



The Bond Board – Community Storytelling Commission Project

Our Voices – Our Future

Co-produced stories of belonging, survival and journey, informing community understanding and The Bond Board's future strategic direction.

About The Bond Board

The Bond Board is a long-established homelessness charity operating across Rochdale and Bolton since 1993. We support over 2,000 people each year who are homeless or vulnerably housed, many facing multiple and intersecting disadvantages including poverty, the cost-of-living crisis, insecure housing, migration trauma, poor mental health, and extreme social isolation.

Our work focuses on supporting people into the private rented sector through bond guarantees, tenancy sustainment, housing management, crisis support, landlord engagement and co-produced community drop-ins. Our ethos is grounded in respect, empowerment, lived experience and community resilience. Co-production is central to how we work and how we learn.

This commission builds on previous co-produced projects including *Sustainable Livelihoods (2017)*, *Zine and Heard – A Celebration of Resilience (2021)*, and the *Tenants' Advocacy Service Evaluation (2023)*.

Project background and intent

Our Voices – Our Future responds to the ongoing cost-of-living and housing crisis, rising social division, and increasing hostility towards migrants and people experiencing homelessness. Recent consultation with Bond Board service users found that 100% reported financial hardship, and many described loneliness, isolation and stress as dominant features of daily life.

This project is a community storytelling project first. Its purpose is to create accessible, culturally sensitive spaces where people can tell their own stories in ways that feel safe, dignified and meaningful. The project will bring together diverse groups who rarely have opportunities to listen to one another, including:

- Homeless and vulnerably housed people
- People living in poverty in the private rented sector
- Refugees and people seeking asylum
- Volunteers and peer supporters
- Staff, trustees and partner agencies
- Socially-minded landlords

Alongside the creative work, the project will generate insight that helps The Bond Board better understand lived experience, emerging issues and service gaps. This learning will inform future organisational planning, but the primary emphasis remains on participation, voice and relationship-building rather than research extraction.

Overall approach

The project will be delivered through a **close collaboration between the commissioned artist(s) and an embedded sense-maker/researcher** appointed by The Bond Board. The roles are distinct but deliberately connected:

- **Artist(s):** lead the creative storytelling process, relationship-building, facilitation and creation of public-facing outputs.
- **Embedded researcher/sense-maker** supports reflective learning, pattern spotting and sense-making alongside the creative process.

The artist(s) will **not** be expected to carry out formal evaluation. Instead, they will contribute observations, reflections and creative insight into shared thinking spaces with the embedded researcher.

What we want to explore through stories

We are interested in stories that help us understand:

- Experiences of living on a low income in the private rented sector
- Survival strategies during the cost-of-living crisis
- Journeys *to*, *with* and *beyond* The Bond Board (why people come, what helps, what doesn't)
- Belonging, exclusion and feeling 'at home' in current social and political contexts
- Everyday acts of resilience, solidarity and care

Stories may surface tensions, contradictions and hard truths. We welcome complexity rather than tidy narratives.

Ways of working

1. Story-led, not product-led

Creative medium is secondary to storytelling. Film, audio, zines, visual art, text, installation or hybrid forms are all welcome, but proposals should show how chosen methods serve the stories rather than drive them.

2. Embedded, low-pressure engagement

Story gathering should take place largely within existing, familiar Bond Board spaces (e.g. coffee mornings, migrant drop-ins, housing-related settings, Bolton Hub), using micro-interviews and short conversational encounters as well as longer sessions where appropriate.

Participation should be flexible:

- From 2–3-minute exchanges to longer 1–1 or group sessions
- No expectation that people participate more than once
- No pressure to share more than feels safe

3. Language, trust and peer involvement

The artist(s) will work alongside peer supporters, volunteers and interpreters, and should be comfortable collaborating with trusted community members rather than working as an external expert.

4. Co-analysis and feedback loops

The project will include moments where emerging themes are fed back to participants through:

- Informal creative feedback activities
- Visual mapping, prompts, or shared reflection tools
- Opportunities for people to add, challenge or reinterpret themes

The artist will contribute creatively to these moments, alongside sharing feedback with the embedded researcher. We expect the artist(s) to work with the project evaluator to support sense making. This might include regular sense making check in conversations using reflective techniques such as thinking spaces to support the reflections on learning from the project.

5. Trauma-informed and honest practice

The artist(s) must work in a trauma-informed way, making clear:

- What participation will and won't influence
- How stories may be shared publicly.

- Care, consent and participant control are essential throughout.

Outputs

The project will culminate in an **enduring, multi-format creative output** suitable for public sharing and community celebration. This might include (but is not limited to):

- A publication or zine
- An exhibition or installation
- A live or recorded performance
- A digital or audio collection
- A mixed-media showcase

The form will be co-designed with participants and the project steering group. The output should counter stereotypes, reflect diverse voices, and be accessible to both participant communities and wider audiences.

Timeframe

- **May 2026:** Artist(s) commissioning
- **June 2026:** Detailed planning
- **July-December 2026** Creative delivery, storytelling, co-analysis and production
- **December 2026 -January 2027:** Final output and community sharing

Exact schedules will be agreed during mobilisation.

Budget

- Artist fee for creative delivery (inclusive of materials): up to £11,000
- Additional project costs (venues, accessibility, translation, etc.) are covered separately within the overall project budget.

Value for money and clarity of scope are important. Proposals should include a clear fee and delivery breakdown.

Who should apply

We welcome applications from:

- Community artists
- Storytellers
- Facilitators
- Photographers, filmmakers or audio artists
- Creative collectives

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Experience working alongside marginalised communities
- Trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice
- Comfort working in messy, real-world settings
- Experience of co-production and shared authorship
- A reflective, collaborative approach to learning

What to include in your proposal

Proposals can be:

- A written submission or
- A short video (5–10 minutes)

Please include:

- Lead applicant details
- Your creative approach and values
- How you would engage diverse communities
- How you would work alongside peer supporters and the embedded researcher
- Accessibility and trauma-informed considerations
- Initial thoughts on creative outputs (flexible at this stage)
- Relevant experience and examples
- Budget overview
- Safeguarding, DBS and insurance details

How to apply

Interview Date: **3rd June 2026**

Submit proposals by **20th May 2026** to:

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Further information about us: www.thebondboard.org.uk

