10 YEARS OF LEARNING FROM CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES

An Introduction to the Learning from Creative People and Places

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Ten keywords for Creative People and Places

COMMUNITIES   Creative People and Places is fundamentally about finding ways for communities to take the lead in shaping or co-creating local cultural provision. This means having community voice present throughout, in transparent and well-supported ways.

TIME   Taking a long-term approach changes how people working together in a place can think about the challenges and opportunities facing that place and its communities. Taking the time to sit with the issues, and to get to know people and build trust is essential.

TRUST   The cultural sector needs to earn trust with communities. Every action builds or destroys trust. Be open, honest and talk to people directly. Also, you should trust yourselves, your processes, and the communities and artists you work with.

LISTENING   A core skill for this practice is listening to communities, their dreams, desires and stories – and also to what they don't say or those who may not immediately come forward. Listening to the evidence of how something works is also crucial.

PARTNERSHIP   Changing the governance paradigm from the single objective-based charitable model to a consortium with shared purpose encourages a shared collaborative effort among partners with a stake in the success of local communities and the place.

ASSET-BASED Even communities lacking in visible cultural infrastructure are rarely 'cold spots'. They are rich in creative practice and have spaces and festivals that can be utilised. Take an asset-based approach rather than focusing on deficits.

FLEXIBILITY When working alongside communities who may have challenging circumstances, and who may be reluctant to engage with some things, there is an even greater need than normal to be flexible in how you work and what you aim to do with people.

RISK From inception to its place in the heart of Arts Council England Let's Create strategy, Creative People and Places has been ambitious and risk-taking. Risk-taking has also been integral to approaches at local level, with failure relished as a learning opportunity.

LEADERSHIP Although it has developed less hierarchical, distributed models of leadership, Creative People and Places builds on leadership that connect people across their differences, collaborates and encourages collaboration and multiplies the voices of others.

LEARNING Creative People and Places is notable as a large-scale example of a funder investing in a long-term action-research programme, with as much interest in the learning as the outputs and outcomes. Each place has been an ongoing learning programme.

About Creative People and Places

Creative People and Places is an intervention by Arts Council England to inspire new ways of thinking about cultural engagement in local authority areas where the official statistics showed historically low levels of engagement. The first phase ran between 2012, when the first awards were made, and 2016, followed by two further phases up to 2021. In December 2021, 39 Creative People and Places consortia were selected as part of Arts Council England's national portfolio up to 2025. Arts Council England have invested over £60 million into the three phases of Creative People and Places considered by this guide. The total investment by 2025 will be £108 million.

Arts Council England's aims for Creative People and Places are:

- More people from places of least engagement experience and are inspired by the arts

- Communities take the lead in shaping local arts provision

- The aspiration for excellence is central – this covers both excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities

- To learn from past experiences and create an environment where the arts and cultural sector can experiment with new approaches to engaging communities

- To learn more about how to establish sustainable arts and cultural opportunities and make this learning freely available

- To encourage partnerships across the subsidised, amateur and commercial sectors

- To demonstrate the power of the arts to enrich the lives of individuals and make positive changes in communities

- That activity is radically different from what has happened before in each place

Creative People and Places was developed as an action research programme, with ongoing evaluation commissioned by Arts Council England, and with an associated peer learning programme. This has created more than 80 pieces of research, including a number of thematic studies of topics such as leadership, social capital, cultural ecologies, community engagement, diversity and excellence.

Between 2012 and 2019, when the most recent audience profiles were completed, there were over 7.4 million engagements with people as part of the Creative People and Places programme.

About this report

This report summarises central learning points from research commissioned around the Creative People and Places programme since 2012 including many research papers, conference reports, provocations and evaluations of the programme and individual projects. My methodology has confined itself mainly to analysis of over 80 documents published by either Arts Council England, the Peer Learning and Communications Programme or individual projects, complemented by discussions with Arts Council and Creative People and Places team members.

My brief was to create a short independent report which would be useful to any group of people interested in working in a Creative People and Places-like way, and that reflected what the many people who have considered Creative People and Places have found. To reflect the depth and diversity of the research and learning from Creative People and Places, and to reflect the passion, commitment and bravery of those involved in Creative People and Places over the last ten years, in something highly 'usable', has been even more daunting a task than I imagined. As such there are some caveats I feel I need to put on record.

What follows inevitably reflects my own relationships to Creative People and Places. The shift from 'supply-side' to 'demand-side' in funder thinking that some see in the work was part of many debates I had in my own decade in the arts funding system, building on earlier experience delivering 'audience development' projects in Teesside in the 1990s. Since 2013 I have been Critical Friend to the team and consortium in South East Northumberland, Museums Northumberland bait. I have written and co-written research papers for the peer learning programme, on excellence, leadership and learning. I remain clear that Creative People and Places has been the most influential intervention by Arts Council England in the last two decades, delivered by a remarkable set of people across all the places.

This report cannot capture everything that was learnt, nor reflect the careful nuance of how the network has worked without becoming unmanageable. I have had to synthesise and simplify at times in pursuit of usability. Any

summary risks making the process appear too linear, too easy even. Creative People and Places has been anything but. There is also a risk of seeming to suggest that Creative People and Places invented a way of working that actually has long roots in the history of arts practice. It is not entirely new, but 'standing on the shoulders of giants.' And finally, it can make it sound as if all Creative People and Places are the same. They are not, as all respond to their local circumstances.

There is much else to say and debate about this programme which falls outside the 'learning summary' nature of my brief. As Creative People and Places becomes more mainstreamed into Arts Council England funding programmes, there is a risk it could lose its disruptive element, or see its techniques co-opted and watered down by those more attached to the status quo. Time will tell as to what extent the learning I identify here takes root over the next decade.

Some overview points

The three evaluation questions considered consistently by all parties during the evolution of Creative People and Places have been:

- Are more people from places of least engagement regularly experiencing and inspired by arts and culture?

- To what extent is excellence of art and culture and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?

- What approaches are successful and what are we learning?

In relation to the first question, one of the main learning points since the inception of the programme has been that the language of 'cold spots' and 'lack of engagement' present in the original justifications for the investment has been turned around. There is a greater acknowledgement in the new 'Priority Places' policy of Arts Council England of historical patterns of investment and resulting paucity of infrastructure than in previous iterations of similar policies, which arguably focussed on the symptoms rather than the causes.

Detailed audience data has been gathered throughout the lifetime of Creative People and Places. The evidence suggests that approaches taken by Creative People and Places lead to different patterns than are typically seen. Across all Creative People and Places projects in 2019, just over half of participants were from one of the lower engaged Audience Spectrum segments (53%), while 30% were from medium engaged segments, and only 17% were from the higher engaged segment[1]. This suggests the programme is reaching the lower engaged segments more effectively than other programmes, while serving a lower percentage of the higher engaged segments.

[1] Most recent available profile, in Creative People and Places Profiling and Mapping – 2019 National Report by The Audience Agency, published 2020.

Sixty-three per cent of Creative People and Places participants belong to one of four low or medium engagement segments:

- Kaleidoscope Creativity who are urban and culturally diverse, engaging locally, outside and mainstream

- Facebook Families: harder pressed suburban/semi-urban households for whom the arts play a small role

- Trips & Treats: suburban households, often with children, where culture is often part of a day out or treat

- Up Our Street: reasonably comfortable households, audiences for popular arts and entertainment, museums and heritage sites

There is evidence in the literature that this can, at least in part, be attributed to the way in which Creative People and Places has involved local people in shaping the offer. Some people previously not active in the arts can be seen to engage to new levels if the work is relevant and useful to them, their lives and where they live.

Excellence of both art and culture and the process of engaging communities has been a central concern throughout the programme. Arts Council England's early emphasis on 'arts expertise' within consortia and in development of activity, led to some tension around community ownership but also to deep reflection on the meaning and importance of quality. An extremely wide range of approaches to programming and evaluation emerged from this. Place evaluations tend to see excellence as contextual, drawing on the expertise of artists, arts professionals and community members. Approaches have evolved as part of people's relationship to creative activity, in their context, more than any pre-existing corpus of knowledge of a canon or artistic hierarchy. Go and sees, curator and artist talks and collaborative project delivery have deepened the sense of what excellence means in specific situations, at specific times.

This report expands on several areas of particular importance to the third question, identifying especially the importance of

- Enabling community voice and demand as the starting point for programme activity, so communities can shape local provision

- Long-term approaches to building trust within communities, drawing on the skills of listening and collaboration to build place-based partnership mindsets across sectors, which can then enable successful consortium governance and delivery

- Taking an asset-based approach to place-based cultural ecologies, rather than a deficit one, and embracing the broadest possible definitions of culture and creativity, and being people-focused rather than infrastructure-focused

- Investing in learning and an action learning mindset to all activity, enabling risk and reflection

- Maintaining flexibility and risk-taking in programme and partnership development

The literature shows that one of the fundamental challenges faced by Arts Council England as funder, and by the teams and consortia who deliver the projects is to deliver locally-shaped and nuanced programme within a single national programme. Putting 33 local programmes into a national programme has also been a rich experience, allowing for peer learning and putting each project, with its own hyperlocal factors, into a national context. How all have grappled with this tension shows that because not all places are the same, a diversity of approach to sharing power and increasing engagement is needed.

Taking a long-term approach to resourcing programmes and teams makes a positive difference – although tapering has at times caused difficulties. It is important to invest in the time to understand what is happening in a place, and to have a long-term frame for decisions. This helps the team sit in the spaces between the aims of the programme and the place with less pressure for short-term results.

Creative People and Places has shown that partnership mindsets and approaches can positively influence local ecosystems to change behaviours and patterns of engagement. Responses to Covid-19 lockdowns have also shown how arts, culture and creativity matter hugely in times of crisis and in people's lives, with many programmes exceeding engagement targets but in new ways.

Dig deeper

- You can find much more detail in the national evaluation reports by Icarus (2016-19) and Ecorys (2013-16).

- The Audience Agency have produced annual reports on audience profiling and mapping up to year 6.

- My own report, Faster But Slower, Slower But Faster gives much context that is still relevant.

- Arts Council England have published useful guidelines for local evaluation of Creative People and Places projects.

Ensuring community voice in decision making

Central to Creative People and Places has been a much greater emphasis on community voice – for Arts Council England as the instigator of the programme, and for those involved in the consortia leading the individual projects. This has increasingly meant, in practical terms, local people being involved in strategic decisions about what is done and where, either as additions to consortia or in dedicated processes for involving communities. Sometimes this has been through groups nominating representatives. The guidance for Creative People and Places projects has become clearer on the distinction between grassroots and community organisations, wanting the voice of local people and communities to be heard directly, as well as bringing in those whose work is with and for communities or localities.

This has been challenging at times, especially for those more used to speaking or acting 'on behalf of' communities. At its best Creative People and Places is distinctly not an 'on behalf of' way of working. This has required explicitly recognising imbalances of power or representation and finding practical ways to reduce or eliminate them. The diversity of individual places needs to be respected and seen as an asset. Made by Many found that when they expanded into Wellingborough, which had a substantial Black population, new considerations about community voice became apparent. This led to a new forum, and also influenced the choice of office base – within a local Black community organisation. Race equality training has been useful for some places in addressing gaps in community voices and in establishing new relationships with marginalised groups. Building trust is difficult but fundamental.

Learning highlights

- Listening to communities generates more engagement than trying to persuade them and leads to a more relevant programme

- Community 'do-ers' and 'connectors' are influential in many places, especially those that are closely connected to each other, in a hyperlocal place or a faith or interest group. The example of others in groups which may be less well-connected beforehand can also be influential in encouraging people to join in. Building a network of connectors takes time but reaps rewards.

- It is important to not to create new, exclusive 'in-groups'. To quote one place, 'relationships matter, class matters, inequality matters.' It is important to think about who might distrust engagement approaches, or face barriers to joining in conversations.

- Approaches rooted in co-creation draw in a wider range of people and can equalise power differentials. They need skilled facilitation and development.

- Many places have found that a focus on stories and storytelling (eg of a particular place, its heritage, its industry, or of experiences of Covid-19) empowers people and gives them confidence to express themselves as part of a community voice.

- Trusting the process matters, even if it feels counter to instincts or training at times. Some Creative People and Places staff described how communities would bring very different perspectives to artist selections than curators with more sense of, for instance, critical reception and perceived status of artists, but the work chosen was equally as relevant, and successful.

How to: core approaches

- Plan and build a clear but flexible framework for collaboration, especially with community champions that agrees shared aims and objectives sets parameters and agrees the frequency and regularity of involvement.

- Listening to your communities can take a wide range of forms:
  - community panels – either ongoing or for specific commissions
  - cultural ambassadors or connectors (CBD case study)
  - Facebook groups, either public or closed
  - inviting individuals from local communities or groups to contribute to team or consortium discussions

- Working with non-arts groups and starting with questions or issues relevant to communities rather than with 'the art' or 'culture' leads to different ways of working, rooted in what matters to people. They can work out how art or culture might help.

- Offering the right support at the right times to co-build creation and share power is important. Develop relationships of mutual trust by doing some of these things:
  - think about the language you use and make sure it doesn't exclude, minoritize or 'other'– avoid terms like 'hard to reach'
  - consider the locations you use for meetings, how rooms are set up and how you present ideas
  - be transparent and honest about what you can and can't do in that context, including about project budgets
  - think about the differentials in confidence and power different people might feel and how you can equalise those
  - ensure clear feedback and communication about the development of projects

- Build capacity for working together in Creative People and Places, artists and communities – panels and groups that reflect and deliver a commission or a series of workshops together form connections and habits that provide informal routes for community voice to be heard.

- Shared decision-making requires clarity about the fit of the project, the team working on it and on creating appropriate spaces for discussion and decision. Decision-making can take a range of forms from voting to consensus-based decisions.

Dig deeper

- Find out more about a range of ways to share decision-making in Shared Decision-Making Tips, tools and case studies from Creative People and Places projects by Louise White for MB Associates.

- Find more on cultural connectors, ambassadors and grass roots development in these case studies by Ecorys, from the first phases of Creative People and Places: Engaging Communities in the Arts: five case studies.

- Read about power when building in community voices in Chrissie Tiller's Power Up Report.

- The programme has built upon a history of socially engaged and community arts practice. Francois Matarasso's *A Restless Art* is a great starting point for finding out more.

- Several case studies in 64M Artists' report Cultural Democracy In Practice come from Creative People and Places. 64M Artists have also drawn connections to ideas of 'everyday creativity'.

Overcoming barriers to engagement

Although Creative People and Places has increasingly moved away from deficit-thinking, there remain common barriers that people describe as hampering their involvement in creative and arts activities. Some feel that what is on offer is not relevant to them or their community. Some people lack confidence to take part alone, or don't have friends or family to accompany them. The language of arts marketing can be off-putting, and the way provision has traditionally been organised creates difficulties in taking part at the specific times or places. (This has become even more apparent after the Covid-19 'pivot to digital' showed how disabled people or those unable to travel could be included rather than excluded.) The cost of taking part, and the time it takes in busy lives can also be barriers. Finally, and fundamentally, many also feel a lack of recognition by others that what they already do is also creative and cultural. (This point is made in particular in relation to some ethnic and faith communities who often have high levels of cultural activity which, due to its nature, has rarely been recognised as such by funders.) Experiences during the pandemic have shown how factors such as isolation or restrictions on gathering together physically can be addressed by Creative People and Places, using the same principles of inclusion.

Creative People and Places projects have addressed these issues in many ways, building on the central principles of being locally driven, locally distinct and nationally recognised.

Learning highlights

- Building in relevance and making it personal matters to people. Creative People and Places research has shown that 83% of audiences had not regularly engaged with the arts before. If Creative People and Places shows anything it shows that the historic patterns are not inevitable – if work is relevant to people, and they feel like it includes them in some way.

- Large-scale outdoor free events can increase engagement numbers when integrated into other strategies that build longer-term connections and reach into some communities.

- Community connections add diverse routes in, allowing for exploration of exclusion based on protected characteristics and other patterns such as class. Involving community members through the development of a project builds in points for reality checks.

- Digital activity can overcome some barriers for people who may be isolated, less able to travel or attend in person or who find 'live' events difficult. Covid helped shift a largely 'face-to-face' practice into the digital realm too. Doorstep events and use of postal services helped address the challenge of digital poverty.

- Frequency and repetition help build up confidence and patterns of engagement, moving beyond the one-off, and allow for people to connect on their own terms.

- Visibility and accessible language draws people in, given a programme that contains a range of artforms and approaches. This allows for multiple entry points for people with very diverse needs. It is clear 'big names' from the art world will not necessarily be known to or draw audiences from areas of low engagement.

How to: core approaches

- There are a myriad of tactics for overcoming the barriers people face. These barriers belong more to the arts and culture sector than to the people who currently are less likely to engage. Some things to try to start include:

  - get out and about and talk about what you do to non-arts groups – in accessible language, not arts-jargon

  - ask some people who don't currently engage to review your marketing and communications with you, and identify anything in the language, imagery or format that might be off-putting

  - emphasise this is about fun, not hard work

  - work in partnership with people who can introduce you, share networks and help people find their way to your activities, and help others get involved in shaping what you do, ensuring your communications approach does not exclude cultural activity that is meaningful to specific faith, ethnic, age or other groups that may define by identity

  - create ways for people to connect with each other in facilitated spaces and processes

  - make it easy for people to engage on their terms, taking the risk out, is important for those not already committed. Payment upfront can be a risk or barrier for many people. Pay What You Decide models have been shown to help with this in some venues, though there is limited evidence across Creative People and Places.

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- Trust demolishes lots of barriers – use the tactics described in the previous section on community voice to build it.

- Perceptions of cultural venues and events are often a barrier. Several evaluation reports describe people who had never gone to their local theatre or gallery becoming engaged through work in non-traditional spaces, for non-traditional audiences.

- Taster sessions and 'go sees' give a low-risk opportunity to engage and build confidence. The go sees work best when there is a trusted relationship in place to encourage some risk. (Again, this mimics in communities of low engagement what we know of communities of high engagement, where much attendance is either organised by or recommended by friends and families.)

Dig deeper

- You can follow some individual stories of engagement in Blackpool in this report by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre: Left Coast: Journeys to Cultural Engagement.
- Building Relationships with People New to the Arts shares a range of approaches to overcoming barriers to engagement.
- Mapping and analysis of engagement approaches across the Creative People and Places programme by Sarah Boiling and Clare Thurman gives a comprehensive set of approaches to engagement across a wide range of places.
- Common Vision and Creative United have pulled together learning from the pandemic experiences of projects including Creative People and Places, and sets of practical tools for working digitally, at home and in partnerships.
- You can find out more about work during the pandemic focussed on isolation and loneliness in Impact of creative & cultural activity during the pandemic on loneliness, isolation and wellbeing by Imogen Blood and associates.

The consortium approach

One of the biggest differences between Creative People and Places and earlier 'audience development' initiatives is the emphasis on collaborative, consortium working. Arts Council England were clear from the inception that bids needed to come from consortia, believing that these were more likely to draw in 'unusual suspects' in each place, that this would lead to changed ways of working, and that it would avoid the relatively large amounts of money being seen as being given to any single organisation. The consortium has increasingly been seen as a way of listening to the community. All consortia include at least one arts or cultural organisation and one community and/or volunteer-led grassroots organisation that is not an arts organisation. Where there is only a professional community organisation and no grassroots group, consortia have to show how they will enable grassroots groups to shape the programme.

The main roles of the consortium have been to provide oversight of direction and governance and hold a specifically recruited team to account to deliver the programme. The core consortium members are generally not involved in direct delivery. The range of members and roles has at times been challenging, especially in terms of the time needed to establish equitable relationships. Managing potential conflicts of interests has also been difficult at times, with time needed to establish clear protocols and to work through any issues.

Over the lifetime of Creative People and Places some consortia have been through various transitions: from bid to delivery, to learning to legacy. Organisational membership has changed, lead bodies have changed and individuals around tables have changed. The points need to be carefully managed to provide both continuity of purpose and approach, and space for fresh perspectives and thinking. The transitions between funding phases have also proved useful points for review. Emphasising legacy has been useful, as well as being clear on the role of the consortium members in the place and community. The evolution of individual consortium members over a relatively long period of time also highlights the need for flexibility and ongoing openness and clarity. (Many organisations change as a result of being involved in consortia, as well as for other reasons including changes of personnel.)

Learning highlights

- Consortia have been central to Creative People and Places, contributing to the depth and nuance of the reach of many places, while also adding in complication and complexity. At their best, they create, to quote the title of the latest report on consortium working, 'positive interdependence'. If not actively developed by all involved, they can generate work and competitive behaviour.

- Consortia reflect and bring power differentials – sometimes even power struggles – within a place and the people active there, and within communities. They have sometimes found it difficult to be representative in the diversity of their membership.

- From the two reports looking at consortium working, one earlier in Creative People and Places' history and one later, it is clear that simply having a consortium structure does not equal power sharing, though those structures can help and provide useful frameworks when groups hit tricky issues or conflicts of interest

- Success factors include openness, honesty, clarity of vision and roles that build upon a clear, common goal and shared values

- Cross-sectoral collaboration yields benefits in terms of positively influencing local 'ecosystems' by bringing different perspectives together around a perceived issue – in this case statistically low levels of cultural engagement – which almost inevitably connects to other problems and positive opportunities. Many Creative People and Places have used empty shops, local health patterns, perceptions of a town, and isolation as useful starting points, especially during Covid-19.

- Involving a range of pro-active partners can lead to better engagement, consultation or involvement of local communities by some National Portfolio Organisations and delivery partners, as a positive side-effect of the Creative People and Places delivery

How to: core approaches
- Recognise that the consortium working will be critical to the success or failure of the project. Be clear on commitments without return and practice 'active generosity'. Be clear that cutting corners or paying lip service to consortium working is a big risk.

- The set-up phase is crucial, moving from bid to business plan. This phase needs adequate time and resource. Areas to cover include any potential conflicts of interest (or the likely perception of such conflicts), roles and responsibilities, ambitions, programme design, delivery roles for members where appropriate and relationships with other deliverers, and the lead body and its responsibilities. Clear, honest communication, and tackling any issues early, make progress possible.

- The most important factor to constructive consortium working has been managing conflicts of interests well. Have frank and open discussions about how you will do this, how you will flag any concerns, and how they will be resolved with your context.

- Having an independent chair is recommended as a good way of maintaining separation between lead body and consortium.

- Lead organisations need to consider carefully the financial and legal implications of their role, and involve their trustees

- During the delivery phase, ensuring a distinction between the governance of the programme via the core consortium and the delivery team who will be line managed within the lead body but accountable to the core consortium. Build this into agreements, terms of reference and how agendas and meetings are designed.

- Think in cycles of change and about legacy, while also maintaining attention on what is being delivered.

- See 'failure' as an opportunity for learning – put time aside for regular review and reflection, involving a critical friend if you have one. Consortia that have been able to really adopt an action research mindset have been able to identify learning, routes to improvement and the next set of challenges most effectively.

Dig deeper

- Positive Interdependence: A 2020 review of the successes and challenges of consortia governance in delivering the Creative People and Places Programme by Alchemy.

- Place Governance and Partnerships: Ecorys case study of Left Coast, exploring how Left Coast began to evolve from a consortium with a housing sector lead body into an independent delivery organisation.

- Governance and Consortium Working by Tom Fleming and Catherine Bunting covers early phases of the programme.

Partnerships for place

Partnership is an integral part of the Creative People and Places approach. In addition to the consortia which are, of course, partnerships, there are hundreds of examples of partnership working across the 30 projects and 33 places. Partnerships can be seen at all different levels of Creative People and Places. From the consortia to artists working with particular community groups, to places working with local businesses, or with venues, the enabling role of partnerships is apparent.
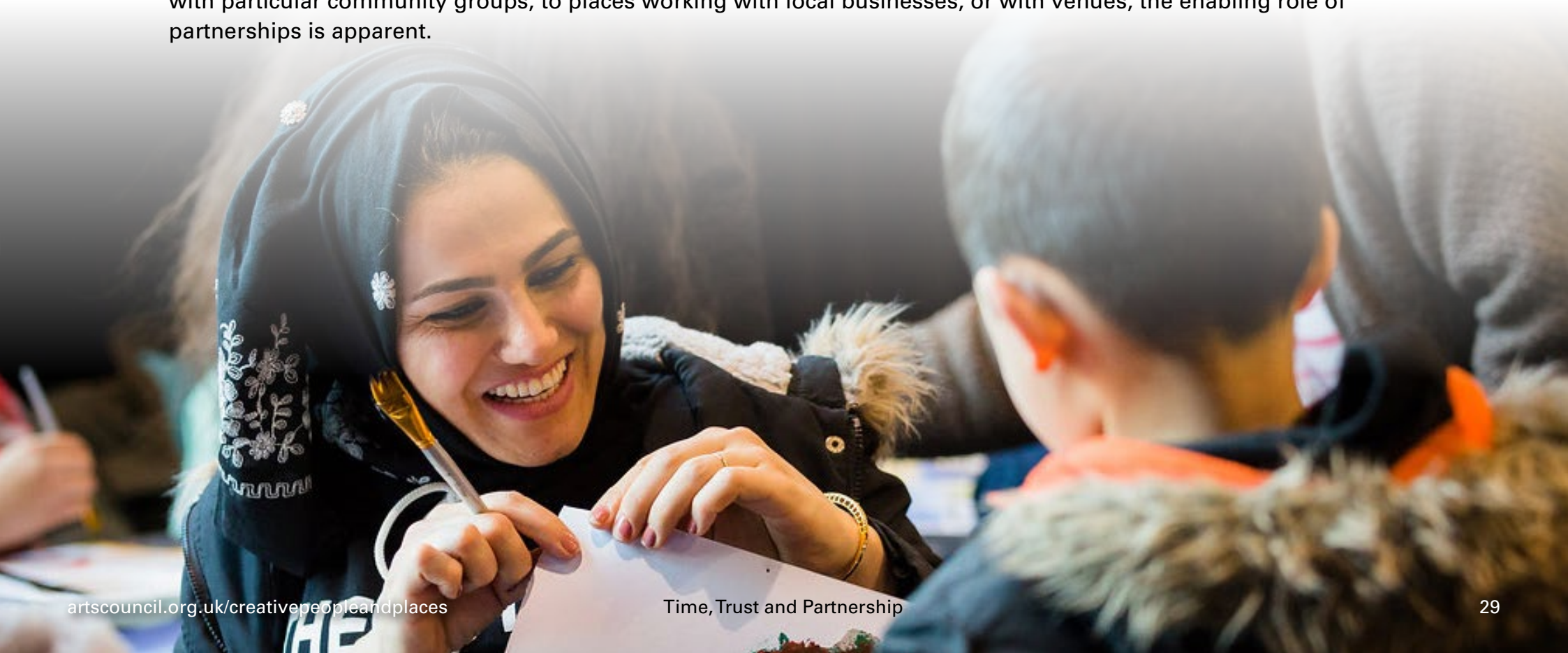
The politics of place can be hyperlocal, with big differences between neighbourhoods. Stakeholders involved in leading the place can be competitors as well as collaborators, and personalities can play their part too. The context is more complex than the traditional arts audience development model, once an attempt to multiply leadership and work co- creatively is made. As one interviewee said: 'Place-based leadership is far more than organisational – you need to have eyes open to context of the work not the market for the work.'

This is not unique to Creative People and Places of course. Partnership working has been increasing over many years, with a variety of motivations identified by the Kings College report The Art of Partnering. These ran from maximising and sharing resources, attracting funding, artistic impact or reach. The success of many partnerships across Creative People and Places reflects factors common across other cultural partnerships, or indeed in any sector. There is a common need for good clear communication, establishing positive relationships between people, having working practices and values which are compatible and effective planning and governance. However, there are some patterns one can see particularly clearly in Creative People and Places.

Learning highlights

- Consortia and specific partnerships that include non-arts partners can change the dynamics in an ecology. They bring in different voices, perspectives, histories and working practices. They create occasions for discussion of the needs of particular places, and for people to meet who might not otherwise do so. There are many examples: from Heart of Glass working with St Helens Rugby Club to Museums Northumberland bait working with a local social club and Appetite working with Stoke-on-Trent's Business Improvement District.

- Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson's report for the Peer Learning and Communications Network *Creating the Environment* emphasises the role partnerships play in 'holding open' relationships with a range of potential partners in the ecosystem. This helps ecologies grow and include a diversity of voices, experiences and people.

- Businesses are important to many places – and people of all kinds work in them. Creative Scene for instance worked with several local businesses in their early phase, as did Transported, working with a haulage firm. These partnerships were effective in helping engage people who would be less likely to take part or attend an arts event. This is especially so where there was a 'workplace' culture or customer base to tap into. Research has shown economic spillover from partnerships with business, from events reanimating public spaces, and from skills development.

- Partnership with arts and cultural organisations from outside the individual places have been beneficial. Places often have less infrastructure and fewer independent arts organisations of scale. Some Creative People and Places have made points of partnering with national organisations to connect their localities to arts from outside the area.

- Local media (and social media) are important in localities: Heart of Glass for instance worked with a local newspaper, the St. Helens Star and BBC Radio Mersey side as Media Partners for a large-scale public art project.

- During Covid-19, places were well-placed to establish partnerships with agencies addressing immediate, basic needs, including those with existing relationships and even shared bases with food and housing agencies. East Durham Creates, for instance, is based within the East Durham Trust which focused on community needs during lockdowns.

How to: core approaches

- To build partnership that can change the ecology of a place, it is important to identify specific organisations already active and rooted in everyday life and activity in a particular area. This expands the specific, local knowledge available to projects, and helps with design and delivery. It also creates new connections from which might evolve future activity, as seen during Covid-19.

- Gross and Wilson encourage an explicit commitment to 'holding open' the cultural ecosystem, of which partnership is a vital element, but not the only thing needed. The partnership should not close off opportunity for others or become a new 'closed group'. Good questions to test how this is being done are
  - Do strategic plans keep 'open' who is engaged with, who can work in partnership, the relationships to local, regional, sectoral and national networks and structures and kinds of outcomes being produced?
  - When things seem to be becoming 'closed', how can the strategic approach be challenged to open it up?

- Create partnerships that are sustainable but also be ready for them to change as the circumstances of individual partners change. Alignment and clarity are especially important. What's in it for each partner, and what's asked of them?

- Talk about arts engagement clearly and powerfully to bring new partners on board. For many the typical language of the arts, and the funding or other processes, are off-putting or opaque.

- Including artists early in the development of partnerships can avoid issues further into a project.

Dig deeper

- [Business and Arts – The Power of Partnership](#) (Creative Scene).

- [The cultural eco-systems of Creative People and Places Creating the Environment](#) Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson.

- [Building Partnerships Beyond The Arts: three case studies](#) by Ecorys explores how Transported in Boston and South Holland, Heart of Glass in St Helens and East Durham Creates are developing collaborations with a range of partners outside the arts.

- [The Economic Spillover of Creative People and Places](#) by Vivienne Niblett provides five case studies to show how, in some places, developing arts and cultural engagement has also had a spillover economic benefit.

Leadership in Creative People and Places

Leadership is another area where Creative People and Places is not unique but a part of a rising tide of progressive approaches that build on individual styles and skills to create a more open, collaborative approach to leadership that also acknowledges the complex systems in play in local places. It has been characterised by values and purpose-driven leadership. To quote my own paper here, 'a fundamental contribution of Creative People and Places in places has not been to add to infrastructure or arts engagement in so-called cold spots, as perhaps originally envisaged, but to multiply leadership within the community and systems active in places rich with people and ideas. They have done this by building trust, being open and positive, and sharing control.'

The dynamics of one place are unlikely to be replicated in another and may need different approaches. Being conscious of the histories of communities, and the reasons some people may not immediately trust a new initiative's intentions, has been vital. Building trust is central when working in collaboration with multiple stakeholders in the community or place, especially as people in many places, or specific groups and communities, feel let down or stereotyped by previous attempts at 'outreach' or 'inclusion'. Being clear about the programme and its relatively long-term purpose has been helpful. This has been challenged at times by the need to change requirements and boundaries, emphasising the importance of communication and supportive flexibility.

Learning highlights

- Creative People and Places leadership styles that provide inspiration, provoke exploration of wide ranges of diverse practice, and that share skills and resources have been highly effective at encouraging new partners and building trust with communities.

- Collaborative, non-hierarchical leadership by many hands widens the circles of influence while making relevance more likely.

- Having clear responsibilities within that distributed leadership is still vital, and many people within Creative People and Places at all levels have demonstrated this. (The needs at local level require this to come from many directions: from highly practical support to strategic policy-level influencing).

- Leadership styles tend to be rooted in relationships rather than position – trust, confidence, and shared goals have been more important than any financial or strategic advantage Creative People and Places may have had. The approach has decoupled leadership from authority, putting power into the community in different ways – a community of which Creative People and Places becomes part. The power aspect of leadership has very much stressed 'power with' rather than 'over'.

- Leadership driven by values, ambition or vision for the place, and a focus on quality of both process and artistic output has been important to building backing for Creative People and Places – although collaborative, there are many examples of leaders described by others as trailblazing', or 'setting an example'. This is more often done in a sense of exploration through stewardship of communal learning.

- This flexible, learning-based approach has target-driven styles that have been part of the consortium or place networks. Although it has been in tension at times with the 'SMART' business plans projects especially where more directive. Sometimes a lack of articulation of the Creative People and Places style of leadership has led to misunderstandings.

- Peer support has been important to individuals being able to deliver the style of leadership seen across the programme, which can be highly demanding. It has helped with the resilience and well-being of many leaders.

How to: core approaches

- The 'multiplying leadership' approach most useful in delivering the aims of Creative People and Places can be summarised as being rooted in activities which:
  - connect people and ideas to each other
  - collaborate and co-create with people through exploration of shared purpose
  - multiply the visibility and awareness of the effect, range and diversity of people involved, and also the collective learning from experience
  - know the community and the context and ask useful questions

- hold open spaces for others while developing and delivering strategic plans
- develop collective capacity

- Trusting relationships with people in communities that have been let down or neglected before are vital but take time.

- Create a 'positive error culture' that embraces learning from unpredicted results, including failure, to build trust and confidence.

- Connect potential leaders, artists and community activists in clear, productive structures so everyone involved can contribute.

- Make sure your approach to leadership runs through teams and the governance of your project, involving independent community members where possible, and by building relationships with previously marginalised groups. Formal 'advisory boards' can be helpful, for particular communities of place, characteristics or interest.

- If you start to work in new areas (as several places have) make sure you approach each community quite specifically and are ready to adapt your approach to meet the various needs of different places and communities.

Dig deeper

- [Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities](#) by Mark Robinson looks in depth at leadership within Creative People And Places.

- [How Diverse are We Really?](#) by Dawn Cameron includes observations about how leadership can be more inclusive, and some of the demographic patterns within Creative People and Places workforces and audiences.

- [Failspace](#) offers some tools to help everyone in the cultural sector instigate more honest and open conversations about failure between colleagues, artists, funders, participants and board members. It was developed by Leila Jancovich (University of Leeds), with David Stevenson (Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh), Lucy Wright and Malaika Cunningham.

Project delivery methods for change within a place

Across the 30 Creative People and Places projects there have always been a wide variety of ways of working, although all have aimed to change how culture is developed and experienced in their location. Some have been delivered with arts organisations which were already part of the 'infrastructure', as Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations. One, Heart of Glass, has become an independent National Portfolio Organisation. Some have been delivered by dedicated teams within CVS organisations, some from within universities, galleries, theatres and community arts organisations. All have been governed not by their lead organisations but their consortium board. The make-up of these has been incredibly diverse, drawing on private, public, education, health, housing and voluntary sectors. All have, to some degree, been instrumental in creating change in their places.

There is no prescription as to whether it is better for a project to be delivered from an arts organisation or a community organisation as lead body. It depends on the place and the partnership that has come together from that place. In East Durham, after beginning with Beamish Museum as lead body, the consortium shifted to a community organisation, East Durham Trust – which led to the 'artification' of a socially-focused body according to one director. Conversely, New Vic Theatre have been a strong lead body for Appetite. The central learning is perhaps that a spectrum of sustained delivery methods is needed, with a common mindset of community voice, partnership and excellence. This may differ from the norms of arts and cultural organisations and provision previously.

Learning highlights

- The structure through which projects deliver matters less than the spirit and values with which they work. There have been examples where conflicts of interest have not been well-managed and more 'selfish' instincts have led to challenges, but this is not limited to any one type of organisation. This was apparent in early work looking at consortium development, where the 'forming' and 'storming' parts of group development took some time and much effort. Arts Council England has learnt it can help to be more involved earlier, where delivery methods are at risk of being dominated by any one partner or approach.

- Where the Creative People and Places team becomes highly enmeshed in core service delivery of the lead organisations, there are risks of partners feeling more distant from delivery and development, with some impacts on partnership development. A success factor, whatever the nature of the lead body, has been for the team to have a degree of independence from that lead body and to be answerable to the consortium and the place. (Although there are also legal, financial and HR responsibilities to be considered.) The lead body needs to respect the difference the delivery team adds, and their community focus.

- Collaboration is core and moves people from 'invitation' and 'consultation' through co-creation to being leaders 'followed' by the Creative People and Places team. This requires a balance of community development and arts programming expertise.

- Co-creation similarly can be seen as a spectrum of approaches, to be applied in particular circumstances, with particular mixes of people. Some artists work well with communities on an entirely co-created basis, others may want more control.

- Places generally have small teams and ambition needs to be in proportion to capacity to avoid overwhelm, overwork and stress.

How to: core approaches

- Working with local 'anchors' – organisations in cultural, voluntary and social sectors, local authority functions, businesses, groups, ambassadors – helps arts activity benefit from established relationships and trust in a locality. Where these were perhaps in need of strengthening, a huge part of the value of Creative People and Places has been bringing people together to work together on an action research project with learning embedded in.

- Using the principles of human-centred design has been important to making change within a place. The iterative development and built-in engagement opens up decision-making to potentially marginalised groups and encourages ownership of the issues and the solutions.

- An asset-based approach, starting with people and places, has generally been more productive than filling perceived deficits.

- Confidence is essential within a place that wants to change – be that confidence to go and see things people may not be familiar with, or confidence to take part in a community panel deciding which of a shortlist of artists is commissioned, Build appropriate levels of capacity and skills, step by step, with the professional team sharing expertise openly and freely – but not overwhelmingly.

- Take time to discuss what each group or place means by quality and excellence to build a solid foundation for change, rooted in shared values. Make sure you consider the potential imbalances in confidence and power within any group.

- Create conditions and habits of dialogue that are supportive and challenging and encourages openness to different views and approaches.

- Being flexible and consistent about core purpose, values and methods has been vital to Creative People and Places and has been shown to build trust and enable a risk-taking 'positive error culture' in places.

- The programmes delivered have been hugely various – and those with multiple entry and exit points for different types of need have been most beneficial. There is no one-size-fits-all.

Dig deeper

- Power Up by Chrissie Tiller looks at the complexities and challenges of sharing power

- Considering Co-Creation, compiled by Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre is a through look at the range of approaches to co-creation in Creative People and Places and elsewhere.

- A case study of Creative Black Country's Desi Pubs partnership with the Midlands Pubs Association shows one approach to working in non-traditional settings.

- A range of partnerships can be seen in case studies produced as part of Transported's evaluation work.

Artistic practice and excellence

There are some central principles that come through the entirety of the literature which relate to cultural practice and excellence: that work should be locally driven, locally distinct and nationally recognised. There is a sense from all the considerations of excellence in individual evaluations and in the thematic study on excellence that across the programme excellence has increasingly come to be seen as experiential, dynamic and contextual, based on the coming together of process, people and skilled execution of an idea. An artist's reputation as 'highly acclaimed' or 'award-winning' means little to many people who have not previously engaged and is less likely to attract them than some local connection or a connection made in creating the work.

There has been a mix of artists involved in Creative People and Partnerships, with one study finding that 75% of commissioned artists were experienced at working collaboratively in community contexts and 53% (282) had previously lived or worked in the Creative People and Partnerships place they were commissioned by.

Learning highlights

- Flexibility helps cope with complexity and changing environments at programme level. Artists being open and flexible is also seen as most likely to lead to successful commissions, especially those long-term projects where plans may need to change.

- Local people in one research study felt that how an artists interacted with them, the location and the community were the most important factors in a project – far more so than whether they were local or knew the place previously. The interaction also changed people's perceptions of what was possible.

- Investing in artists has been shown to bring new partnerships and stakeholders to the table. That artists are also community members, rather than something somehow separate, became more apparent during the Covid-19 crisis when the connections artists had helped teams adapt and respond very quickly.

- Equity and diversity need particular focus within Creative People and Places, something which has not always been done consistently. Equity issues have needed particularly detailed work, given how some dominant cultural practices have been supported previously while others, associated with marginalised communities, may not. Perceptions of excellence have been shaped by hierarchies which have privileged certain artistic practices and have tended to exclude others rooted in folk, ethnic or faith cultures.

- Touring can be a useful complement to work in localities.

- Potential legacy from excellence comes from developing sustained practice which reflects the complexity of what artists do, influencing how artists are able to work in particular places.

- Peer learning is seen as a positive space for exploring what excellence means in practice and has been an essential element of the programme locally and nationally. It is an element not always included in such programmes but that has been extremely valuable. There is a need to build safe spaces through facilitation to enable people from a wide range of backgrounds, and with different ways of talking about creativity, to work together well.

- Local frameworks for quality and inclusion have proved helpful as a framing for including community voice in decision-making, giving everyone involved practical ways to orientate themselves. They also help artists who may become involved.

- Projects have combined a variety of approaches to delivering artistic excellence, working across four spectrums, the opposing 'poles' of which range
  - from audience-focussed product to participatory work
  - from community driven choices to team driven choices
  - from work with nal Portfolio Organisations/high profile artists to work with local artists
  - from facilitating others to choose to Providing expert choice

How to: core approaches

- When thinking about excellence of both product and practice, reflect on and define a range of approaches to quality of practice. Common elements found across the programme include integrity, resonance, originality, technical proficiency, ambition, magic and long-term impact.

- Commissioning processes that support equity and diversity can be designed by involving a diverse range of perspectives in the decision-making, support and progress monitoring and evaluation of projects, with arts professionals alongside community members sharing skills and knowledge.

- Writing clear, precise briefs that leave room for flexibility and encourage risk-taking helps project delivery

- Support artists to use their core skills, not to be quasi-social workers or carers.

- Matching resource to ambition is crucial: shrinking budgets have at times compromised some Creative People and Places' ambitions for realising large scale projects, and equally sometimes projects have expected too much from limited budgets. Be clear with artists and community members about budgets, practicalities (such as use of facilities) and any other parameters.

- Select artists for their fit with particular roles, opportunities and communities, rather than because of their status as artists

- Design your evaluation methodology to reflect the nuance of what excellence means to you in your context, rather than any prescribed definitions. It can help to define your terms as Museums Northumberland bait did with their quality guidelines.

Dig deeper

- A report I co-wrote with Consillium Research, What it does to you: Excellence within Creative People and Places, explores thinking around excellence across the programme during Phase Two. The report includes useful frameworks such as the bait quality guidelines and also explores connections to Arts Council England's Quality Principles, now implicit within Let's Create.

- From Small Shifts to Profound Changes by Elizabeth Lynch and Miriam Nelken describes the impact of Creative People and Places on artist practice, with useful recommendations for boosting quality, equality and diversity.

- Evaluation in participatory arts programmes, edited by Sarah Davies shares a selection of practical approaches, models and methods developed across Creative People and Places, 2013-2016.

Digital

Reports and evaluations covering the earlier years of Creative People and Places make relatively few references to digital engagement. Social media was a consistent part of communications as one would expect, and although there were some digital arts commissions, these were fewer in number. A 2019 report by The Audience Agency/Golant Media Ventures suggests that a lack of experience and confidence meant that opportunities for digital programming were missed. The emphasis on engaging people where they live, on building partnerships and on removing barriers, all meant that the practice was generally a face-to-face, personal one.

However, the Covid 19 crisis and lockdowns which began in March 2020 changed this massively. Many, but not all, places shifted their programmes online in some form, although many continued with different forms of in-person activity. These included doorstep theatre and music, postcards, and packages of creative materials for families. Some shifted their trusted formats to hybrid models. (Back to Ours moved their 'Shindigs' to 'Shindig on Your Couch' with funding to tackle isolation, for instance, with DVDs and masks provided.)

Moving projects online brought new opportunities for reach and engagement, showing that sharing power and building trust could be done online, digitally, as well as face-to-face. Many places shifted their community panels and other decision-making formats online with little reduction in participation, despite the issues of digital exclusion. Some invested in equipment for community members. Some places found that digital events had new, different participants than the in-person ones. Online meetings were more accessible for some people, tackling barriers of time and access for those with work or caring responsibilities, or managing disability or shielding. Maintaining attention proved challenging online, although 'competing demands' of the pandemic were also a factor. As people introduced in-person activities again, they noted it often brought unexpected results, more than the less fluid online environment.

How to: core approaches

- Build digital communications and platforms into your marketing and communications strategy.

- Make demystifying digital the focus for creative projects, building the confidence of participants.

- Tackle digital exclusion by not relying on digital solely and by investing in equipment where possible and appropriate.

- Build partnerships with local digital experts, artists, businesses and creative technologists to create opportunities for learning.

- Use online meetings and tools as well as face to face to increase involvement in shared decision-making.

Dig deeper

- Digital Engagement & Opportunities Research Insights & Recommendations by The Audience Agency and Golant Media Ventures explores how Creative People and Places had used digital up to 2019.

- A series of case studies of lockdown learning tell the story of how projects pivoted to online.

Creative People and Places as action research

Framing the programme as action research – interested in both learning and outputs and outcomes – has been fundamental to Creative People and Places. It combined collaborative projects aimed at tackling an issue – statistically low levels of engagement in particular local authority areas – with research using quantitive and qualitative data to understand what was happening, and to inform future practice. It has given teams, consortia and Arts Council England permission to try things out and see what happens, to learn from what might be perceived as failure without being punished for it, to take risks and to iterate approaches over time. As an action research project it developed ways of reflecting collaboratively on the experiences and evidence related to the programme.

Support for an action learning approach included a National Peer Learning and Communications Programme which evolved as the cohort of 'peers' expanded over time. The programme brought people together from different roles and also ran a series of conferences which brought teams and consortium members togethers before expanding to attract more people from the broader cultural sector. Regular peer learning sessions were extremely valuable to people doing similar jobs in sometimes different contexts, but often with high expectations and much pressure. There were reported benefits for individual wellbeing and resilience, as well as for creative problem-solving and general support. These also built a strong sense of common approaches within the diversity of people and places.

The National Peer Learning and Communications Programme also complemented the programme evaluations commissioned by Arts Council England with an extensive series of thematic research commissions, covering topics including social capital, diversity, excellence, leadership, community-led decision-making, power, ecosystems and co-creation. Toolkits and guides often flowed from these, supporting practice across the network and more broadly. This commitment to shared learning – including reflecting on the limitations of the programme – has been crucial to the impact and demonstrates a successful approach to influencing sectoral thinking.

In the first phase, each place was encouraged to employ a 'critical friend' to support on data and evidence collection and to provide an independent perspective combining support and challenge. Many places have maintained critical friends throughout, although roles have evolved in a range of ways depending on the situations and the skills required from a critical friend.

How to: core approaches

- Consider taking an action research approach to your work or to a project.

- Use 'failure' (eg things not turning out as well as expected) as well as success as an opportunity for learning.

- Work collaboratively with peers, including community members, as part of your reflection and to provide support when needed.

Dig deeper

- A short report on the national peer learning and communications programme will be published by Arts Council England in 2022.

CONCLUSION

Some challenges

There have been many challenges over the last decade. I want to draw attention to four here.

What is 'long-term'?

From its inception, Creative People and Places were asked to agree 10-year visions but then, if successful, asked to develop three or, latterly, four-year business plans to confirm funding for that period only. They have had to reapply at each stage, with the exception of an extension due to Covid-19. The programme has therefore been both long-term and a series of (at best) medium-term commitments. It has added up to a substantial long-term commitment by Arts Council England and the many consortium partners involved. But the process has created additional workloads for all involved, and much detailed negotiation of delivery plans at times – especially when starting up, sometimes without staffing. This has undoubtedly been challenging for directors and consortia. Should the constraints of the arts funding system change, a much more long-term approach would appear beneficial.

Power and its sharing

Because of the eligibility criteria, most places involved in the programme have tended to lack habits of collaboration and connectivity in other spheres. Places have had to identify partners, some of whom may have been more interested in acquiring power than sharing it. There have been what can only be described as power struggles at times. Local people are often described as lacking trust in 'well-intentioned incomers', based on prior experiences. Such places often have lower involvement in community activity and decision making overall, so involvement in culture can be seen as facing double barriers.

Capacity and collaboration

Although the 33 places have shown themselves to be far from 'cold spots', there is often a lack of capacity at community level, which has meant that project teams have been expected to fulfil a wide variety of roles, simply by virtue of being there. This has caused some challenges within lead bodies – perhaps unexpectedly, especially within some arts organisations where roles could become unclear. The opportunity to act as catalysts has been central, but has also meant the teams have had to develop their ecology simultaneously with creating their own approaches – 'building while flying' as the learning review by Ruth Melville and Ben Morgan put it.

Artists working with communities

Despite the long history of socially engaged practice, some places have found it difficult to find artists who combine innovative artistic practice with a commitment to including community voices in their creative processes. This has sometimes led to misunderstandings over process and what was desired or possible in particular situations. Creative People and Places is not an artist development programme in itself, although it has sometimes taken steps to develop its own workforce so it can better pursue community engagement aims. Initiatives such as The Faculty North, a partnership between Heart of Glass and In Situ, have been successful.

Creative People and Places, Arts Council England and Let's Create

Creative People and Places has been a big learning opportunity for Arts Council England too. There have been tensions inherent in the activity for some commentators, between local needs and a national programme, and between long-term place-based visions led by community voice and the business models and imperatives of individual organisations. Through these tensions, Arts Council England staff describe much learning from the programme.

Most important, and potentially significant in the long-term, is the influence the programme has had on the 10-year strategy, Let's Create, which was launched in 2020. There are clear similarities between two of the three Outcomes sought in Let's Create and outcomes in the Creative People and Places logic model – 'creative people' and 'cultural communities'. One of the Investment Principles is summarised as 'Inclusivity and Relevance', ideas which are central to Creative People and Places. A second is Ambition and Quality, which emphasises listening to audiences and non-audiences as well as encompassing ideas around excellence.

Arts Council England have also identified 54 Priority Places, signalling an even greater emphasis on place-based partnership working in future. The selection of Priority Places was informed by data on both investment and engagement, drawing on the experience of developing Creative People and Places' own eligibility criteria.

Almost all place consortia include a National Portfolio Organisation, some as lead body. Collaboration has been widespread although there have been different levels and forms identified. The expectations around collaboration –

and the potential for competition issues – were not always clear or consistent enough to encourage joint working. Research by the Tavistock suggests that messaging from Arts Council England was vital in encouraging genuine partnership.

Arts Council England staff also report an influence on Project Grants applications and how they are assessed. Assessors are now more consistently looking for evidence of community demand as well as 'supply excellence'. This is also influencing some Relationship Managers discussions with National Portfolio Organisations, exploring not just intent but how communities are involved. This is also influencing how organisations' approaches to diversity are considered.

In terms of managing the programme, learning has included understanding the importance of the start phase and subsequent transitions for consortia and knowing when to be hands off and when to be hands on. Having tapered funding in later phases for the first places, the Arts Council has recognised that this created some challenges and moved to a more 'even' distribution of funding for future programmes. Creative People and Places is also suggested to have had an influence on how Arts Council England designs its programmes, with more internal iterative co-design, and more public consultation.

There is an open question about the influence of the programme on thinking about business models for Let's Create and place-based work. Creative People and Places projects have found earned income hard to build to a significant proportion of their revenue, although they have found fundraising very possible. In some cases they have been well-positioned as new 'capacity' in places previously without it where trusts and foundations were looking to invest. As Creative People and Places becomes increasingly integrated within the national portfolio, albeit on slightly different terms, it remains to be seen how much the ethos of Creative People and Places as consortia-led and integrating community voices will spread to other National Portfolio Organisations or how much they will become

more mainstream in their approaches. Creative People and Places could become more like National Portfolio Organisations, with financial imperatives trumping other priorities at times, or vice versa with community voices becoming more common on boards, and more community-focused organisations entering the portfolio.

Dig deeper

- [Creative People and Places – an experiment in place-based funding](#) by Dr Leila Jancovic gives valuable background to the programme.

- [Collaborating for Change](#) by Heather Stradling and Matthew Gieve of the Tavistock Institute explores how Creative People and Places and National Portfolio Organisations might best work together.

- Arts Council England have published a wealth of material to do with [Inclusivity and Relevance](#) and the other Investment Principles that are an important element of their [Let's Create](#) strategy.

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About Mark Robinson

Mark Robinson is the founder of Thinking Practice. He works across the cultural sector in the UK and internationally as a writer, researcher, coach, strategist and facilitator. In 2021 Future Arts Centres published his book *Tactics for the Tightrope: Creative Resilience for Creative Communities*, part manifesto part toolkit. He is also a widely published poet, whose *New & Selected Poems: How I Learned to Sing* was published by Smokestack Books in 2014. Mark was previously Executive Director of Arts Council England, North East. He has also run festivals, poetry publishers, community arts programmes and worked in adult education.

Images

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