

CoLibra
www.colibra.co.uk

Evaluation Report for Cultural Spring's Phase 3 Creative People and Places (CPP) Project

5 May 2023

Author: Nick Scott, Director

E: nick@colibra.co.uk, T: 01765 609971, M: 0771 414 5354

Company No: 7809327 Registered in England and Wales

Contents

Section	Page
1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Research objectives and questions	10
4. Methodology	10
5. Findings	11
- Outputs	11
- Participant demographics	12
- Workshops	14
- Craft packs	21
- Your Art	22
- Go and See	23
- Community Research and Development	25
- Social Prescribing	26
- Community Champions, Community Connectors and Cultural Friends	27
- Audiences	28
- Artists and Creative Practitioners	29
- Team Learning	33
- Partners and Stakeholders	34
- Added value	36
- Legacy and sustainability	37
6. Conclusions	38
7. Recommendations	42

1. Executive Summary

If you ever doubted the social, cultural, economic and wellbeing contributions of Arts Council England's investment in its Creative People and Places Programme then read this report. The findings in this final evaluation and impact report for Cultural Spring's Phase 3 Project evidence how, for a relatively small investment of £500,000.00 over a three year period, that a cross sectoral, geographically focussed art and cultural partnership can positively impact on the wellbeing of participants, embed arts and culture as an expected and accepted part of everyone's lives in Sunderland and South Tyneside and support artists and creative practitioner development.

The range of activities delivered, the numbers and types of people engaged, the variety of engagement opportunities on offer, the reach into communities of least engagement, value for money and the positive feedback from participants are all things the Cultural Spring should be justly proud of. If Cultural Spring was a stick of rock, 'meaningful arts participation and engagement' would be writ large through its core.

Arts Council England's Creative People and Places Programme project aims to engage those least engaged in the arts. Cultural Spring's Project focussed on communities within Sunderland and South Tyneside and was delivered between April 2020 – March 2023. During this period Coronavirus raged, which meant that for substantial periods of time, face to face arts engagement activities were not possible – a particular challenge for any engagement project. In spite of this, Cultural Spring re-engineered activities and successfully continued to deliver a diverse range of arts engagement activities on-line, for people to do at home and in person once restrictions lifted.

Research revealed that Cultural Spring's Phase 3 project successfully engaged:

- **8281 participants** took part in art and craft workshops and Go and See visits.
- **5278 audience members** at seven different events.
- **2845 households** were craft pack recipients. *(Note: this figure is included in the 8281 participants)*
- **106 volunteers** supported Cultural Spring delivery.
- **44** individuals engaged as **Community Champions, Cultural Friends and Community Connectors** to help encourage and embed arts engagement within the communities of place.
- **36 artists and creative practitioners** were commissioned to support delivery.
- **10 organisations commissioned** to deliver new activities.
- **18 community forums** involving local people in decision making about the activities and projects being delivered in their localities were facilitated.

Evaluation findings from participants revealed the following:

- **99% would recommend the activity to others**
- **99% reported an appetite/intention to engage in future arts activities.**
- **98% felt a sense of achievement.**

- **93% reported learning something new.**
- **93% valued the social aspect of their engagement and feel more socially connected.**
- **92% reported that engaging in programmed activities made them feel happy.**

Demographic data for those who engaged revealed that:

- **30% disability/limiting health condition.**
- **45% aged under 16 years.**
- **9% ethnic minorities**
- **58% resident in the top 30% of most deprived areas** in Sunderland and South Tyneside.
- **22% male, 77% female and 1% non binary.**

Significantly, **a third (33%) of people engaging with Cultural Spring activities had no previous arts engagement** in the preceding twelve months and a further 43% had only engaged between 1-3 times in the previous twelve months.

Clever stewardship of funds and maximising social capital, networks and partnership enabled Cultural Spring to deliver their Project and in so doing, leverage an additional £216,717.00 to support delivery. This means that **for every £1.00 of ACE investment, Cultural Spring secured a further £0.43.**

Cultural Spring's **asset based community development (ABCD) approach** was one which built on local community strengths, rather than focussing on arts and cultural deficits and thereby strengthened community capacity. Their approach to programming activities in non-traditional spaces for non-traditional audiences/participants has helped to extend reach and engagement amongst the least engaged.

Generous leadership was demonstrated through Cultural Spring's Steering Group, Community Champions, Community Connectors and Cultural Friends, Your Art and Commissioning Forums. This was achieved by ensuring that those involved knew they were important and valued and by spending time developing relationships and meaningfully connecting with individuals and organisations, providing opportunities, empowering others to make decisions and delegating responsibilities.

Clear and simple marketing messages using non arty language, programming different activities to appeal to and attract specific segments of the population, providing free or subsidised activities and working in, with and through gateway community organisations has extended reach, promoted social inclusion and deepened engagement for certain groups e.g. children, families, those on low incomes, young people, men, minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities.

In terms of artistic practice and excellence, Cultural Spring recognises that this is less about involving award winning artists and more about finding local connections in the making of the work. They successfully deployed an **approach based on the coming together of process, people and skilled execution of ideas.** Cultural Spring's Research & Development commissions excel best in this area. The fact that 97% of participants said they had an appetite/desire to engage in future arts activities and 97% would recommend the activities to others is testament to both the quality of the offer, enjoyment and embedding an appetite for continued arts engagement.

2. Introduction

Cultural Spring is one of 39 Arts Council England (ACE) Creative People and Places Programme (CPP) projects. CPP is an action research programme whose aim is for more people to take the lead in choosing, creating and participating in arts and culture experiences in the places where they live. Funding is targeted at areas with low arts engagement, often co-terminus with areas of deprivation.

This is the final summative evaluation report for Cultural Spring's Phase 3 Creative People and Places (CPP) Project which ran in South Tyneside and Sunderland over the three years from the 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2023. Significant periods of time between March 2020 – March 2021 were affected by Covid -19 pandemic restrictions which precluded or severely limited social gatherings. These social lockdowns significantly hampered arts and cultural participation activities.

Cultural Spring's Phase 3 project aimed to:

- Entertain*** Make their arts and cultural programme exciting and stimulating, getting both the attention and holding the interest of communities and stakeholders, leaving them with delight and wonder and a sense of pleasure after taking part.
- Equip*** Ensure that Cultural Spring affords many opportunities to 'learn through doing', to develop new skills, confidence and aspirations, so that ultimately there is a greater love of and appreciation for what great art and culture can mean – at individual and/or community level.
- Empower*** To develop a desire across individuals and groups to sustain a long-standing legacy and impact, through developing a foundation based on collective enthusiasm and action, where communities have the confidence and skills to choose, campaign for, and manage the cultural provision they would like to see in their areas.
- Encourage*** To enable the first tentative steps and participation in arts and cultural events; Support nascent arts and cultural appetite; Encourage and facilitate individuals to take on new responsibilities and to take advantage of opportunities that help shape their lives and the communities they work, live and play in.

Theory of Change

The co-produced Theory of Change table overleaf provides the framework for this evaluation.

Cultural Spring's Theory of Change

VISION	<p>For arts and culture to be an expected and accepted part of everyone's lives in Sunderland and South Tyneside.</p>
MISSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme of all art forms to encourage and enable everyone to get involved and to establish a new cultural environment. • Attract great musicians, writers and artists (locally and nationally) to work in and with our communities. • Provide opportunities for people to enjoy new experiences, discover new passions, learn new skills and be involved in decisions about the types of activities available to them. • Develop a rich programme capable of catalysing previously untapped partnerships and opportunities.
OUTPUTS (Short term results)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4000 participants (500 Go and See & 3500 Workshop participants) • 42 artists, creative practitioners and commissioned organisations engaged and supported (30 creative practitioners/workshop leaders, 10 commissioned organisations & 2 new companies) • 8000 audience members • 80 co-creators (50 community arts champions, 20 volunteers & 10 commissioning forums)
OUTCOMES (Mid term results/differences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased social/community capital • Increased activity rates • New skill acquisition • Increased confidence • Increased appetite for future arts engagement • Increased pride in the area • Greater numbers of individuals wanting to give back to their local communities
IMPACTS (Longer term results/changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and culture embedded • Improved wellbeing • Enhanced Community cohesion and self-reliance • Improved local image and civic pride • Economic benefits

Cultural Spring's Phase 3 Project built on activities and learning delivered in previous Phase 1 and 2 CPP Projects and involved delivery in the six new wards of: Ryhope, Silksworth and Doxford in

Sunderland, and Hebburn North, Hebburn South and Primrose in South Tyneside. These wards have a combined population of 59,000 people.

Governance

The Project was strategically managed by a diverse Steering Group of local partners, comprising:

Name	Organisation/Role
Councillor Joan Atkinson	South Tyneside Council
Richard Barber	Cultural Spring Charity
Kathleen Boodhai	Sangini
Sinead Burke	ACE Relationship Manager (Observer)
Paul Callaghan	Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture Trust
Diane Gray	Community Champion
Ian High	Cultural Spring Charity
Emma Horsman	Project Director
Rob Lawson	Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture Trust
Fiona Martin	Customs House Trust
Sandra Naglis	Community Champion
Padma Rao	Sangini
Ray Spencer	Customs House Trust
Graeme Thompson	University of Sunderland (Chairperson)
Katie Whiteoak	Community Champion
Councillor Linda Williams	Sunderland City Council

Day-to-day project management was delivered by a small team of eight, comprising:

- Emma Horsman – Project Director (Staff – employed by the University of Sunderland)
- Emma Scarr – Project Co-ordinator (Staff – employed by the University of Sunderland))
- Michael Barrass - Project Producer (Freelancer, From February 2020 To June 2021)
- Alexandra Marsden – Community Coordinator (Staff – employed by the University of Sunderland))
- Rob Lawson – PR and Publicity Associate (Freelancer)
- Iam Burn – Data and Admin. Co-ordinator (Staff – employed by the University of Sunderland))
- Si Beckwith - Audience Engagement Co-ordinator (Freelancer)
- Emma Biggins – Empty Shops Programme Co-ordinator (Freelancer)

Additional support was provided through Chrissie Tiller who acted as a critical friend to Cultural Spring.

Approach

Cultural Spring's programme of diverse arts and cultural activities were delivered under six main strands:

i. Creative Workshops

These scheduled workshops covered a diverse range of art and craft activities and were delivered by artists and creative practitioners. Local community venues were used for delivery and workshops included taster sessions, single sessions, workshops delivered over a number of weeks or just a couple of days, online and in person sessions and craft pack distribution during Covid-19. Workshops were provided free of charge, but participants were encouraged to make donations through the Cultural Spring's Pay What You Feel initiative.

ii. Your Art

This strand aimed to provide start up support to encourage new arts initiatives in local communities. It involved local people as co-commissioners and decision makers and working with community champions to select the proposals they wanted to support in their localities.

iii. Go & See

Organising and scheduling a range of opportunities for people to go, see and experience art, in groups, both locally and further afield.

iv. Community Research & Developments

Research and Development callouts were developed by and with community partners and local people, with artists selected by the communities themselves.

v. Social Prescribing

This pilot strand involved partnership and network development to explore social prescribing for the arts, to extend reach and demonstrate the valuable contribution that involvement in the arts on positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

vi. Cultural Friends

This pilot strand involved recruiting and deploying 'Cultural Friends' to befriend, encourage, support, accompany and connect individuals to access arts and cultural opportunities - both Cultural Spring's and others.

Collectively these six strands delivered opportunities for individuals to engage on their own terms in the places where they lived as:

- Consumers (i.e. audience members and participants)
- Co-creators and commissioners (i.e. Artists, Creative practitioners and decision makers)
- Leaders (i.e. Steering group members, Commissioning Forum members)
- Connectors (i.e. Community champions, Cultural friends and delivery partners)
- Volunteers (i.e. supporters and participants)

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

Delivering arts and cultural participation and engagement activities during Covid's social lockdown presented significant challenges. Coronavirus restrictions severely limited face-to-face group participation, meetings and gatherings of any kind. However, Cultural Spring successfully pivoted and re-engineered activities and project delivery to ensure continued access to arts and cultural activities. Wherever possible, activities were shifted on-line for those without digital access, alternative delivery mechanisms were developed (e.g. craft packs for use at home) to ensure the widest possible inclusion and mitigate against digital exclusion.

This successful pivoting (reported on in more detail in the Interim Evaluation Report) ensured that Cultural Spring's range of arts and culture engagement activities continued to provide vehicles for connections to be made, continued learning, created a sense of 'all being in it together' and the much needed safe calm spaces and time out where individuals could temporarily immerse and distract themselves from the stresses caused by Covid-19.

3. Evaluation Objectives and Questions

This report seeks to address the following six key research questions:

- I. The extent to which Cultural Spring delivered against its projected outputs?
- II. Did engagement and participation in arts and cultural activities contribute to improved wellbeing amongst participants?
- III. How Cultural Spring responded to delivery and engagement challenges during Covid-19.
- IV. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
- V. The extent to which the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence in the process of engaging communities has been achieved?
- VI. Which approaches have been successful and what lessons can be learned?

4. Methodology

This evaluation deployed a mixed methodology to enable the gathering and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach ensured that the evaluation was capable of capturing data from Cultural Spring's diverse range of engagers – be they participants or audience members, partners in delivery (i.e. artists and creative practitioners), stakeholders, co-creators (e.g. Community Champions), Staff and those involved in Cultural Spring's governance.

A range of research methods were used to evidence findings including:

Secondary research comprised:

- Analysis of monitoring data to gather numbers and demographic information.
- Analysis of evaluation forms from Workshop and Go and See participants to provide valuable qualitative data at scale linked to Theory of Change outcomes.

Primary research comprised:

- Surveys and focus groups with artists and creative practitioners.
- Semi structured interviews with artists and creative practitioners.
- Interviews with community champions.
- Attendance at quarterly Team meetings.
- Semi structured interviews with staff.
- Questionnaire for Steering Group members.
- Case studies and cameo development.

5. Findings

This section first reports on Cultural Spring’s outputs, presents demographic details for participants, examines outputs and outcomes delivered under the six key delivery strands and then provides details from consultations with artists/creative practitioners, Steering group members and staff and concludes with a section on added value.

Outputs

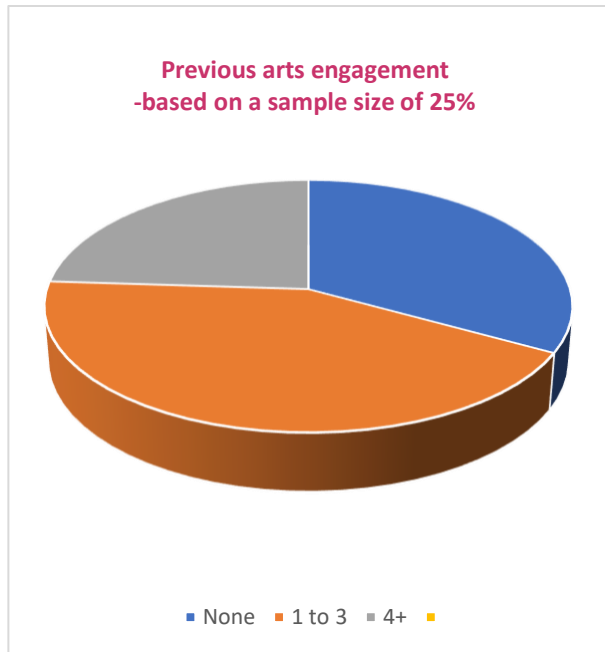
The table below details Cultural Spring’s three year projected outputs and those delivered.

Target outputs	Outputs delivered	Notes
3500 Workshop participants 500 Go and See Total 4000	4834 workshop participants 602 Go and See participants 2845 Activity/craft packs distributed Total 8281	Exceeded
30 Creative practitioners commissioned	36	Exceeded
10 Commissioned organisations	10 including: We Make Culture Creative Seed Southpaw Dance Company The Art Room Theatre Space NE Cultural Creatives Regeneration NE Sangini Williby Rocks Candle and Bell	Met
2 New companies commissioned	2	100% met
8000 audience members	5278	66% met
50 Community Arts Champions	16 – Cultural Friends, 25 Community Champions 3 Community Connectors Total 44	88% met
20 Volunteers	106	Exceeded
10 Commissioning Forums	18 including: Staying Connected – craft packs Online Art Workshop panel 3 Your Art Panel meetings Non digital projects (South Tyneside) Nexus 40 Community Takeover 2 South Tyneside Covid Memorial project panels 9 Stephenson Trail panels – including 6 for education resource packs with schools.	Exceeded

Participant demographics

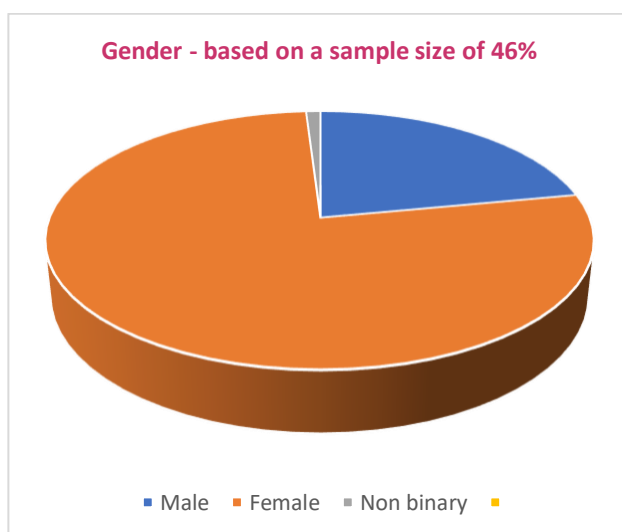
A total of 13,600 individuals engaged with Cultural Spring's activities over the three years of the project. Demographic data reveals the following:

Previous arts engagement



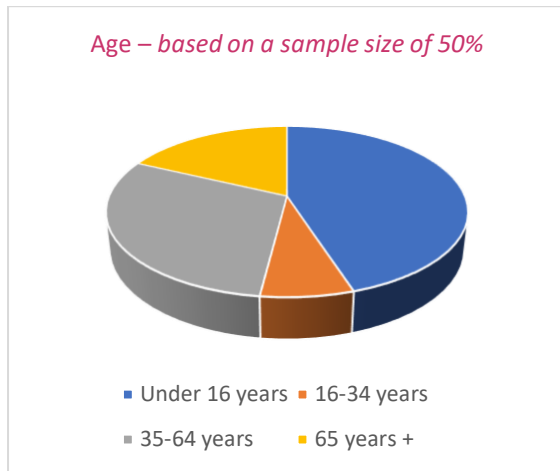
33% no arts engagement in the previous 12 months, 43% 1-3 engagements and 24% four plus engagements.

Gender



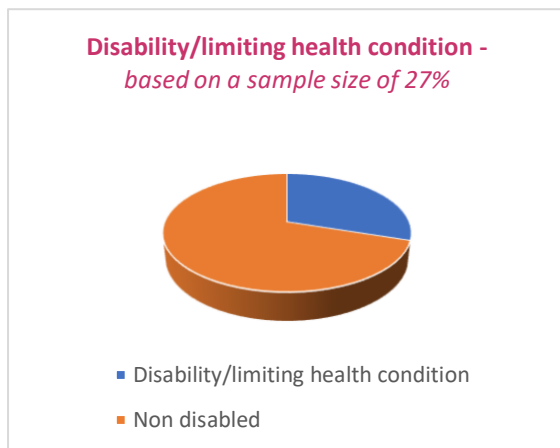
22% Male, 77% Female and 1% Non-binary.

Age



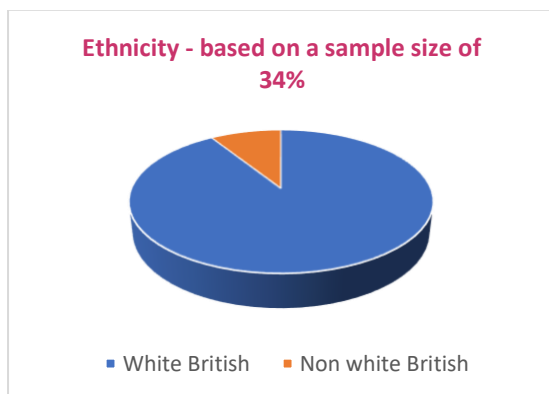
45% under 16 years, 6% 16 – 34 years, 31% 35 – 64 years and 18% 65 years plus.

Disability/limiting health condition



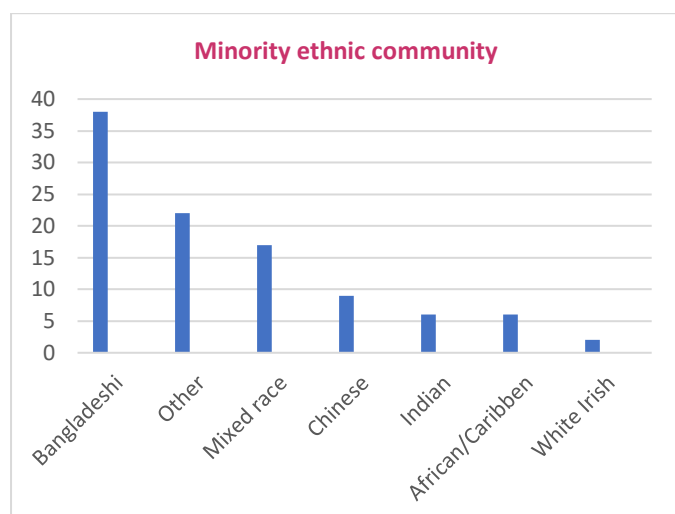
30% with a disability/limiting health condition and 70% without.

Ethnicity



91% White British and 9% minority ethnic groups of which:

Minority ethnic communities



38% Bangladeshi, 22% other, 17% mixed race, 9% Chinese, 6% Indian, 6% African/Caribbean and 2% white Irish

Areas of deprivation/Participant locations - based on a 52% sample size

Deprivation deciles were used to categorise where participants came from. These are based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% (or decile) of small areas in England, and Decile 10 represents the least deprived 10%.

Over half (58%) of participants lived in the top three most deprived deciles (i.e. 1-3). Just under a quarter (24%) lived in deciles 4-6 and the remainder (18%) came from deciles 7-10 (i.e. least deprived areas).

Outputs and outcomes for each delivery strand

This section details Cultural Spring's delivery under the six key activity strands.

(i) Creative Workshops

Cultural Spring's workshop programme forms a substantive part of overall provision and was responsible for 56% of all engagements. Workshops covered sixty two different subject areas and were delivered using a mix of on-line digital workshops during Covid-19 and face-to-face group workshops post Covid. These workshops were all designed to appeal to a wide range of people and interests and the artists engaged became partners in delivery.

A total of 4834 participants engaged in workshops against a projected target of 3500. Demographic data for workshop participants can be seen in the table below:

Demographic	Number for in person workshops	%	Numbers for online workshop	%
Gender				
Male	579	23%	75	20%
Female	1888	76%	304	79%
Non binary	6	1%	4	1%
Prefer not to say	26	-	2	-
Unknown	1000	-	100	-
Age				
Under 16 years	1470	53%	12	4%
16-24 years	21	1%	6	2%
25-34 years	106	3%	12	4%
35-44 years	167	6%	32	9%
45 – 54 years	159	5%	71	22%
55-64 years	408	16%	93	28%
65-74 years	327	12%	86	26%
75 years +	142	4%	17	5%
Prefer not to say	69	-	155	-
Unknown	1000	-	1	-
Arts Engagement levels				
No previous arts engagement	1354	35%	155	22%
Disability	402	30%	90	32%
Minority ethnic group	-	8%	-	26%

Digital Workshops

Fourteen digital workshops were developed and delivered to ensure continued access during Covid-19, including:

Workshop	Description
Writing Bootcamp	YouTube sessions delivered over four weeks taking individuals from raw ideas to a stack of writing.
Card making	Creating beautiful cards to send to friends and family over two weeks.
Folking Around the World Part 1	Singing focussed workshops including stories about different countries the songs come from.
Folking Around the World Part 2	Exploring the world and folk traditions through the medium of song during weekly sessions over an eight week period.
Winter Writers	A course of ten creative writing workshops.
Summer Writers	A course of ten creative writing workshops and activities.
Christmas Cards: Surreal Collage	Four online sessions to create collage cards.

Winter Lights: Installations for Your Home.	Single session workshop exploring how to re-purpose and re-cycle old Christmas lights into new light installations.
Christmas Street Gallery: Creating and Showing Work for your Window	A forty minute session to create an eye catching piece of festive or winter art to be hung in windows.
Awesome Artists (2D & 3D)	Mindful art sessions to support creativity involving a series of fun activities.
We Make Culture	Adult song writing sessions delivered over two weeks.
Animal Face/Pen Portraits	A single session opportunity to learn the fun skills in collage and mixed media.
Introduction to Podcasting	Two sessions to introduce participants to the world of podcasting and editing.
Creative writing	An online creative writing course suitable for anyone wanting regular writing inspiration.

Note: Free materials for a number of these workshops were provided, upon request.

Non digital Creative Workshops delivered during Covid-19

Five non-digital workshops were programmed to ensure that digitally excluded, disinterested or disengaged individuals had opportunities to participate in creative activities during Covid-19. These workshops included:

Workshop	Description
Wish you were here - Postcards	Participants were sent blank postcards with instructions to create a card for onward posting. Different instructions were given over a twelve week period, for instance In words, drawing, collage, paint, print or sewing please detail your favourite recipe or a happy childhood memory etc. Each participant received 11 cards from others and had one card of their own.
We Make Culture: Singing Your Stories and	This project combined singing and letter writing groups. Participants wrote weekly letters over a six week period on different subjects e.g. What home means to you? Selected passages were read out and recorded. The letters were used by a composer to create songs which were subsequently performed at six weekly workshops.
Front Street Songs	A socially distanced music performance project, aimed at families with children under 11 years, to introduce children to live performances of familiar and original songs, playing simple instruments and making their own music using household objects.
Letter Writing & Musical Collage	This project aimed to create and tell the stories of the people through audio collage, interweaving spoken words and songs from local residents through teleconferencing. Teleconferencing proved difficult, so artists worked with Cultural Spring and others to deliver the project in person, once conditions allowed.
Postal Art Workshops	Fortnightly art activity packs were posted to participants. These packs explored: urban landscapes, self-portraits, sketching and drawing, creative writing, drawing with stitch and collage. The project was open

	to beginners and those with experience and aimed to focus on the positive, encouraging participants to create unique and meaningful responses to their time in lockdown. Work created was collected and made into a book for participants to keep as a memento.
--	---

Post Covid-19 in person group workshops

Forty eight different types of workshops were delivered, some of which were repeated. Some workshops were delivered as tasters, others for one day and others ran for a few weeks. Consideration was given to delivering hybrid workshops to allow for in person and on-line attendances. However, following prolonged periods of Covid lockdown, participants were keen to return to in persons sessions.

Workshop	Description
Patchwork Tote Bag	Learning how to create a patchwork tote bag.
Felt Bookmarks	Making felt bookmarks.
Copper Xmas Trees	Creating Christmas decorations using copper wire and beads.
Pre School Painters	Targeted at 1-5 year olds exploring autumnal colours and textures with paint.
Watercolour	Creating fantasy watercolour landscapes.
Glass Fusion	Creating colourful fused glass coasters
Ukulele	Beginner ukulele sessions
Hooky and Proggy	Learning the basics to design and construct small and large hooky and proggy rugs, wall hangings, broaches etc.
Early years music	Musical fun for children and parents involving singing, dancing and playing instruments.
African drumming	Learning the basics of African drumming and understanding its important cultural role.
Patchwork drawstring bag making	Learning how to design, cut and construct a patchwork bag using re-purposed fabric.
Social singers	An informal pop, rock, gospel and folk singing group.
Needlefelt bookmark	Learning how to make unique needlefelt bookmarks
Community choir	Singing pop, rock, gospel and folk songs.
Birdboxes	Creating your own birdbox for the Spring.
Needlefelt pumpkins	Learning how to make your own needle felted pumpkin,
Animation for 8-16 year olds	Learning how to bring to life weird things through stop motion animation.
Indian block printing	Mindfully creating printed fabric using Indian wooden block prints.

Zine making	Creating a unique pocket sized book/zine with collage, text and images.
Beginner's ceramics	Beginners guide to hand building, surface decoration and glazing.
Christmas crafts	Homemade printed cards and handcrafted gifts.
Ceramics for improvers	Learning how to expand your clay hand building skills and techniques.
Light drawing photography	Exploring time, space and light photography on smart phones and tablets.
Wreath making	Creating a festive wreath with upcycled fabric, ribbons and embellishments.
Furniture upcycling	Upcycling old and unloved furniture with paint and decoupage.
Mini winter Lumiere	Using origami and paper cutting techniques to make illuminated winter scene decorations.
Glass stars	Making fused glass strs for Christmas.
Introduction to pewter	Learning skills to create a pewter artwork.
Felt Christmas tree and giftbox	Using felt, beads and sequins to make trees and giftboxes.
Silk painting	Designing and creating a piece of silk painted fabric.
Block print Christmas cards	Using pre cut stamps, letters and collage to create unique cards.
Mini mosaics	Using tiny ceramics, tiles and beads to create small mosaic decorations
Embossed copper decorations	Learning how to emboss and cut copper sheets to make decorations.
Vintage textile decorations	Creating textile decorations using a range of vintage textiles and embellishments.
Textile Hearts	Create your own textile hearts for Valentines Day.
Bead and Wire Jewellery	Creating jewellery using a range of tools, materials and techniques.
Cyanotypes	Try out the oldest photographic printing process and create your own beautiful cyan blue artwork prints.
Weaving	Learn to weave a scarf using an Ashford loom.
Coaster Art	Learn basic upholstery skills whilst making a lovely hanging for your wall.
Japanese Bookbinding	Learn the traditional Japanese stab bookbinding technique and create your own book to take away.
Pewter Pebbles	Creating a beautiful, embossed pewter design onto a pebble.

Ceramic Wall Hanging	Creating a handmade Organic Clay Wall hanger for indoors or outdoors, using dried flowers and leaves that will be imprinted into the clay.
Intro to Decoupage	Learning basic decoupage skills.
Ceramic Planters	Make a ceramic planter and paint it.
Shibori Dyeing	An introduction to traditional Japanese Shibori dyeing techniques.
Pewter Clocks	Create your own embossed pewter clock.
Glass Art	Creating individual designed glass items ranging from small bowls and coasters. Experimenting with different procedures to produce some exciting effects in glass.
Make Your Own Lamp	Create your own bespoke, upcycled lamp.

Workshop outcomes

The table below reports on the five ways to wellbeing outcomes and is based on a seventeen percent sample size of participants (aged 16 years plus):

Outcome Measure	% of participants
Reporting that participation had made them feel happy	92%
Sense of achievement	98%
Learned something new	93%
Appetite/intention to engage in future arts activities	99%
Would recommend to others	99%
Valued the social aspect of the engagement	93%

Participants gave various reasons for joining workshops. The vast majority of which related to wanting to feel connected to others and improving wellbeing. For example:

‘Giving something back for very little effort. Plus I live on my own, so good to be in touch with others’

‘A good way to connect with others at a time when we can’t take part in face-to-face activities’

‘Loneliness’

“Try something new and learn new skills’

‘I was intrigued to try watercolours, having not tried this method of painting since I was at school many years ago’

‘It made me curious when I had seen the advertisement for the course. I am also quite isolated due to being a carer for my partner and wanted to do something for myself’

'To raise self esteem, to make something'

Examples of participant reported benefits included:

'I always feel so much better mentally and physically after the sessions'

'Helped keep a positive outlook and cheered me up'

'Enjoyable and a means of meeting new people'

'I can make something - didn't think I was creative but turns out I am'

'Something to focus on during a difficult time'

'It's something I look forward to every week - and every week I learn something new'

'I didn't think I could make a clock out of pewter, but I did, and it makes you feel you have accomplished something'

'Feel great after each workshop. Connected and a bit lighter'

'Uplifting, informative, fun'

'I liked this because I don't have transport to go to workshops and lots of classes pretend to be disabled and wheelchair accessible but are not. This class was free and easy to do any time of day'

'This workshop has given me a little happiness in the strange times we are currently living in'

'This sort of activity offers a sense of achievement, provides opportunity for social interaction and so supports an individual's health and wellbeing'

'It's makes me happy when I am making things, painting and drawing, it's seeing the things you have made and done, that makes me so happy, I need this'

'Excellent way to learn new skill with a group, develop new skill and new social contacts, help to de-stress and distract if necessary'

'Inspiring, lively, inclusive, fun'

'I have learned how to talk to people in new ways (such as video calls, email, text messaging)'

'It's laid back, fun and engaging. Plus it's a chance to socialise so less isolation'

'Productive and therapeutic'

'Helping me with anxiety and depression'

Craft Packs

Cultural Spring commissioned and delivered a diverse range of craft packs, each containing instructions and kit, all designed to engage and distract people through creative pursuits in their own homes during lock down. Some were targeted at specific groups of people and others were designed for families to do together. The table below summarises the range of creative craft packs circulated: during 2020.

Nos	Description	Cost	Target participants	Locations
200	Eco crafts	900.00	Families with children 5-11 years	South Tyneside
200		990.00	Families	Sunderland
100	Textile crafts	1000.00	Socially isolated adults	South Tyneside and Sunderland
100	Various crafts	500.00	Families	Sunderland
100	Eco crafts	500.00	Families with children 5-11 years	South Tyneside
60	Mixed crafts	650.00	Families with older children	Sunderland
60	Mixed crafts	438.00	Teenagers	Sunderland
120	Eco crafts	600.00	Families with children 5-11 years	South Tyneside
50	Xmas crafts	50.00	Isolated adults	South Tyneside
70	Xmas crafts	796.00	Adults – primarily men	Sunderland
120	Sketching	810.00	Adults – primarily men	Sunderland
120	Mixed crafts	600.00	Families with children under 5 years	Sunderland
40	Calligraphy	300.00	Adults	Sunderland
50	Mixed crafts	500.00	Adults – primarily men	Sunderland
400	Mixed crafts	2000.00	Families	Sunderland
35	Mixed crafts	210.00	Care experienced students and care leavers	Sunderland
35	Mixed crafts	210.00	Bereaved parents	Sunderland
40	Sketching crafts	430.00	16-18 year olds	South Tyneside
2120		£12084.00		

Unfortunately no evaluation feedback was collected from the recipients of the Craft Packs. Packs were distributed either directly by the artists commissioned or the gateway organisations in the different localities. Anecdotal evidence suggests the packs were very well received and appreciated and that the likely outcomes were similar to those for the workshops. Furthermore, it appears that Craft Packs were successful in reaching more children and young people.

Craft Packs were distributed to 2120 addresses during 2020. The unit costs for these craft packs has been calculated as follows: $\text{£}12084.00/2120 = \text{£}5.70$ per household or $\text{£}12084/4240 = \text{£}2.85$ per participant – assuming two in each household.

Feedback from Craft Pack participants included:

‘Brilliant idea. Made me feel really special to be receiving a pack of treasures and treats to create. It really changed my mood and gave me something worthwhile to do’

‘Great idea. Lovely surprise not knowing what to expect, but having the opportunity to create an art piece of your own out of something’

'Due to the unprecedented situation, my kids cannot have a normal life, so this type of activity helps their mind and body to be active'

'As a carer, I need an outlet and, for me, crafting is it. The craft is also easy enough for my relative with dementia to join in too'.

In total during and post Covid-19 2845 craft packs have been distributed.

(ii) Your Art

Your Art aimed to provide start up support for new arts and cultural activities developed and devised by local amateur/community arts, cultural or creative groups. During the pandemic Cultural Spring adapted Your Art to improve reach with people who were particularly isolated and negatively impacted by the pandemic. This involved:

- (a) The creation and appointment of two Community Connectors, namely a South Shields writer and broadcaster and a public health practitioner in Sunderland. Each worked with identified community organisations to further develop their Your Art project ideas.
- (b) The selection of four local community organisations to improve and extend reach, namely:
 - Regeneration North East was awarded £350.00 to develop a Butterfly Project, supporting people with lived experience of mental health by asking individuals to send images of artwork depicting butterflies to create a virtual gallery, whose launch coincided with World Mental Health Day on October 10th, 2020. Regeneration North East CIC is a disability led organisation which delivers creative interventions to support physical and mental wellbeing.
 - Sunderland MIND's Total Arts Project was awarded £500.00 for the creation of a youth drama group to help boost confidence amongst young people. Sunderland MIND is a charity run by and for local people which provides support for individuals, carers and families experiencing emotional or mental health problems.
 - The Let Your Soul Grow project was awarded £450.00 towards the costs of photography and music sessions to support vulnerable people including asylum seekers, refugees, those with mental health problems and disaffected youth. Just Let Your Soul Grow supports young adults with learning disabilities.
 - Into the Spotlight was awarded £250.00 to provide entertainment for residential and care home residents during lockdown. For example, performers Elaine Rennie (runner up of 1999's TV Stars in Your Eyes), Johnny B Goode and Daniel James (runner up in South Tyneside's Young Performer of the Year – Pride of South Tyneside Awards 2019) staged performances in the car park of Deneside Court Care Home in Jarrow.

These four projects were co-created with local people and designed to reach people with limited access to creative experiences and activities. The two Community Connectors provided additional

capacity who collaborated with the projects and shared experiences and insights of getting community-based arts projects off the ground.

Post Covid, Your Art projects included:

- East Boldon Forum, Beautiful Boldon Birds Project. Following on from this £500.00 project Cultural Spring engaged with this group for the Covid-19 memorial commission through South Tyneside Council.
- Hagan Hall and Clasper Court received a £500.00 award towards the cost of a social group for older people living in supported accommodation. Cultural Spring are continuing to work with this group to involve them in the Summer Parade in South Tyneside, through Cultural Spring Charity.
- South Shields Photography Club received £300.00 to help to recruit new members.
- Whitburn A Capella was awarded £300.00 towards a community choir.
- King Ink received £350.00 to purchase equipment and to encourage greater involvement of a more diverse range of the local community members in poetry writing and performance.
- Grindon Painters were awarded £964.00 to support a photography session and art Tutor, to create artwork for an exhibition for the Jubilee Celebrations at Grindon Church Community Project.

Your Art is due to be relaunched during Cultural Spring’s Phase 4 programme with a change of focus and commissioning to ensure the improved collection of data from participants in these micro commissions.

(iii) Go and See

The Go and See programme aimed to ensure that people had the chance to experience the best arts and cultural events across the North East and beyond, in groups and without having to worry about the cost of tickets and transport. 602 people took part in fifteen different Go and See visits against a target number of 500 and constituted 4% of all engagers.

Go and See Trip	Art Form
Beauty and the Beast	Pantomime
Squidge	Interactive performance for under fives
Royal Northern Sinfonia x 2	Music performance
Red Ellen	Theatre - Play
Grayson Perry’s Vanity of Small Differences	Art Exhibition
Festival of Thrift	Outdoor arts, craft and performance event
Speakeasy	Dance
Lindisfarne Gospels	Museum
Off the Wall	Outdoor theatre production for families
Ladysmith Black Mambazo	Music
The Pitmen Poets	Music
Robin Hood in Cooksonville	Pantomime

Aladdin	Pantomime
Redcoat	Theatre
The Ocean at the End of the Lane	Theatre and puppetry workshop
UK Centre for Carnival Arts, Luton	Carnival space tour and workshop

Demographic data for the 602 Go and See participants can be found in the table below:

Demographic	No.	%
Gender		
Female	266	67%
Male	121	31%
Non binary	9	25%
Unknown	204	-
Prefer not to say	2	-
Age Range		
Under 16 years	263	54%
16-24 years	19	4%
25-34 years	30	6%
35-44 years	54	11%
45-54 years	32	7%
55-64 years	37	8%
65-74 years	40	9%
75 years +	11	1%
Prefer not to say	2	-
Unknown	114	-
Previous arts engagement in the preceding 12 months		
None	89	34%
1-3 times	110	42%
4 +	56	24%
Unknown	334	-
Prefer not to say	6	-
Ethnicity		
White British	288	84%
Minority ethnic group	47	16%
Unknown	258	-
Prefer not to say	2	-

The following outcome data is drawn from 12% of adults surveyed who took part Go and See trips. This lower sample size was in part the result of the greater numbers of children and young people (55% of all participants) attending Go and See trips who were not asked to complete evaluation forms.

Criteria	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Attendance made me feel happy	28	90%	4	10%	32
Sense of achievement	23	74%	1	26%	24
Intention to take part again	31	100%	0	0%	31
Recommend to others	31	100%	0	0%	31
Importance of social aspect/opportunity to reconnect	26	84%	5	16%	31

Consideration to get involved in more face to face/workshop activities	31	100%	0	0%	31
Learned something	22	71%	6	29%	28

One participant said: *'It was good to experience something different which I wouldn't have done if the ticket price hadn't been reduced'*. This captures the importance of these opportunities being subsidised to enable economic inclusion. It is a fact that the areas of least engagement in the arts are coterminous with economic disadvantage and poverty and going forwards it will be interesting to explore whether arts engagement becomes more difficult for those worst placed to tackle the current cost of living increases.

(iv) Community Research and Development Commissions

Staying Connected was Cultural Spring's first set of artist/creative practitioner commissions which sought to increase participation by involving local people in choosing five artists to explore new ways of connecting people and communities with arts and culture during the pandemic. The following five diverse projects were selected and delivered:

- **The Super-Human Art Project – Gary Nicholson**
 This commission involved art and collage materials being posted to participants with disabilities, who were asked and supported to create self-portraits of themselves as a Super-Hero with special powers and a suitable name. Completed artwork were scanned and images uploaded to a dedicated Facebook page, with an accompanying YouTube.
- **Craft Packs and Online Tutorials - Claire Finlay**
 Craft kits were created and delivered to 320 individuals with accompanying online support through either Facebook Live, Skype or other platforms.
- **An Adventure for Lives Less Ordinary - Katy Weir**
 This commission was part epic poem, part spoken word, part song and part Zoom celebration of everything that's great about Sunderland. The project changed a lot from its original concept and became a deaf focussed project with participants engaging in a visual arts workshop. This project provided people aged sixteen and over with the opportunity to participate and perform to varying degrees and British Sign Language interpretation was provided.
- **Theatre Space North East - Corinne Kilvington**
 This commission involved delivering a range of online theatre skills workshops open to all, run over four sessions using Zoom.
- **Lockdown Writing - Carol Cooke**
 This commission involved a South Shields writer and broadcaster creating an archive of lockdown writings, recordings, photos, videos and sounds. (See <https://youtu.be/1uKa06DjjRk>)

Quotes from participants included:

'I enjoyed the experience it was very uplifting'

'It gave me a chance to reignite my love of art and to support this project'

'Very fun and educational. Tutor made me feel welcome and part of the group. Enjoyed it very much'

'Supportive, informative and fun course delivered by a tutor of the same thread. Would highly recommend getting involved'

'Brilliant idea. Made me feel really special to be receiving a pack of treasures and treats to create. It really changed my mood and give me something worthwhile to do. It was lovely to be involved in something so creative and helped to keep me connected to other like minded people in the area. Thank you'

'That we all have a super hero no matter what shape size or colour we are all the same'

'Something different and BSL was available too - a rare opportunity for deaf people to access anything like this really'

Additional Commissions/Projects

To ensure widest possible inclusion, Cultural Spring commissioned the following projects two community boost engagement activities to add to their creative offering:

- Artists Padma Rao and Miki Z were commissioned to deliver creative online workshops for women asylum seekers and refugees in Sunderland
(See: <http://theculturalspring.org.uk/gallery/sanginis-online-felting-technique-sessions>)
- Liz Million was commissioned to curate and produce Resilient Ryhope - Lockdown Life Stories – a book containing poems, photographs and drawings from Ryhope villagers of all ages – describing the trials, tribulations, boredom and laughs experienced during lockdown.

(v) Social Prescribing

This was a pilot activity for Cultural Spring. Social prescribing is an approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community as an alternative to prescribed medication. It aims to support individuals' practical, social and emotional needs negatively impacting their health and wellbeing.

In social prescribing, local agencies such as local charities, social care and health services refer people to a social prescribing link worker and together they co-produce a simple personalised care and support plan. Social prescribing is an all-age, whole population approach that works particularly well for people who:

- have one or more long term conditions
- who need support with low level mental health issues
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.

It is often used as an alternative to prescribing medication for those with low level mental health issues or who are socially isolated or lonely, through connecting individuals with groups and activities of interest to them – be these arts and cultural activities or exercise classes.

Development work in this area was limited due to the pandemic and momentum was further lost when a joint Social Prescribing application with partners from across South Tyneside to the Arts Council was unsuccessful. However, it should be noted that the additional funding secured from the Arts Council for Cultural Spring's Loneliness Project was successful in attracting a number of social prescriptions for arts engagement activities from social prescribers and link workers.

Cultural Spring is a member of All Together Better - an alliance of health and social care providers, local commissioners and the voluntary sector - which is aiming for a single integrated social prescribing service for Sunderland. Cultural Spring have continued to engage with Link Workers and Social Prescribers in South Tyneside and Sunderland to encourage social prescriptions for arts and cultural activities. To date social prescriptions have been minimal and hampered by Link Worker staff turnover, resulting in the continuing need to develop new relationships and raise awareness of Cultural Spring's offer.

(vi) Community Champions and Cultural Friends

Community Champions

Cultural Spring's Community Champions are a network of people passionate about arts and creativity in their local communities who work to help shape projects. They are Cultural Spring's foot soldiers, known, trusted and plugged into their communities. Twenty five Community Champions support the work of Cultural Spring through acting as community animateurs, promoting opportunities for arts engagement activities within their communities, sitting on Your Art commissioning forums to help identify and select activities and projects.

The following three cameos serve to illustrate the impact on two individuals from being a Community Champion:

From workshop participant to Steering Group Member

Kati's art engagement journey began when she attended one of Cultural Spring's watercolour workshop at the Grindon Project several years ago. She subsequently became a Community Champion which means she sits on Your Art commissioning forum meetings, deciding which local art projects to commission. She is now an active member of Cultural Spring Steering Group and engaged in many different aspects of the Project. She is passionate about community involvement in project delivery and decision making and sees this as a way to ensure community voice is heard, confidence is built, and local people are empowered to get involved. Of Cultural Spring she says, *'We are never made to feel like a token community input....our opinions are always valued'*.

Relocation, church, community and the arts

'Lost and treading water during lockdown, Cultural Spring was a real boon to me'. Alison's path to becoming a Community Champion came about following her relocation to Sunderland in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown. Her role as a church related Community Worker brought her into contact with Cultural Spring and their pandemic postcard project supporting socially isolated people. She

realised the importance and value of such projects and made contact with Emma Horsman at Cultural Spring and decided to become a Community Champion. She has worked with Cultural Spring to develop taster creative drop in sessions, including silk painting, felt bookmarks and glass/copper Christmas decorations at Stockton Road United Reform Church. Alison believes that being a Community Champion has helped her focus, improved her wellbeing and reduced social isolation.

From consumer to co-creator

During Covid 19 Andrea was recovering from a serious illness, she felt low and isolated. She saw an advert promoting take up of Cultural Spring’s craft packs and their other activities. She took up the offer and says, *‘it was a lifeline’* to her. When she started to feel better and grateful for the support Cultural Spring had provided, she wanted to put something back and became a Community Champion. Andrea said her confidence was low and attributes becoming a Community Champion as a ‘real confidence boosting experience’. She has supported Your Art funding panels and helped judge a photographic competition. She is now Andrea supporting some of the Project’s social media activities.

Cultural Friends

The introduction of Cultural Friends was another pilot activity for Cultural Spring in Phase 3. The intention was to recruit Cultural Friends who could be matched with individuals to accompany them to arts and cultural activities, as a way of extending reach to those least engaged and not wanting to engage or participate alone. Sixteen Cultural Friends were recruited, but when Covid-19 hit meetings had to take place virtually via a private Facebook group. Unfortunately this group was a victim of Covid and momentum slowed and the group subsequently disbanded.

Audiences

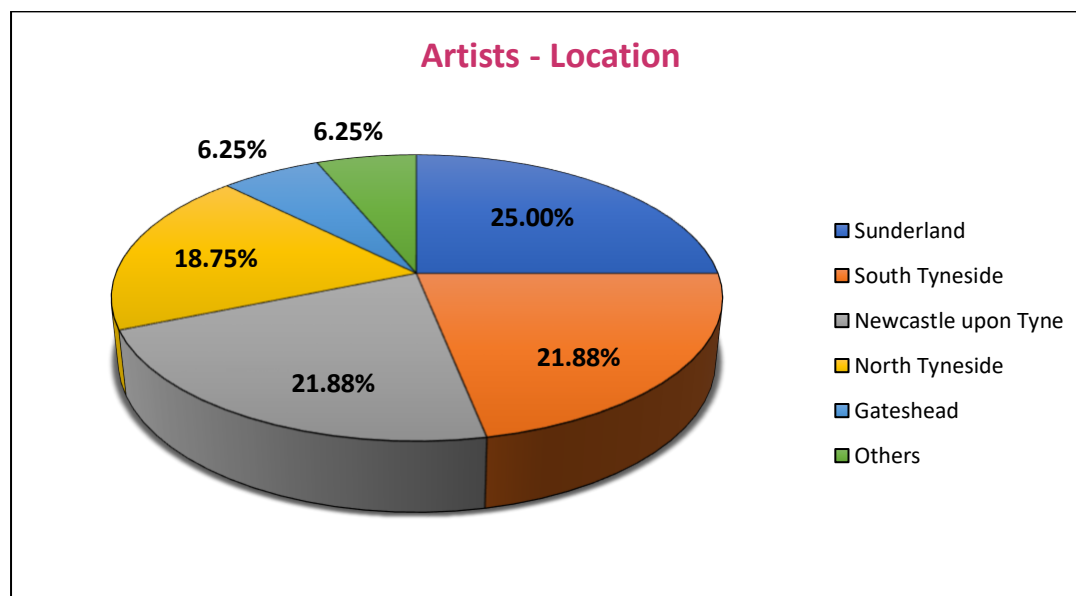
Cultural Spring had a target of 8000 audience members for Phase 3 activities. However, Covid-19 restrictions meant that social gatherings were not allowed and severely hampered all audience related activities. A total of 5278 audience members were recorded in relation to the following events/activities:

Date	Event	Audience Numbers
December 2020	Storytime	405
January – June 2021	Community Conversations	216
April 2022	My Seafront, My Roots	887
June 2022	Hetton Carnival	300
June 2022	Barnes Park Carnival	2000
November 2022	Stephenson Trail	200
March 2023	Covid Memorial Service	270
	Total	5278

Artist/Creative Practitioner Feedback

Whilst Cultural Spring's CPP programme is not an artist development programme, we have found there to be significant benefits and unintended consequences, to be had amongst artists and creative practitioners engaging with Cultural Spring. This evaluation therefore sought their feedback and input in three main ways: online survey, focus groups and telephone interviews.

36 artists/creative practitioners worked with Cultural Spring to deliver activities against a projected target of 30. Eighty eight percent of whom were white British and 12% from minority ethnic backgrounds. Eleven of the 36 (just less than a third) were early career artists (i.e. with between 1-5 years trading). Nineteen percent were male and 81% female. Almost 47% of artists commissioned came from either Sunderland or South Tyneside and all but 6.25% were located in the North East region.



A healthy 42% response rate for an online survey with artists and creative practitioners revealed the following:

Adapting creative practices during Covid-19

Eighty eight percent (88%) of respondents reported having to significantly adapt their delivery methods during the pandemic. One artist said it had been a whole new way of working and one they would not have tried pre-Covid. Another reported: *'I have had the opportunity to develop my existing workshop skills into a format that works in Zoom, and to design a 7 week online course, which I can now take with me into future projects.'*

Social capital development and new work.

Eighty percent (80%) of respondents reported making a number of useful contacts to help further their creative practice and enhance their reputation/raise their profile. One artist said, *'The team at Cultural Spring (Iam Burn, Emma Horsman and Emma Scarr) have been extremely helpful and have linked me up to many other arts organisations and community organisations throughout this project.'* Another reported *'This project has involved collaborating with South Tyneside Council. Their support*

and the way they have promoted the project as well as promotion from Cultural Spring has certainly raised my profile in South Tyneside and beyond.' Others commented on how, *'More people now know about my work. Participants have been encouraged to look at my other textile pieces'* and *'Through working with the staff at Cultural Spring, I have established links with a number of professionals who have helped me to develop my creative practice and could help me with projects in the future.'* One artist attributed new contracts to Cultural Spring, saying *'I've done more work in the area and this could be down to being part of the programme I think, and being able to put this on my CV/ people may have heard of me via the programme'* and another reported how *'We have had re-occurring orders for our craft packs'*.

New Learning and Cultural Spring Support

Eighty percent (80%) of respondents reported learning something new or developing new skills and 67% felt this had improved their artistic practice. One artist said *'I learnt how to create simple activities that were easy to follow/try for people at home, when I couldn't be there to assist them in person. I learnt how to talk about what I am doing in an easy to follow way. I learnt how to check-in with people to make sure they were following the activity ok. I now like working online and would like to run more online activities as part of my practice'*. Another artist commented on how *'Working to such specific and personal briefs, whilst maintaining a high quality of work and meeting deadlines, has definitely enhanced my reputation as a commission based songwriter'*. Others said of their experience, *'It has been a steep learning curve as this was the first postal project that I had completed. The team at Cultural Spring could not have been more supportive'* and *'I've been able to work with a different group of participants and had to adapt my practice to best suit their needs and interests. I've undertaken training on first aid for mental health, which was useful and practical'*.

Increased confidence

Eighty eight percent (88%) of respondents reported feeling more confident and able to deliver similar projects in the community in the future. For instance, *'My self-confidence has increased because of this process'* and *'The flexibility and support Cultural Spring team give allowed me to feel confident and design a programme that let me practice new skills'*.

Making a difference

Eighty eight percent (88%) of respondents felt they had made a positive difference to the participants they had worked with. One artist cited *'An 82 year old grandma worked on the project with her 5 year old granddaughter. People were delighted to receive a package by mail which didn't contain bad news or a bill. It got families talking and older people reminiscing. It was inclusive and intergenerational.'* Another said *'Seeing participants smile and build in confidence is always a joy! Likewise, seeing them achieve wonderful things is a privilege - and more so, when new friendships form, and they are all rooting for each other - supporting each other in their creative pursuits! I am happy I could have been part of that'*.

Quality Artistic Experiences

94% believed they had delivered/achieved a quality artistic experience for participants – in spite of Coronavirus restrictions. One artist explained their approach *‘We co-designed the workshops, and they could be participated in by artists and non-artists, beginners and more expert practitioners. The background material and artistic history and context we set as part of the workshops helped ensure the artistic quality was high’*.

Descriptive words

When asked to use three words to sum up their experiences of delivering creative activities during the pandemic, a wide range of adjectives were used, and all were positive. The most commonly cited adjectives referred to the importance of community connection and engagement. The second largest grouping related to positive aspects experienced such as: uplifting, heart-warming, rewarding, enriching and affirming. The other biggest category referred to how enjoyable and fun their experiences had been.

Focus Group Findings

Three facilitated focus groups were held with artists/creative practitioners to capture their experiences and learning during the pandemic. Sixteen artists attended one of three online focus groups (digital, non-digital and craft pack artists). Key findings are presented below:

- Artists had to re-think their own delivery models during lockdown to accommodate remote, online and offline delivery. For some this meant using online facilitation and instructions through for example Zoom, YouTube or Tik Tok, and for others it meant having to create detailed written instructions for participants and offering telephone tuition.
- Creating meaningful connections with remote participants was important for artists/creative practitioners. This was achieved in various ways: creating ‘a web of a postal network’; allocating time for calling or texting participants; inserting handwritten messages in craft packs, bicycle deliveries, knocking on participants’ doors and waving.
- Artists and creative practitioners recognised that delivery had benefited them too, as one artist said of their experience *‘Encouraging and emotional and therapeutic – both for me and the participants’*.
- Artists and creative practitioners had to operate outside their comfort zones – in terms of having to learn and use new technologies to aid delivery during the pandemic, and/or through working with different groups of people/participants that they would not normally work with.
- For those artists who mainly delivered online, they reported Zoom fatigue and identified challenges in reading people online.

Six artists and creative practitioners attended a further focus group held on 17th January 2023 where two key issues were discussed, namely: What difference did being commissioned by Cultural Spring make to their creative practice and what has changed as a result? Artists and creative practitioners reported the following:

Impact on their creative practice.

- Improved techniques and processes for engaging with communities.
- Extended reach and enabled their creative output to be taken and seen in communities, rather than just in galleries and museums that people may not go to/see.
- Important and rewarding to give back to the community.
- Greater awareness of the need to be able to support participants with diverse needs e.g. low confidence, low level mental health issues, disabilities and other social challenges.
- Improved cultural and community awareness.

Subsequent changes

- Increased confidence.
- Improved customer focus with greater understanding of and learning about what is important to communities.
- Recognition that it is important to take art to where people are.
- Understanding that sometimes art is the vehicle rather than the destination. For instance, the creative activity is a hook to engage, but enhanced social connections and social inclusion was the desired result for some participants.
- Group work helps to reduce artists/creative practitioners own social isolation.
- More partnership working
- Enhanced social capital
- Larger commissions and more work
- Profile raised
- More community work, with extended reach into schools
- Extended geographic reach for work

The following two case studies illustrate partnership development and the mutually beneficial relationships developed with artists during Covid-19:

Danielle Pollard, Williby Roc's CIC, Education Director 5th May

Danielle worked with Cultural Spring during the pandemic to adapt and deliver 460 Eco Craft Activity Packs to the local community. The packs were so successful and the increased demand has enabled Williby Roc's CIC to expand and start delivering the packs to other organisations such as local primary schools and Bright Futures. Danielle said the project had been a real lifeline for them.

Williby Roc's CIC is pleased they have been able to both keep afloat and expand during the pandemic. They are now undertaking more work in Sunderland too. They believe their relationship with Cultural Spring and the scale of the activity has meant that more people, who would not normally have access to or become involved in art and creative activity, have been involved. This way of working has also created a new way of working for the CIC.

Claire Finlay, Artist

Claire is a self-employed local artist in her final year of her a Glass and Ceramics degree at the University of Sunderland. Her project focussed on developing and delivering craft packs to the local community for use during lockdown. Her Craft Packs covered a variety of crafts including needlework, felting kits and textiles and she developed YouTube step-by-step instruction videos to accompany them. Claire reported that Zoom did not work great for this type of activity.

To start to build connections Claire delivered Craft Packs directly to people's homes (in socially distanced ways), mainly in South Tyneside and also in Sunderland too. She also provided tutorials by calling and texting participants to talk them through the activities and to answer any questions they may have had. She believes that the project was particularly successful in reaching those who lack the confidence to join a classroom environment and in enabling people to try new crafts, learn new skills and one local group - Perth Green Community Association - even became constituted whilst carrying out this activity.

Claire said, *'Creating craft kits for Cultural Spring has given learners a focus through lockdown, but it has also helped me, by giving me the drive and focus through a difficult time for everyone.'*

Claire exhibited her course work at The Glass Centre in Sunderland in July 2021.

Cultural Spring's Team Learning

Discussions and semi structured interviews with team members highlighted the following learning points from delivery over the past three years:

- The team were able to quickly implement remote working during Covid-19.
- Clear and regular communication and transparent planning were key to successfully re-engineering delivery during the pandemic.
- The team's flexibility and collegiate approach was instrumental in being able to pivot quickly.
- Valuable ad-hoc water cooler conversations were missed and not possible when working remotely.
- Informal team/colleague support was previously taken for granted and will not be done so in the future. Support from colleagues during uncertain and stressful times was much appreciated.
- The team took advantage of the plethora of accessible, cheaper and/or free online training during the pandemic for continual professional development purposes. Collectively they have benefited from training in: Mental Health First Aid, LGBTQI awareness, Safeguarding, Active Listening and Coaching skills, Social media and marketing, CRM systems.
- Craft Packs to support engagement were started in May 2020, however, non-digital workshops were not scheduled until the beginning of January 2021. With the benefit of hindsight the team would have started the non-digital workshops sooner. However, this is caveated by the fact that scheduling delivery in times of such uncertainty made planning very difficult and the team were keen to ensure capacity, ensure safety and manage finances.
- Regular online Zoom catch ups with the evaluators has proved to be useful and cost effective.
- Shared values are key when working with partner organisations, artists, creatives etc for effective and

- Working in, with and through key people in community organisations is key to gaining traction, trust, buy in, sustainability and legacy.
- Taster sessions can provide useful routes for individuals into more engaged involvement e.g. for regular workshops.
- Being able to offer free and subsidised Go and See visits enables those on low incomes to participate and therefore widens participation.
- A strengths/asset based approach using by working in and through what exists already in terms of community orgs and infrastructure as well as meeting people on their own term where they go e.g. cafes helps to accelerate reach an embed activities – relational marketing support.
- Clear simple marketing messages, using non arty language helps to reach the least engaged and promotes wider inclusion.
- Complementarity and synergy with the Heritage sector could be further maximised. The Stephenson Trail was a good example of this which helped leverage an additional £40,000 for a joint project.
- Cultural Spring is now much better and confident in being able to say no when there is not good strategic fit. Quality provision trumps quantity at all times.
- Important to have venues which are delivery partners rather than just spaces for hire.
- Targeted approaches for Go and See participants means we reach those less engaged and new participants.
- Shared values are key – with partner organisations, artists, creatives etc for effective and meaningful engagement.
- No one size fits all, each community is different. You need to really talk to and listen to people – what are they interested in and how can we develop these into projects. What will work for you in this community?

Partners and Stakeholders

Added value, contributions and support

Contributions made to support the Cultural Spring's CPP project made by Steering group partners were many and varied including:

- Promoting activities and engagement amongst their respective members and audiences.
- Alerting to funding and contracting opportunities.
- Being advocates for Cultural Spring amongst wider networks and partnerships.
- Contributing to policy development, strategic planning and future planning.
- Providing support with funding bid development.
- Assisting with gathering data to produce evidence of Cultural Spring's effectiveness.
- Ideas generation.
- Providing finance, HR and governance support and being the Project's accountable body.
- Provision of hot desking space.

Aspects of Cultural Spring that they are proudest of

- Raising local community aspirations and expectations vis a vis the arts.

- Inclusivity in terms of supporting people to visit venues and join in activities they would not otherwise access.
- Local and hyper local approaches to arts engagement.
- Longevity and sustainability – since 2014 Cultural Spring has built solid foundations in the communities it supports, proving it is here to stay unlike many others which have come and gone.
- Continuous innovation and not resting on laurels. Delivering different activities, commissioning new and different artists and experimenting with different offerings.
- Delivery in non traditional venues such as pubs and care homes.
- True community engagement and empowerment with the hard to reach and underserved communities such as veterans and ethnic minority communities.
- Demonstrating how arts engagement is a core part of health and wellbeing.
- Seeing individuals turn an arts related passion into a business.
- The big community events.
- Supporting artists and creative practitioners to grow, develop and expand their practices.
- Spotting opportunities and joining up the dots e.g. warm spaces or social prescribing.
- Taking families to see Broadway musicals for the first time ever.
- I know of many people who had their first taste of choirs, dance, music performance and exhibitions as a result of the Cultural Spring. It not only gives them more confidence and introduces them to new friends, but it also ignites their desire to do more.

Learning amongst Steering Group members

- Arts makes people happy and they learn new skills and are able to problem solve.
- The need to be present, to meet people where they are, not to expect people to come and find you – that you must go out and find them!
- People value longevity, and if you work in an area for long enough, then you will get under the skin, get to know the community and gain trust from the people that live and work there.
- Passion can be unlocked in people by giving them opportunities in a way that feels comfortable to them. Large cultural venues can be intimidating to a lot of people. Working directly within a community can break down some of those intimidation factors and get a more varied mix of people involved.
- I think we've proven that with an adequate resource these kinds of projects can do what it says on the tin - we can change people's lives for the better through amazing cultural experiences.
- That it is possible to engage people who may not be familiar with arts and cultural participation, and that there is no one size fits all approach, and just because it is not as straightforward as working with those who actively engage, it is wonderful to work with these groups, and share in their happiness as they realise the benefits of arts and cultural engagement on their wellbeing, and social inclusion.
- Quality engagement works on many levels. It's important to listen and empower the communities you work with. Don't assume you know better than those you are going to work with. be adaptable to change and swift of foot.

- That it needs to be bottom up rather than top down. Coaxing and encouraging individuals to make their own decisions about the choice of activity rather than parachuting projects in.

Future hopes

- Keep looking at different ways to engage wider audiences in new opportunities.
- Larger-scale marquee events with allied long lead-in participatory programmes.
- For continuation of activities in South Tyneside.
- To increase awareness, interest, desire and action of the power and potential of arts and cultural engagement on mental wellbeing and social inclusion.
- Delivering local events in the community as the cost of living crisis continues to bite.
- Well established regional and national companies working in the area.
- Taking whatever is created to other communities across UK and beyond.
- A ready acceptance in all local authority strategic plans that cultural engagement should be encouraged and enabled with regional as well as national public funding.
- More large scale projects involving more participants.

Miscellaneous

Other comments offered by Steering group members taking part in the survey included:

‘The staff team have been amazing. Their passion, expertise, commitment, skill in developing and managing, in relationship building and more, has been key. I would also single out Emma’s leadership as something special. Quite simply, it wouldn’t be the same without her and I wouldn’t be typing this response.’

‘The Customs House is proud to have been involved in CPP and in particular helping shape Cultural Spring and hosting its South Tyneside arm. We hope to be able to work with them in the years to come.’

‘I’ve been involved with the Cultural Spring since its inception, and I am constantly amazed at what is achieved. Feel very proud to be associated with such a life changing organisation.’

Added value

Cultural Spring successfully leveraged an additional £127,339.00 in cash and £89,378.00 in kind during Phase 3, from the following sources:

Source	Amount
Cash funding	
South Tyneside Council	22,474.00
Sunderland City Council	40,000.00
Sunderland City Council	2110.00
Nexus	9000.00

Community Chest Sunderland	9218.00
Community Foundation (via Charity)	2660.00
Sunderland Culture	800.00
Jubilee Events	950.00
Groundwork workshop income	525.00
Earned income	3880.00
Other	3342.00
<i>Value added from partners</i>	<i>32,380.00</i>
<i>Subtotal cash</i>	<i>£127,339.00</i>
In kind support	
Community venues and Go and See contributions	19,356.00
Consortium partners in kind support	70,022.00
<i>Subtotal in kind</i>	<i>89,378.00</i>
<i>Total cash and in-kind support</i>	<i>216,717.00</i>

Note: For every £1.00 of ACE investment, the Cultural Spring leveraged/attracted a further £0.43 (or £0.19 cash and £0.24 in kind support).

It should also be noted that Cultural Spring secured a grant of £31000.00 to deliver a Loneliness Project, but this could be counted as match funding and has not been evaluated as part of this commission.

Legacy and Sustainability

In September 2020, Cultural Spring set up a registered charity, to work with partners in South Tyneside to ensure continued arts and cultural delivery and engagement activities post March 2023 – at which time South Tyneside became no longer eligible for Creative People and Places programme funding – due to increased engagement and participation.

This development is part of Cultural Spring’s strategic planning to ensure continued arts and cultural provision in South Tyneside. Discussions are ongoing with the Steering Group and Charity’s trustees as to the potential for novating the Cultural Spring project to the Charity, TUPE considerations, National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status, access to grants and contacts etc.

Since its inception (30 months ago), the Charity has secured £150,595.00 in grants and commissions.

6. Conclusions

There is no doubt that Cultural Spring has delivered a highly successful and targeted Phase 3 Creative People and Places Project. Conclusions are grouped under the five key research questions identified earlier in the report for ease of access.

I. The extent to which Cultural Spring delivered against its projected outputs?

Cultural Spring either met or exceeded five of its seven key outputs. Participant numbers were slightly more than doubled (8281 against a target of 4000), 40% more artists and creative practitioners were commissioned, 106 volunteers supported Project delivery against a target of 20. The exceptions being engaging 5278 audience members against a projected target of 8000 and 44 community arts champions against a target of 50. Inevitably both of these targets were affected by Covid-19, not least because the types of social gatherings necessitated for audience based events were prohibited during the pandemic. Arguably, whilst 44 community arts champions were identified, should those undertaking these voluntary roles involved and sitting on the Steering Group be counted, this output too would have been exceeded.

II. Did engagement and participation in arts and cultural activities contribute to improved wellbeing amongst participants?

There is substantial qualitative and quantitative evidence to support individuals' engagement in Cultural Springs programmed arts and cultural activities positively contributing to their wellbeing. Ninety eight percent (98%) of survey respondents reporting that following engagement they felt a sense of achievement, 93% reported learning something new, 93% felt more connected and valued the social aspect of their engagement – something which was particularly pertinent during Covid-19 lockdown periods and 92% reported that their engagement had made them feel happy.

Furthermore, the following quotes from participants serve to highlight individual wellbeing benefits:

'I always feel so much better mentally and physically after the sessions'

'Uplifting, informative and fun'

'Helping me with anxiety and depression'

'Productive and therapeutic'

III. How Cultural Spring responded to delivery and engagement challenges during Covid-19.

Faced with the ban on social gatherings presented during the Covid-19 pandemic, Cultural Spring successfully pivoted and re-engineered activities to ensure continued access to arts and cultural activities and to continue to extend reach into previously untapped communities. Hybrid workshops were developed with creative activities being undertaken in individuals' own homes with online and telephone support, other workshops were shifted entirely online and craft packs created and delivered to people's homes. Online offerings enabled Cultural Spring to successfully engage people with disabilities, families, young people and children.

In so doing they: supported artists and creative practitioners to re-think their delivery models and activities; created a mix of on and offline arts engagement opportunities; worked in partnership with existing organisations and forged new partnerships to ensure access and extend reach to groups particularly impacted by the pandemic; helped to support the local arts ecology and supported community members to maintain engagement in various decision making fora.

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

When 33% of participants report having had no arts engagement in the previous twelve months and further 43% reporting only having engaged between 1-3 times in the previous twelve months – there can be no doubt in Cultural Spring’s success in reach the least engaged. Furthermore when you consider the fact that 58% of participants resided in the top 30% of most deprived areas across Sunderland and South Tyneside - it is clear that Cultural Spring has been extremely successful at engaging the least engaged of the least engaged, i.e. those facing additional social, cultural and economic barriers to engagement.

Cultural Spring demonstrated an understanding of both the intersectionality and barriers to people’s engagement in both the planning and delivering of arts engagement activities. There are many and varied barriers to people engaging, for instance some may lack the confidence to do so and Cultural Friends and Community Champions were devised to address this. Others may think the arts is not for them and this is where both taster sessions and Go and See trips proved useful. For others the costs of engagement may prohibit engagement – something Cultural Spring accommodated in terms of delivering free or subsidised provision, the introduction of the Pay What You Feel initiative and programming activities locally to reduce transport costs and time.

Evidence from participants demonstrates that those engaged were inspired by the arts with 98% reporting that following engagement they felt a sense of personal achievement, 99% reporting an appetite for and intention to engage in future arts activities and 99% saying they would recommend the activity to others.

V. The extent to which the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence in the process of engaging communities has been achieved?

In terms of Cultural Spring’s excellence in the process of engaging communities, this has been demonstrated in a number of ways, mainly:

Using an asset based community development (ABCD) approach

Whilst some communities of place may lack visible cultural infrastructure, they are none the less rich in creative practice and have spaces indoors and out that can be utilised. Cultural Spring has taken an asset based community development (ABCD) approach, sometimes referred to a strengths based approach to planning, programming and delivering activities in community spaces. This approach built on local strengths rather than focussing on arts and cultural deficits and further built community capacity. Their approach to programming activities in non-traditional spaces for non-traditional audiences/participants helped to extend reach and engagement amongst those least engaged.

Flexibility

When working in and with communities who face challenging circumstances, and who may be reluctant to engage in some things, Cultural Spring demonstrated great flexibility in how it worked and what it aimed to do with people and communities. For example, online, Facebook groups, craft packs, trialling cultural friends and delivering in, with and through trusted local partner organisations all demonstrate this flexibility. Indeed interviews with staff underlined how no one size fits all and the importance of taking time to listen to what communities want and need – all of which takes time to do.

Generous leadership

Generous leadership provides ways for people and/or organisations to work together to create art and cultural value. Cultural Spring demonstrated generous leadership on its Steering Group, with Community Champions, Cultural Friends, Community conversations and Community Connectors, Your Art and Commissioning Forums. Generous leadership was achieved by making sure that those involved know they are valued and important, spending time developing relationships and meaningfully connecting with individuals and organisations, providing opportunities, empowering others to make decisions and delegating responsibilities.

Artistic practice and excellence

In terms of artistic practice and excellence, Cultural Spring recognises that this is less about involving award winning artists and more about finding local connections in the making of the work. They successfully deployed an approach based on the coming together of process, people and skilled execution of ideas. Cultural Spring's Research & Development commissions excel best in this area. The fact that 97% of participants said they had an appetite/desire to engage in future arts activities and 97% would recommend the activities to others is testament to both the quality of the offer, enjoyment and embedding an appetite for continued arts engagement.

Building Trust and Partnership

Cultural Spring continued to encourage collaborative effort among partners with a stake in the success of local communities and place. Community Connectors and Community Champions are pivotal in supporting this – often acting as Cultural Spring's foot soldiers on the ground, being the eyes and ears within communities.

Relevance and making it personal

Cultural Spring's partnership work with organisations such as Sangini on the Srijoni Project -Sangini is a Black and minorities women led community arts project, which investigated cultural participation among Muslim women, perspectives of Islamic arts and the notion of cultural entitlement among Muslim women and NAFFI Break which supports veterans helped to make personal and relevant arts engagement and thereby contributed to excellence in the process of arts engagement.

VI. Which approaches have been successful and what lessons can be learned?

Whilst Cultural Spring had understandable concerns about shifting delivery online during Covid-19, one of the unanticipated successes of digital provision has been the engagement of greater numbers of individuals, who for whatever reason, find it difficult to attend venue based activities – for instance people with disabilities, confidence issues, lived experience of mental health, caring responsibilities or learning disabilities. Similarly enhanced partnership working in, with and through local gateway and stakeholder organisations and local groups has resulted in extended reach into certain communities of interest – for example people with learning disabilities, lived experience of mental health, minority ethnic groups and young people. However, this indirect relationship does present challenges in terms of relationship building, branding, information and feedback collection.

Cultural Spring's mix of workshops, Go and See visits, audience events and R & D commissions continued to provide successful vehicles to both attract new and retain existing participants in arts and cultural activities.

Tailored activities, partnership working and targeted promotions have increased participation amongst specific groups e.g. people with disabilities, young families, minority ethnic groups and men have paid dividends.

Cultural Springs wide range of co-creator opportunities, including Community Champions, Cultural Friends, Community Connectors, volunteering, Steering Group membership, Commissioning Forums, and Your Art Panels help to support and embed generous leadership, arts democracy, sustainability, local ownership, legacy and collectivism going forwards.

Having a post within the Cultural Spring team that is dedicated to data collection and means that real time data can be produced and analysed in timely ways to help inform future delivery and priorities.

7. Recommendations

It is a testament to the Cultural Spring team and evidence of their being and action research and doing organisation that the number of recommendations in this report, compared to previous ones are fewer in number. Proof that previous recommendations have already been enacted. Therefore, below, in no particular order, a limited number of recommendations are made for consideration:

- (i) Should a future pandemic result in lock downs, consideration could be given to developing online Go and See visits – perhaps tapping into existing virtual museum and art gallery tours with facilitated zoom discussions afterwards to share learning and experience. Cultural Friends could have a role to play here in encouraging/supporting virtual visits.
- (ii) Retention of some digital and non-digital provision and hybrid delivery models, as this has proven effective in widening access, participant diversification and maintaining connections.
- (iii) Continuing to follow up/finishing off/celebrate delivered projects and activities – e.g. mounting exhibitions of work or creating booklets/displays etc, as ways of continuing and further embedding engagement within communities.
- (iv) Creating a file which contains a list of all activities developed/delivered, with a brief description, numbers of participants and demographic details for internal management purposes.
- (v) Collecting images from Art/Craft pack participants, with the associated artists/creative practitioner’s support to help further evidence these activities pictorially.
- (vi) Further promote and push the Pay What You Feel system, introduced during Autumn 2021 to increase donation levels and free reserves, particularly amongst repeat participants.
- (vii) Creating/facilitating a network of commissioned artists/creative practitioners to provide peer support, enable collaboration, information exchange, sharing new delivering techniques and learning.
- (viii) Quarterly scheduling of staff time to formally review and discuss what has worked well over the previous quarter and what were the challenges?
- (ix) Consideration could be given to prioritise new workshop attendees or possibly limiting a percentage of places for newbies.
- (x) Organising and celebrating 10 years of the Cultural Spring– inviting some of those who participated in the early days to share their journeys.