

# National Theatre of Scotland Case Study

**Art  
Works**  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
Special Initiative

Developing  
Practice in  
Participatory  
Settings



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

## About the Project

'Shift' is a co-production between the National Theatre of Scotland and CultureNL, the body responsible for the management and operation of North Lanarkshire's cultural services. Running for seven months, it's an ambitious and profound work paying homage to the philosophers, inventors and labourers on whose efforts present day Scotland has been built. The title refers to the measurements of activity which accumulatively fashioned an empire and thrust our country onto the global stage.

Stepping onto a literal stage for this project are participants from six areas across North Lanarkshire. 18 – 35 year olds based in the region have little experience of engaging with the performing arts, and it's hoped that creating a new community group will address this issue.

## Early Stages

Initial preparation for the pilot version of 'Shift' strove to identify the key staff to involve in the delivery of the project. Each interested party briefed the organisers on their aims, ambitions and objectives which were then considered in relation to the partner organisations'. Both NTS and CultureNL were keen to engage staff at the planning stage, allowing time and freedom for their thoughts and ideas to shape the remainder of the project.

A team was built comprising five NTS staff members, a single freelance director, 10 CultureNL arts officers and two lead officers from the same organisation. All met with group leaders from artforms connected to Culture NL to share in project aims at grassroots level and gain a sense of which participants may wish to get involved.

## Using the Toolkit

The 'Is This the Best We Can Be?' toolkit helped both organisations arrive at a democratic approach to working together in a hands-on, practical way, while simultaneously engaging community participants. It offered a means by which the partners could measure their progress and assess the extent to which they were achieving their agreed aims at each stage of the process.

The toolkit was seen to act as a checklist, a way of ensuring that an established time line was being managed and adhered to. It provided reassurance that good practice was being maintained. The partners reported that by referring to the toolkit in the early stages of the process, they found themselves 'using' it subconsciously throughout.

As NTS's Karen Allen said, ***"I feel we use all the elements within the toolkit already within our practice through our co-production agreements and detailed outlines with all partners."***

***"We will continue to work with the toolkit through the delivery of the project and evaluation and use in all other participatory projects where relevant."***