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## BUSINESS PLAN 2025–2028



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**phf** Paul Hamlyn  
Foundation

# 1. The introduction: Exec Summary

This plan reflects where Chol is, in 2025, following significant cultural and organisational change over the last five years. The economic climate is challenging, we are living in the reality of a deeply felt cost of living crisis which impacts across all of our stakeholders but particularly for us, means that we have to consider the impact on the team, our pool of freelancers, and the funding landscape.

Following the introduction of the Chol-Operative in 2020, our flat structure, equal pay and equal responsibility environment, we have taken time to adjust and implement what is needed to succeed with that approach. During this time of adjustment, the team have experienced significant capacity pressure, though some element of financial stability was brought about as a result of success and acceptance into Arts Council England's National Portfolio, there is more work to do in diversifying and strengthening our funding portfolio. We are also at a stage of acknowledging that the Chol-Operative, to be successful, requires adaptability and openness to ongoing reflection and evolution - as we all individually and collectively change and grow, along with the landscape we are working in, so too must the Chol-Operative. The aim is that we evolve in a way that fully represents the commitment and ambition we have towards our beneficiaries.

It is important to note that due to the reality of the last five years, long term, strategic planning has been challenging for Chol, however, we are now in a position to better align our plans with our ambition. It is also important to acknowledge that in order to strategically position ourselves and our work, cultural/organisational change is necessary. Whilst this is happening, and even in the last 12 months, we can observe decisions and planning that nod to this longer term objective: working smarter, not harder; the introduction of the Strategy and Development role; the scale of application for projects like Ella's Peas; our flagship programme Imaginary Communities; all encompassed within our Strive Strategy and Framework. On that basis, we should scale our ambition for this business plan, to what is pragmatically ambitious, and therefore achievable, both in terms of timescale and also income/expenditure. This steady approach to ambition aims to create a sustainable foundation for the lifetime of the organisation, beyond the end of this business plan.

This plan, therefore, looks at 2025-2028, responds to the current landscape and funding structure, and aims to capture the ambition within the organisation, whilst acknowledging certain limitations that we face owing to the aforementioned economic landscape. Within this timescale, it is worth noting that our two key funding streams, Arts Council and Paul Hamlyn Foundation come to an end and therefore the plan will also address these factors.

## 2. The introduction: An organisational summary

Established in 1989, Chol Theatre has evolved into a dynamic and socially conscious action research company with theatre and creativity at the heart of its practice. A registered charity based in Yorkshire, we work with children and young people (CYP) from early years to early career across Yorkshire and the North, prioritising work in Kirklees, Barnsley and Sheffield with an additional area of interest in Rotherham. Our approach is entirely collaborative, working in everyday community and educational settings to co-create stories and work that are/is rooted in communities and local heritage. Our projects are born out of a curiosity to establish models of working that can be robustly monitored and evaluated in order to share our learning, locally, regionally, nationally and in some cases, internationally. Through this action research, allowing us to evidence efficacy and impact, we seek to nurture the next generation of creative change makers, supporting children and young people to feel **powerful, valued and connected**, knowing that they can be active in making positive change happen in their own lives and the lives of their communities.

Over the last 15 years, against a landscape of decreased arts in curricular investment, we have developed Imaginary Communities (IC) alongside children, teachers and community partners. IC is a robust learning methodology, backed by in-depth evaluation, that has proven highly effective in engaging children in learning across the curriculum, improving engagement and skills in writing, nurturing positive well-being and relationships, and further developing teacher confidence in arts-based pedagogies. This programme is recognised Nationally and Internationally as an impactful approach to education.

In 2020, we moved to the Chol-Operative, a democratic and inclusive company model. It means that we are a woman-led team, working in a flat structure with equal pay. At the time of writing, there are five equal directors, all with their own individual skill set and aligned area of focus. The model was born out of our desire to create more accessible through-routes within the organisation, with the aim of eliminating the many barriers that prevent people from working in senior positions in arts companies. Our commitment to collaboration means that collectively, we lead the organisation with ambition, determination, kindness and equity, navigating the successes and challenges that a flat structure can offer. We are further supported by an engaged and dynamic board of highly experienced trustees and are in the process of developing the Young Chol-Operative, creating opportunities for emerging artists, producers and administrators that might otherwise find career access and development challenging.

Strive is our commitment to anti-racism and inclusion, a strategy and framework embedded into every aspect of our work, informing the development of our projects, practice and ambition. It ensures we regularly interrogate our purpose, vision, values and approach to our work, our company structures and our working culture. Strive – diversity, equity and inclusivity – is the beating heart of our work; it is a journey, not a tickbox. In 2023, we became a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England, allowing us to deliver our work to more people in a deeper way.

# 3. The Vision and Mission

## **Vision:**

To see children and young people feeling powerful, valued and connected

To see Yorkshire as the caring and creative capital of the UK

To see robust, dynamic and inclusive arts education practices in the UK and Internationally

To make significant contribution to arts in community and heritage practices in the UK and Internationally

To lead by example in relation to anti-racism, inclusivity and equity in the arts and wider society

To lead by example in relation to equitable, collaborative leadership that celebrates individual and collective expertise

To see the value and importance of action research, monitoring and evaluation recognised and implemented in the arts, nationally.

## **Mission:**

*To see children and young people feeling powerful, valued and connected* by creating environments that allow them to co-create stories in their everyday spaces; responding to their identity and locality; leaving a lasting impact, inspiring creativity and self expression through our programmes using flagship methodologies including Imaginary Communities and Equal Playmakers.

*To see Yorkshire as the caring and creative capital of the UK* we will contribute by sharing our models of best practice – devised in the region – through accessible, equitable and inclusive programmes including caring and creative schools; ensuring that the highest quality arts education practices are shared across the region, nationally and internationally, so that more professionals have a deeper understanding and awareness about educational inequity and how to remove barriers to learning.

*To see robust, dynamic and inclusive arts education practices in the UK and Internationally.* We will play our role by using action research to continually monitor, evaluate and collate meaningful learning, establishing robust evaluation frameworks across all aspects of the organisation so that we can articulate impact and efficacy of the arts in education; by working as national consultants and regional leaders in arts based training for teachers and artists to share quality practice through evaluation and research; developing new and existing relationships with national and international partners to continue researching, evaluating, developing and informing models of best practice.

*To make significant contribution to arts in community and heritage practices in the UK and Internationally* by using action research to develop models of working that explore, evaluate and devise shareable methods for accessible and inclusive approaches to

co-creation in community and heritage settings with particular interest in socio-demographics that may not ordinarily consider the arts as a tool for connection.

*To lead by example in relation to anti-racism, inclusivity and equity in the arts and wider society* by the ongoing interrogation of our systems, environment and approach through our Strive strategy and framework; regular self reflection, teaching, learning and unlearning both as individuals and as an organisation, but also with partners and stakeholders; recognising when to lead and when to seek guidance and learning (unlearning) from those better placed, willing, and appropriately remunerated to inform.

*To lead by example in relation to equitable, collaborative leadership that celebrates individual and collective expertise* through the ongoing development of our Chol-Operative and Young Chol-Operative models, whilst exploring ways in which to develop effective, long-term project-based recruitment and training opportunities that fit within the concept of our structure, recognising the inequity in relation to gaining skills and expertise, providing sustainable CPD for all internal and external stakeholders.

*To see the value and importance of action research, monitoring and evaluation recognised and implemented in the arts, nationally* by leading by example in relation to the importance of implementing robust frameworks that reflect on the efficacy of our work in order to share learning and best practice, locally, nationally and internationally.

## **In order to achieve our vision and mission, the following are the four cornerstones to Chol's work:**

**Education:** Advocating for creativity at the heart of schools to ensure children and young people access arts and culture as a means to feel powerful, valued and connected, regardless of their social background or postcode. We will understand and promote how creativity increases children and young people's attainment and well-being through cross-curricular learning.

**Community connection:** Inspired and contextualised by the intercultural community we're part of, we will devise projects that tackle inequity. Cholavan, our mobile creative vehicle, will enable us to reach a diverse range of people, including those from disadvantaged communities.

**Partnerships:** Collaboration is key to our mission. We will continue to nurture relationships with libraries, museums, schools, arts organisations, community spaces, universities, & LCEPs.

**Innovation & Sector development:** Our projects will offer alternative pathways to a career in the arts, with a long-term goal of increasing diversity of arts professionals.

## 4. The What: Values, Aims and Objectives; the Art

Chol believes passionately in radical kindness, openness, collaboration, learning, inclusivity and equity. These things inform all that we do, from our strategic planning and partnerships to our day-to-day operations and team leadership.

Our focus is on creating an environment that nurtures confidence, open dialogue and curiosity. An environment that both recognises and celebrates difference; people-centred conditions that are essential to realising our individual and collective potential. We want to create the conditions, knowledge and opportunities that allow success for our colleagues, partners and wider stakeholders.

We do not believe in gatekeeping, rather identifying ways to achieve our objectives, robustly interrogating them until we are confident in our approach, then sharing that approach for the greater good of those we work, rest and play with. This is why we place such significance to action research.

Through these things, we wish to affect change in the individual and collective communities we collaborate and partner with. But we also recognise the following important factors:

- it is not our role to prescribe what positive change looks like for others, rather create an environment that allows equal investigation so as to learn what this might look like.
- it is not our role to empower people, rather create an intentional environment in which people can identify and take ownership of their own power in a way that feels authentic to them.
- play is critical to all of this. At all stages and ages; therefore, we must also allow ourselves and others to learn, grow, and get things wrong. We cannot and should not have all the answers.
- communication is key, being unafraid to sit with our own and group discomfort.
- we aim always to create an intentional space, a place where people are met with unconditional positive regard for the benefit of personal, professional and creative growth.

## **Taking this artistic vision and ethos, the following areas of our work will focus us to realise our ambition:**

### **Heritage and Culture**

Chol has a long, well-respected reputation for collaborating with local communities to share untold stories in ways they care about. Working intergenerationally is a key part of this practice, through collaborating with people of all ages, we will enable CYP be directly involved in co-creating high quality cultural events and performances to:

- celebrate community identity and heritage, social ties are built and strengthen with an increased sense of belonging,
- take part in art in their local everyday spaces and heritage venues, with new people.

### **Heritage Community Performance**

Through our Heritage and culture work, we will produce and present performances that are bold, inspirational, and relevant to CYP in the community. Young co-creators will:

- explore, celebrate, and/or commemorate local heritage together,
- bring refreshing perspectives to newly identified and well known heritage stories,
- explore what stories, heritage, connection and collaboration means for the future of their communities.

### **Community and Social Arts**

Co-creation is at the heart of our approach. CYP drive this work and ensure that our theatre and art making activities in communities are socially and ethically relevant and accessible, creating responsible pathways where possible. Through this, CYP will:

- develop their own arts practice,
- hone skills and take part in social arts activities outside school.
- gain interest, knowledge and confidence in building creative careers in South & West Yorkshire.

### **The Cholavan**

Using the Cholavan as a tool for connection, we will:

- build relationships and engagement in order to identify what is important to the communities we wish to work with,
- encourage creative thinking and ambition amongst the communities and participants we work with,
- develop programmes and opportunities that feel relevant to our stakeholders - as opposed to parachuting in with prescribed ideas and outcome targets.
- create non-traditional performance and exhibition spaces for communities that otherwise may not be able to access such.

## **Youth Performance**

Inspired and informed by our work at grassroots level, our engagement with young people and conversations about ideas and stories they are interested in and want to explore, we will:

- present large-scale, youth-led projects, co-created by CYP in one of Chol's core locations.
- Share these performances across our geographic reach, at community and social events programmed by partners.

## **Young People**

We will actively build programmes and relationships with young people in our core areas of activity in order to:

- develop projects, collaborations and partnerships that respond to their direct interests,
- build confidence, access to creativity, connection with each other, their communities and heritage.
- to develop the model of the Young Artists, Young Producers, and the Young Chol-Operative, thus creating pathways through the organisation and supporting career development for emerging practitioners.

## **Education and Learning**

We will continue to advocate for the power of creativity in learning, with particular interest in caring and creative curriculums, supported by:

- evolving versions of our artists in residence programmes,
- building relationships with schools, non-traditional education models, and communities to support access to creative learning opportunities.
- supporting artists and practitioners in continuous professional development to ensure the quality of opportunity going into these environments,
- the training and development of teachers and schools to bolster confidence in arts in education practices. training and skills sharing.
- the research and development of programmes inspired by IC and Equal Playmakers within museums and libraries.

## **Evaluation and Sharing of best practice**

All of the work we do has value and importance in and of itself, however, we are unique in the dedication we have to the ongoing, robust interrogation of practice in order to learn, grow and share methodologies that can affect positive change - we consider that all the work we do comes from a place of action research. As a result of this, all of the work that we do at Chol is now, or will:

- be subject to in-depth evaluation and learning in order that we can demonstrate robust methodology and best practice,
- be shared in-person, online and through our CPD work, with stakeholders including artists, practitioners, educators and funders.
- benefit from time and energy into the creation of robust evaluation and learning methodologies to inform models of best practice in relation to co-creation in the community and heritage, and youth and social arts environments. We will draw on our existing skills and expertise to create a framework that can be tried, tested and shared with partners, peers and the wider sector, initially in the region, but ultimately nationally and internationally.

# 5. The environment influences: SWOT

## Strengths

We show don't tell, commitment to collaboration (int & ext), work ethic, committed to affecting change, generosity of spirit, the board, steeliness/determination, NPO status, our foundations/history, flat structure, our reputation, flexibility/adaptive, not having a fixed office, intellectual/robust/rigorous methodology, Chol-Operative, Openness, humanness, kindness, agile team, reflective, nimble, ambition for self and others, laughter, resilient, chol magic, legacy, vulnerability, authenticity, Cholavan, All female team, we are not at the centre of our work, a growing, beautiful visual brand ID, high levels of expertise in different skill sets, responsiveness, passion, team commitment to our work, we are bigger picture thinkers, string organisational structure, strong regional reputation, geographical reach of team

## Weakness

Flat hierarchy creates challenges re autonomy/attracting new talent/retaining talent due to salary restrictions, no internal career progression, work ethic can lead to exhaustion, perspective is hard to get when time pressured, work life balance, lack of diversity/lived experience in team and wider freelancers, not having a fixed office, website, geographical spread of team, spread of work across the region, IT/Filing/Gdrive, HR, board is too small, lack of new skills and fresh perspective on the board, pressure to over deliver, Cholavan access issues, our profile is not broad enough locally, regionally or nationally, we can be too humble about our work, lack of a clear marketing/pr strategy, lack of time for self care in the team, small, majority p/t team, workload and structure can make us chaotic, internal/external comms, lack of up to date policies, lack of diversity around our income,

## Opportunities

New government, ACE review, changes to the education system, International Connections, Independent schools, Library and museum work, co-creation ambitions/conversations, Strive, Our programme, Sheffield Theatres connection (Dir of Participation), Rotherham Children's Capital of Culture (Becky Parry), Code of Conduct, Partners, Regional relationships/opportunities for development (Kirklees), End of current PHF Funding, Early Years opportunities, Other charities – YP, Refugees etc, New collaborations & partners, intergenerational work, community work, changes in Arts Award – shift to Arts Mark?, MH awareness and our work aligning with self esteem and resilience, untapped funding streams incl Foyle, Garfield Weston, Esmee Fairbairn (sector-wide sharing best practice), Children in Need, South Yorkshire Mayoral Fund, Safe Communities fund, new board members

## Threats

Funding cuts, cuts to arts education, political opinions, religious opinions, social fear around terrorist acts in public spaces, ACE review, end of PHF funding and our reliance on the funding, new government, economic challenges, NPO being a limited timeframe

## 6. The influences: PESTLE

| Politics  | Economy   | Society  | Tech   | Law   | Environment  |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>The change in government - this is likely to work in favour of Chol, and the communities we work in, but we don't know this and transition phases are often challenging anyway</p> | <p>The cost of living crisis is still being deeply felt and impacts our staff, participants, communities and partners</p> | <p>There has been a notable increase in the lack of boundaries and empathy felt amongst participants in community settings making for challenging communications and an increased need for skills in conflict resolution</p> | <p>The recent Microsoft crash demonstrates a fragility to our tech reliant systems</p> | <p>Wage laws in relation to paying participant expenses</p> | <p>The climate emergency must still be at the forefront of our mind when making any producing decisions - Cholovan; materials; suppliers etc</p> |
| <p>Divisive political rhetoric is having a frightening impact in our communities. We are likely to see more of this played out in the communities we work in</p>                      | <p>Increased cost of materials and resources remains an issue</p>   | <p>Continued growing interest in 'support local' type initiatives</p>  | <p>AI - where does AI and care meet?? AI and art?</p>                                  | <p>Union/Equity compliant contracts</p>                     | <p>Policies</p>  |

| <b>Politics</b>                                      | <b>Economy</b>  | <b>Society</b>   | <b>Tech</b>  | <b>Law</b>   | <b>Environment</b>                       |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Current interrogation of school inspection processes | The state of the economy is impacting on availability and distribution of funds | Increase in safeguarding risks due to right wing rhetoric  | Ultra-connectivity offers opportunities to connect with many more people   | Union membership within Chol - linked to activism theme? | Challenges on digital storage and papers |
| Potential continued industrial action in schools     |   | An increase in awareness of health and wellbeing creates opportunities for our work                        | Ultra-connectivity poses wellbeing and safeguarding risks - are people craving more face-to-face/analogue interaction? | Changes in law to safeguard our YP from terrorism        |  |
|  |   | An increased awareness of access has shown how much work we have to do to be truly accessible              | Algorithms are shaping the content of what we see – the rise in tech exploitation                                      |  |  |
|  |   | There are an increasing number of communities and members within communities who are facing real isolation |  |  |  |

## 7. The practical considerations: Resourcing

### **People:**

*The Chol-Operative:* Through this model, we aim to create an equitable environment that allows all members of the team to play to their strengths, whilst responding to organisational need. Having identified roles and responsibilities in 2023/24, the Chol-Operative has had the opportunity to test the structure and share of workload which has shown us that by nature of the way in which we work, and through our ambition to align all projects strands strategically, there is crossover in most roles, of some nature. We believe this to be an inevitable part of the nature of a flat structure such as that which we have developed and recognise therefore the importance of ongoing reflection and evaluation of success and challenges, in order to ensure that we are adapting and responding to organisational need, maximising the skill set we have available to us on the team, preserving an environment in which each member of the team can thrive, whilst recognising the importance of creating roles that are clearly defined to protect succession planning and sustainability. We will continue to evaluate our roles through the lifetime of this business plan, as our projects, workload and the landscape evolves, reserving the right, therefore, to amend roles, job titles and responsibilities according to business and individual needs. We will also continue to be reflective of the model and the benefits and challenges it presents, considering dynamic ways to evolve the model to support personal and professional growth, staff retention, and employee satisfaction. Whilst also considering how the Chol-Operative might present opportunities for young people through CPD and transparent succession planning.

*The Young Chol-Operative:* We have also identified that the development of a Young Chol-Operative model, provides a unique opportunity for emerging artists, producers and administrators to gain valuable experience in a transparent organisation, whilst offering much needed support to the Chol-Operative from a capacity perspective. This model, whilst born out of activity in recent years, is evolving more strategically as the business plan, programme plan and ambition unfolds. It seeks to create a mutually beneficial environment for emerging practitioners and Chol, mirroring the Chol-Operative flat structure, whilst creating an access point for those part of the model to gain valuable, transferable skills for the purpose of their own career development. This model will be subject to the same rigorous evaluation that all our work requires as we explore if and how it might feed into the sustainability of the Chol-Operative.

Through both these things, we recognise the following challenges:

*Recruitment and representation through a Strive lens:* When recruiting staff for any role within Chol, we recognise that we will be recruiting from an uneven landscape and that opportunity and privilege is not equitable for all. With this in mind, we will identify a budget line to support CPD for the team which will include specific development time and financial resources to support those who may value and benefit from additional training in order to take on roles and responsibilities that other people have had greater access and privilege to.

### **Systems and Policies:**

All systems and policies will be fully reviewed during 2025, with support from external HR expertise. Key policies that have external impact have been reviewed and updated and can be found online in the Chol-Operative Google drive, however these too will be subject to review and revision..

We have recently devised our Strive Strategy that has given us a framework to be adapted for every aspect of the organisation, programme strands and projects, informing us on how to ensure we remain actively anti-racist and inclusive over the lifetime of this business plan. This activity is an ongoing commitment, requiring continual professional development for all staff and, where appropriate, the board.

### **Governance:**

The Chol board is made up of a group of dedicated individuals, often with a long standing relationship to the organisation in some capacity or other. During 2025/26, we will revisit the board review and skills analysis in order to establish what gaps we might have in relation to board representation. We will then recruit accordingly, ensuring all recruitment is taken through a Strive lens.

### **Assets:**

*Imaginary Communities (IC)*: is our flagship tool, a robust pedagogy that creates an equitable environment for co-creation amongst children in schools through the Caring and Creative Schools programme. This programme is recognised nationally and internationally as a leading approach to health and wellbeing in children, demonstrating significant positive impact on educational, social and creative attainment. During 2025, we will register IC as a trademark in the UK and EU. Whilst we remain firmly committed to sharing the concept and methodology for the greater good, we recognise the importance of quality control and reputation management in this regard, hence the registration.

*Cholavan*: Fundraised and procured through a crowdfunding platform during the global pandemic, our Cholavan is a travelling resource acting as workshop, performance and exhibition space. It is also a tool for community engagement and has capacity to develop further, with additional investment. It is important to recognise its limitations in terms of access and during the lifetime of this business plan, we aim to identify a strategy to resolve this issue in more than a temporary way that short term funding/ investment might offer.

## 8. The practical considerations: Finance

Since achieving NPO status, Chol has benefitted from investment that creates an element of stability from which we can further develop and position our work, this investment also allows for us to demonstrate match funding to support future applications for funding. A longstanding relationship with Paul Hamlyn has also been a significant factor in the organisation's financial security, both from funding directly related to activity, but also consultancy contracts.

Whilst it's important to recognise that both of these current funding agreements come up for renewal during the lifetime of this plan, we can take comfort in this plan and the time we have taken to reflect on a strategic direction across all project strands which will strengthen the potential to diversify our funding streams, whilst we hope, positioning us strongly for continued relationships with ACE and PHF.

It is time to look at the way in which we receive our funding, and how to balance medium to large scale investment from funders in a staged capacity, so that we can stabilise income further, and reduce the potential for significant income reduction in the event of a funding round coming to an end. We have already established a new relationship with The Heritage Lottery Fund in 2024, with whom we hope to further develop our relationship during 2025/26, and we are considering alternative trusts and foundations to explore longer term relationships that align with our aims and objectives.

The aim during the lifetime of this plan will therefore be to:

- secure NPO til 2028 in line with their extension.
- secure NPO beyond 2028.
- identify and secure a new, three/four year funding agreement with a new trust/foundation to support our education work.
- secure new, three year funding agreement to support Community Theatre & Heritage
- secure new, three-five year funding agreement to support Youth and Social Arts
- explore and identify potential relationships with core funders to support capacity building within the organisation
- explore new, 6 month to one year/or match funding agreements
- assess existing income revenue from large scale consultancy contracts and explore ways in which this may be secured through better capacity infrastructure
- identify potential sponsorship opportunities that will bolster existing and future planned activity
- increase revenue from commercial activities around Imaginary Communities (in independent schools, through international partnerships)
- explore potential for collaborative relationships that unlock collective funding opportunities and expand the reach and depth of our work.

A full fundraising strategy is in progress.

## 9. The practical considerations: Strive

Our Strive Anti-Racist Strategy is deeply intertwined with our company ethos, sitting within the broader Strive Framework to interrogate and eliminate racial inequity. The Strive framework informs all aspects of delivery, across our organisation, actively demonstrating our commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and promoting equity. This ensures that our culture of care extends to the mental and emotional wellbeing of all staff, and influences the impact and change we might have amongst those people we work with, from CYP beneficiaries, to freelancers and wider stakeholders. Our mission is to create a workplace and environment where diversity is not just accepted but celebrated, with a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination. As with our organisational model, we acknowledge that our strategy is a living, working document. We recognise that we don't have all the answers but we are committed to continually learning, unlearning, evolving and improving our approach as we learn more.

We have created this strategy based on our ongoing conversations and understanding that addressing racial inequity is not only a moral imperative but can also support us in creating a healthy and thriving workplace. Following the Black Lives Matter movement, and lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic, we know progress has been made but it is nowhere near where we need to be, which is evidenced by the far-right riots in September 2024. Events like these are a stark reminder that systemic racism is unfortunately still very much prevalent in our society and everyday lives. Our response to this is to confront these disparities with intention and action based enquiries.

The full strive strategy will be published on our website

During the lifetime of this business plan, we will look at what other aspects relating to DE&I may need to be addressed through dedicated strategies, including, but not limited to LGBTQ+ and gender inclusivity.

# 10. The progress: Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation is not about 'proving', it is about learning and improving.

Our approach to evaluation design and implementation is bespoke to Chol and each individual project, centring inquiry and action research. It is live, purposeful, and crucially, allows us to adapt and improve during projects as well as afterwards. We use creative methods and tools ensuring the activities align with project aims and the evaluation activity adds value to the experience of the participants (not a one-way extraction).

All of our evaluation builds on wider evaluation and research in the sector – we believe that there is little benefit in working in silo. We aim to connect and collaborate with peers through our evaluation, committing to sharing our learning openly and engaging directly with other organisations learning. Our intention is to keep all of our evaluation meaningful, we want to be a positive force for change in the sector.

Central to our learning is our commitment to understanding and evidencing the value of our work to the children and young people in schools and communities within our regions. This is focused and aligns with our company mission to ensure young people feel powerful, valued and connected. Over the lifetime of this strategy our evaluation activity will be feeding directly into an overarching piece of action research answering the following questions:

- What is the impact of Chol's creative practice and projects on young people's feelings of power, value, and connection?
- How does this result in positive change for children and young people?
- What are Chol's key methodologies and artistic pedagogies? and how do these ignite the impact evidenced?
- How do we consider Strive within all these three areas?

These questions will be reviewed each year.

Outputs, accountability and ambition

Over the course of this plan, we will explore, develop meaningful ways to share our learning. By 2028, we will have a robust collection of meaningful evidence to support our assertion regarding the mission and value of our work and the impact of creativity on those taking part.

## 11. To summarise

This document sets out an ambitious plan for Chol in the coming years, we are excited by the conversations we've had and the direction the organisation is going but also recognise that this plan is to aid, not constrain us.

To be effective, we need to be constantly reviewing the contents and adapting our activity to reflect our learning, the local, regional and national landscape - socially, financially and politically, whilst remaining nimble to opportunities that align with our ethos.

We look forward to sharing our progress

