

August 2019 - December 2020

Annual Report

THE LOSS PROJECT CIC



Carly Attridge, Founding Director “Whilst we recognise that grief and loss are some of the most painful human experiences, we also want to help people find light and love. It is possible for joy and beauty to exist alongside grief. We want to create safe spaces where you can be met where you are at. We cannot only dwell in pain, our heartbreak can be coincided by the release of anger, pain and sadness but also in laughter, joy and hope. When we talk about loss what we are really talking about is change and transition; which means growth. Our work aims to be life affirming as well as addressing the complexity of grief.”

Community Interest Company
Ltd by Guarantee
Company no: 12178372

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Introduction

The Loss Project came to life in August 2019, registered as a community interest company. We could never have imagined that our first year in operation would coincide with a global pandemic where grief and loss has been propelled to the forefront of our minds. This has presented us with many challenges and opportunities. We set up with the intention of starting small and allowing us the time and space to play, create, test and learn with a variety of people across the UK with an interest in exploring grief and loss. This has meant we have worked with a number of different partners, collaborators, and people with lived experience, which has added great richness and depth to our work so far. We never want to lose our playfulness as we endeavour to find different ways of exploring grief and loss.

The Loss Project was the brainchild of Founding Director, Carly Attridge; a combination of reflections on personal and professional experiences and a deep desire to help people to better acknowledge grief and loss in a variety of contexts so that we can live in acceptance of these human experiences that affect us all but are so often left at the sidelines with fear of facing them. We believe our creative nature helps to host spaces where people can come as they are, but can also find safety as they grow and transition. Dr Julia Samuel's says that "pain is an agent of change" and we couldn't agree more. We have a curiosity in this change and a desire to help people as they find themselves growing into a new identity and place of belonging.

This is our first annual report which aims to give transparency of our learning, our successes and challenges, as well as the direction we want to travel in. We are so grateful to everybody who has joined us on the journey so far, it's been quite the ride but we are also really excited for the road ahead. We hope this report gives you an insight into who we are, what we are hoping to create and the impact we have achieved so far.



Video

Our Numbers

We think that stories are the best way to bring our work to life, but also recognise that numbers can help people to understand where we are at. This report refers to work from November 2019 when we were first operational until December 2020.

As a small team, we are proud of what we have been able to create and deliver against the backdrop of the pandemic.

Our next reports will follow the financial year.

£48k

TOTAL REVENUE (IN THIS PERIOD)

This includes grants, contracts, sales and donations.

2000 +

FOLLOWERS ON TWITTER

Our audience is growing across our social media channels.

As of Nov 2019



130+

PARTICIPANTS



50+

WORKSHOPS DELIVERED



13

NEW PARTNERSHIPS



£1425

RAISED IN A CROWDFUNDER



Our Work

Spoon rooms: Monthly meet ups about grief and loss

“It was nice to be able to speak without worrying about upsetting the other person, as you might with a family member.” Spoon Room Participant 9 Dec 2020

Spoon Rooms are our monthly spaces that are open to anyone who has experienced grief or loss. We run them in partnership with Camerados. We think that Spoon Rooms are a great way of holding safe, friendly and welcoming spaces for anybody who wants to connect with people over grief and loss. We have had professionals who work in this area join us, people who are bereaved or people who are curious to find out more.

Cat Duncan-Rees, who lost her father in early March 2020, has found solace in both the general and the loss-themed Spoon Rooms. “It was helpful to join a group of people knowing that I didn’t have to pretend. I could just be...There is no pressure to talk about anything in particular. There was one loss-themed session where I don’t think I even talked about my Dad.”
<https://www.pioneerspost.com/business-school/20200721/grieving-home-the-online-community-of-mourners-who-listen-hear-not-fix>

Want to join a Spoon Room? Sign up here:
<https://www.thelossproject.com/upcoming-events>



Creative Writing Workshops

With thanks to City Bridge Trust and The National Lottery Community Fund we delivered a series of 3 creative writing workshops in the Autumn for those who had been bereaved facilitated by poet and writer Joe Duggan, who has himself experienced a number of close family bereavements in recent years. We believe writing is a great tool to express ourselves, no matter if you see yourself as 'creative'. We found that offering a gentle structure and a dedicated, shared space to navigate loss through poetry and writing can be both healing and connecting.

"I'd like to hold onto the fact that grief can be something that we share. Every story someone's told has made me think about my own situation. It's helpful to remember that other people share grief. It's very cathartic to actually speak those difficult things." Workshop participant

We hope to deliver more creative writing workshops in 2021, particularly platforming hidden voices and people in in-between spaces that may not have the opportunity to access work.

See an example piece by Rachel Shore in our gallery:
<https://www.thelossproject.com/gallery?pgid=jxoscpcfc1-2390ef84-3d31-47a2-9ab4-63eccc1ef4ec>



Our Work



We worked with Riot Soup, a women of colour artist collective to produce some illustrations about grief and loss to encourage conversations.



We've worked collaboratively with a number of volunteers and artists to produce downloadable content.



Digital Loss Box

Over the summer, we ran a series of three creative online workshops with people who have experienced the loss of someone close to them in the past or people who are working with grief and loss in their professional practice, to help us design creative digital resources for individuals grieving themselves. As with all our work, we feel it's crucial that our content and projects are created in solidarity by people who have been there too.

Through conversations and creative exercises the group came up with many different ideas based on themes of their own grief experience they felt were important to address. The three ideas the group wanted to prioritise were:

- **Grief Badge** - some kind of digital and physical sign that you are grieving
- **Constellations Network** - an informal network of local people who are interested in connecting about loss and grief. Offering both a chance to connect to others who might be experiencing similar things and the opportunity to find ways to respond to local people's needs when it comes to grief and loss
- **Creative Content about Loss** - short films helping people experiencing loss to know that they're not alone and what they're experiencing is 'normal', as well as content to help people who are supporting someone grieving to know what to say or do and to avoid!

Here's what our participants have said about being involved:

"It has been good to connect, to know others are working to a common aim and that we all have different skills and expertise that appear to complement each other. The workshops have allowed individuals to mix, listen and speak. I feel we are a team which allows ideas to flow without judgement which turn encourages further ideas. We are looking to ourselves to know what helped support our grief and what did not, whilst acknowledging the many different faces of grief. We work from people not services. Thinking creatively about how grief is supported outside of services, from our own strengths and community.

I have personally felt encouraged and included which has only strengthened my resolve to look for ways to connect in the community. It has given me confidence to re-engage with ideas differently." Heather, Digital Loss Box Participant



Rebecca, Workshop Participant

Constellations

"I've mentioned what I've been doing with my friends and they've been interested in what I've been talking about. We've had more conversations about loss."



What is it?

Constellations is a network of people who want to open up more conversations about loss in their local community in different and creative ways. Over a period of 4 months, The Loss Project tested an online space for listening, learning, reflection and space for peer support to navigate participants' own journeys.

We aimed to create new connections between people who have had experience of loss or grief. We hoped people would learn from each other and come up with and test out creative ideas of their own around connecting with others in their communities around loss.

We had a group of 14 people based across England including: Bristol, London, Dorset, Devon, Liverpool, Leeds, Essex, Suffolk, Berkshire, Norfolk, Kent and West Midlands.

We ran 4 weekly workshops throughout November 2020, which were designed to allow people to get to know each other, to start sharing and exploring what was going on in their communities already, to share things that weren't working and things they'd like to change, as well as exercises to generate ideas for new creative projects/ ways of connecting with others around grief and loss. We then ran 3 x monthly reflection sessions for people to reconnect, check in and share their reflections and learning from the month previous.

Constellations; participants perspectives

"It's about the value and importance of conversation. These conversations bring clarity. We learn so much through conversations that count. This group has helped us to unknot and to reflect back to each other. It's allowed that connection."

"I've felt a connection and this group has been important to me. It's allowed me to do some grieving, to set up rituals of my own."

"It's offered more awareness about how to talk about loss. I've been talking to more people openly about loss."

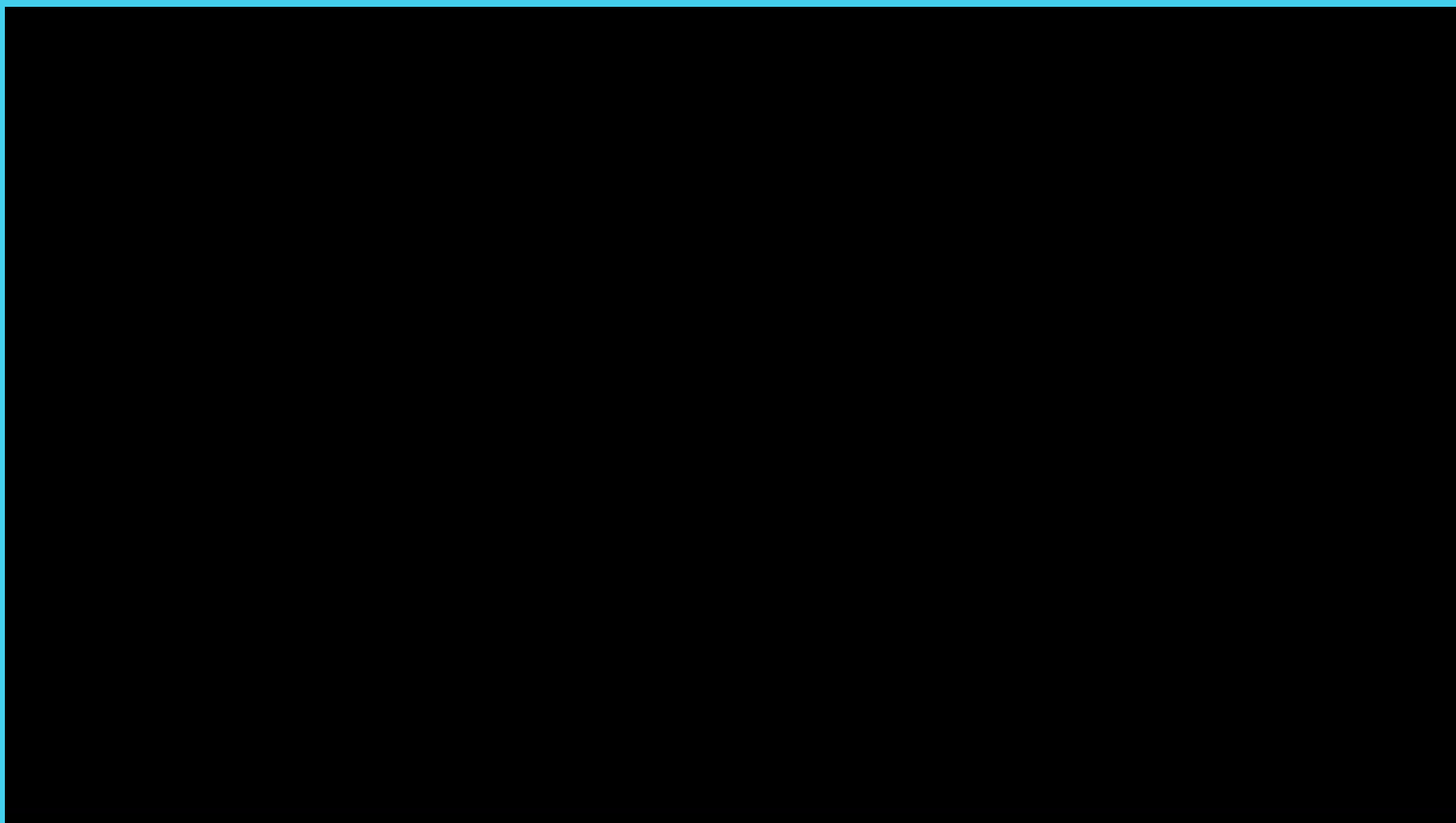
"It's allowed my grief to feel normal - that it can connect as well as upset. It's helped change my attitude towards grief - I find I'm more easeful."

"This group has really challenged how well I thought we could connect digitally/ via Zoom. I really underestimated the kind of connections you can build. I've been so inspired by everyone."

"This group has offered a good connection, it's been a supportive group, it's offered hope. We need that support. It allows precious space for conversations and helps us shine a light on what we're doing. It's also offered different perspectives."

"It's highlighted how wellbeing is the most important thing. I've found the group useful, nourishing, inspiring and connecting. It unlocked a little screw that I had self-tightened. I've been a bit freer in my sharing of my experiences."

Constellations



Constellations is an important project for us. We want to develop our learning further to develop a network of people with lived experience and professionals who are keen to do things differently when it comes to creating a grief and loss positive culture. Our work so far has confirmed that there is more opportunity to:

- 1) Run more Constellations test projects, particularly in partnership with organisations who have existing community networks and organisations who are led by people of colour and other marginalised groups;
- 2) To develop a network of practice that offers learning, skills, and support for people who are taking action in their communities;
- 3) To use the arts as a tool to engage with people;
- 4) To develop an incubator of people who want to develop their own projects around grief and loss in their own communities & settings.

Working with organisations

A significant part of our work is supporting organisations with grief and loss from a variety of sectors. It has led us to creating the Making SPACE for loss workshop series. Spaces that translate across a variety of losses in a variety of sectors. This has included:

- End of life awareness training for volunteers.
- Grief and loss awareness
- Having Difficult Conversations and supporting staff with grief and loss
- MAKING SPACE for Loss workshop series in the Arts sector, for nurses, and for community organisations.
- Well being workshops- informal group workshops supporting people with well being and self-care
- Creative Memorial workshop for the National Education Union



“[My biggest takeaway was] just to talk more, feel comfortable and natural about death and see it as less negative. You can inspire other people to do the same. I’m feeling like a better help now.”

Wick Award End of Life Awareness Training Participant

Our Learning

1. We can't be all things to all people, nor can we do it all at once. We have big ideas and ambitions but we are also a small team with a range of interests who want to ensure that we look after ourselves whilst we do this important work.
2. The pandemic has opened up doors to people who may not have wanted to talk about grief and loss before, including organisations who recognise the importance of supporting their staff, volunteers and others in their communities with these complex human experiences. The pandemic has propelled our mission forward, but it has also meant our first year has been against a tricky and uncertain financial backdrop.
3. Growing our audience; getting our message out there and using social media and other channels to our advantage isn't necessarily one of our super strengths and has taken a lot of time and energy to try and grow; whilst getting our tone right for us. We lean into hope, joy and fun, despite our subject matter but also need to ensure that we are not flippant either.
4. Something that we are very conscious of is that the death, dying and grief space is already very white centric, and that we are currently a white led organisation. We want to change this, so that our work is not made only in our image. We want to give voice to, platform and work collaboratively with our colleagues from other groups that are not traditionally represented and are looking at ways that we can do this better. It is a work in progress. We need to educate ourselves but also ensure it does not become a tick box exercise. We hope the development of our collective will also be another way to distribute leadership and accountability and that brings a range of voices and experiences to our work. Our desire is to grow a collaborative, collective with joint ownership of the work and it's direction.
5. We had anticipated that our work would be face to face but the pandemic meant 100% of our work had to go online. We have been surprised by the powerful and safe spaces we have been able to create using online video platforms, and this will now form a significant part of our work in the future as it has enabled us to connect people from across the country who would not normally have the opportunity to meet. We hope to have a blended approach in the future with some face to face work but with larger programmes delivered online.

Our Learning

6. We have been working at a fast pace to try and meet the demand since the pandemic arrived. We know this is obvious but looking after ourselves in our work has been a challenge. Facing grief and loss, and essentially our own mortality every day is not an easy task. This means that sometimes we have to say no, take more regular breaks and get outside support to ensure that we are in the best possible place to support others with our work. We know that there are many others supporting people in their communities around grief and loss who also need support. We hope that our collective will provide a space for people to gain peer support, share ideas and practice and ultimately have the opportunity to refresh and nourish themselves.
7. We have spent a lot of time improving our message. We started with a blank page to play, test and learn and that meant that who we are and what we do became a bit blurred, especially because we are both niche and broad at the same time because we're interested in losses in all of their forms. Our learning from our first year has helped us to hone what we are and what we're not as well as beginning to articulate our approach much better.
8. We need to get much better at asking for help and networking- we can't do it all on our own.
9. Growing the collective; we want to inspire, catalyse, bring in a range of voices and really try to do things differently. We're not trying to start up another service, and we want to stay in a fresh, innovative space
10. We have had to accept that we are trying to do something different and as such we don't fit into a neat and tidy box. This can be frustrating at times, especially when we are seeking funding but we also believe in what we are trying to achieve. One of our values is about sitting comfortably in discomfort and we have to practice what we preach.
11. Financial sustainability; we are still working on our blended business model which means that we have some grant income and some income from sales of our workshops, training, consultancy, coaching/mentoring and bespoke projects. We are focused on people and our work is complex. We do not have a one size fits all solution but are keen to find ways to ensure that we are growing our revenue and are not solely grant reliant. We are trying to pioneer a fresh, and new way of working and are comfortable that we don't have all the answers yet.

Our key focuses

1. Sustainability: We have a blended business model that combines grant income with contracted work through workshops, training, coaching, mentoring and delivering projects. We want to increase our sales income so that we move towards a more stable financial position that is not reliant solely on grant income.
2. Marketing and Branding: Improving our marketing is a key development area. We know there is a demand and we need to ensure we are reaching the right people.
3. Building a collective: We are committed to growing our collective of people with lived experience, artists, facilitators, academics, technologists or anyone with an interest to develop this work with us. We want to work with people with a range of skills and backgrounds that also platforms different voices and experiences. We are keen to grow a collective that enables us to commission more projects, as well as widening our talent pool for work with our clients, but that moves us away from being a white centric organisation.
4. Governance: Building a collective means we need to find different ways of being accountable and exploring what leadership might mean.
5. Growing Constellations: We want to test more Constellations projects with a variety of communities. We are seeking further funding to test this model and have big ideas to share.
6. Creative work: We want to do more creative work with artists.

Our strategic focuses 21/22

Strategic focuses

THE LOSS PROJECT CIC 2021 - 2022

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

EXPLORE
DIGITAL LOSS
BOX AS REVENUE
GENERATOR

MOVING AWAY
FROM GRANT
ONLY FUNDING

ENGAGING WITH
NEW CLIENTS
AND SELLING
OUR SERVICES
MORE
EFFECTIVELY

GENERATING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

CONFIDENCE
GROWING FOR
COMMUNITIES TO
SUPPORT EACH
OTHER

INCUBATING &
SUPPORTING
IDEAS INTO
ACTION

SUPPORTIVE
NETWORK

GROWING THE COLLECTIVE

EXPLORE
DIFFERENT
MODELS

GET EXTERNAL
SUPPORT TO
DEVELOP

GROW THE
COLLECTIVE
TEAM

GROWING OUR AUDIENCE

STRENGTHEN
OUR BRAND

BE RECOGNISED
AS THE PLACE TO
GO FOR
EXPLORING LOSS

STRENGTHEN
DIGITAL
MARKETING &
COMMS

Wish list

There are many ways that you can help The Loss Project, if nothing else just telling someone in your networks about us is a great way to help to share our message.

Who in your networks could you introduce us to?

We have a wish list that would help us to achieve our key priorities this year:

- In kind support to develop our collective structures and governance;
- Collaborators interested in joining The Loss Project collective;
- In kind support or funds to develop the Digital Loss Box;
- Connections to corporate partners/Employee Assistance Programmes;
- Support to develop an artist response to grief and loss across the UK;
- Partners interested in exploring grief and loss in universities;
- Funding and support to deliver more creative writing workshops;
- Marketing/design pro bono support - particularly branding/website;
- Press and opportunities to write blogs/papers/chapters;
- People who want to write for our blog.

Thank you

Sian Prime | Adrian De la Court | Sarah Lacey | Roxanne Persaud |
Becky Grove | Jenny Fox | Maff Potts | Bob Thurst | Kate X | Ethel
Tambudzai | Santander Universities | Goldsmith's College London |
Wick Award | Local Trust | City Bridge Trust | Tudor Trust | Ashley
Evenson | Joe Duggan | Joy Kahumbu | Elizabeth Bayliss | Riot
Soup Collective | Outward | Canopy | Rooted by Design | Alex
Delaney | Andrea Thorogood | Burcu Ceberler | Cass Humphries-
Massey | Donna Crowley | Emily Allan | Emily Barnett | Flora
Baker | Guy Peryer | Heather Cooper | Irem Luqman | Jenny
Gregory | Joanne Skinner | Laura Toop | Lesley Illingworth | Jackie
O'Carroll | Nicola Le Prevost | Rebecca Peyton | Shirley Fowler |
Suzanne Begley | Tracy Tomlinson | Travey Davenport | Sara Budd
| Nikki Price | Vanessa Gordon | Eden Silver-Myer | Jo Garner |
Local Trust | Local Area Coordination Network | Community
Chesterfield | Applied Arts Scotland | Ellen O'Hara | Florence
Nightingale Foundation | Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival |
Hackney Herbal | Beth French | Megan Bullock |

Accounts

THE LOSS PROJECT CIC

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2020

	Notes	Period ended 31 August 2020 £
Income		47,085
Cost of sales		(27,324)
Gross surplus		19,761
Administrative expenses		(5,708)
Surplus before taxation		14,053
Tax on surplus		(2,670)
Surplus for the financial period		11,383

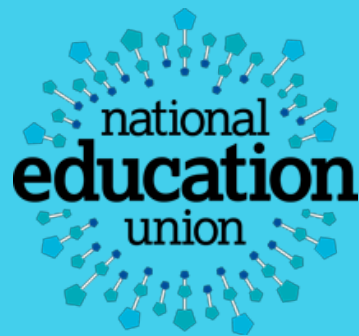
We have a blended business model, which means we have a variety of income streams. We are working towards being less grant reliant but currently our income is made up of:

- Grant Income
- Contracts and commissions
- Training, workshop sales
- Coaching, mentoring and consultancy sales

19/20

Thank you

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