EVALUATION OF THE CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

Phase One

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

creative
communities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

About this report

This report sets out findings from an evaluation of Phase One of the Creative Communities Programme. It explores:

- who took part
- impact on participants
- impact on the sector
- what worked well and lessons learned.

Context

The Creative Communities Programme was launched in 2020. It aims to support and empower communities to develop cultural activities. It seeks to extend high quality opportunities for people to take part in culture, including in areas with more limited opportunities and lower levels of cultural engagement. It also supports cultural projects that produce positive outcomes for young people at risk of re-offending.

Creative Communities is funded jointly by the Culture and Justice Directorates of the Scottish Government and managed by Inspiring Scotland. It forms a key part of the Culture Strategy for Scotland.

Phase One of the programme ran from November 2020 to July/ August 2021. Within the programme there is a focus on:

Empowerment and place	Empowering communities and recognise each community's own local cultures and sense of place and identity
Wellbeing	Supporting mental wellbeing and reducing loneliness
Diversion	Diversion from anti social behaviour and opportunities for young people at risk of reoffending

The Creative Communities Programme is based on the belief that it is communities themselves who are best placed to articulate their needs and how to meet them. The Programme is therefore deliberately flexible, supporting a range of different initiatives and outcomes.

Method

The evaluation involved:

- a desktop review of programme management information, interim reports and final reports from projects
- 16 interviews with projects which received funding through the Creative Communities Programme
- 4 interviews with projects which received development support and seed funding through the Programme
- 2 interviews with national stakeholders involved in funding and delivering the programme
- 2 interviews with Inspiring Scotland staff managing and supporting the programme.

Projects were independently selected for interview, to ensure a mix of project types, locations, partners and engagement with the programme.

CHAPTER 2
PROJECTS

Introduction

This chapter explores the profile of the funded projects and organisations receiving development support through Phase One of the Creative Communities Fund.

The application process

Organisations were invited to apply to Phase One of the Creative Communities Programme during July and August 2020. The application process was deliberately designed to be simple and accessible to encourage community and grassroots organisations to apply for funding. A total of 185 applications were received.

The Creative Communities Programme originally aimed to support a small number of projects, with a budget of £300,000. As it became clear that the pandemic had created a clear need for this type of project, and there was a very high level of interest in the programme, this funding was increase first to £600,000 and then to £900,000.

Inspiring Scotland undertook an initial sift of applications, and then a panel reviewed a batch of around 50 applications for selection. The fund was launched in November 2020. National stakeholders involved in the application review process were very pleased with the process, feeling it was very well organised and a good use of time.

Funded projects

In Phase One (2020/21), the Creative Communities programme funded 27 projects. These projects received financial support of up to £40,000 to deliver a project in their communities. A list of projects and funding levels is included as Appendix One.

In April 2021 additional emergency Covid-19 funding was offered to these 27 organisations.

Two of the funded projects during Phase One were rolled into Phase Two, to allow them more time to deliver their projects in light of the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Location of funded projects

Inspiring Scotland thought carefully about the mix of funded projects. The funded projects which progressed during Phase 2 (25 projects) covered 15 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. A few projects operated in more than one local authority area.

1 PROJECT
- Dundee
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Eilean Siar
- Falkirk
- Fife
- Inverclyde
- Perth and Kinross
- West Dunbartonshire

2 PROJECTS
- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- Renfrewshire
- Highland

3 PROJECTS
- Edinburgh
- Argyll and Bute

6 PROJECTS
- Glasgow

There was a good focus on the most deprived areas of Scotland. Glasgow, where there were six projects, is the local authority area in Scotland with the highest share of deprivation. Almost a quarter (24%) of the most deprived datazones across Scotland are within Glasgow. Overall:

- Across the 11 most deprived local authorities[1], there were 12 funded projects
- Across the 10 middle authorities, there were 12 funded projects
- Across the 11 least deprived local authorities, there were 4 funded projects[2].

There was also a good spread between urban and rural areas.

- There were 18 projects in local authorities which are predominantly urban
- There were 10 projects were in local authorities which are mainly rural.

Across Scotland, 20 local authorities are predominantly urban and 12 are predominantly small town or rural. National stakeholders indicated that they were happy with the spread of funded projects across Scotland.

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[1] Based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020
[2] A few projects operated in more than one authority area.

Intended outcomes of funded projects

The Creative Communities funded organisations were asked to develop their own intended outcomes, in a bespoke and flexible way. Broadly, these outcomes fit with the categories of:

- **Cultural and creative engagement** - All 25 projects that progressed in Phase One aimed to support access to creative and cultural opportunities, including participation in cultural activities and attendance at cultural events or places of culture.

- **Tackling isolation and building community connections** - 20 of the projects aimed to kindle or build community connections, relationships and sense of community - often through intergenerational connections or empowering communities to have a voice through culture.

- **Health and wellbeing** - 18 of the projects aimed to have an impact on wellbeing, most commonly on mental health.

- **Justice** - 2 of the projects aimed to reduce anti-social behaviour through diversion activity, for young people or adults. In addition, one project worked with young offenders in Polmont Young Offenders Institute to enhance creative and cultural opportunities and positively impact on health and wellbeing.

Projects also had a range of other intended outcomes, including:

- skills development for participants - creativity, literacy, personal, emotional, social, confidence, communication
- skills development for artists and creatives - exploring new ways of working
- building connections between cultural organisations
- engagement with climate justice.

Development support

Ten organisations were given development support as well as £2,000 of seed funding to increase their capacity to deliver for their communities. The organisations provided with support included:

- Five community based creative organisations
- Three local community organisation
- One arts and justice organisation
- One large, national housing association in partnership with a small creative company.

The selected organisations had indicated an interest in development support at the time of application. The development support and seed funding was intended to assist with activities such as research and development, community engagement and organisational development, to build the capacity of the organisation. One of the projects led by a local community organisation was rolled forward into Phase Two.

In April 2021 additional emergency Covid-19 funding was paid to these Phase One development organisations.

A flavour of projects

Example: Storytelling in the community	The Our Island project run by The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust was about people telling their stories through the community. The project was led by an artist, who is also a member of the community, and the community shaped how the project developed. The project involved crafting workshops, such as lino printing and a story blanket, and a writing group. In June 2021 there was a small gathering where project artworks were displayed, people read their stories and they screened the film. Next, the project is keen to create a heritage space to display the products.
Example: Creative activities with families	Rock Community Church in West Dunbartonshire ran an Aonaichte/ Together project for families. It engaged with young people, adults and older people. As part of its work it provided mental health packs known as 'The Fluffy Sock Collective'. It also delivered pre-recorded family cooking classes, stage design and film workshops, and hair and makeup workshops. The classes were posted on You Tube, and families received a parcel with all the supplies they needed. The church was also able to redevelop its rundown garden into a usable creative outdoor space, that could be used for project delivery.

Example: Creative activity with people seeking asylum	Maryhill Integration Network's Museum of Things Project involved 21 online arts sessions, one in person session, a creative evaluation session and a week long exhibition. The majority of participants had recently arrived in Glasgow and were in the asylum process and had a wide range of backgrounds. Most participants received individual support outwith the sessions. The project chose to use visual art as there was an appetite for people to share and tell their story as a beautiful thing, not just a sad or scary story.
Example: Creative expression through multi-arts	Right2Dance's Connected project operated in Renfrewshire. It involved families coming together across generations and telling their story in a multi-arts platform using arts, drama and film. 24 people completed the programme.
Example: Visual arts workshops with older people	An Lanntair's Creative Connections project in Lewis and Harris worked with isolated people aged 60 and over through online creative workshops delivered by freelance artist educators in both English and Gaelic. The workshops were sociable and focused on building workshops through visual arts activities including painting, drawing, sewing and textile design. The aim was to reduce loneliness and improve mental health and wellbeing.
Watch: **Inspiring Scotland's film on Creative Communities**	

PARTICIPANTS AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

This chapter explores the number of participants, profile of participants and types of activity involved across the 25 active funded projects during Phase One of Creative Communities.

Of the 27 funded projects, 25 were able to run activities by summer 2021. One project, which focused on creating intergenerational links between young people at school and older people in care homes, found that it was not possible to deliver a project of this nature at the time of the pandemic. This project was pushed back into a later phase of the Creative Communities Fund.

Participation numbers

Overall, through Phase One of Creative Communities more than **4,100** participants took part in creative or cultural activities. This includes:

<div style="display:flex">

1,539
regular or repeat participants

2,399
participants in one-off events

96
volunteers

85
family members

</div>

Projects ranged in size, from 6 regular participants through to more than 250 regular participants.

Participant profile

Projects were able to gather information on the profile of participants from many, but not all, of the participants they engaged with.
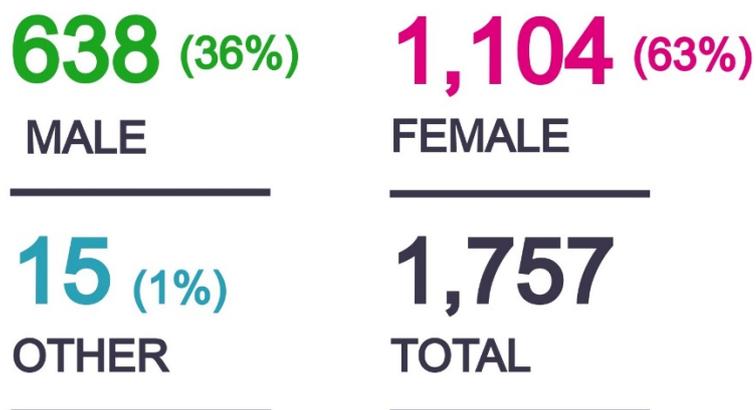
Age
More than half of all participants, for whom age was known, were children and young people.

1,248 (51%)
0 TO 18

274 (11%)
19 TO 25

660 (27%)
26 TO 60

277 (11%)
60 PLUS

2,459
TOTAL
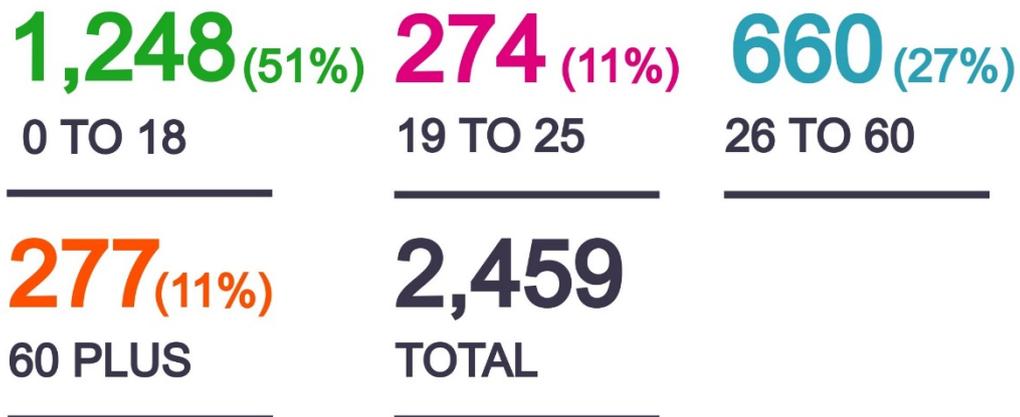
Gender
Almost two thirds of participants were female and just over a third were male. Just under one per cent identified as another gender identity.

638 (36%)
MALE

1,104 (63%)
FEMALE

15 (1%)
OTHER

1,757
TOTAL

Almost all of the projects that had worked with participants had worked with both males and females, with the exception of one project in a young offenders institution which involved young men.

Ethnic origin

Overall, where ethnic origin was known, 92% of participants were white and 8% were minority ethnic. For comparison, at the time of the 2011 Census, 96% of Scotland's population was white.

33 (2%)
ASIAN

72 (4%)
BLACK

21 (1%)
MIXED

1,635 (92%)
WHITE

11 (1%)
OTHER

1,772
TOTAL

Wider profile

In addition, projects gathered wider data which highlights that at least:

1,037
participants had mental health needs

124
participants were disabled

62
participants had experience of the justice system

50
participants had addiction issues
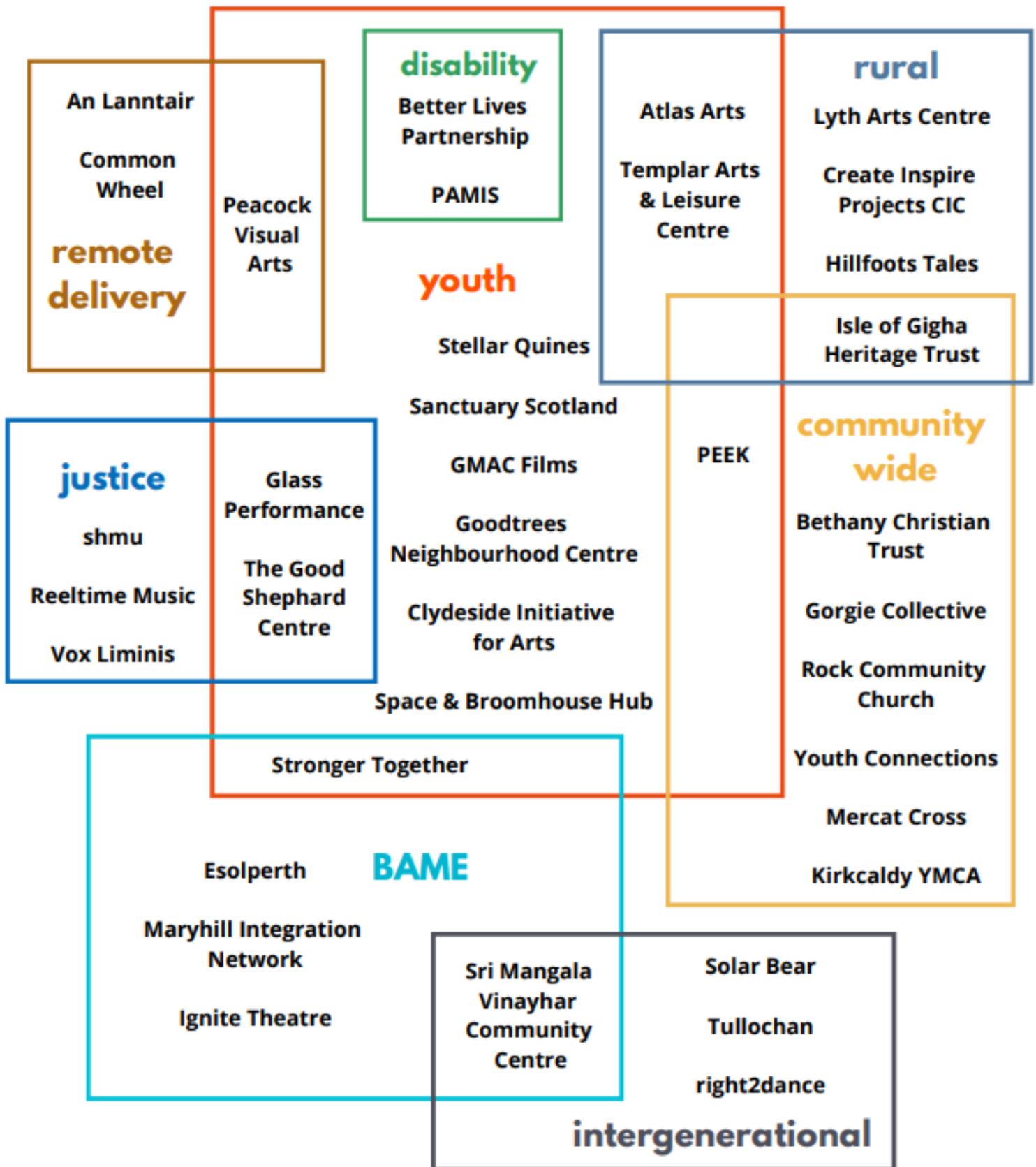
100
participants had other conditions

Projects worked with a wide range of participants, with different experiences and needs. The analysis below, by Inspiring Scotland, demonstrates the reach of the projects (both funded and projects provided with development support).

remote delivery

An Lanntair

Common Wheel

Peacock Visual Arts

disability

Better Lives Partnership

PAMIS

youth

Stellar Quines

Sanctuary Scotland

GMAC Films

Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre

Clydeside Initiative for Arts

Space & Broomhouse Hub

Stronger Together

justice

shmu

Reeltime Music

Vox Liminis

Glass Performance

The Good Shephard Centre

rural

Atlas Arts

Templar Arts & Leisure Centre

Lyth Arts Centre

Create Inspire Projects CIC

Hillfoots Tales

Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

PEEK

community wide

Bethany Christian Trust

Gorgie Collective

Rock Community Church

Youth Connections

Mercat Cross

Kirkcaldy YMCA

BAME

Esolperth

Maryhill Integration Network

Ignite Theatre

intergenerational

Sri Mangala Vinayhar Community Centre

Solar Bear

Tullochan

right2dance

A flavour of participant profiles

Example: Ethnic minority young people	The Now You See Me project run by Stronger Together Enterprise offered artist led workshops for ethnic minority children and young people. It offered drama lessons, dancing lessons and singing lessons.
Example: Patients in mental health wards	The Common Wheel MultiStory project involved delivering writing resource packs to patients in mental health wards at a hospital. The aim was to prompt creative writing output. This approach was used during the pandemic, as there was no access to hospital settings.
Example: Young people in secure care	The Good Shepherd Centre supports young people in a secure care setting. The Creativity Hub project involved music tuition for young people, with music tutors from Soundlab delivering online sessions in groups and individually.
Example: People furthest removed from the labour market	Tullochan Trust works with people who are furthest removed from the workplace. The Furniture Fix aimed to develop male role models and a sense of community spirit and pride. Kit boxes were delivered directly to young people each week, linked to a practical online demonstration and the chance for people to show what they had made.
Example: Autistic young people	The Better Lives Partnership's project Bridge2Creative worked with autistic young people who attended a Saturday Art Club. The project used a Creative Exploration Box, which was posted out to each participant personally. Participants were encouraged to interact with the content using a provocation, or prompt, and some top tips, and could respond in any way they wished.
Example: Young parents	The Stepping Stones project run by Stellar Quines Theatre worked with young parents and pregnant women to build their confidence and skills. It ran in areas of multiple deprivation in Edinburgh. It focused on exposing participants to culture and being led by participants to co-produce the project. Working with artists (including a writer, costume maker and film maker), support workers and creative learning staff, the participants created and performed their own films.

Activities

Activity type

Projects focused on a range of different activities, including:

22 Projects
artist led classes, workshops or tutorials

10 Projects
festivals or community events

5 Projects
visual arts exhibitions

2 Projects
theatre, music or dance performance or broadcasting

Overall, the funded activity involved more than **4,600** hours of artist led classes workshops or tutorials.

Example: Visual arts	Templar Arts and Leisure Centre Trust ran a My World in a Box programme which involved visual arts activity. Participants were aged between 5 and 25 years. TALC developed an easily adaptable art pack which allowed participants to create a small scale visual artefact in the form of a box. The art depicted the environment and situation they were in due to Covid-19 restrictions.
Example: Multi-arts	Me, My Community, My Story run by PAMIS in Perth and Kinross involved children and young people with complex physical or sensory needs. Participants explored their local community through stories, music, drama art and film. The group took part in creative theatre activities face to face, and also an online programme or art, storytelling and craft. Young people chose the media they wanted to work in. Some made books, others did film or poetry. The group worked with an artist through online sessions to help pull the work together. The group has also explored the local community through attending events and performances in the local area, with family members.

Example: Theatre, music or dance performance	The Juke Box project run by Glass Performance broadcast 15 hours of new unique radio content through a series of 90 minute Juke Box radio shows. The content for the shows was designed and curated by a total of 45 young people and broadcast to the prison population of approximately 300 people. The project worked remotely, meaning that the project was open to all group in the prison - rather than each section of the prison population. Each show was broadcast 15 times each, a total of 225 hours of radio broadcast.
Example: Exhibitions	An Artful Place project run by Bethany Christian Trust included a photography exhibition presented at Sharing Not Hoarding, over two months in community gardens. The Trust appointed a street artist with experience of working with young people, along with a photographer and a textile artists. Sessions were delivered to young people and older people, and artworks were displayed in the community.
Example: Community events	The Yardworks Govan project run by Clydeside Initiative for Arts explored what street art means for people and how it might improve communities. It included talks from well known artists, community engagement work and youth work. It involved workshops with four youth organisations in Govan, artist talks and a community event to celebrate the work that had been done. In spring/ summer 2021 more than 280 people took part or attended events.
Example: Other activity	The Gorgie: Our Place Project run by Gorgie Collective involved public art exhibitions, pop up art, a sculpture trail map, an artist led walk, tree planting and a public art film.

Adapting activities

During Phase One, the restrictions in place due to Covid-19 were loosened slightly in autumn 2020 and then there were periods of extended lockdown from December 2020 to April 2021. This meant the projects all had to adapt their approaches, often on an ongoing basis, to ensure that participants could be supported in line with the restrictions.

All projects managed to deliver during Phase One, with the exception of two projects which could not feasibly be delivered during 2020/21 - for example because schools were closed and care homes had no external visitors.

Example: Online	PEEK's East End Arts Festival project had to be adapted due to the pandemic. It involved running online Zoom sessions for children, young people and families in the East End of Glasgow, supported by creative packs. There were limited in person outdoor activities, but most activity was online. There was a small final festival, but numbers were limited as restrictions at the time were tight.
Example: Online	SHMU's Create Express Transform project re-developed its film courses for online delivery. It worked with tutors to develop strong and engaging online courses and hired freelance music tutors to enhance the project.
Example: Blended	The Youth Connections Power to Change project involved regular online workshops led by artists, which 57 people of a wide range of ages attended. A visual arts artist, drama worker and music technology organisation delivered these activities. The project also included a physical exhibition, with 48 visitors who were seated and distanced, as well as artwork being included on the Power to Change website.

IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This chapter explores the impact on participants in Phase One of the Creative Communities Programme. It focuses on:

- Increased participation in culture
- Improved mental wellbeing
- Reduced loneliness
- Diversion from criminal behaviour
- Skills and aspirations.

Increased participation in culture

2,241 participants increased their participation in cultural acts and **1,443** increased their attendance at cultural events through Creative Communities projects.

All projects indicated that they were providing an opportunity for people to engage in creative arts that they would not have had otherwise, allowing people to try something new and feel joy and pride in taking part.

> Absolutely loved the chance to dance together!"
> Participant

> There was laughter and fun and the women were doing something for themselves. There was a sense of self and ownership."
> Project lead

A few project leads said that taking part in cultural activity helped people to be more creative at home, or outwith the project, and to see themselves as artists.

> Being part of the activities has made me realise my potential."
> Participant

Many projects reported the importance of the activity being free, and that this was a significant factor in facilitating engagement.

> It has allowed people to access professional arts workshops and performances they otherwise wouldn't have had."
> Project lead

Wellbeing

787 participants improved their mental wellbeing through Creative Communities projects. Project leads highlighted that activities helped people:

- to feel happy
- to have something to look forward to
- to feel part of something
- to connect and interact with others.

Across projects it was clear that taking part in shared creative activity made people feel better, at a time when, because of the pandemic, they often felt vulnerable, anxious and alone.

> I haven't felt this excited in ages. Riding the creative wave."
> Participant

> Made me happy. Made me feel better about my mental health."
> Participant

> I feel sunnier than I did before I came here."
> Participant

For many, the arts activity was the only social activity they were engaged in, and so it formed an important marker in their week.

> It makes me feel valued and safe and more confident and less lonely."
> Participant

Example: Maryhill Integration Network, Museum of Things	At Maryhill Integration Network, some participants felt that coming to the project helped to positively change their mood and outlook on life. Some felt that the creative work helped them to develop a sense of self and identity.
Example: PEEK, East End Arts Festival	At first, one participant at the face to face visual arts session was shy and anxious around the other young people. However as the weeks went on she started forming friendships, including with people who will be attending the same secondary school. This means that she will be starting secondary school with friends and she is feeling more relaxed about the whole process.
Example: Youth Connections, Power to Change	One project brought older people together, and participants particularly valued the opportunity they had to reminisce together over their school days and younger years. Most (60%) said that the project was helping them deal with stress, anxiety or depression. "I think we spent half our time just laughing." Participant

Wellbeing - confidence

Participants commented that taking part in the activity helped them feel more confident trying new things, talking to others and with their creative skills.

> **"** It is helping my confidence when speaking to people and the meeting people is helping my mental health."
> Participant

> **"** My confidence has soared since joining."
> Participant

> **"** The project helped me to develop my confidence and I've started preparing my portfolio to apply to study at art school."
> Participant

Project leads and staff delivering the activity also commented that they had noticed improvements in confidence from the participants.

Example: SHMU, Create Express Transform	One participant was passionate about attending but had issues with mental health and confidence. He received support prior to joining, and then took part in his first music session with his camera and mic off, using the chat function to communicate. As the course progressed, he would un-mic himself when he had something to contribute. He then started turning his camera on to participate in activities in which he played his musical instrument, engaging in a way he felt in control and empowered. By the end of the course, he was talking about engaging face-to-face in sessions in the community.
Example: Stellar Quines, Stepping Up Stepping Out	One young parent felt anxious and had a lack of confidence that created significant issues for her sense of self alongside the demands of being a young mum. Through discussions with the group, she said that she had previously enjoyed being creative and that this project had re-ignited that spark. In regaining her confidence, she was able to offer support to another woman in the group to help her with her literacy. She has gone on to join a writing group, with support from the project. *"I have felt more confident, more free to do something fun and generally much more positive. This has been life-changing." Participant*

Wellbeing - Sense of purpose

Participants commented on how creative activity helped them feel more motivated, and gave them a sense of purpose.

> ❝ My motivation has got better as I am getting up early for the zoom sessions and feel better talking on them. It also helps me with my routine."
> Participant

> ❝ The project made us feel responsible, for all our efforts, and it gave me motivation."
> Participant

For example, in one project which was based in a secure intensive support centre for vulnerable children staff reported marked improvements in the young people's enthusiasm, engagement and abilities. In another project, working with vulnerable adults, staff reported that participants' outlooks changed, feeling a new sense of self and the motivation to move forward positively.

Example: Tullochan, Furniture Fix	A mother referred her son to the project as he was not attending school and suffered anxiety when in a classroom environment. He engaged well and demonstrated improved wellbeing and motivation. She feels that since engaging in the project, her son is more relaxed and has now found a hobby that he genuinely loves. "… this is the first thing in his life he has ever got up for and got out the door willingly for and has genuinely taken interest in." Parent

Wellbeing - resilience

A few project leads and participants commented that taking part in the activity had a positive impact on wider aspects of their lives - including attitude, resilience and relationships. In a few projects, activities provided a conduit to explore sensitive emotions and memories in a challenging and cathartic way.

> " My attitude has most improved… it is thanks to courses such as these it is helping push through comfort zones and change myself for the better."
> Participant

> " I feel no fear and I feel like I'm releasing everything from the past and moving forward."
> Participant

> " …it's helped me mentally by giving me a good space to express myself, as I was completely introverted before."
> Participant

Example: Kirkcaldy YMCA, Finely Tuned	One young parent had a history of mental health issues and anxiety. The project worker supported her to attend, walking with her to the sessions. She developed strong, positive relationships with other participants. She became confident enough to seek medical advice and support to address wider challenges in her life, such as seeking alternative housing and beginning to use public transport. The participant now plays a key role in introducing new women to the group and encouraging members to keep in touch with one another.
Example: The Good Shephard Centre, Creativity Hub	One young person didn't speak for one month after arriving at the project. She agreed to go into the music room and play the guitar, with the online tutor. She started to communicate very quietly after this. Two months later she was leading the pupil council, gathering feedback from peers and feeding back to the project. The project lead feels strongly that it was the music project that facilitated this change.

Reduced loneliness and connections

1,362 participants reported reduced loneliness through Creative Communities projects. Phase One projects helped to reduce loneliness, particularly during the pandemic.

> " Great boost to mood, after rather bleak time with no external contact."
> Participant

> " I was connected with others in a way that otherwise wouldn't have been possible."
> Participant

Participants said that they appreciated being part of a group in their local community and doing something together. Both younger and older participants enjoyed developing friendships based around shared interests. In particular, the connection was important for participants who were shielding during the lockdown periods or in isolated rural areas.

Sometimes projects brought together people who would not normally have had the chance to take part in community activity. Other projects helped families to do activities together. The projects also helped participants feel more positive about their locality, and to feel a sense of pride in their community. For some, it also gave them a sense of agency in their community and their future.

Example: An Lanntair, Creative Connections Western Isles	An Lanntair's Creative Connections project delivered some workshops in Gaelic with the aim of strengthening the connections between older residents and the place where they live. The workshops were themed with many encouraging participants to get involved in creative activities that allowed them to explore their memories and stories of where they live and to create art inspired by their surroundings. "This workshop is important to me as it is in Gaelic, my first language. My first ever art class in my own language!" Participant
Example: Gorgie Collective, Our Place	**94%** of participants felt that the project improved Gorgie as a place to live. "It makes me feel positive, looked after, with a sense that someone cares about the community in Gorgie." Participant

Example: PAMIS, Me, My Community, My Story	The PAMIS project supported children with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families and brought the community together in a new way. Firstly, the project provided a new way for the participants to interact and engage in group activity. There are few opportunities available locally and the young people are usually taken to the nearest city (an hour away) for activities. Secondly, it helped, the young people became more visible in their local community. The group is now well known, and better understood by people in the local community, and because of this, a local theatre reached out and offered them a drama workshop.

Empowerment

Project leads reported that the activities helped individuals and communities to feel a sense of pride, achievement and empowerment.

> I have felt that I have accomplished something."
> Participant

> I feel empowered. It was a big deal to be included and for my work to be appreciated."
> Participant

Example: TALC	The TALC My World in a Box project gave young people the opportunity to engage in high quality art and creative activities, express themselves and reflect on their situation meaningfully and feel that their voice was being heard. Their work was prominently displayed in the centre. Participants and tutors felt a sense of achievement.

Example: ATLAS Arts	The ATLAS School of Plural Futures project was a new and co-collaborative way of working with people that has not been tried before. This created a safe space for meaningful conversations and involved young people as co-creators and the artist and staff as learners. The project equipped participants to have conversations and think about and take ownership of the challenges facing them in their lives on Skye and Lochalsh, including the climate, their relationship to place and local issues.

Diversion from criminal behaviour

At least **57** people were diverted from criminal behaviour through Creative Communities projects.

Three projects worked with participants that were at risk of or who had been involved in criminal behaviour. In these projects, the participants reported improved wellbeing, outlook or diversion from criminal behaviour.

Example: Glass Performance, Juke Box	The Juke Box project worked with young men in HMP Polmont, aged 16 to 21 to develop a radio show. During lockdown, all activity stopped in prison and the young men were in their rooms for 23 hours per day. Through the email a prisoner system, the young people who signed up to the project got a letter each week and were able to submit ideas and content to the show. Literacy was an issue for some, so they included a phone call contact each week as well. Over time, the project developed so that young people are working collaboratively, producing their own segments and presenting the podcast. It also gave the chance for young people to be presented in a positive light for prison staff. The young people enjoyed participating and said that it helped with their mental health – making them feel happy, part of something, proud of themselves. *"Something as simple as getting a letter each week and requesting a song and hearing their name, I think we had underestimated the impact of that."*
Example: Goodtrees Creative Hub	The Goodtrees Creative Hub project in Edinburgh worked with young people from local schools who were finding difficulty engaging and attending in line with their activity agreements. The project indicated that it had diverted at least 15 young people from criminal behaviour, as well as reducing loneliness for 30 and improving mental wellbeing for 20. The project addresses issues of mental wellbeing and mindfulness through participation, discusses how these issues are affecting young people across the community and explores strategies to help and support.

Skills and aspirations

Across the projects, participants reported a range of improved skills. Broadly these were around:

- the arts and creative activity
- digital engagement
- educational skills
- personal skills.

Participants developed a range of creative arts skills, including: music making, music production, dance, drama, digital art making, art therapy, performance creativity and film.

> **"** I feel the course helped me regain my passion for music and I actually bought a guitar following on from completing the course."
> Participant

> **"** On a practical side, I gained new skills and experiences, we learned a lot of simple and beautiful techniques."
> Participant

Example: The Good Shepherd Centre Creative Hub	One young person uncovered a talent for rapping and emceeing. As part of his project, the young person wrote his own lyrics, developing his vocabulary and song writing skills. Since leaving the project, the young person has been able to continue engaging in music tuition and mentoring, to continue developing his craft. *"I've seen him develop his rap skills from quite humble beginnings to someone who can eloquently perform an engaging live set."*

Some participants also gained a lot from engaging online through platforms such as Zoom. These skills were highly transferable to their wider lives - for example helping older people to stay connected with their families.

For some participants, the project activity provided an opportunity to develop wider skills, such as literacy or language skills.

> **"** I have been working on the alphabet and letters. I'm proud for this. The writing and reading has been so hard! Being involved is something I'm also proud of. I've never done anything like this."
> Participant

A few projects offered the opportunity to gain qualifications as well. For example, participants in the Better Lives project had the opportunity to work towards the

ASDAN Expressive Arts Short Courses and those on the Tullochan project could work towards REHIS qualifications.

Participants and project leads also reported a range of wider skills, such as interpersonal skills, communication skills, planning, organising, research and co-ordination.

> " I'm enjoying communicating with other people again and learning new things."
> Participant

In a small number of cases, young people went on to learning, training or employment as a result of taking part. For example, the Tullochan project supported 30 young people to progress into employment, education or training. Through the Maryhill Integration Network, participants became volunteer facilitators.

Example: Clydeside Initiative for Arts, Yardworks	Yardworks worked with one participant who shifted his aspirations from being a painter and decorator to studying graphic design, as a result of involvement in the project.
Example: Tullochan, Furniture Fix	One participant developed her confidence and artistic talents through the Furniture Fix project. Her confidence grew and she started to showcase her artistic talents. With her improved health, wellbeing and increased capacity developed through engagement with our project, she felt ready to try and find employment. Supported by Tullochan staff, she attended an open day for recruitment at a local hotel, where she was successful in gaining a post.
Example: Glass Performance, JukeBox	One young person had a history of finding it difficult to engage with other young people. He had never signed up to any other activities in his time in Polmont – but he signed up at the start during the pilot phase and participated every week. He has now signed up for another project, too. Taking part in the project had a positive effect on how people in the prison have viewed him.

IMPACT ON SECTOR

Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of Phase One of Creative Communities on the creative and community sector. It explores:

- employment opportunities created
- impact on funded organisations
- Impact on organisations receiving development support.

Employment opportunities

Through the Creative Communities programme:

129
artists were employed for 10,237 hours

23
community support workers were employed for 5,757 hours

10
trainees or interns were employed for 1,198 hours

This is an average of:

79
hours for each artist

250
hours for each community support worker

120
hours for each trainee or intern

Some highlighted that upskilling of staff was an unexpected positive outcome of their work. For example, artists learned about co-production and working with communities, while community support workers learned about using creative methods to achieve positive outcomes for communities. In some cases, community workers and artists gained more confidence that this type of creative project could work, and could make a difference.

> " This project is not only good for the participants, it also helped me gain more experience when it comes to teaching and communicating my ideas and thoughts."
> Artist

A few projects highlighted that they were very committed to paying artists at a fair wage for their work.

Example: Skills development in artists	The CAIR (Community Artists in Residence) project at Lyth Arts Centre provided each artist a budget of £500 for training. This could be used in any way they wanted. This offer was valued by artists, who spent a long time working out how to use their budget. One artist donated his budget to a younger artist, to support their training.
Example: Skills development in artists	The Peacock Visual Arts Project hired a young person to work on the Youth Led Creative Activity Box project. This young person has developed their knowledge, skills and awareness of art and culture and has now gone on to run her own spoken word groups and workshops independently.
Example: Skills development in artists	Atlas Arts found that being involved in Creative Communities had a "profound impact" on the ATLAS team, staff and artists. The team experienced a new way of delivering, based on building relationships and trust, that they will take forward into the future. "I believe it has changed the way we will work and deliver programmes in the future… I feel like something every special has begun to happen here." Project lead

Funded organisations

Views on support

This evaluation involved discussions with 16 independently selected funded organisations. All of the funded organisations involved in this evaluation were very positive about the support offered by Inspiring Scotland. Organisations felt that there were lots of opportunities to access support, and that overall working with Inspiring Scotland had been very positive. Organisations said that working with Inspiring Scotland was fantastic, flexible, collaborative and responsive.

> **"** Inspiring Scotland has been so supportive and interested, very flexible and adaptable."
> Project lead

> **"** Inspiring Scotland are very intuitive to the way we have adapted and it feels a lot more collaborative than with other funders I've worked with."
> Project lead

Many mentioned that their project had to change along the way, and that Inspiring Scotland was very supportive and understanding of small changes, quick to approve changes, and happy for projects to adapt in response to need. In a few cases, this helped to enable a co-design or co-production approach to project design and delivery, with artists and participants.

> **"** All the way through they've been really flexible. That attitude of 'we can only try it' – it's not a punitive approach, it's supportive and it helps."
> Project lead

> **"** The funding was so flexible that it allowed us to do that…it made us feel like we were allowed to do that."
> Project lead

Many also felt that the Inspiring Scotland team was genuinely interested in their project and enjoyed talking through ideas and being involved in discussions about their work. At times Inspiring Scotland had visited projects, and this was valued by the funded organisations.

> **"** I hadn't experienced that before – it was the best funding relationship. Inspiring Scotland were really interested and engaged in the projects."
> Project lead

The funded organisations found the networking and portfolio sessions useful to meet like minded people, learn from one another and get a sense of other projects. A few mentioned that sharing approaches was reassuring and helped them feel more confident in their work.

Some particularly enjoyed the training on evaluation, which they found very useful at an early stage in their project. It helped projects to "get excited" about evaluation and built this in from the start of their work.

> "Because we started to have conversations early on, I felt confident in putting the evaluation in at an early stage. And I was surprised at how much young people had to say at those early stages."
> Project lead

A few also mentioned that the messages around evaluation were positive, in that there was a blend of qualitative and quantitative information. Some highlighted that Inspiring Scotland was genuinely interested in impact, and the difference their work makes to communities.

> "Funders can be so different, Inspiring Scotland is really about the stories and the difference and not all about the numbers."
> Project lead

A few funded organisations mentioned that they did not use the Slack platform, as they did not have the energy to engage with yet another online platform at a time when so much of their work was remote and digital, during the pandemic.

Funded organisations mentioned that the reporting structure was clear, not too onerous and supported by very clear guidance. National stakeholders were also happy with the reporting process, including high quality reports from Inspiring Scotland - balancing qualitative and quantitative data - and monthly updates and catch ups with Inspiring Scotland. The Creative Communities video was also seen as a very good way to demonstrate impact around wellbeing.

> "Overall I would say this was a five star process."
> National stakeholder

Wider national stakeholders also commented that the projects achieved success partly through the funding, but also through the wider support from Inspiring Scotland, and the passion and resilience of funded organisations.

> "It felt like a really supportive network they created… It just shows you, the programme isn't just about funding. Personally, I think the more important part is about the support and the peer to peer support."
> National stakeholder

> "From what I know of Inspiring Scotland, their expertise and support is really to a high standard. It made a huge impact."
> National stakeholder

Capacity to engage with support

All of the funded organisations involved in this evaluation felt that their organisation had the capacity to take up the offers of support from Inspiring Scotland. A few mentioned that the package of funding and support made it easier to prioritise engaging with the support programme. However, some noted that they were very busy, and generally working beyond their capacity. A few indicated that in the future they would allow more time within their bid for administrative support and extra help around delivery.

Most felt that the offer of support was there, but they didn't feel any pressure if they were not able to engage.

> " I like that there were all of these things on offer if you wanted to, but you didn't have to go and it didn't feel like you were at a disadvantage if you didn't go."
> Project lead

Some indicated that they couldn't engage with all the support, but felt they had the capacity to meet the funding requirements. One larger organisation indicated that it felt the support may be more useful for smaller organisations and felt a little bit of pressure to engage with the events and activities. Another local creative organisation felt a bit under pressure to attend events, when they didn't have capacity. And another community organisation felt that there was "almost too much" support, and found it hard to attend training sessions and portfolio events.

Impact of support

Some projects received intensive support through the Creative Communities team, and wider Inspiring Scotland team - including health checks, bespoke training and support. This was accessed through Inspiring Scotland's network of specialist volunteers who lend expert assistance to help build capacity and overcome challenges. The programme provides this support free or for a reduced fee.

Some organisations indicated that they had taken part in health checks. This was useful in helping organisations to identify what to work on and how to become stronger. The health check helped to give some organisations the confidence to focus in on areas where they could do better, with the aim of strengthening their organisation. Organisations mentioned that they valued the honesty within this approach, exploring what is working and what the challenges are, in an open and honest way.

Example: Lyth Arts Centre	Lyth Arts Centre received a charity health check as well as training on governance and managing a Board. This helped the organisation to identify areas for improvement in governance structures, which it is now addressing. More widely, the Creative Communities programme helped to shape the future focus of the organisation. Lyth Arts Centre has changed its approach, to embed co-design, a local focus and more participatory programmes for local people. This is a shift from a focus on engaging touring artists, in the past. In the future, their work will be much more shaped by the people in the local community. *"It was really helpful and will inform our future direction."* *"It genuinely has been transformation for us as an organisation. It's changed what we do as an organisation And there's been space for learning, exploration and risk taking."*
Example: Maryhill Integration Network	MIN received additional support from Inspiring Scotland to support restructuring within the organisation. It took part in the organisational health check and identified areas for improvement. It found this support useful in focusing in on key areas for development.

More widely, funded organisations highlighted that the Creative Communities programme had an impact on their wider work. For many, the projects they ran through Phase One were continued into Phase Two or Three of the programme. Lessons learned during Phase One helped projects to strengthen and expand their work, and organisations were pleased to be able to build on what they had learned.

Many were also inspired by their work through Creative Communities, to go on and do similar types of work in the future. Phase One projects helped with this through:

- providing the evidence base that the model and approach works
- helping projects to understand the resources needed
- providing the chance to formalise and grow early ideas
- providing learning about how to match supply and demand for project activities
- increasing the confidence of community groups and organisations to run this type of creative activity
- allowing projects to try out new ways of working with partners
- inspiring wider similar work.

> "What we were able to do with Juke Box inspired other work."
> Project lead

> I wanted the project to become the catalyst for something else and become embedded, with support from the local authority."
> Project lead

Example: Continued activity	As a result of the Phase One work, PEEK will continue to deliver a family visual arts programme. This is something they had never run before Creative Communities funding. The projects was not funded for Phase Three, but will continue.
Example: Catalyst for growth	For Yardworks, the Creative Communities programme has been a real catalyst for scaling up their work. It gave them the chance to formalise what they were offering, make it more visible and demonstrate its value. As a result, the organisation has started to move its work into different areas of the city and connect with schools around environmental issues.

Development support

Organisations which received development support had access to a range of support including:

- portfolio and networking events
- one to one mentoring
- connections through Slack, an online platform
- access to the Resource email
- access to the Specialist Volunteer Network.

The organisations that we spoke with as part of this evaluation who had received development support were excited and energised by the support. Project monitoring forms also highlight that all organisations were highly positive about the support received.

Overall, development organisations enjoyed and valued the networking element of the support. Attending events together and using Slack to continue conversations allowed organisations to share practice, exchange ideas and advice and learn from one another. All felt that the peer networking was very valuable, with some describing it as feeling like a family or community.

> It really feels like you are part of a community, there is so much support."
> Project lead

> Being a part of the Creative Communities portfolio has had a hugely positive impact on our organisation…"
> Project lead

Through being part of the Creative Communities portfolio, organisations made new contacts. Organisations felt that these connections - with both funded and development organisations - enhanced their skills and knowledge.

> It has expanded my network of contacts to now include many brilliant and creative people and organisations."
> Project lead

> Having access to Creative Communities training and networking resources has been extremely helpful and has helped to build confidence in the team."
> Project lead

One to one mentoring sessions were also highly valued. In particular, these sessions helped staff who worked alone or in small organisations by providing a way of talking through ideas at a strategic level. Organisations really enjoyed this personal, one to one approach from a funder and felt that there was a strong focus on listening and bespoke support.

> " I work alone, so it felt really good to have someone to help me get out of my head a little."
> Project lead

Using the support and funding, organisations explored project ideas, piloted projects, researched community needs and developed strong project plans for future activity. This included undertaking research, detailed project planning, clarifying actions required to create a deliverable project, and working through how to measure the impact of their planned project.

> " It is so rare to get access to development support and funding to develop an idea into a deliverable project."
> Project lead

> " This was invaluable to us, as the development of a project and organisation is often looked over in terms of funding applications."
> Project lead

Development support helped organisations to gain a wide range of skills around project planning, project management, funding, partnership working, evaluation and monitoring and practical project delivery - for example digital delivery.

> " This has given us the skills and confidence to be a more effective organisation and more responsive to community needs…"
> Project lead

Example: Ignite Theatre	With seed funding through Creative Communities, Ignite Theatre was able to commission a marketing company to work on an audience development and marketing plan for the organisation. This focused on how to engage with schools, and new ways of engaging people beyond performances. This will put the theatre in a much stronger position to market itself for future projects and funding, attract more participants and engage more effectively with communities. Ignite Theatre also undertook an organisational health check, implemented governance training as a result and engaged with Inspiring Scotland's specialist volunteer network to access support with recruiting a treasurer.

Example: Reeltime Music	Reeltime Music secured development support and seed funding for a concept that engages young people involved in the justice system and young people with care experience in youth work and rock and roll activity. Discussions with Inspiring Scotland helped to explore a range of ideas, refine them and work them up. *"The discussions with Inspiring Scotland helped me to think it through."* Reeltime Music plans to work with Who Cares? Scotland to run a pilot project in autumn 2021.

With support, some development organisations were able to think about their governance. A few organisations were newly formed or very small and used the support and associated funding to formalise organisational structures. A few organisations made use of the specialist volunteer network to access training and development for board members and staff. Development organisations were also able to access health check support, which they found useful.

> " It really has helped us focus on the governance of the organisation… We feel we are at the cusp of a new chapter for our organisation and this funding has helped us channelling and prioritising."
> Project lead

Example: Firewalker Films	Firewalker Films is a small limited creative company, which is exploring becoming a community interest company. It applied for the support jointly with a housing association. The support has helped her to think about her business development, introduce a new offer of training, form useful partnership and apply for wider funding.
Example: Hillfoots Tales	Hillfoots Tales used the seed funding and support to enable the organisation to formalise into a community interest company.
Example: Create Inspire	Create Inspire was a newly established community interest company and the Creative Communities work was one of its first projects. A virtual community choir for people of all ages was set up, to bring the community together. "Creative Communities has made so much difference to us. It was not just about the money - it was about the support, belief and encouragement."

Some development funded organisations also indicated that the support helped them to keep their energy and focus over a very difficult period. Access to the one to one support and networking provided professional and emotional support.

> "At a time when I was feeling overwhelmed, professionally and emotionally, the support I have received was truly energising."
> Project lead

> "They were really interested and passionate about the project. Someone who believed in my ideas when it felt like everything was falling apart."
> Project lead

Some organisations highlighted that the resource email was very helpful and relevant, and encouraged them to find out about other initiatives and opportunities.

Overall, development organisations felt that the nature of support was 'opt in'. This was valued as while organisations were passionate and wanted to make the most of the support available, many were also very time constrained. Most felt that the timescales were flexible, and that Inspiring Scotland was very understanding of the constraints they operated within. However, a few felt that because of capacity they couldn't always attend training sessions, and that this may be something to consider for the future for smaller organisations. One organisation suggested a twinning or pairing between similar organisations may be a nice addition to the programme, to bring similar organisations together. However, overall organisations did not suggest many changes to the support programme at all and felt that it was a well thought through programme of support.

National stakeholders felt that the development support aspect had worked well, and this this could be further developed and strengthened for future similar funds. This would include being clearer and more focused about exactly what was available through the development support programme, what types of organisation this may benefit, and what level of seed funding this would be accompanied with.

Ongoing impact

Taking part in Phase One of the Creative Communities programme has helped organisations to access ongoing support and funding. For Phase Three of the programme, organisations were able to apply for different levels of support:

- funding
- development support
- both funding and development support
- portfolio member.

All but two of the funded organisations has continued within the portfolio. Six of the development organisations received funding in Phase 3, one was rolled into Phase 3 automatically to provide more time for their work, and the other three organisations continued as either development organisations without funding or portfolio partners.

CHAPTER 6
WAYS OF WORKING

About this chapter

This chapter explores project planning and delivery, exploring:
- success factors
- learning from online delivery
- wider lessons learned.

Success factors

Each project in the Creative Communities portfolio was different and experienced its own successes. However, some common themes are explored below.

Partnerships

Projects found that a key success factor was strong partnerships with other organisations. Firstly, it was important to have strong relationships and a shared ethos and vision with those involved in project planning and delivery.

> **"**We are all on the same page, with the same goals."
> Project lead

Example: Partnership working	The partnership between Good Shepherd and Soundlab worked well because partners had similar good attitudes, good communication and shared skills sets, and were able to capture and articulate outcomes well. They worked together to develop a format for reporting at the outset. Both partners really believed in the benefits of music and what it can achieve. *"We're like-minded people looking to achieve similar outcomes."*

While it was important to have a shared ethos, it was valuable to have partners with different skill sets and experience. Some pointed to the value of having different strengths - such as project management, creative skills and community engagement - and clearly defined roles, within an overall shared ethos and approach.

> **"**I felt very comfortable knowing that we were all approaching things in the same way."
> Project lead

Partnerships and strong working relationships helped projects to deliver in settings which were challenging and difficult to access. For example, one project was able to get resources into a hospital setting largely due to existing relationships with staff members who knew and trusted both the organisation and the individual involved.

> ❝ People sign up to things because they know and trust the person."
> Project lead

Another project delivering in a young offenders institute found that partners who had strong knowledge of working within these institutional settings were hugely valuable, and made the project better equipped to deal with the issues emerging.

Community connections

Many projects talked about the importance of being strongly linked to and connected to the community. Some organisations had worked in communities for a long time and felt part of the local area and culture. Others recruited or worked jointly with local artists or local community groups, with excellent established relationships. This helped to connect with participants and encourage people to get involved.

> ❝ We didn't have to sell what we were doing, it was hyper local, and when people know each other it feels much more accessible."
> Project lead

Other organisations highlighted how they connected with communities through recruiting artists who were locally based, had lived experience of an issue or felt passionate about issues relating to communities of interest.

Example: Connecting with Communities	At Maryhill Integration Network, the Museum of Things project wanted to involve refugee artists or people with empathy and passion for the project. The project was led by artists with lived experience, and who spoke a few different languages between them so could communicate with some of the participants in their own language.

Projects emphasised that communities were diverse, and involved people of a wide range of ages and experiences. Trusted organisations who connected with communities in an inclusive and accessible way helped to encourage people to take part, build trust, allay fears and convey passion about the project.

Example: Local connections	The project lead at Yardworks had lived in the local area her whole life, and knew the area, organisations and people. This was really important to the project. The artists working on the project also shared similar backgrounds, could relate to the young people and knew some of the challenges they may be facing. This helped the project to build relationships, and adapt the work as these relationships grew.

With this sense of community, projects found that peers supported one another. Some commented on the value of peer mentoring, the support offered within the group of participants, and found that participants were very encouraging, kind and considerate to one another.

Community connections were also extremely valuable for recruiting participants. Projects found that word of mouth and referrals from partners helped to encourage people to take part.

Person led

Projects found that taking a person led, tailored approach to delivery worked well. For example, some projects offered taster sessions so that participants could choose what they wanted to focus on, or co-designed the approach jointly with participants.

Example: A tailored approach	The Better Lives Partnership's Bridge2Creative project found that their project worked well as it was tailored to demand. Different elements, such as music or performance, were added based on participant interests. These were then linked to learning opportunities and qualifications like game development and sound recording. This approach worked well, but it did present some logistical challenges in ensuring the artists were able to support all of the areas participants wanted to focus on.
Example: Taster sessions	The Good Shepherd Centre's Creativity Hub project offered taster sessions in everything that Soundlab could offer. Young people then whittled this down to the areas they wanted to pursue. It was kept flexible so that the project could adapt if young people's interests changed.

Experienced artists

Some projects recruited freelance artists to deliver creative activity. Projects were positive about the quality of artists they recruited. Where artists had experience of working with the community, for example disadvantaged people, young people, or people from a particular geographical area, this helped projects build good relationships.

A few projects found that working online meant that they could involve artists from much further afield. For example, one project engaged artists from across the UK. Another recruited one artist from the USA for online work, bringing key expertise. Conversely, other projects found that involving very local artists helped to strengthen their project.

Learning from online delivery

The value of online delivery

Many of the projects used online delivery, in response to the restrictions in place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some projects indicated that through shifting online, they engaged with some participants that they would not otherwise have reached. This included people lower in confidence, people not engaged in other settings, disabled people with barriers to travel and access, people with social anxiety, people with no access to transport and older people. Through taking part in online activity, these participants built confidence and then began attending in person activities when they resumed.

A few projects also found that online support intensified the nature of work with participants, which helped to strengthen relationships and bonds. And a few mentioned that people may take more responsibility for their creative activity online, through having to set up and clean up which they may not do normally at a session. They found this helped to build a sense of ownership.

Example: **The value of online delivery**	PEEK found that in shifting activities online, they were able to engage with some young people who they would not have engaged with otherwise. This included some young people who were not confident enough to attend in person, some who had disengaged from school and some refugees and asylum seekers new to Scotland. Through online engagement, participants build up their networks and confidence and some now attend face to face activities. PEEK will continue to include online delivery as part of its work, to overcome issues around lack of confidence and to enable those who are self-isolating to participate.

Online delivery - what worked

Projects found that online delivery was most effective with:

- small group sizes
- break out rooms
- one to one sessions for those not comfortable engaging online
- hybrid models involving some face to face contact where possible
- equipment and connectivity support
- time for offline/ autonomous activity
- lots of breaks
- resource packs to use during online activity
- pre-recorded sessions to allow flexible engagement.

> **"** Around the halfway point, everybody felt comfortable and happy, they wanted to have a laugh and share their work, they were losing those inhibitions. After that it just got funnier and funnier."
> Project lead

Example: Supporting online delivery	Youth Connections organised for access to laptops, wi-fi and other equipment to ensure that people could participate. The organisation applied for top up funding from the Big Lottery to fund some equipment costs that were not factored into the original budget. The organisation was committed to supporting people to engage, so when additional resources were needed, for example for resource packs to support online activities, the Chief Executive was able to find the money to make this happen.

Online delivery - challenges

Although online engagement was very useful, it did not suit everyone. Challenges included:

- some people, across a range of ages, just did not like engaging online
- people experienced digital fatigue
- some, particularly in rural areas, experienced digital poverty and issues with connectivity
- childcare to enable participants to focus while online
- challenges adapting some creative disciplines online.

Example: Replacing online delivery	The Caithness Artists in Residence project run by Lyth Arts Centre used a range of methods due to digital poverty and digital access being a real problem. Instead, the project used What's App, phone conversations and paper and post. Another project used letters as part of their engagement, and found that it allowed young people to be more open and honest about their feelings.

Wider lessons learned

Across all projects, the pandemic was the main challenge. It affected what projects could do, how they could engage with participants, where they could meet, what spaces they could use, access to spaces such as schools, care homes and hospitals, how far people could travel and availability of artists. Some found the biggest challenge was that the pandemic affected their ability to plan, with the restrictions changing so quickly over the course of the year.

A few projects found that when they were able to meet face to face, there was still some hesitancy about uptake (across a wide range of age groups and participants). And a few found they had to do a lot of work to be clear about project plans with participants, to manage expectations and create a sense of clarity and certainty.

Other, challenges and lessons learned were very specific to each project, such as:

- One project found it was a challenge to ensure all partners shared the same ethos, passion and understanding for the arts and how creative projects work.
- One project found that their partner (a large housing association) was not as involved as expected, as roles hadn't been fully defined initially and capacity changed. Instead, partnerships grew organically and naturally with community and youth organisations, who were very useful partners.
- One project found that it needed to build artists skills around co-design and mental health, which was new for some.
- One project found it challenging to gain permission for public art to be displayed.
- One project found it took up a lot of time to distribute activity and creative packs - next time they would organise a material pick up point.
- One project would make more use of taster sessions next time, to allow participants more time to think about what they wanted to do.

More broadly, the programme found that although projects with justice outcomes were included within the funded projects, most application were for community projects using arts and culture rather than justice specific outcomes. This highlighted learning that future work focusing on creativity and justice may need to be more specific about the purpose and focus of creative work in relation to justice outcomes, perhaps using examples of successful justice projects to showcase what works.

CONCLUSIONS

Projects

The funded projects were varied in terms of geography, disadvantage, target group and creative activity. Funded projects largely aimed to support access to creative and cultural opportunities, tackle isolation, build connections and support health and wellbeing. A few projects focused on justice outcomes, but not so many applications were received focusing on this theme.

The application system was simple and assessment well organised and effective. Funders adapted to the level of demand in applications, increasing the support available.

Overall, the funded activity involved more than **4,600** hours of artist led classes, workshops or tutorials. In addition, there were events, performances, broadcasting, festivals and exhibitions.

Participants

More than **4,100** people took part in Phase One of Creative Communities. Of these more than **1,500** were regular or repeat participants.

50%
of participants were 18 or under

66%
of participants were female

8%
of participants were minority ethnic

more than
1,000
had mental health needs

more than
110
had experience of justice or addiction

Impact on participants

2,241

participants increased their participation in cultural acts

1,443

participants increased their attendance at cultural events

1,362

participants reduced their loneliness

787

participants improved their mental wellbeing

57

participants diverted from criminal behaviour

The funded projects provided the opportunity for people to engage in creative arts that they would not have otherwise, having fun and feeling joy and pride. Participants felt happier, part of something and had something to look forward to. Some developed their confidence, sense of purpose and resilience.

The projects brought people together, building connections and reducing loneliness - which was particularly important during the pandemic. Participants connected with others who they may not normally engage with and built a sense of pride in their community and sense of agency and empowerment about their future.

Participants also developed a wide range of improved skills around creativity, digital engagement and skills for life, learning and work. A few young people went on to learning, training, volunteering or employment as a result of taking part.

Impact on the sector

Through Phase One of Creative Communities, employment opportunities were created for **129** artists, **23** community support workers and **10** trainees or interns. This work was a total of at least **17,100** hours, at a value of at least **£163,000**. This figure is based on payment at the Living Wage and freelance artists would have been paid at higher levels, at union standards. Through the programme, artists and community support workers also developed their skills and gained confidence in leading community based creative projects.

The support provided by Inspiring Scotland to the funded and development organisations was very highly valued. Organisations enjoyed working with Inspiring Scotland, finding them flexible, responsive and collaborative. Staff from small organisations or who worked alone particularly enjoyed being able to talk through project ideas at a strategic level, with someone else.

Organisations found that they connected with peers through the portfolio, enabling sharing of ideas and learning in a supportive environment. Support helped organisations to strengthen their project planning and delivery skills, including around demonstrating the evidence base for the approach, understanding resource requirements, setting out clear actions, matching supply and demand, connecting with partners and measuring impact.

Organisations valued access to Inspiring Scotland's network of specialist volunteers, particularly newly formed or very small organisations who accessed support to formalise and develop their organisational structures. Organisations who had taken part in health checks found these useful, providing a focus for strengthening the organisation.

Organisations enjoyed that the opportunities were opt in, and most did not feel pressure to engage. However, some indicated that their capacity was stretched, meaning it could be hard to make use of all the support available.

Project delivery

Success factors
Key factors enabling successful project delivery included:
- Strong partnerships with a shared ethos and vision
- Close links and connections with the community
- Taking a person led, tailored and co-designed approach
- Engaging experienced artists with creative and community development skills.

Lessons learned
Through Phase One, projects learned a lot about online delivery. It worked best with small groups (or one to one sessions); time both online and offline (and face to face wherever possible); resources to support creative activity; and lots of breaks. It enabled projects to connect with some people they would not otherwise have engaged. However, it did also present challenges around comfort engaging online, digital fatigue, digital poverty, connectivity and childcare.

More broadly, projects found that the biggest challenge they experience was that the pandemic affected their ability to plan, with the restrictions changing so quickly over the course of the year.