



## **Ideas Matter Annual Report FY 2023-24**

**Charity number 1178999  
Company number 11213433**





# About Ideas Matter

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the financial year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Ideas Matter is a charity registered with the Charity Commission under registration number 1178999 and a company limited by guarantee with registration number 11213433.

## Trustees:

Ferenc Furedi (full year, chair)

Philip Roy Mullan (full year)

Luke Samuel Gittos (full year)

Sheila Frances Lewis (full year, treasurer)

## Advisors:

Jane Sandeman (independent examiner, fellow member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants)

## Key employees:

Geoff Kidder (chief executive)

Alastair Donald (secretary)

## Address and contact:

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London  
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[ideasmatter.org.uk](http://ideasmatter.org.uk)

020 7269 9234

## Structure, governance and management

Ideas Matter is governed by a memorandum and articles of company association

Ideas Matter is a company charity

The company directors are also the charity Trustees

The company is limited by guarantee

Registered charity number: 1178999

Company registration number: 11213433

# Objects and activities

## Ideas Matter was set up with two aims:

1. To advance education, in particular but not exclusively, by providing a forum for discussion and debate through the organisation of public debates, festivals and summer schools involving academics, thinkers and experts that deepen and enrich the knowledge and understanding of all participants.

2. To advance good citizenship, in particular but not exclusively, through the promotion of ideas of tolerance, open debate and participation in democracy through the organisation of live events, and in print and online.

## Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects:

Ideas Matter charity's overriding ambition is to encourage a culture of learning and discussion, in order to enhance public debate of the many questions that face society and citizens today. To that end, the organisation pursues projects that encourage both self-education and a willingness to debate people with other viewpoints. Our work is not aimed specifically at any one section of society but at the broader culture of intellectual engagement and participation. To that end, we work with adults and soon-to-be adults wherever the opportunity for debate arises.

The major activities undertaken include organising education and citizenship projects, specifically the projects Debating Matters, Living Freedom and The Academy.



### Debating Matters

An innovative and engaging approach to schools debating, emphasising substance over style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously.



### Living Freedom

Our annual residential school that allows 18- to 30-year-olds to explore ideas around the past, present and future of freedom by engaging with 'the best that is known and thought' and the provocations of contemporary intellectuals.



### The Academy

Our annual summer school for all ages interested in studying ideas. Organised each year around a specially chosen theme, lectures on philosophy, history and culture demonstrate the value of scholarship in itself over instrumental approaches to knowledge.



# Our work this year

Ideas Matter  
Company number 11213433 | Charity number 1178999





# Chief Executive's Comment



**Geoff Kidder**  
**Chief Executive**

'This was a packed year for the Ideas Matter charity. Following the change of name we adopted last year, we had a chance this year to really grow into our new identity. The wide range of events, and the continued success of each and every one of our projects, gave a fresh impetus to the work of the charity and allowed us a much-needed opportunity to engage an exciting group of participants. This includes not just the young people around Debating Matters or Living Freedom - but also our wide network of judges, speakers and supporters. I feel confident that, after the successes of this year, we are in a great position to continue to deliver on our objectives in the coming year. As ever, we look back with pride on a busy year of making good on our mission: bringing ideas back into the heart of society. Because society sorely needs it.'



# Debating Matters

As Debating Matters entered its twenty-first year the sixth-form debating competition returned to some familiar venues and some new, engaging pupils from across the UK and in Berlin. This year also saw the launch of a new and invigorated version of Beyond Bars – an initiative working with women prisoners at HMP Bronzefield, Surrey.

Over the course of the year, the competition held four championships, two showcase events and the prison programme involving:

- Over **450** school pupils
- As many as **50** female prisoners
- Some **45** teachers & prison education officers
- Over **100** volunteer judges
- The release of **9** new or updated Topic Guides

The summer term was a particularly busy one for DM as the competition made a visit to the Durham Union on 8 June, then took part in a special event at the 104 London Debaters club, before flying across to Germany for the eighth annual DM Berlin Championship.



It was back to London in July for the 2023 DM London Championship and then a site visit to Bronzefield Prison to meet with prison officers and female prisoners in preparation for Beyond Bars 2023.



In August and September, Debating Matters completed an uplifting project with prisoners of HMP Bronzefield - the biggest women's prison in the UK. The Beyond Bars programme demonstrated that the DM format of rigorous, well-researched and impassioned debate is as much at home in prisons as it is in schools.

After two intensive training days, participants engaged in two days of tough debate and a special 'Question Time'-style discussion with panellists Lord Maurice Glasman, Timandra Harkness, Martin Wright and Alka Sehgal Cuthbert.

The autumn term saw the DM team take part in the Leeds Salon Annual Years 10&11 Debating Competition. Debating Matters is the official 'Judging Partner' for the competition, providing the Topic Guides, judges and judge recommendations as well as contributing to prizes for the event. This annual competition gives us an important presence in the north and allows us an opportunity to connect with more schools in Yorkshire.



# Debating Matters

A return to the Battle of Ideas festival in October led to a showcase debate between New College and Richmond-upon-Thames College, on the motion 'Social egg freezing empowers women'. It was an excellent opportunity to promote our work with like-minded people and organisations at such an important, well-attended event.



© House of Lords / photography by Roger Harris

Being able to showcase the event at the House of Lords was a fitting demonstration of the importance of debate and dialogue, and provided an unforgettable experience for the young participants. Competing in such a historic and iconic venue, with peers and esteemed judges present, brought a sense of gravitas and achievement, and we hope it was a standout moment for the young debaters' intellectual journeys.

In all, this was a busy and successful year for Debating Matters, which saw us bring our '20 for 20' programme to a close as well as forging some relationships which will no doubt set the competition up for another successful year ahead.

In the new year, and rounding off an exciting year of new initiatives, four schools from the four corners of the UK came together to compete in DM at the House of Lords for the second year running. Judges included a number of our regular DM judges as well as peers from the House of Lords including Baroness Smith of Newnham, Lord Triesman and Lord Trevethin and Oaksey.



© House of Lords / photography by Roger Harris

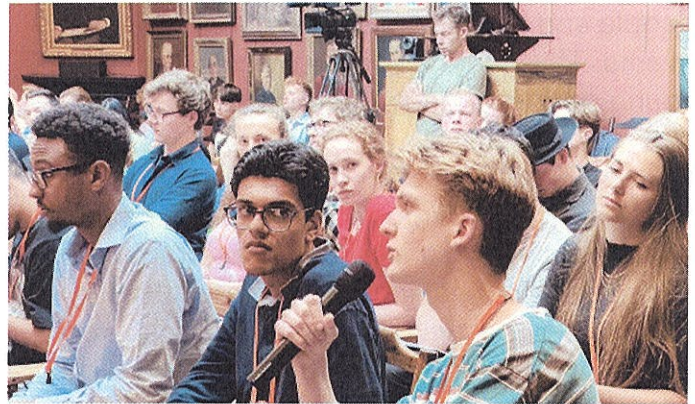


# Living Freedom

This year, Living Freedom continued and expanded its annual summer school, but at the same time moved into new territory and engaged young people in a variety of new settings. This significant expansion was a tremendous success and will be the bedrock of a much-expanded programme going forward.

The summer school this year was jam-packed with intellectual stimulation and was our best-attended yet, with a new venue allowing us to expand the capacity. Young people from across the country, the continent, and indeed the world engaged in topics from the freedom of conscience and progress to AI and campus activism.

Some salons reflected on important thinkers from history and offered an opportunity to understand the emergence of key ideas and ideals and debate if and how they remain important in the present.



Others focused in on contemporary hot topics from social media to religious freedom, and explored the complexities of these issues and their implications for free speech. These events were well-attended and demonstrated an appetite for in-depth discussion that moves beyond the usual platitudes found on university campuses.

It was especially exciting that this year we attracted a broad range of young people committed to making freedom a reality - from newly formed student groups doing campus campaigns to young people engaged in the fight for freedom across Europe and North America.

This year, Living Freedom expanded our university salon series, with 10 events in universities across the UK and Ireland that reached a combined 400 students.





# Living Freedom

The year also saw Living Freedom make a range of improvements to our engagement with young people. The project has grown over the past year, with more young people than ever engaged through our university series - not just a one-off event but a proper network for young people and a comprehensive programme of events. This year has seen a record number of young people engaged in our work.

We also hosted a series of 'London Freedom Forums' – regular informal discussions aimed at allowing young thinkers the opportunity to develop their speaking and chairing skills by taking part in panel discussions. These events allow young people to get together and dig a bit deeper into some key topics of the day from misinformation to free speech on campus and to meet and socialise with like-minded peers.

They included our annual Christmas balloon debate, with the panellists arguing for their favourite representation of freedom from the arts and culture. We also covered issues like misinformation, free speech on campus and more.



Finally, we should mention that Living Freedom has been lucky to cultivate a number of young advocates for freedom who are now involved in the running of the project as well. Around a dozen graduates of the summer school are engaged as volunteers and program co-ordinators, and have helped organise the university events.



## UNIVERSITIES

Oriel College, University of Oxford	6 February
Critical Subjects Architecture School	7 February
Selwyn College, University of Cambridge	15 February
South College, University of Durham	16 February
King's College, University of Aberdeen	20 February
University of Warwick	22 February
Trinity College Dublin	12 March
London School of Economics	19 March
University of Exeter	20 March
University of Edinburgh	25 March



# The Academy

We were delighted to put together another edition of our annual project The Academy. This year, we asked ‘What happened to the future?’

The key questions on the agenda were:

- How can we challenge the pessimism and fatalism that rules over the current political moment?
- How does our current unease contrast with previous visions of man’s place within history?
- What social forces underpinned utopian politics in previous eras?
- Why do art and culture seem to have run out of steam? And how does the unease about the future relate to our disquiet with our past?



It was a return to our regular event venue Wyboston Lakes, where around 175 people - including a number of people on reduced price scholarship tickets - came together for a weekend of serious thought and reflection. As ever, it was a chance to ask hard questions and reflect in good company on one of the thorniest issues of our time.

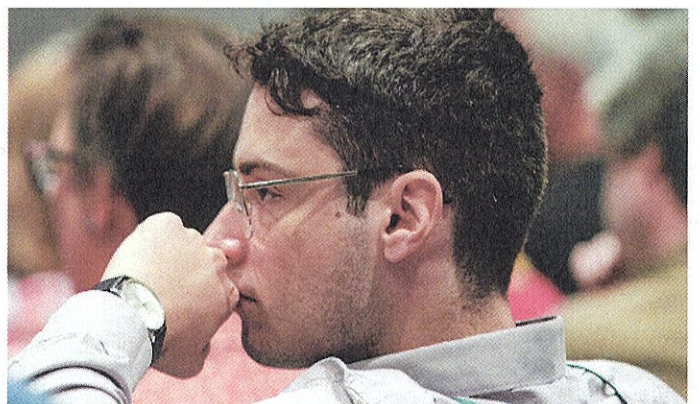
Sessions tackled a wide range of issues and events, from transhumanism & science fiction to the idea of a ‘new elite’, and from the resurgence of dystopian thinking to the concept of historical progress.



We were lucky to be able to involve some of the moment’s most important thinkers and commentators, from Professor Matthew Goodwin to Frank Furedi, the *Telegraph’s* Sherelle Jacobs to the art critic JJ Charlesworth.

As an additional bonus for the event, we were able to benefit from the recording of all the lectures, which were released on our YouTube channel enabling access by a wide audience.

We are delighted that the content and spirit of the event was of its normal high standard.





# Our public benefit

Ideas Matter  
Company number 11213433 | Charity number 1178999





# Assessing our public benefit for the year

Ideas Matter has suggested using the following criteria to judge the effectiveness of its projects

**The quality of debates: are the speakers well-informed, do they present their arguments well and have the topics and presentations engaged the audience?**

This year, through diverse discussions across our initiatives, we exceeded our goals. All three projects showcased remarkable intellectual engagement. Debating Matters focused on producing a wide range of comprehensive topic guides, broadening its impact. Living Freedom grew significantly, engaging more students and tackling key historical thinkers on university campuses. The Academy offered intellectually thrilling lectures and discussions, directly addressing the pressing issues of the current moment.

**The size and mix of audiences: have the debates and other events attracted sizeable audiences that include a reasonable cross-section of society?**

Debating Matters engaged a diverse range of people this year, concluding its 20th anniversary celebrations by bringing together friends, old and new. Living Freedom attracted strong attendance from the vital 16-30 age group, with its largest-ever summer school, and impressive turnout for its salon and forum events. The Academy broadened access during this period by continuing its scholarship programme for younger or financially challenged individuals.

**Geographical spread: can the organisation successfully produce events beyond London, both in the UK regions and across Europe, broadening the experiences that inform the discussions?**

Our digital footprint—spanning YouTube, social media, and project updates—has allowed us to engage audiences from a wide array of locations. This increased reach was mirrored in our in-person activities, with Living Freedom hosting salon events in new cities, creating fresh opportunities for participation outside London.



# Our year in brief

**450**

**School pupils involved**



**Participants from across  
the world engaged**



**A host of online  
resources, videos and  
readings**

**4,000**

**Estimated total  
individuals reached**



# Our year in quotes

## Debating Matters

“I love Debating Matters! What brings me back every year is the enthusiasm and engagement of the students. And it’s not only the debaters who show this enthusiasm, it’s also their classmates who fire targeted questions at the opposition and support their teams. Debating Matters is a clear demonstration of student potential unleashed in a constructive format.”

Khushi Pasquale, Debating Matters Berlin judge

“I have loved this experience and learned a phenomena amount... I loved being asked questions and being challenged – it really was a healthy debate!”

Anonymous Debating Matters Beyond Bars participant

## Living Freedom

“Living Freedom fuelled my intellectual curiosity, igniting profound discussions and forging connections that broadened my perspectives on freedom like never before; an experience every young mind should embrace!”

Ryan Hoey, attendee, Belfast

“I really enjoyed Living Freedom last week, it was really insightful to hear so many different perspective and views from a range of different topics. Whilst there were opinions I disagreed with there were many that changed mine. Having the ability to talk to people without it brewing into arguments was refreshing.”

Abijeet Sansoy, attendee, London

“Living Freedom is a place where free-spirited individuals can come together to have their ideas debated and strengthened, not cancelled.”

Lavinia Johnson, attendee, Oakham

“I never thought I could learn so much in the short span of three days, but Living Freedom proved me wrong. I also met some incredible, like-minded people at the event, making it a great opportunity to network and build connections. Overall, this was a thoroughly amazing experience that I would love to return to next year!”

Emma Zaoli, attendee, first-year student at Durham University

“It was fantastic and an inspiration to see the curiosity and hunger for debate present among the attendees.”

Sonia Gallego, speaker; journalist and senior producer, Al Jazeera English

“It’s easy to be cynical about the state of public debate right now, but Living Freedom shows that there’s a younger generation ready to grapple with big issues, open to intellectual challenge and keen to think things through for themselves.”

JJ Charlesworth, speaker; art critic and editor, *ArtReview*



# Our year in quotes

“My mind was stretched and my thoughts challenged in the best possible way, leaving me with a sharpened perspective of the most pressing issues of today. I was able to make connections between topics as seemingly divergent as freedom of conscience, big tech, literature, classical music, and philosophical notions of ‘progress’. Truly grateful to have explored these questions with an interested group of peers, who coincidentally knew how to have lots of fun along the way.”

Ella Nixon, speaker; art historian

“Living Freedom is a refreshing opportunity to engage with bright young minds, generating an exciting buzz of questions and reflections from a range of perspectives. An annual workout for freedom of thought!”

Dr Jennie Bristow, speaker; senior lecturer, Canterbury Christ Church University

## The Academy

“I really liked The Academy and would definitely be keen to come along next year. Thanks for your hard work and leadership helping organise it.”

Mayur Gupta, Academy attendee

“Thank you so much for organising such a great event! The event helped to expose me to new ideas and ways of thinking about the future I had not considered and I thank everyone for that.”

Hugo Okada, Academy scholarship recipient

“Fabulous event. Food for thought and wonderful to have the opportunity to mingle with people from all sorts of backgrounds who are all united in their interest in the world around them and the events that are shaping the future.”

Johanna Barry, Academy attendee

“If you are concerned about where society and politics is taking us then this event will be right up your street. Not just for the intellectual but the lay person with an open mind the Academy of Ideas allows for all thought and discussion.”

Janice Lukas, Academy attendee

“It was so encouraging to meet so many friendly, intelligent people and discuss prevailing issues with openness and common sense.”

Patricia Kavanagh-Brown, Academy attendee

“All of the lectures fit so well together and made you think, what a way to get excited about the future!”

Felice Basboll, Academy scholarship recipient



# Accounts

Ideas Matter  
Company number 11213433 | Charity number 1178999





# Summary

Summary	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Prior year funds
	£	£	£	£
<b>Income:</b>				
Donations and legacies	52,374	470	52,844	50,926
Charitable activities	58,926	10,000	68,926	70,831
Other	2,152	-	2,152	447
<b>Total</b>	<b>113,452</b>	<b>10,470</b>	<b>123,922</b>	<b>122,204</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>				
Raising funds	12,732	-	12,732	13,050
Charitable activities	71,519	26,642	98,161	81,794
Other	16,782	-	16,782	19,145
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,033</b>	<b>26,642</b>	<b>127,675</b>	<b>113,989</b>
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period	12,419	-16,172	-3,753	8,215
Tax payable	-	-	-	-
Net income/(expenditure) after tax before investment gains/(losses)	12,419	-16,172	-3,753	8,215
Net income/(expenditure)	12,419	-16,172	-3,753	8,215
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>12,419</b>	<b>-16,172</b>	<b>-3,753</b>	<b>8,215</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>				
Total funds brought forward	159,003	27,002	186,005	177,790
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>171,422</b>	<b>10,830</b>	<b>182,252</b>	<b>186,005</b>

## The Ideas Matter policy on reserves

We have a Reserves Policy that has been agreed by the trustees. In short, it states that:

- We will hold reserves to protect itself against major risks identified in the Reserves Policy
- Ideas Matter will aim to accrue reserves of one-year operating expenditure
- Trustees will monitor progress in accruing reserves



# Income

Analysis of income	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Prior year
	£	£	£	£
<b>Donations and legacies:</b>				
Donations and gifts	35,388	470	35,858	34,568
Gift Aid	6,986	-	6,986	6,358
Legacies	-	-	-	-
General grants provided by government/other charities	10,000	-	10,000	10,000
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,374</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>52,844</b>	<b>50,926</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>				
Debating Matters	25,575	-	25,575	17,472
The Academy	25,388	-	25,388	24,252
Living Freedom	7,963	10,000	17,963	29,107
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,926</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>68,926</b>	<b>70,831</b>
<b>Other:</b>				
Other	2,152	-	2,152	447
Total	2,152	-	2,152	447
<b>Total income</b>	<b>113,452</b>	<b>10,470</b>	<b>123,922</b>	<b>122,204</b>



# Expenditure & restricted funds

Expenditure Analysis	This year			Last year		
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Expenditure on raising funds:</b>						
Incurring seeking donations	6,000	-	6,000	2,087	-	2,087
Incurring seeking legacies	-	-	-	-	-	-
Incurring seeking grants	5,000	-	5,000	9,000	-	9,000
Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity	1,732	-	1,732	19,63	-	19,63
<b>Total expenditure on raising funds</b>	<b>12,732</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12,732</b>	<b>13,050</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13,050</b>
<b>Expenditure on charitable activities:</b>						
Debating Matters	22,962	1,000	23,962	3,838	8,580	12,418
The Academy	39,921	470	4,0391	40,391	-	40,391
Living Freedom	8,637	25,172	33,809	1,103	25,222	26,325
Free Speech Champions/other	-	-	-	-	2,660	2,660
<b>Total expenditure on charitable activities</b>	<b>71,520</b>	<b>26,642</b>	<b>98,162</b>	<b>45,332</b>	<b>36,462</b>	<b>81,794</b>
<b>Other</b>						
Support costs	12,000	-	12,000	14,999	-	14,999
Other office costs	4,781	-	4,781	4,146	-	4,146
<b>Total other expenditure</b>	<b>16,781</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,781</b>	<b>19,145</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19,145</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>101,033</b>	<b>26,642</b>	<b>127,675</b>	<b>77,527</b>	<b>36,462</b>	<b>113,989</b>

Restricted funds	Balance at 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 31 March 2024
Donations to Living Freedom	16,172	10,000	26,172	-
Oakdale Trust	750	-	-	750
Thomas Howell Trust	1,500	-	-	1,500
FSC Charitable Activities	8,580	-	-	8,580
Donations to The Academy	-	470	470	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,002</b>	<b>10,470</b>	<b>26,642</b>	<b>10,830</b>

The nature and the purpose of the restricted funds can be summarised as follows:

During the course of the year we received funding for Living Freedom Summer School and The Academy.



# Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of Ideas Matter trustees:

Full name:

PHILIP ROY MULLAN

Signature:

*PR Mullan*

Position:

TRUSTEE

Date:

22 December 2024





# Ideas Matter

**Charity number 1178999**  
**Company number 11213433**