



20  
STORIES  
HIGH



# Artistic Director Recruitment Pack

We're looking for a bold artistic leader with the imagination and ambition to shape the next groundbreaking era of 20 Stories High in partnership with our Executive Director

**Salary:** £40,000–£45,000.

**Deadline for applications:** 5th October 2026, 10am





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This pack is available in a range of formats including large print, screen reader compatible versions and a format based on the British Dyslexia Association style guide.

If you have a more specific formatting requirement, please let us know by emailing [Amy@20storieshigh.org.uk](mailto:Amy@20storieshigh.org.uk) we will try our best to provide this for you.



# <sup>1</sup> Welcome from our Chair

## Catrina Hewitson

This is an exceptional opportunity to shape the future of one of the UK's most distinctive theatre companies, creating theatre and art with and for young people and communities in Liverpool and beyond.

As 20 Stories High enters its third decade, we're looking for a pioneering Artistic Director to jointly lead our next chapter alongside our Executive Director, Leanne Jones with the 20 Stories High team.

Over the past 20 years, we have gone through many changes, adapting and evolving to meet the needs of audiences and participants in Liverpool and across the UK. Our mission has always remained the same: to collaborate with young people and communities to develop the stories they want to tell through the art forms they own and want to see.

Now we're looking for the person who will bring aspirational energy, who is excited by our core vision, mission and by building a groundbreaking plan for the future together.

We're searching for someone with a compelling artistic vision: someone who will challenge us, inspire us and create extraordinary work with young people and communities.

Someone who sees possibility where others see barriers, champions new voices, nurtures exceptional artists and makes work that resonates locally, nationally and digitally.

Someone who has the ability to listen, empower and grow underrepresented communities. Someone who shares space, making artistically excellent work: but supports others to do the same – and has the imagination and ambition to help define what 20 Stories High becomes over the next decade.

Last year we chose not to appoint. We realised we weren't simply replacing an Artistic Director. We were defining the future of 20 Stories High. Since then, we've spent time listening, reflecting and experimenting throughout our twentieth anniversary year. We've explored new ways of making work, collaborated with new artists and asked ourselves what kind of organisation we want to become.

Now we're ready.

The next chapter of 20 Stories High has not yet been written. We're looking for the artistic leader who has the imagination, courage and collaborative spirit to write it with us.





# 2 About Us

20 Stories High believe that “everybody’s got a story to tell... and their own way of telling it.”

We create bold, excellent theatre, music and art experiences with and for culturally diverse, working-class, disabled, neurodivergent, d/Deaf, LGBTIQ+ young people (13–30) and community groups (all ages), emerging artists, and world-class professionals.

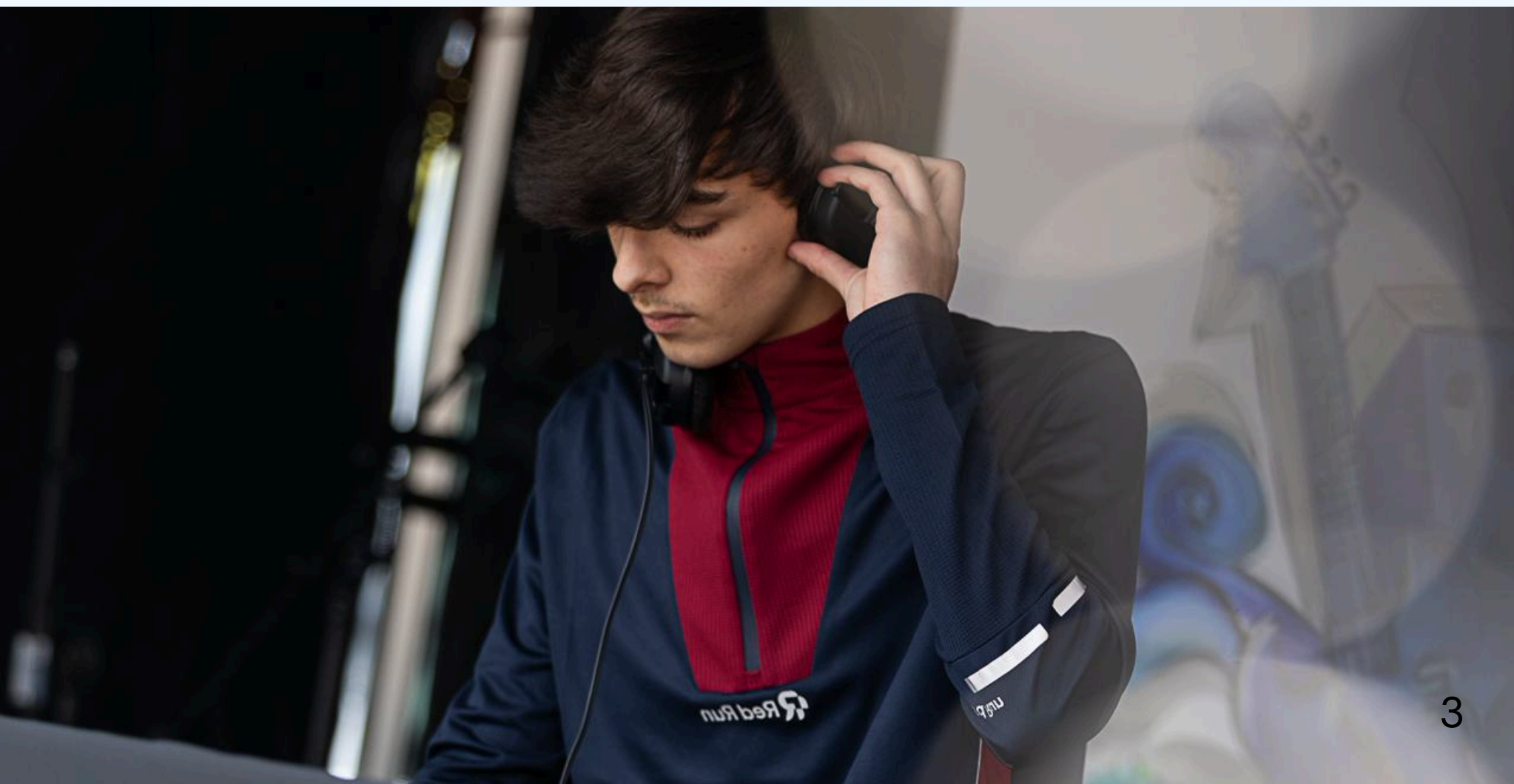
We tell stories that bring joy, empower, and enable social change – inhabiting a wide variety of spaces: from theatres, community centres, and schools to digital platforms, living rooms, and bus stops.

Our heart is in Liverpool, but our reach is universal.

We are a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and have built a national reputation for co-creation, innovation, and activism.

We champion Hip Hop, spoken word, music, and storytelling that reflects our communities.

Our work is joyful, inclusive, political – and always rooted in the lived experiences of the people we make it with.







## 2 Continued

### **Our Vision**

A world where culturally diverse, working-class, disabled, neurodivergent, d/Deaf, LGBTQIA+ young people and communities are equally valued, seen and heard by the most diverse audience possible.

### **Our Mission**

To make theatre and creative projects with and for underrepresented communities, emerging artists, and world-class professionals. To create bold, heartfelt, and unique experiences that enable social change. To collaborate with young people and communities to develop the stories they want to tell through the art forms they own and want to see.

### **Our Strategic Aims**

- Create exceptional artistic experiences with and for underrepresented young people and communities.
- Champion, develop and collaborate with the next generation of artists and creative leaders.
- Make ambitious theatre and creative work that reaches audiences in theatres, community settings and unexpected places.

### **Our Values**

Everything we do is rooted in four core values:

- Activism
- Playfulness
- Wellbeing
- Excellence

We focus on hope, wellbeing and doing all we can to create the highest quality work and participatory opportunities.



# 3 Our Work

Our work spans theatre, music, film, digital storytelling, artist development and community participation. Whether we're touring nationally, making work in schools, creating Hip Hop theatre or developing the next generation of artists, our ambition is always the same: to create exceptional work that puts young people (13–30) and communities at its heart. We experiment with different art forms, fusing together spoken word, music, poetry, rap, movement, drama, puppetry, visual art and other forms that are introduced by participants and artists.

## Digital snapshot

See some examples of our digital projects and documented theatre shows:

- [Windsor Primary School Music Video \(2026\)](#)
- [Birthday Film -Youth Theatre \(2026\)](#)
- [High Times and Dirty Monsters \(National Tour 2023 full show\)](#)
- [I told my Mum I was going on an RE Trip \(BBC film adaptation 2018\)](#)
- [Black with a Capital B \(film\)](#)
- [Access Manifesto: A New Chapter in the arts 2025 \(film\)](#)
- [State of Mind: wellbeing in everything we do 2022 \(film\)](#)

## Images of our shows

Please [click here](#) to see a mix of images of our youth theatre shows, touring productions and participatory projects.

## What our audiences have said

- [PRESSURE: 2026 youth theatre show](#)
- [Who the f--k is Shakespeare? 2024 touring show](#)
- [High Times & Dirty Monsters: 2023 touring show](#)

"I really enjoy being part of youth theatre. It has helped me develop my creativity and grow in confidence, and I think it's a really inclusive space. It's great to see how welcoming it is and how it caters for different types of people, making everyone feel like they belong."

**-Participant**

"There's so little theatre out there that considers the age group & demographics of my pupils. I know that 20 Stories High's work will be quality pitched perfectly to them. The relationship you offer to schools is amazing – so personal – I feel valued, listened to and trusted as a professional." **-Teacher**

For more information about our organisation, including our structure, finances and future plans, please see our [About Us document](#).



# The Opportunity

This role is about shaping the artistic future of 20 Stories High in partnership with the Executive Director, Associate Director and the team. Championing new voices, developing the next generation of artists and ensuring our work continues to challenge, celebrate and reflect the communities we work alongside.

Co-creation, inclusion and wellbeing are at the heart of everything we do. We want a leader who shares these values while bringing fresh artistic thinking, ambitious ideas and the confidence to lead change.

Our work is rooted in relationships, so we believe our Artistic Director should live in, or within easy daily reach of the Liverpool City Region. We want someone who will immerse themselves in the creative life of the city: building connections, discovering artists and helping shape Liverpool's cultural future.

## **At the heart of this role are two ambitions:**

- To create bold, ambitious theatre and artistic experiences with and for young people (aged 13–30) and communities (meaning excluded community groups of any age)
- To champion culturally diverse, working class, d/Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, LGBTQ+ artists, opening doors, nurturing talent and creating opportunities for the next generation of creatives and leaders

## **In your first few years, success might look like:**

- Developing a distinctive artistic vision that excites audiences, inspires artists and reflects the energy and diversity of Liverpool City Region.
- Working alongside the Executive Director to lead a confident, resilient and thriving organisation.
- Creating exceptional, professional theatre and creative experiences in a variety of spaces including theatres, community and outreach settings.
- Building meaningful pathways for emerging artists to develop and flourish within and outside of 20 Stories High.
- Growing an ambitious variety of partnerships that strengthen our impact locally, nationally and internationally, for example educational institutions, commercial companies and arts organisations.
- 20 Stories High continuing to be one of the UK's leading young people's theatre companies.

## Ambitions for the future

As we enter our third decade, we're shaping an ambitious future for 20 Stories High. We're exploring how we can deepen our impact, reach new audiences and continue creating bold, socially relevant work with young people and communities.

**We're looking for an Artistic Director who will help shape that future by:**

- Growing our co-creation practice with young people and sharing our practice with individuals and companies across the country.
- Experimenting with live theatre, art forms and digital innovations to ensure our work is relevant and contemporary.
- Continuing to champion equity, diversity, inclusion and access in all we do, and to influence the sector to be as fair and representative as possible.
- Building new partnerships that strengthen our artistic ambition and long-term sustainability.

## Current Programme

Our 2026–27 programme reflects the breadth of our work and provides a strong foundation for the next Artistic Director to build on. It includes:

- **Youth & Community:** Youth Theatre, schools and outreach programmes, Nu Noize music projects, creative workshops and community events.
- Cultural Bridging: 3-year project for young people and then their wider community in key areas of the region experiencing an increase in hate crime.
- **Artist Development:** Supporting emerging artists through initiatives such as Actor's LAB, Nu Noize steering group and new creative development opportunities.
- **Productions & new work:** research and development of shows, seed commissions, and Nu Noize mini gigs and Desk Jams and a tour of our touring show The Spine in theatres, schools and community settings.
- **Community projects:** Transformations Trans Artist Network & Commissions, Monthly creative sessions, Creative workshops with Liverpool Sisterhood Network and the Venus Centre.
- **EDIA Leadership:** Continuing our commitment to anti-racism, inclusion, wellbeing, accessibility and innovative ways of making and sharing work. Examples: Access Manifesto, Black with a Capital B, Transformations project and Decompressure events.



The successful Artistic Director will inherit a vibrant programme while bringing their own artistic vision, ideas and partnerships to shape what comes next. We don't have a blueprint for the future. We're looking for the artistic leader who will help us create it.

For more information about our current programme, please click [here](#) to see our business plan or [click here](#) to have a look through projects and events on our website.

**A typical week (although no week is typical!)**

No two weeks at 20 Stories High are the same. Some weeks you'll be in rehearsals, others developing new ideas with artists and young people, building partnerships, or leading the organisation.

Over the course of a year, we imagine your time broadly balancing like this:



● Creative delivery      ● Creative planning & programme development

● Strategic development of the company      ● Mentoring & developing artists

● Seeing work & building relationships

# Person Specification and Key Responsibilities

There is no single route to artistic leadership. We're looking for someone with the vision, imagination and potential to lead our next chapter. If you don't meet every point below but believe you're the right person for the role, we encourage you to apply. We will work collaboratively with the right candidate to identify any training and development needs as part of the induction of the role. Resource will be available for training, coaching and mentoring.

## Person Specification

We're looking for someone who:

### Is an ambitious artistic leader

- Has a distinctive artistic voice and a passion for creating bold, high-quality work.
- Believes in the power of theatre and creativity to inspire change.
- Is curious, inventive and excited by experimentation, and new ideas.
- Shares our practice and contributes to the wider cultural sector.
- Can create art and opportunities that has a global appeal while honouring local roots and communities.

### Creates with and for young people and communities

- Has experience of making work with young people and/or communities.
- Values co-creation and collaborative artistic practice.
- Creates work that is inclusive, accessible and reaches diverse audiences.

### Inspires and supports others

- Leads creatively with generosity, integrity and care.
- Builds strong, collaborative relationships with artists, partners and teams.
- Champions the development of emerging artists and creative talent.

### Thinks strategically

- Can balance artistic ambition with organisational thinking.
- Shares our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.
- Is excited by helping shape the future of a growing organisation.
- Works with our Chair and Trustees to maximise their involvement and contribution.
- Explores and discovers new ways to develop our income and fundraising so we can deepen and build on our work.



## Key Responsibilities

Working alongside the **Executive Director**, you'll provide inspirational leadership for the organisation while shaping the artistic future of 20 Stories High. You'll:

### Shape our artistic future

- Develop and deliver an ambitious and young person led artistic vision for the company.
- Commission, create and curate exceptional theatre and creative experiences.
- Ensure artistic excellence across productions, projects and partnerships.

### Lead creative programmes

- Oversee productions, participatory projects and artist development programmes.
- Assemble and support staff, creative teams, collaborators and guest artists.
- Champion new voices and create opportunities for underrepresented artists.

### Lead the organisation

- Provide strategic leadership and help deliver the company's long-term vision.
- Foster an inclusive, ambitious and supportive organisational culture.
- Build partnerships that strengthen our artistic and organisational impact.
- Contribute to fundraising, advocacy and organisational sustainability.
- Represent and champion 20 Stories High locally, nationally and digitally.
- Set future annual budgets and create an ambitious yet realistic business plan for future years.

The **Executive Director** will be responsible for the co-creation and delivery of the business plan, finance, fundraising, partnerships, smooth running of overall programme, staffing structure and the fundamental sustainability of the organisation.

The **Associate Director** takes a lead on youth theatre, outreach projects and community specific projects. They input into the artistic vision and creative planning of the organisation.

Together with our dedicated team, you'll ensure 20 Stories High continues to be one of the UK's leading companies for artistically ambitious, socially engaged theatre.



# Terms & Conditions

- **Contract:** We're open to discussing full-time, part time or job share arrangements.
- **Salary:** £40,000–£45,000 (Full time equivalent), depending on experience.
- **Pension** is enrolled with our provider, NEST pensions and offers a 3% employer contribution.
- **Location:** Our home is Toxteth TV in the heart of Liverpool's L8 community. Because relationships are central to our work, we're looking for someone who lives (or is willing to relocate) to within a reasonable daily commute of Liverpool. Financial support for relocation is available.
- **Working Pattern:** 37.5 hours per week. We're primarily office-based because we value working and creating together, while offering flexibility for some home working. Evening and weekend work will occasionally be required, with time off in lieu provided.
- **Annual Leave:** 25 days plus bank holidays.
- **Start Date:** Ideally from Winter 2026, with opportunities to meet the team and experience our work before you begin.
- **Reports to:** Chair of the Board.
- **Direct Reports:** Associate Director and freelance creative teams.

We recognise that many artistic leaders maintain elements of their own creative practice alongside leadership roles. We're happy to discuss how freelance or personal creative work can sit alongside this position, provided it complements the needs of the organisation.





## <sup>7</sup> Benefits of Working at 20 Stories High

At 20 Stories High, we believe exceptional work happens when people feel supported, trusted and inspired. We are committed to creating a workplace where creativity, wellbeing and collaboration can thrive.

Alongside the opportunity to shape the future of one of the UK's most distinctive theatre companies, we offer:

- A comprehensive wellbeing offer, including occupational health support and access to tailored wellbeing services.
- Additional time off between Christmas and new year, as the offices close.
- The opportunity to continue elements of your own artistic practice, where this complements the role.
- Ongoing professional development and opportunities to learn, collaborate and grow.
- Family-friendly policies, including maternity, paternity and shared parental leave.

Above all, you'll join a collaborative, values-led organisation that puts people first. We believe exceptional theatre is created by teams who feel empowered, supported and inspired.

20 Stories High is proud to be an ITC Fair Work Approved Manager, a Disability Confident Employer and an Accredited Living Wage Employer.



## <sup>8</sup> Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Access

At 20 Stories High, diversity isn't an aspiration, it's central to our artistic practice. The strongest work is created when the people making it bring a rich range of lived experiences, perspectives and voices.

We want our team to reflect the young people and communities we work alongside, helping us create work that is authentic, ambitious and deeply connected to the world around us. We are committed to building an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued, supported and able to thrive.

We particularly welcome applications from people who are currently underrepresented in the cultural sector, including people who are:

- From African, Caribbean, South Asian, East or Southeast Asian, mixed heritage or other Global Majority backgrounds\*
- d/Deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent
- From working-class backgrounds
- LGBTQIA+

If you believe you're the right person for this role but don't meet every criterion in the person specification, we'd still love to hear from you.

\*This includes, but is not limited to, people of Middle Eastern, Arab, Latin American, Jewish, Romany and Irish Traveller heritage.

## <sup>9</sup> Safeguarding

20 Stories High is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is embedded across all aspects of our work.

As part of our recruitment process, we will assess all applicants' suitability to work with children, young people and adults at risk. The successful candidate will be required to complete the appropriate pre-employment and DBS checks and will receive a comprehensive safeguarding induction, including training and clear guidance on safeguarding procedures and reporting concerns.

To see our latest safeguarding policy, please click [HERE](#).



# How to apply

Please see below for each stage of the recruitment process. Throughout each stage, you'll have opportunities to ask questions, meet the team and share your ideas about the future of 20 Stories High.

This process might seem lengthy with a few different stages. We have designed this with the intention of giving lots of spaces for candidates to get to know the company and our community well, and to have a variety of ways to share your vision, ideas and experience.

## Step 1 (optional): Let's connect

Before you apply, we'd love to hear from you. You can:

- Speak confidentially to our independent recruitment associate, Sue Emmas at RTYDS (see section 11. Get In Touch) – you can also organise a chat with a 20SH team member through Sue.
- Explore our website.
- Join an online information session to learn more about the role and ask questions anonymously. We will run two sessions:
  - evening session on 10th September 5pm or
  - daytime session on Wednesday 16th September 12pm.
  - To sign up for these sessions, contact:  
**[Amy@20storieshigh.org.uk](mailto:Amy@20storieshigh.org.uk)**.

## Step 2: Application (Deadline Monday 5th October 10am)

To apply, please submit your CV, Background Information form and cover letter (no more than 2 pages / 6 – 8 minutes) addressed to Catrina Hewitson, Chair of the 20 Stories High board, outlining:

- Why you are interested in the position
- How your skills and experience match the job description and person specification
- How you think you could contribute to the next chapter of the company's artistic future
- Your commitment to work for and with young people and communities

You can apply in writing, by video or audio recording. Please send all documents to [recruitment@20storieshigh.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@20storieshigh.org.uk)

Our Background Information form can be found [here](#).

### Step 3: Initial interview (14th or 15th October 2026)

Selected candidates will be invited to an initial online (or in person if preferred) interview to explore the opportunity together. Candidates will receive the interview questions in advance and will be asked questions relating to their artistic vision, experience and ideas for the future.

This will be a short interview (approximately 45 minutes) with the Executive Director, a 20 Stories High team member, a Trustee, Sue Emmas and a young participant.

20 Stories High is a Disability Confident employer. The Disability Confident scheme supports employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, and to create a more inclusive workplace.

As part of our commitment to Disability Confident recruitment, all Deaf and disabled applicants who meet the core criteria outlined in the person specification will be guaranteed an interview.

### Step 4: Exploring the future together (22nd or 23rd October 2026)

A smaller group of selected candidates will then be invited to join us for half a day in person, exploring leadership ideas with our team, Trustees and young people. This day will include the following elements, and an invite to lunch with the team:

- **Interview (45 minutes):** Interview questions will be shared in advance.
- **Workshop (60 minutes):** Facilitate a one-hour creative workshop with members of our Youth Theatre and Creative Community. A brief will be shared in advance.
- **Future of 20 Stories High:** Presentation (15mins for presentation, 15 mins for questions) In response to feedback shared at the initial interview, share a presentation of your artistic vision for the next chapter of 20 Stories High, including ideas for new work, participation and artist development. A brief will be shared in advance.

We will offer a £100 honorarium to each candidate for their in-person attendance, as we know this takes you away from other work. There will also be travel expenses for anyone travelling over 25 miles.

Our recruitment process will involve a diverse panel of Trustees, staff, young people and community members. We are committed to making the process as accessible and welcoming as possible, and we'll provide feedback to any candidate who attends the in-person day together.



We are conscious that this requires time and energy, so please do let us know if there is anything we have not listed in our offer that would make it manageable for you.

The successful candidate will be appointed subject to satisfactory references, evidence of the legal right to work in the UK and an Enhanced DBS check.

All information shared during the recruitment process will be handled in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and GDPR. Data will be shared with those involved in the recruitment process only, which entails 2OSH staff, Trustees, community members and recruitment associate Sue Emmas (RTYDS). Equality monitoring information is collected separately from your application and is never seen by the selection panel.

## 11 Access & Wellbeing

Access and wellbeing are fundamental to how we work. We are committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming and supportive recruitment process, and we're always learning how we can do better.

If there's anything we can do to make any stage of the recruitment process more accessible, please let us know and we will work with you to put things in place. This might include BSL interpretation, step-free access, wheelchair-accessible spaces, additional breaks, adjusted lighting, specific seating, access support workers or any other reasonable adjustments.

Questions and tasks will be shared in advance, and we welcome any notes or anything that supports your engagement in any sessions.

You're welcome to share an Access Rider at any stage of the process, or complete our Access Questionnaire [HERE](#).

We can also support you with Access to Work applications and help remove any financial barriers to accessing the recruitment process.

We're committed to creating a workplace that is inclusive and supportive for parents, carers and people with a wide range of access requirements.

This recruitment pack, application form and additional information are available in a range of accessible formats, and we'll happily provide any further information in the format that works best for you.

We actively support Access to Work. If you're eligible, we'll work with you to apply for or review your Access to Work package and put the agreed support in place as quickly as possible.

Requesting adjustments or sharing an Access Rider will never affect the outcome of your application. Our aim is for every candidate to be able to show us their best work. If there's anything we can do to support you, please let us know.

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# Get in Touch

If you're excited by this opportunity, but unsure whether you're the right fit, we'd encourage you to get in touch. You have the option of speaking to a member of the 20 Stories High team or a confidential chat with our recruitment associate, Sue Emmas (RTYDS). We'd much rather have a conversation than miss the chance to meet an exceptional artistic leader: [sueemmas@rtyds.co.uk](mailto:sueemmas@rtyds.co.uk)

Please note that Sue is unavailable until Friday 28th August, and will get back to you following her return.

We are here to help and answer any questions throughout the process.

For practical advice and to book onto the information sessions please contact Amy (Office Manager) on: [amy@20storieshigh.org.uk](mailto:amy@20storieshigh.org.uk)  
0151 708 9728

Visit [www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk) to explore our work.





# 20 STORIES HIGH

[www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk)

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