classroom is accessed through a wardrobe complete with fur coats.

A discovery room behind a moving bookcase where children can explore hands on exhibits and games, a curiosity cabinet, a working time machine, infinity mirror, working periscope and dressing up corner among many other things.



## Event and activity programme

In addition to the shop we also offer an extensive event and activity programme



- **Story and Rhyme** for carers and tots every term time Thursday
- **Monday Night Children's Literary club** exploring fables, Grimms fairy tales, books, animation, drama and film making
- **An author in residence** who brings their expertise, skills and experience to deliver exceptional workshops and support events.
- **A schools offer** including workshops and activities within Kingsley
- **A schools offer** including workshops and story keeper visits to schools
- **A free family workshop offer** every Saturday exploring stories, animation, drama, puppets, shadow puppets, origami, fables and much more
- **Space** for special needs groups to deliver workshops
- **A successful volunteer programme**



THE

# SCALDRUN

## School Holiday Provision

Every school holiday we provide free activities for children and families aimed at families who are on a low income. In the last year these have included:

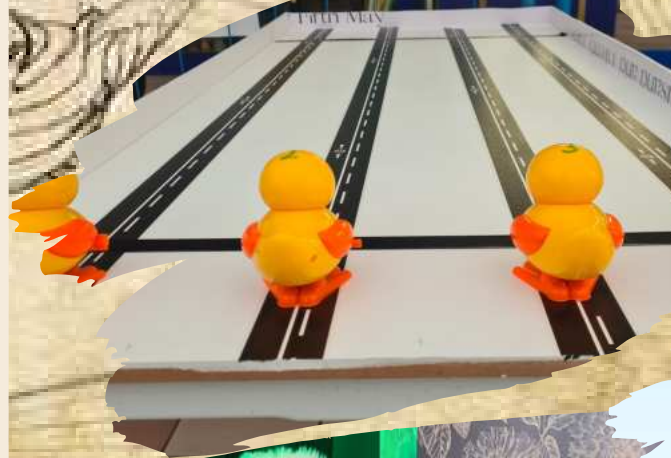
**Monster Bash** for October Half term - with a cookie monster trail, silent discos, crafts, stories, workshops and monster mash dress up.

**The Grinch Experience** in December- this was one of our few 'paid for' events and saw 1200 children meet the Grinch and receive a small gift.

**Indie Author week** in February half term - offering workshops and activities with new and local authors including our award winning Artist in residence

**Duck Fest** - 3 days during Easter with games, activities, stories and workshops with a duck theme.

**Neurodiversity week** during June - celebrating differences and highlighting books that are available to children who struggle to read. and promoting a range of books that feature children with neurodiversity. We welcomed a local author who worked with her son to write a book about his autism, offered inclusive workshops and welcomed Midstream for a visit. Midstream is an organisation which supports adults with additional needs. They bake and supply the cakes for Kingsley and Co. We also purchased and displayed 25 Umbrellas from the ADHD foundation in the corridor outside our shop, promoting the work that they do.



# Summer

Our summer programme offered 2 days a week of free activities which included:

- **Mobile Zoo**
- **Pirate Party**
- **Board games**
- **Circus skills**
- **Drumming workshops**
- **Teddy Bear's Picnic**
- **Illustration workshops**

*"Every Thursday she wakes up and says 'It's book cafe day!'"*

Every event was well attended and explored literacy through story, rhyme, drama, illustration and physical theatre.






# Ali Harwood: Artist in Residence

We were delighted to welcome Ali Harwood as our Artist in Residence this year. Ali is an award winning author, artist, poet and teacher and made an incredible addition to the team.


Throughout the year he delivered multiple workshops with hundreds of children, families and schools on a variety of themes, From illustration to chinse zodiac, Liverbirds, poetry and Dragonology, every workshop brought delight to those who attended. He also led an 8 week after school project helping children to write and illustrate their own stories.

Ali also involved Kingsley and Co in a number of regional events such at the launch of the Liverpool Literary Cycle and was a judge for our children's short story competition. From September Ali will take on the role of Bootle Children's Literary Festival schools and author liaison, helping us to manage this huge project working with over 40 schools.





## Additional activities and achievements



In addition:

- We **held 8 author events** where local authors delivered workshops and promoted their books and even had a visiting actress talk about her role as a young actor to our film and script writing group.
- **Eurovision event** celebrating music from around the world, distributing 300 Eurovision themed books and activity packs
- Distributed **100 Builder book** boxes containing books for all ages and targeting families reading together.
- Took a group of children studying Grimms fairy tales to **visit Grimm and Co** and to see a **fairy tale themed panto**.
- **Delivered a film club awards** event and film screening for children attending our story and film writing course.
- **Christmas Light Switch on**. Our Story Keeper – dressed as the Grinch also turned on the Christmas Lights for the strand Shopping Centre.

**Liverpool Literacy Cycle Fair** - based in the Central Library In Liverpool, our story keeper had a stall and took part in storytelling.

**Formby High Literacy Festival** - Our Story Keeper also delivered workshops for the Formby High Literacy Festival.

**Celebrated opening a new creative and interactive Library** at a local school along side author Frank Cottrell Boyce.

In addition to the above activities, we had various groups use our classroom for community meetings and hosted consultation meetings around the regeneration of the Strand. We welcomed breastfeeding groups, informal visits from special needs groups, support groups from Alder Hey and much more.



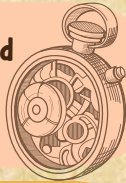


# Beneficiaries

Our core beneficiaries are children aged 0 to 14 years and their families. We target families who are on a low income and as a result have fewer opportunities and are statistically less likely to achieve. We also target schools and the wider family.

During the last year we have delivered activities with the following.

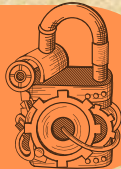
**42** Young people attended  
8 - 10 week week  
after school clubs



**264**  
children attended the duck fest



**400**  
Children attended  
Story and Rhyme



**563**  
Children attended the  
Monster Bash



**943**  
Children attended  
workshops with school



**971**  
Children attended our  
summer programme



**1,200**  
Children visited the  
Grinch



**1611**  
Children took part in family  
workshops



**3178**  
Attended projects with their children



**5423** children took part in  
activities this year and  
**3178** adults.

In addition, footfall in the  
shop was **16123** people.

# Other Outcomes



## Volunteers

29 volunteers gave 1627 hours of volunteer time over the last year

## Books donated

13669 second hand books have been donated, equivalent to 3 tonnes of books diverted from landfill



## Second hand books sold

7301 quality pre loved books have been sold for £1



## Books given away

2039 books have been given away free of charge to children



## Other achievements

Kingsley and Co has featured in a number of publications including blogs and tourist guides, and 'Space to Thrive', a report by Locality which was send to central government.

Kingsley and Co is being cited as a model for high street regeneration by the chair of the government's select committee for high street regeneration.

Visitors have purposely travelled to see us from as far afield as Nottingham, Kent and Glasgow.



# Impact

We collect feedback from every event that we deliver in the form of feedback cards. We also ask for comments, and collect basic data from event sign ins so we can calculate where people are coming from and if we are hitting our target audience.

## FEEDBACK

THE AVERAGE SCORE FOR OUR ACTIVITY AND EVENT OFFER IS 9.5 OUT OF 10

### Fun

'What a fabulous experience for the children - very engaging, child friendly, and festive. (It) created a real sense of magic and wonder.'



### Connected

'Very welcoming and baby/child friendly. Great safe space. Staff are enthusiastic. Just what is needed in hard times to support the community.'



### Wellbeing

'The staff are friendly and inclusive and inspire the children's imagination. As a neurodivergent family we always know we will have a fun, relaxing time at these events.'



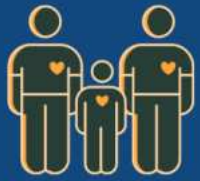
#### ATTENDEES FROM DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES

65% of all attendees are from L20, L21 and L30 postcodes, i.e. the poorest areas of Sefton. 16% come from neighbouring areas and 16% from the Merseyside region.



#### FREE SCHOOL MEALS

53% of the children and young people we are working with are on free school meals. The national average is 24%. Derby ward where Kingsley and Co is situated has 43% of its children on free school meals



'Nice to see other parents and grandchildren on half term. It's hard to find affordable activities and it is amazing we can access this for free. Great to see the list of all activities available'



### Demographics

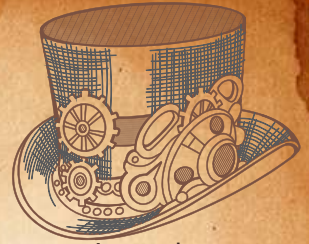
On average, 65% of all those who attend our events are from the immediate area including post codes in the most deprived communities in Merseyside. Another 16% come from communities close to Bootle while a further 16% come from across the Mersey region 3% of visitors come from across the UK

### Free school Meals:

We collect data from our events regarding how many of the children we are reaching are on free school meals. This gives us an indication of poverty and children are entitled to a free school meals.

Our data tells us that on average, 53% of the children we are working with over the year are on free school meals. The national average in the UK is 24% of children are on free school meals. In Derby Ward where Kingsley is based, the average is 42% of children on free school meals. This evidences that we are achieving our aim in targeting children and young people in the poorest families.

# CASE STUDIES



## **Ellie: Name changed**

Ellie struggled with self confidence and had low self esteem but enjoyed storytelling and drawing. She joined a group working with our Story Keeper and Ai Harwood our Artist in residence. The group explored storytelling and illustration through fables and encouraged them to write their own. Ali recognised Ellie's talent and encouraged her and a couple of the other children to take part in a poetry and story reading event at the Sefton Palm house where Ellie had to read out loud in front of a roomful of adults.

Around the same time we launched a short story competition asking for children to write stories that would feature in a book which we would launch at the Bootle Children's Literary festival. Ellie decided she would enter a short story. unbeknownst to her Ali also entered one of her stories that she had created during her time in our Fantastic Fables group, Both Ellie's stories were chosen to feature in the book to be published in November and she is the only person of 117 entries that has 2 successful stories. Her mum told us that she knew her daughter was talented but being recognised was hugely impacting her self belief. Ellie hopes one day to be an author.

## **Graham - name changed**

Graham came to Ykids at age 11 and began attending groups. He was very loud and quite disruptive always seeking attention and encouraging others to misbehave. At 14 we invited him to become a volunteer at Kingsley and Co and he began to learn many skills including customer service, barista training, cash handling etc.. We watched as his confidence and understanding of self grew as he was trusted with more and more important roles. He also began to learn youth work skills and was able to support in leading children's groups and at events. As a result of his experience he managed to get a part time job but he remains one of our most reliable and hard working volunteers.

Graham loves history and had set his mind on going to university to study history, but after his extensive experience working at Kingsley and Co he has decided instead to do a PGCE and become a primary school teacher. He has just been accepted to study at a Liverpool university. He puts his change of heart down to the joy he has working with children at Kingsley and Co, and wanting to make a difference in children's lives.



# Challenges and lessons learned

## **Recruiting the right staff is key**

The first few months of our appointment of a Story Keeper in September 2020 were challenging as in the November we went into a second lockdown that lasted until June 2021. We did our best to create online content and engage our audience through story telling online, interviewing authors and distributing free books to children. After just a few months however our Story Keeper fell pregnant and left after just one year. We re-recruited and our new Story Keeper who had just finished a degree in Applied Theatre at Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts has brought life and drive to the project.

## **Lack of space**

We quickly outgrew the building that we had been given by the council, so after 18 months we requested and were granted the shop next door - knocking through to create a classroom and turned the former classroom into a discovery room.

## **The challenge of a leaky building**

The property had been given to us free of charge, and was intended for demolition when the council raised enough funds to regenerate the town centre. This however meant that maintenance of the building had not been prioritised for some years. Over the last 3 years and we had at least 5 large leaks/floods causing us to close for repairs which has caused a lot of frustration. This also took out our classroom space for the entire summer this year causing us to have to make huge changes to our plans at a time when we have become busier than ever.

**Location, location, location!** Our project has been recognised as an asset in the shopping centre but footfall/passing trade is extremely low unless drive customers to visit through events and activities. This however we have done very successfully which has been noticed and we have appeared in a number of national publications online and in Locality's 'Space to Thrive' report. We have also had a great deal of interest from the Chair of the government's select committee for Highstreet Regeneration.

We also took on an author in residence who had shown a great rapport with and children and families -however due to health issues he was unable to deliver on the agreed contract. Our second attempt has been a completely different experience with an amazing award winning Author and artist Ali Harwood, on board who is bringing real value to the Kingsley and Co offer.

## **Charging for activities**

Bootle is a very poor community and books and literacy are not high on the priority list when people are struggling to put food on the table. Initially we offered family workshops with a charge of £12 per family of 4 including crafts, drinks and cake. It was a loss leader but often workshops were not filled.

We then trialled offering the family workshops for free but did not include refreshments. We found that workshops now fill rapidly and people generally still buy refreshments of a greater value making the offer more cost effective but also attracting families who could not afford £12 for activities.

We did find however that families were prepared to pay for an experience at Christmas such as the Grinch Experience. We ensured we kept costs reasonable and included a 15 minutes interactive experience and gift in the ticket price.

## Finance and funding

'Brilliant as always.  
Exceptional  
storytelling skills'  
parent

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
sales	14661	33791	35299
donations	309	444	626
bookings	0	5037	10158
<b>Total</b>	<b>14970</b>	<b>39200</b>	<b>46083</b>

### 2020-21

Kingsley was closed for part of the year due to Covid

### 2021-2022

This year was a relaunch and included the Bootle Children's Literary Festival, large event involving 34 schools, and a pirate festival hence an increase in income.

### 2022-23

We opened our new classroom space and income has steadily increased without a large scale event during the year.

### Finance moving forward

While income and bookings have increased the project is not yet viable financially without funding investment - this is largely due to the location which has extremely low footfall. We have gained additional investment from a variety of funders to support the project.

In January 2024 we will be relocating to a new unit which is much larger and is in a prime location on the high-street - as a result we expect footfall and therefore income to increase dramatically allowing us to advance towards sustainability, and meaning we can become less grant dependant.

We will however need to make some initial investments as we refurbish the building adding toilets and a kitchen.



# Funders and supporters

All that has been achieved would not have been possible without the generous support of funders, local business and partners.

This year we are grateful for support from

The Steve Morgan Foundation

The Rank Foundation

The Tudor Trust

The Leather Sellers Company Charity

The All Churches Trust

Sefton Councillors

Cargill Care Council

John Lewis

Iceland Bootle

The Awesome Foundation

Vinci Construction

Mann Roberts Solicitors

BNY / Pershing

Warwick Developments North

West Ltd.

Living Well Sefton

Cllr Trish Hardy

Eleanor Rathbone Trust

Peel Ports

One Vision Housing

PH Holt Foundation

Siobhan Dowd Trust

Strand Shopping Centre

Sovini

# What's next?

We have two large events on the horizon including the Bootle Children's Literary Festival from Oct 26th to November 11th and moving to a new location.

## Bootle Children's Literary Festival 2023

This year our theme is Fairy Tale, Myth and Legend and 30 schools have signed up already. The event will offer

- **Author visits to schools**
- **Workshops and activities at Kingsley and Co**
- **A golden ticket scheme distributing thousands of new books to children**
- **A fairy door interactive trail around a local park**
- **Fairy door workshops in local libraries**
- **Fairy tale film showings at the Plaza community cinema**
- **A literary Fair**
- **A Medieval story telling fair**
- **An animatronic dragon and Vikings**
- **The launch of a book of short stories written by local children.**



## Moving to a new location

In January 2024 we will be moving to a new shop unit - a former bank. Pros:

- The bank is much larger and will allow us to deliver more activities to more children and young people.
- The bank is in good condition and has recently been refurbished
- Footfall will increase as the property is in a prime location at the entrance of the shopping centre
- The bank opens on to the street allowing us to open evenings and after school
- Larger premises mean we can install a proper kitchen and offer a wider range in the cafe.
- We will have the opportunity to begin an apprentice programme employing young people with barriers to work.
- The unit is being given to us free of charge.





## Moving to a new shop unit

### Cons:

- We will need to fund raise and invest heavily in refurbishing the property including installing a kitchen and accessible toilets.
- Due to its location we will need to open more days a week and employ additional staff adding additional costs before we can recoup them.
- We will have a period of 3 months when we are closed while we are moving from one property to another



## Proof of concept

While moving location will have its challenges we were aware that our current venue was due for demolition at some point, however we wanted to prove that our concept could work. And over the last 3 years we believe that we have done that:-

- While literacy rates are low, there is a desire from children and young people to engage with literacy and the arts in Bootle.
- Our events and activities are popular and are reaching our target audience.
- Schools are engaging and recognising the positive impact of the story telling environment on their pupils.
- Feedback is overwhelmingly positive
- The project is meeting need for children and families who are in poverty and are not easily able to provide their children with extra curricular cultural and educational opportunities due to cost and accessibility.
- The project makes a positive impact on wellbeing and community cohesion
- The project is making a positive impact on footfall in the shopping centre, and is an integral part of the regeneration of the town centre.
- Young people are gaining skills in volunteering which are leading to jobs.
- People of all ages are engaging with the project.
- Children are being inspired to improve their literacy by engaging with stories, meeting authors, learning new skills, using their imagination and being encouraged to be creative.
- The project has raised national interest and is attracting visitors from across the region and further afield.





# Kingsley & Co

We are indebted to the Rank Foundation for supporting us through their Profit for Good programme which has enabled us to deliver a successful and thriving project which is rapidly moving towards sustainability. Children's lives are being impacted, young people are gaining jobs and the work is supporting the transformation of our town. Thank you for believing in us.



"It was fun - I liked doing everything"

"My kids love books and get excited when they can donate them back"

"What a brilliant magical idea, we were just walking past and as soon as the kids saw it their eyes lit up with excitement"

