

## Welcome from the Chief Executive

Hello!

Thank you for your interest in becoming the Creative Director of the Bluecoat. I hope, as you read on, you will come to see that this is one of the most distinctive artistic leadership opportunities in the UK right now.

When the Bluecoat formally set up as an arts centre in 1927 it was the first of its kind in this country. In 2027 we mark our centenary under the banner 'A Century of Breaking New Ground'. It is a moment to honour a remarkable artistic lineage: from the first UK showings of Picasso and Matisse outside London, to Yoko Ono in 1967. The Bluecoat has also been a place of ideas, innovation and incubation: organisations like Liverpool Arab Arts Festival and the entity that became FACT were developed here. It is also a moment to look outward and forward, to set the agenda for what a contemporary arts centre can and should be, as we move into our second century.

### The Opportunity

The Creative Director will join us at the height of centenary preparations. The shape of 2027 is set, with strong freelance leads in place across commissions and exhibitions. Our plan to renew live programming at the Bluecoat is almost complete with a launch date set for Spring 2027. The programme framework is ready to be drawn together into a single compelling artistic statement. Your first task will be to take that framework and give it coherence, pace and spark; to shape how the programme strands converge and build across the year. Your second, and in many ways more important task, is to use 2027 to build an artistic vision and programming model that will define Bluecoat from 2028 and well beyond. This is a senior role with genuine authority over the artistic life of the organisation and a clear mandate to renew it.

### What we are looking for

We are looking for someone with the creative authority and strong producing experience to lead a complex, multi-artform programme with the generosity to build on the work of others, and the skills to lead collaboratively. Equally, we are looking for someone who brings energy. UK arts organisations have had a hard few years, so we want a Creative Director who will help us push back against that, someone who can stimulate excitement through the programme, create momentum, and build deep, imaginative relationships with artists and our existing audiences as well as the new audiences we want to reach. Our ambition is for Bluecoat to be one of the places where people in Liverpool, the city region and beyond come to encounter the artists and ideas they will remember for a lifetime.

You will find further information in the pages that follow about the role and what we hope you will bring to Bluecoat. Our recruitment partner Shreela Ghosh would be delighted to have an informal, confidential conversation before you apply. Details are at the back of the pack.

**Mary Cloake, Chief Executive**



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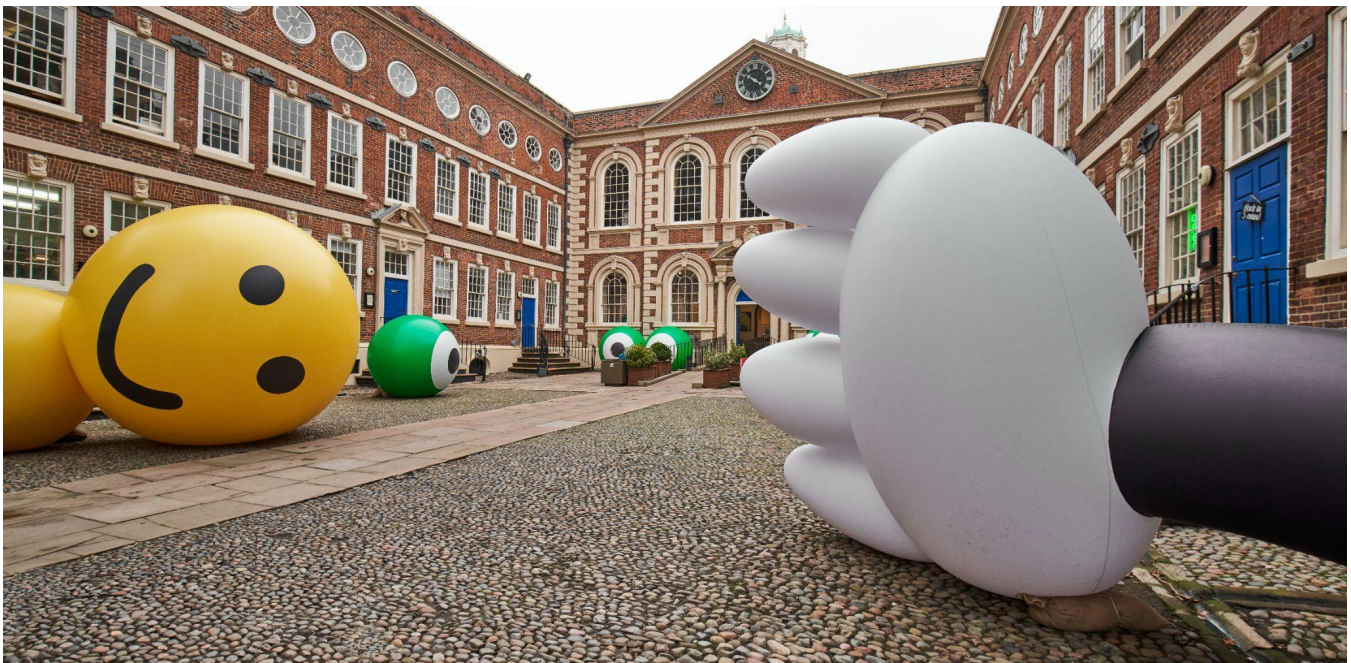


## Creative Director: The Opportunity

In 2027 the Bluecoat marks its centenary as the UK's first arts centre. With the anniversary year already set in motion, the Creative Director will join at a pivotal moment - building on the momentum to help refine, complete and deliver the programme. This marks the start of your journey with us and sets the foundation from which you will lead the future artistic vision of Bluecoat as we move into the next century. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help shape a nationally significant cultural moment, and to define what an arts centre can be in the twenty-first century.

We are looking for a Creative Director who will provide a compelling artistic vision that brings to life the values of the Bluecoat: someone with creative authority, producing capability and collaborative instinct. The Creative Director can be from a multi-art form ensemble background, or a singular art form - the most important qualities being that you will bring innovation, challenge assumptions, inspire teams and shape a sustainable cultural narrative that resonates long beyond the anniversary year.

In the Centenary year - *A Century of Breaking New Ground* - the Creative Director will shape the overarching creative framework within which the individual programming strands cohere. They will ensure that the centenary becomes a genuine artistic statement - not a fireworks display, but an honest, artistically ambitious exploration of what an arts centre can be today and in the future. Harnessing the anniversary year as a catalyst for renewal and reinvigoration, the Creative Director will establish a creative vision that empowers artistic ambition and connects with diverse audiences through bold and inclusive programming.



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## About the Bluecoat

### Background

The Bluecoat is Liverpool's centre for the contemporary arts — a bustling cultural venue that sees 700,000 visits each year. Housed in Liverpool's oldest city centre building, a Grade I listed former charity school built in 1716–17, the Bluecoat combines a regular programme of exhibitions, live events, workshops and discussions across visual art, music, dance, literature and other artforms with a community of creative retailers, working artists' studios, a café, and a garden.

The building's history is intertwined with Liverpool's story as an Atlantic port. The merchants who founded the school derived much of their wealth from maritime trade, including the transatlantic slave trade. The arts centre has increasingly addressed this colonial legacy through critical programming and research — an engagement that reflects our commitment to telling uncomfortable truths alongside celebrating achievements.

The century as an arts centre contains remarkable history. The building has hosted Stravinsky, Michael Nyman, Doris Lessing, Jeremy Deller's Acid Brass, and countless experimental performances. Equally significant is the incubation work, many organisations such as Liverpool Arab Arts Festival and precursor organisations to FACT developed at Bluecoat from small initiatives into independent entities.

### Vision

A world where all people can enjoy the arts, participate in culture and develop a unique and personal creative life.

### Mission

To provide a welcoming and inspiring place where creativity is celebrated and where exceptional engaging and exciting arts experiences are found - a place where visitors don't just look at art but engage with contemporary art, art making and art-makers.

Our purpose is to find new ways for people to experience the arts.

We are a home for creative potential, where art and people meet.



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Our work is guided by four central themes:

1. **Breaking new ground:** Liverpool's contemporary arts centre - the first, the original. A place defined by 100 years of radical thought and creative reinvention.
2. **Unlocking the creative process:** Bringing people into the heart of the creative process, creating new opportunities for individuals and communities to interact with artists as they work.
3. **Inspiring curiosity:** A creative playground, a supportive space in which to unearth new ideas and embrace something out of the ordinary.
4. **Purposefully inclusive:** An inclusive home for artists and creative practitioners. A platform for artists with different viewpoints and from backgrounds under-represented in the sector.

## Our Values

We strive to be

1. **Dynamic:** investing in great artists and great art and co-authoring and co-creating art and performance. Creating even greater depth in our participation work and disseminating best practice. Exploring new approaches to programming and energetically advocating for the value of the arts and artists in society. Actively pursuing social enterprise models that support our sustainability.
2. **Inclusive and Open:** Warm, welcoming, receptive and eager to learn from others. Respecting and valuing difference and making our programmes and our business reflect diversity in its widest sense.
3. **Reflective:** Building on our unique heritage ensuring there is a great legacy for future generations, learning from the past. Understanding the impact of our work and responding to it creatively and thoughtfully. Thinking carefully about how our commercial goals can augment and enhance our charitable purposes.
4. **Experimental and playful:** Not taking things for granted, seeking new and fresh ideas through collaborative and inclusive programmes of work. Taking calculated risks and asking audiences to go on a journey with us. Thoughtful and joyful in our approach to growth and development in all areas of our practice. Encouraging others to celebrate with us the successes and the challenges.
5. **Challenging:** not accepting the status quo in society. In the arts, adopting dynamic and changing approaches, actively seeking alternatives to old certainties or established artworld models. In our social enterprise activities, looking for creative opportunities and challenging ourselves to generate income in ways consistent with our artistic purpose.



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## The Operating Model and Context

This appointment comes at a time when the UK arts sector is navigating a series of well-known pressures, including long-term funding constraints, ageing cultural infrastructure, the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, and wider societal, local and global political challenges. Yet despite these national challenges, we continue to build momentum - through our artistic work, the ambition of the creative community and a renewed business plan that positions us for our future.

Our operating model sees a turnover of approximately two million each year. In broad terms, this equates to 30% from ACE, 37.5% from fundraising and additional income, 17.5% from rentals and 15% from Trading.

We are undergoing a period of transition, part of which sees the completion of the new Events Space. This is a beautiful renovation of the "Bistro" which sees the space transformed into a flexible commercial venue suitable for a range of events including weddings and live performance productions.



With this context in mind, we are looking for an innovative thinker with an entrepreneurial approach to new opportunities. This is a cultural leader who will align creative risk taking with a clear sense of what a sustainable future looks like for the organisation. We are working within a resource-constrained environment, which will require the Creative Director to work closely with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team to make things happen, including fundraising.

## **The Senior Team**

The organisation is in a period of growth and transition and as such is in the final stages of refining the next iteration of the Business Plan. The Creative Director will be part of the Senior Management Team and will be line managed by the Chief Executive. The Creative Director will also have line management responsibilities. The revised staff chart will be shared during the recruitment process and, once appointed, we anticipate that the new Creative Director will have an opportunity to inform this process and be a part of further recruitment.

During the Centenary year in 2027, it is envisaged that the Creative Director will oversee a number of freelance contracts, with freelancers being central to the delivery team for the year's programme of activities.



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## **Job Description - Responsibilities**

### **Artistic Programme Leadership**

- Lead an ambitious and sustainable artistic vision for The Bluecoat that builds on and enhances its existing reputation.
- Develop the overarching creative framework for the Bluecoat 2027 centenary programme and implement the projects.
- Commission, develop and deliver an artistic programme that engages and entertains a diverse audience and encourages them to try a new experience.
- Work with the Chief Executive to ensure that the artistic programme, where possible, makes a positive financial contribution to the company's operation whilst appealing to a broad and representative audience.

### **Producing and Programme Delivery**

- Lead the delivery of a curated artistic programme and oversee complex, multi-partner productions across exhibitions, live performances, events and related activity, ensuring strong coordination between internal teams and freelance contributors.
- Take a leading role in building and sustaining national and international partnerships.
- Develop thriving relationships with colleagues and partners to ensure all practical and technical aspects of programme delivery are planned and executed to the highest professional standards with clear oversight of budgets, schedules and quality control.
- Ensure this planning is underpinned by regular and effective communication about the programme across and within teams.
- Appoint all visiting artists and key artistic personnel.

### **Partnerships, Commissions and Artist Development**

- Develop and nurture relationships with artists and creative practitioners at all stages of their careers and celebrate under-represented voices in the arts and culture sector.
- Act as an active ambassador for the Bluecoat, building relationships with peer organisations, international partners, and funders. Attend relevant shows, festivals and conferences to gather intelligence, build networks, and champion the work of Bluecoat.
- Support the collaborative commissions with partner organisations ensuring that the commissions deliver genuine creative ambition while respecting the partner organisations' own creative and brand identities.
- Contribute to building and supporting Bluecoat's creative community of artist studio-holders, creative businesses and retailers.

### **Participation Programmes**

- Provide strategic oversight of our award-winning participation programmes.
- Ensure where possible, that synergies are created between the work of Blue Room, the Children & Families team and the artistic programme.
- Identify opportunities for growth and development in these areas.



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## Strategic Communications and Public Profile

- Work with Business Development, Marketing and specialist PR partners to ensure artistic values are reflected in marketing, PR, brand, audience development and digital strategy.
- Be a credible public spokesperson for Bluecoat's artistic programme.

## Heritage and Cultural Legacies

- Support the Cultural Legacies strand of the centenary year, ensuring that its reflection on the Bluecoat's 100 years of history — including Bryan Biggs' 50-year contribution — is connected to the forward-looking strands of the programme.
- Champion creative approaches to engaging with Bluecoat's complex heritage, including its histories connected to transatlantic slavery and colonial trade.

## Leadership, Management and Fundraising

- Work as part of the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to strategic planning, organisational development, and cross-departmental collaboration.
- Contribute to funding applications, reporting and evaluation, working with the fundraising team to secure resources for the creative programme.
- Contribute to Board reporting, including Programme Committee papers and briefing notes.

## General

- Uphold Bluecoat's values as an inclusive and collegiate organisation. Carry out all duties with full regard to Bluecoat's Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety policies. Carry out any other duties as required that are reasonably commensurate with the level of this post.



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## Person Specification

The criteria in this person specification represent the requirements for the role and will form the basis of the assessment of your application. Please ensure that you give examples of these when preparing your application.

We are interested in what you can do, not where you have done it. We welcome applications from candidates whose experience spans curatorial, producing, programming, or combined arts backgrounds. The ability to work across artforms and bring artistic coherence to a complex programme matters more than a specific career path.

## Skills and Experience

### Essential

- Demonstrable success providing artistic or creative programme leadership in the cultural sector for a minimum of 5 years.
- Substantial experience of working across multiple artforms or disciplines. This experience might be gained within a multi-disciplinary practice, or from a singular art form specialism working with partners and projects across artforms.
- Experience of managing complex, multi-partner creative projects or productions from concept to delivery, including budget management and stakeholder coordination.
- A track record of commissioning, co-producing, or programming work that demonstrates genuine creative ambition and critical credibility.
- Experience of leading or coordinating teams (including freelance contributors) towards shared creative outcomes in a complex operating environment.
- Strong communication skills: the ability to articulate artistic vision compellingly and to represent the organisation within the cultural sector and the media.
- Experience of fundraising, donor engagement or advocacy for creative programmes.
- Financial literacy: the ability to set and manage programme budgets.
- Evidence of a strong professional network including artists, producers and commissioning bodies.

## Knowledge and Understanding

### Essential

- Deep knowledge of and enthusiasm for contemporary arts practice.
- Understanding of the current challenges and opportunities facing UK arts organisations.
- Understanding of audience development and community engagement in the arts, and the ability to make programming decisions that are informed by the needs of different audiences but without being driven solely by commercial viability.
- Understanding of inclusive practice in arts programming and openness to working in an accessible way with artists, collaborators and partners



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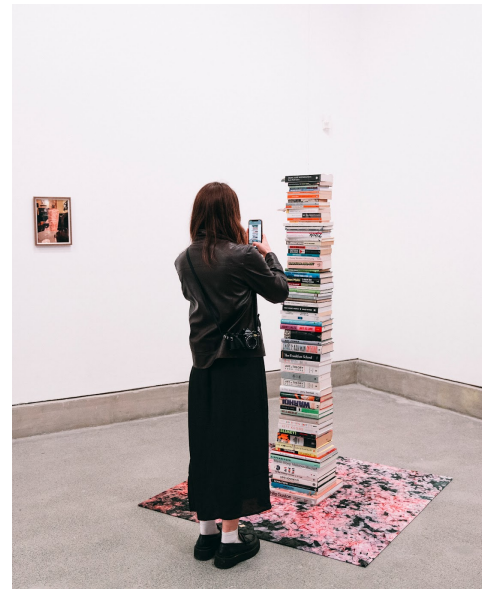
## Desirable

- Knowledge of Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region cultural landscape, or a demonstrable ability to embed quickly in a new city and build relationships with its cultural community.
- Knowledge of the heritage interpretation sector and creative approaches to engaging with complex institutional histories.
- Knowledge of international contemporary arts networks, practices, and co-commissioning models.

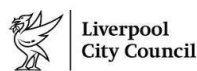
## Values and Behaviours

### Essential

- Leadership style which is inclusive, collaborative and respectful while remaining focused on the Bluecoat's priorities.
- Comfort with ambiguity and constraint. You will join an organisation which is changing and evolving; pragmatism and creativity in equal measure are essential.
- Quick, confident decision-making across artistic and operational domains, combined with the ability to communicate decisions clearly and create shared understanding.
- A genuine commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, cultural diversity and broadening access to the arts — evidenced through practice, not just intention.
- Commitment to Bluecoat's values of being dynamic, inclusive, reflective, and challenging.
- Willingness to work flexibly, including regular evening and weekend work as required and in line with Bluecoat's TOIL Policy.



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## Further Information

### Equal Opportunities

The Bluecoat is an equal opportunities employer and positively encourages applications from suitably qualified and eligible candidates regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender status, religion or belief, marital status, or pregnancy and maternity. Bluecoat will provide reasonable support throughout the recruitment process to applicants who have a disability.

The Bluecoat acknowledges that its current workforce does not fully reflect the cultural and ethnic make-up of our audience, and we therefore welcome applications from candidates from as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible who meet the essential criteria.

### Find Out More

- Website: [thebluecoat.org.uk](http://thebluecoat.org.uk)
- Archive: [thebluecoat.org.uk/library](http://thebluecoat.org.uk/library)
- Instagram: @the\_bluecoat
- Facebook: [facebook.com/theBluecoat](https://facebook.com/theBluecoat)
- LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/the-bluecoat](https://linkedin.com/company/the-bluecoat)

### Terms and Conditions:

- **Contract:** Five year fixed term with opportunity to renew
- **Salary:** In the range of £50,000 - £55,000 per year depending on experience
- **Line Manager:** Chief Executive
- **Location:** The successful candidate must be prepared to live in the North West and within commuting distance of the Bluecoat in order to engage with the pulse of the city, region and organisation.
- **Working hours:** This role is a full-time role (37.5 hours per week) including regular evening and weekend work. Flexible working arrangements are available.
- **Holidays:** 33 days including bank holidays
- **Pension:** Workplace pension scheme
- **Other Benefits:** Staff discounts in Bluecoat Cafe and Shop, complimentary or discounted tickets to shows, professional development opportunities.

We welcome applications from candidates who wish to work in a flexible working pattern (for example around caring responsibilities or access requirements relating to a disability)



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## How to Apply and Selection Process

The recruitment is being led by Shreela Ghosh, who leads a specialist consultancy in search and recruitment within the creative sector. Shreela is working closely with Mary Cloake, Chief Executive of the Bluecoat, on all aspects of this recruitment. We welcome informal conversations about the role. To arrange a confidential chat please contact [creativedirector@thebluecoat.org.uk](mailto:creativedirector@thebluecoat.org.uk), marking your message for the attention of Shreela Ghosh.

It is expected that the selection will be a two-stage process and will include a presentation, an interview and a task involving scenario planning.

You can apply for this role using the Application Form and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form only. We will not accept CVs.

**Please submit both forms (in Word Document or pdf format) by email to [creativedirector@thebluecoat.org.uk](mailto:creativedirector@thebluecoat.org.uk)**

Please also indicate if you have any problems with availability on the interview dates (see below) in the application form

The interview process will include two rounds of panel interviews, presentations and, at the second stage, an opportunity to meet Board members and staff of Bluecoat.

**Closing date for applications: 12pm on Mon 20 Jul, 2026.**

**First round interviews are expected to take place in Liverpool on Monday 27 July.**

## Data Protection

We process personal data in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act, the Data (Use and Access) Act, and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations. We aim to be transparent about how we handle your data and not do anything you would not reasonably expect.

Questions, comments, and requests about our Privacy Policy are welcomed.

Email us: [mydata@thebluecoat.org.uk](mailto:mydata@thebluecoat.org.uk)



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