

CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES



END OF YEAR 3 REPORT; EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Impact, outcomes and the future at the end of year 3

Executive summary

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the local Creative People and Places (CPP) programmes which have contributed to the national evaluation over the past three years by submitting monitoring data, local evaluation outputs, participating in interviews and case studies. Your input to the evaluation is much appreciated. Thanks also to the national steering group, and in particular to A New Direction (AND) and Arts Council England in their respective coordination and funding roles.¹

Introduction

One of Arts Council England's goals is for more people to experience and be inspired by the arts, irrespective of where they live or their social, educational, or financial circumstances. The CPP programme aims to support this ambition by providing investment in parts of the country where people's involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average, with the aim of increasing the likelihood of participation.

Arts Council England invested around £37 million across 21 Places² over three different funding rounds as part of Phase 1 of CPP.³ Only places which appeared in the bottom 20% of adult arts participation⁴ were able to apply for funding. The early recipients of Phase 1 have already completed delivery and have now begun to deliver Phase 2 (a second three-year phase of activity).

The national evaluation

In 2013, Arts Council England commissioned AND to coordinate a national programme evaluation on behalf of all 21 local CPPs. This was the first time that an external organisation had been tasked with the coordination of an evaluation for an Arts Council England programme. A national network of local place representatives was established to

steer the evaluation and, in December 2013, Ecorys was contracted to undertake the meta-evaluation, which comprised of a review of local monitoring and evaluation data supplemented by a small amount of primary research.

Drawing on a wide range of sources⁵, this final evaluation report on the first phase of CPP presents the overall outcomes to January 2017, highlighting a variety of successful approaches to producing local arts programmes and learning.

The aim of the overarching programme evaluation is to understand what worked and what did not work and to capture lessons to inform the sector, with an emphasis on generating new knowledge around engaging communities in the arts and culture and sharing this. There are three core evaluation questions, set by Arts Council England to guide the national evaluation commission:

- Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
- To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?
- Which approaches were successful and what were lessons learned?

¹ Photo credits (front cover):

Heart of Glass. A Right St Helens Knees Up, performed by residents from local sheltered housing associations at a sold out Citadel Theatre in 2016. Photo: Stephen King

² The term used to describe the region/ geographic area successful in applying to the CPP programme.

³ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-funding/funding-programmes/creative-people-and-places-fund/successfulapplicants/>

⁴ According to the Active People Survey.

⁵ Quarterly monitoring reports submitted to Arts Council England (for the period up to 30th September 2016); local evaluation outputs; qualitative data from interviews with national strategic stakeholders including Arts Council England and a sample of Place Directors, and staff, partners and participants in the case study areas.

CPP Programme Structure



To answer these questions, the national evaluation has taken a **theory-based approach** and developed a **logic model** which is detailed in the full report and shows how the CPP programme has been developed to address an identified need, the outputs and outcomes it is expected to generate and ultimately how it will contribute to wider economic and social impacts (or longer-term outcomes).

Research undertaken as part of the national evaluation has tested the existence of these mechanisms in the context of the CPP programme.

The evaluation design has attempted to build upon, rather than duplicate, local Place evaluation efforts, using a meta-evaluation framework to systematically and comprehensively review local Place evaluation outputs.

Methodology

Primary research



Secondary research



Outputs

11 progress reports
12 case studies
3 annual evaluation reports

CPP programme reach and outcomes

At the end of year 3, the improved quality and quantity of local evaluation outputs, combined with local CPPs' progress with project delivery, provides more compelling evidence than in previous years that **the overall programme is achieving all of the short-term outcomes in the logic model:**

- More people engaged in, and inspired by, and enjoying the arts)
- Increased understanding of the arts and confidence to make informed choices
- Increased excellence and innovation in the arts (including understanding of what works well and less well)
- Increased capacity and capability in arts provision
- Increased revenue for the arts

- Excellence in engaging and empowering communities

Throughout, local CPPs have made mixed but generally good progress against work plans, action research has informed local programme design and delivery, and the **overall picture is positive**.

Partnership-working continues to be valued, providing opportunities for mutual learning, improved access to communities at grassroots level and additional complementary expertise and assets. CPPs have increasingly been supported by partners to build up local capacity, capability and local infrastructure. They have done this through co-ordinating and improving networks of people, improving knowledge of local venues and providing opportunities for developing the skills of participants, volunteers and arts professionals.

The best partnerships are locally relevant, flexible and responsive. However, ongoing challenges include making sufficient time and effort to make partnerships work successfully and managing differing expectations.

The programme has achieved almost **1.45 million audience/visitor engagements** nationally to date. According to interview data and the Audience Agency findings⁶, **CPP is successfully engaging more people from areas of least engagement in the arts**.

“It certainly has reached people who do not normally engage in the arts...for all we say CPP took longer than expected actually it’s been remarkably quick and successful in terms of reaching people that are normally considered difficult to reach...but I think it has demonstrated that you do that if you work locally...” (National strategic stakeholder)

The Audience Agency’s national profiling and local evaluations indicate that **a disproportionately high level of people (in relation to the proportion of the cohort in English households) from places of low engagement have been involved with CPP**.

Across the CPP programme in its first three years, 91% of visitors belonged to one of the medium or lower engaged Audience Spectrum segments of

the population, compared with 77% of the English population, which demonstrates that the programme is working. A similar picture is seen with the Mosaic Profile. CPP is therefore increasing engagement in the arts among individuals that have not previously engaged/do not engage regularly and also inspired those who do engage in the arts to engage more, which is a significant achievement.

A need to better understand audiences was identified in year 1 and at the end of year 3, all the evidence points to this having been achieved. **A range of effective methods to engage audiences** were identified, including establishing sustained dialogue with local people and putting on small, frequent events. **Sustained engagement** was linked to locally relevant events and activities, taking activities to people’s localities and working symbiotically with the community to understand local interests. A wide range of examples can be found in the full report.

Cumulatively, the evidence suggests that **CPP has facilitated changing perceptions of the arts at the individual, community and arts sector level**. This ranges from individuals viewing artistic excellence in different ways, to CPP changing perceptions within Arts Council England about how different leadership models can produce excellence in art, the latter exceeding the original expectations for the programme.

As a result of engaging in CPP, more individuals feel **empowered by and confident in discussing art** as their level of ownership increases. The qualitative evidence indicates that participants from Round 1 CPP Places in particular are thinking about the arts in a different way and are actively challenging and questioning what ‘excellent art’ is and their relationship to it. They also **experience a greater sense of belonging** in their community as a result of participating in the arts.

The changing perceptions of art at the individual, community and programme level are helping to **change the local context for art in CPP Places**. Two Places have secured Ambition for Excellence grants and non-arts partners have begun to incorporate more arts practice into their everyday work. In general, local CPPs are demonstrating increased confidence (in comparison to previous years) in terms of what they want to deliver and how they will deliver it.

⁶The Audience Agency (2017) Creative People and Places Profiling and Mapping 2014-2016 National Report.

An **increasing number of Places are bringing in revenue for the arts**, particularly by supporting individuals to apply for grants for example through Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence Grants, but also by linking in with the local council or by crowdfunding to raise revenue from the public.

Furthermore, in year 3, **more CPPs (especially those funded in earlier Rounds) are achieving the medium and longer-term outcomes of the logic model:**

- Creative people – sustained and informed arts participation irrespective of circumstances and background
- Creative places – sustainable arts and cultural provision

The primary and secondary data is also showing that **at least eight local CPPs are making demonstrable progress towards achieving some of the longer-term outcomes of the programme**, including:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved social cohesion
- Increased community pride

More people across different CPPs are reporting feeling **increased pride in their community** which, in some cases, has led to a greater sense of community cohesion, particularly in areas where people have been inspired to become activists for their community.

CPP programme excellence and good practice

CPP Places have come a long way in terms of their thinking, design and experience of delivering excellence in art and excellence in community engagement. **Excellence in art and community engagement is now understood by many Places as a continuum**, as highlighted by the thematic research piece on Excellence in CPP⁷ and in various discussions arising from the *People Place Power* national conference⁸. There are ongoing challenges in achieving the right balance but importantly CPP has provided Places with the

⁷ Consilium Research and Consultancy and Thinking Practice (2016) CPP Thematic Research. What it does to you. Excellence in CPP -

<http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/what-it-does-you-excellence-cpp>

⁸ Robinson, M. (2016) People, Power, Place. Increasing arts engagement a national conference. Conference Report. 27-28 September 2016. Thinking Practice - <http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/people-place-power-conference-report>

opportunity to pilot and refine different approaches. The best examples of excellent art and community engagement come from CPPs that have consciously taken a holistic and multi-faceted approach to forge a mutually beneficial relationship between the arts and the community.

There has been a notable shift towards excellence being embedded into everyday practice, which is also evident in the number of tangible examples which have emerged from Places alongside an openness to sharing their learning and experience. Furthermore, partnership working has raised the level of ambition for excellence and also helped to achieve excellence.

Local CPPs approaches to excellence range from being very structured to fluid but in general, **Places would agree that achieving excellence requires them to take a more holistic view of quality in terms of the whole process and all those involved**. Quality processes are important so that groups can demonstrate that they are able to develop and deliver projects.

Key learning is that achieving excellence is about ensuring that the community, artists and CPP team have time and **space to openly reflect** with each other and take on board feedback.

CPP is increasingly being recognised for its excellence in art, which has not only raised the overall profile, but is starting to have a positive impact on the sector too. There is some strong evidence that there are increased levels of confidence, recognition and ambition arising from the programme. It has enabled places to be **more artistically ambitious**, which is a good indication of the progress made towards excellence and demonstrates that places have grown in confidence to be more innovative and risk-taking with new and different opportunities. Moreover, CPPs are increasingly being compared to National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), which receive regular funding from Arts Council England.

Lessons learned

Throughout, the learning has been focused on three key areas: process issues; outcomes and looking to the future. There is now greater recognition that establishing local CPPs is resource and time intensive and requires up to one year's lead-in time, and thoughtful and pragmatic programming decisions. Round 2 and 3 Places have been able to learn from the earlier

CPPs and some have hit the ground running and progressed at a faster pace. A small number have taken longer to start delivering after spending a lot of time planning and developing activities with their local communities. This highlights the **importance of getting the right balance between time and resources for the planning phase and for implementation**. CPPs also need to ensure that they have **sufficient capacity to deliver**, which is an area requiring greater focus in the future.

As highlighted earlier, **local CPPs continue to evolve and strengthen their partnerships, which are change-makers and are worth the effort required to develop and nurture relationships**. CPPs have overcome many of the early challenges to partnership working and continue to evolve and strengthen partnerships evident in increasing levels of collaboration and the numbers of new partnerships that have been established.

CPP is also **creating valuable learning and capacity development for its partners**, including NPOs, and this goes beyond the arts sector, which reflects local CPP's growing confidence and presence in areas. There is evidence of consortia partners learning new skills which is enabling them to better meet the needs of local communities. However, this has worked well for some CPPs but not so well for others.

Allowing sufficient time to engage and involve local people in the planning and/or delivery process is another lesson learned as is ensuring that learning is shared. Overall, CPPs have generally been successful in terms of engaging with local communities and artists. In doing so, they have learnt that art and arts experiences can take time to grow and develop, to be authentic, engaging and genuinely community-led.

CPPs are now in a better position to reflect on their experiences and have become more comfortable with accepting that things do not always go to plan, and that it is as important to highlight what does not work as what does, which is all part of the learning process. This has included learning not to try to do too much. CPPs have valued the opportunity the programme has provided in terms of peer support and peer learning.

After some initial reluctance to prioritise **monitoring and evaluation**, there is evidence to

suggest that this area of work is increasingly being valued and demonstrating its worth in evidencing the success of the programme.

Sustainability is increasingly on the agenda for local CPPs and several have successfully brought in increased revenue for the arts, most often at the individual level through support with grant applications.

Conclusions

CPP was launched in 2013, with some excitement and trepidation about what achievements and learning the programme would bring. It represents the first arts programme which explicitly focuses on the two key metrics of engagement and excellence in locations where historically, widespread audience engagement has been below average. It is also the first time that Arts Council England has commissioned an external organisation to lead the evaluation. Therefore on several counts, programme activity was, at least initially, considered to be somewhat risky. However, CPP has always had the potential to deliver something new and aspirational, and to learn from action research and evaluation.

At the end of year 3, the interviews and increased breadth of local evaluation data that has emerged in this last year indicate that all of the short-term outcomes around audience engagement and increases in understanding of the arts, excellence, capacity and capability and revenue for the arts are being achieved to a greater or lesser extent. The local CPPs that have demonstrated increased revenue for the arts have had the full three years in operation suggesting that if other places adopt a similar approach (which involves gradually diversifying their income) then this outcome (increased revenue for the arts), will also be achieved. Increasingly, the evidence indicates that more local CPPs appear to be achieving the programme's medium-term outcomes around sustained and informed arts participation and sustainable arts and cultural provision, and some of the long-term wider societal benefits such as improved health and wellbeing.

Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and being inspired by the arts?

The qualitative and quantitative data unanimously indicates that more people from places of least engagement are experiencing the arts. Commonly, interviewees highlighted how successful the programme has been in engaging

non-attenders and were keen to point to its effectiveness in targeting places of low arts engagement in comparison with other arts programmes, which is a significant achievement.

The Audience Agency national profiling and some local evaluation data shows that a high proportion of people taking part are from groups with low engagement with the arts.

The evidence suggests that CPP has changed individual, community and sector perceptions of the arts and that participation in CPP leads to greater empowerment, confidence and an increased sense of belonging in communities, which has in certain Places led to a greater sense of community cohesion.

Alongside this developing knowledge-base, it is apparent that local CPPs are demonstrating increasing confidence (in comparison to previous years) in terms of what they want to deliver and how they will deliver it. Places continue to consolidate their focus in terms of brand identity and their established local presence and are increasingly willing to share learning.

Similarly, the benefits of partnership working have been better documented and shared. Although, more research into non-arts partners' experiences of CPP and what they have gained from their involvement would further equip local CPPs to lead and support new partnerships to achieve mutual gains. The extensive and largely successful work of the Peer Learning Network among CPP Place Directors should be extended to other team members.

To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence in the process of engaging communities achieved?

From the interviews and review of local evaluations, it is clear that excellence in art and community engagement is now understood by many Places to be linked and the programme has been influential in promoting that understanding.

The depth and breadth of examples that are considered to be excellent has grown as has local CPPs' confidence in sharing these.

Based on the interviews, it seems that in general Places would agree that achieving excellence requires them to take a more holistic view of quality in terms of the whole project process and all those involved. However, based on the evidence to date, there are limited examples of CPPs adopting a full 360-degree feedback

approach to create a holistic picture of excellence as advocated by Arts Council England.

Partnerships in many forms have proved to be both a source of inspiration with regards to excellence and a means through which the learning from CPP can be disseminated. More generally, CPP is increasingly being recognised for its excellence in art, which has raised its profile and is starting to have a positive impact on the sector through increased recognition, ambition and links with NPOs.

Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned?

Commonly, and despite different local contexts, there are some approaches that have been successful because they share particular principles (such as inclusiveness, flexibility and patience) which have helped some local CPPs to achieve at and beyond the level of their initial aspirations for the programme. A range of effective audience engagement methods have been developed.

Lessons have been learnt around the different stages of the process, namely around the significant amount of time it takes to set-up CPPs and the subsequent effects on the speed, breadth and depth of programme delivery, and the importance of balancing resources.

The structure, make-up, commitment and capacity of partnerships remain of critical importance to the effective delivery and impact of CPP and to its future. Importantly, the evidence suggests that partnerships are generally setting aside more time for reflection which is paying dividends, reflected in successful (and transparent) adaptations to local arts programming, improvements to monitoring and evaluation, and a growing evidence base that can better demonstrate the impact and outcomes of CPP.

At the same time, there is strong evidence to suggest that mechanisms for sharing learning are working effectively. They provide support and challenge through peer advice and review, and the Peer Learning Network is increasingly a vehicle for dissemination. CPP is now being recognised as a source of good practice and learning among the wider arts sector.

There is evidence to suggest that monitoring and evaluation is becoming increasingly valued. However, the extent to which CPP is changing the practice of arts organisations is as yet unknown,

and the evaluation in year 3 has observed a seemingly widening gap between CPPs that have established plans for sustainability and those that are currently lacking. Thinking ahead to phase 2, the sustainability issue will only grow in importance with a view to the achievement of a 10-year vision.

What next at the end of phase 1?

In the first three years, the extent to which CPP has changed the local context for the arts has been an ongoing line of enquiry that it has not been possible to fully answer in this timeframe. It is clear that to a greater or lesser degree, CPP has changed arts engagement opportunities locally, and related levels of engagement within CPP areas, and that this has led to a range of positive outcomes at the level of the individual, communities, and in some cases, for the arts.

However, there has been common agreement among interviewees that the picture is mixed in terms of CPPs' level of ambition and aspiration and it is still too early to say whether even examples that have been highlighted as excellent are going to continue beyond the period of Arts Council England funding. The question is whether local CPPs will continue to have a positive impact beyond the funding period, and what that will mean for the local arts workforce, which is another area of limited evidence to date. Together with leadership, this area requires greater focus if CPP is to continue to achieve its overall vision.

With this in mind, we set out a summary of the outstanding gaps and areas for future learning:

- There is a need for more research on the minimum and ideal staffing structure for core CPP teams and the current and potential role of volunteers in increasing the capacity of CPP places.
- The voices of non-arts partners should be increasingly heard to document more what they have gained from their involvement, what they need from the arts sector, and what they can offer.
- There is scope to explore the potential for working with the voluntary and amateur arts sector to develop and share learning based on the increased capacity and momentum these partners can bring.
- A further relatively unexplored area is the role and potential of commercial partnerships,

which may have particular opportunities around income generation.

- The success to date of the Peer Learning Network could be broadened as has been acknowledged and hopefully its role will increase in importance in phase 2.
- It is important for local CPP Places to consider further what kind of engagement is desirable and essential that consistent monitoring of previous engagement levels and the sustainability of engagement happen across all CPPs to inform programme development, share impactful stories and generate new income.
- The timeliness of delivery of monitoring returns must be improved in order that more up to date information is available to aid the action learning which is integral to the CPP programme. It is noted that the time allowed for the turnaround of monitoring returns for phase 2 has been reduced.
- Lastly, the role of local evaluation going forwards must be given consideration as this has implications for being able to demonstrate the success of the programme and the extent to which it has met its overall aims within a 10-year vision.