
Creative Scotland

**‘How do you draw a
rainbow the wrong way?’**

**Understanding young
people’s development in
creative activities**

September 2017

BOP
Consulting



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‘How do you draw a rainbow the wrong way?’

This unusual comment really captured our attention when we were conducting the interviews for this research. The young person who asks this question speaks of their experience of a primary school teacher suggesting that their rainbow was the ‘wrong way around’, which reinforced a self-belief that they had no artistic ability.

That young person, perhaps unable at such a young age to argue or explain, persevered, didn’t give up on their ambitions and a few years down the line, were introduced to an arts project funded through the CashBack for Creativity programme. They finally found somewhere safe and supportive, led by passionate and skilled practitioners who understood that they could develop if they could just find the right place to explore their creativity.

Photo credit: SHMU Youth Media Project (funded by CashBack for Creativity).
Photographer: Graham Dargie.

Research conducted by Douglas Lonie, Barbara McKissack and Melissa Wong,
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Foreword

CashBack for Creativity is a unique and highly valued programme managed by Creative Scotland and funded through the Scottish Government's Cashback for Communities programme. It takes funds recovered from the proceeds of crime and invests them into a range of free arts and creative projects to generate opportunities for young people experiencing additional challenges or barriers to access.

Creative Scotland has been a delivery partner since the programme's inception in 2008 delivering high quality arts learning and developmental activities across all areas of Scotland. Over 40,000 young people have participated in the programme so far, and the artists delivering activity have provided access to life changing outcomes that include improving the skills and confidence, raising attainment and aspirations and providing pathways for further learning, training, education and employment.

Commissioning this research has provided an opportunity to hear the voices of practitioners, stakeholders and young people who have been involved in the delivery of CashBack projects; to explore the components of effective good practice in delivering creative projects to young people experiencing additional challenges or barriers to access and to share that knowledge and experience. We also hope it will be a useful resource for the future development of projects.

The Research Report will also be produced as five 'Research Bites', to be published over 2017-18 and available on the Creative Scotland website. Each 'Bite' is a synopsis of one of the five key themes of the Report and will be accompanied by a podcast consisting of interviews with young people and practitioners, and reflective questions to further explore key themes of the Report. In response to requests from artists a literature review including a summary of relevant research reports is published alongside this report.

We would like to thank all those who have taken the time to record interviews and facilitate BOP in their fieldwork, all the participants who took part in our CashBack Learning Day in March 2017 and all the artists and partner

organisations who have contributed to the cumulative bank of knowledge and experience the sector now has and who have had such a positive impact on Scotland's young people.

Joan Parr

Head of Creative Learning, Creative Scotland, July 2017

Executive Summary

Aims

This research sought to understand how young people taking part in a range of creative programmes across and beyond Scotland developed creatively as well as how their creative development may be linked to other elements of personal or social development. Specifically, it focused on the following aim and research questions:

To explore what children and young people experiencing additional challenges gain from engaging in arts-led creative work

The further research questions were:

1. How are participants developing their creative skills and how is this linked to broader development?
2. What are the unique 'active ingredients' of projects that are leading to positive outcomes?
3. What practices and approaches have been more successful or less successful and why?
4. How are arts projects valued and understood by those involved (the young people, artists, parents/carers and non-arts partner organisations)?
5. How can current good practice be applied to project models for future delivery?

Overall findings

It's all about self-directed goals. One of the clearest findings is that progression journeys must be made on the terms and needs of individual participants. The reason that the projects work is because young people are there to do and make something creative and if there are other benefits that is a bonus. The programmes will not be successful if the participants feel that they are getting 'youth work by the back door'.

Collaboration is key. Whether it is about dividing skills across a team to get the best outputs, or about having a more equal relationship with a tutor or creating and producing something that is bigger than an individual ego (or set of egos). Working together, trusting each other and relying on each other is the only way that the best outputs and outcomes can be achieved. Learning to work collaboratively may also be a skill that will be useful in future learning and employment.

Developing self-identity is a core part of life throughout childhood and adolescence, but these projects can really move things up a gear and help young people to explore their creative selves in a safe and supportive environment. Being encouraged to explore these identities can have a lasting effect on their health and wellbeing, as well as help them to think about future learning or career paths.

Authentic, highly skilled and emotionality intelligent staff are required.

The projects only work because of the highly skilled and highly emotionally intelligent staff who draw on a range of professional resources to ensure that participants are encouraged, feel motivated, and are challenged in a way that is appropriate to each individual. Relationships are not based on what's lacking in a young person (or their life) it's about recognising and building on what they bring to any setting at any time. This is a highly professional practice.

There is an opportunity to bring theory further into practice. All those involved in the research were highly engaged and very interested in how theoretical frameworks and concepts from across different academic disciplines (e.g. sociology, psychology, education theory) could be brought into their practice more. This relatively brief research project seeks to make some of these links, but there is scope for existing theory and knowledge to be brought more closely into how projects are designed, delivered, and evaluated.

What do we know based on previous literature?

- We need to be clear about defining the groups and demographics of the young people we are working with

- We need to think about what kinds of creative or other areas of development we are looking to explore within projects
- We need to be very clear about how potential outcomes (intrinsic and extrinsic) are related to each other and overlap
- We need to acknowledge the politics of voice and agency when working with children and young people experiencing additional challenges
- We need to operate within and consider reflective frameworks across our work.

What did we learn from this research?

Attainment and progression

Participants and practitioners discussed how progression can be defined in terms of **self-determination** - the theory that **intrinsic motivation** is core to personal development and can only occur where individuals have competence, autonomy and relatedness. This is a useful starting point to understanding how and why young people come into and develop within projects.

Participants and practitioners also described how **self-directed learning, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving** were present in projects and how this was related to the creative process, as well as the approach of the practitioners, the pace, and the setting.

Another important element of attainment in projects is the development of **metacognition**, or how participants are encouraged to think about learning and how they can apply their skills in other contexts. This is a particularly useful aspect of projects when participants may not be fully engaged in formal education as it enables them to apply skills learned 'non-formally' to formal contexts.

Additionally, projects provide opportunities for participants to develop **direct transferable skills**, particularly if the art form or creative activity will be replicated in course-work within formal settings.

Rather than simply working in teams, the nature of **collaborative working** is learned across projects. This includes understanding the variety of roles and tasks required to produce high-quality creative outputs, learning how to contribute to a team effort, as well as understanding and respecting other people's input.

These developmental aspects of progression and attainment should also be considered alongside the **structural barriers** that many of these young people face. Whether this is the multiple challenges posed by acute poverty and inequality of access, or whether it is an alternative pace or level of support that may be required, it is important to remember that progression and attainment can only be negotiated and set at an individual level.

This has clear implications for **how progression is tracked and measured**. Projects require ongoing support for establishing ways to acknowledge and track progression within and beyond projects. This can include commitment to projects, progression across projects, outputs produced, and self-identified goals being met. For some this will include accreditation, but for others this is not an appropriate measure of progression.

Wellbeing

The projects taking part in this research are likely having an impact on participants' health and wellbeing, despite this not always being an explicit aim. When analysing the accounts of practitioners and participants in light of existing frameworks and previous research on the elements that make up positive wellbeing, we can see some clear synergies, particularly around:

- **Providing opportunities to explore self and social identities and to develop a positive self-concept**
- **Providing opportunities to relax, to work collaboratively and to engage in creative exploration and play**
- **Providing the opportunity to lead in decision making processes and to feel in control of the creative process and future trajectories**

— Enabling a safe space for participants to discover new selves and imagined future selves.

Future research and evaluation may wish to explore some of these issues in greater depth, and it would make sense to measure and track changes in wellbeing within projects for those groups of young people at higher risk of having poor mental health outcomes. However, at this stage it remains useful to highlight how the development taking place in these projects is likely to extend beyond education, attainment and employability, and also includes positive wellbeing outcomes.

Employability

Across the projects we spoke to as part of the research there were a number of key ways that employability skills were being supported. Transferable skills were being supported in the form of the **knowledge and skills participants would need for their future professional training and careers**. This could be the practical and technical knowledge required to produce creative outputs and was cited as giving some young participants a competitive advantage in formal education and the workplace.

Projects also help young people to **understand and plan career trajectories** by demonstrating a range of career options and helping them to specialise in different roles.

The projects included in this research also helped participants to **recognise the challenges of working in the creative sector**, both in terms of the type of work itself, as well as the often insecure and portfolio nature of career trajectories.

Group working was also cited as an important element of how projects contribute to employability outcomes, **collectively working toward a creative output** was cited by both participants and practitioners as an essential workforce skill that may not be developed so strongly in other contexts. This included the **subjugation of self-identity to group-identity** and a recognition

that the creative process being undertaken by the group took precedence over that being led by an individual.

Finally, it was clear in many accounts that the most effective way in which employability was being developed was through participants learning **‘ways of being’ that support them to work together toward a creative output**. This links back to findings elsewhere that focus on the development of self-identity, and highlights how through projects participants are learning about their future possible selves, and how to ‘be’ a creative practitioner in the art form they are experiencing. As with findings elsewhere, it is in validating these potential identities that projects can motivate participants to engage, develop, and progress.

Professional approach and pedagogy

Practitioners and participants identified a range of approaches to practice and pedagogy that appeared necessary for projects to be successful. These included:

- Establishing a **basic level of trust**, especially for those participants who may have difficult relationships with adults outside of the setting or in the past
- Being **authentic**, honest and open about the process and what to expect from participation
- In some cases it was beneficial if practitioners had **similar backgrounds** to the participants and could act as role models in terms of achievement
- It was also important to retain an **identity as a creative professional**, especially in comparison to teachers
- It was important that sessions were based on **enjoyment, creativity and exploration**, although learning outcomes could be explicit, it was also important for sessions to be fun in order to retain participation
- This is linked to the fact that the vast majority of participants are **electing to attend**, which also impacts on the pedagogical approach

- Recognising the whole identity, social background, and immediate needs of participants is close to **social pedagogy** practice and this may be something that projects wish to explore more formally.

‘Communities of practice’ and politics of participation

The concept of ‘**Communities of practice**’ was highlighted as a potential way of understanding how these groups come together within specific domains, and set expectations and a shared sense of progress.

A tension was highlighted between whether projects are presented to participants as **progressive learning situations’ (specific or general) as opposed to ‘opportunities for liminal experiences’**. (By liminal, we mean extraordinary or unusual activities, in this case creative activities). It was suggested that perhaps this is less of a tension so long as participants are enabled to **develop according to their own set of needs and goals**.

Another tension was highlighted which relates to whether there is something ‘special’ about **creating something together**. Or whether the positive effects reported could be repeated in non-creative group activities, although it was suggested that this may be related to the identities of the participants (i.e. people with a stronger ‘creative identity’ will gain more).

It was argued by some practitioners that projects provide an opportunity for participants to gain a deeper understanding of the social and political circumstance of their lives and how they can take action. This is supported by the theory of **critical consciousness** or conscientization, which suggests it is not enough for people to come together to understand their situation but that they must act together to change it.

1. Introduction and literature review

Introduction

This research explores the experiences of young people taking part in a range of creative and cultural activities within and beyond Scotland. It particularly focuses on those projects seeking to support creative development with children and young people experiencing additional challenges or barriers to access.

It was commissioned by Creative Scotland as part of the CashBack for Creativity Programme, recognising that many of the projects funded through this programme seek to engage children and young people experiencing additional barriers in creative activities. However, it is intended to be relevant to all projects and programmes which work creatively with children and young people and seek to achieve a broader range of outcomes than just art form specific knowledge or skills.

It is not intended as an evaluation of a specific programme or policy, instead it seeks to use established theory, informed by a review of relevant literature, to explore practice across a range of creative and cultural projects, collecting and analysing new empirical data from these projects. In doing so we hope to help practitioners, organisations, funders and other researchers to better understand and articulate some of the complex processes at play within these projects.

The research is based on over 50 interviews with participants and practitioners and a rigorous thematic analysis of what was said to understand where there are common approaches, clear outcomes, as well as remaining questions or tensions (a full methodology is provided in Appendix 1). We have tried to situate the research in the lived experience of those directly involved in these projects, and present their accounts alongside some other emerging theories and concepts in the field of creative and participatory arts projects. In doing so we are not attempting to *prove* that specific approaches will definitely lead to specific outcomes, but instead to critically engage with an area of work which is complex, multi-layered, and cross-sectoral. This provides an opportunity to open up dialogue, challenge assumptions, and consider how co-ordinating

frameworks and structures can affect practice, and ultimately the experiences and trajectories of the children and young people taking part.

The report is presented across five main sections, three relating to current policy agendas in Scotland (Attainment, Health and Wellbeing and Employability) and two relating to the more specific features of creative participatory projects (practice approaches and pedagogy, and Communities of practice and politics of participation). The research is based on visits and interviews with seven organisations in total; five in Scotland (currently funded through the Creative Scotland CashBack for Creativity programme), one in Brighton, and one in Barcelona (organisation and project descriptions can be seen in Appendix 2). Each organisation works with children and young people experiencing additional challenges through creative, project-based, work. These 'additional challenges' can be very diverse, acute, extreme or otherwise, and the art forms and creative approaches used across projects are equally diverse.

The core aim of the research is not to isolate specific creative practices that are linked to reducing, solving or 'curing' challenges experienced by young people, but instead to explore and identify the links and synergies within creative practice across those challenges, and across art forms. In short, trying to better understand what is happening in these projects and what effects it may be having and, crucially, foregrounding the words and understanding of the practitioners and the participants in the process.

A final point to highlight is that this research is intended to be the starting point of further discussion, to critically engage with funding discourse around impact and outcomes, and to enable all those concerned with the creative development of young people to engage confidently in the topic.

Why research creative projects with young people experiencing additional challenges?

A number of research studies and evaluations in recent years have sought to explore how artistic and creative projects lead to broader outcomes for children and young people experiencing additional challenges. 'Additional challenges' in this sense can relate to many factors. Mullen (2011) describes a range of

categories which may provide a useful framework for current purposes. He describes challenges relating to:

- Life conditions - Young people with a permanent condition such as a disability, impairment or a condition such as Asperger's syndrome, this could be permanent or temporary
- Environmental issues - Young people with a challenge related to where they live. This could be about such issues as rural isolation or living in areas of social and economic deprivation
- Life circumstances - Young people who bully or are being bullied, who live in state or foster care, refugees, young carers, and a number of other circumstances
- Behavioural issues - Young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who may become excluded from mainstream school

The intention here is not to create a finite list of conditions, issues or factors affecting young people, but instead to consider how the challenges they face may require different kinds of approach, as well as careful definition and consideration. Similarly, an approach to policy and provision that uses general terms like 'at risk' or 'disadvantaged' may not be helpful for focusing understanding on what kinds of 'broader outcomes' may be most important or appropriate for children and young people experiencing additional challenges.

It's also important to raise the question of whether a creative project is provided because it will help a young person deal with additional challenges, or because they are more likely to be experiencing barriers to access opportunities to be creative (or indeed, a combination of both)?

It is also important to consider the development of skills and knowledge within particular art forms, as well as the development of young people's *creativities* in general (i.e. the range of ways in which they consider themselves to be creative and to act creatively). This includes skills and knowledge across particular creative fields, but also a consideration of their creative identities (i.e. how they think of themselves as creative individuals), the ways in which they use their

creative capacity to understand their selves (psychological processes), and the people and the world around them (social processes).

This is a useful frame of reference for the current study which seeks to explore the lived experience of young people experiencing additional challenges taking part in a range of creative projects, but also to work with practitioners and others involved to uncover the processes and practices that they understand as creating change. The following sections discuss some of the existing research and evaluation findings that indicate the links between creative development and wider outcomes, as well as some of the successful practices and approaches.

Most of the projects studied in this research are designed and run by third sector cultural organisations, and could be considered 'non-formal' education projects. Non-formal education as defined by the European Parliament (2012), refers to intentional, voluntary learning situations led by a professional facilitator (and separate from formal learning which is systematic, sometimes coercive, always intentional and tends to take place within institutions), and informal learning which tends to be unintentional and to take place in 'everyday' contexts.

Most of the creative projects featured in this study are similar to formal education in the sense that learning objectives are regularly negotiated and agreed by participants, and most of the interactions are goal focused, but differ significantly on the basis that participation is elective rather than coercive, and the pedagogies employed are far more fluid than those generally seen in the school classroom (Miller, 2005).

For this reason, non-formal education projects can be especially appealing and effective for those who are disengaged, or disengaging, from formal education, as well as providing a range of skills in a more iterative and negotiated way than is commonly supported through the school. A recent review of the role and nature of non-formal education by the European Commission highlighted the opportunities this creates for young people:

“ The purpose of youth work [i.e. non-formal education] is not to provide jobs, but engagement in the wide variety of personal and social development activities that it offers, helps young people to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are frequently said to be needed in the labour market. These include teamwork, communication, leadership, flexibility and responsiveness. They also include creativity and innovation, which involve defining problems, coming up with ways of dealing with them, and sticking to a chosen course of action. In this way youth work contributes to closing the gap between the competences acquired by young people and the needs of the labour market. (Bamber, 2014:5)

In presenting the rationale for non-formal education in these terms we are seeking to highlight the productive tension within youth (arts) work, where projects and participants are often seeking to develop both creative capacities, and broader areas of development, which may also extend to education, training and employment. In taking this approach we hope to highlight how the 'journey' to extended skills and capacities begins through the aesthetic experiences of participants.

The Young Foundation (McNeil, Reeder and Rich, 2012) recently published a Framework of Outcomes for Young People which highlighted how their progression journeys should be considered using both intrinsic and extrinsic indicators. From a comprehensive review of the literature referring to outcomes for young people, the authors highlighted a clear division in measuring and communicating the intrinsic changes (i.e. those relating primarily to individuals, including happiness, self-esteem and self-confidence), and those more easily observable by external parties (i.e. extrinsic outcomes such as literacy, numeracy or health).

The authors also stress that the ways in which intrinsic outcomes are essential to the successful development of extrinsic outcomes is often overlooked by those evaluating youth projects. The suggestion that happier and more motivated young people are more likely to achieve academically, or gain employment, is not difficult to conceive of. However, they highlight how many youth work organisations overlook these complex psycho-social processes in a rush to 'prove' the external benefits of their work. This research provides an opportunity to redress the balance and focus clearly on the intrinsic outcomes deriving from engagement in creative activities.

In much of the third sector discourse around personal development these intrinsic outcomes are referred to as 'soft' outcomes, which may be doing a disservice to their importance. Although often difficult to measure or *prove*, the challenge remains to understand and communicate their significance, especially in the arts and cultural sector where intrinsic development is often a core element and first step of engagement and progression.

Links between creative and other outcomes

A searchable database of evaluations relating to arts approaches and non-arts outcomes has been produced and is presented alongside this research report in an excel file. Rather than summarising the findings of each of these evaluations and reviews (and creating a very long literature review document here), we instead explore some of the diversity in how participating in creative activities can be linked to non-arts outcomes. These can be explored further in the full review spreadsheet.

Bungay and Vella-Burrows (2013) reviewed 20 academic papers exploring the links between participation in non-formal cultural education projects and health outcomes for young people (age 11-18). Acknowledging there were still some gaps in the evidence, they nevertheless found that participating in creative activities can have a positive effect on behavioural changes, self-confidence, self-esteem, levels of knowledge and physical activity.

Lonie (2013) summarised research findings from a range of non-formal music interventions aimed at engaging and achieving positive outcomes for children and young people experiencing additional challenges. He concluded there were

strong findings indicating that engagement in creative music making could lead to pro-social behaviour, increased self-efficacy and improved social interaction for young people experiencing additional challenges (including behavioural problems, and complicating life factors such as being in care, being in the youth justice system, or excluded from mainstream education). A core aspect of the successful interventions was the very specific practice of the professionals working with the young people which enabled them to develop personally within a very intentional creative education framework.

Creative Scotland (2015, 2016) have also published findings from evaluations of their Youth Music Initiative that indicate how the funded music programmes (some more formal and some more non-formal) can develop young people's social and emotional skills, as well as bringing together children in the community within activities that wouldn't be happening otherwise.

Burkhardt and Brennan (2012) outlined a number of evaluations showing the positive impacts of non-formal dance interventions for children and young people, including a positive association with dance workshops and improvements in self-efficacy (along with a number of physical benefits such as improved cardiovascular fitness and reduced obesity).

Pujara, Atkins and MacMahon (2014) examined 18 arts-based projects for children and young people in London across art forms. They found a range of outcomes and a wide variety of different types of evidence, ranging from robust mixed-methods evaluations to anecdotal reflections. There were also projects that had developed innovative approaches to evaluation, such as using arts-based methods to capture the participant's journey. Some projects demonstrated so-called 'hard' outcomes such as lower crime rates, increased literacy, and increased entry into education, training or employment, as well as 'soft' outcomes such as increased self-esteem, increased dialogue, and raised aspirations. However, the variety in standards and types of evidence made it difficult to draw general conclusions about the benefits of the arts for young people experiencing additional challenges.

Many of these studies highlight that there are limits in understanding the specific role that cultural and creative activities play in young peoples' broader development, over and above other types of intervention. Dickens and Lonie

(2013) suggest there is a direct relationship between creative activity and the fostering of *agency* among young people. They argue that in providing alternative means of expression (i.e. giving young people a voice whether through music, poetry, dance, visual art, or many other cultural forms), non-formal creative and cultural projects enable young people to develop self-esteem, motivation, increased participation, and the broader range of intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes described in The Young Foundation framework (2012). It is worth representing The Young Foundation table again for current purposes:

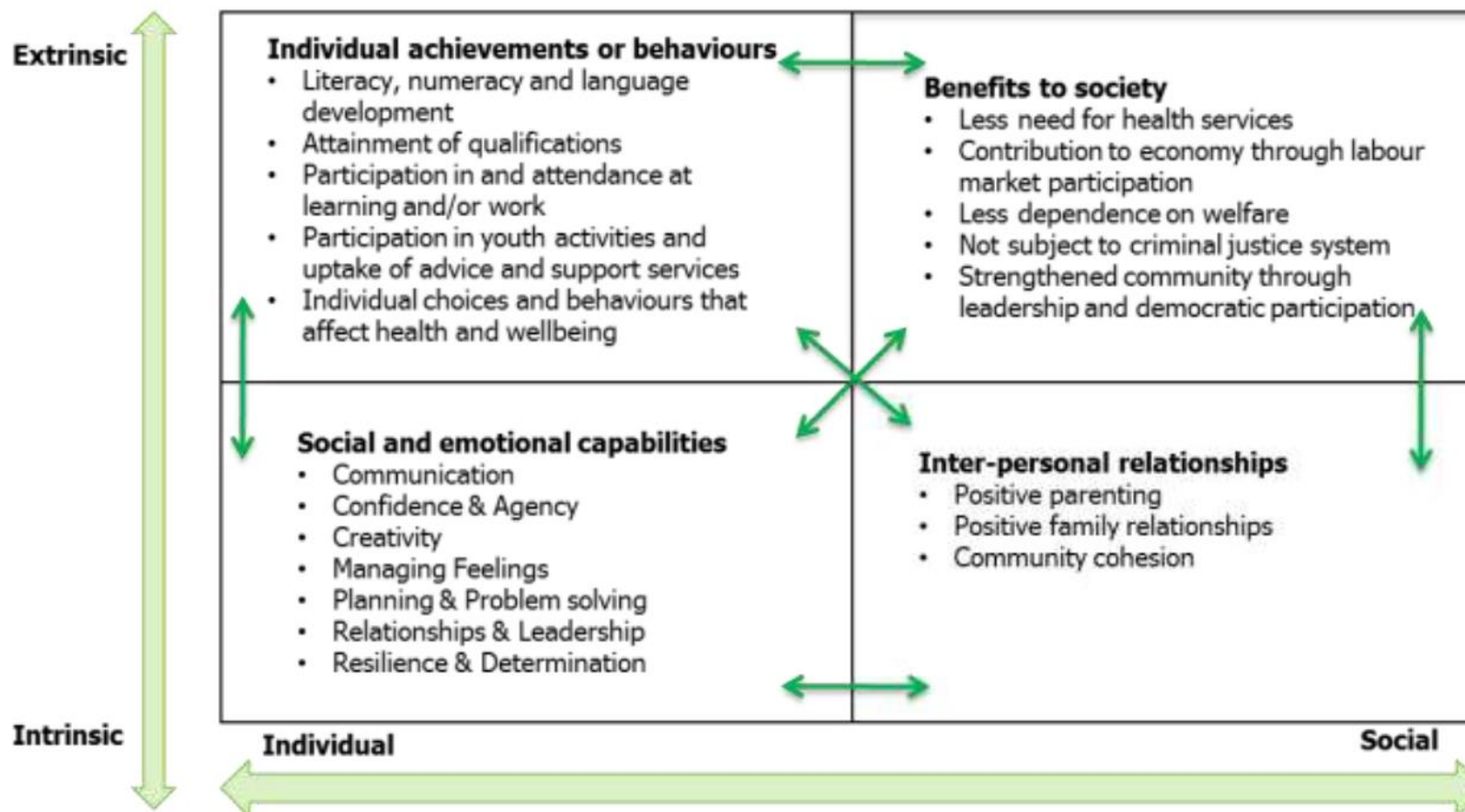


Figure 1 - The Young Foundation framework of outcomes for young people (McNeil, Rich and Redder 2012:12)

One of the most useful things about the Young Foundation framework is that it acknowledges the non-linearity of outcomes. They intersect across the dimensions in recognition of the fact that positive (or indeed negative) outcomes can be both personal and social at the same time, and are directly related to each other.

The framework here is not derived exclusively from creative and cultural projects which leaves space to consider the specific processes within these types of intervention that 'activate' these outcomes. If we accept the arguments put forward by Dickens and Lonie that it is self-expression, voice and agency that act as the catalytic feature in creative projects then there remains space in the current research to explore further the ways in which young people set out on 'outcome journeys' and the specific role of a range of creative activities in this process.

We should also acknowledge that these journeys are situated within the broader outcomes frameworks of enabling organisations and their funders (and in many cases in this project, Creative Scotland). This is discussed more fully in the next section but raises further critical points around how young people's experiences are explored in research, and the extent to which there may be a political bias in communicating young people's development. As Dickens and Lonie (2013) caution:

“ Ultimately, by insisting on the validation of children and young people as expressive, creative individuals— recognised as producers of culture and knowledge, and therefore as citizens capable of full and active participation in the shaping of their own communities... [important questions are raised] at a time when the dynamics of recent democratic and economic crises are impacting heavily on children and young people who still lack the political representation to challenge such circumstances directly (Dickens and Lonie, 2013:69)

This highlights how, in researching the effects of creative participation on young people, and especially those who may be marginalised or potentially excluded, there is an ongoing need to acknowledge the politics of voice and agency, and allow them to express their experiences on their own terms.

The current research therefore seeks to explore young people's development based on their accounts and the accounts of those working closely with them, rather than seeking to prove or disprove hypotheses associated with a 'top-down' policy framework. In doing so there is less of a tension between the very factor that leads to positive outcomes (i.e. voice and agency through creative activity) and the way this is accounted for in policy discourse.

In short, we can only really understand the effects of young peoples' creative participation by allowing them to explain it and communicate their experiences on their own terms.

Effective practice(s) in creative projects

A number of funders of creative projects for young people have sought to establish what makes a good quality intervention. This is presented in application and reporting documents, as well as in additional guidance materials.

Rimmer (2012) has cautioned how the ways in which funders seek to 'guide' those delivering youth arts projects can be interpreted as strict instructions on how a project should be run and lead to enforcing particular elements upon participants, in the process undermining the very agency that successful projects seek to develop with the young people they are working with. He argues that there is a delicate balance between the adoption of practice within projects that is led by the artistic process and the implementation of practice that is considered to be about 'improving' or 'transforming' young lives - including performance, accreditation or progression into other provision (i.e. at what point does encouraging a young person to 'take the next step' become a process of coercion with the aim of meeting a particular funding target rather than a reflection of their needs or wishes?)

The argument is presented here not to be overly critical of the necessary funding mechanisms in place, but instead to highlight a tension that can exist for practitioners to deliver genuinely creative and engaging projects within Quality and Outcomes frameworks over which they have little control.

Creative Scotland recently published a toolkit developed with ArtWorks ('Is this the best it can be?' 2016) that seeks to help those delivering arts projects to reflect on the different aspects of their practice and delivery. Rather than providing a set of instructions or suggested activities, it seeks to help people think through the different aspects of their work that will lead to positive or negative experiences and outcomes for those taking part.

It is intended to be used in the planning stages, as well as developed throughout the life of a project, also leading to more intuitive evaluation processes as the different elements of a project are critically explored by the delivery teams throughout. It is also intended to be used with partners in order to highlight the expected roles and responsibilities of all those taking part in a project.

Arts Council England has recently developed a set of quality principles for participatory work with children and young people. These are:

- Striving for excellence and innovation
- Being authentic
- Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
- Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
- Actively involving children and young people
- Enabling personal progression
- Developing belonging and ownership (Arts Council England, 2014)

The National Foundation for Youth Music has also published a quality framework to help practitioners working in participatory music making with children and young people ('Do, Review, Improve', 2013). This was developed across a range of project types and consists of 23 elements for consideration

covering how the practice is young person centred, the session content, the environment in which the delivery is taking place, and the skills and attributes of the practitioners. As with the recent Creative Scotland Artworks toolkit, it is intended to provide a reflective framework for practitioners and project staff, rather than a 'tick box' list of how to deliver projects.

The discussion of these frameworks is provided to acknowledge that much work has already been done to 'demystify' the process of participatory arts with children and young people. The professional field is well established and there are active communities of practitioners and organisations across the UK and internationally who are committed to understanding how different approaches lead to positive outcomes for young people. It is precisely because many of these practitioners have embedded reflective practice in their work that this research project provides an opportunity to explore and communicate these processes in greater depth.

Summary

This brief conceptual overview is provided to remind the reader that much work has already been done on the question of how creative projects impact on the lives of children and young people experiencing additional challenges. The arguments here are provided to foreground 'where we are' at the starting point of the research:

- It highlights how we must be clear about defining the groups and demographics of the young people we are working with
- To think about what kinds of creative or other areas of development we are looking to develop within projects
- To be very clear about how potential outcomes (intrinsic and extrinsic) are related to each other and overlap
- To acknowledge the politics of voice and agency when working with children and young people experiencing additional challenges
- To operate within and consider reflective frameworks across our work.

In exploring the perceptions of young people, and the practitioners working with them, this research seeks to highlight the 'outcome journeys' that are enabled by high-quality experiences, being mindful throughout that the creative and aesthetic development of young people is at the forefront of these experiences.

The purpose here is to bring different disciplines together and explore how youth arts practice is concerned with aesthetic, psychological, and social processes all at once. This then allows us to deepen our knowledge and understanding of the field, remind readers and practitioners of the importance of young people's accounts, and provide a useful additional narrative to the often 'dry' policy discourse of 'frameworks', 'indicators' and 'objectives'.

2. Attainment and progression

Introduction

Due to the fact that these projects are seeking to engage participants experiencing a range of additional challenges, it is important to consider how the notion of attainment is negotiated and understood across and within projects. This section presents findings relating to how participants and practitioners understand creative projects leading to personal development, particularly relating to educational development.

For those young people seeking to engage in a developmental creative activity on their own terms, progression and success cannot generally be measured in terms of the number of awards achieved at which levels, but instead should seek to understand how participants and practitioners experience and understand attainment and progression journeys.

This is not to shy away from the 'bottom-line' of educational performance measured at a regional or national level, but instead to explore how for some of those experiencing acute life challenges there needs to be a different approach taken, and that creative projects can offer a unique 'way in' to educational development on the terms of the individuals concerned.

Key themes identified

One of the ways projects support young people to progress is through developing **self-determination**. This is a concept in psychology made popular by Deci and Ryan (2002) and explains how young people can move from an 'I can't' mind-set, to an 'I can' mind-set. It is based on **intrinsic motivation** (i.e. how people feel motivated to meet their basic psychological needs) and in this situation, their own personal development.

The three elements of self-determination that need to be present are competence (i.e. feeling you are able to do something), autonomy (i.e. not feeling forced to do it for any other external party or reason), and relatedness (i.e. being supported by someone else, or knowing there is someone else who can support you). When thinking about how participants are encouraged to

engage in developmental journeys the link to approaches taken in these projects becomes immediately apparent.

The various practical approaches taken by practitioners are discussed further, with examples, in a later section. However, it is important to acknowledge early in a discussion of attainment and progression that participants become self-determined, and increasingly self-determined, because they are choosing to be there, they are made to feel able to join in, and they are surrounded by people willing and able to help them, should they need it. It's not just basic encouragement and acceptance; it's enabling young people to engage on their own terms:



Researcher: Why did you come back?

Participant: I guess it's having someone tell you that you are good and that you can be better. Before I did the fake band documentary I didn't really sing in public. We had a pop choir thing in my community centre but the group closed down. So I didn't have anywhere else to sing and when I went to the [organisation] residential trip I was cast as the "bitchy wee singer" that bossed everyone about. I think that's my personality. I did feel quite bad for yelling at people.

Researcher: That's fine, you were acting, you were acting!

Participant: Yes, and I sang, and all the [organisation] guys were encouraging me and they were like, "Yes you have a good voice." All of my

friends and some of them are in here just chilling, two of these guys [other participants] were in there on the trip with me, again they were like, “You’re good.” So having that sort of encouragement and the stability of someone saying, “Hey you’re pretty decent,” that’s pretty good, especially if they are music making pros!

Other respondents described participants’ motivation as ‘wee sparks’ or ‘lightbulb moments’, when participants recognise that they have something to offer the project and are becoming aware of their own capabilities.

If we accept that this is likely due to an increase in intrinsic motivation, and the development of increasing self-determination, we must also accept that this process is unlikely to be replicated if a qualification or accreditation is presented as the main (extrinsic) benefit of taking part. Participants need to feel committed to projects to meet their own development needs, or if not, the road to attainment will likely be short.

This is linked to the types of rewards that participants described when asked about their developmental journeys. Very few, if any, spoke about an accreditation or certificate as being an example of their development, instead they described new ways of thinking, or developing skills that they could apply in other areas of their lives. So, when thinking about how creative development projects contribute to ‘closing the attainment gap’, it potentially makes more sense to think about the ways that young people are being supported to learn and apply new skills to different situations, than counting the number of young people gaining a particular qualification.

As the participants themselves described, through their voluntary participation in these projects, and in the highly-skilled way that practitioners work with them, they are developing skills in self-directed learning, and critical thinking. In doing so, they can then apply these skills to other aspects of their lives. **Self-directed learning, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving**, are all core aspects of the creative process, therefore it also makes sense that these skills

are being particularly developed in creative projects like filmmaking, production, music, drama, visual art and many other fields:

“ The people that are teaching us like [name] and those guys, they are really nice and they work really well with people and understanding everyone’s individual ability. What they do as well as teaching us how to use the equipment they’ll talk us through and show us different programmes that might work better for us. They’ll also expand off and say, “You like doing this, this and this how about trying that?” So they don’t just teach us what we’re there for, they teach us all these different things as well. So we wouldn’t be able to do that if someone just sat us down and said, “Okay do this, do this.” It’s very interactive but not in an annoying way. It’s very personalised. (Participant)

“ Researcher: Then what do you think is valuable about learning creative stuff [in projects], alongside the more academic subjects? Creative subjects alongside others?

Participant 1: It sounds cheesy, but it’s helping me to think out of the box.

Participant 2: Yes!

Participant 1: Like, it's making you, kind of, think of things that you probably wouldn't have actually thought of before, and get you to see a different angle. Which helps you with your academic studies. It makes you more aware of, "Oh, I'm not able to do this, but hey, I could do it this way as well."

Along with learning new ways to approach other learning situations (i.e. **metacognition** – or 'thinking about learning' – or 'I remember when I had this problem in this context and took this approach, maybe I can do the same here') there were also reports of other, more practical, ways that participants could transfer their skills and learning to other contexts:

“ Researcher: Cool, and is there anything that you're learning that you think, "Actually, that could be useful outside of this session,"?

Participant 1: Yes.

Researcher: What sort of things?

Participant 1: For media, in school, we're required to write our own scripts, and we're not really taught that yet in actual class. We're more focused on other things. So it helps us make it clearer and less confusing for the groups, and stuff.

Participant 2: Yes. I'm coming close to doing a practical project for the main exams and stuff like that, to put forward to be marked and stuff. So having

this gives me an idea of how I should make that, and yes, also it helps if I want to make my own film.

Here the participants described **direct transferable skills** that enhance and complement their studies at school. Highlighting how they acquire direct skills and knowledge that can be applied in other areas of their lives.

Another core area of development identified was the ability to work in collaboration with tutors and other participants. 'Team-working skills' has become a bit of a catch-all term in some participatory youth settings, often used to describe an outcome when projects are anything other than one-to-one. However, the tutors and participants here described the way in which participants work and learn together as a really crucial aspect of how they progress and develop in other aspects of their lives. **Collaboration** is also discussed in the final section of this report as a unique way in which learning communities function, over and above learning in a group, or learning with someone else. However, it is important to highlight it as a key feature of attainment and progression in this section, as quite often the young people taking part in creative development projects will not have the opportunities to explicitly develop these skills elsewhere. A tutor from one of the projects explained this point a bit further:

“ Actually, that's the big thing that they get out of it, it's the team work. It's learning how to work with a small group of people to work together with the tutor as well, because the tutor is part of that team, work together and make something creative. You're learning and you're dealing with the creativity stuff but you're also working as a team and that comes with all the social skills you need to work as a team... You get youngsters that will say, "Normally I would shout at somebody if I got in to trouble or if I got stressed or if I can't get something to work, I'll take it out on the nearest

person." Through this process, they're working with that person that they would normally shout at because they're working together. (Practitioner)

The issue of exclusion from other, similar, opportunities is also significant when we consider attainment in creative development projects. There are a range of **structural barriers** that can prevent some young people from gaining access to similar provision in other contexts. A few examples described in the research included:

- A participant who described that he could only do Media Studies in Sixth Year at school if he passed Higher English; however, he also had dyslexia so felt he would not be included in this opportunity, despite this being his field of interest.
- A young carer who described that if it wasn't for the organisation running these holiday courses they would have pretty much no other opportunity to participate in collaborative creative work.
- A looked after young person who was performing well and regularly attending a project but then got moved to live with a relative in another part of the country and therefore had to stop attending the project.

Each of these diverse examples highlights how circumstances outside of the control of participants and organisations can affect the progression trajectories of the young people taking part. Similarly, there are a range of factors that can affect the day to day lives of all young people that cannot be accounted for within projects, and these tend to be more numerous and more complex for participants experiencing additional challenges.

When thinking about the need or justification for these projects (and, of course, their funding) it should be remembered that often they are providing activities and opportunities that simply would not be there for these young people otherwise. The 'special attention' provided to young people here is not because they are less driven, less determined or less able than their peers experiencing fewer challenges, it's simply that there are a far greater number of barriers to

progression in their way. This should be borne in mind when assessing the 'value' or 'performance' of such projects.

This is also linked to **how progression is tracked and measured** in projects. If the participants are engaging in learning that is markedly, and necessarily, different from formal education then the ways in which they progress should also be measured differently. The tutors we spoke to suggested that this difference is not based on the abilities of the young people, but on the broader range of complicating factors that young people may be affected by. Progression is always contextual and difficult to set at a group level, but particularly for those experiencing additional challenges, as one tutor described:

“ I adjust the achievements, if that makes sense? I used to work in a school with another staff member who didn't have really much youth work experience at all and we were doing the SQA. I was like, "That was a really good session they got so much done!" He was like, "No, they didn't." and I just thought actually their achievements, compared to what they did the week before - that they wrote a whole script and they filled in a booklet each. Then we had a chat about it, and he agreed that was a huge achievement for that group at that time and especially the young people we were working with to have engaged them that much. (Practitioner)

Indeed, the participants themselves described how the progression journeys they are exposed to are contingent on a range of factors, and may be influenced by the conversations they have with tutors, and/or the range of options available to them locally.

“ Researcher: Just thinking about the future, is there, do you feel that from doing the filmmaking that you’re doing through [organisation] is helping you think about whether you would want to work in film in the future? If it is, what do you think are the kind of steps that you might need to take in order to get there?

Participant: Well, from doing my first course, like, I’ve found out that I did want to do something to do with film. Because I really enjoyed it, and since this is my third one, I’m just going to keep doing more until I’m old enough to apply for the BFI Academy and do more advanced stuff next.

This is not to say that the progression opportunities made available for participants are not well planned or structured by the organisations (see case study 1 for an extended example), rather that each progression pathway has to be negotiated and made on the terms of the participant – which echoes the self-determination argument made at the start of this section. If participants feel that they are being forced into a particular trajectory, their intrinsic motivation will fall away. This has clear implications for how progression and attainment targets are set at a project and programme level.

Summary

Participants and practitioners discussed how progression can be defined in terms of **self-determination** - the theory that **intrinsic motivation** is core to personal development and can only occur where individuals have competence, autonomy and relatedness. This is a useful starting point to understanding how and why young people come into and develop within projects.

Participants and practitioners also described how **self-directed learning, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving** were present in projects and how this was related to the creative process, as well as the approach of the practitioners, the pace, and the setting.

Another important element of attainment in projects is the development of **metacognition**, or how participants are encouraged to think about learning and how they can apply their skills in other contexts. This is a particularly useful aspect of projects when participants may not be fully engaged in formal education as it enables them to apply skills learned ‘non-formally’ to formal contexts.

Additionally, projects provide opportunities for participants to develop **direct transferable skills**, particularly if the art form or creative activity will be replicated in course-work within formal settings.

Rather than simply working in teams, the nature of **collaborative working** is learned across projects. This includes understanding the variety of roles and tasks required to produce high-quality creative outputs, learning how to contribute to a team effort, as well as understanding and respecting other people’s input.

These developmental aspects of progression and attainment should also be considered alongside the **structural barriers** that many of these young people face. Whether this is the multiple challenges posed by acute poverty and inequality of access, or whether it is an alternative pace or level of support that may be required, it is important to remember that progression and attainment can only be negotiated and set at an individual level.

This has clear implications for **how progression is tracked and measured**. Projects require ongoing support for establishing ways to acknowledge and track progression within and beyond projects. This can include commitment to projects, progression across projects, outputs produced, and self-identified

goals being met. For some this will include accreditation, but for others this is not an appropriate measure of progression.

Case Study 1. Structured vs Unstructured Progression

This short case study seeks to highlight how the elements that make up a 'progression experience' for a young person can follow a similar logic in very different environments, and with very different levels of structure being applied to the potential trajectories of participants.

Screen Education Edinburgh run a series of progressive filmmaking courses, they start with first access taster days, which are open to all, including those from diverse challenging backgrounds, and from there provide an 'Introduction to Film' course over 8 weeks (typically associated with a Discovery Arts Award). For those motivated to continue this is followed by a 'next steps' programme which is a bit more advanced and hands-on (and can be accredited with Bronze Arts Award). For those young people still motivated to continue they can take part in a BFI Film Academy and/or 'Moving Image Arts GCSE which is also very practical. Even beyond this the organisation can support those young people able and willing to continue their filmmaking through Moving Image Arts A-Level, work placement, traineeship and BFI Craft Residential opportunity. Many of those progressing through the higher levels then go into university and to work in the sector.

Kibble Education and Care Centre run art activity drop-in sessions in a secure unit for children who have been removed from their families and communities. The sessions tend to be multi-arts so that the broad range of interests of the participants can be accommodated. The particularly 'progressive' sessions are in the summer holidays, when the young people don't actually have to be there (i.e. they could stay in bed or watch TV). However, because the young people enjoy the professional and inclusive approach of the practitioners, as well as the novelty of trying out their skills across a range of creative activities, they turn up every day. By the end of the holidays they may have tried visual art, DJing, parkour, jewellery making, printing, spoken word and many other creative activities. Because of their situation they will be unable to share any of their achievements in a public showcase or performance, however they have turned up most days, engaged, and produced high-quality creative outputs.

Of course there are a range of structural and circumstantial barriers that mean that not every participant will progress in the same way across either type of

provision, but as the table below indicates, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to progression, and it is best not to think of progression as wholly linear. The first column describes progression processes (i.e. 'progressions') and the following columns indicate whether they are present within the two different projects.

| Progressions | Screen Education Edinburgh | Kibble Education and Care Centre |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Identity exploration (i.e. 'possible future selves') | ✓ | ✓ |
| Developing trusting relationships and cooperation | ✓ | ✓ |
| Increased self-efficacy | ✓ | ✓ |
| Commitment | ✓ | ✓ |
| Productive collaboration with peers and adults | ✓ | ✓ |
| Transferable skills (e.g. creative problem solving) | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sense of achievement | ✓ | ✓ |
| Accreditation | ✓ | ✓ |

3. Health and wellbeing in creative development projects

Introduction

The projects featured in this research don't tend to work directly on health and wellbeing outcomes, and are generally not delivered in clinical settings. Nevertheless, in the accounts of participants and practitioners there was some clear cross-over with theory and research which is focused on these types of outcomes.

Many of the projects taking part in the research discussed how they aim to work holistically with children and young people, allowing them to set their own trajectories and supporting them in whichever way is necessary. In more broad terms, it is difficult to achieve the more 'extrinsic' outcomes of attainment, employability, or social change, if those taking part are experiencing stress, anxiety or other conditions that could affect their participation.

This section therefore considers how the accounts of participants and practitioners may be aligned with health and wellbeing outcomes and frameworks and any potential areas of overlap.

Key themes identified

The Children's Society and the New Economics Foundation recently published **Five Ways to Wellbeing** (2014), based on research with over 1,500 children and young people. The research indicated that there are five key ways that children and young people (and those around them) can contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing. These are:

- Connect (talk with family, see friends, share)
- Keep learning (read for fun, teach yourself, grow)
- Be active (walk, cycle, run around, keep well)
- Take notice (look around you, listen, rest, be)
- Be creative and play (Draw, paint, act, play more, dream)

The creative projects featured in this research can contribute to children and young people's wellbeing along each of these lines. Particularly in relation to learning and being creative, but also in providing opportunities for people to connect to each other and to be active in their communities. A table in the case study at the end of this chapter outlines examples from each of the projects that fit into this framework, and it may be useful for projects and practitioners to think about how their activities may or may not be contributing to participants' wellbeing along these themes.

There are also a number of aspects of positive mental health and wellbeing represented in the validated and well-used **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale**, which are also represented in the accounts of participants. Their 7-item test of mental wellbeing includes the following dimensions:

- I've been feeling optimistic about the future
- I've been feeling useful
- I've been feeling relaxed
- I've been dealing with problems well
- I've been thinking clearly
- I've been feeling close to other people
- I've been able to make up my own mind about things

Beyond the potential immediate benefits of joining in and taking part in projects, there are a range of other ways that projects contribute to participants' health and wellbeing. One of the most important is by establishing greater levels of self-belief and imagining new future selves. Thoits (2013) has described the links between self-identity and wellbeing in a recent review of the literature:

“

It is virtually impossible to develop a theory of the etymology of mental illness without thinking about self and identity issues. Almost all approaches in psychiatry and clinical psychology (with the exception

of behaviourism) view individuals' mental health as at least partly influenced by positive self-conceptions, high self-esteem, and/or the possession of valued social identities. (Thoits, 2013:357)

Many of these wellbeing dimensions are represented in the accounts from participants and practitioners presented throughout this research, particularly feeling optimistic about the future, feeling relaxed, feeling useful and being able to make up your own mind about things. The practitioners also discussed how often these complex socio-psychological processes are taking place without participants fully realising it. Indeed, because they are relaxed and having fun, their developmental experiences don't feel like hard work (whether creative work or 'self-work'), and the positive experiences within the session may lead to positive experiences beyond:

“ It is harder to evidence because a lot of the time they don't necessarily realise their achievements in that sense because at the start of summer I got them all to sit down and write a case study about their time in [organisation]. There was a lot of 'I'm going to college to study media now and I really enjoy it'. Which to them is a really big thing, but I've also seen confidence and communication and group work come on in leaps and bounds but they don't necessarily think "I'm a lot more confident now". It's just they enjoy being here, they enjoy being part of it. (Practitioner)

While some of the development of confidence may be unrecognised, across the research the importance of **positive self-identity** was frequently mentioned as a core area of impact for those taking part. By enabling participants to reinvent

themselves as creative producers, as well as recognising their artistic expression and abilities, there was a constant process of reinvention taking place, and importantly, reinvention away from the definition of their identity that may have led them to be targeted for participation in the first place (e.g. looked-after, young carer, 'behavioural issues' and so on):

“ So, in school they're told that they're no good, that they're rubbish, they're badly behaved, they're a bad kid. Bad boy, bad girl. Friends [saying] "I'm not allowed to play with you. Mum and dad says I'm not allowed to play with you, because you're bad, you're naughty." So it's just compounded for years and years of they're no good, and then suddenly they get to the age of eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and they get told, "You are good," and they believe they're good. They walk away with that ring [something they have made], or whatever it is, and they're so proud, and think, "I can achieve things, I can be good. I can be successful." For me, that's the magic in it, I suppose. (Practitioner)

“ Researcher: That's what I was going to ask, what you might have done before that made you think 'that's the sort of thing I'd like to get into'. Had you done much music or drama?

Participant: It was a little bit different for me because I didn't do that with my school and mostly I was a carer so I didn't do anything outside of school and in school you've got very limited options. I didn't have the opportunity before that. But [referral partner], because she knew I was interested in media but I didn't have a way to do it. She got me to the [music video] thing and that was fun, that's when I thought about doing it properly. (Participant)

The **reimagining of self and social identities** provides a way for participants to fight back against potential stressors they can encounter as a matter of course in everyday life. This process of reimagining the self is an important way that projects can affect participants' wellbeing. While further and more specific research may be required to understand how long these effects may last, and if there is a significant reduction in stress in the long-term as a result of participation, in theory, the opportunity to redefine and reimagine the self through these projects can provide both temporary relief from negative self-concept, as well as the development of a new self-concept over time. This is linked to the findings already presented in relation to attainment, and will be explored further in relation to pedagogy, but it is useful to consider how 'identity work' in projects, is also about making young people feel healthy and happy:

“ I have had teachers in my primary school telling me that, like primary 3 might I add, told me that I had no artistic ability because I drew a rainbow the wrong way. How do you draw a rainbow the wrong way? She was like “it's back to front” and I was like “it's not”. They all tell you that you cannot, and you shouldn't, or you should really reconsider your ideas and your plans, which has also been sent around in

my direction quite a lot. That's only because I'm so forward with it, I'm like “this is what I want to do as a career in my life because it's what I love”. Not a lot of people can find the one thing they love as a job...If you find something you love, you're only going to get one chance at it. So you've got to take it while you're young, that's what I love most about the guys in here [organisation]. The people [participants] around me as well, because I have quite a lot of friends who are musicians starting bands up by themselves. They don't tell you that you can't. They tell you that you can. They tell you that you can do all the things you want. You can do drama, you can do acting. You can even work on the radio. You can do all of these things. People say that you can because they've encouraged you. So it's that little shove off the edge, yes you can and the push you off the cliff and you fall into your dream job. (Participant)

“

We understand that people come with no voice so we have to create a new reality, or talk about a new reality. One where they have a voice, have an opinion, one where they are the leaders of their lives. But they don't believe in it. So every time something happens in the group that shows this we focus on it... every time that someone in the group does something that shows they are embracing a new reality, we put attention on it. We also then have to

translate this into their reality outside of the session, their homes, their communities, the other areas of their lives. This is the new reality we want and something you can believe in, you have rights and you have things to do, work opportunities, whatever it might be, find specific things and transfer them to real lives and future realities. (Practitioner)

While participants didn't talk about shifting their self-identity in very explicit terms, they clearly considered their self-concept as a core area of change when asked about the effects of participation in projects. This ranged from general reflections on their selves as artists, imagining new careers, or simply stating that the process they were taking part in was also **a process of self-analysis and discovery**. Linking back to the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework discussed above, it could also be argued that these creative development projects provide an opportunity for participants to 'Take Notice' of themselves, of their trajectories, and of how their activities are affecting other aspects of their lives:

“ Doing our stuff that we're doing just now, like going to pitch our ideas, it makes you think, “Why did I choose to do exactly this sort of thing? What does that say about my personality?” Then when you think about it a bit more, it helps you to understand more of who you are. Doing creative projects like this, say if you were to do art or something, and you were going, “Right, what does this mean to *me*?” That's the same sort of thing that you're doing with this course here. (Participant)

Summary

The projects taking part in this research are likely having an impact on participants' health and wellbeing, despite this not always being an explicit aim. When analysing the accounts of practitioners and participants in light of existing frameworks and previous research on the elements that make up positive wellbeing, we can see some clear synergies, particularly around:

- **Providing opportunities to explore self and social identities and to develop a positive self-concept**
- **Providing opportunities to relax, to work collaboratively and to engage in creative exploration and play**
- **Providing the opportunity to lead in decision making processes and to feel in-control of the creative process and future trajectories**
- **Enabling a safe space for participants to discover new selves and imagined future selves**

Future research and evaluation may wish to explore some of these issues in greater depth, and it would make sense to measure and track changes in wellbeing within projects for those groups of young people at higher risk of having poor mental health outcomes. However, at this stage it remains useful to highlight how the development taking place in these projects is likely to extend beyond education, attainment and employability, and also includes positive wellbeing outcomes.

Case study 2 - Linking project approaches to the Five Ways to Wellbeing

| Five Ways to Wellbeing | Project Approaches |
|---|--|
| Connect (talk with family, see friends, share) | <p>Collaboration is a core aspects of projects – whether working as a team together, or working with practitioners, all projects discussed the importance of learning to work together, to achieve a common goal and to understand compromise and working to each other's' strengths.</p> <p>Many projects also talked about how participants share their achievements with family, friends, or other influential people in their lives, or where these relationships aren't strong, use the connections in projects as a meaningful proxy.</p> |
| Keep learning (read for fun, teach yourself, grow) | <p>Projects are (almost always) explicitly about learning new skills – going deep within one art form, or getting an experience across several art forms, participants are constantly learning something new. These skills can be very specific to the domain, or more general and applicable across their lives, but often lead to a renewed interest in learning and acquiring further skills beyond the project</p> |
| Be active (walk, cycle, run around, keep well) | <p>While creative projects are less obviously active than sports or outdoor activity projects, they generally involve physicality and embodiment, whether this is shooting a film in an outdoor location, dance, conducting interviews in a shopping centre for a radio show, or recording an EP with a band, the vast majority of projects are intensely active as well as creative.</p> |
| Take notice (look around you, listen, rest, be) | <p>This research shows that a large part of how and why participants engage in projects is because they are developing a different perspective on life. Often in creative projects, participants are encouraged to question their own perceptions of themselves and of other people, to explore new identities (particularly as artists and creative agents), and to consider deeply some of the traditions and canons of the art forms they are learning. Each of these elements provides the opportunity for participants to take notice of their lives in new and interesting ways.</p> |
| Be creative and play (draw, paint, act, play more, dream) | <p>Clearly being creative is at the core of all these projects and there are multiple ways that creativity is learned and explored within projects (including art form specific ones that encourage young people to bring in other art forms). The other very important aspect of this wellbeing dimension is play. Projects provide a safe space for experimentation and play, often at a time in a young person's life when they are being encouraged to play less and work more.</p> |

4. Employability

Introduction

Progressing into employment is not a core intended outcome for the majority of projects featured in this research. Nonetheless, there is a recognition that the skills being developed may be beneficial to the next stage of these young people's lives when they are making decisions about which careers to pursue and entering the labour market.

The practitioners and participants included in this research spoke about a number of ways that the 'everyday' and 'out of the ordinary' activities taking place in projects were indicating what careers in these different creative fields may be like, as well as developing skills that may be of advantage in these, or broader, careers.

In these ways, progression *towards* employment (i.e. rather than publicly funded 'back to', or 'into work' schemes judged on how many people are re-entering any form of employment) is often an objective of the projects being delivered, whether this objective is subtler or more obvious. This section seeks to critically engage with how this is perceived by the participants, and to explore which areas of development they, and practitioners, most clearly see as being an advantage in potential employment.

This section focuses more on how the participants considered the projects contributing to employment skills in creative and cultural jobs as this was the most natural way to engage them in a discussion about employment. Clearly some of the skills and abilities being developed are relevant to employment more generally. Similarly, the outcomes discussed above relating to attainment and progression are also likely to positively affect the employability of participants¹.

Key thematic findings

Many participants indicated an interest in studying their chosen art form at university level and expressed a clear intent to pursue a creative career. They saw a strong connection between the technical knowledge and skills they were developing through the projects and the **knowledge and skills they would need for their future professional training and careers**. This is particularly notable given that they also expressed a belief that there is otherwise a lack of clear paths into creative careers, especially compared to more mainstream careers. This sentiment suggests that there is a desire for clearer professional pathways within the creative sector and that these courses play a role in filling this gap:

“ This gives you the base skills, what you can use when you go to uni. So then you need to work on the big first project, because you've had all this experience here. You'll already know, “All right, I know how to set this up. I know how to structure this; I know how to get a plan going.” (Participant)

“ I think that learning this stuff here, and taking part in this course, as I've said, is very good. Because it's teaching, like, all the broad spectrum of it, and how you'd create a film, and when you get that knowledge, I'm hopefully going to study film at uni. So, getting this knowledge and helping to understand and do it will help with the course, and then having all of this knowledge will make it easier, in a sense. For you to be able to go out and try and find

¹ The 'Journey to Employment' (JET) Framework by NPC (2014) is a useful publication for considering how various intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes can combine to affect an individual's general employability <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/>

all of this stuff. Because it's not, like, a natural sort of goal, like a banking sort of job. You have to go out and do it yourself. So with this experience here, it's basically shaping you, to get out and just go off and do it. In a weird sort of sense. (Participant)

Participants understood courses as playing important roles in providing a broad base of technical knowledge and skills within their chosen creative discipline, which they believed would provide an important foundation for future specialisation—or a back-up plan, should that fail. This finding is also important in that it reveals an understanding that specialisation must be built on a strong bedrock of general knowledge and skills and that these projects help participants to **understand and plan career trajectories**:

“ Researcher: if you wanted to become a filmmaker, or you wanted to specialise in some aspect of [film], whether it then becomes editing, or costumes, or acting. Or, you know, whatever part of the creative world you might want to fit into. What do you think are the steps that you'll need to take, or what are the bits of support that you think you would most need to get there?

Participant: Definitely going to these kind of courses. Getting, like, your Arts Award, and then when you go to college or university, and you're doing actual learning of those courses, you kind of get this better sense of what you're doing, and what you can do with that. So when you want to specialise you already know you've got those background skills, and you can bring them forward and use them. If you're wanting to just go for

one thing, like maybe sound design, or cinematography, you kind of need this just now. So you have a baseline of what you're doing, and when you want to branch out to that certain division, you can do that knowing that you've got all the knowledge. (Participant)

Participants also demonstrated an awareness of next steps needed in order to pursue a creative career, revealing a belief and understanding that the path to professional success in the creative industry is not a sudden flight but one built on a series of small, progressive steps. This finding is particularly significant given that young people are often bombarded in the media by stories of instant success (e.g. the discovery of Justin Bieber through his YouTube videos). This shows that these participants don't harbour false expectations of shortcuts to success, but that they see a creative career as a long-term goal that they will have to continually work toward.

Additionally, rather than seeing a creative career as lucrative or glamorous, they generally **recognised the challenges of working in the creative sector**, such as the unreliability of steady income and employment. Many also expressed concerns about the sustainability of a creative career and their chances of long-term success, yet these concerns did not appear to deter them from their plans.

“ My biggest concern is that, if I was to study film at university, it's the next step after that. How I could do this on a professional level. Because when you are a freelance filmmaker, it's not the best thing for trying to get money and jobs and stuff like that. So, and that's just my biggest concern, what's after that, you know? (Participant)

“ My plan for the future is just to avoid living on my mum’s couch. That’s what I’m striving for at this point. I do want to get into the music industry, which is pretty tough, but I told my family this is what I want to do, and they’ll be told it until I’m dead. So you’ve got to start small. I’d say [this project] isn’t starting small, small is like starting busking in the street, but [this project] is the mid-ground. (Participant)

Although the courses are generally structured with the aim of working toward a creative output, the practitioners emphasised that the process of creating this output was as important as, if not more important than, the end product. In particular, they saw the process of **collectively working toward a creative output as supporting participants to develop their interpersonal, cooperation, and team-working skills**. As with the findings relating to attainment, practitioners and participants identified how collaborative working through a project process was equipping young people with real-life experience that would be of value to their employment trajectories. The practitioners saw creative activities as particularly appropriate for supporting participants to develop these skills, given that they rely on the contributions of many individuals using different sets of skills and experiences toward producing a collective output:

“ For me, that's probably the big plus point, is the team effort and understanding that everybody is different, everybody has a contribution to make, everybody needs to be listened to over that stuff, which sometimes you forget because people can be a bit egocentric or a bit full of themselves. To make something good, you can't

be that, you've got to work and learn and work with other people. (Practitioner)

“ They have to be a team to do radio. They have to go on in that studio relying on each other. They know that if they suddenly can't remember what they are going to say, the person sitting next to them is going to help them. (Practitioner)

The participants also talked about the importance of interpersonal, cooperation, and team-working skills, especially within the context of collaborating with people with whom they wouldn't normally otherwise interact, such as people of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, or cliques. There was particular emphasis on the **subjugation of self-identity to group-identity** in the service of the creative output.

“ I think that you start to distance yourself from being like, "I'm making a film" to "we're making a film." I think what helps with that is starting to realise that [it is a] collaborative process. (Participant)

“ When there's a deal with disagreements or something. Like, "No, if you're going to disagree with me, just leave. I'll just make this on my own." Being able to—and I think part of being forced to do that in here — forced is kind of like not the right word but having to do that, it makes you learn. Like, okay, so how can I compromise but not lose what I'm trying to say. (Participant)

In contrast to the practitioners, the participants saw these skills not as outcomes in themselves, nor as interim outcomes on the road to employability (as an outcome in itself), but as necessary **'ways of being' that support them to work together toward a creative output**, which they saw as the primary purpose of both the project and their future professional work.

This is a relatively subtle difference between participants seeking general employment skills (e.g. for their CV, for a university application), and participants seeking to understand and participate in the creative process; to learn to work in creative employment. This was highlighted by their description of these skills as having a greater importance in the creative industries than in other types of employment (i.e. suggesting that there is something different about training to work in the creative industries and training to work in general).

Summary

As with previous sections, the links between creative development projects and employability are not always immediately obvious. Different projects will take necessarily different approaches to how employability outcomes are being pursued and it may be necessary for these not to be made obvious in the first instance to retain interest and engagement from some participants.

Across the projects we spoke to as part of the research there were a number of key ways that employability skills were being supported. Transferable skills were being supported in the form of **knowledge and skills participants would need for their future professional training and careers**. This could be the practical and technical knowledge required to produce creative outputs and was cited as giving some young participants a competitive advantage in formal education and the workplace.

Projects also help young people to **understand and plan career trajectories** by demonstrating a range of career options and helping them to specialise in different roles.

The projects included in this research also helped participants to **recognise the challenges of working in the creative sector**, both in terms of the type of work itself, as well as the often insecure and portfolio nature of career trajectories.

Group working was also cited as an important element of how projects contribute to employability outcomes, **collectively working toward a creative output** was cited by both participants and practitioners as an essential workforce skill that may not be developed so strongly in other contexts. This included the **subjugation of self-identity to group-identity** and a recognition that the creative process being undertaken by the group took precedence over that being led by an individual.

Finally, it was clear in many accounts that the most effective way in which employability was being developed was through participants learning **'ways of being' that support them to work together toward a creative output**. This links back to findings elsewhere that focus on the development of self-identity, and highlights how through projects participants are learning about their future possible selves, and how to 'be' a creative practitioner in the art form they are experiencing. As with findings elsewhere, it is in validating these potential identities that projects can motivate participants to engage, develop, and progress.

Case study 3 –Developing the whole person before focusing on employment

Firefly Arts works with young people (15-18), many of whom don't attend full time education, have low self-esteem or find communication difficult. Participants are referred by key workers and rarely know each other on arrival so initially team building and establishing a trusting group dynamic is essential. Participants tend not to have attended drama groups or summer schools and for many this will be their first opportunity to engage in group creative work. This is often then a first step towards developing skills and confidence necessary to apply to future employment. In common with feedback from other groups one participant commented that the hardest task they had was "on the first day, coming in at all"

Firefly aims to move participants to a positive destination and for some participants this has meant attending college or university or moving towards employment, while for others it might be establishing positive self-worth, gaining confidence, learning practical skills and establishing trust with the group.

Each course has an end goal to make a film or hold a performance but participants also define their own personal goals at the outset. Practitioners have set aims for each session but are flexible and have a number of delivery plans to work through to find the right methods to engage particular groups and be led by their interests. This ability to be flexible and change direction is seen as key to success. Participants recognise their learning is enhanced as they feel self-directed and in the words of one participant "Learning here is more fun – they treat us well. You have a say - even though they are telling us what to do, we're also making things up from scratch". Another commented that it "It helps you concentrate, you don't get bored."

Skills development is linked to confidence, as one practitioner stated: "Confidence means so much for each individual – but it is really more about self-worth. That leads to really valuing themselves – it might be through performance or through learning to work with the camera". Working in collaboration is important so individuals aren't put on the spot, especially at the beginning. As an example, no microphones are used until participants are confident to talk in the group, building up to the moment when they can talk

safely in the room and not worry about ideas being wrong. Games are good to establish trust – "just to get them talking and it doesn't matter what you say. No right or wrong answers. Giving opinions, all sharing, that's what counts. "

Creative group work can impact on all aspects of the young persons' lives – particularly if the practitioners see something a participant is interested in or could benefit from (such as an interest in writing and therefore encouragement to write a film script). Giving each individual a role they feel confident in and therefore can achieve while learning new skills is crucial to empowerment. The group is established and work together before looking at issues they care about and, through discussion and exercises, a subject matter for the film emerges. They then build up skills (performance, camera, etc) and choose which they're more interested in, or continue to sample a variety of roles.

Working in creative projects allows participants to think about what they care about and use imagination to express that. It also helps shift ideas and perceptions about who they are and who they can be. The combination of active ingredients that Firefly practitioners foster include: collaboration, thinking outside the box with support to think differently and develop self-worth in an atmosphere where everyone feels safe and willing to try ideas, where failure is good for learning and to progress towards a solution that will work for the whole group.

5. Professional approach and pedagogy

Across the projects participants and practitioners regularly spoke of how the place and space in which activities were happening were important to successful engagement and development. Alongside the physical and geographical elements, the approaches of practitioners were also described as being core aspects of success.

This section outlines some of these aspects that came up despite the art form or the specific site in which the project was taking place and begins to outline some of the shared qualities of conceptualising professional approach and pedagogy across projects.

Key thematic findings

Practitioners talked about the complex and multiple challenges faced by participants on projects, which have led, in some cases, to a distrust of others, particularly those in positions of power. Participants may have been let down or betrayed by adults in their lives, or they may be lacking adults who believe in them and encourage them to succeed.

“ The children that we work with, you know, they’ve had really, really difficult starts in life. Horrific starts in life, and spend their life maybe not trusting adults. Not trusting people, and quite rightly so because of the things that have happened. (Practitioner)

These negative feelings toward adults create a barrier to engagement because tutors have to build a **basic level of trust** with participants before they can work toward higher-level outcomes. Given that this trust can be difficult to develop, practitioners talked about the importance of small-group working, close personal attention, and building long-term relationships in order to establish and maintain

this trust over time. Moreover, long-term relationships allow the tutors to see incremental changes in the participants’ levels of trust and engagement that may otherwise be difficult to perceive, as well as cumulative changes in their level of attainment.

“ So if it’s just within a small group, and you’re building up that relationship with the tutor, as again, that’s all relationship-based, totally. So there’s only four or five of you at that table with one tutor, maybe a volunteer helping you as well. You’re more like almost one to two, or one to one, at times. So it’s like an opportunity, then, for the tutor, as I said, to find a way of getting an in. Finding a way of building confidence, and finding a way that works for that kid. (Practitioner)

“ What I’ve found over the years though and what we’ve been lucky in is being able to do those long-term projects where you’ve been able to develop relationships with young people and see the big changes. (Practitioner)

Both practitioners and participants saw **authenticity** as an important element of developing these relationships. Practitioners needed to prove that they were worthy of the participants’ trust through their authentic understanding of the participants’ lives and of their creative discipline. Notably, both groups saw this understanding as needing to come from experience rather than from learned knowledge or qualifications.

Practitioners who came from **similar backgrounds to the participants** saw their life experiences as helping them to relate to the participants by recognising the barriers that they face and the potential difficulty of succeeding in these

circumstances. Meanwhile, the participants saw these practitioners as inspirational role models who had charted a path that they, too, could follow.

“ Practitioner 1: I think the fact that both [Practitioner 2] and I grew up in a regeneration area, we went to school and we've succeeded in the sense by being here and carrying on what we were taught when we first came here.

Practitioner 2: Yes, we can relate to not just the young people but the adult volunteers that get involved as well because we've experienced it ourselves for first hand.

“ They've got the same sort of background as you and they're at- because I mean, people from a disadvantaged background... that ideal that someone in the same sort of conditions as you can do it, why can't you? It just gives you that bit of confidence. It's like, "Oh right, well if they can, I can." (Participant)

The practitioners' professional experience in the creative industry was also an important part of their offer to participants. Rather than youth workers delivering creative activities, for the most part they were considered **creative professionals** taking time out of their working lives to share their skills with young people. For the participants, this was a critical distinction. As creative professionals, the practitioners were worth taking seriously, and it gave the sessions a greater sense of purpose and professionalism.

“ I was like, "Okay, so these guys have made something, and I appreciate that they've made something, and I can

learn something from them." That was a big part for me about respecting [practitioners] was the fact that they have made professional films. (Participant)

This distinction is also closely linked to pedagogical approach. The practitioners position themselves **not as teachers but as facilitators of a creative process**. For example, rather than framing the sessions as 'filmmaking lessons', the programme was pitched as an opportunity to make a film from start to finish. This put the focus on supporting the participants' artistic creation rather than teaching; any teaching that happened was very much in the service of the creative output.

“ They're not here for script-writing lessons, they're here to make a film. (Practitioner)

This contrast to the traditional teacher-student relationship changes the balance of power in the session. Instead of acting as an expert telling others the correct way to do things, the practitioner acts in a supportive capacity. There were also examples of some projects that inverted the balance of power by creating a space where the practitioner was not an expert and participants could demonstrate their expertise. Given that many participants may have a distrust of authority figures these scenarios offer the opportunity to create a different paradigm for their relationship with the practitioners.

“ I think the reason it [the programme] engages is that the tutors are seen as being good guys. It's like [practitioner] is, although he's teaching them how to make a film, he gets on with them and they get on with him. Therefore, there's a relationship there which is, again, completely different to a teaching relationship

where one person is telling you how to do things.
(Programme Manager)

“ I mean the work we're doing this time round is a joint project. It's music and film so they're doing hip hop stuff and I think it works because it's something that they know and something they want to do and something they're knowledgeable about. Suddenly they're not in a position where the teacher knows everything near enough. They're in a position where they know as much. They're maybe not as experienced but they know quite a lot and in some cases, as much as the person that they're working with. It's more of a working relationship.
(Practitioner)

This different relationship between practitioners and participants also has implications for the focus of the sessions. Because the practitioners explicitly position themselves as not teachers, there is no pressure to achieve set attainment levels, freeing up space for **enjoyment, creativity and exploration**. Interestingly, participants noted that removing this pressure enabled them to be more relaxed and focused about their work, suggesting that the pressure to achieve may be counterproductive to actual attainment. The enjoyment that they were getting out of the opportunity for creative expression encouraged them to continue working. Additionally, by putting the focus on process rather than product, they were able to work toward a long-term goal without getting daunted by the magnitude of the goal itself.

“ You spend your whole school life, especially six years of high school, putting your effort into things that aren't creative so you don't have anywhere to just let those

creative juices flow... So like [organisation], it gave that release away from high school of it was the hanging out and working on this creative work and you can just let yourself go with that. You're not stuck by passing tests and things, it's just “on you go”. (Participant)

“ The informality about it makes it a lot easier to work because obviously you respect them and you do see them as your teachers, but they're not. They're more personal that it's almost like friendly, so it's much easier to be relaxed and just relax and work. (Participant)

Given that there is no pressure to achieve extrinsic measures of success and no requirement to be there (i.e. projects are largely, if not always, elective), the participants are **electing to attend** because they genuinely want to be there. Their participation therefore requires several acts of agency: deciding they want to participate, making the effort to attend, and actively engaging with the session once they are there. Once they have already committed to these acts, it is a relatively easy choice to want to succeed.

“ They weren't sitting you down and saying, and doing like, they weren't teachers. Although they were teaching us like. So it was a case of like, being able to go in, have fun, so you- because you were having fun, you wanted to do the stuff for them. Like you wanted to make sure that you were going like and doing everything he needs you to do. (Participant)

“ I think the people who work here and the people who are around you here. It's a lot different. Even at school if you take music a lot of people take music to fill up a column. Here everyone around you wants to be here and wants to do things here, which is a very different than anywhere else... So everyone here is passionate about it, which is a very, unfortunately it's a very unique thing for people to experience, especially up here. (Participant)

Practitioners noted that removing the pressure to achieve and creating the space for them to choose to succeed on their own terms were particularly important for young people experiencing additional challenges, where pressure could be counteractive to their progress. Rather, it would break down the trust and relationship between the practitioner and the participant, reverting to the traditional teacher-student model. This belief that educational attainment works in parallel with personal development reflects a holistic view of the participant that is grounded in **social pedagogy**. The practitioners recognize the whole life of the participant before setting up expectations and asking them to do anything:

“ So if someone's having an off week you know what we actually slow it down and keep the social thing going. Sometimes you go a bit off topic, and talk about random stuff and then we'll come back into, “Oh right okay, how can we use that?” That ability to be able to do that and not kind of go, “Well the focus for this week is we're going to learn about camera settings or how to work the sound...” and really feed off the young people and their interests. That takes the pressure off them, and a lot of the young people I work with collapse under pressure.

They don't do pressure. So they don't turn up and then you've got no project anyway. (Practitioner)

Summary

Practitioners and participants identified a range of approaches to practice and pedagogy that appeared necessary for projects to be successful. These included:

- Establishing a **basic level of trust**, especially for those participants who may have difficult relationships with adults outside of the setting or in the past
- Being **authentic**, honest and open about the process and what to expect from participation
- In some cases it was beneficial if practitioners had **similar backgrounds** to the participants and could act as role models in terms of achievement
- Although it was also important to retain an **identity as a creative professional**, especially in comparison to teachers
- It was important that sessions were based on **enjoyment, creativity and exploration**, although learning outcomes could be explicit, it was also important for sessions to be fun in order to retain participation
- This is linked to the fact that the vast majority of participants are **electing to attend**, which also impacts on the pedagogical approach
- Recognising the whole identity, social background, and immediate needs of participants is close to **social pedagogy** practice and this may be something that projects wish to explore more formally
- Participants recognised the **balance between process and product**. Ensuring a high-quality output or product was essential for authentic creative interactions, but the process of getting there, and the individual journeys to achieve these were equally, if not more, important.

Case study 4 - Karate Kid or Kung-Fu Panda?

The potentially unlikely combination of basketball and music production forms the basis of practice for Basket Beat in Barcelona, which works in a variety of different settings, and often with groups experiencing social exclusion.

Each session takes place in a circle, where each participant and the practitioner can see each other at all times and communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Within the circle there has to be trust established between the leader and the participants and between each of the participants. By using the basketballs and their bodies each individual can make a beat, but it is up to the group to make it harmonious and produce music as a collective expression. In this way the group is more powerful than any one individual or the leader.

The space is also very important - the fact it is a circle means it is sealed to the outside and to the past. There is a lot of complexity outside the room, but in this practice they create a space where they don't know what will happen and there are no prescriptive behaviours based on the histories and identities people bring with them. Within each session the group begin and end with the same activity.

Also, the workshops are open – everyone from the community is welcome to join in (e.g. teachers, supervisors, prison guards), also those from the academic community can come to view and participate. This approach is equalising and open. This is especially important when working with 'problem' groups because a very important aspect of the practice is that within the circle 'problems' are shared, and 'solutions' are shared. Essentially it is a group of people trying to create something that sounds excellent, but that can only be achieved through shared effort and trust.

From the leader there is constant explanation of why certain approaches are being taken, tacitly encouraging people to apply the learning in other areas of their life. Repeating what the group are learning and why. How for some people it is important to share and be inclusive, while for others it might be about not acting immediately on an urge to dominate or disrupt someone else.

People who often feel that they don't have a voice do have a body and are encouraged to use it and to make decisions that will affect the rest of the group.

When asked about how this can have an effect beyond just creating a celebratory and engaging creative experience, the lead practitioner suggested a strong analogy:

“ You can either be Karate Kid, or Kung-Fu Panda. We do the second. We work to make sure everyone understands the process, the structure of the sessions, why things are happening in the way they are, what that will achieve, and what people can take away from that.

In this way the practice is not 'mysterious', with the lessons unveiling themselves over time (i.e. the Karate Kid approach). The practice is based on understanding that you have power and control over yourself, your body and your actions, and this is how you can influence a group and a creative output.

Across different types of creative practice with young people from different backgrounds it is interesting to consider to what extent the process is made out to be a mystery that will unfold through time (Karate Kid), or is made plain and constantly reiterated, with the associated shared understanding of individual responsibility and personal impact (Kung-Fu Panda).

6. Communities of practice and politics of participation

Introduction

Across the different research sites there were many commonalities that didn't fit within the initial parameters of the research (i.e. attainment, progression, employability and wellbeing).

This section therefore relates to observations shared by practitioners and participants that are not immediately related to external policy agendas but perhaps go some way towards explaining elements of what does and doesn't work in different settings, and why.

Many of the projects discussed how they were clearer on their impact over a longer period, seeing young people being part of projects over several years and progressing through projects and programmes. Similarly, the staff built meaningful relationships with each other and with participants across different funding periods and funding frameworks. This section therefore considers what some of the other background processes might be that contribute to the success of projects or positive outcomes for those taking part.

Key thematic findings

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced the term '**Community of practice**' to describe how individuals become part of a group that meets regularly, sets its own standards of progression and exchanges interests and experiences to grow professionally and personally. It's focused on situated learning where people develop through observing and participating and could be argued to apply to a number of the projects explored within this research. The way that collaborative practice has been described across a number of the sections in the report clearly demonstrates aspects of a community of practice as outlined and developed since by Wenger (2011), particularly around the definitional concepts of domain, community and practice:

- **Domain** - A group identity shared by a common interest (in this research, likely an art form, although could also be a physical community or other shared identity)
- **Community** – Individuals come together to share ideas and exchange knowledge, engage in joint discussions. They can work together or separately but they are connected by the domain and the exchange
- **Practice** - They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, or ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice (Wenger, 2011:2)

Within the projects featured in this research we can see how participants and practitioners have spoken about and defined the way they operate in a way that closely matches the definition of a community of practice as outlined by Wenger. The framework is useful because it helps us to define what these projects are and how they function (i.e. beyond 'workshops', 'sessions', non-formal education, community arts and so forth).

This also highlights how these projects are unusual, or different, from some of the other communities that these young people engage with (e.g. family, school or peer group). When engaging with these projects there is a clear intention to participate for something other than everyday social needs, a recognition that these specific communities of practice are about knowledge acquisition and personal development. However, this also highlights an interesting tension that emerged in the research between how explicitly projects present themselves as '**progressive learning situations**' (specific or general) as opposed to '**opportunities for liminal experiences**' ('liminal' here meaning extraordinary or unusual activities – in this case creative activities).

Different practitioners provided different explanations and rationale for how open they were when engaging with young people about the projects and their intentions. Some were very open about the fact that the projects were intended to introduce participants to a broad range of skills across art forms or within a specific art form, and by extension link to their broader learning, aspirations or 'life-chances'. Others described how introducing the projects as something other than a fun and diverting opportunity to make something (e.g. beats, videos,

visual art, jewellery, and so on) would mean that they would not engage in the first place or commit to something over time. There was a clear difference in approaches reported by different practitioners across projects:

“ I think it's creativity in general, I don't think it's just film. I think basically if you think about school, what happens is you sit in a classroom and the teacher imparts knowledge. Then you learn from that and then you show that you've learnt and you have to show at different levels and so forth. That's not for everyone. Whereas with making a film or music is good for this as well, you're actually learning whilst you're doing it. You're not consciously being taught, you're actually picking it up. I think that's where it works with the harder to reach groups because actually, they don't know that they're learning. They're actually just making the film... At a basic level it seems that they're just making a film, but they are learning, they're learning loads. They're learning how to communicate with each other. They're learning how not to lose their temper at each other, how to work together, how to deal with problems and so forth. They're learning work skills but they don't know they're learning and I think that's why it works. (Practitioner)

“ I like having a laugh with them and getting stuff from them without them realising. I think teachers have got a clear agenda. They need them to do this, this and this. I need them to do stuff, but I am not teaching

them. They are learning it without realising they are learning it. And I have had to change that so much [when working] in the schools, whereas it kind of stays the same here within this setting. (Practitioner)

“ The crucial thing is about them setting their own targets, and then seeing that any development has come from them. So for us it's not about us saying 'right, you are going to be perfect for college so let's work on that', it might be ok, your aim is that you want to learn this software so you can make a tune, and that might be the only aim. Someone else might want to release an EP – that's the target. So we set a timeline for the release and work towards it. That sort of thing. So you're not foisting progression routes on them, your just naturally helping them to achieve. (Practitioner)

These accounts are slightly at odds with those of the participants themselves (presented throughout this report) who seem able to identify and discuss the other areas of their lives and learning that their participation is affecting. Some may argue that there is something of the 'Hawthorne Effect' here, whereby the behaviour of the subject of research changes because he/she is aware of being observed. In other words, when a researcher or an evaluator talks to a participant about their involvement the participant knows the phrases and terms in which to define and describe the benefits.

However, the accounts presented throughout this research from a broad range of settings and with young people from very diverse backgrounds are less obvious than this. Through the methodological approach we have created space for participants to describe their experiences in broad terms, and worked these

‘upwards’ into concepts and theories, therefore it seems their accounts are genuine reflections of their experience rather than ‘soundbites’ we are expecting to hear.

The tension raised here is not about whether talking to participants in conceptual terms or explicitly about funder or programme objectives will be off-putting, or counter-productive. It is about the extent to which it is appropriate or necessary within practice to discuss the extent of progression within the domain, and/or beyond the domain. The answer implied by the practitioners is that this should be done, but sensitively and on an individual basis. Ethically, it seems appropriate to acknowledge with the participant that the aim of the project is to help them **develop according to their own needs and goals**.

Another important aspect of the practice is how these individually set goals and development plans often become subjugated to the common goal of the group in producing a creative output that is also credible. This is linked to existing educational concepts like the **‘common third’ in social pedagogy** which describes activities where practitioners join together with participants on equal grounds to explore and participate in an inclusive activity and reflect on their involvement and achievements together (Hatton, 2013). This raises another question around how important the type of activity itself is; whether the developmental process is down to the activities being creative activities (whatever the art form), or whether it is the process of collaborating equally, achieving something together, and reflecting on it together, that enables people to feel they are achieving and developing.

“ I’m going back to social pedagogy, the kids that have been involved, we’re hoping that they’re going to take on little leadership roles. Teach the kids who’ve never done it before how to do certain things. So it’s like sharing the, the common third of it you call it in social pedagogy. Where you’re sharing your experiences [in an activity]. So that’s now the plan for [project] and I’m

actually more excited about that than the, “Look what we’ve done, ta-da, exhibition.” (Practitioner)

“ Participant 1: I think that you start to distance yourself from being like, "I'm making a film" to "We're making a film." I think what helps with that is starting to realise that it's a collaborative process, even from the beginning of writing something...

Participant 2: Kind of getting in touch and trusting other people.

Participant 1: Yeah, you learn to trust people a lot more. Not like- it's not that we don't trust people, but you learn to let people- you learn to trust that people will do exactly the same amount of work that you will. To get to the final project.

“ The beat gives us a common language and the music gives us a common goal, which creates the group. The beat is outside of me, the reality is outside of you. It becomes external and co-created. The group exists in the space, it becomes the laboratory, the super-structure that is more important than the individual. You begin to work with the individual through the needs of the group but the group is the most important thing, the collective and the beat. (Practitioner)

These somewhat disparate perspectives address the same question about how and why **creating something together** seems to have a certain power which goes beyond the individual, and has a greater 'return' than individual efforts. The answer may be that for these specific young people, who are interested in exploring or broadening their creative identities in general, it is important that it is a creative activity that they are engaged in. For others it could be other activities, domains and interests. However, this is also a question that could be explored further across projects of this kind.

Another key idea to emerge from the research concerns the overall goal of the projects and practice. Some practitioners discussed how they saw their aims as less explicitly focused on employment or attainment, and their associated economic connotations, and more as an educative project bringing participants together for collective action and therefore aligned with raising **critical consciousness or conscientization** (Freire, 2000).

This is an approach that seeks to guide learners towards an understanding of the social and structural circumstances that surround them and how they can take action to resist oppressive social structures. Education in this regard is less about learning specific skills that you can transfer to other situations, and more about developing a deeper political and social understanding. In doing so learners are enabled to recognise the validity of their own voice and produce creative outputs that highlight systems of oppression (some of which may be affecting them).

“ One of the things we try to do is promote disruption, but from a safe and secure place. We have to be really connected to individuals and all the things that might be happening to them, where they feel comfortable or uncomfortable. But encouraging risk taking in the security of the situation [is a core aim]. (Practitioner)

“ I have seen young people, [name] who has not actually come in today. One of her old primary schools was about to get shut down and she knew that radio was a tool that could help with that. So she set up interviews and she found out research about it and that was really interesting. She was one of the quiet ones who would just come in, do a radio show and leave. But she knew that radio was a tool to tackle an issue that was going to really bother her. Technically she then gained extra, because she wanted to go out and do more. I find their interest in community stuff grows, they become aware of what's going on. (Practitioner)

While the obviously political nature of this concept was not discussed explicitly in many of the interviews, it was suggested in some of the accounts and provides an interesting framework through which to consider some of the other findings within this report about how projects function and their purpose.

Summary

This section discusses some other areas of interest that were raised in the research. The concept of '**Communities of practice**' was highlighted as a potential way of understanding how these groups come together within specific domains, and set expectations and a shared sense of progress.

A tension was highlighted between whether projects are presented to participants as **'progressive learning situations' (specific or general) as opposed to 'opportunities for liminal experiences'**. It was suggested that perhaps this is less of a tension so long as participants are enabled to **develop according to their own set of needs and goals**.

Another tension was highlighted which relates to whether there is something 'special' about **creating something together**. Or whether the positive effects

reported could be repeated in non-creative group activities, although it was suggested that this may be related to the identities of the participants (i.e. people with a stronger 'creative identity' will gain more).

Finally, the issue of **critical consciousness or conscientization** was highlighted as a potential further area of interest within projects. It was argued by some practitioners that projects provide an opportunity for participants to gain a deeper understanding of the social and political circumstances of their lives and how they can take action.

7. Conclusions

The findings presented in this report have come from over 50 qualitative interviews with practitioners and participants across seven organisations encompassing diverse geographies and art forms. The analysis sought to identify the key themes emerging from key current policy agendas, as well as highlighting some of the features of creative projects interviewees brought up as being important.

Throughout the report we have tried to present the findings alongside key theories and concepts that may be worth further investigation. With that in mind, we are presenting far more topics for further discussion and research than we are presenting conclusions of what works, or universal truths. That said, there were some core findings that seemed to dominate across all sections and are worthy 'take-aways' from the research:

It's all about self-directed goals. One of the clearest findings is that progression journeys must be made on the terms and needs of individual participants. The reason that the projects work is because young people are there to do and make something creative and if there are other benefits that is a bonus. The programmes will not be successful if the participants feel that they are getting 'youth work by the back door'.

Collaboration is key whether it is about dividing skills across a team to get the best outputs, or about having a more equal relationship with a tutor, creating and producing something that is bigger than an individual ego (or set of egos). Working together, trusting each other and relying on each other is the only way that the best outputs and outcomes can be achieved. Learning to work collaboratively may also be a skill that will be useful in future learning and employment.

Developing self-identity is a core part of life throughout childhood and adolescence, but these projects can really move things up a gear and help young people to explore their creative selves in a safe and supportive environment. Being encouraged to explore these identities can have a lasting

effect on their health and wellbeing, as well as help them to think about future learning or career paths.

Authentic, highly skilled and emotionality intelligent staff are required.

The projects only work because of the highly skilled and highly emotionally intelligent staff who draw on a range of professional resources to ensure that participants are encouraged, feel motivated, and are challenged in a way that is appropriate to each individual. Relationships are not based on what's lacking in a young person (or their life) it's about recognising and building on what they bring to any setting at any time. This is a highly professional practice.

There is an opportunity to bring theory further into practice. All those involved in the research were highly engaged and very interested in how theoretical frameworks and concepts from across different academic disciplines (e.g. sociology, psychology, education theory) could be brought into their practice more. This relatively brief research project seeks to make some of these links, but there is scope for existing theory and knowledge to be brought more closely into how projects are designed, delivered, and evaluated.

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Appendix 1 – Methodology

The current research was structured around a guiding aim and five further specific research questions. The overall aim was:

To explore what young people experiencing additional challenges gain from engaging in arts-led creative work

The further research questions were:

1. How are participants developing their creative skills and how is this linked to broader development?
2. What are the unique 'active ingredients' of projects that are leading to positive outcomes? (including an exploration of different types of intervention for different groups, whether there are optimal sizes, exploring the effects in mainstreaming vs targeted project designs)
3. What practices and approaches have been more or less successful and why? (including a consideration of how young people's aspirations change, how skills are developed within and beyond projects)
4. How are arts projects valued and understood by those involved (the young people, artists, parents/carers and non-arts partner organisations)?
5. How can current good practice be applied to project models for future delivery?

The research methodology was qualitative, and sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of young people directly, as well as the practitioners and organisations working with them. We engaged with a broad range of projects (including multiple art forms) across multiple age ranges and across Scotland. The organisations included in the research were:

- Firefly Arts, West Lothian (Multi-art form)
- Eden Court, Inverness/Moray (Multi-art form)
- Screen Education Edinburgh, Edinburgh – (Film)

- Kibble Education and Care Centre, Paisley (Multi-art form)
- Station House Media Unit, Aberdeen (Creative Media)

In addition to these Scotland-based projects funded through the CashBack for Creativity programme we included two further comparators in the research. One based in England (AudioActive, Brighton), and one based in Spain (Basket Beat, Barcelona). This allowed for the exploration of methods and processes within other policy and funding frameworks from those organisations based in and operating within the funding frameworks of Scotland.

Funded organisations were contacted by Creative Scotland and asked if they would like to participate. This was followed up by an email from the BOP research team directly to arrange an appropriate time for a fieldwork visit. Within fieldwork visits there tended to be short interviews with project staff, practitioners and participants. All those engaged with for research purposes were given full information about their participation. Interviews were recorded and all transcripts were anonymised, so that research participants could feel assured that they will not be identified by anything they say. Anyone who didn't wish to participate in the research was free not to. Where appropriate given the nature of the activities, pair interviews or small focus groups were conducted.

Between five and ten individuals from each project were included in the research. Although as this is a qualitative research exercise, the focus is more on the depth of meaning explored in the interviews rather than on achieving a representative sample of a particular youth or practitioner population.

Interviews were transcribed and analysed using principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), in this method we explore the accounts for shared explanations of different themes and ideas. We seek to understand how experiences make sense to participants and practitioners, but acknowledge that these perspectives do not represent a universal 'truth' and are interpreted by these individuals, as well as by ourselves as the research team. The presentation of findings is therefore based on a summary of how the research

questions and ideas were interpreted as 'reality' by those we spoke to. Each transcript was analysed by two members of the research team.

Topic guide for participants

1. How long have you been involved in [creative activity]? How did you first get involved? What other creative activities are you involved in?
2. What are the main things you have learned by taking part in [activity]?
3. How does this [activity] affect other aspects of your life? Do you use any of the learning in other aspects of your life?
4. What are the things you have done that you have learned most from? What was most challenging?
5. Do you think any differently about your options in the future based on taking part here?

Topic guide for practitioners

1. How does your approach in [activity] differ from some more formal styles of learning or teaching?
2. To what extent are you about developing the participants' skills beyond [activity]? What are the techniques you use to achieve this? How open are you about the non-arts outcomes you might be achieving with the young people?
3. How do you situate the learning so that it has a resonance in other aspects of participants' lives? Was this even an intention? How much do you plan intended outcomes in your preparation?
4. How do surprising outcomes shape your future delivery?
5. What do you think are the core ways that creative activities and outcomes are linked to broader outcomes? What do you think are the 'active ingredients' in participating in projects?
6. Progression question? Progression within the specific field or progression in general?
7. What do you think is the most important learning that has come from this project that could be shared with other people doing similar work?

Topic guide for (non-arts) partners

1. Why did you want to get involved in the project?
2. What do you think is valuable about this practice over and above other types of project?
3. What (if anything) do you think is valuable about creativity and arts-based projects?
4. How would you like to see things develop in the future to help improve partnerships between arts-based and non-arts specific organisations?

Appendix 2 – Project Descriptions

Station House Media Unit (SHMU), Aberdeen – Station House Media Unit provide a community radio station and print magazine, edited and hosted by young people. They work with around 30 young people at any one time and focus particularly on local areas of high deprivation, as well as those experiencing additional challenges such as being looked after, or young carers. They host structured and drop-in sessions and a range of structured developmental opportunities for those young people seeking to progress in creative media.

Screen Education Edinburgh – provide a broad range of provision from first access to advanced industry-level training. The CashBack programme focuses on young people from deprived areas of Edinburgh, and those with additional learning needs, as well as children and young people experiencing a broad range of additional challenges. The CashBack entry level programme provides a structured 'introduction to film' course, covering all the basic theory and practical knowledge required to produce a short film. Structured progression opportunities into next level courses are also provided.

Kibble Education and Care Centre, Paisley/Who Cares? Scotland – Kibble Education and Care Centre is a secure unit for children who have been removed from their families and communities. It provides holistic care and an education programmes seeking to achieve reintegration for the children in their care. For CashBack they work in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, the national support agency for looked-after children. Between them they run a weekly multi-arts session in-house where participants can engage in a broad range of creative activities, they also run a separate weekly session in the community for young carers in the Greater Glasgow region.

Firefly Arts, Livingston – Firefly run multi-arts programmes with children and young people in a deprived area of central Scotland. Between two major cities, but with underdeveloped cultural infrastructure, the CashBack programme focuses on working with young people to produce high-quality creative outputs across multiple art forms.

Eden Court Theatre, Inverness – is a theatre and workshop venue in central Inverness which provides structured workshops and drop-in sessions for young people across drama, music and film-making. They work with young people experiencing a range of challenges, including young carers, looked-after children and young people with additional learning needs.

Audio Active, Brighton – Focus on music production with young people from across and beyond Brighton, particularly targeted work with young people experiencing additional challenges, from the effects of poverty to those at risk of exploitation. Audio Active run a combination of drop-in sessions and more structured music courses, often with additional accreditation on offer for those seeking it.

Basket Beat, Barcelona – Based on collective music and movement, Basket Beat work across a range of education and social settings using their innovative methodology to engage diverse groups, often with significant additional challenges, in group music making. They focus on how individual actions affect group dynamics and creative outputs and goals. The sessions can range from one-off opportunities to progressive courses, and in some cases performance of ensemble music making.



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