

Arts Council England

# Youth Performance Partnerships

Year One Evaluation Report

November 2020

Photo credit: Skylight Circus Arts, The Stage Direction

**BOP**  
Consulting



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# Executive Summary

Arts Council England commissioned BOP Consulting to conduct the evaluation of the Youth Performance Partnerships programme (YPP). This is the first-year report for the three-year evaluation which assesses the programme's progress towards achieving the outcomes and impacts identified in the YPP logic model and discusses learnings from the first year of the programme.

## The programme

Youth Performance Partnerships is a three-year programme delivered and led by five Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) across England which seeks to create developmental performance experiences for young people, enable new talent to be supported and developed, and to create more equitable access to the creative arts, particularly focusing on areas of high disadvantage and low engagement.

In March 2019, five areas across England (Croydon, Plymouth, Salford, Derby, and Medway) were each awarded £1 million to deliver a programme of engagement characterised by strong co-creation elements with children and young people. Over the course of three academic years, each area aims to reach over 2,000 children and young people.

The design of the YPP activities is intended to be locally and young-people driven. Awarded projects are different in terms of their activities and project settings. However, common approaches across the five projects include:

- Needs analysis to identify local needs and target areas.
- Consultation with young people to inform project contents.
- Regular and in-depth engagement with specific cohorts of children and young people to co-create performances
- Talks or interactions with practitioners to learn about different roles in performance-making / creative careers

- Performances co-created and performed by children and young people
- Involvement of local creative practitioners, schools and community partners to deliver project activities.

## Project progress

The first year of the YPP programme was mainly about setting up and initiating project delivery. The first part of the academic year (i.e. September to December 2019) was generally given to projects establishing themselves, confirming their offers with partners and schools and consulting with young people on proposed activities. There were only a few short months of activities being delivered as planned before the onset of the pandemic. We were anticipating data from projects relating to activity over the whole academic year, but this was necessarily curtailed by the closure of schools and cultural venues.

In the first year of the programme, across the five projects, 1,941 participants were engaged in work delivered by 158 artists and practitioners, with the work reaching audiences of 3,586 people. These figures are likely to be significantly lower than anticipated in places due to COVID-19 having a prolonged impact upon delivery. We are currently working with the five projects and ACE in Year 2 to establish how best to adapt the evaluation to accommodate these disruptions in delivery and anticipated activities.

**Figure 1 YPP Year 1 evidence against outcomes**

**Programme aims: to create more and deeper performance experiences for young people, enable new talent to be supported and developed, and to create more equitable access to the creative arts, particularly focusing on areas of high disadvantage and low engagement.**

<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Evidence from Year 1</b>	<b>Data source</b>
<b>More children, families, and schools from deprived and lower-engaged areas are experiencing and appreciating performances.</b>	<p>A general lack of self-reported data from young people due to early stage of the project delivery as well as disruption of the pandemic which cut short many of the planned sessions.</p> <p>Project partners assessed that the provision of opportunities for young people to engage in performing arts locally has improved.</p> <p>YPP activities were targeted at more deprived areas and children and young people who would not have engaged in the arts normally.</p>	<p>Partners and artist/creative practitioners survey</p> <p>Project plans, baseline participant survey, project monitoring data</p>
<b>Young people develop self-expression, agency, and self-efficacy through artistic development and performance.</b>	<p>Projects have been explicitly seeking to promote co-creation with young people</p> <p>Participants' showed improved confidence, both individually and collectively as a group, as the regular sessions progressed.</p> <p>Preliminary evidence of a growing ability from the participants to express a voice in the creative environment.</p>	<p>Reflections from artists / creative practitioners and peer researchers</p> <p>Small sample of survey responses from artists and creative practitioners</p>
<b>Young people improve their professional, performance, and performance making skills.</b>	<p>Participants showed improved collaborations, stagecraft and the ability to incorporate multi artforms.</p>	<p>Artists / creative practitioners and evaluators assessments.</p>
<b>Communities (i.e. schools, families, and broad publics) and young people feel better connected to their locality through high-quality performance experiences.</b>	<p>Over 3,580 audience members were engaged in 118 performance activities. Very limited data to assess the experiences of the audiences and community members. Year 2 evaluation will focus on capturing stronger evidence collected from this stakeholder group wherever possible.</p>	<p>Project data</p>
<b>Schools and cultural organisations improve their abilities to engage broad and diverse participants and audiences.</b>	<p>Project partners and artists/ practitioners reported significant improvement in trust and partnership working. However, practices and tools to engage young people, particularly from challenging circumstances are yet to be strengthened.</p>	<p>Partners and artist/creative practitioners survey</p>
<b>LCEPs establish new and innovative models of partnerships, which are effective in local areas.</b>	<p>Partners and artists/practitioners established new ways of working in partnership than previously and developed stronger partnerships with organisations outside of their sector.</p> <p>YPP projects have shown innovation and flexibility in their response to the pandemic and have largely excelled at transferring a range of activities and support online. This has, in some cases, led to new positive engagement opportunities for young people, parents and partners.</p>	<p>Partners and artist/creative practitioners survey</p> <p>YPP peer-learning and exchange sessions, project reporting</p>

## Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on YPP's pathway to impact

The COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown since March 2020 has limited many activities planned for the first year of the programme. Yet projects have shown innovation and flexibility in their response to the pandemic and have largely excelled at transferring a range of activities and support online. This has, in some cases, led to new positive engagement opportunities for young people, parents and partners.

Overall, while the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions continue to necessitate programme adaptations at the activity level, it is not felt that major revisions are required to the logic model at this stage and that anticipated outcomes and impacts can still be met. Discussion with the projects revealed that the pandemic has challenged the *contextual* assumptions of the YPP logic model, such as the socio-economic circumstances in the communities. These contextual assumptions have had a clear impact on the type and format of activities that projects can offer, and by extension, children and young people's experience. However, the *operational* assumptions do not appear to be significantly challenged by the necessary COVID-19 adaptations (e.g. that partnerships with schools and other organisations remain possible and co-creation with young people can remain central to programme activities).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic extends beyond the disruption on Year 1 activities and delivery. It has implications for project models in the next two academic years such as the types of activities offered, partnerships, and planning and management. The gaps in the evaluation data observed at this stage (and largely anticipated given the implications of the pandemic) are addressed in the recommendations below.

### Recommendations for projects

- Work with local evaluators to review data collection approaches with participants, parents and schools and ensure that proposed methods are complementary to changes in project delivery.
- Plan all activities within a mixed-model framework (i.e. online and face to face), consider how to best facilitate online mentoring and support for young

people who are strongly invested in the project but may be facing additional barriers or challenges.

- Rethink plans for engaging audiences and communities given the new restrictions in public space and ongoing venue closures and adaptations.
- Engage in conversations with schools around how the YPP programme can provide an opportunity for pupils to develop their creative capacities, and potentially wellbeing, in response to a challenging historical moment.
- Continue to record what seems to be working in co-creation and enabling participants' voice. Formalise accounts of good practice and share with YPP and other peers.
- Consider how to support practitioners and partners to develop their practice with young people experiencing additional challenges.

### Recommendations for ACE/DCMS

- To support projects to continue to be adaptive to unknown and changing restrictions and opportunities enable as much flexibility as possible in budget management and spending restrictions (e.g. carry-over between years)
- Consider resourcing a national participant network in some form. This could provide a useful way for participants, practitioners and artists to share practice more broadly and celebrate/promote project activities and achievements across broader audiences and publics.

# 1. Introduction

Arts Council England commissioned BOP Consulting to conduct the evaluation of the Youth Performance Partnerships programme (YPP). This is the first-year report for the three-year evaluation which assesses the programme's progress towards achieving the outcomes and impacts identified in the YPP logic model and discusses learnings from the first year of the programme.

## The Programme

Youth Performance Partnerships is a three-year programme delivered and led by five Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) across England.

Funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) and administered by Arts Council England (ACE), the programme seeks to create more and deeper performance experiences for young people, enable new talent to be supported and developed, and to create more equitable access to the creative arts, particularly focusing on areas of high disadvantage and low engagement.

The key objectives of the programme are:

- More children and young people, aged 8-18, particularly from areas of low cultural engagement and high levels of deprivation, take part in high-quality performance and performance making.
- Children and young people will develop a range of important skills and abilities and will be supported to progress.
- Teachers will develop skills and confidence in the teaching of performing arts and therefore deliver a legacy within the school beyond the programme.
- Cultural organisations will better understand how to meet the needs of schools and pupils.

- Families will take pride in their children's achievements and value the activity.
- Schools, children, young people, and families will better understand the full range of career opportunities within performing arts and wider creative industries including producing, directing, design, backstage and technical roles, etc.

In March 2019, five areas across England (Croydon, Plymouth, Salford, Derby, and Medway) were each awarded £1 million to deliver a programme of engagement characterised by strong co-creation elements with children and young people. Over the course of three academic years, each area aims to reach over 2,000 children and young people.

The goals and vision of YPP align with Arts Council England's most recent 10-year strategy, which calls for more equitable access to culture and a shift towards democratising culture and creativity:

“ By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.<sup>1</sup>

LCEPs, a place-based initiative, have been developing in response to local needs across the country since the Cultural Education Challenge in 2015. The five awarded LCEPs which demonstrated existing strong relationships with leading theatres in their areas, were judged to be well-placed to deliver the YPP. It is also hoped that the YPP programme will drive the next stage of development of LCEPs and test the potential for LCEPs to deliver place-based interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Arts Council England (2020) 'Let's Create: Strategy 2020-2030' p14

## Evaluation methodology

Arts Council England commissioned BOP Consulting in 2019 to undertake the programme-level evaluation of the Youth Performance Partnership programme.

The evaluation aims to identify the impact of the programme, assess the extent to which the programme has met its aims and objectives and understand how it is developing over the three years and across the five areas. The research also aims to inform Arts Council England's future cultural programme models for young people and enable them to share relevant policy and practice with the wider sector.

BOP's methodology for evaluating YPP has three stages:

- Stage 1 – Project set-up (April 2019 – February 2020). This initial stage set up the programme level evaluation. This included an inception meeting with ACE and the five LCEPs and the development of the logic model and data collection tools.
- Stage 2 – Data collection and peer learning sessions facilitation (September 2019 – 2022). The second stage focuses on ongoing data collection and peer learning support. This includes regular coordination with projects and local evaluators to troubleshoot and manage the flow of data, facilitation of peer learning to capture emerging learning and findings, and annual reporting.
- Stage 3 – Synthesis of finding and reporting (September 2022). At the culmination of the third year, BOP will collate and analyse insights and learnings gathered across the three years and will report back to ACE and DCMS.

## COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown since March 2020 has brought an abrupt stop to many activities planned for the first year of the programme. Throughout the lockdown period, all five projects have found ways to adapt their programme of activities. This was mainly done by pivoting to digital offers but also providing a handful of small-scale face-to-face activities to

continue to provide much-needed support for children and young people locally in this difficult time. Section 1 provides an overview of the activities delivered in the first year of the programme across the five projects, including adaptations during the lockdown period.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic extends beyond the disruption on Year 1 activities and delivery. It has implications for project models in the next two academic years such as the types of activities offered, partnerships, and planning and management. It challenges the assumptions of the programme and the macro-context which would influence the programme's 'pathway to impact'. Throughout this report, we have reflected on these implications and learnings from the pandemic. Section 2.1 discusses the implications of COVID-19 on the YPP logic model. As we examine the emerging outcomes of the programme in sections 4 and 5 we have also taken into consideration the emerging implications of COVID-19.

This report builds on the Year 1 interim report submitted in March 2020, which discussed in detail the YPP logic model and baseline data from project partners. This report draws from various data sources:

- Project reported data on its activities and outputs
- Project evaluators' assessments of project progress against YPP outcomes
- End-of-year survey responses from project partners and artists/practitioners from two YPP projects
- Baseline partner survey data collected between April – September 2019
- Two peer learning and exchange sessions attended by core project teams facilitated by BOP in November 2019 and August 2020
- Discussion from evaluators call facilitated by BOP in April 2020

### Data gap

Due to the disruption by the pandemic, self-reported data from participants, teachers and parents and carers are largely missing from the first year of reporting. In some cases, delivery was cancelled, and participant baselining was

not possible. In other cases, survey responses in paper form are stored in offices which are not currently accessible.

BOP's work-to-date covers tasks within stage 1 of the methodology:

- Develop core survey questions targeting five stakeholder groups: children and young people, schools and teachers, parents and guardians, artists and practitioners, and project leads and partners.
- Develop baseline survey questions targeting project leads and partners, and children and young people. The partner baseline survey was launched between September and December 2019 and was presented in the Year 1 Interim Report
- Develop monitoring indicators for participants.
- Set up digital surveys.
- Develop data capture templates for projects to share their data.

We have asked projects to either develop their children and young people survey by incorporating BOP's survey questions or capture the indicators through other methodologies where surveying is not appropriate (e.g. younger children or those for whom surveying would inhibit participation).

BOP also facilitated a peer learning and exchange session focusing on co-creation in November 2019, hosted in Plymouth and an online session in August 2020, with plans for two further peer learning and exchange sessions each year for the duration of the programme (physical or remote depending on forthcoming mobility restrictions).



## 2. Programmatic Logic Model

The logic model in Figure 1 was developed through an iterative process. An initial draft was developed based on BOP’s review of project application documents to identify common themes and approaches that matched with the programme goals. The draft was then presented and discussed with the ACE team, YPP projects and local evaluators in April 2019 before it was finalised in November 2019. The logic model outlines the intended programme outcomes and impacts and was the basis for the evaluation framework and tools.

**Figure 2 YPP objectives and intended outcomes**

Programme objectives	YPP logic model outcomes
More children and young people, aged 8-18, particularly from areas of low cultural engagement and high levels of deprivation, to take part in high quality performance and performance making	<b>Access</b> - More children, families, and schools from deprived and lower-engaged areas are experiencing and appreciating performances.
Children and young people will develop a range of important skills and abilities and will be supported to continue developing through clear progression routes	<b>Non-Cognitive Skills</b> - Young people develop self-expression, agency, and self-efficacy through artistic development and performance. <b>Transferable/Technical Skills</b> - Young people improve their professional, performance, and performance making skills.
Teachers will develop skills and confidence in the teaching of performing arts and therefore deliver a	<b>Engagement</b> - Schools and cultural organisations improve their abilities to engage broad and diverse participants and audiences.

legacy within the school beyond the programme

Cultural organisations will better understand how to meet the needs of schools and pupils

Families will take pride in their children’s achievements and value the activity

Schools, children, young people and families will better understand the full range of career opportunities within performing arts and wider creative industries including producing, directing, design, backstage and technical roles etc

**Partnerships** - LCEPs establish new and innovative models of partnerships, which are effective in local areas.

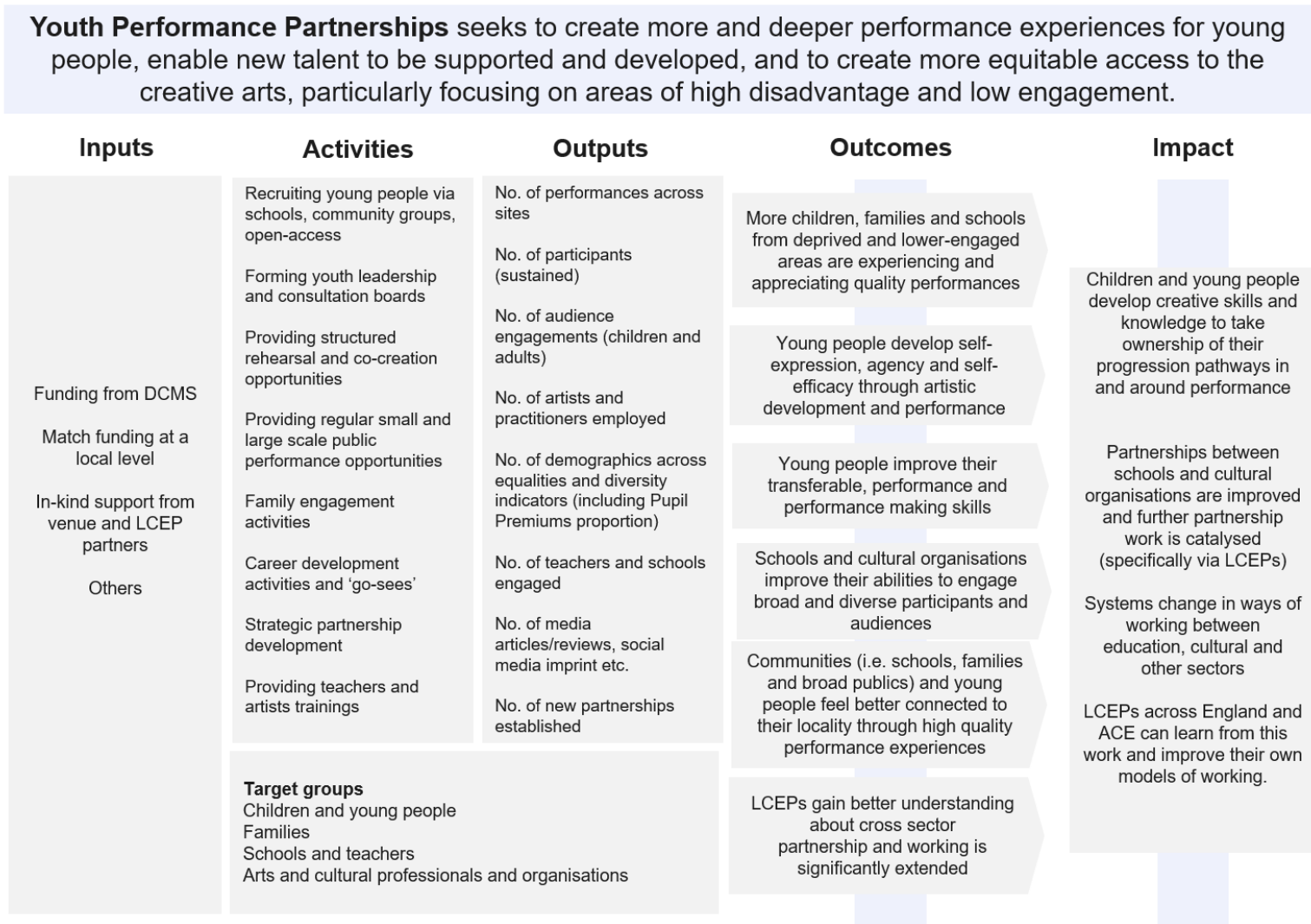
**Valuing Culture and Performance Arts** - Communities (i.e. schools, families, and broad publics) and young people feel better connected to their locality through high quality performance experiences.

The outcomes of the YPP logic model concern both process and impact – we are interested in how impacts are achieved as well as what impacts are being achieved. One key objective of this evaluation is to learn from different models of engaging children and young people and the ways of working of the LCEPs.

### Data collection

As the logic model was being finalised, we developed a set of data collection tools for projects and evaluators to implement. These tools include survey and interview questions against each outcome and impact area. The surveys are designed for five project stakeholder groups: children and young people, schools and teachers, parents and guardians, artists and practitioners, and project leads and partners. Projects are asked to baseline their partners and children and young people data to compare changes before and after the programme intervention.

**Figure 3 YPP Impact Model**



## 2.1 Logic model assumptions and responding to the pandemic

When we co-developed the programme logic model with the projects, it was done so with a set of implicit assumptions that have been challenged by the developments since March 2020. While we recognise that some activity was able to take place before the national lockdown and proceeding limitations, generally projects have had to adapt quite significantly in response to the pandemic.

The assumptions that sat alongside the logic model were as follows:

### Contextual

- There would be no restrictions on social gathering and mandatory shut down of services (schools, theatres and community centres etc.)
- The socio-economic circumstances of the target and broader populations would not change drastically within a short period at a population level
- Children and young people's psychological needs would not change significantly at a population level

### Operational

- That a strong understanding of local needs (e.g. through needs analyses) can provide targeted and effective interventions
- A co-creation approach can engage and give voice to children and young people
- Engagement with education and broader communities can influence perceptions about cultural education and performance-making
- Successful partnerships and ways of working that can generate broader systems change can be established and developed

In discussion with the projects (largely via a peer learning and exchange session held in August 2020), we can see that the *contextual* assumptions have had a clear impact on the type and format of activities that projects can offer, and by extension, children and young people's experience. However, the *operational* assumptions do not appear to be significantly challenged by the adaptations that have been necessary. Ultimately this indicates that while activities are likely to change significantly, the overall programme outcomes and impacts are still achievable and indeed are guiding the pandemic adaptations that projects are making.

## 3. Programme overview

The design of the YPP programme is intended to be locally and young-people-driven: at application stage LCEPs were encouraged to come up with a project design that suits its local needs and fits the overall programme objectives.

As we can see in Figure 4, the five projects are different in terms of their activities and project settings. However, a number of common approaches have been adopted across the five projects to achieve the programme objectives.

They are:

- Needs analysis to identify local needs and target areas.
- Consultation with young people in the forms of survey, youth panels etc. to inform project contents.
- Regular and in-depth engagement with specific cohorts of children and young people to co-create performances
- Talks or interactions with practitioners to learn about different roles in performance-making / creative career
- Performances co-created and performed by children and young people
- Involvement of local creative practitioners, schools and community partners in delivering the project activities.

### 3.1 Project activities in Year 1

Given that the first part of the academic year (i.e. September to December 2019) was generally given to projects establishing themselves, confirming their offers with partners and schools and consulting with young people on proposed activities, there were only a few short months of activities being delivered as planned before the onset of the pandemic.

In the first year of the programme, across the five projects, 1,941 participants were engaged regular sessions delivered by 158 artists and practitioners, with the work reaching audiences of 3,586 people. These figures mainly captured

the activities delivered between January to early March 2020 and are likely to be significantly lower than anticipated in places due to COVID-19 having a prolonged impact upon delivery.

**Figure 4 Project activities and Covid-19 adaptations**

Name of the project	Activities planned for Year 1 (pre-Covid-19)	Activities delivered during lockdown / Covid-19 adaptations
Croydon Creative Collective (C3) (Croydon)	<p><b>Join:</b> As part of recruitment activity, the BRIT School carried out a programme of engagement in target schools, Birdgang and Urban Playground each performed pieces, and delivery of taster activities</p> <p><b>Studio delivery:</b> Neighbourhood studio sessions delivered and trialling of school-based studios</p> <p><b>Live at Fairfield:</b> Annual large-scale performances at Fairfield (Year 1: Young Spotlight)</p> <p><b>Go See:</b> Theatre visits and backstage tours – including Cyrano de Bergerac at the Playhouse Theatre starring James McAvoy</p> <p><b>Creative Careers:</b> Careers development and other platform activities, including planned events and a commissioned film</p> <p><b>Year 1 pop up events across four areas</b> - performance, dance, music and spoken word, with partners including the BRIT School, Dance Umbrella in collaboration with Urban Playground, Rap Club and Well-Versed Ink</p>	<p><b>Studio delivery and Go See:</b> Covid-19 and lockdown cut short the studio delivery sessions, and prevented plans for going to see Talawa’s Run It Back and shows at Brighton Fringe from going ahead</p> <p><b>Creative Careers:</b> Commissioned a film to tour round schools with industry professionals and BRIT School students. The events had to be cancelled due to lockdown, but there are plans for the film to be made as part of the digital careers programme when socially distancing rules allow</p> <p>Some older students continued to engage in a national time capsule project online, and took part in a performance showcased at Crystal Palace virtual festival</p> <p>Created and launched an interactive digital programme in July. Plans to offer local studios to complement the digital programme when allowed, as well as to restart a centralised Studio, and have some Summer “Live at Fairfield” performances.</p> <p>School engagement strategy in planning stages. To include workshops in schools which combine teacher CPD and identifying young people who would benefit from engaging in the programme</p>
#ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby)	<p>Delivery of programme organised around five hubs, with each hub led by a single partner organisation:</p> <p><b>SEND Hub:</b> Planned series of 30 sessions in 6 schools with each school having 5 sessions in either music, art or movement, running from mid-March to mid-July</p> <p><b>Derwent/Chaddesden Hub:</b> Worked with seven schools and in October 2019 hosted the S.H.E.D (Social Higher Education Depot) at one local primary school, Artistic activities delivered from November 2019 onwards include creative writing, dance and movement</p>	<p><b>SEND Hub:</b> Covid-19 and lockdown interrupted all delivery, with no activity undertaken. Planning underway to reinstate delivery from September</p> <p><b>Derwent/Chaddesden Hub:</b> Forced to cease artistic activities and sports provision earlier than intended as a result of Covid-19 and lockdown.</p> <p>Some participants were retained and took part in a five-week online project via Zoom and culminated in a socially distant sharing event in July. Planning is underway to reinstate delivery from September</p>

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**Normanton Hub:** Worked with five schools delivering activities including a series of taster and developmental workshops, with sharing sessions plans among schools involved. The Hub also had a target to support 25 young people to achieve their Arts Award.

**Abbey Hub:** Worked with young people between the ages of 8-13 in schools, in addition to planning community delivery and engagement activities. Performance project based around Treasure Island developed, with three performances planned, the first in March

**Sinfin Hub:** Worked with four schools delivering activities including building a transportable Treasure Ship, character and movement workshops and other activities in graffiti, music, cheerleading, design and production. Wider community activities planned for March

**Normanton Hub:** Unable to move into the sharing and performance stage of activities as a result of Covid-19, only delivering the taster/developmental sessions

**Abbey Hub:** In the early stages of the project, schools received taster sessions in art, music and drama.

**Sinfin Hub:** Activities were planned but only partly delivered, with wider community activities planned for March and activities planned for May half-term also unable to go ahead due to lockdown. Further plans to develop performance works were also put on hold due to Covid-19

Programme of online activities for young people developed in response to lockdown. Included a project where young people responded to creative provocations and were able to connect and collaborate online via Zoom, with digital outputs of their work shared online, and a project with children worked with a playwright and author to produce a script and plan a performance set to take place in 2021

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Theatre31  
(Medway)

- Establishment of the two youth panels in Medway and Sheppey that would steer the programme
- Baseline research into current levels of cultural engagement across the area and what were the most challenging barriers to participation was conducted with over 700 young people. The results were collated into a report which has steered the development of the full programme.
- Initial go-see theatre trips and masterclasses - Go-see theatre trips were planned and organised by young people, and several live masterclasses were held before lockdown.
- An initial partnership contract with MACA (Medway African Caribbean Association) was initiated, to support a new Hip Hopera production exploring the legacy of the Windrush.

After lockdown, sessions with the youth panel-were carried out online, and masterclasses, Q&As, workshops and group watching of digital performances were also delivered online. The MACA also successfully engaged new young people and carried out early R&D sessions online. A socially distanced film was created with Medway young people to help publicise the project, and the Sheppey Youth Panel made a short animation celebrating their local area. A summer programme of masterclasses and workshops were also delivered.

<p>With Flying Colours (Plymouth)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Co-create 5 brand new school plays to be performed at a live fringe style festival (working with 5 local schools – 1 Secondary / 4 Primary)</li> <li>— Co-create a variety of pop up performances with the young people to be performed in their local community</li> <li>— Deliver a robust CPD offer for schools/teachers</li> <li>— Engage the local community through a series of making workshops</li> <li>— Embed the Arts Award, Arts Mark and careers sessions into delivery</li> <li>— Commission a professional company to work with partner schools and their young people to co-create a piece of work to be performed at the festival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Created 5 school plays and a series of pop up performances but were unable to perform them live.</li> <li>— Created a Digital Festival, consisting of content inspired by the school-play / pop up ideas, as well as a selection of tutorial videos created by artists delivering in schools. Above Bounds also produced a wide range of content for the site as part of their commission.</li> <li>— Ran some focussed CPD sessions for the teachers engaged in the project (Drama and Writing / Directing Young People)</li> <li>— Ran a series of making workshops in the community, including costume, puppet and mask making along with creative writing sessions for adults/families during the school holidays</li> <li>— 3 of 5 schools began their Arts Mark journey</li> <li>— Above Bounds Theatre Collective, the professional company commissioned, did work with partner schools and began their co-creation process but like the school plays were unable to perform live</li> </ul>
<p>Stage Directions (Salford)</p>	<p><b>On-Stage Ensembles:</b> Including taster sessions and the engagement of all seven settings, with core delivery starting in six of the seven settings</p> <p><b>Off-Stage Ensembles:</b> Including delivery of taster sessions</p> <p><b>Careers Event:</b> Established the parameters of the event, with the recruitment of core roles underway</p> <p><b>Festival and Celebration Event:</b> Date held for the event in July 2021, currently in the planning phases with a focus on the event logistics</p> <p><b>CPD, Recruitment and Trainees:</b> Including recruitment of trainees and ensemble leads, a residential run for professionals, and the delivery of Arts Award training</p>	<p>For the most part, Stage Directions were able to deliver everything set out within the delivery plan for Year 1. That said, the duration of engagement was impacted by Covid-19</p> <p>Digital resources (workshop plans) were developed for schools, and community settings, focusing on Theatre Making and developing new stories</p> <p>Arts Award Resources created for Explore and Bronze, to be used for the programme moving forward</p> <p>New Podcast station, allowing individual guided learning around theatre and theatre-making</p> <p>New YouTube Channel created, focused on 'What Is....' theatrical styles and methodologies, tools for schools and young people</p>

## 3.2 Programme outputs to date

Figure 5 Programme outputs to date

Project	Number of performances	Number of sites	Number of participants (sustained)	Number of audience engagements (children and adults)	Number of artists and practitioners employed	Number of new partnerships	Number of teachers and schools engaged	Additional notes / caveats
Croydon Creative Collective (C3) (Croydon)	25	4	300	2,980	38	10	8 with close engagement, plus 20 receiving some form of programming	Performances noted here given to young people, none done by young people
#ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby)	83		404		24			Missing some data due to being inaccessible at present. Figures do not include the sessions delivered during the lockdown
Theatre31 (Medway)	6	16	59	62	19	1	6	Minimal delivery taken place so far
With Flying Colours (Plymouth)	0	0	319	119	37	6	5 schools (and 9 teachers)	Lack of performances due to Covid-19. Additionally, 208 participants (including adults) were engaged through community workshops, parents evenings and meet the teacher events
Stage Directions (Salford)	4	11	859	425	40	35	4	Additionally, 1,604 young people have been actively engaged in Taster Sessions
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1,941</b>	<b>3,586</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>NA</b>

Source: Collated by BOP Consulting, data sourced from project teams



### 3.3 Pandemic adaptation underway and anticipated

As seen in Figure 4, projects have responded swiftly to the immediate impact of the pandemic in order to continue project delivery. Projects are also considering project adaptations to address the longer-term impact of the pandemic on young people.

Young people recognise the challenges and risks of the current global situation. Both in terms of changes in immediate social and cultural behaviour due to the pandemic, knock-on economic pressures, and the rise of movements such as the Black Lives Matter protests and ongoing climate change activism. This is reported as leading to increasing instability and concern, but also a growing motivation to act, be involved and engage in individual and collective creative responses. Projects report increased interest in general from young people, as well as specifically, for example, in how education models can be adapted to online engagement, or high streets can be equipped as stronger spaces for cultural production once physical distancing requirements are relaxed.

Projects reported that this increased interest and motivation is to be celebrated, but that young people still need access to supportive guidance, whether from tutors and mentors or informed parents and carers. The challenge for YPP projects is how to galvanise this increased energy, and still provide supportive and adaptive learning experiences.

Most organisations recognise that the near future will require a mixed-methods approach including both face-to-face and online provision. Young people themselves are eager to return to physical engagements. However, schools, local authorities, and indeed national guidelines are changing rapidly, and projects must remain adaptive.

Plans with partners and artists are continually being adapted based on local circumstances and opportunities. The overall outcomes and impacts in the logic model are still guiding plans and agreements, however, the activities to achieve them must be allowed to be flexible and adaptable.

### 3.4 Positive impacts observed since the pandemic

Pandemic adaptations may have democratised access in some ways. By extending their digital participation offer, some projects (e.g. Plymouth, Derby, Medway) have reached individuals and groups they may not have if only providing physical interactions. Some reported that the requirement to Move things online created even greater digital engagement from those who were previously reluctant.

Some LCEPs have also been brought together to work more effectively in response to the crisis. Plymouth described how the pandemic has sharpened the focus of the LCEP and enabled them to prioritise activities for those most in need. Croydon indicated that the LCEP has moved from monthly to weekly meetings to discuss how to respond to the emerging situation, deepening relationships in the process.

Some projects discussed how schools have been initiating more conversations with LCEPs and YPP delivery organisations as a result of the pandemic, recognising that artistic and creative skills and experiences can enable young people to develop resilience to the emerging challenges many of them face.

Croydon described how they have maintained co-creation and self-directed learning, adapting the programme to offer young people options digitally and they can choose to engage with what they want. Teachers have also been offered 20 minutes webinars, which have proven to be accessible and appreciated.

Overall we can see that while the COVID-19 pandemic has had a clear impact on the nature of the activities provided across YPP, at this stage it does not seem to negate the programme logic model, nor significantly detract from the programme's intended impacts. Indeed, there may be some unintended positive impacts that are achieved over the course of the programme, as these emerging findings indicate.

## 4. Outcomes for young people

### **YPP intended outcomes:**

*More children, families and schools from deprived and lower-engaged areas are experiencing and appreciating quality performances;*

*Young people develop self-expression, agency and self-efficacy through artistic development and performance;*

*Young people improve their transferable, performance and performance making skills*

**Intended impact:** *Children and young people develop creative skills and knowledge to take ownership of their progression pathways in and around performance*

By the end of the first year of the programme:

- There is emerging evidence of children and young people's progression towards the intended programme outcomes, particularly around participants confidence and creative self-expression
- During the lockdown period, some projects were able to move their planned activities online and to create new digital offers to continue to engage and support children and young people while in physical isolation
- Participants' final products from Year 1 showed a high level of creativity, collaboration and technical skills, attributed to the commitment of the participants as well as positive and recurring engagement with the YPP activities
- Preliminary evidence suggested that youth voice development to be a potential outcome of the programme.

In the first year of the programme, the YPP engaged 1,941 participants throughout the five YPP projects across the broad range of activities on offer. These are the participants who were most intensively engaged with the YPP – through regular (often weekly) small-group sessions delivered by artists/creative practitioners.

The disruption of COVID-19 pandemic on the regular and planned YPP activities has limited the availability of self-reported data from children and young people. Furthermore, participants self-reported data from two projects were not available for analysis as their responses to the paper survey were kept in offices where access was restricted due to the pandemic.

This section mainly draws on the reflections from artists, practitioners, peer researchers and teachers involved in the delivery of the programme on how they view the impact of the sessions delivered so far on the participants. Despite the subjective nature of these reflections, by triangulating the various sources these accounts indicate progress in the delivery of outcomes in Year 1.

### 4.1 Engaging children and young people from deprived and lower-engaged areas

**Needs analysis improved local understanding of needs hence the provision of YPP activities that would enable meaningful engagement with children and young people.**

The needs analyses undertaken by each project in advance to the delivery of activities were used to identify the localities project activities would target, as well as the artforms and activities that would appeal to the participants. This exercise helped shape the unique YPP offer in each area that would enable meaningful engagement with the children and young people involved. Generally, accounts from practitioners, teachers and participants suggested positive and recurring engagements before the pandemic hit.

For example, needs analysis undertaken by the #ThisIsDerby Reimagine (Derby) helped the project to focus its activities in five parts of the city. BAME communities and Normanton/Arboretum were picked out as an area of need. The creative consultation with young people in the area as part of the need's

analysis highlighted the park as somewhere they wanted to use but feared. In response to these needs, one of the project hubs' artistic activities were designed to focus on celebrating physical surroundings using visual arts, dance and the environment as a theme.

Although data were incomplete across the projects to give a comprehensive picture of the socio-demographic profiles of participants engaged, partial data from projects indicated that the YPP had reached children and young people who would not have engaged in the arts normally, for example:

- All schools involved in Stage Directions (Salford) have a higher proportion of pupils eligible for FSM and higher proportion pupil premium than the Salford average and 81% of participants live in the top three highest areas of deprivation in the local authority area
- Baseline data from participants from With Flying Colours (Plymouth) showed that 54% of the participants were eligible for Free School Meals (compared to a national average of 15.4%<sup>2</sup>), and half of them had not taken part in any creative activities outside the classroom.

## 4.2 Self-expression, agency and self-efficacy

### Recurring engagements with YPP activities attributed to improved confidence and resilience

The majority of accounts commented on improvements in participants' confidence, both individually and collectively as a group, as the regular sessions progressed.

Practitioners and teachers involved in With Flying Colours (Plymouth) noted considerable improvements on the young participants (8-13-year-old) including SEN students. Pupils appreciated the variety of activities that were different from a normal lesson: more creative, active, freer and more intensive. The child-centred approach and the positive inclusion of all participants, even those who were initially disruptive, meant pupils felt their ideas were valued and made

them keen to take part and contribute. Certain individuals in the class gained confidence in being able to write their own stories and read them out to the class without the pressure, this included a student reported as being 'playful' in classes who responded particularly well to the writing sessions and was later nominated for a school award for this piece of work.

An artist working in the #ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby) music workshop sessions said that: *'The group's confidence grew week by week, and they contacted each other in WhatsApp group chats regularly within the final weeks. They also reached out to each other at the end of the final session, discussing future collaborations and their next creative steps as artists.'* Another artist involved in delivering sessions on writing noted that: *'Over the weeks it seems as though participants started to gain a sense of calm in investing and redrafting their work and communicating with a likeminded group of young people.'*

The length and depth of engagement with YPP activities were important in improving participants' confidence. Regular sessions with the same group of peers helped reduce participants' shyness and improve their ability to learn from each other. In Stage Directions (Salford), practitioners reported that paired work allowed for the support of each other in idea development, thus making sharing the idea to a whole group less intimidating for the quieter members.

However, the extent of the improvements was not necessarily linear across the board. A practitioner from With Flying Colours (Plymouth) also commented that *'beyond a slight rise in confidence and utter enjoyment of drama as a specialist subject'* which was *'overall very apparent'*, they did not observe developments *'in any individual per se'*. This might be due to the designs of the sessions as one comment from the same project suggested the sessions to be extended to a longer period in order to achieve the intended outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/news/leadership-news/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019/>

## Youth voice development as an emerging programme outcome

Embedded within the design of each of the five projects is an intent to amplify the voices of participating young people, to ensure they are directly represented across the activities and outputs of the programme. Across the YPP activities, young people were encouraged to take ownership and decide how best to progress within the context and scope of their given project.

Reflections collected from practitioners and evaluators across the programme have suggested a growing ability from the participants to express a voice in reaction to the creative environment that they were presented with and a new means of self-expression through the artistic tasks they undertook in the sessions.

As the programme continues to develop and engage more young people, youth voice development can be considered to be a new emergent outcome of the programme.

### Project examples

Several projects have established youth panels as a means of developing the voice of the young people participating in the project. Theatre 31 (Medway) has established two youth panels, one in Medway and one on the Isle of Sheppey. These panels are run by the young people on their behalf, and provide an opportunity for those participating to lead on key decisions, in areas such as planning, performance creation and commissioning, and play a critical role in the shaping of the programme.

Participants in Stage Directions (Salford) were given opportunities on an almost weekly basis to create their short performances, tableaux or freeze frames in response to a brief, which aimed to stretch their imaginations and creativity. These exercises proved to be popular among the majority of participants because of the freedom they were given to develop their self-expression. While at the beginning participants in several groups showed

hesitation, this was eventually resolved across the majority of the settings with the constant encouragement of tutors and peers for participants to step out of their comfort zones.

Interviews with C3 (Croydon) participants suggested that, despite their relatively limited experiences in the workshops (being either in attendance for their first or second session), participants were already developing a sense of confidence in their abilities and a greater ability to express their thoughts and feelings engendered by their positive engagement in the project.

Although the pandemic has cut short many of the YPP activities, some projects were able to continue their sessions online and continued to witness the development of the young people involved. One of the dance artists from #ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby) who led the online sessions during the lockdown period noted that participants, although nervous to share, were proud of their creative writings, showed their parents their work and '*Loved having ownership.*'

### Emerging outcome

These examples of project activities, in conjunction with the design of the five projects and some of the early outputs from Year 1, demonstrate that there is potential across the programme for youth voice development to be established as a new emergent programme outcome.

Central to the continued establishment of this potential outcome is that the projects remain intentional and focused on hearing the voices of young people, creating opportunities for this where possible either through the implementation of methods such as surveys i.e. Theatre 31's survey of young people which received 670 responses, or more directly from a more select invested group of young people e.g. youth panels.

Moving forward we will continue to record and assess what activities across the programme appear to be working to enable the voices of participating young people, and will formalise accounts of good practice so as to further support and develop this area.

## 4.3 Transferable, performance and performance-making skills

### Strong collaboration conducive to co-creation

Most of the Year 1 activities across the five areas were designed to be carried out in a group setting, recognising group working to be key to co-creating new ideas.

“ The group created some great mind maps and showed good ability to work in small groups when generating ideas. Have begun focusing on a theme for the show and developing a series of ideas around it; They are genuinely curious about characters they want to investigate. Some still need support from peers in making decisions but can then imagine the idea. (Practitioner, The Stage Directions (Salford))

Practitioners faced challenges in mixing the group initially, the level of success seemed to be influenced by, but not only by, the age of the participants and the age range of the group. Throughout the process practitioners have developed a range of techniques and tools to help with the mixing and the gelling of the group: paired work for younger participants, groups of older age performed better when set with a task that has a performance outcome. Some groups found the collaborative element a little more challenging than others. One practitioner from Stage Directions (Salford) reflected: *‘Being placed in groups with those whom they may not usually work with was quite a step for some of the participants but after some gentle encouragement the groups became more cohesive.’*

In a younger group setting in With Flying Colours (Plymouth), teachers and practitioners commented that the collaboration skills developed by the

participants throughout the activities were a ‘small but important change’. Participants have demonstrated their team skills including learning to compromise when needed and to appreciate others’ perspectives. The group activities also allowed them to learn from working with others they wouldn’t normally work with.

### Participants’ outputs demonstrated creative and technical skills

Evaluators across the five YPP projects have noted evidence of creative skills being developed through young people’s engagement with the activities.

In Stage Directions (Salford) where its evaluation framework is based on the ‘5 creative habits of mind’<sup>3</sup>, researchers noted various degrees of improvements across all the five creative habits of mind: ‘Collaboration’, ‘Disciplined’, ‘Imaginative’, ‘Persistent’ and ‘Inquisitive’. Initial findings from the project evaluator suggested that the improvement in the area of ‘Inquisitive’, which is considered as an advance skill within the framework, appeared to be relatively modest compared with the other four areas.

Evaluators for #ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby) found that the outputs produced by young people in the lockdown (i.e. digital projects) demonstrated strong skill competencies across multiple art forms. They demonstrated strong creative skills and all final project outcomes involved multiple artforms. They demonstrated skills associated with technology and production, problem-solving and teamwork with many outputs involving collaboration.

Almost all project evaluators highlighted the improvements in participants’ stagecraft and the ability to incorporate multi artforms throughout the project. With Flying Colours (Plymouth) noted how by the end of the project the group’s performance, which was initially resembling ‘roleplay’, showed a great deal of thought into various aspects of performances from the basics of ensuring that everything is visible to an audience to more complex matters such as making their performances visually engaging. This was partly a result of their increasing

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<sup>3</sup> The 5 Creative Habits of Mind was developed by the Centre for Real World Learning following a review of creativity and an examination of literature relating to the assessment of creativity in schools (Spencer, Lucas, & Claxton, 2012).

commitment to the project but also of the establishment of a routine to the sessions and a greater understanding of the craft.

In addition, some projects offered opportunities for young people to take a leadership role in group activities, with an aim that these would contribute to the development of their professional skills in the creative industries.

For some projects, practitioners have mentioned the need for more time and a more sustained period of engagement to fully develop the outputs that they were trying to produce with young people and to achieve the level of development intended by the programme.

#### **4.4 Looking ahead: supporting children and young people through the COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many existing needs and inequalities within the five areas where the YPP interventions take place, those reported include food security, learning gaps (through school closure), and digital accessibility

This was compounded by new needs in terms of losses, bereavement and grief being experienced among young people during the pandemic time for a variety of reasons (i.e. literally losing loved ones and grief for the loss of 'normal life'), creating new and additional challenges among already vulnerable populations. As a result, projects have also increasingly targeted support to young people via parents and carers.

In providing more holistic support to young people under this changing macro-context, two projects identified one-to-one creative mentoring as another potential strand of activities that has emerged in a clearer way than was originally planned.

The five projects recognised the potential benefit of setting up a national YPP network for all the children and young people involved in the programme in the five localities. In times of restricted physical mobility, a national network could allow young people to feel being part of something bigger and meet new

likeminded people to continue to develop their creative endeavours on an even greater scale. Projects were keen to point out that the pandemic should not diminish the ambition of the YPP programme, even as the format continues to adapt.

## 5. Outcomes for partners, schools and communities

### **Youth Performance Partnerships intended outcomes:**

*Schools and cultural organisations improve their abilities to engage broad and diverse participants and audiences;*

*LCEPs gain better understanding about cross-sector partnership and working is significantly extended;*

*Communities (i.e. schools, families and broad publics) and young people feel better connected to their locality through high quality performance experiences*

**Intended impact:** *Partnerships between schools and cultural organisations are improved and further partnership work is catalysed (specifically via LCEPs); Systems change in ways of working between education, cultural and other sectors*

By the end of the first year of the programme:

- Project partners and artists/ practitioners reported significant improvement in trust and partnership working
- Provision of opportunities for young people to engage in performing arts locally has improved. However, practices and tools to engage young people, particularly from challenging circumstances are yet to be strengthened.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has played a catalytic role in facilitating more regular interactions and shared vision among partners

- Despite an increased sense of understanding of the value of cultural education and a strong focus on supporting students wellbeing among schools, appetite and capacity for schools to host physical YPP activities remain uncertain.
- Limited data were available at the writing of this report to assess the experiences of the audiences and community members. However, projects have been proactive in reaching out to the communities and reconfiguring how they can benefit communities in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This section examines the emerging outcomes of the Youth Performance Partnerships on project partners, this includes institutional partners as well as artists and practitioners hired to deliver the projects, and schools. Data were drawn from a baseline partner survey conducted between April – September 2019, end-of-year survey responses from partners of With Flying Colours (Plymouth), artists and practitioners from #ThisisDerby Reimagine (Derby), observations from project evaluators, as well as insights from the peer learning and exchange session held in August 2020.

### 5.1 Partners

#### **Trust and partnership working showed significant improvement by the end of Year 1 activities.**

Feedback from partners and artists/practitioners from the Plymouth and Derby projects showed that trust and partnership working were significantly improved as a result of their engagement with the YPP activities.

Figure 6 shows that a net 83%<sup>4</sup> of partners and artists/practitioners agreed that as a result of the YPP, they trusted other organisations and professionals more

<sup>4</sup> Net agreement indicates the total proportion who agreed or strongly agreed with a statement *minus* those who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

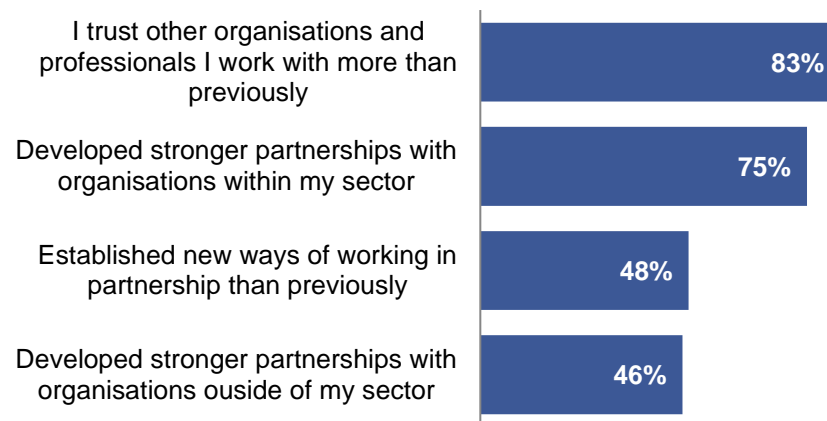
than previously; a net 75% agreed that they have developed stronger partnerships with organisations *within* their sector. A net 48% of partners and artists/practitioners agreed that they have established new ways of working in partnership than previously and a net 46% felt they developed stronger partnerships with organisations outside of their sector.

Despite a relatively limited sample, these emerging outcomes are encouraging in the context of a low level of trust and partnerships reported at baseline, where partners reported a low level of trust between the cultural and education sectors (net positive rate of -9%) and indicated a clear desire to develop better ways of working through the YPP.

Other qualitative data gathered from various sources also confirmed the improved trust and partnerships as a result of the YPP. These comments suggested that YPP provided a platform for disparate organisations across different sectors in the city to work together on a shared vision, allowing sharing of work streams and contacts, and presenting itself as an exemplar of cross-sector working.

“ It has been really useful to gain an understanding of how the different partners contribute to the wider arts agenda across the city, it has raised awareness of different initiatives and opportunities and required us all to think of how what we can do can contribute to the enrichment of young people's lives through art. (Partner of With Flying Colours)

**Figure 6 YPP partners and artists/practitioners' feedback on partnerships working from end-of-year survey (net positive agreement)**



Source: BOP Consulting (2020) (from top to bottom: n=23, 28, 23, 28, Derby and Plymouth projects only)

While the experiences of the partnerships were positive overall, there was a small incidence of partners' feedback indicating the project management being slightly opaque, for example, partners were not clear about their role within the project, felt they were being pushed to the periphery, and confusion around the project staff furlough situation during the lockdown period.

**YPP improved the provision of opportunities for young people to engage in performing arts locally. Practices and tools to engage young people, particularly from challenging circumstances are yet to be strengthened.**

Against the baseline where partners perceived a deficit in the number of opportunities for local young people to engage in performing arts activities (net positive rate of -69%) and a lack of community understanding about the value of performance (net positive rate of -69%), by the end of YPP first-year activities, a net 75% of project partners and artists/practitioners agreed that there were



more opportunities for local young people to engage in performing arts activities than before the project. Project partners and artists/practitioners also agreed that they could engage with a broader range of young people than they would have otherwise (43% net positive rate).

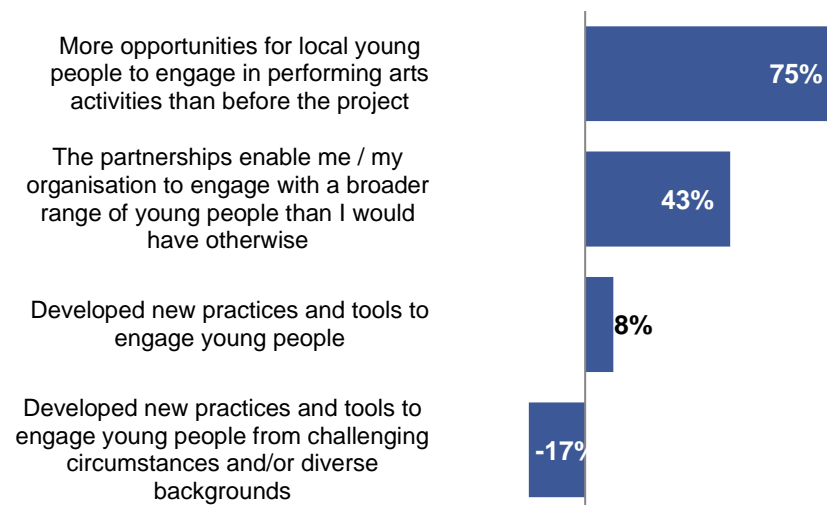
These positive developments were not so strongly matched with improvements in practices and tools to engage young people. As shown in Figure 7, only 8% (net) of partners and artists/practitioners felt they have developed new practices and tools to engage young people; the net positive rate dropped to -17% when asked about engaging young people from challenging circumstances and/or diverse backgrounds.

Although these findings are indicative given the limited sample, feedback from artists and practitioners involved in the programmes suggested that more preparation time with other artists/practitioners who are co-delivering the sessions and more briefing on the full project with artists in advance would help improve the delivery of the activities.

in the findings from partners and practitioners are contrary to the accounts of projects themselves. In the first peer learning and exchange session at the beginning of the programme, project partners already saw the development of practitioners' skills and capacity to work with young people, many of whom were from challenging circumstances, through a co-creation process, as one of the success factors for their projects. This indicates that perhaps further work is needed across projects to respond specifically to the needs of practitioners and

Project teams have expressed keen interests through various peer learning and exchange sessions to learn from each other and share good practices and tools. Part of this programme evaluation would be to identify and capture good practices. We recommended that ACE to continue to play a role in documenting and sharing good practices beyond the YPP programme.

**Figure 7 Feedback from YPP partners and artists/practitioners on engagement opportunities and practices.**



Source: BOP Consulting (2020) (from top to bottom n=28, 28, 12, 18, Derby and Plymouth projects only)

**COVID-19 pandemic played a catalytic role in facilitating more regular interactions and shared vision among partners**

Reflections from project teams in the recent peer learning session suggested a step-change happening as a result of the pandemic that may not have happened otherwise.

Various projects noted that the lockdown has enabled more regular communications with the LCEP partners outside of the cultural sector. The urgency and the sudden change in circumstance have given the LCEP a strong reason to break out from the business-as-usual model and an encouragement to try out new formats to deliver the activities.

“ Throughout lockdown we have seen development in relationships on the education side of the LCEP. Have been having weekly meetings that were taking place once every 4-6 weeks previously. The increased frequency of these meetings has enabled relationships to build and to see where different parties each can make different contributions to supporting young people. (YPP project lead)

Moreover, the pandemic has had a ‘recalibration effect’ in terms of the capacity to engage young people across project partners. Partners of LCEPs felt they are now working in a similar position following lockdown and working towards a common purpose, allowing them to look for solutions together.

## 5.2 Schools

As a result of the pandemic, no survey data was collected from schools and teachers on their feedback on the Year 1 YPP activities.

### **Stronger understanding of the value of cultural education**

Throughout the lockdown period, project partners noted an increased sense of understanding of the importance of cultural education among schools. Although not attributed directly to the impact of the programme, project partners see this as an opportunity to cement stronger relationships with schools and reinforce the role that culture can have in supporting young people and their needs. That said, schools are still in different positions on when to host any face-to-face sessions amid the ongoing pandemic.

The digital offer produced by the YPP projects during the lockdown period provided new resources and opportunities for schools and their pupils to engage with the programme. While some project’s lockdown activities focused on in-depth engagement with a small group of participants (e.g. #ThisisDerby Reimagine), other projects have created showcases and learning materials that have democratised access, allowing YPP to reach schools and participants in areas which they had not previously. In Croydon’s YPP where they have

produced a lot of learning materials online during the lockdown period, any schools in the borough were able to refer their pupils to the digital programme.

“ Thinking about co-creation and self-directed learning, our programme is adapting to offer young people lots of things digitally and they can then choose to engage with what they want.

## 5.3 Communities

In the first year of the YPP programme, over 3,580 audience members were engaged in 118 performance activities. Very limited data were available at the writing of this report to assess the experiences of the audiences and community members. However, projects have been proactively reaching out to the communities and reconfiguring how they can benefit communities in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the limited data on this area of impact, we will liaise with project evaluators to ensure the next year’s evaluation will capture stronger evidence collected from this stakeholder group wherever possible.

## 5.4 Looking ahead: flexibility in working with partners and schools to deliver impact of the YPP

It was unsurprising that in all projects partners are expecting to maintain a mixed model of delivery in the coming school year between online and physical activities.

The pivot to digital delivery during the lockdown period has been largely successful in terms of understanding the appetite of different groups of young people to engage online, building the project’s digital capacity, and incorporating the legacy from the digital activities to Year 2 activities.

It is expected that YPP projects will have to tailor their activities with different schools based on their needs and preferences in engaging physically or

digitally. While the aspirations for the programme remain the same among the project partners, projects need to be flexible in looking for different ways to deliver the project.

With the new model of project delivery, projects will need to rethink their partnerships with some partners or artist/practitioners to find the best fit within their programme of activities, bringing in artists/practitioners at different times of the project to deliver according to their strengths. For example, during the lockdown projects noticed that some artists/practitioners were stronger in delivering online activities and preparing online materials than others, and others were better at engaging artists/ practitioners within their communities to deliver activities. This ongoing matching of artists and practitioners to adapted activities in each setting should remain a priority for project co-ordinators.

## 6. Summary and recommendations

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on YPP programme activities and on evaluation data and approaches.

Given that the first part of the academic year (i.e. September to December 2019) was generally given to projects establishing themselves, confirming their offers with partners and schools and consulting with young people on proposed activities, there were only a few short months of activities being delivered as planned before the onset of the pandemic.

Projects have shown innovation and flexibility in their response to the pandemic and have largely excelled at transferring a range of activities and support online. As discussed throughout the report this has, in some cases, led to new positive engagement opportunities for young people, parents and partners.

### Children and young people outcomes

While there is a lack of direct data from young people at this stage, the accounts of practitioners and partners indicate that there are clear positive developments taking place, particularly in relation to enabling young people to make creative decisions and co-create project designs and outputs (i.e. increased agency), and in learning the technical skills required for high-quality performance and performance-making.

### Partnerships and practices

Year 1 findings are particularly strong in relation to the YPP projects fostering new and effective partnerships with schools, artists and other cultural organisations. This is especially significant given the additional challenges of the pandemic and the period of this evaluation. It seems that YPP is enabling new partnerships as well as strengthening existing ones and this will only serve to make the adaptations necessary in the coming year even more impactful.

Findings are less strong that partners and practitioners feel secure that new practice is being established or that this is particularly helpful for them to support children and young people experiencing additional challenges.

### Projects peer learning and exchanges

The peer learning and exchange activities taking place between the five projects appear to be valued and useful, particularly in relation to the pandemic response and resilience. Projects would like to see this develop further into a more systematic exchange between participants themselves in order that they can feel part of something greater than the local programmes.

Overall, while the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions continue to necessitate programme adaptations at the activity level, it is not felt that major revisions are required to the logic model at this stage and that anticipated outcomes and impacts can still be met. The gaps in the evaluation data observed at this stage (and largely anticipated given the implications of the pandemic) are addressed in the recommendations below.

### Recommendations for projects

- Work with local evaluators to review data collection approaches with participants, parents and schools and ensure that proposed methods are complementary to changes in project delivery. Prioritise methods (quantitative and qualitative) that communicate the participant's experiences across the programme.
- Plan all activities within a mixed-model framework (i.e. online and face to face) and consider how to best facilitate online mentoring and support for young people who are strongly invested in the project but maybe facing additional barriers or challenges.
- Rethink plans for engaging audiences and communities given the new restrictions in public space and ongoing venue closures and adaptations.
- Approach schools with your updated offers, particularly engaging in conversations around how the YPP programme can provide an opportunity for pupils to develop their creative capacities, and potentially wellbeing, in response to a challenging historical moment
- Continue to record what seems to be working in co-creation and enabling participants' voice. Formalise accounts of good practice and share with YPP and other peers

- Consider how to support practitioners and partners to develop their practice with young people experiencing additional challenges. As with approaches to co-creation, formally record accounts of good practice, and exchange these with partners and peers to be iteratively developed and made relevant to different contexts

#### **Recommendations for ACE/DCMS**

- To support projects to continue to be adaptive to unknown and changing restrictions and opportunities enable as much flexibility as possible in budget management and spending restrictions (e.g. carry-over between years)

- Consider resourcing a national participant network in some form. This will most likely be digital in the first instance, but could provide a useful way for participants, practitioners and artists to share practice more broadly and celebrate/promote project activities and achievements across broader audiences and publics.

# **BOP** Consulting

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