

Case
study **1**

CREATIVE
PEOPLE
AND
PLACES

Working with artists through lockdown

Case Study written by [Kathryn Welch](#)

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning is a short series of Case Studies that explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CPP projects and how they responded. Each of the five Case Studies will explore a different theme and we will publish an accompanying reflective blog on our website, www.creativepeopleplaces.org, in December 2020.

The 33 Places funded by the Arts Council England's Creative People and Places (CPP) programme are no strangers to working hand in hand with their local community. Nonetheless, lockdown created an immediate and profound shift - both in the needs facing their communities and in Places' ability to respond. Many Places saw their established community networks reorientate their energy to focus on immediate and basic needs. Simultaneously, their networks of artists and creative collaborators faced new and frightening challenges, as work fell away and income dropped or disappeared overnight.

In order to support more people to take a lead in choosing, creating and taking part in arts and culture

experiences in their local area, Places needed to rethink how they could work alongside artists, as well as with communities. Artist and talent development is not - in itself - a feature of the Programme, but the process of co-creation with communities often sees CPPs working closely with artists to develop their practice and deliver on community decision-making. Lockdown challenged many Places to test new ways of working with artists to continue to achieve communities' creative aspirations.

As the first phase of the COVID-19 crisis passes, and Places take a moment to catch their breath, we've been reflecting on the process of working with artists over the past six months:

1 Flexible opportunities are needed to cope with fast-changing environments

The early phases of lockdown saw Places navigating a fast-moving, uncertain environment. There was a need for Places to rethink delivery plans and to reconsider how their funding might best be used to support communities. For Places typically accustomed to designing projects slowly, collaboratively, and in consultation with partners, the rapidly-changing context made this approach more difficult. In the early days, challenges arose from making plans - only to see the national context change within days and render those plans unfeasible.



Click Therapy: Lockdown and Easing MarketPlace



Click Therapy: Lockdown and Easing
MarketPlace

“There was a real contrast between the speed society was changing, and the time it takes to work in an ethical way alongside communities”

Seed, CPP Sedgemoor

Many Places sought to balance a thoughtful, responsible and co-created ethos with the need to move at speed - to provide nourishing creative activity in a time of uncertainty and unhappiness, to support the local creative ecosystem and to sustain relationships with local people. In an environment where the rules changed day by day, as well as week to week, CPPs’ deep understanding of their communities and adaptable approach to delivery meant that many were well placed to respond.

“We had to think on our feet - to scrap the plan we had, and change course completely.”

Right Up Our Street, CPP
Doncaster

“We were looking to support a possibility - not a predetermined outcome or impact”

Heart of Glass, CPP St Helens



2 Embracing uncertainty enabled meaningful collaboration between artists, communities and Places

In the uncertain context of lockdown, CPPs reached out to help artists to reimagine how they could work with and for communities. Many Places developed microcommissions with flexible terms, focused on helping artists to explore, adapt and test their practice. Others offered commissions focused on research and development, designed to create thinking space, or to incubate new ideas – creating new spaces and building connections to help artists engage meaningfully with communities.

MarketPlace, CPP Fenland and Forest Heath, designed a two-part process that invited artists to come forward with ‘Inklings’ - a germ of an idea - and receive support to work



in a collaborative way with the CPP team, community members and other artists. This approach allowed money to reach artists quickly, whilst retaining the co-creation ethos and allowing time and space for the whole team to learn to navigate the new national context.

“They’ve been supportive in that they support the process of making connections, having conversations, and exploring how things might work - which is a tricky old business. They’ve been very patient, very keen, very clear, very supportive”

Stuart Mullins, supported by
MarketPlace, CPP Fenland
and Forest Heath

Investing directly in local artists brought new partnerships and stakeholders to the table, as artists drew on their local connections to realise their creative aspirations. This approach recognises artists as community members, rather than as external agents delivering for communities.

“It’s interesting because a number of the ‘inklings’ projects have changed quite a lot since the initial conversation we had with the artist - simply because the environment changed, week by week. The level of flexibility has been massive, but it’s a really interesting way to work, it’s been really creatively exciting”

MarketPlace, CPP Fenland and Forest Heath

“The opportunity with MarketPlace came at just the right time, giving me the chance to focus on a short, community-focused project, flex my creative muscles, and work collaboratively with two musicians to build a series of workshops based around music and creativity.”

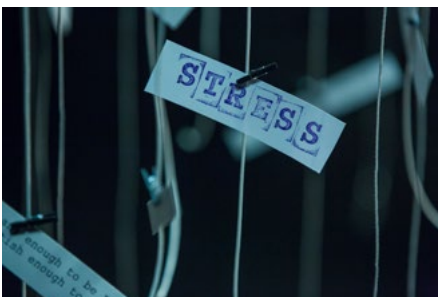
Leanne Moden, Poet and Workshop Facilitator, supported by MarketPlace, CPP Fenland and Forest Heath

The practicalities of designing a sensitive and proportionate process of responding to a commission was emphasised by all Places. It was seen as a vital factor in creating the circumstances that made it possible for artists to come forward at such a challenging time. Keeping the scale

of commissions relatively modest was felt to have enabled more artists to respond, without the pressure of a larger project.

“We needed to offer things [to artists] that weren’t just a promise”

Creative People & Places Hounslow



Above: **Identity Crisis** Take Be Told Theatre. Photo: Cristina Schek

3 Developing artist relationships is a long-term investment in the future of a place

Many Places recognised that success in their long-term vision ultimately relies on a diverse and thriving creative ecosystem - one where communities can partner with artists who understand the local context, who can tailor their work to suit the local environment, and who have genuine and trusting relationships with local communities. This can be especially pertinent to CPP Places, which are often affected by locally-born artists moving away to progress their careers.

“When we were locked down all of my work - like everybody else - virtually stopped overnight. And then

I saw a callout from Right Up Our Street in Doncaster looking at new ways to work during lockdown. I work all over and I live in Doncaster, but I don't work in Doncaster a great deal - and I really want to work in Doncaster more. So it kind of felt like a perfect opportunity”

Wayne Sables, Quarantine Creates, supported by Right Up Our Street, CPP Doncaster

In Hounslow, microcommissions prioritised local artists - helping them to develop their skills at working in a socially-engaged way, and to explore how their lived understanding of the hyper-local environment might help them create work that was especially relevant. During lockdown, of course, locally-based artists had the additional advantage of being able to feasibly (and legally) deliver 'real life' creative opportunities in local communities - whilst those artists based further afield were more reliant on an exclusively digital offer.

4 Trusting relationships can maximise impact in a crisis

At Heart of Glass, CPP St Helens, existing warm connections with local authorities and arts organisations made it possible to work quickly - and to realise partnerships in new ways - to maximise the support available to artists in the early phases of lockdown. An initial commitment of money from the CPP toward artist microcommissions was quickly matched by local partners. The nimble, responsive approach of the CPP enabled a distinctive and sizable commitment to be collaboratively agreed, and the scale expanded from 10 to 51 commissions within just a few days. Furthermore, the existing good reputation of the CPP enabled them to negotiate a trusting, light touch approach to the awarding of microcommissions that enabled a growing project to be managed within the constraints of furlough and lockdown.

“We've all been able to be more equal, more honest, more sensitive. We've all been a bit more human”

MarketPlace, CPP Fenland and Forest Heath



Above: The Council of Kindness meeting, part of project **Donctopia**, led by Richard Hurford, Sharon Richards and Andrew Loretto. Right Up Our Street

5 CPP Places bring a radically generous approach to their partnerships with artists

“It’s about how best to deploy our funding to enable as much work as possible to go forward”

Right Up Our Street, CPP Doncaster

Places described a real sense of care toward the artists they worked alongside, and in many cases went to additional efforts to help sustain their initiatives to help them continue to connect with communities over the long term. At Right Up Our Street, Project Leads collated and shared data, write ups, transcripts and case studies with funded artists, with the



Above: August Charles performing his debut single **Take Me Away**, part of project **All Eyes on Culture**, led by artist Charlotte Felters. Right Up Our Street



Left: Stills from two film-vignettes created by artist James Locker, part of project **Thoughts Formed**, Right Up Our Street

specific intention of helping them present a strong case to funders for enabling them to continue to develop the approaches and initiatives begun during lockdown. As many artists they partnered with were relatively new to working in a socially-engaged way, many Project Leads found that they could offer practical and impactful support in areas such as evaluation, data collection, consent and collaborative working.

“Working relationships with artists have felt more intimate, including greater need to check in on how people are on a personal level in the context of lockdown”

Museums Northumberland bait, CPP South East Northumberland

Whilst this approach is at the heart of much community development activity, its application in an arts context is distinctive. It sees commissioners - those traditionally in a position of power - bring a humble and pragmatic approach to making the best investment in a community as a whole.

“It’s started a train of thought about the processes we use in the future”

Creative People & Places Hounslow

6 The future will bring different challenges again

The reflective, learning-oriented approach of CPP Places has enabled them to test new ways facilitating relationships between artists, communities, audiences and participants. That said, we should be cautious of drawing simple conclusions from unprecedented times, and thoughtful reflection with Project Leads also identified the challenges and limitations of applying learning in a blanket way to the new circumstances we will no doubt face in the months ahead.

“We should be talking about testing, piloting, starting things, not ‘achieving big change’”

Creative Scene, CPP West Yorkshire

Whilst the crisis may have seen important and necessary changes to working practices, the ethos at the heart of CPP Places - to enable communities to realise the creative activity they most want to see in their area - has been at the heart of it all. As such, Places are emerging from lockdown with new insights about the role that artists can play in building deep and trusting local relationships, generating ideas with and alongside communities, and adapting flexibly to deliver creative activity in uncertain, fast-moving and difficult circumstances.



Bedroom Isolation Self Portrait with Brother Artist: Keren Sequeira

Watch this story in the accompanying short video created by video editor Eirene Wallace.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk

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www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places/creative-people-and-places-projects

¹ This only includes physical engagements - previous figures may also include digital engagements. Figure subject to change as data validation is still ongoing.

² Calculated by The Audience Agency using postcode data for 2017-19.

³ As classified by The Audience Agency's [Audience Spectrum](#) segmentation system.



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Case
study 2

CREATIVE
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The role of digital engagement in place-based projects

Case Study written by [Kathryn Welch](#)

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As COVID-19 - and the resultant lockdown - forced us into physical distance from one another, digital tools and online engagement became key to maintaining connection, communication and friendship. For many CPP Places, what followed was a steep learning curve - an intense live experiment in the online delivery of creative projects. The urgent drive to move engagement online has been an opportunity to investigate the role that digital engagement can play in place-based projects, and to explore the factors that can best enable effective online delivery. We've been looking back on what's been learned through this intense period for digital engagement:



Cubes Example - Small Contentments - 6 Million+

1 Moving projects online brought new opportunities for reach and engagement

Creative Scene (CPP for the West Yorkshire towns of Dewsbury, Batley, Mirfield, Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike), supported Small Contentments, a project by local organisation 6 Million+ to mark the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. In place of meeting in person, project participants used a Whatsapp group, supplemented by hand-delivered creative packs and socially distanced artist visits in gardens. The Whatsapp group was conceived to support the project participants to share their experiences and check-in with one another. However, it quickly developed into a trusting, intimate and supportive space that the group could actively shape to meet their needs. The Whatsapp format was embraced by people of all ages (including one holocaust survivor aged 96, and those for whom English was not a first language), and enabled group members to support each other in ways - such as throughout the night - that would have been very difficult to realise without a digital element to the project.

“I’ve found out that we’re all keen gardeners, and some people cook the most wonderful food. I’ve been able to enjoy the process, enjoy the conversations on WhatsApp, and see what everyone else is doing”

Karen, Small Contentments participant

Project participants in Small Contentments already had a longstanding connection with 6 Million+, so came to the project with trust and relationships already in place. This is likely to have made the move to a digital environment considerably more straightforward. The creation of a film at the end of the project offered a further opportunity for participants to share, reflect and celebrate the connections forged via the project - especially important in marking the project’s conclusion in a time when the participants could not come together in person.

“For three months to stay in the house, it’s very, very hard. Hopefully, it will come day when we can meet each other face to face”

Jasmina, Small Contentments participant

For East Durham Creates, the Fishes and Wishes project combined a Facebook-based project with public art installations in the local environment. The art installations attracted public interest and intrigue (*“Can you go viral if you’re just in one place? We went locally viral”*), drawing people into a Facebook group where they were supported to make and share their own creations, and to interact with a story as it developed. The digital element was key in engaging with the community in a socially-distant manner, and it enabled those who were shielding - and some people from beyond the local area - to participate.

2 Digital engagement has shaped community consultation and co-production

Community consultation and local co-production are inherent to the structure of CPP Places, and the move to digital spaces has shaped that element of delivery too. Whilst some CPPs found that their regular community participants and decision-makers were less available during lockdown, others found that digital events helped them to connect with new people. In some cases, for example, online meetings have been found to be more accessible than their real-world equivalents, enabling participation to be more easily juggled around work, caring commitments, disability or shielding:

“Decision making meetings have shifted very successfully online with no obvious barriers to participation, although we are very much aware of digital exclusion in the borough. We must continue to offer this as an option long term as it enables the involvement of a range of people who struggle to leave home for meetings”

Creative People & Places Hounslow

As lockdown progressed, a gap was observed in some cases between those who quickly became familiar (and then increasingly fatigued by) Zoom calls, and those who were new to the technology and took longer to develop a familiarity with online meetings. In those cases, managing



Top: Artists with King of Fishes.
Above: Fishes and Wishes

the very different skills and energy of individuals added a challenging additional layer to the successful facilitation of online meetings. Whilst Places are looking forward to being able to reconnect in person for decision-making meetings, where it can be easier to create deeper or more personal connections, many will be looking to incorporate digital elements into their planning and

community engagement processes for the future.

“It think what it [lockdown] has given us is a range of options, so that people can be part of things in future in a way that best suits them”

Creative Scene

3 Digital exclusion was a key concern

The move to digital engagement was not always straightforward. As delivery across a range of sectors (including schooling) rushed online, CPPs were extremely sensitive to the likelihood of digital exclusion for many of their community members. The demand on many families' limited digital capacity was high, and many CPPs were conscious of not adding to that burden, nor of reinforcing the exclusion already experienced by families with limited resources. In those cases, a mixed delivery model - with physical elements running alongside the virtual - were key.

“We’ve never relied solely on digital because as an area we have a higher than average level of digital exclusion as well as issues such as data poverty or

in many households lack of access and/or shared devices. I think it’s all about adjusting and working across lots of different platforms and particularly in places where there are high levels of digital exclusion and/or data poverty/ limited access then you have to consider digital as one output but not the be all and end all”

East Durham Creates

Digital exclusion is understood by many Places as a complex and nuanced issue - not simply a case of whether or not internet access is

available, but also encompassing issues around digital literacy, access (or not) to different types of device, concerns around personal safety, confidence to show what your home looks like, and access issues for people who struggle with their speech or have English as a second language.

“[There are] some people with issues feeling safe online and being able to have the camera off, or being self conscious about people seeing them and seeing where they live or seeing themselves on screen”

Ideas Test



Above: Creative Scene. Above right: Small Contentments - 6 Million+. Top centre and right: Fishes and Wishes.

4 Attracting (and maintaining) public interest can be challenging

In [East Durham Creates](#), one project encouraged local families to create a model village from recycled materials - offering a series of 30 online videos to coach families through the creative process in their own homes. The videos were distributed by email and are now hosted on the CPP website, where they are an attractive and high-quality collection. However, the Project Lead noted that the series asked a lot of participants' commitment at a time when lives were unpredictable and demands on energy felt high. The email distribution format (chosen to target local families) offered very few opportunities for two-way engagement, interaction or community-building. This echoes the experience of [Museums Northumberland bait](#), who observed that this format *"can feel like 'one-way traffic' with limited feedback on how people have used video step by step guides"*.

At Creative Scene, the Batley and Spennings Youth Theatre company moved their summer school online. The young participants benefited from access to West End Theatre professionals - who were able to contribute a digital offer more easily than an in-person summer school. However, the Project Leads also noticed that it was harder to reach those young people who may have tagged along with a friend to an in-person event (*"the value of positive peer pressure"*) but who lacked the confidence, motivation or inclination to join a digital offer.

5 Real-live creative activity often brings unexpected positive impacts

The move to digital during lockdown also offered an opportunity to consider the indirect impacts of creative activity when it is delivered live in communities, and to question what may have been missing as these events moved online.

In [Creative People & Places Hounslow](#), a popular series of creative activity takes place regularly on Hounslow High Street and in Felton Town Centre. During lockdown, these dance classes moved online to Facebook Live - attracting very high numbers of participants, some international attendance, and a diverse audience. In contrast to the live events, however, there was relatively little opportunity for the team to understand the nuance of engagement (who came along, what brought them there, and what they got out of it) when compared to the opportunity simply to stand at the outskirts of a physical event and observe. The energy and excitement of public events can attract passers-by and spark conversations with those who wouldn't typically choose to attend a creative event. Equally, the energy and fun of these events can enliven an area, influence people's perceptions of their area, and bring joy and cheer to those who are simply passing by.

As some lockdown restrictions begin to be lifted, Creative Scene have recently returned to in-person creative events on Dewsbury Market - noticing the impromptu



Artist Clare with her pack from 6 Million+

conversations, engagement with passers-by and chance encounters that deepen and widen connections with communities. These passing moments, that often happen on the sidelines of a creative event or with those who hadn't planned to participate in any formal way, can be absolutely at the heart of community creativity - but have proved enormously difficult to replicate online.

Similarly, [Museums Northumberland bait](#) noticed that it can be less easy, or simply not possible for facilitators to 'read the room' online in the same way as for live group activity. In one digital project led via a closed Facebook Group, they noted that whilst everyone in the group had watched posts, not everyone had chosen to share their own work.

"It takes a lot of confidence to share online, even in a closed group"

[Museums Northumberland bait](#)

6 Adapting delivery to suit new contexts is at the heart of the CPP model of delivery

A number of Project Leads observed that it is in the very nature of the CPP model to deliver creative activity wherever it needs to happen, and to adapt delivery to work wherever people are - whether in a car park, a town hall, an open field or - this year in particular - online. CPPs translated their experience - consciously or otherwise - of adapting their work to different contexts to focus their energy on creating safe, engaging, welcoming and inclusive online spaces.

“In many ways, CPPs are perfectly designed to meet a crisis like this. We adapt to changing circumstances, we’re flexible, and we adapt to deliver what the community needs”

East Durham Creates

“CPPs always work outside of conventional arts infrastructure anyway - the work always happens where it needs to be. The town is our arts centre and we can take solace from that - we have expertise to bring and to share”

Heart of Glass, St Helens

“It’s the safeness of the space that is the thing - whether digital or in person”

Creative Scene

COVID-19 and lockdown has stimulated a period of intense digital delivery, experimentation and learning in CPP Places this year. The accelerated pace of change has enabled progress in digital engagement that may have taken years to achieve under usual circumstances, and brought to the fore useful learning around in attracting and maintaining attention online, building deep and wide connections, and reaching those who may not consider creative activity to be for them.

In many cases, a hybrid model of delivery - where some elements were delivered safely in person, and supported by a digital platform for further engagement - was found to combine the best of both worlds. In-person activity offers deep personal connections and can better reach those who may not typically participate, including those with limited digital access. In tandem, a digital offer has been effectively used to help more people to get involved, to invite participants and artists to work collaboratively, and support new leaders to emerge. Looking ahead, Places will continue to explore how best to combine the flexibility of digital delivery with the very particular sparkle of real life delivery - supporting the CPP’s distinctive approach to locally-led and place-based creative activity.

The action learning mindset that is at the heart of CPP delivery has helped Places to adapt nimbly to the intense digital learning that’s taken place this year. Places have embraced the learning gathered from such an intense period online, and will use it to shape and inform their future delivery - both on and off line.



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Case
study 3

CREATIVE
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Touch, connection and creativity

Case Study written by [Kathryn Welch](#)

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Of all the restrictions COVID-19 has imposed on our lives, loss of touch and physical contact came up again and again in interviews with CPP Places. There was talk of the big, fundamental moments in life, such as hugging a grandchild or the traditional last washing of bodies so important in Muslim funeral rites. But we missed small moments of touch too - helping a neighbour over the road, a touch of the arm in conversation, the reassuring contact of sitting side by side with a friend. In conversation with CPP Places and some of the artists and communities they support, we've been exploring the role of creativity in supporting, overcoming and capturing this profound experience of 2020.

1 Creativity helps us find new ways of showing kindness to others

In this context of distance and disconnect from one another, Places noted the desire for making connections in other ways. At a community and neighbourhood level, people used creativity to find moments of real connection with those around them, and to demonstrate their love and care for one another. In Rotherham, CPP Flux Launched Sparks of Joy - a process for people to nominate their neighbours for a short one-off performance on their street - such as a brass band, community choir or circus:

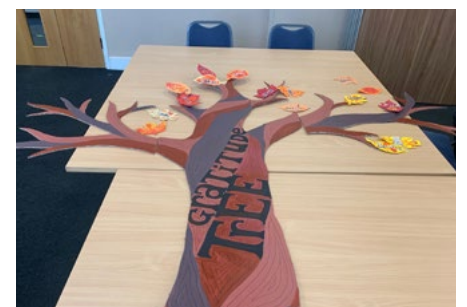
“We put a post out through all the Facebook groups - we explained what Sparks of Joy was going to be about. And we got inundated. We might’ve gone too far. It’s ridiculous. But it’s incredible. And people have come back and nominated each other. No one’s got their hand up and gone, I need it”

Jude, Flux (Rotherham)

Despite the very real problems people were facing - with jobs, housing and food, as well as with health - the community absolutely recognised the need to find alternative ways to build a sense of connection to one another, and the role that creativity can play in overcoming physical distance:

“There is a head teacher who leads on creativity. We had a call with her and she’s like, there’s a bridge across our primary school so that the kids are safe over a road. Why don’t we put the kids on there, they can sing a song, and parents can stand in the park. And it’s a simple idea where people can feel safe, but spread some positivity with each other”

Jude, Flux (Rotherham)

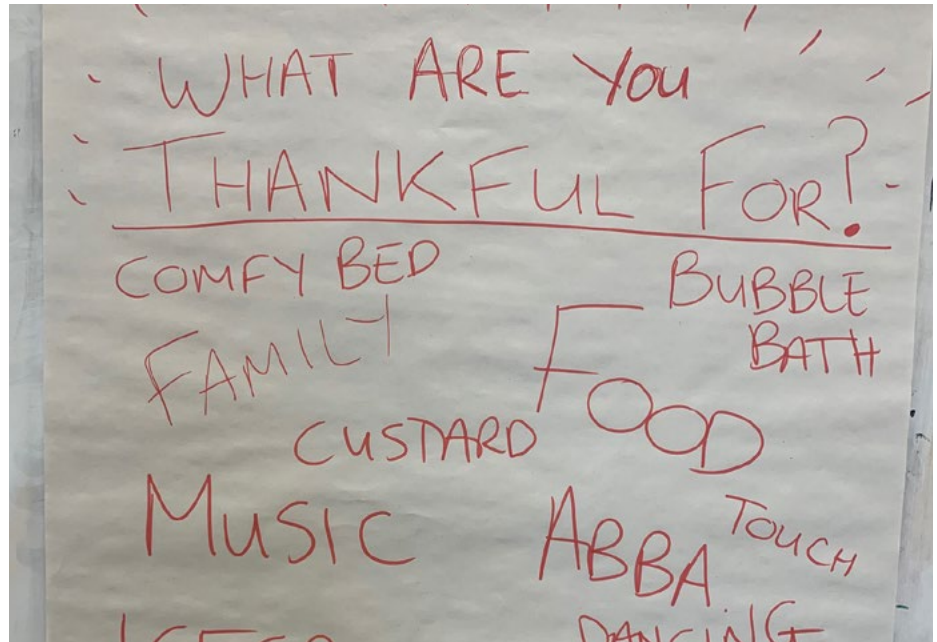


Creative project wearing PPE with SENSE, Rotherham

2 Communities used creativity to find new ways to mark - and record - key moments

Although COVID restrictions have impacted us all throughout the year, the physical distancing restrictions feel particularly acute at key moments in life - births, deaths, weddings and religious occasions. Rooted in a diverse community with a large muslim population, Revoluton Arts in Luton have been considering the impact of this lack of touch throughout Ramandan, as part of a [Wellcome Collection-funded project](#) on touch. To capture the experience of local people observing Ramadan in lockdown conditions, Revoluton Arts created [Ramadan in Lockdown Luton](#): a crowdsourced film compiled from video footage submitted by members of the community, telling their stories through the lens of touch:

“[Before COVID] I often regularly would go to [the] Ramadan tent, and be around muslims from all walks of life, and break our fasts together. It was such a community driven thing. It’s such a special thing, that coming together, which is something we can’t do. And you feel that energy, that warmth, you feel that spirituality. That just doesn’t really seem to feel that visceral in the same way that it normally would”



Creative project wearing PPE with SENSE, Rotherham

“It’s been cooking lots of meals by myself, and times like this when I would look to my mum - to share her recipes and help her and see how she cooks recipes, I’m Googling to see how to make recipes that give me comfort and remind me of home”.

“I’ve been doing this thing where I’ll call home, and at the stroke of sunset, I’ll call my family via Facetime or Whatsapp call, and we’ll break fast together. Although I can’t touch them through the screen, I can at least still see them and hear them - and that means something, it’s better than nothing”.

Here, storytelling gave people an outlet to share their stories, and a means to shine a light on their experiences. The film itself also plays an important archiving role, in capturing a community observing Ramandan through a very particular moment in history:

“It’s the most beautiful archive record reflection of where we’ve just been, you know, from a different creative cultural lens”

[Jenny, Revoluton Arts \(Luton\)](#)

As part of the Touch study, Revoluton Arts and Wellcome Collection co-commissioned award-winning playwright and actor, Sudha Bhuchar, to explore the theme of touch with people in Bury Park. Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s new series the Anatomy of Touch, Sudha noted:

“What was lovely is that I was able to talk to an array of people - very much interested in people of faith, and that whole thing about religion and touch. Through personal stories it’s a chronicle of our times - touch in the time of COVID, if you like”

[Sudha](#)

3 Cooking emerged as an important shared sensory experience

Reflecting on her own family experience of touch, Sudha said:

“My mother was quite shy, she wasn’t a very tactile person. She showed her love in other ways, [such as] through food”

The role of food and cooking as an important tool in creating moments of togetherness through lockdown was common to many conversations with CPP Places. HOME Slough embraced cooking as a really inclusive creative tool - one that can be particularly effective in connecting with people who might not consider themselves traditionally artistic or creative.

“A project that we co-created with our Slough-based community is called Global Cooking Theatre. Every week we bring in a member of our community that comes from a specific culture, and they cook a meal that reminds them of their childhood. We have between 12-20 people on Zoom, and they all spend an hour or so cooking the meal, then after they finish the chef comes back wearing cultural clothes that remind them of their culture, childhood or their other home, and for an hour they share a meal and the stories of that person”

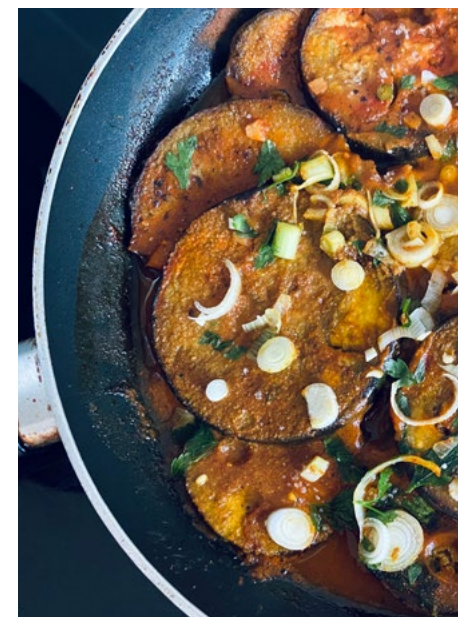
Saad, HOME Slough

Here, cooking provided a moment and an opportunity for people to come together, and to take part in a creative activity that felt side by side with one another. Cooking was an area where people felt confident

to come forward to share their skills and recipes, and one in which a wide array of people could join in and enjoy. For both the participants and chefs of Global Cooking Theatre, though, equally important was the space the project created to talk, share and discuss issues:

“People enjoy the cooking, they enjoy the food, but it’s the conversation - having a moment that you share an experience with people - that is the nearest to what you used to do when we weren’t in confinement. Touch is missing - and that’s important - but people were also missing the shared experience, and the space to have conversations and a space to have a shared purpose - and that’s what Global Cooking Theatre has been able to bring”

Saad, HOME Slough



Global Cooking Theatre food, Home Slough

4 Connection with one another has been vital in light of the Black Lives Matter movement

Lockdown, of course, hasn't been the only notable event of 2020. The Black Lives Matters movement - triggered by the killing of George Floyd in May, shaped the urgency of need for this kind of connection and conversation across communities. This was a key factor for many Places in considering the role of creativity in supporting their communities:

“To be recognised to be seen through a story, I think, is one of the most important things. I mean, what we've seen in the last six months with the Black Lives Matters movement, the toppling of the Colston statue, the pickets outside the art gallery, actually, that's our community saying, listen, see us hear us, we have a stake in our own cultural landscape, and in our storytelling. And actually, we're just going yeah man, you do. And we're listening”

Jenny, Revoluton Arts (Luton)

“We were facing a lot of people who were losing their confidence quite a lot. And the turning point was all the issues that Back Lives Matters brought in, where today it is very difficult to have any discussions about race, about culture, about any of those things which touch

us personally. It's very difficult to have those discussions within the community in a way that doesn't create divide. So we wanted to use cooking and food to bring in those discussions in a way that would increase the confidence of our community”

Saad, HOME Slough

5 For Deaf people, connection through storytelling has been really important

For Creative Black Country, a series of projects led by Deaf creatives brought a different perspective to this need for connection through storytelling. Rinkoo Barpaga, a Deaf stand-up comedian and theatremaker produced a series of [Deaf Stories from the Black Country](#). Rinkoo's project invited Deaf people to share their experience of lockdown, about growing up in the region, their families and their lives, and the particular impact of physical isolation for Deaf people.

“I want to re-engage Deaf people in the Black Country with arts and share the strong traditions of story-telling that are at the heart of Deaf culture. Deaf people tell stories of everyday life with creativity and rich detail”

Rinkoo, [Deaf Stories from the Black Country](#), supported by Creative Black Country

Rinkoo's call out created a rich series of video stories, which highlight the impact of lockdown on Deaf people, and also illustrate the importance of storytelling as a means of outlet, communication and connection:

“Sign language is a beautiful, rich language, meant for 3D, not 2D. Unfortunately, lockdown has meant that we've had to use sign language through screens. 2D was our only option. This was very challenging. It was a huge relief to finally use sign language properly again, and I desperately needed it. Once the pub closed, we all went out and stood under a street light and carried on chatting for hours! That's what the Deaf community is all about”

Sean, [Deaf Stories from the Black Country](#)



Image from 'Made in India' by Rinkoo Barpaga

6 Bringing people back together in person isn't straightforward

Hard as it's been to be physically separate from one another, the continuing restrictions of life under COVID mean that - in many cases - even when we can be together in person, touch is difficult, limited, or missing. In Rotherham, a creative session for a group of disabled adults - run in partnership with SENSE - was profoundly affected by the restrictions to touch:

“We had this [idea that] we’re going to run to this tight timetable - and [it went] out the window. The reality for people with additional needs is that they have not been in contact with many people. They are having to have PPE put on them and not everyone likes it - they don’t like the feel, they don’t like the sound. But it was the only way we could do something that they could do. The artist was really, really good at engaging with the group, she was very prepared. But I just don’t think we realised the time and the energy [we’d need to put] into keeping people safe”

Jude, Flux (Rotherham)



The Touch Commission, Revoluton

7 Conclusion: The role of creativity in times of physical isolation

Touch is a fundamental part of how we relate to one another, how we show our love and care, and how we mark the key moments of life. Deprived of it, communities have used creativity in two ways. Creative moments have enabled us to find connection to our neighbours, to feel part of a community, and to support deep, nourishing conversation. At the same time, creative tools have been an important way for communities to make their voice heard, to share their experience, and to capture for posterity this very distinctive moment in time. Communities all across England have recognised the role of art and creativity in sharing moments of joy, kindness and solidarity with one another, and have harnessed the power of creativity to help maintain and build community bonds through lockdown.



Sudha Bhuchar - commissioned artist, Revoluton

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Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme (CPP) is about more people taking the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in arts and culture experiences in the places where they live. There are 33 projects, each located in a place where people are least likely to engage with arts and culture. Arts Council England have committed £108 million to the programme so far, covering 33 Projects, 33 Places, 30 consortia and 45 local authorities. Since 2013, there have been 4.5 million engagements with the CPP programme¹ and 86% of people who participate in CPP² weren't previously engaging regularly with arts and culture³.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk

www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places/creative-people-and-places-projects

¹ This only includes physical engagements - previous figures may also include digital engagements. Figure subject to change as data validation is still ongoing.

² Calculated by The Audience Agency using postcode data for 2017-19.

³ As classified by The Audience Agency's [Audience Spectrum](#) segmentation system.



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Case
study 4

CREATIVE
AND PEOPLE
PLACES

Basic needs and creativity

Case Study written by [Kathryn Welch](#)

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning is a short series of Case Studies that explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CPP projects and how they responded. Each of the five Case Studies will explore a different theme and we will publish an accompanying reflective blog on our website, www.creativepeopleplaces.org, in December 2020.

The effects of COVID and lockdown starkly highlighted the divisions and inequalities in British society. With lives and health under threat, poor (or no) housing, inadequate food and loss of work meant that many people were struggling to meet even their most basic needs. Essential needs agencies and key workers fought to keep up with demand for food parcels, meet housing needs and provide debt and welfare advice.

Drawing on an earlier conversation with East Durham Creates, who are embedded within a charity (East Durham Trust) providing basic needs services, I was keen to explore how CPP Places had experienced their role in this context. As people struggle to meet their most basic needs, what is the role for creativity in communities?

1 Addressing the immediate and longer term effects of the crisis

Deeply connected to their communities, CPP Places were clear that they had a key role to play in helping people to cope with the effects of lockdown. Just as the impact of the virus for individuals was shaped by social and economic factors, the physical restrictions of lockdown sit side by side with a burgeoning crisis in mental health and emotional wellbeing:

“Art in crisis or art in conflict... I think it’s essential, and I think that’s something we should really hold on to. Whenever there is a crisis - a pandemic, a conflict, an environmental disaster - food is essential, housing is essential, and they come as number 1, but they are not enough. Unless you want to step back at the end of the conflict and look at a society that has

been fed and housed but is completely destroyed emotionally - you need to have art and storytelling and creativity as part of the support that you’re giving to your communities”

Saad, HOME Slough

Looking to the long term effects of the crisis, Places were deeply conscious of the ways that COVID will shape their communities for years to come. The CPP approach of working with, for and alongside communities was viewed as a vital tool in helping Places to cope with, adapt to, and recover from the effects of COVID:

“Arts and creativity are one of the best tools to help people recover, learn, evolve from a crisis. And to do that from a perspective of co-creation means that you increase your chances to succeed in terms of impact in your communities, because they have been part in designing whatever responses you are offering”

Saad, HOME Slough





Scrubs and thank you messages for the NHS, Fylde Coast Scrub Hub, supported by LeftCoast CPP



Above and top left: Scrubs, Fylde Coast Scrub Hub, supported by LeftCoast CPP

2 Creativity as urgently, practically useful

Whilst the focus for CPP Places is typically around finding joy and connectivity through creative activity (Made With Many's goal is 'to surprise, delight and inspire'), it's important to recognise that creative projects can also be deeply, practically useful - especially in a crisis. In Blackpool and Wyre, [LeftCoast CPP established a scrub hub](#) - a network of people sewing scrubs at home for NHS keyworkers. Led by Gillian Wood - theatre costume maker and artist in residence for Fleetwood, local people came together to make, package and deliver homemade scrubs. The

scrub hub gave Gillian a way to connect with the local community, and also offered a chance for people to be useful, to contribute something practical in a time of need, and to find value in dedicating their energy to an absorbing creative activity:

“While the lockdown’s been on, with doing the sewing, the time has absolutely whizzed by. Once I start sewing I just sew and sew - I can be up until 1 o’clock, 2 o’clock in the morning. Once you get the bug everything else goes out the window. I’ve learned a lot; it’s been a challenge for me, because I’ve been doing patterns from scratch. They were appreciated very much by the lady who I did made-to-measure scrubs for.

Everyone’s done an awful lot. It’s been a good contribution that we’ve made. I think it’s been wonderful”

Paula, Fylde Coast Scrub Hub

Reflecting on the wider impact of the Scrub Hub on creativity in the local community, Laura at LeftCoast CPP reflected that the domestic, home-based creativity that is so rich in the region is often undervalued, or not seen as especially skillful or artistic. Projects like the Scrub Hub - meeting a clear and urgent need - elevated domestic skills such as sewing, baking, crochet and quilting and attached a new value to them. In turn, this brought new people into the world of creativity and connection with local creative initiatives, helping drive a renewed sense of pride in skills that reside in the area.



District Liaison Officer Jo Gouldson from Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and Sarah Brown from Made With Many **Made with Many**

3 Partnerships with essential needs agencies took a range of shapes

At the outset of lockdown, the need for safe, secure, adequate housing was high on the political agenda. Simultaneously, the level of reliance on food banks was higher than ever, and specialist food and housing agencies rose to meet these needs. Some CPP Places are already deeply embedded alongside these kinds of essential needs services. Where this was the case, aligning creative opportunities with essential needs support was a well trodden path, made easier by existing relationships and a shared base where everyone mucked-in to help meet rising demand:

“[Based within East Durham Trust] we see day to day the impact of the crisis and understand the impact on their capacity. We could help relieve some of the extra work of adding in arts activities to their packs”

Jess, East Durham Creates.

For other CPP Places, though, the crisis brought about new opportunities and partnerships. All Places were conscious of working sensitively alongside essential needs services at their busiest time, so in many cases responded to requests for creative provision from those on the front line:

“And this was just as homeless people were moved into emergency accommodation. And probably three or four weeks after that, the homeless forum had sorted out some of the basic needs. They were being fed and support

workers were able to go and visit them, the infrastructure there was all in place. And then [the support worker] rang me to say, Helen, they’re really bored”

Helen, Made with Many (Corby & Wellingborough)

Whilst Places such as East Durham Trust have been able to draw on their existing connections to respond quickly and relatively smoothly to the needs of lockdown, the Places without this preexisting local connection have developed intense and mutually beneficial partnerships. Whilst it remains to be seen how these partnerships will develop over the long term, in many cases COVID has illustrated the role of creativity in supporting those at the sharpest end of basic needs challenges, and the potential of working together to provide distraction, escapism and wellbeing support:

“It makes you think why haven’t we worked with food banks before?”

The Cultural Spring, South Tyneside and Sunderland



Volunteer with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service loading up Greetings From...packs as part of the distribution effort **Made with Many**

4 The impact of boredom shouldn't be underestimated

Boredom was a common theme raised and recognised by Places - addressing it was seen as vital in addressing the developing mental health crisis associated with prolonged lockdown. From homeless people newly re-housed in hotel rooms, to families living in cramped conditions with children at home, tensions, stress and boredom combined with the worries about COVID to create a pressing need for distraction. Arts packs - basic materials and activities delivered direct to people's homes - were rolled out by Places all across England to meet this need:



Greetings From art pack **Made with Many**



Michael Phillips from Places for People helping distribute Greetings From... packs on Queensway, **Made with Many**

“For families at the minute, that may have lost income, maybe relied on food banks, a new pack of felt tip pens is not going to be very high up their shopping list. But we all know that if you’ve got kids, they are an invaluable resource. There are real, quite serious mental health problems that are coming out of this pandemic, and there is a real role for creativity to play in that. I think in terms of mental health, [with creative projects] you can kind of get lost in it and let your thoughts go away. And that’s the essential need of it. It’s a little bit of escapism, a little bit of distraction”

Helen, **Made with Many** (Corby & Wellingborough)

And rather than abating as the early months of lockdown passed, Places were conscious of the continued need for support as the long grind of restrictions continue, and as sunny summer days pass into winter:

“We’re very much at a point in this moment in time where we’re past that thing of doing what we can to survive a short lockdown. What we need to be doing is helping our people find a way of living with this and living with it over winter months when it’s cold and wet”

Helen, **Made with Many** (Corby & Wellingborough)



Work by Gary Nicholson of Regeneration NE for The Butterfly Project, supported by The Cultural Spring

5 Creativity is essential in supporting mental health care during the crisis

Places recognised the importance of continuing creative support for those with mental health issues, and people with disabilities that left them more vulnerable to both the virus itself and the effects of loneliness and isolation. Artist Gary Nicholson of [Regeneration NE](#) was supported by The Cultural Spring in Sunderland and South Tyneside to create a series of collaborative online exhibitions, including an exhibition for World Mental Health Awareness Day:

“Before all this chaos ensued, we had two regular weekly meetups. Lots of

people with mental health issues - depression, anxiety and all that sort of thing. So when lockdown happened, we still kept in contact via Facebook Messenger and text and phone calls and what have you... Just trying to keep everyone connected, you know - in the same community spirit - so it wasn't just you were forgotten about and left on your own at home”

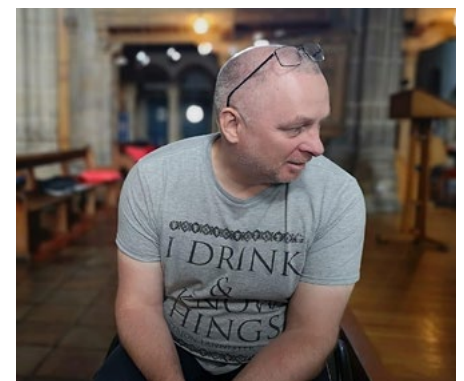
Gary, Regeneration NE, supported by The Cultural Spring

In some cases there were unexpected benefits to this more remote approach. One participant with anxiety found it easier to join online classes than to make it out of the house for in-person events, and some new participants and partnerships had connected with the group as they'd moved online. Gary - who is paraplegic - also spoke about

the benefits to his own wellbeing from the opportunity to support and encourage others to explore their creativity.

“Because they're long days, when you sit at home, bored - there's only so much TV you can watch. But when you're being creative the time goes by really quickly”

Gary, Regeneration NE, supported by The Cultural Spring



Gary Nicholson of Regeneration NE, supported by The Cultural Spring

6 Reassurance and familiarity when we are frightened and uncertain

As well as facing boredom and frustration, there was a significant level of fear and uncertainty experienced by people during lockdown. In Sunderland, The Cultural Spring were especially conscious of the isolation, uncertainty and fear experienced by women asylum seekers and refugees, to whom they were already connected via a partnership with [Sunderland Women's Art Group](#), run by Sangini and Friends of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (FODI). For these women, lockdown compounded what were already frightening circumstances with regard to legal matters around their residency status.

Commissioning a series of online creative workshops, it was seen as especially important to work with two artists - Padma Rao and Miki Z - who were already well known to the women of the art group. This created a sense of familiarity, constancy and reassurance at a time when much else seemed uncertain:

“We wanted the women to find solace from the harsh reality of the increasing impact of the lockdown. The creative activities proved healing and were therapeutic. Over the weeks the women gradually built their self-confidence through learning together. The women supported each other by helping each other with technology, such as



Drawing workshop by Padma Rao and Miki Z, Sangini and FODI women's group, supported by The Cultural Spring

how to operate Zoom, and celebrating each other's creativity by posting artwork online and on social media.”

Padma, artist with Sangini and Friends of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (FODI), supported by The Cultural Spring.

7 There will always be more need - but joy is what makes it all worthwhile

All Places had experienced immediate and desperate changes to the essential needs facing their communities. Food parcels were essential, as were better and more secure housing. As a population, as well as at the local level, we have never been more aware of our health, and our survival. These matters, though, were not the only things on our minds. Even at the height of the crisis, and even for those facing particular challenges in terms of their health or circumstances,

pure survival was not enough. Our communities needed companionship, reassurance, escapism. We urgently sought friendship, distraction, to be useful. For many, creativity was a route to all these needs:

“Our job was to keep going. That was it. All of us looked at our phones, about 100 gazillion times a day. We were looking for news, we were looking for escape. We were looking for friendship, we were looking for comfort. We were looking for something to connect us with each other”

Jenny, Revoluton (Luton)

As days turn to weeks, and weeks into months, creativity is helping communities to sustain their spirit, to connect with each other, to offer and receive support. Even - and perhaps especially - for those in the most difficult of circumstances, creativity can offer a moment of light. When times are tough, creativity offers a moment to lift the spirits, create a smile, and encourage us to spot the glimmers of hope in the most difficult of circumstances. As Saad of HOME Slough concludes, “joy is more than enough”.

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Case
study **5**

CREATIVE
PEOPLE
AND
PLACES

Risk, failure, learning and resilience

Case Study written by [Kathryn Welch](#)

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning

Creative People and Places in Lockdown: responses and learning is a short series of Case Studies that explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CPP projects and how they responded. Each of the five Case Studies will explore a different theme and we will publish an accompanying reflective blog on our website, www.creativepeopleplaces.org, in December 2020.

This case study - coming as it does at the end of a series - offered an opportunity to reflect on some of the themes that had emerged through earlier conversations and interviews with CPP Places. Almost all of those interviews began - in one way or another - with an acknowledgement of the things that haven't happened this year thanks to COVID. Activity has been cancelled, business plans rewritten, recruitment delayed and fruitful partnerships paused or changed.

“The first few weeks of becoming Director was just me, like everybody, getting my own personal bearings. I was revving myself up to go, all guns blazing, have loads of energy, get on top of the business plan. And now suddenly, I’m confined to my living room”

Rebecca, Freshly Greated,
CPP Great Yarmouth

Nonetheless - despite and perhaps because of these conditions - new, interesting and really exciting activity has emerged from the conditions of 2020. As such, we set out to explore the lenses through which Places consider their success or failure, the factors that shape their appetite to risk, and the conditions that allow learning and development to flourish from failure.



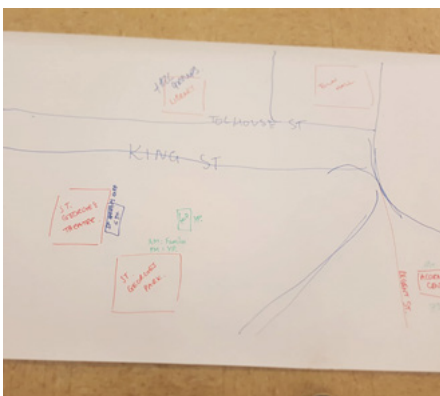
Images from a range of Freshly Greated activity in 2020

1 Success or failure depends on what we're measuring

CPP Places are accustomed to thinking critically about the notions of success and failure. The impact of any project or activity is rarely based on one metric, but is understood to be multi-layered - considering the reach across a community, the quality of creative output and engagement, the nature of partnerships, and the depth of community-led decision-making.

“Action research is absolutely brilliant for this, because we’re not commissioning you to make a piece of sculpture, we’re commissioning you to make the positive impacts that a successful piece of sculpture will have in that place, and for the people that live with it. It’s not about just the end piece - it’s about the impact of the end piece”

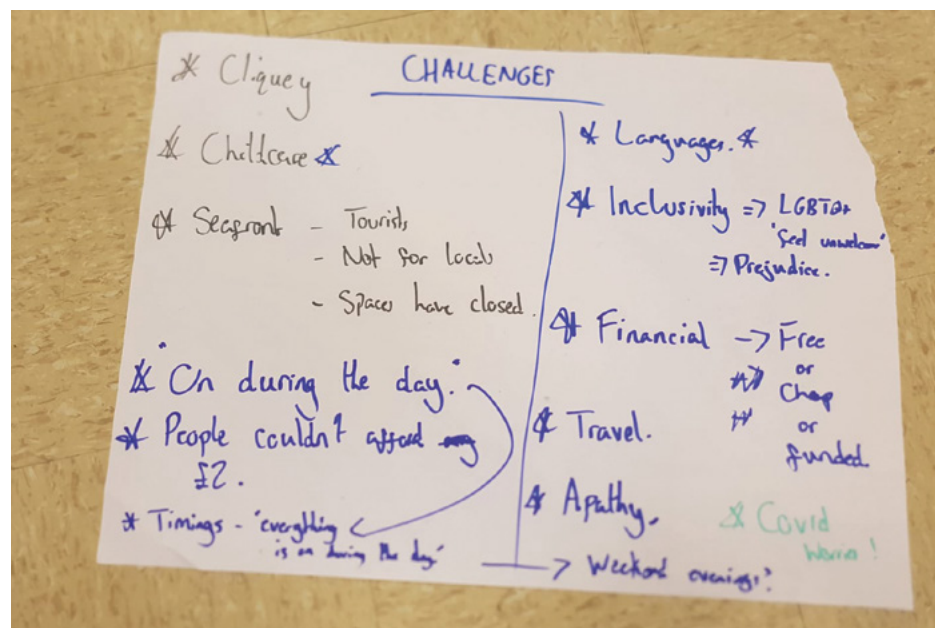
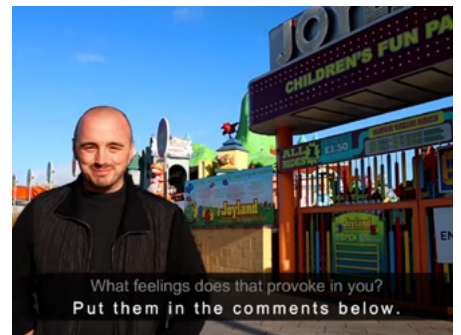
Nick, Transported, CPP Boston Borough and South Holland



In this action learning environment, supported by a strong peer network across the CPP Places, there is a strong sense of welcoming and learning from the projects that go wrong, are unexpected in their impact, or that face difficulties along the way:

“I think the word failure has so many negative connotations, It’d be quite nice to find a way of reframing that a little bit. If you set yourself some goals, objectives, and you don’t reach those objectives, in some ways, yes, that’s failure. But I guess you then need to review, what are the parameters around failures. And also about success, too. When people talk about success. It’s like, well, it might be a success in your eyes. But we unpick what success means as well”

Karl, First Art, CPP Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire



2 Failure helps Places to test - and to advocate for - the approaches that work

Whilst an action learning mindset is well-established as part of the CPP approach, the additional pressures and restrictions of the pandemic have proved a fertile ground for testing this way of working.

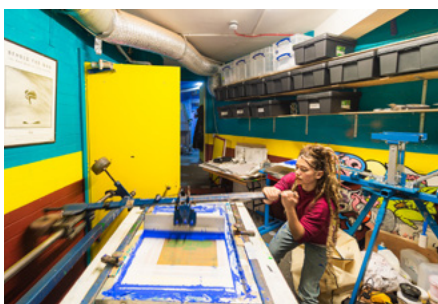
For First Art (CPP Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire) for example, the use of digital tools as a means of creative engagement had been a challenging issue long before COVID hit. The pandemic (and the impossibility of delivering in-person activity) was therefore an opportunity to invest in a riskier piece of programming - of a participatory piece of theatre delivered online. The risks of pursuing a digital project were, to some extent, mitigated by the impossibility of business as usual. In an environment where everything carried risk and uncertainty, it was

easier to find the space to pilot something new. On the face of it, this event was enormously successful by many metrics - not least that tickets were sold-out. However, on closer examination the audience for this digital event - those who were able to join a digital performance in the early weeks of lockdown - was heavily centered on existing arts attendees.

“In terms of our target audience, you’re trying to reach the lowest engaged people you can in the arts, and then you put the digital barriers layered over the top of that. And when you zoom out from that a little bit, it’s obvious that the audience isn’t going to engage with a live [online] theatre show. But I kind of felt like, at that time, this felt the right time to do something digitally. And maybe, in hindsight, we probably shouldn’t have, [but] there was an urgency to do something”

Karl, First Art, CPP Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire

Whilst a sold-out show is never a bad thing, the dash to move creative activity online risked better serving only those who are already most able to access creative experiences, and exacerbating a digital and social divide in our places. That experience, and effective monitoring of the attendee data to give a true picture of the impact of that work - was important in shaping plans for supporting that community through the pandemic, and informed a later initiative to reach a wider community with a more accessible - in person - offer.



Additionally, the testing and evaluation of more challenging initiatives (such as a digital offer, in this case) can be a valuable experience in confidently championing a different kind of approach in CPP Places. Long-term, getting things wrong is valuable ammunition in advocating for the communities you know:

“The data we’ve got back from that suggests, and I wouldn’t even call it a failure. I just call it a learning experience. And, I think what it does as well, the depth of all the evidence gives you ammunition to have more confidence [in future decisions]. So [now] we’ve got the data and the confidence. And it’s the data that backs up the belief”

Karl, First Art, CPP Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire



3 Fail fast, and fail better

The move to new ways of working and new types of delivery during the pandemic has brought new kinds of risk, challenge and failure. CPPs needed to test - with and alongside their communities - what might work in the new landscape of the pandemic. Inevitably, there have been times when an offer hasn’t hit the mark, and Places have had to embrace quite direct feedback from their communities:

“[We were] commissioning a brand partner. So we produced this beautiful branding brief and put it out there - and we got a load of stuff back from brand agencies saying that, you know, this is wrong. You’re asking us to share our ideas in advance of paying us. And so what we did was change that and said - gives us ideas on how you’d do the process. It [has been] a learning point for how you engage with creatives”

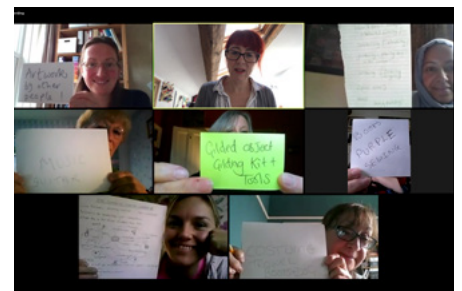
Zulf, The LEAP, CPP Keighley & Bradford



In these cases, the learning-focused approach of CPP Places - embracing feedback and being open and humble enough to change your mind and admit when things aren’t right - meant that they were well placed to evolve quickly to get to a programme that does work:

“My experience is that it’s better to fail fast, and be brave enough to say, we got that wrong. So that’s what we’ve been doing. We’re getting feedback; we don’t need to wait four months or two years to learn that it didn’t work. We know now, let’s cut our losses. Fail fast. And fail better - by learning the lessons of failure. And in that you get innovation as well. So you learn how to do things better to improve the ways of working”

Zulf, The LEAP, CPP Keighley & Bradford



4 There are many stakeholders in defining a Place's appetite for risk

CPP Place teams do not operate in isolation. On the contrary - their success depends precisely on their ability to navigate complex landscapes and build productive partnerships with a whole range of people and organisations - from individuals and community groups to councils, funders and institutions. This can profoundly shape a Place's ability to take risks in their programme:

“[In] the relationship with the local authority, they need to be nurtured, they need to be given confidence, so you can't go faster than them if you want them to be a partner”

Nick, Transported, CPP Boston Borough and South Holland

Some Places highlighted a tension between the CPP approach - which typically works slowly, collaboratively and responsively - and the expectations of other stakeholders. Examples shared included the requirement from local authorities to spend money by set deadlines, a (perceived or actual) expectation of programming high-profile events to be seen to be making an impact with funding, or pressure to preempt community decision-making by developing concrete delivery plans. In some cases, the pandemic has offered an opportunity to step back from these expectations and do things differently:

“I think it would be very easy, in normal times to feel a lot of pressure... in that first year, particularly, to be like, yes, we've got this huge chunk of public money, we need to be seen to be doing - and doing big stuff, rather than giving ourselves the time and permission to do the smaller, quieter relationship building stuff.”

And I think that [not having that pressure], that's going to be a strength ultimately”

Rebecca, Freshly Greated, CPP Great Yarmouth





Arts Council England plays a vital role in giving Places explicit permission to try new approaches. Their response to the pandemic, in quickly adapting grant conditions to reflect the new landscape, has been vital:

“I’m amazed that I feel really so positive. And I think it’s because I can see the energy we’re giving to community engagement, and the fact that I’ve been given the okay by the Arts Council - to reprofile my budget, for example. That it’s okay to be dynamic in that way. And having that permission - it just changes everything”

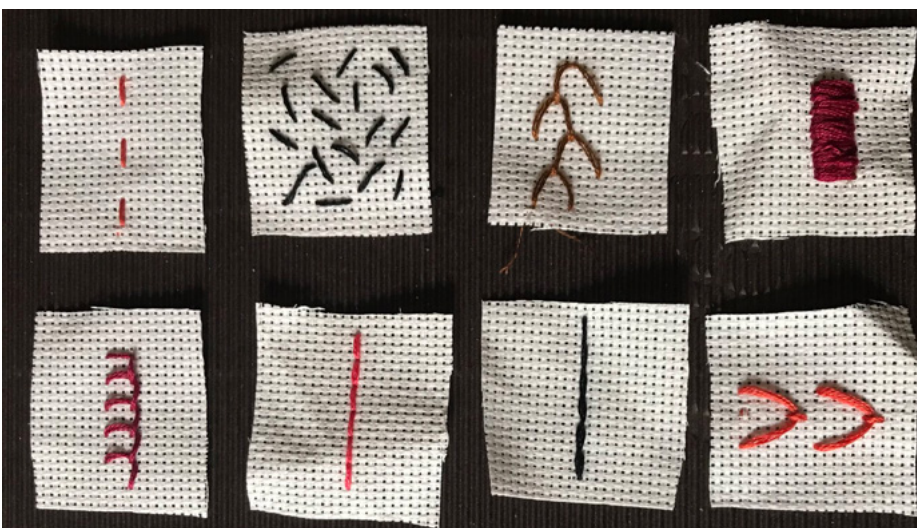
Rebecca, Freshly Greated, CPP Great Yarmouth



The effectiveness of the adaptable CPP approach over lockdown, combined with close connections between CPPs and their wider stakeholders, has encouraged others to adopt and share some of their approach:

‘As a result of COVID, Arts Council England has had to be much more flexible in our approach to working with funded organisations. Out of total necessity and through our Emergency Response Funding, we’ve had to be able to say to organisations, ‘Obviously you’re going to have to experiment with your activities over the next year, and that’s okay’. We’re putting our trust into their expertise and overtly giving them permission to try new things and learn, [saying] ‘Here’s the money, you’ve got the idea, let’s develop it together’. And I think our experience with the success of working in this way with CPPs in recent years, may have contributed to our confidence to be able to do that”

Sara, Arts Council England



5 Conclusion: Finding confidence in uncertainty

As we approach the end of a year that could so easily have been defined by its failure, what is remarkable is the success and optimism that characterises so many Places. Whilst the pandemic has doubtless brought disappointment and cancellations, these impossibility of going ahead with existing plans has also brought time for reflection, deeper engagement and a renewed endorsement of the CPP approach:

“It’s enabled me to take my foot off the accelerator. Just start to reflect on what our programme is about. Who is it for? And where do we want our biggest impacts to be? And I think I’m moving towards a sense that things should be smaller and more intimate and more gentle, at least for the next year. And so that gives people space to gently get involved to be more confident to be more expressive of themselves in their own needs”

Nick Transported, CPP Boston Borough and South Holland

The uncertainty of the pandemic has underlined the value of a flexible, adaptable approach, and the action learning mindset of the Places has enabled them to test, refine, and where necessary to scrap new ideas. Both the successes and the failures of new approaches trialled during the pandemic have given Places the confidence - and the evidence - to understand what their communities need in the new normal.



“My hope is that when [the] COVID storm passes, in, whichever way it’s going to pass, we can come out much bigger and brighter, with some money that we have pushed backwards, and with communities who are super engaged and have been with us - through what could [have been] a massive failure of COVID. But actually, they have spent that time getting to know us, they’re making the decisions with us. We’ve spent the time getting to know them, and they know that they’re in our crew”

Rebecca, Freshly Greated, CPP Great Yarmouth

Images from a range of Transported’s activity in 2020

This Case Study was commissioned as part of the Creative People and Places National Peer Learning and Communications programme.

All Creative People and Places (CPP) projects work together as a network and participate in the National Peer Learning & Communications Programme (NPL&C), funded by Arts Council England since 2013. Shaped by the needs and aspirations of the network, the NPL&C programme aims to share learning that comes out of all CPP projects throughout the network, and works in tandem with Arts Council England to share CPP learning both within the arts and cultural sector and beyond.

Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme (CPP) is about more people taking the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in arts and culture experiences in the places where they live. There are 33 projects, each located in a place where people are least likely to engage with arts and culture. Arts Council England have committed £108 million to the programme so far, covering 33 Projects, 33 Places, 30 consortia and 45 local authorities. Since 2013, there have been 4.5 million engagements with the CPP programme¹ and 86% of people who participate in CPP² weren't previously engaging regularly with arts and culture³.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk

www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places/creative-people-and-places-projects

1 This only includes physical engagements - previous figures may also include digital engagements. Figure subject to change as data validation is still ongoing.

2 Calculated by The Audience Agency using postcode data for 2017-19.

3 As classified by The Audience Agency's [Audience Spectrum](#) segmentation system.



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