New mentoring programme launching in Manchester to support young working class creatives from Creative Mentor Network

Wednesday 8 May, 2024

Creative and Digital Industries in Manchester boast a remarkable gross added value of £4.4bn and support 78,500 individuals. Yet, despite these impressive figures, there's an undeniable gap in opportunities for the working class in our region. Young talents from Manchester are 1.5 times more likely to face unemployment than the national average, a statistic that worsens for those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Enter Creative Mentor Network, a UK charity committed to fostering diversity and inclusivity within the creative industries. Today, we proudly announce the launch of our groundbreaking mentoring programme, Break the Wall, in Manchester. Geared towards 16-25-year-olds from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, Break the Wall seeks to bridge the gap between aspiration and opportunity by pairing mentees with seasoned professionals from Manchester's vibrant creative industries.

Despite Manchester's recent accolade as the UK's creative capital, lucrative creative roles remain elusive for many within our community. The Policy & Evidence Centre's 2022 report highlighted a stark reality: while Manchester boasts the largest creative sector outside of London, pockets of deprivation are left behind as investment gravitates towards more affluent areas.

> *"It's no secret that the creative industry is very London centric, so it's important for us to support those young people in other parts of the country who want to pursue a career in the creative industries. We've had mentees from the North on our programmes before, but being able to run a programme in Manchester will make these opportunities more accessible and support the huge amount of talent that exists in the area. Manchester is such an exciting city with a thriving creative economy, and we can't wait to connect with businesses here and help them see the value of the hidden talent on their doorstep."* ***Natasha Khan, Acting Managing Director, Creative Mentor Network***

The latest Census data paints a sobering picture, revealing that young people in Greater Manchester face unemployment rates 1.5 times higher than the national average, with even graver odds for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Such disparities are further echoed in Labor Force statistics, which underscore the uphill battle our youth face in comparison to their counterparts in London, Surrey, and Hertfordshire.

A myriad of barriers, including network-driven recruitment practices, underfunded careers education, and substandard wages, form formidable obstacles for aspiring creatives from working-class backgrounds. At Creative Mentor Network, we recognise that true change begins with dismantling these barriers.

> *"With significant cuts to creative courses across curriculums and youth services being pulled from councils, we're now seeing the repercussions – an overwhelming lack of working class representation in the creative industry. I've seen first hand how a socio-diverse team can drive real change to client challenges and business needs; different perspectives breed different results. At the minute, creative agencies have never had to work harder to cut through. At Dentsu we run our clients 'team agnostically'. This means pooling teams together from across all 3 UK locations, not just one, depending on the need. We know the value of what a truly socio-diverse team can bring, and clients and businesses are experiencing the difference it makes. By becoming a mentor for Creative Mentor Network, I hope to use my personal and professional experience to not only discover and give opportunity to next generation talent, but shape - and ultimately diversify - the creative industry."* ***Jenna Livesey, Business Director, Denstu Creative, Manchester***

Break the Wall isn't just about mentorship; it's a catalyst for systemic change within the creative industry. By partnering with leading creative organisations like Sony Music, Amazon Prime Video, WeTransfer, and the Advertising Producers Association, we're not only nurturing talent but reshaping industry norms. Our programmes don't just equip young talents with skills and networks; they challenge industry leaders to become inclusive mentors and champions of socioeconomic diversity.

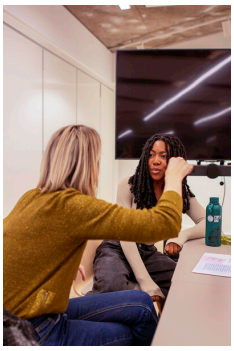
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Through the charity's holistic approach, they are not only empowering young talents to enter the industry but ensuring they thrive within it. The impact of Creative Mentor Network's initiatives extends beyond individual success stories; it's a testament to the transformative power of mentorship and inclusivity.

> *"I hoped that being on this programme would help me understand the industry more and how to look for opportunities. What I got from it was far more than I could have ever expected. I presented at my showcase one week after turning 18. I was the youngest mentee and the first to present my work, I was so nervous. I had never spoken publicly before, even though I dropped my notes twice, and the microphone stopped working halfway through, the world didn't end! After presenting at the showcase I was offered a job to photograph for Schwarzkopf at Salon International 3 day event. The day after I returned from Salon International, I signed a contract for a photography studio with the money I earned. My first client in that studio was booked and images have just been approved for an Album cover which will be released on July 23."* ***Cody Murray, Manchester based photographer & mentee alumni***

As we embark on this journey in Manchester, we are calling upon local businesses to join us in championing socioeconomic diversity within the creative industries in Manchester. By creating a more inclusive and accessible industry, we can help build a stronger and more creatively diverse workforce and create a more inclusive future for Manchester's creative community.

If you or your business are interested in participating in our October programme in Manchester, please find more information and register your interest here.

Applications for mentors close at the end of June 2024.

Company Contact:

Creative Mentor Network

T. 07792126482
E. miles@creativementornetwork.org
W. https://www.creativementornetwork.org

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