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# Evaluation of the Creative Learning Plan

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## Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction and Methodology

In October 2013 Consilium Research and Consultancy (Consilium) and Helix Arts were appointed by Creative Scotland to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the partnership and delivery of the Creative Learning Plan. The evaluation provides an overview of the delivery of the Creative Learning Plan between 2012 and 2014 and signals the completion of this phase of partnership working as well as aiming to inform the next stage of the Plan.

The research methodology involved a number of overlapping stages including a desk-based review, production of a monitoring and evaluation framework, consultation with partners and attendance at scheduled Implementation Group meetings and associated Creative Learning Plan events. Delivery of the evaluation has been supported by contributions from a wide range of stakeholders and their valuable input has been greatly appreciated.

### Effectiveness of Partnership Working

The launch of the Creative Learning Plan builds on previous development work by the partner organisations, in particular Creative Scotland and Education Scotland. The Creative Learning Plan represents the first time that each has come together to collaborate specifically on embedding creativity in learning and teaching across Scotland. The significance of publishing the Creative Learning Plan itself should not be underestimated as partners have acknowledged its value in providing a focal point for partnership activity and a clear articulation of the vision for creativity and creative learning.

Each of the partner organisations had different starting points in terms of their involvement and engagement in promoting and supporting creative learning. However it is evident from consultations that the process of developing the Creative Learning Plan has stimulated internal discussion within each of the represented organisations on which commitments and actions they are comfortable signing up to.

### *Strategic Group*

As the lead organisation Creative Scotland has proven effective in bringing partners together and establishing the infrastructure to drive the delivery of the Plan. Coming together as a group has presented an opportunity for partners to share ideas and influence each others delivery plans which in turn support the implementation of the Creative Learning Plan. The delivery of the Plan has highlighted further areas for collaboration and opportunities for joint investment.

As a group of senior representatives from across the partner organisations, the Strategic Group has the potential to make policy changes to facilitate the effective delivery of the Creative Learning Plan. To be truly effective the Strategic Group requires representation at chief officer level from partner organisations. This has, however, generated challenges in convening meetings and various options have been employed to address this including the identification of senior alternates within partner organisations.

As the Strategic Group only met once during the delivery of the evaluation, there is limited documentary evidence of their oversight of the work of the Implementation Group and direction as to future priorities for multi-agency, albeit it is apparent that development work and partnership discussions have progressed outside of formal partnership meetings.

Whilst the lack of Strategic Group meetings in 2014 does not appear to have unduly held up the work of the Implementation Group, it does nevertheless necessitate a rethink as to the role and purpose of this group of senior leaders in supporting the Creative Learning Plan. In particular to address common issues, delivery challenges or opportunities identified by Implementation Group members.

In light of the growing maturity of the partnership it is recommended that the Strategic Group should review the existing terms of reference in particular with regards to the content of communications and monitoring updates provided to Scottish Government. This can help to ensure future meetings are used to clearly identify areas where the Scottish Government may be able to provide support to address particular challenges or link with other existing policy and implementation approaches. Based on the themes emerging from consultations it is recommended that the Strategic Group should focus on the following areas:

- Supporting **employability** by developing young people's creativity skills
- Embedding an **assessment of creativity** within the inspection process
- Developing **whole school approaches** to creativity

Subject to the focus of the Creative Learning Plan, the process of refreshing the Strategic Group should also involve a review of membership, in particular to seek greater representation from employers and school leaders. Widening the partnership can help to bring in fresh ideas and establish connections with organisations that have a clear stake in developing creativity skills and/or are in a position to embed creativity at an organisational and workforce level.

The process of refreshing the Creative Learning Plan should also consider which organisation is best placed to take on the lead partner role. To date Creative Scotland has undertaken this role and has been integral to building the partnership and forging stronger strategic and operational links between the arts and education sectors. Given the development of the partnership there is a valid case for another organisation taking on the lead partner role to build on the success and achievements evident during 2012 to 2014 and to meet the needs of the next phase of delivery. The process of handing over the lead partner role to coincide with the next phase of delivery should be viewed as a measure of the strength of leadership and management of the Creative Learning Plan by Creative Scotland to date.

### *Implementation Group*

The Implementation Group has met more frequently than the Strategic Group with the secretariat function provided by Creative Scotland. The agenda for the Implementation Group has been too heavily skewed towards process and monitoring with less time devoted for exploring key themes, discussing barriers faced in delivering the plan and developing further proposals for consideration by the Strategic Group. This has been exacerbated by the considerable list of actions across the four workstreams that were established by partners to support the delivery of the Plan.

The requirement to provide quarterly reports to Ministers on the progress of delivering the Plan has added to a sense that the Implementation Group meetings have become overly bureaucratic and, ironically, not very creative. Moving forward it is recommended that the action plan is streamlined to focus on a smaller number of shared actions. This will free up time at the Implementation Group meetings to discuss challenges, review relevant research and evaluation reports, explore issues in greater depth and develop and deliver proposals following agreement by the Strategic Group.

## **Delivery of the Creative Learning Action Plan 2012-2014**

A broad range of actions and development work has been delivered under the umbrella of the Creative Learning Plan. One of the challenges facing partners in delivering the Creative Learning Plan is ensuring an appropriate level of coherence between initiatives and activities and that actions delivered are aligned to the vision for creative learning in Scotland as stated in the current iteration of the Plan.

A recurrent theme in both the baseline and follow-up consultations completed with partners was the difficulty and complexity associated with measuring the outcomes and impact of the activities and actions. Several partners recognised that there has been a tendency to focus on activities and outputs rather than taking a wider view of what the achievement of the Creative Learning Plan vision will mean and how this would be measured.

The evidence base in relation to outcomes and impacts delivered under the umbrella of the plan has grown during the two years of delivery, most notably through evaluation reports covering various actions and projects delivered by the Creative Learning Plan partners but is also evident in partners organisational plans and commitments.

### *Workstream 1 - Share our vision of a more creative society and ensure that all partners are committed to its fulfilment*

The publication and launch of the Creative Learning Plan and establishment of the Strategic and Implementation Groups has provided the infrastructure to communicate the vision and coherent messages about the importance of creativity to a wide range of stakeholders. The Creativity Across Learning 3-18 Report published in September 2013 was guided by the Implementation Group and provides a valuable resource which defines what creativity is and identifies what part it plays in Scottish education (and wider society).

However, although a commitment was made to establish a plan to agree key messages and disseminate them through partners communication platforms, this does not appear to have been governed by a coordinated communications strategy. As a result, key messages have not been presented as strongly and consistently as partners would have liked (including internal messaging within partner organisations). As a consequence the process of embedding and extending creative learning in school (and other) settings has proven more effective in some areas than others dependent on local leadership and connections with the creativity agenda.

There is scope for members of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) play a stronger role in providing leadership around creativity and creative learning at a local authority level, to influence and support school leadership teams, to promote the Creative Learning Networks (CLNs) and to broker links between a range of stakeholders including schools, employers, career advisers, arts organisations and colleges. Key messages on the importance of creativity could also be more strongly incorporated into the inspection and review process managed by Education Scotland, to ensure that it is embraced in schools across the curriculum.

### *Workstream 2 - Build capacity and expertise of learning practitioners and creative partners to support the development of creative skills through learning and teaching*

A wide range of actions included within the Creative Learning Plan pertain to approaches to build the capacity and expertise of learning practitioners as part of a coordinated and coherent professional development programme. The Emerging Leaders professional development course has provided a useful model of how future leaders can be supported to think more creativity and embrace creative skills. Participants feedback has been positive with the programme seen as offering a fresh approach to training managers, with an emphasis on creativity as a driver for development.

A common theme from the emerging evaluations of professional development activities is the considerable value and benefits derived from learning practitioners and creative partners having the space and time to come together to share practice, engage in dialogue around creativity skills and creative teaching and build communities of practice.

This emphasises the value of the Creative Learning Networks in providing the local, collegiate, relevant and sustained infrastructure to enable learning practitioners, creative partners and other key stakeholders to come together with a shared interest in creativity and creative learning. The Creative Learning Networks share considerable potential to engage the growing number of teachers and leaders in school and colleges with an interest in creativity and to build local and relevant communities of practice around creativity and creative learning.

#### *Workstream 3 - Develop a strategic approach to pathways for lifelong creative learning*

The majority of actions included within this workstream have been owned or jointly delivered by Creative Scotland, Education Scotland and the College Development Network. These actions have tended to focus on three areas: firstly providing pathways for young people to obtain skills and experience within the arts and creative industries sector to improve their employability; secondly providing support, guidance and encouragement for young entrepreneurs wishing to establish new business start-ups within the creative sector; and finally to facilitate engagement of target groups, including offenders, people with disabilities and children and young people, in a wide range of creative activities and experiences.

Engaging children and young people in creative processes that develop creativity skills can help to improve their employability and respond directly to the concerns raised by employers. These opportunities should not be restricted to the arts and cultural sector or creative industries. There is a clear rationale for employers being more strongly engaged in the delivery of the Creative Learning Plan to provide opportunities for creative learning across a broader range of sectors and contexts.

#### *Workstream 4 - Develop approaches to the assessment of creativity, including certification*

Partners have developed approaches and delivered actions which assess the impact of creative learning on the acquisition of creativity skills. The Creative Learning Plan has helped SQA to crystallise their ideas around curriculum development in this field, particularly the need for qualifications around creative industries and creative subjects, and also embedding creativity across the curriculum, giving learners the opportunity to demonstrate creativity across all subjects.

There is recognition that it may take several years to see whether embedding creativity in the curriculum is having an impact on the creativity skills of children and young people and their outcomes and pathways beyond the school gate. In the interim, partners have a role in measuring the take-up of creative activities and approaches across schools and colleges and learning from practitioners using new approaches to evaluating creative activity.

### **Key Learning and Recommendations**

The Creative Learning Plan represents the first time that each of the partners has come together to collaborate specifically on embedding creativity in learning and teaching across Scotland. Partners have welcomed the opportunity to come together to support the development and delivery of the existing plan. It is evident that links have been established between organisations and services around creativity that were not previously in place. This has provided both the infrastructure and initial momentum to drive forward a programme of actions to support the aspirations outlined in the Creative Learning Plan.

A common theme from the emerging evaluations of professional development activities delivered under the umbrella of the plan is the considerable value and benefits derived from learning practitioners and creative partners having the space and time to come together to share practice, engage in dialogue around creativity skills and creative teaching and build communities of practice.

Moving forward partners should rethink the role and function of the Creative Learning Networks. Consideration should be given to the CLNs operating at two levels: firstly as learning communities for a range of practitioners and stakeholders involved in creativity, and secondly, as mechanisms for strategic planning of creativity in education at a local level (and the wider community).

### *Recommendations*

- An annual joint meeting of the Strategic and Implementation Group representatives should be established to reflect on achievements, identify areas for development and refresh the partnership plan.
- The Strategic Group should discuss and agree another lead partner to take the Creative Learning Plan through its next phase of delivery.
- Partners should rethink the role and purpose of the Strategic Group in supporting the Creative Learning Plan, in particular to address common issues, delivery challenges or opportunities identified by Implementation Group members.
- The existing terms of reference for the Strategic Group should be reviewed in particular with regards to the content of communications and monitoring updates provided to Scottish Government.
- The membership of the Strategic Group should be reviewed to ensure representation from school leaders, employers and school inspectors.
- The current action plan should be streamlined to focus on a smaller number of actions to support the next phase of delivery.
- Partners should consider establishing a 'Creativity Mark' to facilitate the process of building capacity and expertise of learning practitioners and embedding creative teaching and learning approaches in schools and colleges.
- Key messages on the importance of creativity should be more strongly incorporated into the inspection and review process to ensure that they are embraced in schools.
- Creative Learning Networks should be refocused at two levels. Firstly as learning communities around creativity for a range of practitioners and stakeholders involved in creativity and secondly as mechanisms for strategic planning of creativity in education at a local level (and the wider community).
- Further work should be taken forward to showcase to young people that creative skills are actively used and valued in the range of other sectors also covered by Skills Investment Plans.
- Partners should establish a process and framework for measuring the use of creative teaching by practitioners and acquisition of creativity skills by children and young people.