**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thanks to funding received from **The Baring Foundation** and **Creative Scotland**, **We Are Here Scotland** is supporting a new research project called ***Creative Balance***. This project aims to explore mental health and wellbeing among Black People and People of Colour (BPoC) working in Scotland's creative industries.

Creative Balance intends to be the first of an ongoing exploration into the mental health and wellbeing of Black and People of Colour creatives in Scotland. The research project is seeking to better understand the unique challenges these communities face and identify areas for improvement in mental health support.

This research project pilot aims to explore mental health challenges and needs specific to BPoC communities working in Scotland's creative industries. Through interviews, surveys, policy review, and consultation with experts, the study will identify factors impacting BPoC wellbeing and develop recommendations to improve mental health resources, support, and representation. The project intends to take an intersectional approach considering overlapping identities and partner with BPoC-led groups. Potential outcomes include funding to uplift BIPOC creatives, expanded mental health services tailored to this community, mandatory anti-racism training, promotion of BPoC art forms, and increased commitments to diversity and inclusion across creative organisations.

The project team is led by songwriter and creative practitioner Matt Hickman and podcast producer and mental health advocate Halina Rifai.

*"Having worked in the arts for over 10 years now, I have seen many artists struggle with their mental wellbeing with little to no access to adequate support. That situation is often magnified for creatives from marginalised backgrounds. Over the last year, I have been fortunate enough to have supported artists across all art forms as the Engagement & Equalities Lead for Culture Collective and I am looking forward to being able to continue that work with Creative Balance. Putting artists, and their well-being first is essential. This research project will allow us to understand the needs of the BPoC creative community, and help to give a voice to advocate for the meaningful changes that we need to protect and enhance our mental health & wellbeing.”* says Matt Hickman, Project Lead at Creative Balance

*“I'm pleased that We Are Here Scotland is in the position to develop and facilitate a research project like Creative Balance. I hope this is the start of a much needed conversation with regards to looking into ways in which we can identify new avenues of support and guidance for our community in addressing mental health wellbeing needs whilst navigating Scotlands creative industries.*

*Whilst a project like Creative Balance feels way overdue especially in Scotland. I feel that within the current climate we exist in that this work is very much needed. And I would hope that this project can lead to some positive and meaningful changes for our community.”* says Ica Headlam, We Are Here Scotland Founder & Director

**The project team is currently recruiting members for a steering group, which will help guide the research and design process. They are seeking Black People and People of Colour creatives and mental healthcare professionals to participate.**

**Steering group members will attend three online meetings in January and February 2023. This is a paid opportunity and there will be access to mental health support resources for any Steering Group member affected by the topics discussed.**

**More details on the steering group recruitment and application process can be found at** [**http://www.creativebalance.scot**](http://www.creativebalance.scot) **- Steering Group members will be selected in December and the deadline for application is Monday, 27th November 11.59pm.**

Those interested in learning more about Creative Balance or getting involved can reach out to the team at hello@creativebalance.scot. The project team will provide ongoing updates as the research gets underway in 2023/2024.

**Note to editors:**

[We Are Here Scotland](https://www.weareherescotland.com/) is a Community Interest Company with an aim to amplify the voices BPoC (Black People and People of Colour) in particular Artists and Creatives who reside in Scotland with opportunities to share their work, connect with each other, and have their voices heard within the wider art community. The presence of BPoC artists and creatives working within Scotland's creative industries are significantly underrepresented. This must change. From visual arts, music, dance, poetry, photography, and much more, our stories need to be heard. The conversation has to start somewhere and we hope this space will provide you with a sense of community, inspiration and motivation, whilst also reaffirming the importance of BPoC representation within the arts in Scotland.