



A CREATIVE DECADE; MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CASHBACK FOR CREATIVITY

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MEDIA EDUCATION, DR BRIEGE NUGENT
AND KATE DEACON



**CASH
BACK**
FOR COMMUNITIES

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Executive summary

For ten years Cashback for Creativity has supported youth arts organisations across Scotland to deliver creative activities to young people experiencing additional challenges and living in areas of multiple deprivation. This research builds on BOP Consulting's 2017 report, 'How do you draw a rainbow the wrong way round?', which 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 and social development'.

BOP established the 'unique ingredients' in creative projects that lead to positive outcomes for young people, suggesting that 'Future research and evaluation [of Cashback projects] may wish to explore some of these issues [wellbeing, identity] in greater depth, and [that] 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'. The aim of this research is therefore to understand both the long-term impact of Cashback projects on young people's wellbeing and wider development, and the most effective ways to capture this.

In an increasingly challenging funding environment, it is vital that the positive long-term impacts of the arts are understood in policy contexts. This report explores the challenges of evaluating long-term impact, highlighting where effective evaluation is currently being carried out by Cashback-funded organisations, and offering important considerations for funders and youth arts providers. A key finding is that effective evaluation tends to take a qualitative approach, foregrounding the voices of the young people taking part, and consolidating the positive impact of participation in the arts by providing an opportunity for young people to reflect on their personal development. We identify several advantages of qualitative longitudinal evaluation, namely that it captures rich data on project outcomes, is sensitive to research participants, and has the potential to shift what is understood to be robust evidence beyond quantitative data. At the same time, we stress that expectations around evaluation need to reflect the capabilities and ethics of the organisations.

Research overview

This report presents the findings of an appreciative study undertaken in two phases. In the first phase we collated and analysed the existing studies on qualitative and longitudinal research (see Appendix B: Literature Review). Current understandings from the literature identify two main challenges:

- The difficulty of quantifying the impact of the arts given that each individual experiences the arts and their impacts differently.
- The challenge of aggregating evidence of impact from personal stories and testimonies.

Despite these challenges, the literature recommends qualitative methodologies on the basis that:

- Their emphasis on dialogue and reflection brings to light the link between the intrinsic (individually experienced) and extrinsic (social/inter-personal) benefits of participation in arts and creative activity (for a detailed explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, see BOP 2017, p. 11).

- Methodologies for capturing long-term impact are currently under-researched.
- The increasingly challenging funding environment means that it is vital to capture and understand the long-term impact of participation in arts and creative activity.

In the second phase, we conducted a qualitative study involving six organisations from across Scotland: Reeltime Music in North Lanarkshire, Dancebase in Edinburgh, Station House Media Unit (SHMU) in Aberdeen, Eden Court in Inverness, Y Sort-It in West Dunbartonshire and Hot Chocolate Trust in Dundee. We interviewed eleven staff members/creative practitioners from across these organisations, and eleven young people who first engaged with Cashback-funded projects between three and ten years ago. As part of the evaluation process, four young people created films reflecting on their experiences of engaging with the projects, three independently and one in collaboration with staff at their organisation. The option to make films was met with enthusiasm as it offered a chance for the young people to articulate complex feelings and reflections on the personal impact of their participation in a creative way. It also allowed some of the young people to deploy the photography and filmmaking skills they had gained through the projects. The films can be viewed at:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6515779>
password: Creative_Scotland

At the culmination of the research project, all participants were invited to a screening event, which provided a further opportunity for reflection on the projects' impact, and on the evaluation process.

Initial findings

Arts and creative activities have a long-term positive impact on young people experiencing additional challenges. BOP (2017) address the question of whether similarly positive outcomes can be achieved through non-arts interventions, concluding that arts activities produce positive outcomes by fostering a unique combination of:

- Self-directed learning
- Critical thinking
- Creative problem-solving
- Metacognition
- Collaborative working (as opposed to simply working in a team)
- Critical consciousness
- Creative identity
- The ability to imagine new and future selves
- Technical, artform-specific, and direct transferable skills (pp. 4-5)

The young people who took part in this research reflected that they lacked a sense of direction prior to their participation in Cashback for Creativity. Art projects were appealing in that they offered opportunities to learn and explore their potential that were different from formal education. This report provides evidence that opportunities to engage in creative activities can help young people from deprived areas overcome structural barriers to their life chances. Not only did the young people report increased wellbeing, confidence and hope for the future, but also new hobbies, specific skill-development and career pathways. All eleven interviewees progressed to positive destinations in the ten years following their engagement: six have pursued creative career paths, and the other five continue to engage in the arts as a hobby. Six are in education and three are working.

Arts interventions are effective in that they offer young people the chance to build skills and express themselves, whilst also having a range of developmental benefits including on mental health, self-esteem, relationships and personal goals. These may have diversionary effects, including reducing the young people's contact with the criminal justice system, health and social care services, and the welfare system, which also offer wider community and societal benefits.

The relationships with staff/creative practitioners and peers which young people formed through creative activities were fundamental to their positive outcomes. For young people with additional challenges, and/or growing up in areas of multiple deprivation, these art projects provided rare 'safe' spaces, where participants could 'escape' their situations, access opportunities, build positive relationships with adults and other young people, and experience expert creative facilitation. The importance of these relationships should not be underestimated: for many marginalised young people who commonly experience loneliness and isolation, this may be their first opportunity to feel a sense of belonging.

Through this research we found there was a challenge to traditional methods of establishing a baseline against which changes can be measured. Firstly, baselines can imply a deficit in a young person's capabilities or attributes prior to their engagement. Secondly, it can be difficult to establish a baseline given that young people do not always report the wider structural barriers they face. For example, poverty is evidently underreported. Our findings suggest that a young person's ability to articulate the positions from which they started was formed through their participation in the projects such that a baseline could sometimes only be identified retrospectively. Similarly, it was often only through accessing expert facilitation that the young people were able to form self-directed goals. This reflects what BOP refer to as the 'contribution chain' of outcomes, 'i.e. how beginning participation leads to sustaining, leads to confidence, leads to skills, leads to progression' (BOP 2018). Tracking should therefore take account of these issues by occurring at a time that is appropriate for individuals.

In order to achieve this it is crucial that staff and creative practitioners understand the contexts which young people come from and the interconnected external factors which influence a young person's development. The interviews with staff revealed that positive outcomes should be attributed to multiple factors including but not limited to the organisations' intervention, reflecting the 'contribution chain' in which a supportive environment enables a young person to initiate their own positive change.

Building and measuring long-term impact demands significant time and resources. This can be particularly challenging in the context of short-term funding cycles. Staff and creative practitioners emphasised that whilst for some young people awards and qualifications are an appropriate measure of success, for the most vulnerable young people, small steps such as regular attendance and self-travel are in fact more important indicators of progress. Measuring impact should therefore ideally include opportunities for young people to tell their stories in the way that best represents their individual progress. Potential models for capturing this have emerged, including case studies, videos and podcasts, which we will discuss.

All the young people interviewed said that they would be happy to be part of any research for many years to come, and that they would welcome opportunities to reconnect with peers and staff at annual alumni events. Indeed, young people returned to Reeltime Music and Y Sort-It for events hosted over the past year, demonstrating the potential for longitudinal research. This furthermore shows that the

experience of measuring long-term impact is understood to be potentially beneficial to organisations and young people, in that it provides an opportunity for learning and reflection.

We gratefully acknowledge the time the young people gave to report on the long-term impact of the projects. Their stories help inform understandings of the importance of creative opportunities in addressing the effects of deprivation and inequality.

1. Introduction and methodology

Introduction and overview

This section sets out the research questions used in this study. A decision was made to move the literature review and context of Creative Scotland to the appendices in order to prioritise the voices of the young people and to place the learning from the empirical study at the forefront.

Research aims and questions

This report represents the findings of an appreciative inquiry, which focused on the best of 'what is' (Preskill & Catsambas 2006: 2), and on the discovery and appreciation of peak moments of long-term impacts in the CashBack history. The research questions were:

- 'What are the long-term impacts of creative engagement for young people considered through the lens of the CashBack for Creativity programme?'
- 'How can organisations better evaluate and illustrate the long-term impacts?'

Methodology

The methodology for our enquiry was informed by the demographics of Cashback target groups, including the target age range of participants. The research was approached by adopting a modified Success Case Method (SCM) (Birkenhoff, 2002), namely identifying cases where the impact of the initiative has been felt to be greatest, but also bearing in mind geographical spread and targeting across the three artistic media provided at the organisations in question: music, dance and digital.

Our approach was also informed by the previous independent evaluations and consultation with Creative Scotland. It is important to recognise that in the independent evaluations the methods or reasoning for the development of particular case studies was not given and is a limitation of the current study.

Six organisations were selected for case studies on the basis of this initial research:

- Reeltime Music in North Lanarkshire, set up to bring positive change to disadvantaged young people by providing quality recording and rehearsal services, workshops and training, volunteering, and partnership projects.
- Dancebase in Edinburgh, the National Centre for Dance, which provides public, professional and participatory dance programmes in world class studios. The organisation exists to encourage and celebrate the potential for dance in everyone.
- Station House Media Unit (SHMU) in Aberdeen, which is at the forefront of radio, video production, traditional and on-line publications, music production and digital inclusion.
- Y-Sort It in West Dunbartonshire, which provides a hub for young people in the local community, for them to come together, develop and take part in activities and arts responding to what young people in the area want.
- Eden Court in Inverness, the only major arts centre in the Highlands, which is supported by Cashback to offer a creativity programme providing opportunities for young people outwith mainstream education or who face barriers.
- Hot Chocolate Trust in Dundee, which works with young people aged 12-21 providing opportunities to engage in arts activities to develop skills and confidence.

The case studies prioritised hearing directly from young people and staff/creative practitioners about the long-term impact of initiatives and their attitudes towards evaluation (Olson et al. 2011). We conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews, with prepared questions providing consistency as well as flexibility to pursue lines of discussion raised by individual participants (Cousin, 2009). It would be fair to say that the study set out to be purposive, but as access to young people was reliant on staff within organisations acting as gatekeepers, this is more accurately described as convenience sampling. Interviews took around forty-five minutes, and were audio recorded and transcribed. Findings from the interviews with young people are presented in section 5 of this report (Case Studies, p. 33). These findings were then used to inform the filmmaking phase, in which young people developed a production brief to capture the long-term impact of the programme.

All young people interviewed were keen to be involved in this phase, some suggesting that film would provide a medium through which they could express feelings which were difficult to articulate verbally. The Research and Media teams made repeated attempts to promote participation by offering to make practical arrangements on the young people's behalf, including covering travel costs. However, due to competing priorities and other life circumstances, four of the eleven interviewees produced films, three as individuals and one in collaboration with a group at Y Sort-It. The three individual films explored in subtle and nuanced ways the impact of developing skills in photography, filmmaking and journalism respectively, and how this contributed to the development of their creative identities. In the film developed by Y Sort-It, the focus was on how the project helped young people overcome anxiety by providing a welcoming space for them to socialise and create work together. Just as the young people used film to articulate feelings which were difficult to verbalise, it is difficult to convey the emotion and energy expressed by the films themselves.

The young people were brought together in September for a day, to show their films, discuss findings and develop the key themes. In the report this is referred to as a 'Reflect and Learn Session' or simply 'Session'. All the previously mentioned organisations were involved in all parts of the research, apart from Hot Chocolate, where only staff/creative practitioners were interviewed.

Analysis

Our research is informed by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) methodology for analysing qualitative data. All the data generated throughout the different stages of this research has been brought together in this report.

Limitations

This study has been reliant on participants taking time and being willing to share their stories. Participants defined for themselves the level of information they wished to provide. In some instances, therefore, participants chose to gloss over certain issues. The organisations chosen for case studies reflected findings in the previous evaluations. As mentioned above, their rationale for choosing particular case studies is not known.

The main limitation on this study was time. A larger study would be likely to make this sample more representative. It is not claimed that the young people we interviewed are representative of all Cashback participants, however, their accounts give important insights into the lasting impact of engagement with arts projects on their lives.

2. Long-term impact on young people

Overview

In this section we present the findings from the interviews with the eleven young people from across five organisations (NB we did not interview young people at Hot Chocolate Trust). One young person had completed a project over three years ago, two five years ago, two six years ago, two seven years ago, two eight, one nine and one ten years ago. This research then is based predominantly on young people who first had support through the arts projects funded by Cashback over five years ago. They are now aged between 16 and 22. Three now work for the organisations that once supported them, three sit on the Board and volunteer, two still engage with the projects and the other three remain in good contact with the creative practitioners. Six are pursuing careers in the arts and the other five continue to engage recreationally.

As stated, it is not claimed that these eleven young people are representative of all Cashback participants, but rather that their accounts give important insights into the long-term impact of participation in arts and creative activity. It is also crucial to bear in mind the context in which young people engaged with the projects, given that Cashback for Creativity targets young people experiencing, or at risk of, multiple deprivation, school exclusion and/or involvement in offending behaviour.

Reporting additional challenges

All previous evaluations touch on the challenges faced by young participants. It is possible that these challenges were underreported at the time of their engagement, but that over time the young people have developed a greater understanding and ability to report on the adverse circumstances they faced.

Addressing poverty

Six young people briefly discussed the effects of poverty during the interviews, and a small number reflected openly on poverty at the Reflect and Learn Session in September. Young people from one organisation observed that they live in one of the most deprived areas in Scotland and that the arts project provided a space for them to 'get away', and to access activities and opportunities otherwise unavailable. At the Reflect and Learn Session, young people who were being looked after at home spoke about this being a mental 'escape'. One group wrote:

Sometimes people have some really difficult issues at home and need somewhere to go, places like Y Sort-It are there.

This same group drew a poster of safe spaces in their community; the arts projects were depicted as central. This reinforces the importance of these spaces in supporting young people to feel connected to a place or community. Two young interviewees were supported by the arts projects during periods of homelessness, and described these as the hardest times in their lives. In a 'throw away' comment by one of the young people, the desperation of the situation is made clear:

It was good you had your lunch here too and the staff would discretely give you the leftover food too, and they understood. They are absolutely brilliant. (YP1)

Finally, one young person discussed the change in the benefits system and how it affected their family. They stated, 'we have been surviving, not living.' At this stage four of the young people are working full time, however, finances remain a struggle in

many cases, and it is important to recognise how difficult it is for young people growing up in poverty to get out of it. Also, the shame and self-blame people feel about living in poverty means that it can be too difficult to discuss and as a result it remains hidden (Walker, 2014). Indeed, it would be worth doing a more focused piece of work to draw this out. As will be discussed, all eleven were hopeful of a better future away from the grip of poverty. One young woman in the session argued strongly that arts projects should be available to all young people in Scotland, and that includes those who live in poverty.

Reducing isolation and loneliness

Teuton's (2018) review of social isolation and loneliness in Scotland describes how 60% of young people experience feeling lonely. Those who are socially and economically disadvantaged are most at risk of isolation, and poor mental and physical health. LGBT+ young people also have an increased risk of being bullied and isolated. It was striking how isolated and lonely all of those interviewed reported feeling at the time of first coming into contact with the organisations. Three have autism and before coming to the arts project one of these young people had been a chronic self-harmer and suicidal. Five described having few to no friends at ages 11 and 12 and feeling school had given up on them, and reported that they had already begun to lose hope about their future.

I was going through a very difficult time, difficulties at school. I was only at school 2 hours a week, but this was so different from school... if I didn't understand then I would have it explained to me. It brought me back from a place where I was so low... I was in a really low place and I don't want to talk about that because it is too painful for me, but I hated it, I used to say, 'why was I born autistic?' (YP2)

At the time I wasn't leaving the house and coming here, I found it hard to talk to people still, but although I was silent, they helped me to feel like I was involved and part of a 'normal' group...I wasn't the 'special guy' like I was at school, I was just part of the group and they discreetly supported me. I remember saying to my mum at the time 'I feel different.' (YP7)

I did my work experience here as well. The school said that I didn't need to do it but I wanted to do it and here helped me with that...School was a really negative experience and this was so positive. This was the highlight of the week for me. (YP3)

They had stopped going to school and the arts projects offered a creative alternative, a different way of learning and engaging, as well as starting anew.

Four of those interviewed were also carers and it was only through the arts projects that they met other young people like them. Whilst each young person's circumstances differed, some were able to form common identities with other young people through their participation. All described how they had felt very alone up until then, with the projects providing a space in which some felt supported for the first time.

You meet other people who really understand your situation. We can all relate to one another. This is a deprived area and the kids that come here are going through the same situations and come from the same backgrounds. (YP10)

You knew you were different but there are other people that are going through all of this too. (YP11)

For the other young people, their feelings of isolation were linked to family issues, some skimming over this simply saying 'there was a lot going on.'

I had family things going on then and they really helped, and at the time the school weren't listening. (YP6)

For three young people, dealing with their sexuality made them feel very alone.

I was quite a shy person and I was dealing with a lot with my sexuality and stuff. (YP10)

All the young people feel that without the support given, their lives would be very different. They report coming to the organisations, feeling safe, accepted and achieving a sense of belonging.

I was socially isolated and shy and if it wasn't for here I think I would be unemployed with nothing to do... I think it was good too that when I came here for the first time after that course I did in school with them, you realised you had been in a wee bubble, because I felt like that again coming here, so it took time. (YP8)

I was treated as a person here, not someone with autism. (YP2)

As will be discussed in more detail, relationships between the young people and staff are crucial, but also meeting other young people and making friends. The three young people who are autistic described how it was their interest in the medium – in these cases films and music – that got them attending the arts projects in the first place, and through these experiences that they first made friends.

I have met very very good friends that I am still friends with today. I have other friends too, I didn't have that confidence before coming here. I didn't have friends anymore until I came here. I have someone I can talk to who wants to understand. (YP2)

I think it is good meeting people here too...I think also that we all have a common interest it makes it easier. (YP3)

One of the best things for me is that I met friends through here that I am still friends with and now, and my partner too. (YP7)

Dealing with home and family issues

The 'family issues' manifested themselves in many ways and for two young people this resulted in them becoming homeless because their family could not accept their sexuality. Both young people praised the staff for the practical and emotional support given at the time and felt that without this, things would have been impossible.

I had been coming for a few months by then and it was very stressful. There was a lot going on and they really helped. They got me in touch with the Rock Trust, they have had a lot of experience with that, and they then got me a place in a hostel which was a big step up for me. So I had somewhere to stay. (YP1, S1)

Both related that having somewhere to go and be away from all the other stresses was really valued.

Having the project and just being able to drop in to any class really made a difference to me. I was here all the time. I did breakdance training and loved it. I was still doing my art work, because I will always do that, but it was good to have somewhere to go. (YP1)

Going to X, there were times when I was able to put on the music I wanted to listen to and talk about whatever I wanted. I could leave everything behind when I came in there. (YP5)

One of these young people now has a good relationship with their family but they reported that this had taken time to build. For the other young people, the family issues continue, with one simply saying 'I don't really speak to my mum anymore'. It is important to recognise that some problems remain problems, and are outwith the control of individuals. As already discussed, attendees in the session opened up about the arts projects being a place where they could escape family issues.

Dealing with anxiety

As mentioned, participants from Y Sort-It made a film about anxiety and how the arts project helped them overcome the 'voices in their head.' In the session the young people spoke openly about anxiety and mental health issues, identifying that demand for mental health services was much greater than supply. Two young people in particular described their anxiety in the beginning as being debilitating, with one young woman unable to go into the building on her own for almost a year.

I still remember my first day. I didn't talk to anyone. M was there my first day. I remember his name but not his face, my anxiety was that high. My mum encouraged me to go and said it would be good for me to go. She came with me and I am glad she gave me the push. If it wasn't for EC I don't think I could have managed those years, with dealing with life and the social aspect. (YP2)

They explained that although they had made a lot of progress, they still had 'bad days', although these were much less frequent than they had been in the past.

I have had bad days but they deal with that too. It is other stuff not to do with here, and I had to walk out. It was at lunch time, and they were good about it... (YP3)

Overcoming shyness and gaining confidence

Many spoke about engagement with projects taking them 'out of their shell.'

It totally changed me from being shy to confident. I don't get nervous anymore, it is just worrying about getting things done on time. (YP8)

It did change my standards and what I am okay with and want to do... Instead of thinking 'this is out of my league', it makes you think 'you can do it'. (YP1)

When I started, presenting a radio show for me was nerve-wracking, but then doing it with a couple of people, I got more confident. (YP5)

Before, I wasn't really confident. I was shy, I am not shy anymore, but it helped. The first time I was in a room with strangers talking about things I didn't really know about, after a while getting to know people [...], it has

definitely helped me boost my confidence...It is hard to talk to strangers but it definitely helped me. (YP5)

It definitely boosted my confidence and you could put me on stage and I would be fine, but being myself I was not always confident, but the radio really helped with that. (YP6)

They had our parents in at one stage and they asked them about the impact, I remember mum saying that I was shy at school but not at home, and she said they were helping to bridge that gap, rather than two complete different individuals, just the one. The teachers used to say it was weird seeing me at breaks when I was with my friends, talking at break, but then not speaking at all in class. (YP4)

Developing self-worth

Seven interviewees spoke about growing up feeling like they were 'not good enough', and described how they would 'disappear' in crowds. In the session young people felt very strongly that one of the key impacts of the projects was that they made the young people feel that they matter.

It totally changed me from being shy to confident and before when I was 12, I would go into a room and think that everyone in there is better than me. It took time for me to overcome that and get confidence. (YP8)

It makes you have a better opinion of yourself. (YP4)

All discussed being made to feel cared for, and some even mentioned feeling loved. One of the key aspects of this was being trusted to do well and having access to special experiences and quality engagement through expert creative facilitation. Several young people described the value of being praised by a professional in the arts, performing in an exclusive venue, being part of a production team or being trusted to use expensive equipment.

We got to do lots of performances as well in spaces that I wouldn't think I could...this high art place. That makes you feel special. They treated you as someone worth speaking to...so we were out doing different things and meeting people. They really care here too. Being treated as someone who is worth spending that time and money on, so the dancers in here, it makes you feel good. (YP1)

You know they trusted us to be around equipment that was thousands of pounds and present a good show to the community. It is good to boost your trust and confidence. You feel like you are adult enough to do it. (YP5)

When they say "You can do it, it means something." (Input from young person at the Reflect and Learn Session)

Some young people observed that in the projects power imbalances are flattened, with creative facilitators working alongside them, rather than in the role of a teacher or other authority figure. For other young people, the facilitators' passion was seen to differentiate them from their teachers.

You can forget that they are teachers because they are so passionate. (Input from young person at the Reflect and Learn Session)

Finding purpose and direction

A common theme which emerged from the interviews with young people was their loss of hope at a young age. Three young people reflected that a major impact of their engagement was finding a sense of direction and feeling better able to make positive decisions about their futures.

I am hard on myself. Before when I was going through my sad times I didn't think about my future, whereas now I feel I have a different future. The decisions I have made – they have given me advice and supported me. (YP6)

I was in an odd place in my life and I don't know what direction I would have gone in otherwise, because I didn't have direction. They helped me with my housing, work and my art. I think the whole housing thing as well, that really helped. The flat I am in now was through being through that system and I can still work here, it is a very direct line from that support I got through them...There was a lot of forced change at that point. (YP1)

All reported being encouraged by staff to pursue their goals, with some suggesting that they did not receive career support from other adults. For four participants, the support provided by staff at the projects led them to go to university and for two others to college to pursue filming and journalism.

They encouraged me to go to university and alongside another organisation helped me with my application, and at the time we didn't have a career guidance teacher, so that really helped (YP6)

I am now going to college to do filming and I think that has made me see what I want to do... I think my employment prospects are better. I don't think I would have got into college without all the experience I have from being here. (YP3)

It helped me to increase my confidence, made it clear to me how much I love media, journalism. I am doing journalism now and don't think I would have done that without them. I thought I was going to go down the police route, but realised that I was far more creative and this was a better route. It definitely has altered the way I have gone down. Every time I go back, they let me use their studios and they are like a giant family. (YP4)

When I started going I wanted to pursue what the youth workers were doing, to go to college, I was interested in sound and film, and then I started working for a hotel and knew this is what I wanted to do...I might not have gone on to do film and sound but it plays a big part in my life. I am with someone who is at uni doing it and her family are all film buffs, and I know what it is and it plays a big part in my life. I am reminded all the time about all the experiences I had with them...I still get in touch with the workers. (YP5)

Through providing tuition, resources, connections, artistic purpose and opportunities for achievement, these projects have made the arts not only accessible but, for six young people, opened up career pathways that would otherwise have remained closed. Those young people who have pursued routes outside the arts also reported that the encouragement they received, and the confidence they built through their participation in the projects, were instrumental in enabling them to make positive decisions about their futures.

Shaping identities

For several young people, the projects offered reprieve from external stresses, such as caring responsibilities and other family issues, and periods of living in homeless accommodation. This offered space for young people to prioritise their own needs, relaxation, and identities. The physical spaces and atmospheres in which the activities took place were key to creating this sense, with participants looking forward to attending, and describing the 'buzz' of the projects.

At the time this place gave me consistency, support and it was a safe place to come. With all the things going on with my family I had acceptance. (YP1)

When you come through those doors you can just be you, you are not a carer anymore, you are a teenager. (YP10)

It gave me a chance to think how am I going to change things now I have been open and said I am gay. In school it was completely different...in here I could be open.' (YP3)

When I was in here I could be who I wanted, whereas I at home I kept myself to myself. You are here to be you and they encourage you to be you. (YP11)

It has helped that I am accepted here. I feel I belong here. I feel part of it. It is very unusual for people with autism. I wish this was everywhere. (YP2)

"You can be who you want to be." (Young Person from the Reflect and Learn Session)

Life isn't black and white. Art projects help you find new colours, your true colours within you. (Young Person from the Reflect and Learn Session)

One young person at the Reflect and Learn Session reflected that 'in the arts there is no right or wrong answer and so you feel included'.

The self-acceptance and confidence achieved is directly linked to the young people being able to pursue their goals in life. This research gives weight to the assertion by BOP Consulting (2017) that the intrinsic benefits to doing the arts are directly linked to the extrinsic benefits. Even those participants who are no longer in direct contact with the organisations reported that their participation in Cashback projects had enabled them to build foundations for their future, and that participation in these projects had become part of their identity.

I think with X, it is a great foundation, they stay with you, it doesn't impact any less on your life, they are such a great foundation for other things that although they are less involved in your life, because that is the foundation level that got you on the path that you are on, that has become the most crucial thing. (YP4)

It is part of us. (YP11)

Hopes for the future

All eleven participants spoke about being hopeful for the future. Three, who are now working for the organisations where they engaged, felt that this demonstrated the investment that the staff had made in working with them. Two of these felt that it was likely for now that they would continue in their roles, and the third has begun to think

about scaling back their time with the organisation in order to take up other opportunities.

For me, they went above, and they put their money where their mouth is giving me a job...this was about helping people get out in the world and they did that. (YP1)

Those in college and university also identified their experiences at the projects as crucial to their progression.

I am now going to college to do filming and I think that has made me see what I want to do... I think my employment prospects are better. I don't think I would have got into Aberdeen College without all the experience I have from being here. (YP3)

I don't think I would be where I am without them, they gave me a lot of opportunities and helped me get where I am. They encouraged me to go to university and alongside another organisation helped me with my application...They also made me aware that I could go to university, that I didn't need to go to college first. They were really positive and I think all of the things I did with them helped me to write my personal statement too. I remember at the time a lot of other young people in school had wished they had taken part at the time too. (YP6)

The young people's testimonies demonstrate that having the motivation and confidence to make positive decisions is crucial to rebuilding their hope for the future. BOP (2017) highlight that it can take young people significant time to build the confidence and insight needed to form self-directed goals.

I am very optimistic about the future. I wasn't before. I like the way things are going... Yeah, it has helped a lot, so I know what I want to do and see myself positively. (YP2)

Impact of relationships

Interviewees reported that the relationships they formed with staff and other young people were foundational to their positive outcomes. Some young people identified that staff and creative practitioners had gone 'above and beyond' in the support they provided, at times taking on a pastoral role in addition to their facilitation or creative practice.

I love film and wanted more experience of it, but I think it is the people here, they are incredible. They are amazing... All the people in here have been fantastic. They have helped me a lot. (YP2)

I like the place, there is a buzz here and everyone is really nice. I have not met a staff member who is nasty. I don't know if that is part of the job description but it is a good place to be. It is always nice and they don't force you to do anything but you want to do it. They just take it as it is...I think they have played a huge part for me because they have been there from the beginning. They tell me when I am doing well. (YP3)

They accommodate everyone and work with people from all kinds of backgrounds. I think the best thing about them is that they are not trained to deal with people who have situations, but they help without even trying. They

go beyond their job description, so for example, I almost missed out on an opportunity because my sister didn't have a babysitter for my nephew, but they then did the babysitting. (YP4)

They helped me a lot. It was emotional support and the youth workers there were fantastic. You feel that they care. It is their job, but from what I have seen, it is not just a job for them, they want to help people. I loved the youth workers there... When I went there, it didn't feel like I was going through anything, there were stories the youth workers would tell me to cheer me up. It helped. They kept on offering me things to do and volunteer at, to keep my mind off things that were happening. (YP5)

The people. The youth workers. They really helped and if they didn't know how to help they put you in touch with people who could. (YP6)

It is the staff here. They have made a difference to me. They are all really great and care. They are all dedicated and want to make young people feel good and in school the teachers in comparison were not nice. In here, everyone is treated the same, no matter who you are, or where you come from, that is different to other places. (YP7)

Impact of the arts

The creative dimension of the Cashback project was not just a tool for engagement, but a crucial way to help young people feel inspired to try new things and develop personally and creatively. Participants described how they valued the chance to engage in creative expression, be it through dance, music, film, radio or journalism. For the two young people with autism the common interest in film gave them something to talk about, a way of communicating and working comfortably in groups.

I was obsessed with Tim Burton at the time. We spent a month or two making the set and filming it. Learning the process was really interesting... I have always been interested in cameras and I have started to do photography... Seeing other people who also loved that art was really interesting. It is really special. Some of the people I say are my best friends are in these groups. (YP2)

Throughout that time I have done film making, editing, stop animation... I was interested in films since I was about 8. (YP3)

The opportunity to experiment with creative media has in some cases shaped career paths, with six participants pursuing the arts professionally.

It has changed my life, I am going to be working in a Bulgarian Orchestra over summer and am at the Glasgow Academy for Music, working and just music is everything. (YP8)

Script written for voiceover to accompany film by Natasha Franklin who is studying journalism at university, and gave permission for this to be used

The adventure and chase of a story starts with an idea and a lot of painstaking research. The inspiration for a good story can come from the most surprising of sources. It could be a conversation you overheard or just a local gig announcement in the paper. There is no telling where inspiration may come from.

Once you have your idea, the next step is to find out everything you can about the venue and its location. For me, this is the most important part of the entire process, because knowing your venue and route will allow you to arrive at the venue on time. This sets a good first impression to your interviewee.

Before arriving at the venue it is vital that you are as prepared as you possibly can be. Journalism requires me to [be] organised confident and ambitious. No story is too small or too big. No interview is too far out of reach as long as you never give up. Every interview is different, but the best way to conduct a successful interview is to be prepared and confident. It is important to be relaxed and to watch and listen to the interviewee, their body language will express how comfortable they are with a question and how well the interview is going.

When filming a live gig it is important to always expect the unexpected. Like most things in life, gigs can be unpredictable and the best moments of a good gig are normally the ones that no one had planned to happen.

The easy part of this entire process is writing the actual article. By this point, you have done all of the hard work. For me, I find it easier to write backwards. As a writer, I find it easier to write the ending of my article before I write the beginning. This is something that does not work for everyone but can be a good way to start writing if you feel blocked.

Finally, once the article is finished, you are left with one step. The online furniture of an article is the images, videos or creative aspects that will entice people to read your article. Images and videos play an important part in this process as they keep the reader's attention. Once this is done all that is left is to press the publish button.

Attributing positive outcomes

Given each participant's unique and complex circumstances, it is not possible to attribute outcomes to a single cause, however, it is clear that their engagement with the projects played a key role in generating positive outcomes. The findings suggest that with support, participants became drivers of their own positive outcomes. Participants tended to recognise the significance of their own input and determination, as well as the support given by project staff. When asked to put a figure on how much of their success they attributed to the support they received, participants gave a range of responses, attributing between 30% and 100%, but broadly agreeing that it was very difficult to quantify.

They were like the friends I would go to for advice...I would say it is 50/50 but it is hard to put a figure on it. (YP5)

When I think about it, it is a lot of my own determination that has got me to where I am today, but they showed me that my school or postcode doesn't define who I am and what I do. I went to a school where it was said that the bad kids go, but it is not the case, and I am showing that is not the case. I would say 50% is down to my personal ambition, 30% to X and 20% the other organisation. (YP6)

I think I owe everything to here, a 100%. Without this I wouldn't be doing most of the things I am doing now and this has helped me to know what I am doing. (YP3)

I think 70% to X, I had an interest in music but coming here meant that I could develop that and also now support others. I had been through a difficult time, had left school early, was lonely and really focused on my brother. X taught me that happiness is a cup and if your cup is overflowing then you can help others, it will flow over, whereas if it isn't, it won't. I have to be more mindful of me. (YP7)

I think there are different levels here, there is the foundational level and then the next level. I think you can have the talent but it takes more. I think 75% of my success is down to X and they helped me 99% with my confidence...I think without that I would be working probably in a garage and unhappy. (YP8)

95%...I learned through here not to be a quitter. They really helped me, more than my family, and this is a family being here. 95% of my success is down to them. They really helped me throughout my degree. (YP10)

All interviewees felt that without this support they would be in a very different place emotionally, and in some cases also financially. They would be isolated, unemployed or underemployed, or in very poor physical and mental health. In short, the impact of being involved in these projects for the young people should not be underestimated.

I think it would have taken a lot longer to take me out of that horrible place. I would have been at home all day and that is not good for you. It would have made it more difficult for me to socialise with young people and I do dread to think what my life would have been like without coming here. (YP2)

Measuring impact

The young people felt that 'measuring impact' through statistics or numbers would be impossible, and instead stressed that evaluation should be about knowing their story and hearing from them directly about the difference made. They remembered forms that they had filled in as part of evaluations years before and not enjoying this, but instead preferred doing a piece to camera or podcast. One young person reflected that speaking to someone from 'outside' the organisation made it less awkward, and that making videos gave them distance.

I find it difficult to say to someone's face how I have felt about things, so doing the video interviews is good. (YP2)

Participants in interviews and in the Reflect and Learn Session felt that the method by which they give their feedback or relate their story should be their decision and it should be in a format of their choice.

Ask young people, 'how do you want to express yourself?'. So for me I like to write stories and I make up characters and it is a way of me expressing myself without being direct. I think it would be good for young people to have the choice how they want to express themselves. (YP2)

In reality, long-term evaluation relies on maintaining contact with young people after participation in a project, and providing opportunities to input which are appealing or relevant to them. As one young person said:

I felt when we were doing the interviews with them before, it never felt like it was a chore and I wanted to do it. I think if it ever felt like a chore I wouldn't have done it. (YP4)

All reported being happy to give their feedback for many years and wanting to give back. Suggestions for reporting mechanisms included an app or sharing events.

I think, you know the support that they gave me with the housing, with arts projects and the funding that is available, it is for materials and you are like 'well that is really not my priority right now.' I would be happy to feed into something where they ask me every year how things are going. (Y1)

I would be happy to take part in giving my opinion. I also think it would be good to be invited back once a year and have a chance to see the staff again. I know I will be back anyway, but it would be good to be invited in. They don't push it on you so I would be happy to do that. It is all choice. Actually, saying no to things is hard too but I think you can do it here. (YP3)

I would like to be involved in something. They pretty much do that, keeping in touch, I would be happy to add in more about what the impact has been. If it was an app, fine. I am so used to it happening that I would be happy to do it. I think if the relationship I had with them wasn't as good I wouldn't want to spend my time doing that. But I do want to keep in touch. (YP4)

I would be happy to keep in touch with them for the next 20 years or whatever. I also think they are quite modest as an organisation and don't sing their praises enough. (YP4)

I would be happy to be contacted and submit what I think has been the impact every year, or to let them know when something has happened. I kind of do that already. (YP5)

It is difficult but I think young people are happy to give their feedback and to share their stories. (YP7)

I would be happy to be a part of that and happy to help in any way. I think the podcasts work well. (YP8)

One young person discussed how giving feedback was empowering.

It is empowering because you get to give your opinions...I think a lot of people want young people to have their voices heard, but people in authority don't encourage it enough. (YP2)

Young people were especially keen to have an event bringing people together, because they also wanted to know how other young people they had lost touch with were getting on. This reinforces the importance placed on face to face connections and human contact.

I really like the idea of coming back once a year to celebrate the success, and also to meet up with people again. So have the alumni back. I like it. You could do interviews there too. Bringing what was done in the past as well and sharing what we are doing now would be great. I think it would be good for the young people who are with them to be able to see that too. I was hoping

that once they open their new building I would do a press piece for them. (YP4)

I also would love to go to an event once a year and catch up with everyone and let them know how I am getting on, and to hear how other people are getting on too. (YP5)

Timing evaluation appropriately

Typically in impact evaluations it is necessary to establish a baseline or 'time 1', against which progress made at a later point, 'time 2', can be measured. In this evaluation, all of the young people (and staff, as will be discussed) felt they would have been unable to say what they wanted to achieve with the projects from the outset, and would have found it difficult to articulate issues they were facing or wanted help with. This brings to the fore that perspective and understanding may only come with time, and so charting progress is not simple.

I think some people in the beginning have not got the confidence to articulate that, or don't really know what we are about at the start, so I think asking that should be after 3 months at least of regular contact, otherwise they would struggle. After that, they should really know what they want to do and what they have achieved. Also, look into the Dunning-Kruger effect and also overcoming bravado. It is important to be aware of this. (YP3)

All felt that ideally hearing about impact should be part of a conversation and take into account the wider context. Whereas the vast majority felt that this should be about sharing the positive steps they had made, and that 'checking in' after they had graduated or passed exams was good, one participant said that asking about how things are going should be at a 'neutral' point, so that the response is neither overly positive or overly negative. Overall, most agreed that 'checking in' could be prompted by the organisation, but conducted on young people's terms and via a method framed by the young person.

I think for example when I have graduated, I would like to go back and be able to tell them that. (YP5)

Yes, so for example when I was going to uni, I would be happy to say go online and let them know about the impact they had. (YP6)

I think for example when I was asked to be a volunteer that would have been a good time to ask. (YP7)

One young person reflected that when they had been with the organisation, even when negative things had happened, the workers had helped them to reconfigure this to see it as a point of learning or recognise when they had overcome adversity. The case studies developed then should as far as possible be a close account of young people's lives, and seeking only positive information would limit this.

I think with X they deal with people who are not necessarily in a good place, but they make it a good place to go. Even when they were doing case studies, they would ask you about the negative, but they also made you excited about what was happening next and what are you excited about the future. (YP4)

Key points

- In the young people's own words, these projects changed 'everything.' They provided an opportunity for young people to meet positive influences and connect with peers, to feel cared for and special, to nurture their talents, build identities, and reflect on their personal aspirations. In some cases, the organisations represented safe spaces in the community where young people could escape negative influences or experiences.
- Staff and creative practitioners took on a pastoral role as well as facilitating creative activities. Young people participating in this research recognised where staff had gone 'above and beyond' in the level of care and support they provided in response to the wider circumstances which impacted the young people's lives.
- Poverty was alluded to in the conversations with young people, but not explicitly identified. However, the impact of poverty on their family situations, stability and access to safe spaces, was evident across their reflections. The pastoral support that young people identified practitioners as having provided illustrates the importance of an awareness of the wraparound support required to enable young people affected by poverty to achieve positive outcomes.
- Making films allowed the young people to articulate their stories and evaluate their own progress in a way that was meaningful for them. The films also provide an alternative view of how contexts can be understood and 'progress' charted.
- All interviewees said they would be happy to take part in research for many years to come, and that they would welcome the opportunity to connect with staff and peers at annual alumni events, demonstrating the potential for longitudinal evaluation.
- The young people's testimonies emphasise the importance of providing creative initiatives and arts interventions in an increasingly challenging funding environment.

3. Findings from interviews with creative practitioners

Introduction and overview

In this section the views of eleven creative practitioners from six organisations are presented along with findings from a longitudinal study of 75 young people who had engaged with Hot Chocolate (Robertson, 2016). While recognising the challenges of measuring long-term impact, we identified that meaningful evaluation is possible where there is appropriate time and resourcing.

Impact of the arts

Robertson (2016) reports that the impacts on young people of engagement in the arts are increased self-awareness, sense of identity, resilience, hope, and understanding of their potential to positively impact the world around them. All interviewees felt that engagement had to be voluntary, so that taking those steps into the organisation was the young people taking control and working towards self-directed goals.

We have used the same model since inception, which is about young people having the choice to come here, wanting to be here and being supported to do what they want. This works. (S3)

We do not advertise or take names at the door but instead rely on word of mouth and getting to know people as they drop in and engage over time, building trust and as a result relationships with those who are often referred to as 'hard to reach'. The age range is from 11-21. (S8)

A few organisations work with young people on a one-to-one basis before introducing them to any group as and when the young person chooses. Staff interviewees emphasised that building this trust and confidence takes time, patience and sensitivity.

The ones that stick with me – I think the projects that are developed over a longer period of time allow for young people to really grow and for them to open up. We have some come in who are practically mute but over time have really opened up...This is about people having freedom of choice and being able to have an off day. You know, people who have little confidence, having that off day can really throw them. (S2)

We have a young woman we have been working with now for five years and even getting her to come in the door was a challenge, and now she is working on different projects and that took time, and building that trust. After those five years, doing a project with that young person over a week you could see them really grow even more.' (S2)

Two organisations do outreach work to help young people make those first steps into the building, showing that 'small things' are actually important markers of progress for some. Like in the interviews with the young people, staff only discussed poverty implicitly, for example by emphasising the importance of providing food to participants and in their recognition of negative societal perceptions of the areas the young people came from.

You know we had a local school come the bottom of the list for achieving Highers and they took that all so hard, these aren't good measures, you

know, what about the clubs in the local area? Or the number of people who have gone onto apprenticeships? That is really important. (S8)

Getting young people to attend was viewed as a measurement of success.

The challenges they face and come up against. Getting them to even attend was difficult...The chaos around these young people. We help them with pastoral care, as well as this being about dance, and actually they only have to have a wee interest in dance, this is about the relationships that we establish with these young people. Their priorities shift and change from day to day, even within a day because of what is going on round about them. (S1)

We have had young people go on to college but for me it is even the small things, or what some would see as being small, so people going to the shop on their own, we have the ability here within this building that young people can do that. They are in safe hands and this is about them developing their wellbeing and developing themselves. Just learning those life skills, just to go into a shop for some of the young people we support, that is massive. (S4)

For those who are really vulnerable those small steps are actually big, and it is a challenge capturing that and providing that context. (S6)

Echoing the recommendations in previous reports, participants cautioned against using only awards, qualifications or numerical indicators of success.

I think the Arts Awards has led to some young people not feeling they are keeping up and dropping out, and others we can't take to the next step. This should be about people finding their passion and doing something they are proud of and having a chance to explore that. (S2)

The nice thing about this is that it hasn't been targets or numbers, but it is moving to that. I think that is a mistake. It is not good to have numbers as your benchmark because the young people that we are working with have anxiety issues, they cannot deal with large groups. (S5)

I think this is hard for young people to reflect on themselves and with the shift to the emphasis on numbers, we need to be aware that many of the young people we are supporting cannot cope in groups. (S6)

Importance of relationships

Creative Practitioners were acutely aware of the importance of building relationships with the young people.

We form relationships with the young people and a key aspect of this is young people meeting others, building lifelong friendships. We have other young people who have gone on to go to college in the arts or general workplace. (S3)

This is about relationships and the young people need to be in the right frame of mind for this to be effective. Working with young people to get their mindset right is essential. Without this you can do all the creative activities you like but it will never fully bring out the strengths and interests of the young people involved. (S11)

They felt that the medium matters and is a special 'hook' for engagement for some.

One interviewee, now the project manager of the organisation, described how he himself represented the long-term impact of the support given to him by the staff member who ran the centre and gave him the opportunity to turn his life around. He said:

I am the longer term impact, I went from being expelled from school, drinking, smoking, and being socially isolated playing my guitar for fifteen hours a day. I came here through my girlfriend, met the Community Worker and he basically said that I could set up a studio, use it for my band (and others) and then before I knew it I was doing this and loving it. I made a decision to either remain in the band and pursue music that way, or do this. He treated me with unconditional positive regard and that care he gave me had no conditions attached. (S11)

Challenges of measuring impact

Staff and creative practitioners identified that measuring impact is difficult, especially given that significant changes for the most vulnerable participants may seem small to others.

Also, some things are just very difficult to measure. For example, that same young woman, last week we saw changes in her from the beginning of the week until the end, so for example, instead of saying 'we have a problem' and waiting for you to really help with that, instead she was taking that on and not getting phased and working out the solutions. She has gone from someone who couldn't come into this building to someone who is going in to a group of dancers and asking them to do interviews. (S2)

All felt that when they first engage with the young people they are rarely able to say what they want to achieve from their involvement, and also not able to speak about their issues at such an early point, so getting a baseline has to come at a later point.

I think it would work after knowing the young person for a month and you have begun to build a relationship with them. You know, then you can ask. [Taking into account their lack of confidence] this may be months down the line, or even at the end of a project. They might not have expectations from the outset. We have done end of project interviews and these were brilliant, it was about what they wanted to do more of; they had gone into it because they were more or less told to go, but by the end of it they knew then what they wanted. (S3)

I don't think young people are confident enough at the start to really give you feedback about what they want to achieve and also are probably not in a place where they can say what their issues are, that takes confidence and self-awareness. (S4)

One creative practitioner reflected that change is not always observable: for instance, they related that a young participant who seldom spoke only revealed in a written form their intention to attend a Media Studies course at college.

The main ways in which impact is currently measured are case studies and video interviews, but aggregating data collected via these methods, and which reflects individual contexts, is difficult. Staff at three organisations spoke about doing surveys with the young people, however, it was felt that asking young people to rate qualities like confidence would require a high level of self-awareness and insight. Staff also

cited the expectations of funders as a challenge, in particular the requirement to generate data during the period of project delivery.

In terms of what is meant by 'success', this was also challenged and it was felt that there is a need to be realistic about what can be achieved.

We have had a young man come to us for his disruptive behaviour and now all these years later he works for Apple, having been narrowed down from hundreds of people. He says that what put him on the right tracks was coming here. You know that is success...For me though, measuring the long-term impact is about 20,000 young people coming through the doors over 20 years. (S11)

Challenges of measuring long-term impact

None of the services at present measure long-term impact on an ongoing or formal basis due to a lack of time and financial resources to follow-up. Interviewees also identified the need to credit young people for the progress they had made independently. As reflected by Robertson (2016: 14):

There are so many ways that stories can be exploitative. One of my pet peeves is when organisations present a young person as 'broken' or 'vulnerable' and then they got involved and 'fixed' them. That's dishonest, and it's not a story – it's propaganda...

These organisations were keen to clarify that all of the young people they have supported had potential and they helped to nurture that, not that they 'fixed' anyone. Reeltime and Y Sort-It recently had milestone celebrations and had many return from projects many years ago. Moreover, Hot Chocolate's study reaffirms much of what has been reported here, and also the value of stories, in bringing to the fore context and hearing the voices of the young people directly. Other organisations felt that doing this well was about young people telling their stories too.

I think in the past we have over measured (a lot of numbers) and underreported (the story, the context). We are trying to build in capturing how young people are doing and our impact all the time. It is hard though. (S9)

Maybe it is time to go back to what really matters – the young people's stories! (S10)

This shows that the potential to do longitudinal studies is there, but would take time and resources. A number of interviewees also questioned what was reasonable and ethical to expect of young people who had moved on.

Young people move on too and [...] you won't [always] get that information. (This has to be ethical.) I was able to do this, this time through other workers who are still in touch with these young people and have that trust. (S3)

Yes, but also how long do you keep track of someone, what is a reasonable length of time? I think you could say 'it depends on the dose', as in, how long someone has been with the service. (S11)

As one participant spoke openly about the challenges even with the current study:

You know, we really supported a young woman and she is doing really well and I can't get in touch with her. (Having tried to call her more than 20 times.)

She still gets free classes here and I can't get a hold of her. This is the reality of trying to capture the long-term impact. (S1)

Potential solutions

Staff interviewees felt that resources and time could make this possible, as was the case for Hot Chocolate. This should be a positive experience for those involved. All interviewees liked the idea of inviting young people back to celebrate their progress, or carrying out a study which would provide an opportunity for young people, and even family members and/or partners, to reflect on impacts over time. Robertson (2016) highlights that interviews were made possible because the young people knew the staff undertaking the study and trusted the process. On the other hand, some felt that research would be best undertaken by people external to the organisations.

I think there is real value though in having someone also come in who is objective, who is outside of the service, and speak to the young people about what they feel has been the impact. I think it can be hard for them to speak to us about that. We had one young man doing the interviews and when we interviewed him, we were too close, it was too hard for him to talk to us. I just abandoned it and I think that was the right thing to do at the time. (S5)

Organisations felt they could benefit from training and support on evaluation. Two interviewees observed that support and collaboration around evaluation from Creative Scotland had improved significantly. One interviewee suggested that a guidance pack could be provided, which could include examples of appropriately detailed evaluations. They added:

Organisations often say things like 'tell us what good evaluation looks like' and funders will always say 'every project is different and we also don't want to limit the creativity of evaluation approaches'. I feel some optional guidance would be very helpful in that it would give an idea of the scale of evaluation required and save some charities spending too much or too little time and resources on the evaluation process. (S11)

Peer research

All felt that the idea of peer research is a good one and one organisation has done this in the past with success. Most raised concerns however, that doing this well would take a lot of time and effort, and debated the ethics of young people interviewing one another, and overall it was felt this is 'a lot to ask'.

With a very particular type of young people yes, but I would be wary of that too, what it would actually involve and mean. It could be a damaging process for young people who are not able to engage with this. (S3)

I think there are challenges with that, because young people speaking to young people who know them, that is too close. There could be ethical issues, but I can see some of the potential benefits of young people doing this themselves. (S4)

Good practice

Y Sort-It spoke about their collaboration with 'Social Lab' and how in the past they linked up with a researcher and that this had worked well. Matter of Focus were also mentioned by Reeltime as supporting organisations and having a unique approach to

evaluation worth exploring further.¹

Hot Chocolate has developed a database which captures qualitative information on individuals and quantitative data on their eight core outcomes, as well as information about police contact or incidents and child protection issues. With further investment, this database could be developed for use by other services. Hot Chocolate also delivers quarterly training sessions on 'Reclaiming Monitoring and Evaluation'. The development of this came about through funding from Inspiring Scotland and an independent programme developer who worked with Hot Chocolate to identify outcomes from Evaluation Support Scotland. The database has three functions:

1. A youth work tool which allows staff to capture service users' journeys and progress.
2. A reflective practice tool for staff, which encourages continuous forward planning, and provides a structure to think about next steps.
3. An external reporting tool, enabling staff to persuasively evidence impact to funders and stakeholders.

After the open sessions the team have an hour debrief which is an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have about the young people, share positive stories and developments, and generally review the evening's work. This also allows staff to hear about the young people who they do not work directly with. Records are made of any significant information, so that it is available for discussion and reflection when appropriate. This also ensures a balance between efficiency and effectiveness, as well as shared ownership of information between staff/creative practitioners and volunteers.

The notes are written up as letters to the young people, so that when the young people later access their records, they have a meaningful narrative of their journey and achievements.

As well as capturing each individual's journey, this approach enables Hot Chocolate to aggregate data. For example, their Annual Report (Hot Chocolate, 2018), written by the young people, reports the following core outcomes:

227 grew in self-knowledge (199 last year)
218 increased self-worth (200)
274 improved social skills (230)
207 increased their awareness that they can positively impact their lives and communities (188)
171 acted to positively impact their lives and communities (150)
149 improved their ability to look ahead, plan and stick to goals (148)
190 were supported towards positive destinations in education, employment and training (167)
54 deepened their understanding of their spirituality and/or Christianity (23) the year before²

¹ Matter of Focus provide support for outcome-based evaluation through consultancy and access to the OutNav platform. They are identified in this report as a subject for potential future inquiry, however a case study of their approach was beyond the scope of this research.

² Whilst Hot Chocolate Trust operates from church premises, their delivery is not faith-based, or intended to influence young people's religious or spiritual belief. This indicator reflects Hot Chocolate Trust's holistic approach to supporting young people's wellbeing and development, and is additional to the indicators measured across the Cashback for Creativity portfolio.

In addition, Hot Chocolate Trust conducts an anonymous census every eighteen months, which allows staff to collect additional data, and keep track of any concerns and emerging issues. This is a way of hearing the voices of young people in a different way. For example, a third revealed that they have a parent in prison that the service had not been aware of, and others indicated changes in their living circumstances, with implications for how the service provided support. This approach enables Hot chocolate to think about ways in which they can tailor their support to help young people deal with these issues. They have applied for funding to develop how they can listen better to young people.

Widening impact

As well as producing a report on the longitudinal research, Hot Chocolate discussed with the young people themes which emerged. They developed thirty of these interviews into short films. These sensitively bring to the fore the challenges young people faced and the journeys and progress made. These films have been watched by over 100 young people in different contexts: over 100 practitioners, and dozens of strategic decision makers and policy makers, and partner organisations from community learning and social work use the films to train their staff. The aim of sharing these films is to help develop organisations' understanding of, and ability to meet, the changing needs of today's young people. This database which is in the process of being reviewed and developed, could also be extended to include the voices of those reporting long-term impact.

A number of interviewees reflected on what is meant by 'impact' and on the factors that constrain outcomes. For example, despite the organisations' resilience in navigating short-term funding cycles in a way that allows them to nurture their relationships with young people, it is clear that those funding cycles restrict organisations' geographical reach and their capacity to sustain engagement over the long-term:

What they go back to though when they leave here, it is important to be aware of that. I miss those kids here. This place needs them and it is good to have that diversity here. (S1)

Key points

- The experiences and observations of the staff reflect those of the young people, and echo the research evidence that engagement with the arts improves young people's self-confidence, self-esteem and hope for the future.
- The relationships formed between creative practitioners and young people, and the practitioners' understanding of the complex factors impacting young people's lives, were key in supporting high-quality arts provision.
- Impact evaluation should take account of the 'contribution chain' identified by BOP (2018), recognising that 'small' achievements contribute to a young person's long-term development.
- The most effective way to capture long-term progress is through creating mechanisms for young people to tell their stories. Creative practitioners emphasised the young people's agency in achieving positive outcomes, and were cautious about attributing their development solely to their participation in a particular project. They emphasised that young people should be supported to take ownership of their achievements and advised against the use of baselines that presented young people as deficit prior to participation.
- Key challenges to long-term evaluation are the time and resources required to maintain contact with young people and develop meaningful reporting

processes, concerns over the demands placed on young people to maintain long-term contact with an organisation, and debate over whether evaluation should be conducted by organisation staff or external evaluators.

- A range of qualitative evaluation methods were identified, which included films, letters to participants and systems for recording observations and reflections on young people's journeys. What has emerged overall is that longitudinal evaluation requires organisations to have the appropriate time and resources to maintain communication with participants.

4. Conclusion

Measuring the long-term impact of the arts

Cashback for Creativity aims to reach marginalised young people experiencing, or at risk of, deprivation, unemployment, school exclusion, or involvement in offending behaviour, thus delivering arts and creative activity to young people who are facing complex challenges. This needs to be recognised in any discussion of impact evaluation.

There is a shortage of research on how to capture the long-term impact of the arts. An increasingly challenging funding environment means that it is imperative to develop methods for evaluating and understanding this impact. However, the short-term nature of available funding makes it difficult for organisations to build the time and resources needed to undertake this research.

This appreciative inquiry set out both to understand the long-term impact on young people of projects funded through Cashback for Creativity, and how this can be captured through evaluation. We conducted interviews with eleven young people who had been supported between three and ten years ago, and eleven creative practitioners from across six different organisations. Four of the young people then created films to articulate their personal experiences, with a screening event providing an opportunity for research participants to gather and reflect on the findings.

Although most of the young people had first engaged with the projects more than five years ago, eight were still in direct daily contact with the organisations. Three now work for them as paid employees, three sit on the Board and volunteer, two still engage with the project, and the other three remain in contact with the staff. Six are pursuing careers in the arts and five continue to engage as a hobby. It is not claimed that the members of this group are representative of all Cashback participants, but their input to this research gives important insights into their lived realities and the impact of their engagement with the Cashback projects.

Relational approaches within high-quality arts delivery

Several interviewees reported feelings of isolation and hopelessness prior to their engagement, and one young person reported episodes of self-harm and suicidal feelings. Three young people with autism reported that they had never had a friend before joining. Two young women became homeless early on in their engagement, in one case due to her family's difficulty accepting her sexuality. They reported that staff at the organisations provided practical and emotional support and a space where they felt at 'home', and connected them with appropriate services. Four young carers described the positive impact of meeting other young carers for the first time, with whom they could identify, whilst also enjoying time out from their identities as carers.

By understanding and supporting young people through these challenges, staff and creative practitioners helped young people carve out space in their lives for creative exploration and expression. A major finding of this report is therefore that high-quality arts delivery is underpinned by positive relationships.

This research also provides evidence that arts interventions may help to improve equality of opportunity, in that they may support young people to discover talents and interests and broaden their career options. Even for those who choose not to pursue creative pathways, the evidence suggests that arts and creative projects support the

development of a range of intrinsic and extrinsic skills and help improve wellbeing.

Importantly, the presence of arts projects and organisations in deprived areas can also help signal to young people that adults are invested in supporting them, and that they have not been disregarded or 'forgotten' by society. In addition to the positive impact on young people, the potential diversionary effects of arts interventions, such as reducing young people's contact with the criminal justice system, health services, and welfare support, offer clear societal benefits.

How wider context affects the measurement of impact

Staff and creative practitioners emphasised that supporting young people towards positive outcomes can be a long process. They also recognised the importance of 'small' steps such as regular attendance, which can be significant indicators of progress for the most vulnerable young people.

Evaluation should also consider the challenges that can continue to affect young people beyond the achievement of an evaluative outcome, even where those challenges are not explicitly articulated. For example, many of the young people expressed or implied that they continue to face challenges such as family instability. In other words, the rate of a young person's progress towards outcomes can be influenced by a range of ongoing challenges, and they can require varying levels of support over the course of their engagement.

Evidencing impact

The literature review establishes that the impact of the arts is hard to measure because individuals come from unique contexts and experience those impacts differently. However, there is an increasing understanding of the advantages of qualitative research, alongside growing recognition of the relationship between the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of participation in arts and creative activity. While the specific impact of the interventions through Cashback for Creativity might not be numerically quantifiable, the qualitative evidence suggests that they played an important role within the wider context of these young people's achievement of outcomes.

Echoing the recommendations of previous reports, staff and creative practitioners suggested that awards, qualifications and numerical indicators of success should be used judiciously, and only where it is felt to be appropriate to an individual, with priority given to the young people's personal reflections on their development. They identified the evaluation process as complex and multi-layered, with case studies, videos and podcasts all discussed as possible methods of capturing young people's reflections.

Whilst we recognise the challenge of aggregating evidence of this type, based on our findings we advocate that young people's stories be given due weight and regard within evaluation processes. Evidencing the positive outcomes of long-term engagement has the potential to inform the policy agenda around arts and creative activity and to help align funding structures to the needs of young people for sustained support.

A longitudinal approach

While the literature and this research highlighted the challenges in carrying out longitudinal research on the impact of activities, all of the young people interviewed indicated that they would be comfortable with contributing information through a 'check in' or attending events as alumni. It was revealed that this isn't about the connection with one person, but the organisation as a whole.

There were examples given of what was possible in terms of longitudinal research at an organisational level, when time and resource for this are made available. There was a clear sense that when founded on strong, supportive relationships with staff, evaluation can complement or enhance the positive effects of participation by encouraging self-reflection and collective learning. A qualitative longitudinal approach has additional potential to increase wider understanding and empathy across the sector for young people experiencing additional challenges. Measurement of long-term impact is reliant on young people engaging in this process, and also on organisations seeing the value in doing this beyond the requirements of a short-term cycle of funding.

5. Case studies

The following case studies were developed by the authors and have been approved by the young people to be included in this report, with some details changed to protect anonymity.

CASE STUDY: JAMIE

Jamie is eleven and has autism. He feels that his autism defines him from other people's perspectives, despite there being much more to him. He is isolated and very much apart from the other children at school. Jamie feels low, and that school and those around him have given up on him. Jamie's family life is difficult. His sister has mental health problems and violent outbursts at home, which means that all attention is on her, and the caring responsibilities are emotionally draining for the whole family. Jamie wants to learn to play the guitar but knows that going to a teacher and getting lots of instructions at once will not work for him because of his condition. His mother, keen to help connect Jamie with other young people and to give him a break from his sister, has supported him to find out about a music organisation in the local community that also works with those deemed 'challenging.'

On his first visit, Jamie is brought to the organisation by his mother and, after meeting the workers, joining a small group that evening, and overcoming his initial nerves, feels for the first time in his life that he is part of something. That evening he goes home to his mother and tells her he 'feels different.' She is really happy and relieved: finally Jamie has somewhere to go and be what he wants. He attends a few times every week and is told by the musicians and sound producers to come as often as he wants. In the time out from his caring duties he becomes really good at guitar and more comfortable around the other young people at the centre, making friends, something he knows others take for granted, but for him is a first. Jamie feels his whole sense of wellbeing change. He is positive about his future for the first time and doing something that is just for him. He opens up to the musicians and the other young people about the challenges he faces and they are supportive and caring. Even by saying these things out loud he feels better and more able to cope.

Over the next few years Jamie is asked by the management at the organisation to become a volunteer, helping other young people who were just like him, to be at ease when they arrive, to become more confident and to feel a sense of belonging. Eight years on, Jamie is now a tutor at the service and as well as having a group of lifelong friends, he also has a girlfriend he met through the organisation. His sister has also started to come and play music, and as a result the family are all recognising the changes, with violent outbursts no longer happening. Jamie's mother calls this her 'lifeline.' The family continues to struggle financially but emotionally they are in a better place than ever. Jamie believes that the impact on his life cannot be measured, this is part of him and he doesn't want to think what would have happened had he not engaged with the organisation.

CASE STUDY: ROSIE

Rosie lived close to the organisation and had heard about the film and radio shows through a friend. She describes feeling so welcomed by the staff and other young people and excited by all the different opportunities available. Over the next six months Rosie attended as much as possible, and once she overcame her initial nerves, she got involved in everything, including broadcasting on the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh. Rosie met Anne within the first few weeks of being there and over the months her feelings grew. Growing up in a conservative family she struggled with her sexuality, but when she spoke to the radio producer and youth worker about this, she was reassured that her feelings were normal, that she should be honest about who she is and that she is entitled to happiness. Rosie spoke to Anne who also returned her feelings and they began a relationship. Rosie felt so happy and in love, and yet she would return home every day and lie to her parents about her life.

After only a few weeks Rosie could take no more and she came out to her parents. They asked her to leave the family home and at 16 she was homeless. She packed her bags and went to the organisation and they set her up with an appointment that afternoon with homelessness services. Rosie was so grateful, because she honestly did not know where to begin. That evening she had a place in supported accommodation and over the next few weeks was given help to get a place of her own. The organisation helped her with another service to move in and get things for her flat. Rosie explained that at the time she did not know how to pay bills or how to budget, so learning all this was crucial. Rosie was about to do her exams and felt stressed and overwhelmed. She recalls that going to the organisation and just having a place to listen to music and meet with friends, be a teenager again without any worries really helped.

Rosie passed her exams but didn't get the grades she needed to do the course she wanted, but the radio producer and youth worker encouraged her not to give up. Over the next couple of years she spent most of her evenings at the organisation, having little money and nowhere else to go. Her relationship with Anne continued to develop and she knew she had done the right thing, being true to who she was. Rosie was encouraged to access a college course that would mean she would have to move. She pursued her goals, knowing it would be difficult, but also confident she could do it.

Now seven years on Rosie is about to complete university. She shares a flat with her girlfriend now of four years and feels that her life continues to improve. She now has a relationship again with her family, but for a few years she said that her only real family were those at the organisation. She still speaks to her friends at the organisation every few months, and goes back to visit when she has the chance. Rosie feels that without the support given at that time she would probably be working in a job which did not fulfil her, and nowhere near the confident person she now is. Rosie feels that the impact made cannot be measured, but she is glad she can tell her story.

CASE STUDY: AVA

Ava loves films. Having the chance to make her own was enough to make her overcome her nerves, leave her family home, which she hadn't done in weeks, and take those steps into the building to meet the film makers for the first time. Ava's mum accompanied her into the building and sat with her in the class of just two people, both of whom had autism and had stopped going to school. Ava hated school but this was different and like starting anew. Ava had been suicidal and self-harming almost every day up until this point. She says simply in the interview that she would prefer not to go back 'there' as it is too painful. Instead, her story focuses on how positive her experiences have been with the organisation, making films, animation, making friends for the first time in her life and feeling good at something and about herself. Ava's dream is to be a director and she wants to challenge society's perceptions about women and people with autism. Ava now has a small group of firm friends and feels that the organisation is like family to her. She explains that coming here has really changed her mother's life too. She doesn't want to think what life would be like otherwise.

CASE STUDY: CORA

Cora came to the organisation as an angry 11 year old; in her own words 'it was my way or the highway.' Her brother 'R' was involved in 'all sorts' and the family had a reputation. Caring duties for her older brother 'W' fell mainly on Cora, and with the family's attention focussed on her siblings, Cora felt she was invisible. She felt at that time that the only 'road' for her was following her brother 'R's lead. When she first came to the organisation she was quickly taken aside by the worker and told that her behaviour was not ok and she was above her own behaviour. Cora felt for the first time that she was really being 'seen', and she realised that this person cared and wanted the best for her. Although stubborn, she took this as a wake up call that it was up to her to make the best of her life. Cora changed her attitude and quickly became friends with other young carers, who up until then had been frightened of her. She realised she was not alone and that there were other young people who felt like her, but getting out of all of it for her was about getting an education. Over the next few years she came to the organisation almost every day and used that time to get her coursework done, organising activities, doing arts projects, and taking up whatever opportunities became available. She travelled to places in Europe, met other young carers from across the UK and used the time there as hers, when the rest of her family life felt nothing like that. Cora did better than she expected in her college courses and the staff encouraged her to go to university. She continued to go to the service, get support and encouragement, and recently graduated, with staff attending the ceremony. She says the service is a part of her and that without it, she really feels her life would have taken a very different direction. She has defied the obstacles and family reputation that could so easily have brought her down. Cora feels that the impact that staff at the organisation have made on her life cannot be easily measured, and as a volunteer at the service, she recognises that she too is now having an impact on other young people. She feels strongly that all young people should have access to arts projects, no matter where they come from.

Appendix A: Creative Scotland's statutory duties and policy context

Creative Scotland and the wider policy context

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland, distributing funding from the Scottish Government and The National Lottery. Their statutory duties are set out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. These are:

- (a) identifying, supporting and developing quality and excellence in the arts and culture from those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours,
- (b) promoting understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts and culture,
- (c) encouraging as many people as possible to access and participate in the arts and culture,
- (d) realising, as far as reasonably practicable to do so, the value and benefits (in particular, the national and international value and benefits) of the arts and culture,
- (e) encouraging and supporting artistic and other creative endeavours which contribute to an understanding of Scotland's national culture in its broad sense as a way of life,
- (f) promoting and supporting industries and other commercial activity the primary focus of which is the application of creative skills.

As well as promoting understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts, they also aim to widen access and participation.

The Scottish Government's overarching National Performance Framework (NPF) aim is:

To focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

Creative Scotland's Ten Year Plan for the period 2014-2024, is committed to monitoring their performance against 7 of the of the 16 National Outcomes. These are related to employment opportunities (National Outcome 2), education and skills (National Outcome 3); citizenship (National Outcome 4); tackling inequalities (National Outcome 7); inclusion (National Outcome 13); the environment (National Outcome 14) and efficient, high quality public services (National Outcome 16) (Creative Scotland, 2014).

Background of CashBack for Creativity

CashBack for Creativity was set up in 2008 (previously Creative Identities) as part of the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities Programme, which reinvests the proceeds of crime back into communities to benefit Scotland's young people. The Scottish Government has invested a total of £92 million into the programme over the past 10 years, from 2008 - 2018. Round 3 of the CashBack for Creativity programme commenced in 2017/18 with a total budget of £2.6m across three years (Creative Scotland, 2017).

Cashback for Creativity sits alongside other key youth arts initiatives within Creative Scotland including Time to Shine, the National Youth Arts Strategy and the Youth Music Initiative. Additionally, Creative Scotland works closely with partners on a programme of Creative Learning activity.

The Cashback for Creativity Programme contributes directly to the objectives of Time to Shine, the Ten Year Plan and the NPF and is central to the delivery of Creative Scotland's strategic objectives.

In April 2014, Scotland's Youth Work Strategy was published (Youthlink Scotland, Scottish Government and Education Scotland, 2014). The strategy was developed by the Scottish Government in partnership with Education Scotland and Youthlink Scotland, and reinforces the impact of youth work on young people's learning and development, and the contribution of youth work to key national objectives.

A Review published by Creative Scotland (2017) sets a common understanding of the nature and purpose of creative learning and identifies priorities to guide the work of the organisation creative learning role over the next five years. This process involved consultation meetings with 114 representatives of regularly Funded Organisations and 167 survey responses and internal discussions. For the purposes of this report, it is interesting to note that respondents wanted more support to provide case studies and tell more stories about the best practice and impact of the arts, and to have a calendar of events for knowledge exchange.

Current focus

Phase Four of the programme has a specific focus on providing access to high quality experiences in all art forms to Scotland's most disadvantaged young people with an age range of 10 – 24 years. The target groups are young people disadvantaged by:

- Living in areas of deprivation; and/or
- Being unemployed, not in education or training; and/or
- Being excluded, or at risk of exclusion from school; and/or
- Being at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, offending/re-offending

Since inception, there is now a Targeted Fund so organisations can apply for three years funding, as opposed to the Open Fund, and this development was in response to previous evaluations (Pza Consulting 2011), and listening to the sector on the need to have sustained funding routes to deliver creative projects to vulnerable young people.

As set out in the tender, The Programme has seven key outcomes. These are:

Young people build their capacity and confidence

Young people develop their physical and personal skills

Young people's behaviours and aspirations change positively

Young people's wellbeing improves

Young people participate in positive activity (*Targeted and Open Fund*)

Young people participate in activity which improves their learning employability and employment options (positive destinations) (*Targeted Fund only*)

Young people contribute positively to their communities (*Open Fund only*)

These seven key outcomes are underpinned by measurements, indicators and targets agreed with the Scottish Government.

Appendix B: Literature review

Introduction and overview

In this section we offer a brief contextual overview of the funding environment in the UK and Ireland and consider the key literature on impact and evaluation practice in the arts and cultural sector. This allows us to describe the challenges around measuring impact, and to offer some guidance on potential ways forward. Our definition of arts and creative activity is informed by Pujara et al. (2014):

The word art describes many different practices including: painting, drawing, performance, installation, sculpture, photography, film and new media technologies. Some are more recognised branches of arts practice than others, but all included in this study encompass a variety of programmes and projects using forms of art to engender social change and improve participants' lives.

Methodology for literature review

The literature review was undertaken in advance of the fieldwork and informed the development of the interview topic guide (Appendix C). Our primary research questions were:

- What are the long-term impacts of creative engagement for young people when considered through the lens of the Cashback for Creativity programme?
- How can organisations better evaluate and illustrate the long-term impacts?

We prioritised sources from the last ten years which focused specifically on the measurement of the long-term impact of participation in arts and creative activity, with additional consideration given to sources which addressed one or more aspects of this topic. Parliamentary and other public reports informed our understanding of the wider cultural policy landscape. Previous reports on Cashback for Creativity provided valuable background knowledge on programme aims and ongoing delivery. The literature review provided a foundation to build on existing findings on the impact of Cashback for Creativity by identifying examples of good practice currently used by Cashback-funded organisations to evaluate their long-term impact.

Context

Any discussion of impact must take into account the attitudes and limited budgets which constrain delivery for many sectors across the UK (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, 2017). Ireland provides an informative example of how public spending is prioritised in the context of limited funding: it is claimed that the Irish Government have been slow to recognise the benefits of the arts, particularly in education (Long, 2015) and have instead privileged a health interventionist model (O'Shea and Ní Léime, 2012). Whether in Ireland, Scotland or the rest of the UK, the arts represent a competitive and challenging environment for organisations seeking funding, in which practitioners and supporters of the arts are increasingly tasked with demonstrating value and impact.

The challenge of measuring the impact of the arts

There is a growing body of literature on the impact of the arts on mental and physical wellbeing (BBC News, 2019; BOP Consulting; Wheatley and Bickerton, 2017; Arrivo Consulting, 2015; Pza Consulting, 2011) Patterson and Perlstein, 2011). In some cases the literature focuses on the impacts on particular age groups, for example, young people (Hixson, 2014) and older people (O'Shea and Ní Léime, 2012). Sources generally agree that participation in the arts can have a range of positive impacts on any age group.

For example, a large-scale survey of choral singers in Australia, England and Germany showed that singing improves mental and physical wellbeing, even among people dealing with bereavement and stress (Clift, 2012). The 'take home' messages from the 'Big Noise' evaluation (Harkins and Moore, 2019: 4), includes an extensive list of potential impacts on young people:

- increased confidence, discipline, pride, and aspiration
- improved team-working, communication, and leadership
- enhanced academic skills including listening, concentration and creativity
- increased resilience, happiness, sense of belonging and fulfilment
- strong musical skills development
- uptake of physical activity and healthy eating, avoidance of damaging behaviours, development of positive social groups, peer relationships and cultural engagement
- respite and protection for vulnerable participants.

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2017) propose that art activities or arts therapies can reduce physical symptoms and improve mental health. The effects are wide ranging, from helping to control chronic cancer pain, to building self-esteem, finding a voice, and connecting with a wider community (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010). Jensen and Bonde (2018) found that clinical and non-clinical arts interventions with a therapeutic approach (as well as art activities without an explicit therapeutic approach), have positive and reliable psychological effects for patients with a range of diagnosed illnesses. They conclude that these holistic, non-medical, low-cost interventions, have potential to promote public mental health and wellbeing. De Quadros (2017) furthermore argues that access to arts is a social justice issue, giving marginalised people a medium for expression.

However, sources agree that measuring even short-term impacts of participation in arts activity can be challenging, particularly given that individuals come from unique contexts and experience those impacts differently (Hixson, 2014; Pujara et al. 2014): 'The impact of art is a complex and multilayered concept that is experienced and understood in a variety of ways contingent on each individual's experience and perspective' (cited in Walmsley, 2013: 73). To illustrate, Walmsley (2014) conducted 42 qualitative interviews with theatre audience members to gauge the impact and found that this was expressed in terms of emotion, captivation, engagement, enrichment, escapism, wellbeing, world view and addiction. The authors conclude that impact is a relative concept, dependent on audience typology, and is perceived by audiences in holistic terms, incorporating both intrinsic value and instrumental benefits.

Impact is also probably determined by experiences across the lifecourse. O'Shea and Ní Léime's (2012) conducted a mixed methods study of older people involved in a festival. The effects reported were wide ranging, in some cases differing subtly from the effects reported by different age groups: older participants reported responses such as finding their voice, overcoming shame, opening their minds, overcoming inhibitions, promoting self-esteem and even being given a new lease of life. A further key finding of this study was the practical challenge of gathering testimonies from time-pressured participants, who are also preparing for project outputs such as showcasing work.

Other practicalities have implications for evaluating impact, including changes in organisational staff (Nevanen et al. 2014). For organisations working with people affected by poverty and additional challenges which may affect their attendance, it

may not be appropriate or possible to discuss impact (BOP, 2017). In this context, research is often based on 'convenience samples' of available participants, leading to responder bias and limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010).

Newman et al. (2001) found that many evaluations are unclear about their methodologies. Whilst qualitatively rich, the existing evidence base is regarded as methodologically inconsistent. There is therefore a call for randomized controlled trials with consistent standards of measurement to increase the likelihood that patterns of health improvement associated with art can be demonstrated (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010).

Demand for innovative approaches to measurement

Knight (undated) explores the challenges for organisations of measuring 'soft', or intrinsic, outcomes during the period of service or project delivery. However they explore a range of methods for doing so, suggesting that measuring the impact of participation in arts activity requires tools tailored to the arts. Across the literature there is a recommendation to adopt in-depth qualitative approaches, and a particular preference for case study (Walmsley, 2014; DeNora) or ethnographic approaches (De Quadros, 2017).

However, it is reported that funders often require organisations to use quantitative tools such as outcomes stars, with case studies regarded as less robust forms of evidence (Williams-Burnett and Skinner, 2017). The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts (2017) suggest the need for a move from anecdotes to testimonies gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant observation and reflexive diaries. A tension clearly exists, therefore, between the capabilities and ethics of delivery organisations, and the expectations or requirements of funders.

Nevertheless, Boydell et al. (2014) argue that arts-based research is shifting understandings of what counts as evidence beyond interview-based practice. They suggest that broadening qualitative methodologies to include creative forms of documentation offers more than simply an adjunct to typical data collection and dissemination approaches, instead offering a different way of 'knowing'. Written documentation could broaden beyond conventional academic writing (Hodgins and Boydell, 2014), or impact could be captured through creative processes such as drawing (Williams-Burnett and Skinner, 2017). Innovative qualitative evaluation methods therefore have the potential to provide credible, robust evidence.

The evaluation of impact of Cashback for Creativity to date

Since its inception, Creative Scotland has commissioned independent evaluations of projects funded through CashBack for Creativity. Pza Consulting (2011) carried out the evaluation of the first phase (2008-2011), when Cashback for Creativity was known as 'Creative Identities'. They assessed impact by analysing evaluation information from a sample of projects and interviewed managers, support workers and a sample of participants, to develop case studies. Pza report that the projects were constrained by having to use an externally designed monitoring framework which led to double counting of participants and unreliable cost per participant figures.

In this first phase, it is reported that over 5,000 young people participated in arts, media and cultural activities, and that the programme was successful in targeting young carers and those who are looked after. Even at an early stage, where the focus was on providing short-term 'light touch' projects, the impact on young people was wide ranging, participants reporting new skills in the fields of arts, media, dance

and drama, along with improved confidence and self-esteem. Impacts were reported not only on individuals, but also on communities, through a combination of quantitative data, interview excerpts and case studies.

However, this evaluation suggested that expected outcomes needed to be clearer, with a focus on what is achievable. In order to maximise the impact of short-term funding, Pza advise focusing on where there are existing opportunities and infrastructure, and developing progression routes at the planning stage.

In their evaluation of Cashback Phase Two (2011-2014), Arrivo Consulting (2015) noted the move from a focus on delivering artform-specific activities to a focus on outcomes. The programme's strategic focus was also more clearly aligned to the mission and objectives of the wider Cashback for Communities programme. Arrivo reviewed the application process, interim and final report questions, and data on outputs and outcomes. They also conducted interviews with a sample of projects to develop case studies.

They found that 21,598 young people participated over the three-year phase. In terms of 'hard outcomes', almost 400 achieved some form of certification, although they identified that many young people, particularly those who were disengaged or excluded from education, 'were not motivated by award schemes and [that] the "work" towards awards was a disincentive to participation' (Arrivo, 2015: 13). 101 young people were recorded as having moved into further education, 99 into training and 44 into employment. Arrivo conclude that the projects helped young people gain an awareness of opportunities and progression pathways in the arts, and to raise their aspirations.

Increased access and participation for young people, and sustaining engagement from the hardest to reach groups, is recognised in this report as being resource intensive and achieved through longer-term investment. It is observed that long-term funding allows arts organisations to build relationships with the young people and strong partnerships with referral agencies/partners to provide sustained support and opportunities. This has also in some cases been shown to increase the participation of the young people in their local communities. Moreover, with this longer-term funding some organisations were able to develop a more strategic approach to targeting the hardest to reach young people.

The Arrivo (2015) evaluation draws attention to some of the issues with attempting to evaluate impact, in particular the challenges in aggregating information at a programme level, and in measuring soft outcomes. GMAC's survey that measures changes in young peoples' skills and confidence and Reeltime Music's podcasts are noted as examples of good practice.

A key obstacle noted is that projects define progression differently. In addition, focussing evaluation on hard outcomes does not account for factors such as young people joining the programme at different life stages and at different times. We would also stress that just as definitions of progress vary between organisations, so do they among individuals. In terms of the assessment of long-term impact, tracking young people's progress post-involvement is difficult because of the lack of resources to do this.

Creative Scotland recognises that delivery partners can have limited experience of evaluation. They sought to address this by commissioning external evaluation and hosting a learning day to provide support in developing tools to gather evidence. Arrivo Consulting (2015) recommend that Creative Scotland also ensures that

projects have clear outcomes and monitoring and evaluation plans prior to finalising funding, and even that they should consider linking payments to the delivery of reports to encourage compliance with reporting requirements. This latter point should be considered in the context of the skillsets of the organisations, which are those of youth arts practitioners rather than evaluators.

Finally, and most importantly, there is a word of caution about what counts as 'impact' and one the lessons for Creative Scotland stated is that:

While the progression outcomes from the Programme have been impressive, it is important to recognise that many of the projects in the portfolio engage younger children and more vulnerable people who may not progress into a positive outcome until much later, and not within the lifetime of the Cashback for Creativity programme. While the outcomes that the projects deliver for these young people are softer outcomes such as increased confidence, self-esteem and increased social capital, these are important intermediate outcomes in the young person's journey toward positive destinations. Creative Scotland should ensure that future investment is not solely targeted at projects delivering progression outcomes and should continue to recognise the value of projects which deliver softer outcomes. (Arrivo, 2015: 12-13)

In their 2016 report, Arrivo used a similar methodology to review outcomes from 2014-2016 in the interim evaluation of Phase Three. The long-term and national impact is defined as when 'young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens' (ibid: 8). For the Open Fund distributed through YouthLink Scotland, monitoring is light touch, reflecting the level of funding awarded. The Strategic Fund engaged 5,314 young people in positive activities, 68% from excluded groups.

In terms of hard outcomes, 21 from Station House Media Unit (Aberdeen) achieved SQA qualifications in Radio Production and seven achieved SQA qualifications in film production. Screen Education Edinburgh also supported six young people to achieve a GCSE in film production and a further four to achieve an A-Level. There seemed to be a split between those organisations that focused on engagement and those on progression outcomes. It is reflected that in the previous evaluation, a number of weaknesses had been identified relating to data. As a result a number of processes had been put in place by Creative Scotland, such as new monitoring templates to align to quarterly reporting, a learning day to introduce the processes and additional one-to-one support. It is noted that the quality of data has since significantly improved. Further detail on what data is collected has not been given in the reports.

BOP Consulting (2017) were commissioned to carry out a focused study exploring what children and young people experiencing additional challenges gain from engaging in arts-led creative work. They set out to understand how skills development is linked to broader development; what specifically about creative activities leads to positive outcomes; which approaches are most successful and why, and to identify good practice which could inform future delivery. Over fifty participants and practitioners were interviewed.

In their literature review they discuss how to define an 'outcome', identifying a strong link between intrinsic outcomes (i.e. those experienced by individuals, including happiness and self-confidence) and extrinsic developments (i.e. those that are observable by others, such as, literacy). In addition, BOP contend that referring to

intrinsic outcomes as 'soft' may be doing a 'disservice to their importance', and that the challenge remains to measure, prove, understand and communicate their significance, because they are a core element of the arts and the first step to engagement and progression (2017: 9).

One of the key findings from the study is the importance of self-directed goals. Progression and attainment should be negotiated and set at an individual level, and be measured differently from achievements in formal education. For example, progress could be defined as individual commitment to a project or self-identified goals being met. As with previous reports it is recognised that accreditation might be appropriate for some, but not for others. BOP (2017) validate this with insight from the field of psychology, highlighting that young people's progress must be self-determined, i.e. they must feel competent, supported, and free to choose to participate. BOP furthermore (2017) suggest that arts activities lend themselves to this approach because creative and aesthetic experience can provide opportunities for young people to explore their identities and interests in a safe environment.

BOP's (2017) report is important in that it brings to light the structural barriers that many young people face, such as acute poverty and inequality of access – issues that are rarely raised in the literature. Projects' success relies on young people and staff working together, and staff members' awareness of, and sensitivity to, the issues that young people face. Indeed, the report also suggests that for some practitioners, supporting young people to develop their understanding of their social and political contexts was an important part of their role.

The organisations studied by BOP (2017) reported that they were keen to know more about how other disciplines could be drawn upon to inform their work, in terms of design, delivery and evaluation. Creative Scotland and Artworks (2016) have published a toolkit, 'Is this the best it can be?', to help arts projects reflect on their practice and delivery, to plan ahead, and to build in evaluation and monitoring.

The challenge of measuring long-term impact within the context of Cashback for Creativity

There is a shortage of research on how to capture the long-term impact of the arts (Allcock, 2018), and organisations face great challenges to do this, in part due to a lack of resources and training (Pujara et al. 2014). They state that,

although eager and innovative in evaluation approaches, arts projects were often unable to produce evidence that impressed funders. This left many trapped by their own evidential limitations, both in terms of how the evidence they can collect is undervalued and their inability to demonstrate outcomes which are more desirable to funders. (ibid: 15)

With a squeeze on staff, Judge (2013) warns that when measuring according to funders' priorities, organisations can lose sight of their own organisational goals and priorities. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts (2017) conclude that at present:

Evidence is unevenly distributed across the field, is of variable quality and is sometimes inaccessible. Looking to the future, greater focus needs to be placed on good-quality evaluation which allows for comparative analysis. Equally, there is a pressing need for appropriate longitudinal research into the relationship between arts engagement, health and wellbeing.

In terms of looking at best practice in this area, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) has been evaluating Sistema Scotland's Big Noise programme since

2013 (Harkins and Moore, 2019). It set out to avoid the methodological weaknesses of other studies and achieve two aims: firstly, to assess, over the long term, the outcomes in terms of social and behavioural development, educational performance and attainment, and future impacts on the lives, health and wellbeing of the children and young people participating in the programme, and the social impacts at the family and community levels. Secondly, to gain insights into Sistema Scotland's ethos and vision and its approach to selecting programme sites, adapting programme delivery to local structures and requirements, local partnership working and the characteristics of the staff and implementation. This is viewed as critical to enhancing inclusion, engagement and retention and achieving positive outcomes for the participants, families and the wider community.

Phase One, the Formative Evaluation took place between 2013 and 2018. Phase Two, the Summative Evaluation is currently underway. In the first phase, qualitative approaches helped understand and describe how Big Noise is delivered. The early impacts of the programme were observed and mapped, allowing the researchers to forecast how these were likely to unfold over time and influence life courses. Phase Two will use quantitative analysis of life-course outcomes to assess the long-term impact of the Big Noise programme. Outcome analysis will focus on the educational and health outcomes of participants as well as their contact with the welfare, justice and social care systems. All analysis within Phase Two involves the outcomes for Big Noise participants being compared with those of a similar socio-demographic profile who have not accessed Big Noise.

Conclusion

Whilst GCPH's approach to evaluation required resources which are rarely available to arts organisations in Scotland, it should be regarded as an example of best practice which offers learning to evaluators and funders. As a longitudinal, mixed-method, controlled evaluation, conducted over the life course of the children and young adults taking part, at the individual, familial, community and societal levels, it demonstrates the potential for the arts to robustly evidence their positive long-term impacts.

The Big Noise evaluation also highlights the role the arts might play in delivering against the National Performance Framework, with potential to make a major contribution to national outcomes in culture, health, education, poverty, communities and children, as well as the crosscutting themes: addressing inequalities, and promoting sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

This example also has important policy implications. It shows that arts-based interventions can contribute to addressing inequality, and may also have a preventative impact on young people's contact with the welfare, justice and social care systems. These outcomes are more likely to be achieved when there is sustained support for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged young people, with implications for the short-term funding cycles which are typical in the arts sector.

Finally, the sources identified here suggest that evaluation should be ethically informed as to the demands placed on participants, not only reflecting the purposes of funders but providing participants with opportunities to reflect constructively on their own journeys. Indeed, the benefit of a longitudinal qualitative approach to evaluation should be understood not only in terms of its value to funders but in the opportunity it provides young people and staff to learn through dialogue and shared reflection.

Appendix C: Topic Guide

Cashback for Creativity Research Project Topic Guide Phase 1

Research questions:

- What are the long-term impacts of creative engagement for young people when considered through the lens of the Cashback for Creativity programme?
- How can organisations better evaluate and illustrate the long-term impacts?

Core questions for participants:

- Which project did you take part in and how long ago was that?
- Can you tell me about the impact it had on you at the time?
- What do you think has been the impact on your life as a result? (Prompts: wellbeing, confidence, employment, training, views of self, hopes for the future at the time).
- How do you think it has shaped who you are today? (Who you are, how you see yourself, the decisions you made)
- What specifically about the initiative made a difference to you? Why? What other factors have been important in your life?
- How much of your success today do you attribute to the support given back then? What do you think your life might have been without taking part in the project?
- Do you think the programme had a wider impact on the community? If so, how, why?

Questions on measuring impact:

- In terms of the impact made, can you remember whether the organisation sought your opinions at the time about the difference it made to you?
- How can organisations capture the journey you have described and for this process to be empowering? As discussed, this research is about measuring long-term impact: do you think you would have been happy to have been involved in a process trying to do this over the past few years?
- At what point would it have been good to ask you about the impact made? (Timelines, checking in, natural points?) Do you think you would have been happy to be involved in this?
- What in your opinion have been the turning points/turning people in your life?
- Has there been an impact on the wider community?
- What barriers did you face that made it a challenge for you to progress at times? (difficult question to ask, but the importance of structural barriers on this is drawn out in the BOP report).
- What other questions could we ask that would help you to discuss what this has meant to you?

Key questions for organisations' employees/volunteers:

- What do you think is the long-term impact of the project(s) you have delivered funded by Creativity Scotland?
- How do you currently measure long-term impact?
- What do you think are the challenges in measuring long-term impact? (For example, the challenge of measuring against changing priorities, such as shifting from needing to meet a young person's basic needs to their creative or skill-based ambitions.)
- What do you think could help?
- Is there potential for people to self-refer to have long-term impact measured?

- Is it possible for people to state from the outset what they personally want to achieve through the programme or support? Do you identify goals/ambitions to measure against in collaboration with participants?
- Is there potential to carry out peer research?
- Do you try to capture the wider impact, for example on the community?
- Do you know of any good practice in this area relating to the measurement of long-term impact?

Suggested questions for further research with young people

- How would you describe the experience so far, of reflecting back on your life? Is there anything you have learned as a result?
- Was the initial contact with the service more important than sustaining engagement in terms of impact?
- Do you think the impact of the support given lessens over time? Would your answer change if you were asked in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years?
- How would you like to communicate what the impact has been to you?
- What is a reasonable length of time for an organisation to continue to get in touch to ask you about the impact made?
- This research set out to unpack how to measure long-term impact: what does 'long-term' mean to you? How long after participating in the project do you think you would be willing to come back and talk about it?
- When measuring long-term impact, who do you think should ask the questions? (Or should you tell your story as you want?)
- What do you think is the value in you telling your story?
- How do you want this information to be used?
- What medium do you want to use to tell your story?
- How should organisations ask for your input?
- Should it be up to you to 'check in' when you want?
- Do you think you would have described your life and story differently a few years ago?
- Poverty and the effects of poverty were rarely mentioned in the study, why do you think this is?
- Do you think your story has the potential to make people aware of the challenges young people face and how these can be overcome?
- If you were to tell your story again to the researcher, what would you say?
- What do you think are the key points of your story you would like others to know?
- If your story could be heard by anyone in the world and have an impact, who would you like to tell it to and why?

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