

Impact report 2022



About us

We design kind, clever places to help people learn and grow.

Our vision

A world where the design of every school sparks courage, compassion and curiosity in children, teachers, and parents.



Welcome to our impact report



We were an early B Corp advocate, and still proud to be the first architecture practice in the UK to certify. It was a huge effort, but one that galvanised us as a team, drawing together the disparate efforts we were making.

We qualified when we were small - just 5 employees - and found the holistic nature of the certification provided a great framework to grow in the right way. It opened our eyes to ways to improve practices we hadn't even considered. From tinkering under the bonnet, to raising the flag, we've tried to embrace both ends of what it means to be a B Corp and both affect and inspire change.

Since certifying in 2019, we've had to chart the business through a global pandemic, and in doing so face fresh questions around how we work and what we value. This last period up to our recertification has seen a coming of age for the studio - we may not have doubled in size, but we've doubled down on our values and strengths, and have found a renewed energy behind our vision for improving educational outcomes through design.

We're still a small business, but a more mature one. We're more aware of our limitations, and are working on ways to decentralise and empower a strong, aligned team that share our vision to create impactful work.

This report gives a glimpse of how we're trying to do that. It's structured by our four key stakeholder groups: our team, the planet, wider communities, and our customers. We share and celebrate initiatives we've undertaken, reflect critically on challenges encountered, and state our aims for the next period.

We hope you enjoy and take something from it.

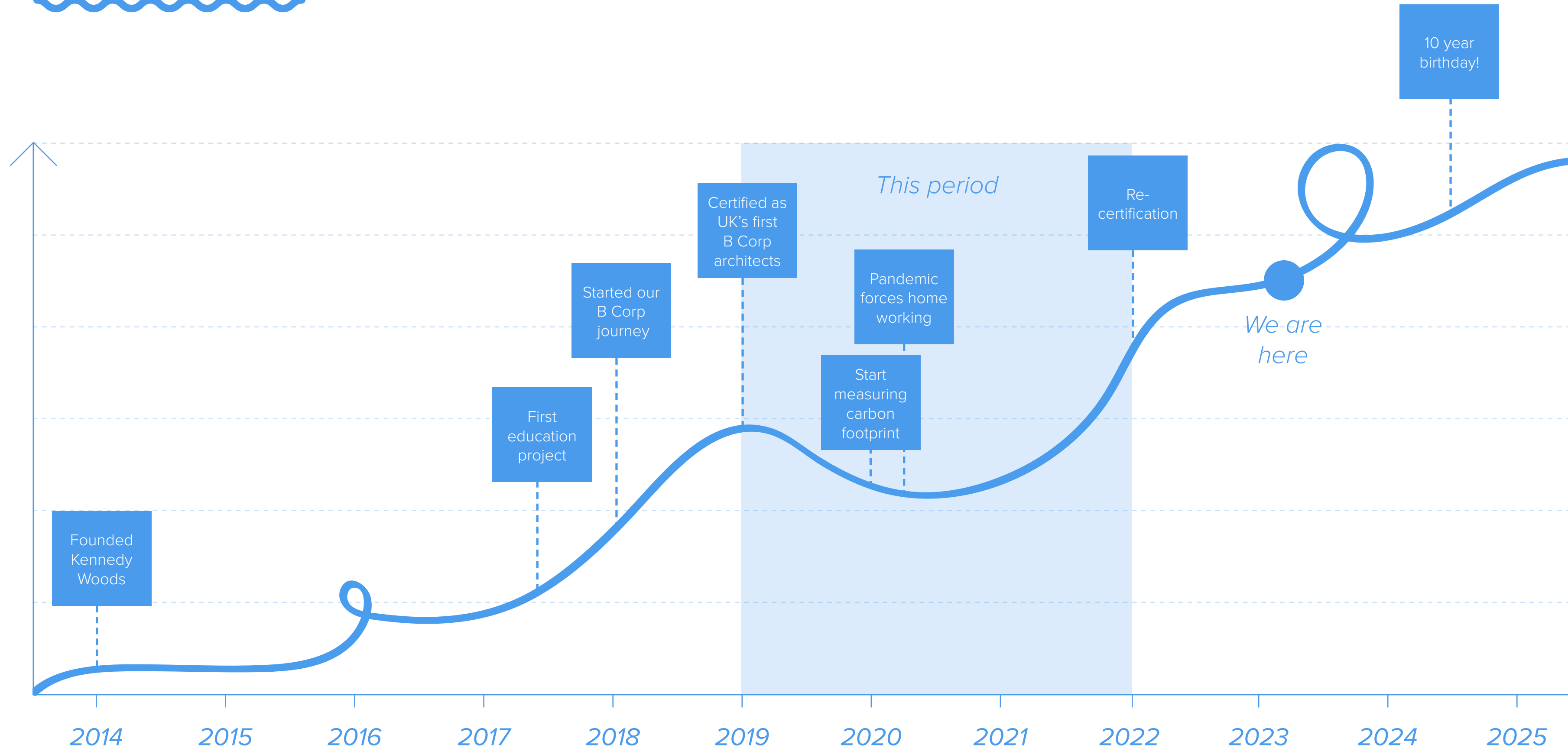
Chris & Tom



“We are proud to be the first architecture practice in the UK to certify”

Chris & Tom

Our B Corp journey



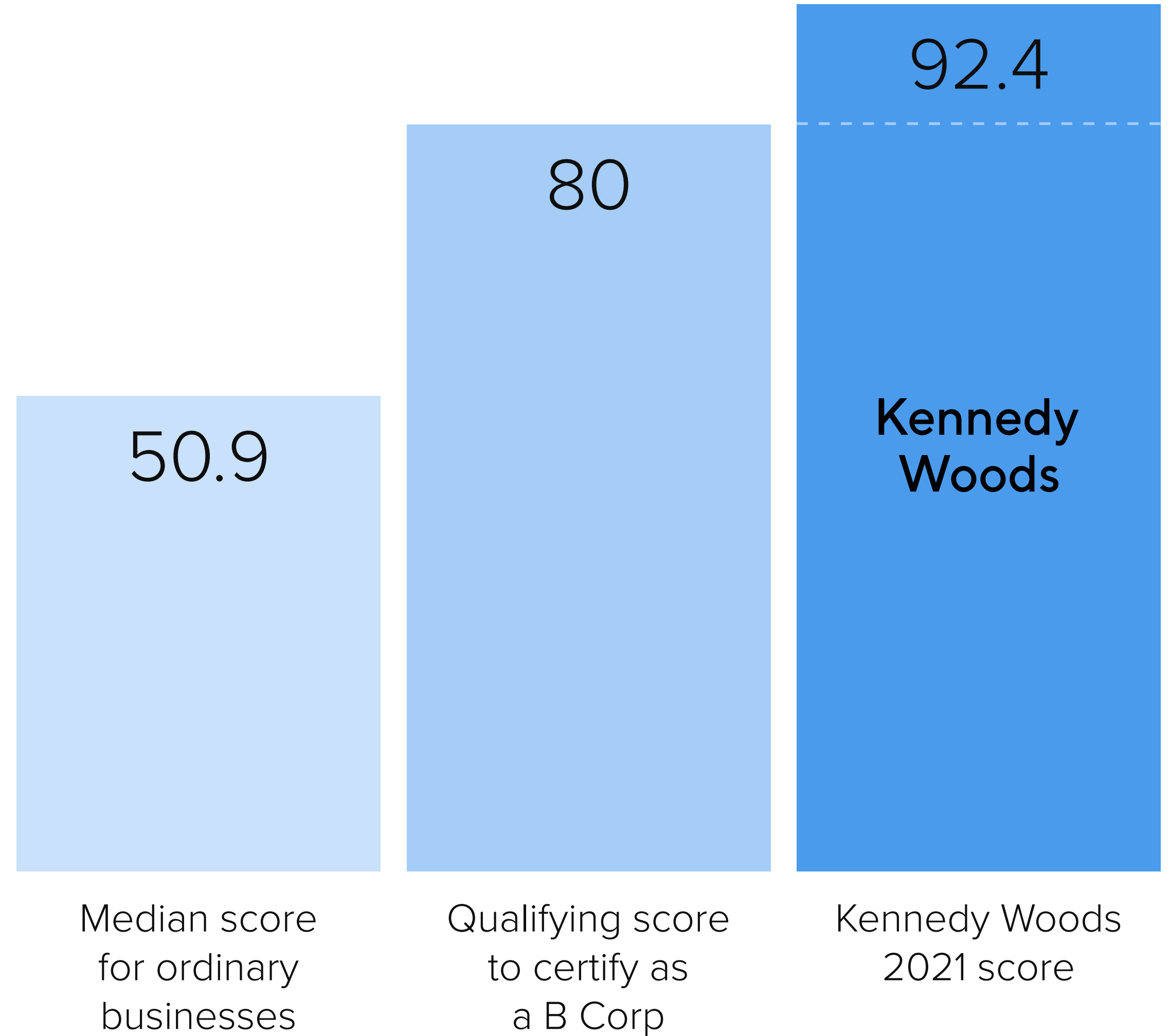
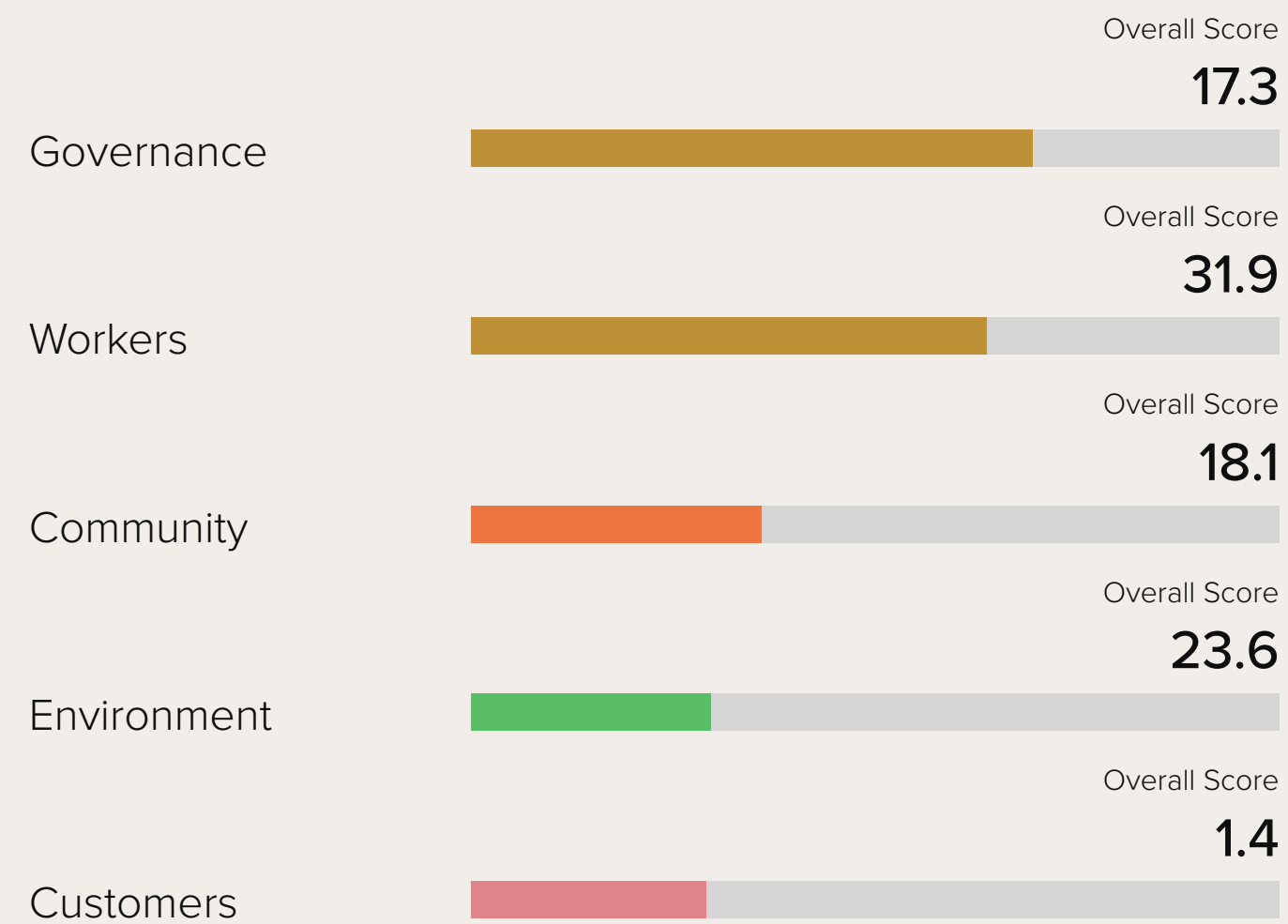
Our overall B Corp impact scores so far



B Corp impact score



We're making
ground on our
#Journeyto100



People



Growing together



Building a great working culture has always been at the heart of our vision for a successful studio, and the past three years has seen that tested in a way we'd never expected.

The Covid pandemic was as sharp as it was unexpected for us, and as agile and innovative as we felt we were being, in reality we struggled. But now that we're out the other side, we can take a step back and appreciate how much we achieved, what we need to sharpen up and what we can take forward. We all felt the need to keep close to each other during lockdown, and through this we rebuilt our community and found clearer ways to communicate.

Thank you to everyone who worked with us during this unprecedented period for their part in shaping who we are today.

As we welcome new faces and diversify our team and talent, nurturing our working culture remains a key focus. For us, a well supported community is an essential ingredient for meaningful design.



Improving our employee offer



There's no doubt that the pandemic made us think differently about what we offer our employees and our commitment to each other.

During the last three years some changes were implemented quickly through necessity, while others were already in planning. For example, we've introduced software that makes remote team working much easier, and our new wellbeing benefits include the option to take a self-care day, no questions asked. We're proud to have sponsored our second employee through their part 3 architecture qualification - he's now teaching on the course!

We're a small team so it's essential that every change makes a tangible improvement in the quality of our employees' personal and professional lives.

Changes introduced in this period:



Self-care day



Remote work weeks policy



Improved parental leave



Health and dental care cover



Profit share bonus



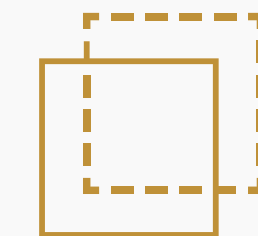
Improved reviews structure



Further education sponsorship



Flexibility for teaching and volunteering



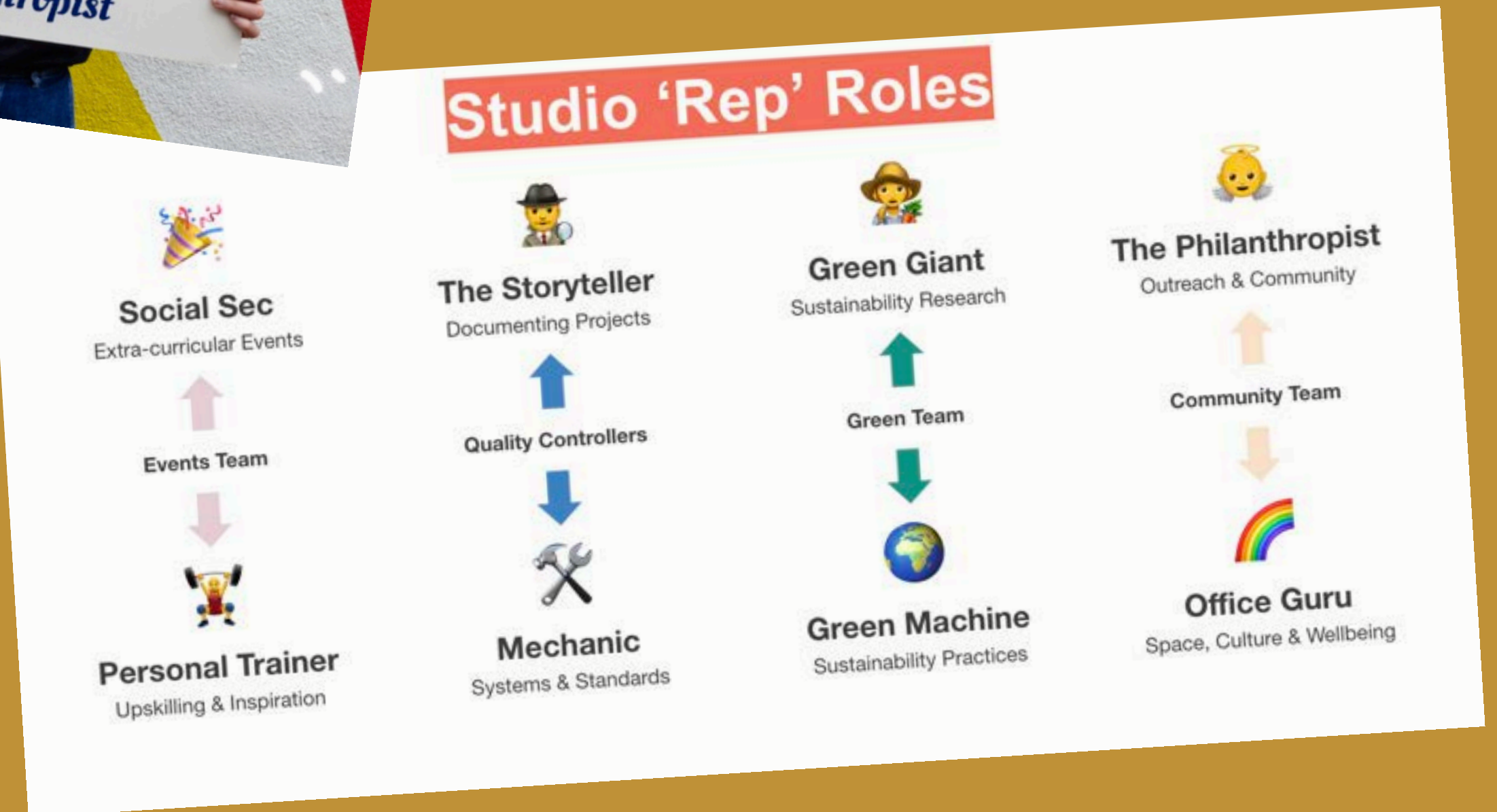
Transparent role descriptions and salary bands

Encouraging all hands to shape the studio



We want everyone to have a hand in shaping the studio, and initiatives to encourage this have taken many guises over the years. The last period was characterised by the 'Rep Roles', with each team member given a focus and monthly time allocation to progress actions within their responsibility area.

As we grow and team members change, we're continuing to adapt and experiment with ways to empower more entrepreneurialism. Today we've moved away from disparate efforts, to collaborating together on a shared focus for each quarter.



Celebrating the other half...

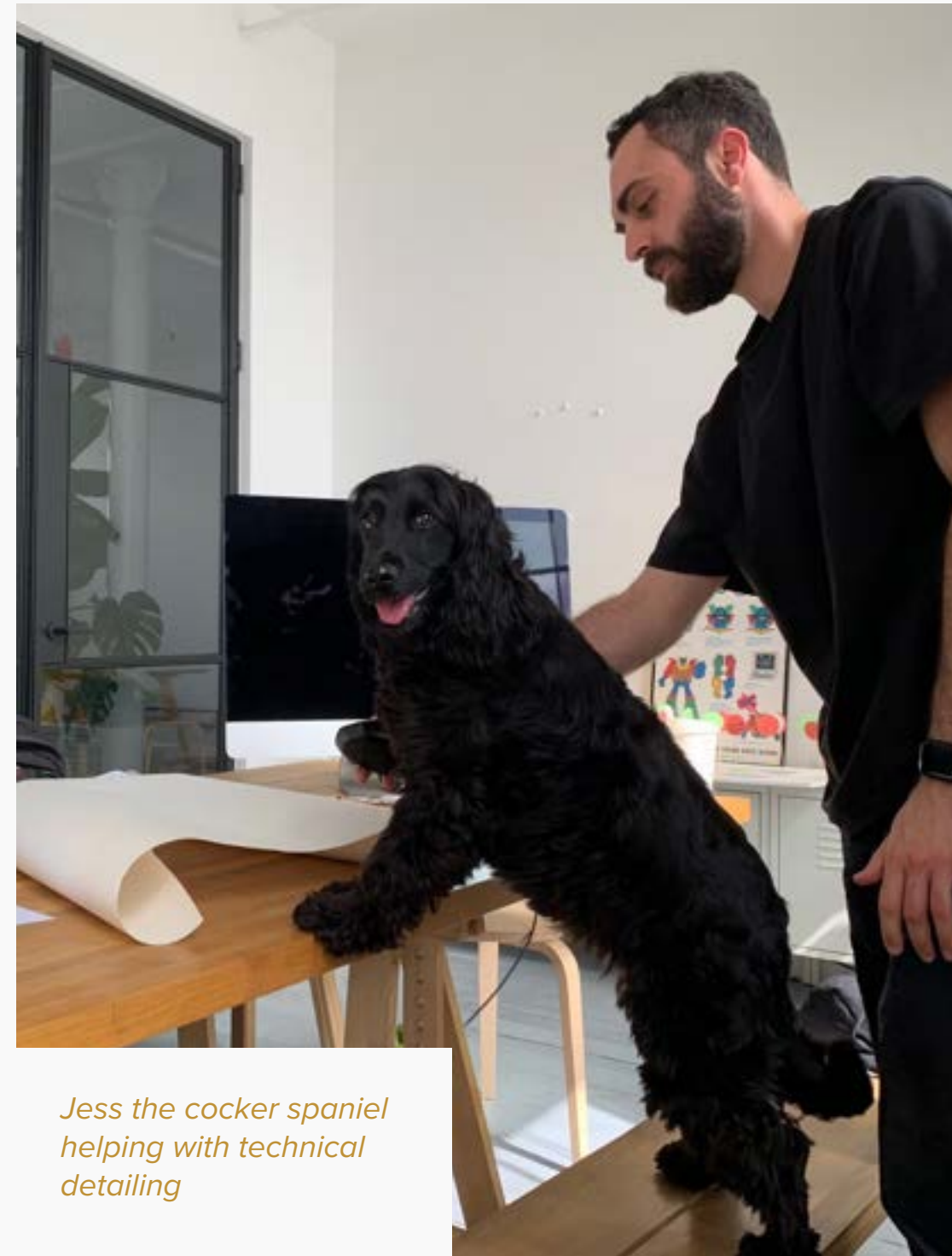
As a studio we've always taken play seriously. From the increasingly competitive Secret Santa, to the sports, events, and team-building out of hours. The last few years have seen the character and values of the studio shine through.



South London summer softball



Getting creative with the secret santa spend cap



Jess the cocker spaniel helping with technical detailing



Aims for next period



→ In the next 12 months we want to

Make our culture, commitments and behaviours more transparent to help with onboarding and team alignment.

Empower everyone in the team to contribute to developing the studio in line with our values, in a way that's decentralised and self-sustaining.

Introduce sliding scale benefits to reward time in practice.

→ To do this we will

Develop a 'little culture book' and a 'design ethos' booklet that illustrate our values in practice.

Involve team in hiring, interviews and onboarding processes for new employees, as well as in screening and bid process to help steer how we grow.

Continue our annual studio summit to discuss and review policies and practices.

Establish budget and processes to allow team to plan team-building activities, socials and other events.



Planet

“If you don’t save the planet,
THE PLANET WON’T SAVE YOU”

– Sarah, age 9



A story of two halves

In the last period we've taken steps to measure and reduce our own carbon footprint. However in doing so, we came to realise that further improvements on the home front will have only a marginal emissions impact, compared with the vast potential impact of our built work.

As reflected in our B Corp score, we've struggled to make headway with our environmental impact in projects to date due to the type, scale and stage of projects we have had the opportunities to work on as an emerging studio.

We've had several schemes start with great sustainability ambitions that our clients have held onto, only to find commitments and specifications watered down in later design stages through cost-cutting measures, which has both disappointing and challenging for us to reconcile with our ethos.

We recognise our role to play in informing, educating, and inspiring clients to invest in sustainable design, and our ambition is to prioritise time spent on this for all projects in the next period.



Becoming a carbon neutral business



In 2020 we started measuring our carbon footprint with PlanetMark, committing to a 5% year-on-year reduction of CO₂ per head, while offsetting 110% of our emissions through fellow B Corp Earthly.

While we achieved large reductions in the first year, remote working due to the pandemic lockdowns skewed our calculations, and as a tenant in a single-glazed factory building heated by an oil-fired boiler, we quickly realised the limits of what we can achieve. But these figures did prompt a positive lateral move to sublet part of our studio, so that we are getting more efficient use from the space.



4.8tCO₂e

Total carbon footprint

-24.4%

Carbon reduction per employee

Retrofitting focus

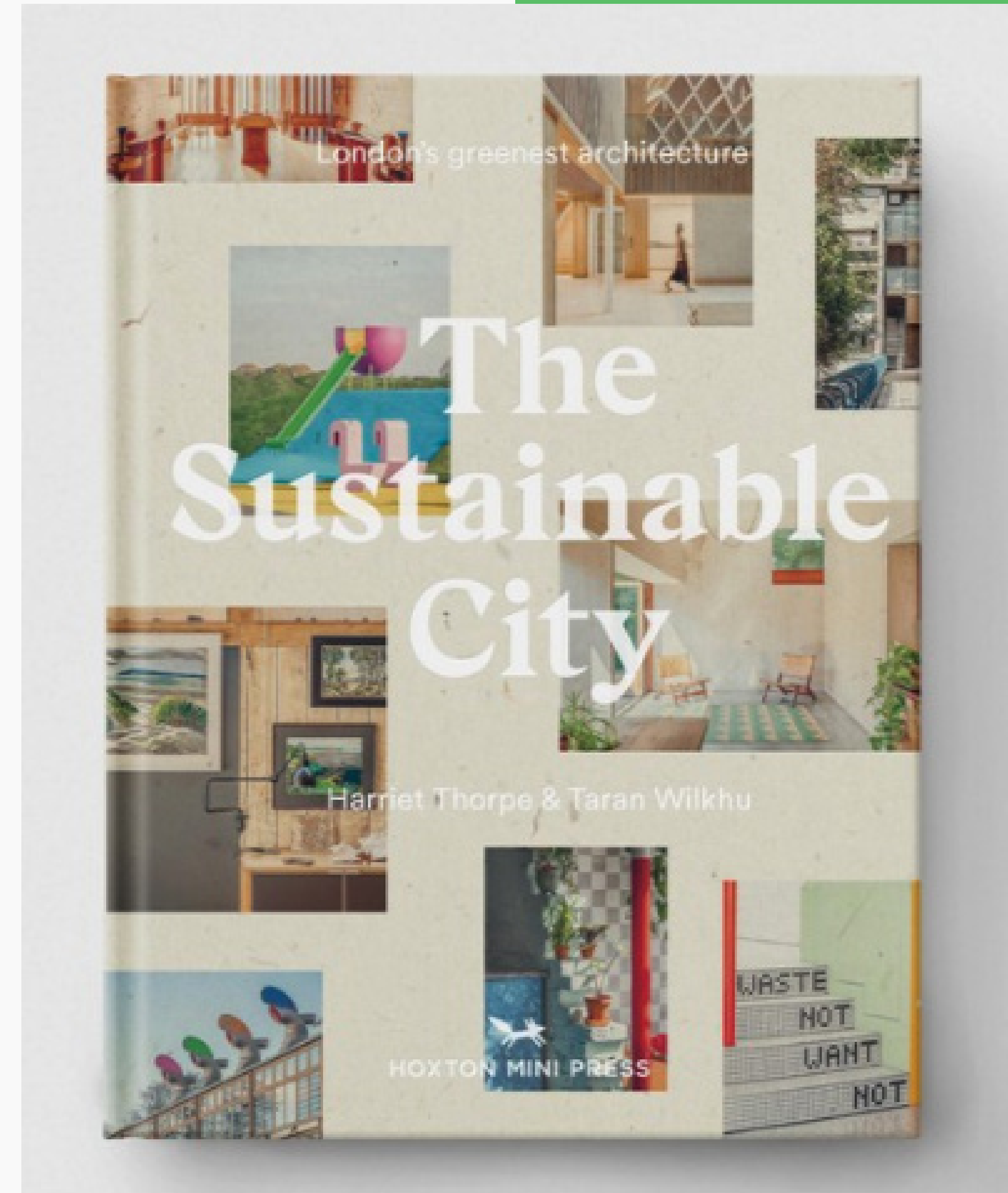


39% of the world's carbon emissions come from the built environment, so we know that one of the most sustainable things we can do is not build.

We're focussed on helping our clients get better use from their existing estates and, wherever possible, prioritise retrofitting over new build.

Finding clients that share our vision is essential and our work with N Family Club demonstrates just how much we can do together. Over the last five years we've helped them open 25 schools in retrofitted and repurposed churches, galleries, community halls, town-houses and commercial units.

Our retrofit interior design work for N Family Club features in The Sustainable City - a new book celebrating London's urban architecture that benefits people and planet.



Pushing for low carbon new-builds



LOW CARBON SCHOOL

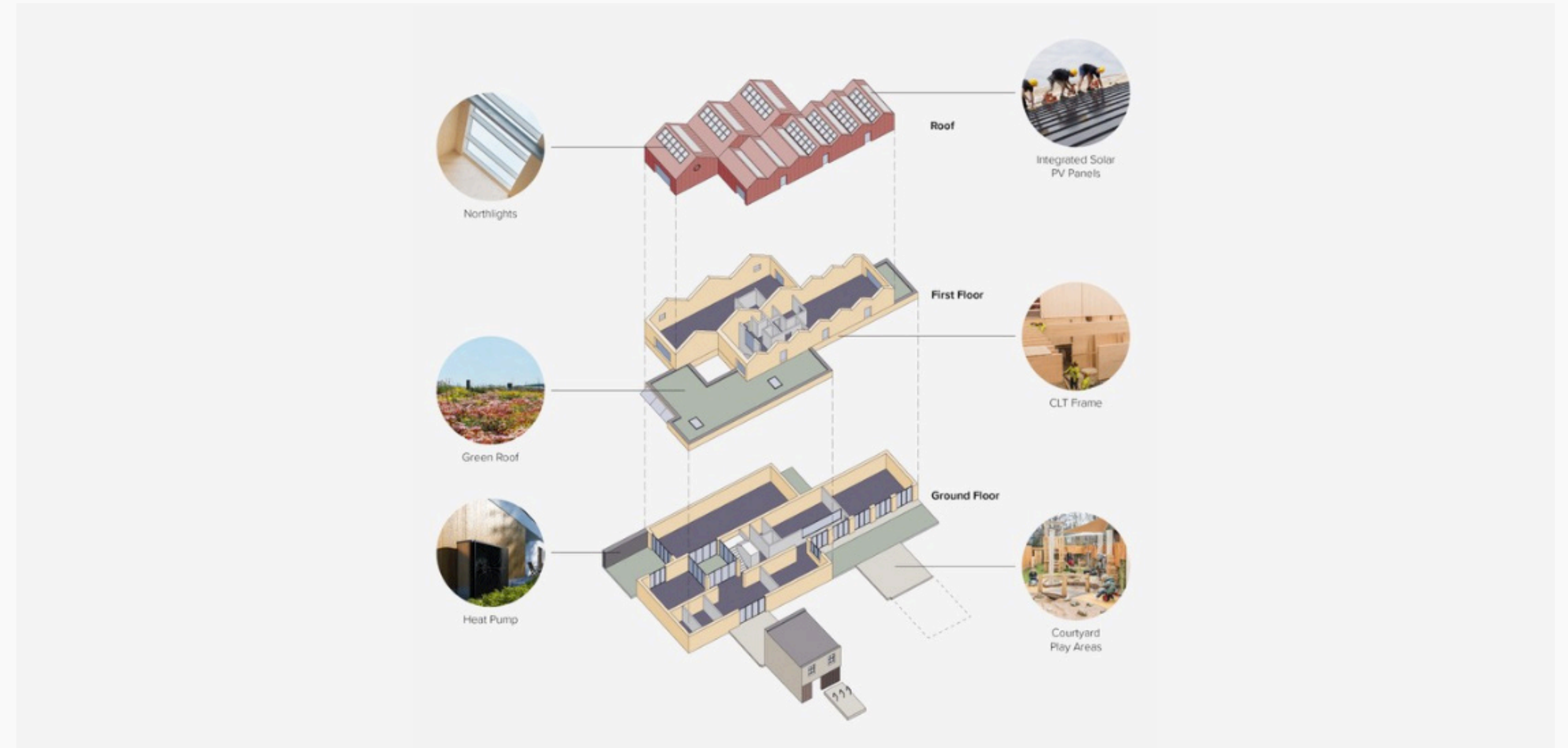
Where retrofit really isn't an option, our focus switches to designing new builds that generate the lowest possible embodied carbon.

During the last period we developed a highly sustainable new build school in Hackney that was on target for a BREEAM Excellent rating. It had a CLT (cross laminated timber) building structure, green roof and integrated solar panels and - compared to a standard steel frame - would have reduced embodied carbon by 75% over the full lifecycle of the building.

We were pleased to see our sustainable school design featured in the Design Council's Design for Planet series as an exemplar for low carbon new builds.

However, despite its green credentials, the school was deemed inappropriate by the local council because the site sits within a residential area, so we're back to the drawing board creating a new scheme for the site.

[Read the full case study here](#)



Engaging others with the challenge



A big part of our responsibility to the planet is to make sustainable design the easy, informed choice.

In addition to our work with clients and peers, over the last three years we've sought out opportunities outside the studio to reach a broader audience.

As part of the Climate Justice For All campaign, we facilitated a HOME-Zero workshop at the National Gallery. Hosted by Love Ssega and Nesta, we joined a brilliant group of creative activists to bring youth and diversity to the much-needed conversation about sustainable social housing.



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Aims for next period



→ In the next 12 months we want to

Ensure sustainability is at the forefront of client conversations from brief stage, with specific targets and commitments made for each project.

Make it easier for everyone in the team to make sustainable design decisions at all stages of a project.

Ensure sustainable material and product specifications are tabled as the standard option rather than 'nice to have' in every project.

→ To do this we will

Create assets to help us educate and inspire clients to commit to sustainable design at the briefing stage of a project.

Run a team-wide monthly knowledge and process meeting, with time allocated for everyone to research and share sustainable design resources.

Build a sustainable design resource and knowledge hub, to make it quick and easy to present sustainable specifications to clients.



Community

“For a group of franchise CEO’s who rarely have the opportunity to come together, we were a hard group to please. Tom and the team exceeded all expectations.”

*Emily Vermont,
School of Social Entrepreneurs*



Opening our doors



We believe design should be inclusive, accessible and engaging, so we set up *In The Making*, a series of initiatives to help make our industry more equitable.

From studio visits, talks and career days, to design camps and open studio family workshop days, we've partnered with many of the UK's leading educational and cultural institutions to deliver popular events for people of all ages, from all walks of life.



[>>> Watch the Design Pirates video here](#)

Slingshot initiative



We conceived Slingshot during Covid as a pro-bono design service to provide seed-stage community projects with the professional support and initial momentum needed to launch from idea to reality. We see the initiative as our way to give back to our communities using the skills we have, and balance our commercial portfolio with charity sector work.

Rather than waiting for clients to turn up at our door, in 2020 we reached out to over 40 local organisations with ambitions to improve their communities, and started a number of collaborations, including:

- Helping Motherhouse Studios bid to create affordable artists studios for working mothers
- Exploring development potential to create supplementary income for a local Methodist church
- Visual communication for the Fourth Reserve to help unlock funding to create a community garden

Since we launched Slingshot we've tested different ways of working and learned to abandon our original one-size-fits-all approach in favour of a relationship-based approach. We're already seeing how light touch architecture and design communication support in early stages of a project can pay back dividends in the long run.



Photograph: Daniel Saunders
An ancient wood in south London has been saved for the public
Gorne Wood is a rare surviving area of woodland in London
Written by [India Lawrence](#) Wednesday 8 March 2023

£100,000 raised

Platforming inspiring, ethical designers

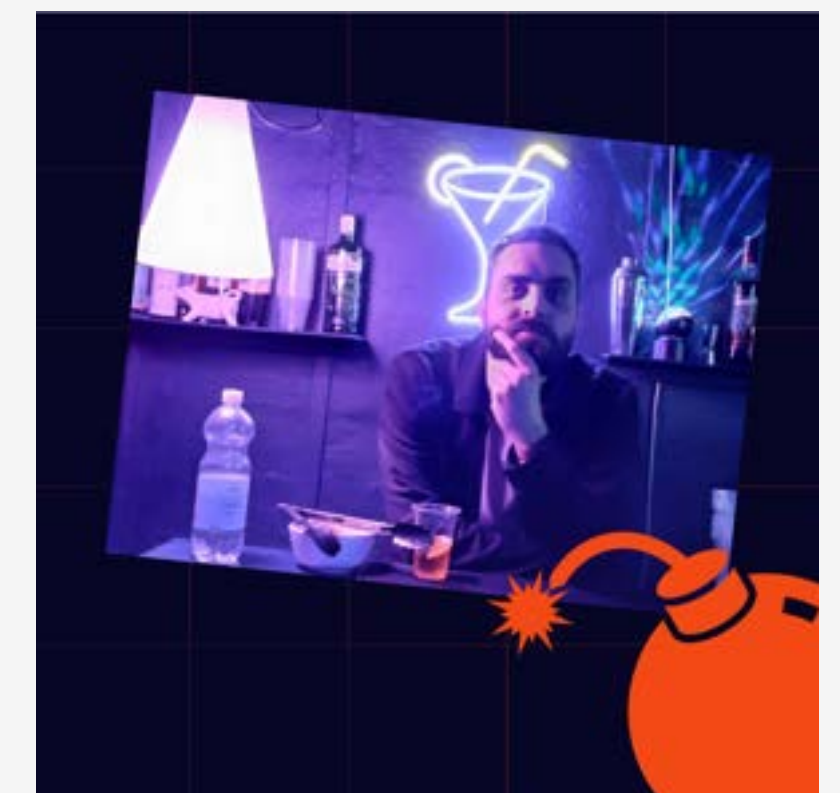
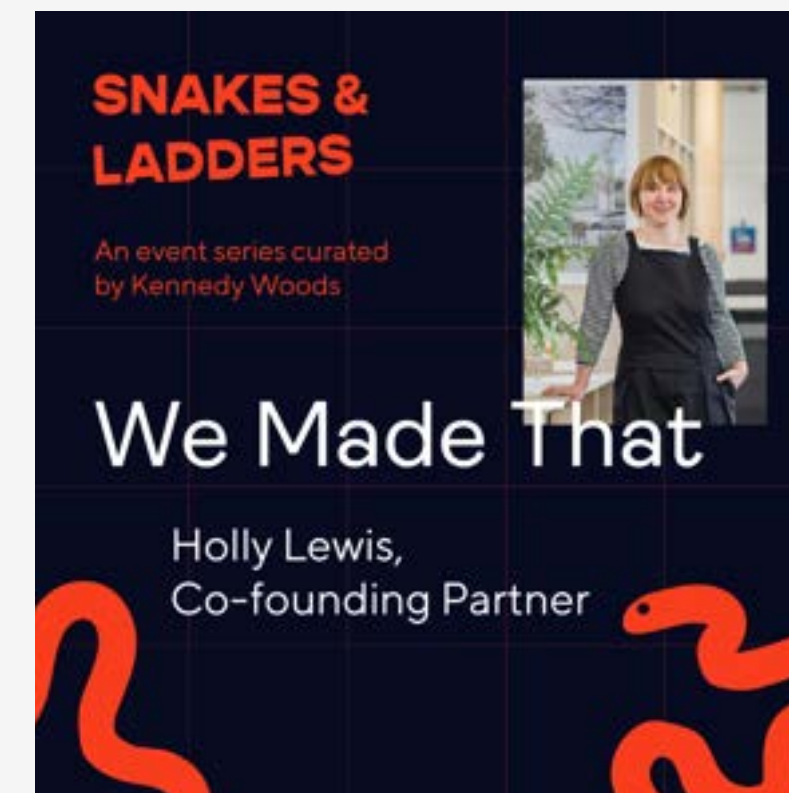


We know that growing a successful business isn't a straight line from A to B - it's a forking path marked by challenge, chance and discovery.

In 2020 we started 'Snakes & Ladders' - an event series that platforms designers who are forging an inspiring path. We encourage sharing candid stories about challenges and learnings from fellow designers balancing passion and purpose in their work.

Opening the studio has been a great opportunity for the team to build their personal networks, and encourage a more outward-looking mode of practice than we had during the pandemic.

[Get tickets to our next event here](#)



Aims for next period



→ **In the next 12 months we want to**

Continue to expand our In The Making initiative to reach more children, inspiring and engaging them with design.

Continue to platform inspirational businesses through studio talks, while making these more relevant for the education community.

Provide opportunities for students to gain insight into design as a profession.

→ **To do this we will**

Reach out to schools and cultural institutions to find a longer term partnership model for In The Making.

Run four sell-out events per year, with speakers who are breaking ground in designing for the education sector.

Prototype a free summer design challenge experience at the studio and take a first placement from a local school.



Clients

“I would recommend Kennedy Woods to other clients looking for a practice who can apply fresh thinking and dedication to a project.”

*Neil Kirby,
Head of Regeneration Southwark Council*



Supporting our clients' impact

Over the last three years we have galvanised our practice around supporting the far-reaching impact of our clients through our human-centred design approach.

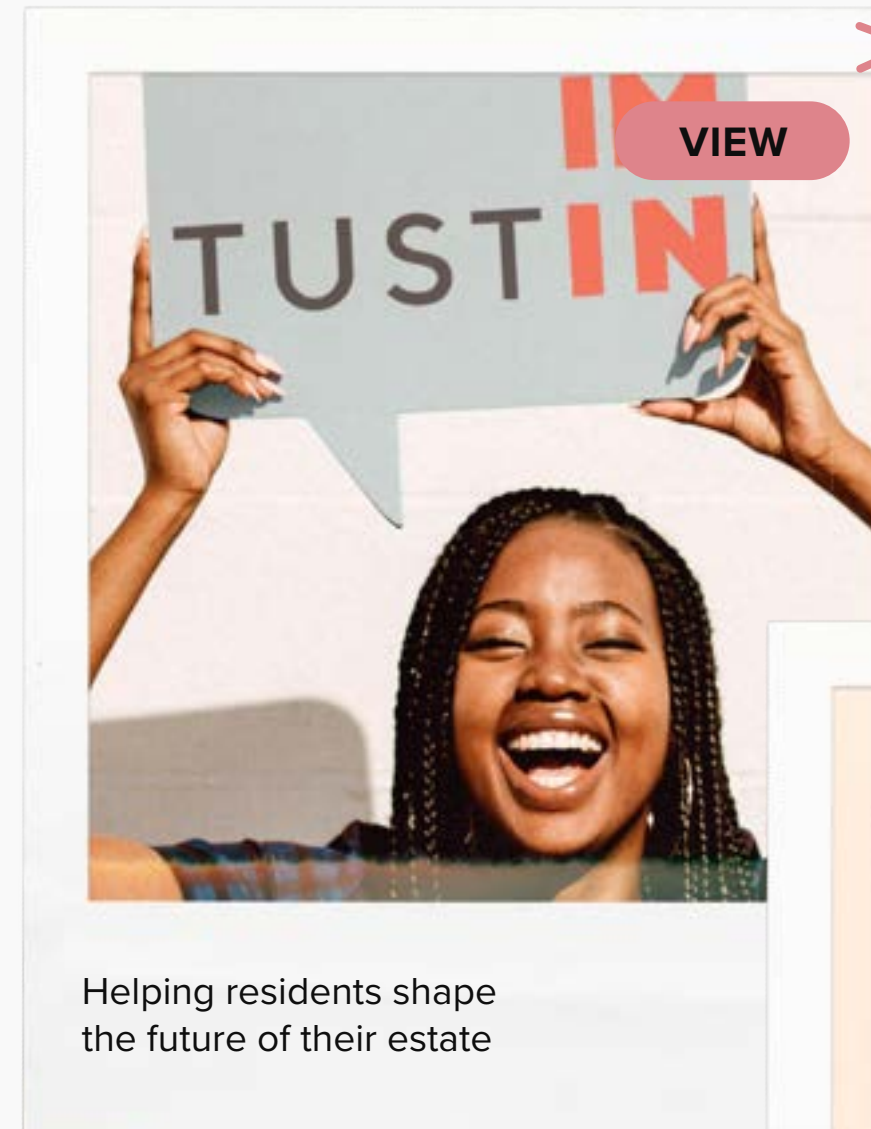
Through client data we've learnt that environments we've shaped have made a positive difference to over 4,000 children and their families in the last period, while enabling our clients to achieve Ofsted Outstanding educational ratings. We've even inspired a few to become BCorps themselves.

Some of the challenges we've helped our clients with:



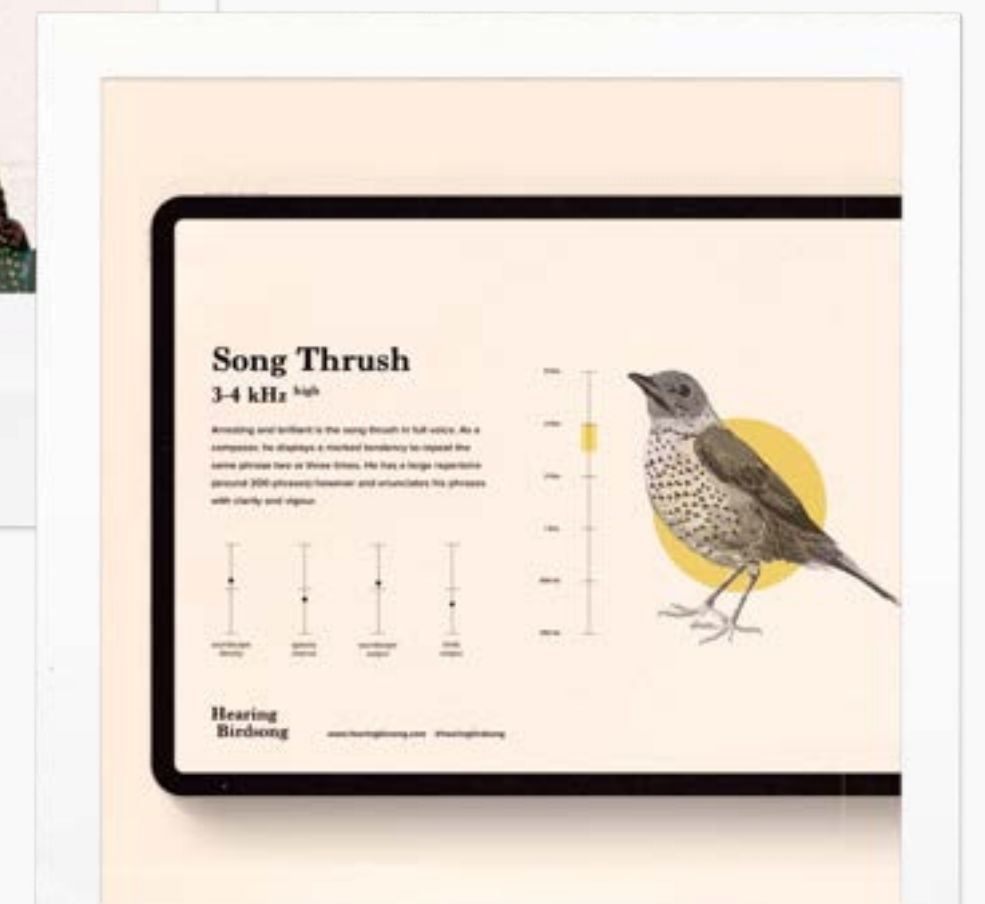
VIEW

30 school rollout for disruptive nursery brand



VIEW

Helping residents shape the future of their estate

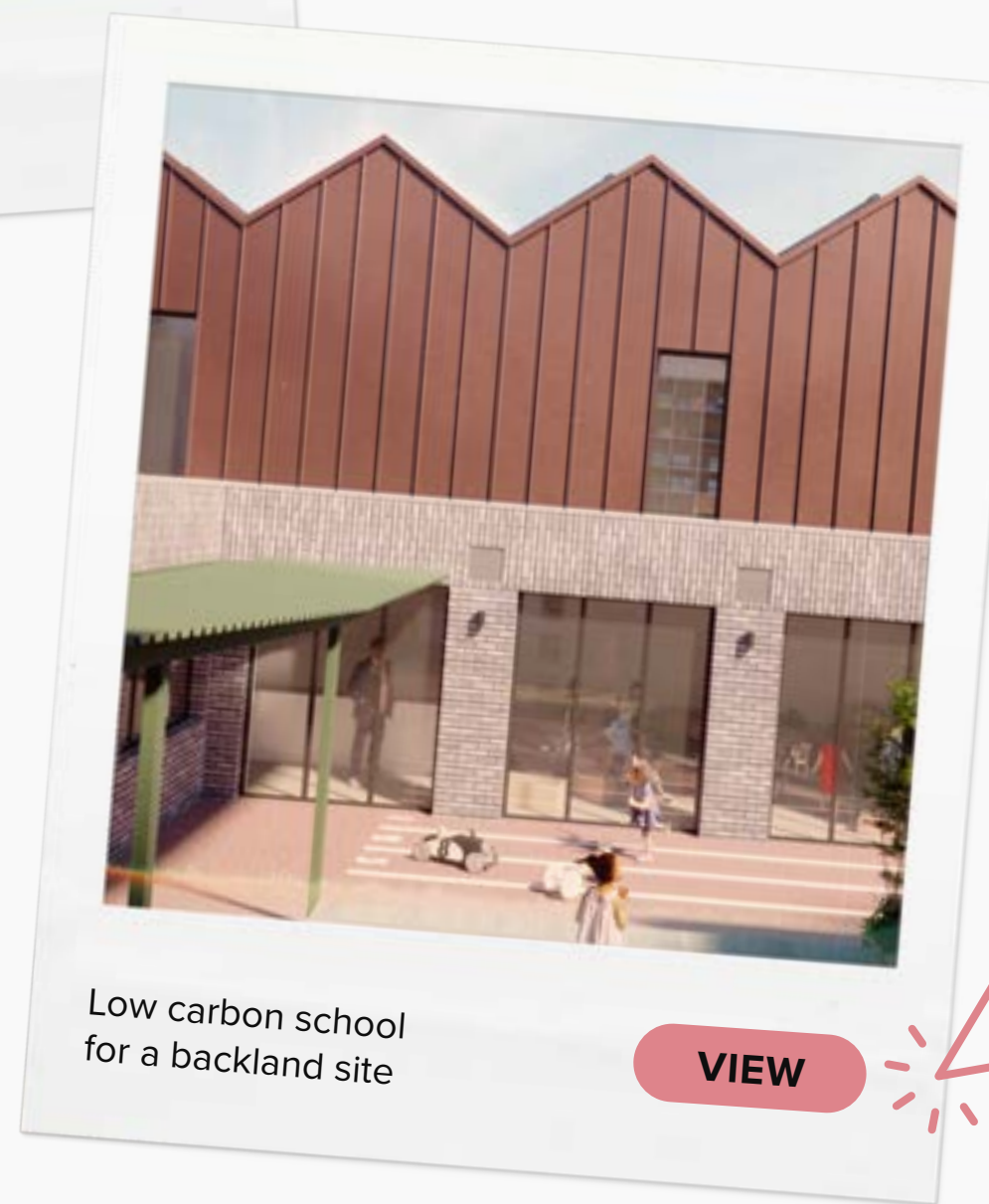


VIEW

Humanised hearing test to boost patient engagement



VIEW



VIEW

Low carbon school for a backland site

Championing human-centred design

BIRDSONG CASE STUDY

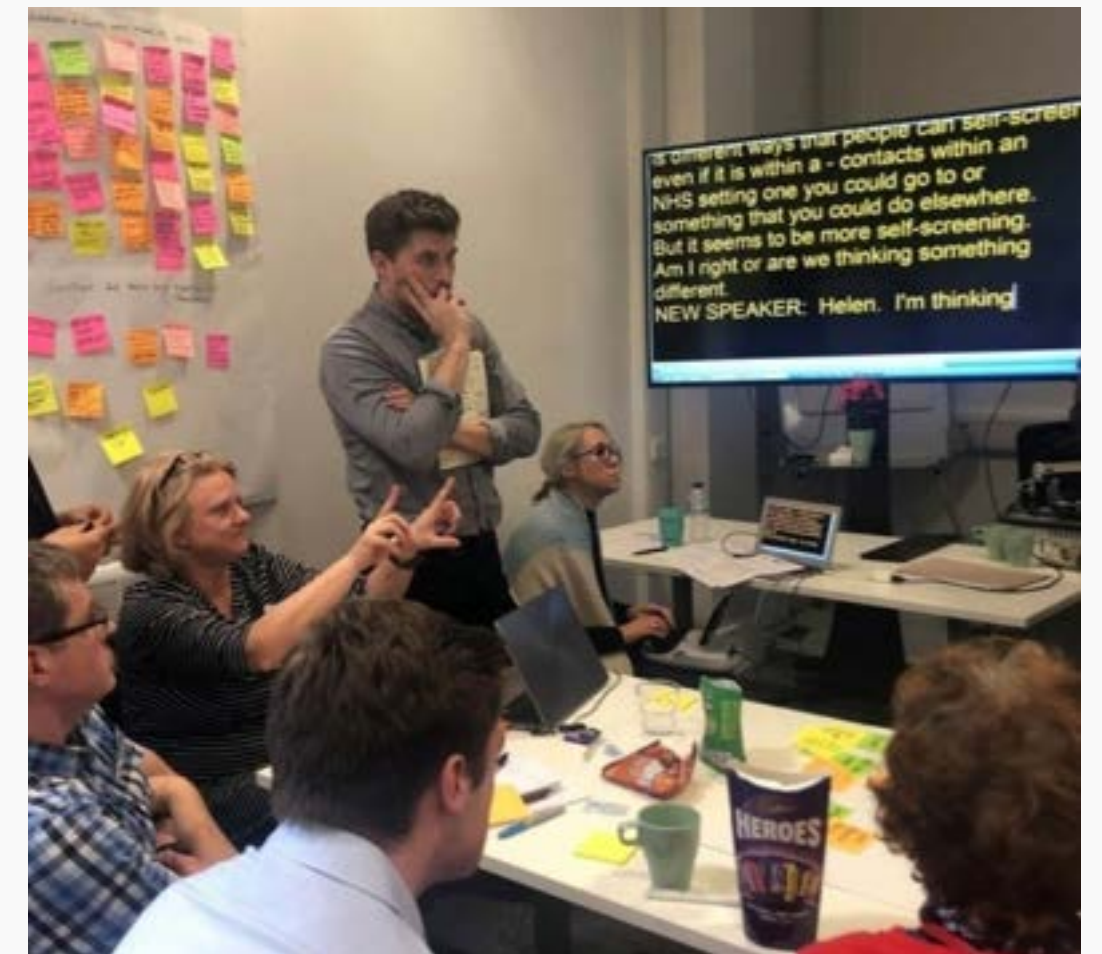
Throughout our work, we are keen to spread the word about human-centred design and the value it can create; Hearing Birdsong is a great example.

9 million adults in the UK with hearing loss don't have hearing aids, leading to isolation, incapacity and vulnerability, yet the way we diagnose hearing loss hasn't changed in 50 years.

In 2019 Tom won funding to develop an innovative concept that humanises the clinical process of hearing loss screening. Inspired by a patient's story, Hearing Birdsong unites user-experience and technology, and shines a light on the potential to humanise other clinical processes.

Working alongside Dyson School of Engineering, Imperial College and the Design Age Institute, our working prototype uses bird-calls within an ambient soundscape to test hearing frequency bands. And, crucially, people can screen themselves at home from a smartphone.

[Follow this link to experience the prototype for yourself.](#)
[Read the full case study here](#)



Various co-design workshops - from birdsong beta to age related banking

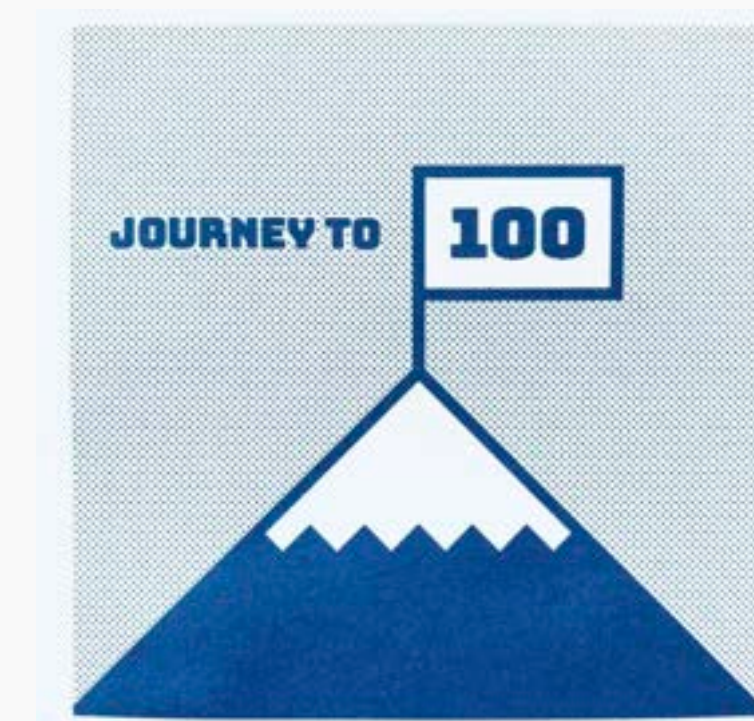
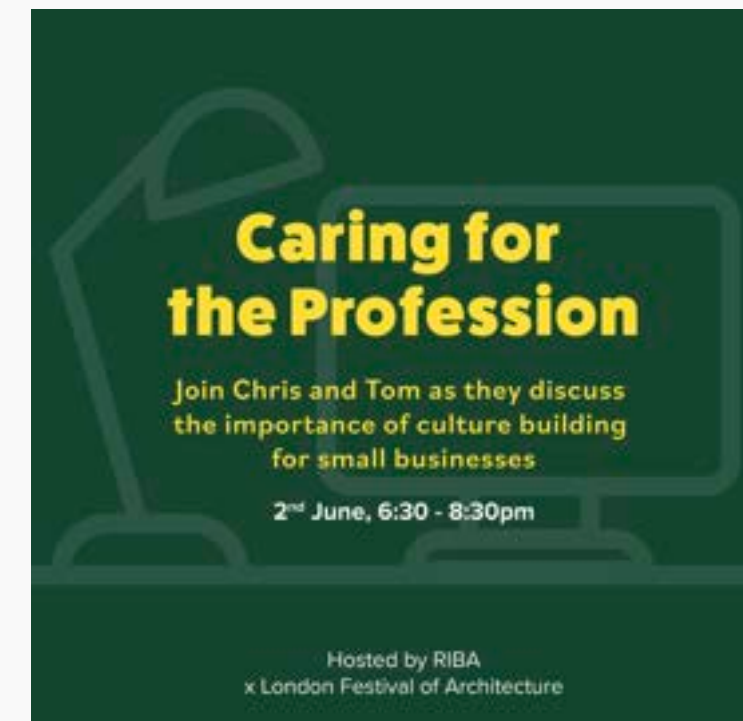
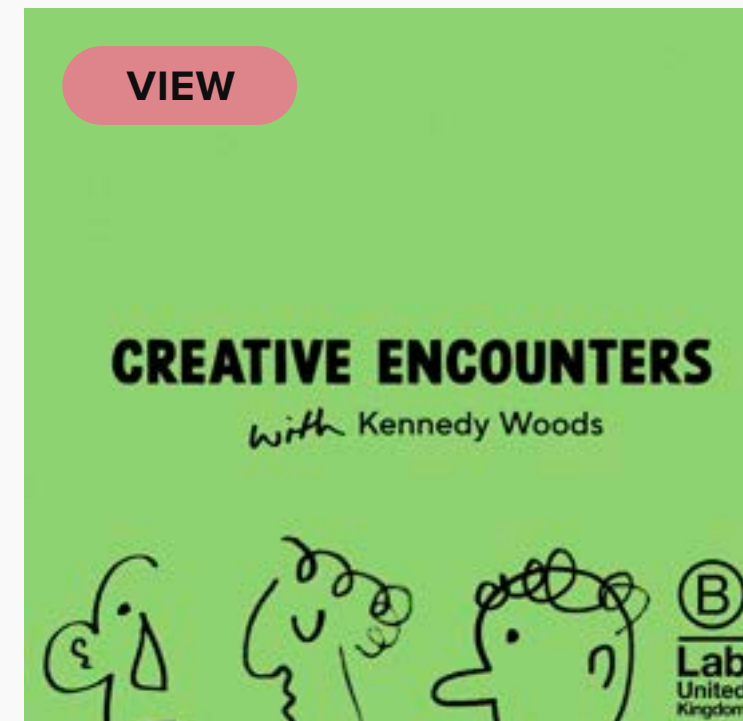
Sharing knowledge and insights



During Covid we started thinking about how to create accessible, engaging content to educate, inspire and entertain our audiences.

We created short, snappy content designed to be shared through our social media channels, on topics close to our heart such as sustainable design, co-design and community engagement, and other practical topics we think may be useful to our clients and partners.

Sharing our knowledge and insights is something we want to continue and we're continuing to experiment with format, channel and style as we learn the best way to bring value to our audiences.



Aims for next period



→ In the next 12 months we want to

Continue to champion human-centred design and its benefits for creating great education environments.

Create and share great content to inspire our client base on topics relating to sustainable, user-centred design in the education sector.

Hear more regular client feedback in order to tailor and improve our services.

→ To do this we will

Propose user-engagement activities and research in all our bids, and work hard to communicate the value of this to all our clients.

Develop our marketing team and strategy around regular knowledge-sharing content production.

Formalise and schedule feedback reviews at client account level.



Thank you



020 7993 8205
kennedywoods.co.uk
@kennedywoodsstudio

