



# THINKING PRACTICE/

**Creative People and Places (CPP)  
Thematic Research**

**'WHAT IT DOES TO YOU'**

**Excellence in CPP**

**September 2016**

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	i
1 Introduction .....	1
2 Literature Review .....	2
3 Approaches within CPP .....	11
4 Assessing Outcomes and Impacts .....	32
5 Key Success Factors .....	44
6 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	45
Appendix 1: Methodology .....	47
Appendix 2: Stakeholders Consulted.....	49

This study was commissioned by A New Direction and delivered by **Jamie Buttrick** and **Andy Parkinson** from Consilium Research & Consultancy in partnership with **Mark Robinson** from Thinking Practice.

**Project manager: Jamie Buttrick**

Consilium Research & Consultancy

Tel: 07713 357389

Email: [jamie@consiliumresearch.co.uk](mailto:jamie@consiliumresearch.co.uk)

Web: [www.consiliumresearch.co.uk](http://www.consiliumresearch.co.uk)

Twitter: @ConsiliumJamie



## Executive Summary

### Introduction

**Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd (Consilium)**, in partnership with **Thinking Practice**, were commissioned to undertake thematic research which captures and reflects on the notions and complexities around excellence across the 21 Creative People and Places (CPP) places.

The research aimed to strengthen the work of the CPP places and community-based practice more widely by exploring the various approaches, impacts and outcomes of excellent art and engagement found across the CPP programme. The research methodology comprised a combination of desk research, consultation with a sample of representatives from CPPs and surveys of ACE staff, artists and practitioners.

### What makes something excellent? What does quality look like?

There is no single common working definition of excellence or how to measure it, but overlapping and sometimes conflicting views. There is, however, a recurrent sense that excellence is experiential, dynamic and contextual, based on the coming together of process, people and skilled execution of an idea. It cannot be simply measured on the same basis everywhere, although there are some core characteristics most would agree on that can be assessed and reflected upon.

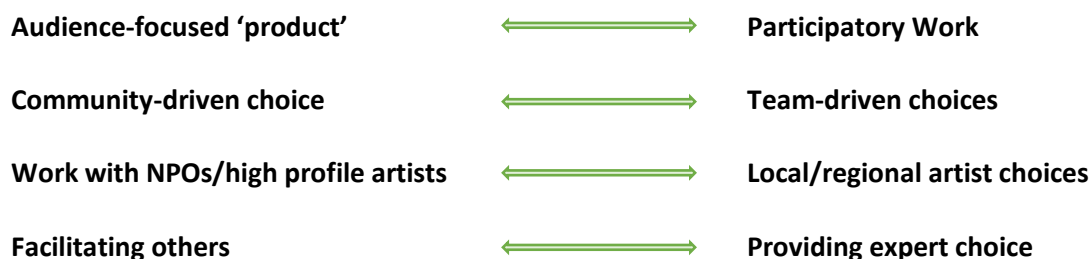
Education, class and cultural background also have roles in shaping ‘*taste*’ and other preferences in relation to what may be considered excellent or high quality art or excellent experiences of it. Validation from others is also noted as a common way of determining the excellence of art. Many writers put an emphasis on the context for the experience, and on the ‘fit’ between how an arts process or work is delivered and the situations of those engaging in it.

Key recurring concepts include the relevance of an experience to those having it, rigour and skill in how it is delivered (including context, execution and involvement), the content of the work or what is drawn from it, and the captivation or challenge created.

A number of attempts have been made to develop ways to consistently assess the quality of work and/or of people’s experience of arts activity. These have sought to create quality frameworks, principles and metrics that can be used on a consistent basis to inform individual artists or organisations in their evaluation of their work.

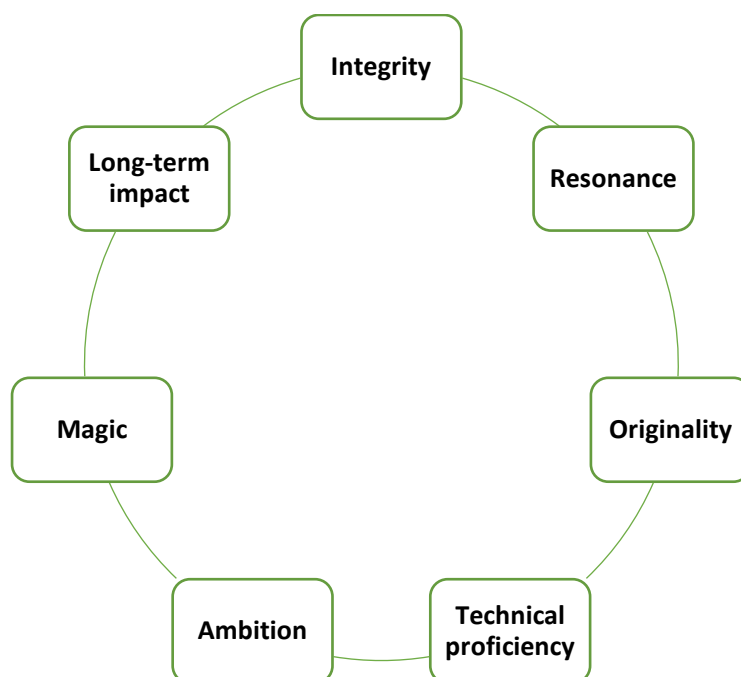
## Approaches within CPP

All CPP areas are aiming to achieve *'excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities'*, and obliged to evaluate their achievements in this area. There is strong evidence of achievement in both areas. Whilst all CPPs are designing programmes that aspire to both of these elements, not all evaluation frameworks are, in practice, addressing both areas equally. There are a number of ranges or continuums that can be said to exist across the CPPs places:



Most programmes combine elements of these binaries, and many are operating models which mix elements integrally, or vary across their breadth over the lifespan of CPP. For instance, some would describe their programming as *'community-informed'* without delegating final-decision making about artist commissions. The mix is varied.

CPP places have tended to be careful not to influence the natural development of programming by restricting it to the potentially *'limiting'* or *'artificial' parameters of a 'one size fits all'* model or framework. This is reflected in *'An Incomplete (and Contradictory) Glossary of the Qualities of Artistic Quality'* developed by a group of Directors, producers and artists that listed seven qualities (within the Taking Bearings report):



## Key Success Factors

### Active and meaningful community involvement

- Discussions over quality and excellence are most productive when framed around a local or personal context.
- Building community capacity to identify, embrace and support excellence can produce long term and sustainable benefits linked to participation and commissioning in CPP areas.

### Collaborative leadership

- The partnership approach to excellence within CPP highlights the need to understand the scale, scope and value of partner roles.
- Ongoing CPD and guidance from Critical Friends can inform approaches to excellence and quality within CPP delivery teams.

### Making choices

- Clarity of vision can underpin approaches to achieving excellence which are bought into by all.
- A balance needs to be maintained between providing support and over-influencing community input (i.e. the challenge of devolving power to the community) - lessons in risk, trust and empowerment.
- Reflection is crucial to developing an understanding of quality and excellence.

### Providing choice through breadth of approach

- The design and content of marketing and communications should be tailored to specific events and audiences. Content should be informative and clear in order to reduce barriers to engagement stemming from uncertainty of what to expect.
- Excellence should not always be linked to scale of participation - CPP enables ideas to be tested or delivered with small groups which can be developed or transferred to inform wider practice.

### Ensuring the right calibre of artists

- Selecting the right artist for the right project will help to ensure excellence in engagement and product (e.g. assessing relevant desire, experience, participatory skills and technical abilities).
- Communicating in inclusive and accessible language rather than 'arts speak' and 'jargon' can help to tackle traditional barriers to engagement.

### Flexibility

- It takes time to build the long term relationships required to embrace excellence as part of an engagement process which incorporates reflection and learning.
- Flexibility of approach may be required in order to identify and/or evidence excellence (and its impact), (e.g. extending project timeframes, overcoming challenges or believing in an idea despite setbacks).

## Recommendations

1. CPP Network and Arts Council England should consider how greater connections can be made to work around quality metrics and to explore how a more consistent measurement framework might sit with bespoke, contextual approaches to development and evaluation.
2. CPP Network should encourage more consistent use of frameworks for excellence of product and process, such as those developed by individual CPPs and the ‘incomplete glossary of the qualities of artistic quality’ in the New Bearings document, and share results.
3. The overall reflection on excellence or quality of product and process of engagement should involve input from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible.
4. CPPs should build on relations with NPOs to discuss quality together, connecting to local, regional or area-level networks exploring the topic, so that learning is mutual and embedded in long-term local partnerships or infrastructure.
5. Arts Council England should consider how learning from the CPP programme could benefit their other areas of work, and how insights around excellence from CPP could be shared more widely.

## Conclusion

Simon Armitage has a poem entitled *‘It ain’t what you do, it’s what it does to you’*. This could be said about *‘excellence of product and excellence of process of engaging communities.’* CPP is delivering excellence in a wide range of ways: what is notable is that it is doing it in ways that emphasise ‘what it does to you’. However, this study also suggests that whilst the content aspect of *‘what’* you do may be as important as the quality of the experience or the impact on people, the process of *‘how’* you do it, and how you then reflect upon the process are also vital, especially when involving communities.

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 **Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd (Consilium)**, in partnership with **Thinking Practice** were commissioned in February 2016 by the Creative People and Places (CPP) National Evaluation team to undertake thematic research which captures and reflects on the notions and complexities around excellence across the 21 CPP places. The research had aims to both strengthen the work of the CPP places and community-based practice more widely by exploring and unpicking the various approaches, impacts and outcomes of excellent art and engagement found across the CPP programme.
- 1.2 The qualitative aspects of this report are necessarily based on the views of those interviewed and as such, are subjective. Every care has been taken to conduct this research openly, thoroughly and professionally, to retain an objective stance, balance the opinions expressed and explore the justification for the comments made.
- 1.3 The research methodology was tailored in response to the research objectives ([Appendix 1](#)). It comprised a combination of desk research, consultation with key stakeholders from Arts Council England and a sample of representatives from CPPs including Directors, Critical Friends and evaluators and visits to two events in order to discuss quality issues within the context of an event.
- 1.4 Carrying out this research has required significant contribution of time and information from a number of people ([Appendix 2](#)), their assistance is much appreciated.

## 2 Literature Review

- 2.1 The literature on 'excellence' or 'quality' in the arts is extensive, wide-ranging and has a history reaching back hundreds of years. Even looking at, say, the last two decades, suggests many different strands of potential exploration and a scope far beyond the brief of this study, given the dual focus of Creative People and Places as programme, of excellence of artistic product and of the process of engagement.
- 2.2 We have therefore focused our review of the literature on key material published since Sir Brian McMaster's 2008 report<sup>1</sup> for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which put excellence firmly back on the policy agenda, material which relates to Arts Council England's assessment and definitions of Excellence and Quality, and which ideally considered of quality of both product and process. This allowed us to concentrate on recent thinking of relevance to the question of how Creative People and Places has addressed excellence, including work on participatory arts and education. It does, however, mean this study can attempt neither a comprehensive synthesised definition of excellence or quality in the arts, nor to reflect the full sweep of thinking on the subject.

### **What makes something excellent?**

- 2.3 There are a number of strains to writing about excellence or quality that can be identified. Some emphasise what might be termed the internal characteristics of the artistic product itself. These include the concept of a piece, the technical execution and, in some literature, the production values of the exhibition or performance. Sometimes these are referred to as the core of the 'intrinsic' values of a work of art. In recent times this has been part of debates between the relative importance of intrinsic value and instrumental uses of the arts and attempts to find ways to integrate both into versions of 'cultural value' (e.g. Crossick/Kaszynska<sup>2</sup> or Knell and Taylor<sup>3</sup> building on Holden<sup>4</sup>).
- 2.4 In general, however, recent literature tends to position the intrinsic elements of arts work as part of a wider set of elements comprising excellence for those experiencing it. Excellence is seen as residing in the experience, not simply in the object or performance. McMaster for instance describes excellence as residing in the meaning, insights and changed perception of the world that a work can help a person who experiences it have. Excellence, he argues, occurs when an experience of a work of art 'affects and changes an individual' rather than being inherent in the work regardless of its impact.

---

<sup>1</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/supportingexcellenceinthearts.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Understanding the value of arts & culture, Geoffrey Crossick & Patrycja Kaszynska, 2015  
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/>

<sup>3</sup> Arts Funding, Austerity and the Big Society, John Knell and Matthew Taylor, 2011  
<https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/arts-funding-austerity-and-the-big-society/Download>

<sup>4</sup> Capturing Culture Value, John Holden, 2004 <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/CapturingCulturalValue.pdf>



- 2.5 He concludes that ‘the greater its power to do these things the more excellent the cultural experience.’ Although his report was highly influential, and has been noted by many (e.g. Hewison & Holden<sup>5</sup>) as presenting a challenge to arts policy, there is little further definition of the actual elements of excellence. (The report is mainly concerned with what McMaster felt were the necessary conditions for excellence, such as innovation, risk-taking, professional development and public subsidy.)
- 2.6 The variety of factors that shape the experience an individual may have, and their view of it, are not straightforward. Education, which research shows correlates with engagement in the arts (DCMS Taking Part)<sup>6</sup>, may shape the experience. Class and cultural background also have important roles in both ‘taste’ and other preferences in relation to what may be considered excellent or high quality art or excellent experiences of it<sup>7</sup>. Validation from others is also noted as a common way of determining the excellence of art. The way in which the visual arts operate within a commercial market has been described as a system of ‘subscription’ in 2004 in Arts Council’s ‘Taste Buds’ report<sup>8</sup>. Grayson Perry summarised this in a Reith Lecture on quality and who decides it, as a kind of 4-stage process of validation, beginning with peers, then critics and collectors who establish a reputation, before moving onto dealers, and finally the generally public<sup>9</sup>. Although the visual arts market is somewhat different to other sub-sectors, the notion of validation by reference to peers, critics and commissioners can be seen in conventions such as the blurb on the backs of books or the quotes from reviews on posters for films and theatre performances.
- 2.7 A provocation paper for the Contemporary Visual Arts Network in the South West of England by Annabel Jackson creates a ‘quality of experience conceptualisation’, based on a number of previous studies or attempts<sup>10</sup>. Jackson argues that there are five dimensions to quality: emotional and intellectual content and connections alongside a social element resulting in memorability and a desire to repeat the experience.
- 2.8 Work done in relation to participatory art work or arts education contexts has also been important in proposing frameworks and principles for ensuring and assessing quality.

---

<sup>5</sup> The Cultural Leadership Handbook: How to Run a Creative Organization, John Holden and Robert Hewison, 2011

<sup>6</sup> The Taking Part survey is a continuous face to face household survey of adults aged 16 and over and children aged 5 to 15 years old in England. It has run since 2005 and is the main evidence source for DCMS and its sectors.

<sup>7</sup> See the work of Pierre Bourdieu and others on this argument, e.g. Distinction, 1987. The limits of our brief preclude a closer examination of this in the context of CPP.

<sup>8</sup> Taste Buds, Morris Hargeaves McIntyre, Arts Council England, 2004

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/tastebudssummary-php7xdjde-e9KL-6-2500.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://next.ft.com/content/c37b1b6a-3017-11e3-9eec-00144feab7de>

<sup>10</sup> Quality Of Experience In The Arts, Annabel Jackson, 2012  
<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/464027/18210629/1337081459117/AJA+Quality+of+Experience+Conceptualisation+2b.pdf?token=0wmCScDFknlWmrhcBfvaKpzRjp0%3D>

**Table 2.1: Different ways of considering the quality of arts education**

<b>ACE CYP Quality Principles</b>	<b>Seidel et al 'Quality through lens of learner'</b>	<b>Through lens of pedagogy</b>	<b>Through lens of community dynamics</b>	<b>Through lens of Environment</b>
Striving for excellence Being authentic Being exciting, inspiring and engaging Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience Actively involving children and young people Enabling personal progression Developing a sense of ownership and belonging	Engagement Purposeful experiences creating or engaging with works of art Emotional openness and honesty Experimentation, exploration and inquiry Ownership	Authenticity Modelling artistic processes, inquiry and habit Participation in the learning experience Making learning relevant and connected to prior knowledge Intentionality, flexibility and transparency	Respect and trust amongst all participants, along with a belief in student capacities Open communication Collaboration	Functional and aesthetic space and materials The arts occupy a central place in the physical environment Sufficient time for authentic artistic work

2.9 Many writers put an emphasis on the context for the experience, and for the 'fit' between how an arts process or work is delivered and the situations of those engaging in it. (e.g. Lowe<sup>11</sup> 2014). The Artworks programme, a special initiative of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, commissioned much research into aspects of quality in participatory work. Although it began with an interest in developing a common definition of quality in order to enhance the perception of participatory arts, those active in the programme through numerous Pathfinder projects found it became a less urgent task than exploring quality in the context of participant experience, situation and other factors such as resources.

2.10 In a paper reflecting on the programme as it concluded Dr Susanne Burns argued that quality was an ongoing process, and that the principle of quality needed to be embedded into dynamic planning, delivery and evaluation (Burns<sup>12</sup>). The conclusion of Artworks emphasised the need to understand the detail of the context in which work was done, and the need to recognise and build in certain things in order to create quality experiences. These can be described as relating to resources, planning and definition of roles, ownership, realism and flexibility.

<sup>11</sup> Critical Conversations: Artists' reflections on quality in participatory arts practice, Toby Lowe, Artworks, 2014 <http://artworksalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Critical-Conversations-Report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Reflections on developing practice in participatory settings, Dr Susanne Burns, ArtWorks 2015 <http://artworksalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ArtWorks-Reflections-on-developing-practice-in-participatory-settings.pdf>

- 2.11 In *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education*<sup>13</sup>, a major report for the US-based Wallace Foundation, Steve Seidel et al set out a number of different ways of considering the quality of arts education, using the idea of viewing this through different ‘lenses’ (See Table 2.1 above). Although the report does not focus on experience of artworks outside of this context it still has relevance to our focus. Seidel et al suggest four different lenses - the learner, pedagogy, community dynamics and environment, each of which have parallels in the Creative People and Places programme.
- 2.12 Quality means something slightly different through each lens, but there are themes consistent with other literature. For the learner emotion, purpose and experimentation are important, whilst for the pedagogue authenticity and relevance are integral. Respect and collaboration must be present viewed through the Community Dynamics lens, whilst resources and planning matter in the environment, echoing the findings of the Artworks research in the UK.
- 2.13 Arts Council England has developed a set of Quality principles<sup>14</sup> for work with, by and for children and young people, which it expects organisations to work with and use to design and assess their work. There are seven principles, of which one is the arguably tautological ‘striving for excellence’. The other six elements describe what might be aimed for, including elements about the experience or the design of the process, such as ‘being exciting, engaging and inspiring’ and others that are outcomes for participants, such as ‘enabling personal progression’. Quality in this context is multi-faceted, and found in the reflection on experience, rather than existing independently of that experience.

#### **What do you need to create excellence?**

- 2.14 Almost inevitably given the slipperiness of the subject, and the fact that people react to what appears to be the same thing in such different ways, many attempts to define excellence compound, or even confuse, what excellence is with what makes it possible. What some people may consider a precondition, others describe as an integral part of it. (This is one difference between the Artworks approaches<sup>15</sup> and those seen in the Arts Council England Quality Principles for work with, by and for children and young people<sup>16</sup>, for instance.) There are however, some relevant descriptions of the capacities required for excellence.

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education*, Steve Seidel, Shari Tishman, Ellen Winner, Lois Hetland, Patricia Palmer, Wallace Foundation, 2010

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Understanding-Excellence-in-Arts-Education.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-metrics/quality-principles>

<sup>15</sup> ArtWorks: Quality – because we all want to do better, Mary Schwartz, Artworks 2014

<http://api.ning.com/files/O0rRt4kCpsrPbfhdg9nzlv4buuiJmW24C-EKqKaQA8ND3l3rP4epC1Xl52cGuvXJVbDR5JvZZZ3aCFH7tQvDErCAFgzyK2u/ArtWorksWorkingPaper8.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-metrics/quality-principles>

- 2.15 Jackson (ibid) lists eight ‘determinants’ that could arguably also be described as elements of a quality experience. These are Relevance, a Welcoming environment, appeal to the senses, active involvement, social interaction, openness to interpretation of the work, critical dialogue inspired by the work and newness or novelty. Siedel et al note that Respect and Collaboration must be viewed through the Community Dynamics lens, whilst resources and planning matter in the environment, echoing the findings of the Artworks research in the UK.

<b>Table 2.2: Excellence Frameworks</b>	
<b>Artworks Scotland Quality principles</b>	<b>Framework for ‘creative capacity’ from ‘Understanding The Value And Impacts Of Cultural Experiences’ John D. Carnwath Alan S. Brown (ACE)</b>
<p>Artists being involved in research, planning and development with all partners/ participants</p> <p>Artists being involved in evaluation and documentation with all partners/ participants</p> <p>Artists having time to time to think and reflect as part of a project</p> <p>Artists having professional development opportunities as part of a project</p> <p>A brief that allows creative input from the artist</p> <p>There is a creative approach to evaluation</p> <p>Artists feel professional valued within the project</p> <p>Having ‘buy in’ and trust between all artists/ partners/ participants</p> <p>There is time to build relations between artists/ partners/ participants</p> <p>Numbers of participants are realistic in terms of time, budget and aims</p> <p>Realistic expectations of what can be achieved in the time and resource</p> <p>Adequate resources – financial and other – to support planning, delivery and evaluation</p> <p>Understanding between all artists and partners of what each can offer one another</p> <p>a contract that makes clear everyone’s roles, tasks and expectations</p> <p>Having a dedicated project manager</p>	<p><i>Core elements of ‘creative capacity’ – consistent elements that do not vary from organisation to organisation</i></p> <p>Clarity of intent and commitment to risk-taking</p> <p>Community relevance</p> <p>Excellence in curating and capacity to innovate</p> <p>Technical proficiency, skill and artistry</p> <p>Capacity to engage audiences</p> <p>Critical feedback and commitment to continuous improvement</p> <p><i>Conditional elements of ‘creative capacity’ – elements that may or may not apply to a given organisation, depending on its mission and programmatic focus</i></p> <p>Supportive networks</p> <p>Sufficient risk capital</p>

- 2.16 Two frameworks are particularly interesting in focusing on the requirements or capacities needed to create excellence (See Table 2.2). Artworks Scotland<sup>17</sup> set out 15 principles, based primarily on consultation with artists working in participatory settings. These cluster around issues of involving skilled artists in all aspects of a project including the brief, ensuring appropriate support and resources are in place, mutual understanding and ownership. Interestingly the emphasis on involvement of artists, and their support and professional development, echo themes with the McMaster report about the need to involve artists in management and governance.
- 2.17 Within a much wider-ranging report for Arts Council England on understanding the impacts of cultural experiences, Carnwath and Brown<sup>18</sup> include a framework of elements for ‘creative capacity’ that they argue are found wherever quality experiences are made. These are listed in Table 2.2. Organisations must be clear what they want to achieve, and this must be relevant to their community, whom they must be able to engage. They must be prepared to take risks, from a base of innovative capacity, technical and curatorial skill and open to continuous improvement and critical discussion.

#### **Metrics for excellence**

- 2.18 In recent years, in the wake of the McMaster report, a number of attempts have been made to develop ways to consistently assess the quality of work and/or of people’s experience of arts activity. These have sought to create frameworks that can be used on a consistent basis to inform individual artists or organisations in their evaluation of their work. These have also sometimes supported reflection on the quality of programming or artistic development within organisational self-assessment frameworks.
- 2.19 In the specific context of Arts Council England-supported activity, this has also been in the context of a renewed focus on artistic assessment and self-assessment in support of the ambitions around excellence within the ‘Great art for everyone’<sup>19</sup> vision. Other studies, such as Baker Richards and WolfBrown’s work on ‘intrinsic impact’ for Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium<sup>20</sup> have had understanding the impact on audiences as their starting points. In this section we will discuss a number of significant projects that have trialled ways of measuring quality.

---

<sup>17</sup> Quality Perspectives, Artists and Partners: Research Background and Key observations, Fiona Dean, Artworks Scotland 2013 <http://artworksalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FDeanQualityPerspectivesreportwithtitlepage.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Understanding The Value And Impacts Of Cultural Experiences John D. Carnwath Alan S. Brown (Arts Council England, 2014 [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Understanding\\_the\\_Value\\_and\\_Impacts\\_of\\_Cultural\\_Experiences.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Understanding_the_Value_and_Impacts_of_Cultural_Experiences.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Great\\_art\\_and\\_culture\\_for\\_everyone.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Great_art_and_culture_for_everyone.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Baker Richards, Wolf Brown, LARC 2011 <http://www.happymuseumproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/LARC-Intrinsic-Impact-Pilot-Study-Report-June-2011.pdf>

<b>Table 2.3: Excellence Frameworks</b>			
<b><i>WolfBrown Intrinsic Impact framework</i></b>	<b><i>Annabel Jackson Quality of Experience Conceptualisation</i></b>	<b><i>Quality Metrics/Manchester Metrics</i></b>	<b><i>ACE Participatory Metrics</i></b>
'Readiness to receive':	Emotional element	Presentation	Performance
Context	Intellectual element	Distinctiveness	Concept
Relevance	Social element	Rigour	Presentation
Anticipation	Memorability	Relevance	Distinctiveness
	Desire to repeat or extend the experience	Challenge	Rigour
Captivation		Captivation	Relevance: Challenge
Intellectual stimulation	Relevance	Meaning	Captivation
Emotional resonance	Welcoming environment	Enthusiasm	Meaning
Spiritual value	Appeal to the senses	Local Impact	Enthusiasm
Aesthetic growth	Active involvement	Concept	Local impact
Social bonding	Social interaction	Risk	<i>Participation – self and participant</i>
	Openness to interpretation	Originality	Organisation
	Critical dialogue	Excellence (national)	Enjoyment: Authenticity
	Newness	Excellence (global)	Respect
			Voice
			Contribution
			Belonging
			Support
			Feedback
			Experimenting
			Acceptance
			Friendship
			New people
			Stretch
			Artistic skills
			Opportunity
			Motivation

2.20 The Intrinsic Impacts study in Liverpool explored how audiences are transformed by cultural experiences. It built on previous work by WolfBrown in the United States<sup>21</sup> that had developed a framework of six elements: captivation, intellectual stimulation, emotional resonance, spiritual value, aesthetic growth and social bonding. The Liverpool study adds a set of factors relating to what it calls 'readiness to receive' that include context, relevance and anticipation.

<sup>21</sup> Assessing the Intrinsic Impacts of a Live Performance, Alan Brown, Jennifer Novak, Wolf Brown 2007  
[http://wolfbrown.com/images/books\\_reports/documents/ImpactStudyFinalVersionFullReport.pdf](http://wolfbrown.com/images/books_reports/documents/ImpactStudyFinalVersionFullReport.pdf)

- 2.21 The pilot study created a survey mechanism to assess the impact on audiences of individual performances or exhibitions. It concluded that the effort needed to obtain meaningful responses was considerable. However, the return lay in the discussions about artistic choices and outcomes that the surveys could inspire. A combination of quantitative data (the surveys providing numbers about impact) and qualitative data (from open-ended questions) was noted as necessary.
- 2.22 The limited extent to which arts organisations had procedures or capacity for such a methodical system was a limiting factor. In terms of the elements of excellence, the conclusion argues that ‘quality...should not be conflated with intellectual or aesthetic challenge’, and that ‘comfort, validation and hope’ could also stimulate intrinsic impact for audiences. This runs slightly counter to ideas in, for instance, McMaster.
- 2.23 The Manchester Metrics were developed by a consortium of cultural organisations in Manchester, working with John Knell and Culture Counts, over a number of iterations. This built on work originally carried out in Western Australia to explore how a standard metric system might measure the central elements of quality as defined by the cultural sector itself. The final report on the pilot<sup>22</sup> describes the metrics and its trialling in Manchester. The metrics combine self-assessment, peer assessment and public assessment across a range of dimensions as set out in Table 2.2.
- 2.24 There are a number of elements in common with WolfBrown’s work in Liverpool: captivation and relevance are used specifically, but other terms also contain similar associations. Nine core metrics were agreed on to be rated by self, peer and public, whilst a number were originally only for self and peer assessment - those relating to concept, risk, originality and excellence. This suggests a view that whilst the public are fully informed about their own experiences, the wider setting of that work requires a more sector-informed knowledge.
- 2.25 The trial was considered successful in a number of ways. It demonstrated it was possible for a diverse set of organisations working in different art forms, scales and community contexts to agree on a ‘standard’ set of metrics. Indeed the final report argues that this direct involvement is crucial to the credibility of any framework or set of quality metrics.
- 2.26 The Culture Counts methodology, which utilises interviews and an app to obtain ratings, had some limitations and areas for refinement but enabled rich data to be captured, analysed and used to inform reflection on artistic programme. Self-assessment before and after an event was identified as potentially useful when combined with public and peer feedback in encouraging organisations to think more deeply about their audiences and their relationships with them.

---

<sup>22</sup> Measuring quality in the cultural sector, Catherine Bunting and John Knell, Arts Council England, 2014  
[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Manchester\\_Metrics\\_Final\\_Report\\_May\\_2014.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Manchester_Metrics_Final_Report_May_2014.pdf)



- 2.27 Some adaptations to the list of metrics were also identified that have fed into the further development of these by Arts Council England. 'Concept' was felt to be appropriate for public assessment. Comparing the list of metrics with those now published by Arts Council England, one can also see that 'Meaning' is no longer included as a metric. Arts Council England have continued to support the roll out of the Quality Metrics via Culture Counts, with many organisations currently trialling the methodology. The current set out of 'core' Quality Principles is set out as shown in Table 2.2 above.
- 2.28 One further development worthy of note for its connection to the way Creative People and Places programmes mix opportunities to view performances or exhibitions with opportunities to participate, is the work done by Bunting and Knell for Arts Council England. This attempts to bring together the Quality Principles developed by the Manchester Metrics group with the Quality Principles for work with Children and Young People.
- 2.29 Working with a consortium of those involved in developing each set of principles, this work attempts to develop a set of metrics to assess a participatory project. The first phase work developed a set of common metrics and outcome statements and trialled some forms of data capture<sup>23</sup>. The list of metrics was noted as inevitably longer than the preceding sets, and the conclusion suggests further work is needed to agree a core set of metrics, based on further trialling. There is, however, some clear mapping across of the two sets of principles, and the participatory metrics build on the two frameworks. They combine elements seen in earlier research as intrinsic or internal to a work of art - such as presentation and distinctiveness - with elements to do with how the work was experienced, the context and environment in which it took place, and the way in which it was delivered.

### Key Points

- **There is no single common working definition of excellence or how to measure it, but overlapping and sometimes conflicting views, and a recurrent sense that quality is a dynamic, contextual process rather than something that can be simply measured on the same basis everywhere;**
- **Key recurring concepts include the relevance of an experience to those having it, rigour and skill in how it is delivered (including, context, execution, involvement), the content of the work or what is drawn from it, and the captivation or challenge created; and**
- **Metrics are increasingly being trialled to help assess excellence and to inform organisational reflection on the quality of work.**

<sup>23</sup> Developing participatory metrics, Arts Council England, 2015  
[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/CC\\_participatory\\_metrics\\_report\\_July\\_2015\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/CC_participatory_metrics_report_July_2015_FINAL.pdf)



### 3 Approaches within CPP

- 3.1 This section of the report outlines the range of approaches to tackling the excellence agenda with different CPP places. The summary of CPP approaches is based on an analysis of CPP and related documentation and feedback from representatives of 13 CPP places. It details how CPP places have worked to reduce and remove barriers to meeting CPP aims and objectives around excellence defined in academic literature, CPP documentation (i.e. delivery and evaluation information) and discussions with sector stakeholders.

#### *Summary of CPP Approaches*

- 3.2 The approaches to excellence and quality employed by CPP places incorporate a range of similarities across the 21 CPP places. However, there is no simple ‘one size fits all’ approach, rather a range of tailored approaches in response to the challenges arising in each CPP place. This is evidenced in the analysis below which outlines the degree to which different approaches have been used, in which context and to what aim. The differences are illustrated well by two contrasting quotes given in Ecorys’ End of Year 2 Report:

***“When we developed a quality framework, we felt much more comfortable with a more holistic way of looking at quality. For something to be ‘excellent’ there needs to be ambition, risk taking, meaning, relevance, collaborative ownership, involving people, producing and performance values, sustainability, replicability and not separating quality of community engagement and quality of art.”***

***“If we try to homogenise that or try to create a five-step guide to quality what would that look like? What it would end up doing is the complete opposite of that. Quality shouldn’t be an assembly line or a standardised rubber stamp.”***

#### ***Quality and excellence expressed within different CPP models***

- 3.3 The individual structure of CPP places has influenced the approach to excellence in each local area. Factors that influence where CPPs position themselves on the ranges described above include:
- The make-up of the consortium of partners;
  - The density or paucity of arts infrastructure in the area;
  - The availability of community partners;
  - The experience of commissioned artists;
  - The type/independence of host organisation CPPs were originally based in; and
  - The directions set by directors and their teams.

3.4 All CPP areas have worked within the framework set by Arts Council England for application, business planning and monitoring. This means they are committing to aiming to achieve ‘excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities’, and to evaluating their achievements in this area. Based on sampling of CPP area plans and our interviews, all CPPs are designing programmes that aspire to both of these elements, although not all evaluation frameworks are, in practice, addressing both areas equally. It is also noted in the Ecorys End of Year 2 report that although Arts Council has recommended places use some form of 360-degree feedback, they found limited evidence of such methods being put in place.

3.5 There are a number of ranges or continuums that can be said to exist across the CPPs places:



3.6 Most programmes combine elements of these binaries, and many are operating models which either mix elements integrally, or vary across their breadth over the lifespan of CPP. For instance, many would describe their programming as ‘community-informed’ without delegating decisions about artist choice.

3.7 Some CPP places have integrated discussions and decisions around excellence within a strong community-driven model (e.g. basing decisions largely on the views of the community) whilst others have been more strongly influenced by CPP staff. Some, such as Creative Barking & Dagenham, see their key role as facilitating informed choices and input from community members, forming community panels made up of partners and local people.

3.8 Other areas including Left Coast and Appetite have taken an approach which is closer to the model of Artistic Director-led programming or curatorial teams designing projects and events, with marketing and engagement specialists developing audiences amongst target communities. This has often involved large-scale festivals and outdoor programming. It does not exclude community input, or programming choices being made in light of knowledge of community interests and reflection on how work was achieved and received.

3.9 Others, and perhaps the majority of the CPP places considered, have adopted what might be called a ‘mixed method’, with some areas of their work involving community decision-making. The majority of CPPs fall somewhere on the ranges described above.

The **Creative Scene** CPP operates in a number of West Yorkshire towns including Batley and Spen, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Birstal and Dewsbury. It aims to make 'art a part of everyday life'. It has developed what Director Nancy Barrett describes as a very pragmatic, process-based approach. It has used skilled producers, working with local people through partnerships to design programmes with local relevance and resonance embedded.

The process of programme development has been a brokered and complex one of matching ideas and needs and place, testing energy, viability and response. Quality has not been set in advance or constantly focussed on explicitly - but the process is felt to have developed high quality work because of the combination of skills and local knowledge.

Much of the local knowledge has come through the volunteer 'SceneMakers' who have developed projects alongside producers that have resonance with the community and local support. They also have a key role in encouraging dialogue about the quality of the work and of the engagement process. Their own development has been supported through network meetings, training workshops and 'Go and See visits' to broaden their experience of different artforms and settings. The programme has worked with professional arts organisations and NPOs, many of them from the West Yorkshire region, with partners engaging in participatory work. NPO status - or recent status, as there has been some 'churn' in recent years - has served as a marker of likely quality, if not a guarantee.

The programme has supported a number of local artists and companies to develop new commissions as well as individual artists to develop their practice (see the Faculty, below). It has also built on local traditions in amateur arts activity such as choirs and theatre/dance schools, with several of these taking part in a major project with Opera North. This invested professional levels of development time and expertise (such as a dramaturg) into a performance with amateur groups performing alongside professional singers. People, especially SceneMakers, were able to engage with the whole process, from development meetings with Opera North to performing and supporting marketing of the performance.

Creative Scene has deliberately not gone down the route of community panels or decision-making, feeling this could be mis-construed as a grant-giving process and not wanting to infer that Creative Scene was replicating some (now de-funct) funding routes for local groups. As the programme has developed, however, partners and SceneMakers have been supported to develop both critical and producing knowledge and so are taking an active role.

The Creative Scene team programmes performances into non-traditional venues including a rugby club, transport interchanges, fish and chip shops and has also developed a small circuit to receive touring shows, which includes pubs and community centres. The people who run these venues - often landlords or centre managers - work actively with the producers to take the decisions on which shows to book, using their knowledge of their clientele and growing experience of artistic product. SceneMakers also guide and assess suitability and support activity including marketing to engage local people. (The model is similar to that familiar in rural touring networks)

Only once enough experience had been gained of local contexts and a good idea of where there is appetite matched with capacity, have Creative Scene moved to develop programming and evaluation criteria, being very wary of the ways in which measurement can distort what is unmeasurable. The formal evaluation is taking a multi-disciplinary, ecological approach. This focuses on cultural value, distinctiveness and interest. Hearts and minds, how people talk and feel about the work, are Creative Scene's ultimate measures.

**Heart of Glass** is the CPP for St Helens. It is conceived as an action research project operating through 'a philosophy of collaboration and partnership, and an examination of the role of art and the artist in civil society', using a passion for rugby and the industrial excellence of the town in glass technology as starting points. Heart of Glass is a rare example within CPP where a new independent organisation has been set up, to enable the second phase of activity. Its vision is an ecological one, to do with making a shift in the local creative sector, partners and their enduring relationships with others, as well as with creating great art and growing arts participation.

The approach to excellence has been a dynamic and flexible one rooted in equity in the exchange between the team and those they work with. To create this, focus has been on understanding roles and skills, and the terms of communication. This has enabled the team to work with different communities in different ways, and to use different parts of the programme to try different approaches. They have not felt obliged to use the same approach across the whole programme, and to talk of the less threatening Quality than Excellence, although neither is commonly used explicitly. Even this is commonly framed in terms of doing the best at that moment, in those circumstances, rather than anything more abstract.

Although the team have taken on board what they found useful from frameworks like the Manchester Metrics, they have not gone down the road of developing or using a template or guideline-based approach as they felt no set of metrics could capture the complexity of CPP or the socially engaged arts practice model they use for their work. (The evaluation is built around socially engaged practice models and is leading, as one person put it, 'to writing things down a lot more'.) There are clearly articulated key principles and core values that guide the work of the organisation.

The range of civil society impacts and interactions are described as 'small steps in a big piece of work', in which context is key for Heart of Glass. They plan a large range of work, and aim to find balance within it, supporting this through Critical Friend and other conversations. Decisions have tended to involve the Director and team, the Steering group and community groups, although final say has rested with the Director.

Heart of Glass has recently been awarded £487,500 by Arts Council England through its 'Ambition for Excellence' funding programme, for a new contemporary collaborative arts project with culturally diverse communities of women in St Helens, working with ANU Productions and idle women. This connects local needs into well-endorsed international practice in the context of contemporary issues.

The **Creative Barking and Dagenham** CPP has a very strong emphasis on community participation, recruiting approximately 130 people to Cultural Connector roles to help shape the programme in line with community demand and preferences. Cultural Connectors work as a team with local and artistic advisors and provide 60% of the voting power during the artist selection process. This approach illustrates the CPP's emphasis on sharing everyone's specific expertise to make the right decisions for the programme and the local area.

***“All decisions on projects and activities we support and deliver are made by our Cultural Connectors – a group of nearly a hundred local residents who are at the heart of the programme, giving and receiving advice and support on how to make the borough an even more creative place to live, work and play in”.<sup>24</sup>***

The Cultural Connectors are drawn from a range of backgrounds and have different experiences of engaging with the arts. This relative lack of prior knowledge has not only led to a range of innovative and programming decisions but has also added to the artist selection process through detailed questions on community engagement linked to local issues. An external arts advisor also adds to the commissioning panel, adding context as appropriate, but not to the detriment of the influence of the Cultural Connectors.

### **Key characteristics**

- 3.10 The various CPP approaches to quality and excellence are discussed below. The analysis is structured against a range of key characteristics derived from the various models or approaches employed. The key issues, strengths and weakness are discussed with the aid of examples where appropriate.

### **Models, frameworks and definitions**

- 3.11 Although there is a 'golden thread' that links the 21 CPP places, each area and programme has its own characteristics, challenges and focus. Representatives of CPP places were very mindful that key reference points for/of excellence and quality will therefore be different for each programme. The one consistent element was recognition of the need for an approach which captures a combination of the quality of the engagement process and aspects of the art output.
- 3.12 In light of the above, CPP places have either adapted all or part of an established framework (e.g. The Manchester Metrics) tailored to their individual programme and/or utilised a range of metrics developed or adapted by their evaluator or Critical Friend.

---

<sup>24</sup> Creative Barking and Dagenham Evaluation Summary Report Jan-Dec 2014

**bait** in South East Northumberland developed a set of Quality Guidelines to describe what quality meant in the context of its programme. This involved the team and the Consortium board chair, facilitated by the Critical Friend. Informed by the Manchester Metrics and ACE Quality Principles for work with Children and Young People, the Guidelines help the bait team and board think about the likely quality of a potential project and reflect on it once completed. The Guidelines are used not as a rigid template, but to provide some structure for thinking and talking about a project. This has also been used to frame discussions with artists and community partners.

The 10 elements within the Quality Guidelines are:

- **Ambition and risk taking** - the participants/artists/curators/project partners challenge themselves with this work;
- **Concept in context** - it is an interesting idea, developed and presented with the right people in the right place at the right time;
- **Meaning and relevance** - it means something to the people taking part or attending and it has something to say about the world in which we live;
- **Integrity and authenticity** - the work is honest and reflects the ideas of the people who are involved in making it;
- **Process** - care, attention and the right amount of time is given to the process
- **Collaborative ownership** - participants and partners are involved in making decisions about how the project is delivered;
- **Production and performance values** - it is well produced and presented to a high standard;
- **Inspires curiosity** - the work sparks curiosity and conversations with the people who engage;
- **Aspiration** - next step opportunities are clear for people taking part and there is an aspiration for longer term development; and
- **Sustainability and replicability** - elements of the project can be repeated, developed or sustained by individuals and groups in south east Northumberland.

**East Durham Creates** has adapted the bait Quality Guidelines, tailoring them to its programme of commissions and community-driven projects. Introduced approximately 12 months into the programme, the Guidelines are been used by the programme consortium members and evaluators to assess continued progress and relevance in terms of quality and excellence at three points across the projects' lives.

### **Taking Bearings**

CPP places have tended to be cautious not to influence the natural development of programming by restricting it to the potentially 'limiting' or 'artificial' parameters of a static model or framework. A group of directors, producers, artists and others did come together at a special meeting to draw up what they termed, 'An Incomplete (and Contradictory Glossary of the Qualities of Artistic Quality'. This was brought together in the document Taking Bearings. As well as suggesting some processes to encourage quality, it identified seven qualities:

- Integrity
- Resonance
- Originality
- Technical proficiency
- Ambition
- Magic
- Long-term Impact

### ***A flexible approach, often relying on a retrospective analysis of quality***

- 3.13 The majority of CPP places have therefore focused their approaches, to different extents, on relatively loose structures that do not seek to over define the CPP view on excellence on those already embedded in, and used by, the sector.

The **Heart of Glass** CPP in St. Helens has followed a 'socially-engaged arts practice' model which emphasises artists' links to the community and civil society and how they consume, interact and demand arts activities. There is a focus on building relationships with art work emerging naturally as result of the trust developed between participant and artist. As a result, although no particular model has driven the CPP's approach to excellence, there has been a consistent recognition of the need for quality of engagement and experiences to form the 'entirety of the work'.

- 3.14 The crucial element of this approach, as highlighted by a range of CPP representatives, is to provide a space for the community, artists and CPP teams to have a conversation about quality. This should be accompanied by an openness about overall aims and objectives and how the project complements these targets. The absence of this space was thought to have the potential to result in a lack of connection and ownership by members of the community and in turn a lack of success in lifting and sustaining participation levels.

**Transported** took a decision not to try and define excellence but to deliver a Quality and Innovation Programme which would provide a forum for stakeholders/community members to explore issues around excellence and help to define what this meant in the context of the work of the CPP. The Quality and Innovation Programme has funded a range of activities including Go and Sees and Masterclass talks with participants encouraged to come back and share their thoughts and experiences. This approach was adopted because it wasn't felt appropriate to impose a rigid top down definition of excellence. Other than the Programme Directors, the Transported programme team were also early stage/mid-career artists with limited experience of artforms other than their own and were therefore lacked the confidence to define and measure excellence across the breadth of the programme.

- 3.15 Several CPP places stated that an analysis of an evolving project was also thought to provide a better idea of its potential outcomes and how these relate to areas of quality and excellence. However, one of the challenges faced by CPPs, and those relying on evaluation teams and/or critical friends to embed excellence as part of the implementation, is that the pace of the programmes and work of the day-to-day CPP teams can be so rapid/agile (e.g. responding to feedback in project development) that it demands a time intensive, hands-on approach.

Like many CPP places, **East Durham Creates** has brought together community and arts sector organisations to support the delivery of its programme. Each partner offers a unique skillset and ability to analyse and support different elements of quality and excellence (e.g. curatorial quality and participant engagement) based on different perspectives, experiences and knowledge of the local area. Framing discussions on the design and assessment of projects within a loose structure rather than a specific framework was thought to potentially hinder the natural development of the programme.

### ***The importance of context***

- 3.16 To engage in works of art it is necessary to have a certain knowledge of what defines the arts and, with implications for what is recognised as art, an understanding of the aims and objectives of specific art works. Significantly, within the context of CPP and greater understanding of what quality and excellence in the arts 'look like', an individual's experience is shaped by their basic relationship or familiarity with different cultural institutions.
- 3.17 Research into arts attendance (e.g. Taking Part) suggests that arts engagement correlates with levels of education (the higher the level of final education, the greater propensity to engage) and social class, with working class young men often least likely to engage. Those who attend the arts as children are most likely to attend as adults. Some research (e.g. Morton et al 2004) suggests that comfortableness with attending arts events is a 'learned' set of skills, with many people not comfortable with the unwritten rules of visiting a museum, art gallery or theatre, for instance.



- 3.18 Ever-widening definitions of what kinds of practice or object can be considered art in both professional and amateur settings arguably adds to this syndrome. Many of our interviewees described that community members were often resistant to or felt uncomfortable with professional arts for these reasons.
- 3.19 CPP places have approached this set of issues by providing communities with access to a wide range of arts experiences and activities (i.e. 'go and see' and/or 'taster' sessions for the community and/or CPP representatives/volunteers) which they would not normally take up. These opportunities have not only overcome financial or transportation barriers to accessing a wider range of arts, but also a relative lack of knowledge of what to expect from the overall experience.
- 3.20 By facilitating the opportunity for those less engaged in the arts to experience a wider selection of quality art across genres, art forms and venues, CPP places have provided the environment through which people can inform their own assessment of quality and excellence. However, CPP places have not sought to shape or regulate this journey through training courses in the established rules that have governed discussions on excellence for years.
- 3.21 Crucially, the CPP approach has facilitated people to gain an understanding of excellence through their own lenses and those of their community rather than merely those of professional curators, programmers or artistic directors. People have, however, welcomed the role arts professionals can play in introducing them to high quality work, exploring the ways in which arts practice works, and how work could be brought to their communities. As a result, CPP representatives report that communities they have engaged with are more comfortable to engage in dialogue about quality with arts professionals. They are therefore in better positions to recognise quality in product and process in the context of their area and their own (expanded/more informed) experience and preferences. CPP has levelled the playing field in terms of a partnership between communities and arts professionals.

The **Creative Scene** programme works with 'SceneMakers' whose role is to help achieve the overarching mission of making art a part of everyday life. 'SceneMakers' are local volunteers who help shape the programme from the ground up through commissioning work, guiding decisions about what the CPP invests in, helping with evaluation and being the voices that speak out for the value of the arts. They therefore play an important role in holding the space for dialogue around what is excellent art and excellence of process (of engaging communities). The SceneMakers and community more generally have been supported through CPP to attend a range of arts activities both within and outside of the CPP footprint. Experiences have been written up as part of the Making a Scene blog, [www.makingascene.net](http://www.makingascene.net) providing reference points for the community and ideas which have been used to shape commissions.

The **East Durham Creates** community panel with responsibility for identifying and selecting 'Go and See' visits has increased its knowledge of quality arts events of relevance to the local community over time. Whilst some initial activities may not have been the first choice of the CPP team, the quality of choices, made from the perspective of the community by the community, has evolved based on the increased knowledge and experience of the panel.

- 3.22 A number of CPP places have also brought arts activities to non-traditional spaces such as shops, pubs, social clubs (e.g. bait's '[The Share at Guidepost Social Club](#)') and local businesses (e.g. Transported's [Haulage](#)). This produces a different reference point for concepts of quality and excellence than, for example, producing a performance in a traditional arts venue such as a theatre or exhibiting artwork in gallery spaces.

***Commonality of combining quality of product/arts and of engagement process***

- 3.23 There was a consensus amongst all of those consulted that excellence within the context of CPP represents a combination of artistic product and the process of engagement. Community views of quality are influenced by the 'whole experience' of an arts activity, (e.g. quality of toilets, food etc.), people do not necessarily split the quality of the 'product' and the 'experience'.
- 3.24 Process over product is acknowledged as a key theme in the 64 Million Artists report '[Everyday Creativity - from Great Art and Culture for Everyone, to Great Arts and Culture by, with and for Everyone](#)'<sup>25</sup> with consultation stressing the importance of process as much as quality of outcome if a positive experience of everyday creativity is to be achieved.

***"Consistently we heard that it's not about what you did (or made) but about who you did it with, what you felt, how it affected you".*** (64 Million Artists, 2016, p17)

The Share, a **Bait** project at Guidepost Social Club explored the role of working men's clubs as a hub for the arts in a community by establishing a partnership with a club in South East Northumberland. The project took 18 months to develop and complete and included two artists residencies and an exhibition at Woodhorn Museum visited by over 23,000 people between June and October 2015. The exhibition comprised a collection of work created and inspired by the people and heritage of the club including work by photographer in residence, Mik Critchlow and a selection of drinking vessels made by the 'Over 60s Bingo Club' with the support of ceramic artist Emilie Taylor.

The role of the curator within the project was crucial in providing a bridge between the club, its members, commissioned artists and bait. The curator's knowledge of the role of social clubs within the community and potential future role was integral to the success of the project. She was also able to work with key influencers to explore what was wanted and would work, but also what would have real quality and meaning as art, and as a process.

<sup>25</sup> <http://64millionartists.com/everyday-creativity-2/>

The project emphasises the need for time and persistence when looking to change perceptions of the arts within a group or 'community' such as the membership of a social club. Engaging positive champions but also those more skeptical, or even oppositional through joint decision making, determination and passion was vital, based on a thorough understanding of the often complex and sometimes insular relationships that govern the day-to-day running of a club.

The project also highlighted the importance of the timing and quality of input from artists with the participatory skills or 'core competencies' to develop relationships with participants. Each of the artists has created work which is sympathetic to, and crucially celebrates the people, history and heritage of the club.

Agreeing to engage with a project such as The Share requires all parties to be flexible and prepared to take risks. Social clubs will need to agree and adapt to artists working with members whilst artists will need to work with the club and potential participants in shaping a relevant programme of activities.

The exhibition in a professional gallery space was seen to provide a validation of both the role of the club in the community and the work produced as part of the project. The display of club artefacts and history served to bring further members into the project by utilising people's interest and pride in the club they support. This demonstrated a range of ideas around what was 'excellent'.

### ***Capacity/knowledge building within CPP teams and artists***

- 3.25 It is clear that for many CPP teams, the approach to incorporating quality and excellence within their delivery represented a significant challenge. This challenge has been met in a variety of ways but typically in the form of support and guidance from evaluators or Critical Friends in addition to learning from national CPP events. Other CPP places have utilised the range of skills present on consortium boards to inform quality and excellence within programming.
- 3.26 Where training has been provided it has been tailored to individual CPP areas and programmes but accessed primarily by the core delivery teams rather than community representatives. There was a consensus across a number CPP places that additional training or guidance for community representatives could impair the value of their judgement by reinforcing an arts institutional bias rather than nurturing a new approach to understanding excellence from the community perspective.

The Critical Friend for the **Appetite** CPP in Stoke, in conjunction with the evaluation team from Staffordshire University, has facilitated workshops for the delivery team to help inform/change views on concepts of quality and establish standards linked to programme resources.

- 3.27 A number of programmes have supported initiatives to upskill and inform artists in a variety of skills required to work effectively in CPP places including discussions around quality and excellence.

The **Creative Scene** CPP has, with the three North West CPPs, established The Faculty, a CPD programme for artists providing an alternative learning environment for those engaged, or wanting to engage, in social arts practice. This has been designed to support quality improvement and help artists and communities achieve excellence through effective processes, commissioning and delivery.

The **Cultural Spring** CPP has utilised the experience of the delivery team and elements of relevant programmes including [Creative Partnerships](#) and [ArtWorks](#) to inform activities to increase the quality of local artists. The training included support and guidance to professionalise local artists, (e.g. encouraging them to hold DBS clearance and insurances) but also acknowledged the participatory skills required to work towards the community development objectives of CPP alongside artist skills. This has included sessions discussing the development of artists' own practice but also how to boost community participation. Crucially in terms of the quality of engagement, this recognised that whilst the art product will be one driver, social engagement is likely to be equally, if not more important.

The **Creative Barking and Dagenham** CPP has found that some artists that had good reputations (locally and amongst national stakeholders) were actually weak or found it difficult to work with local communities as part of CPP. As a result, it has incorporated elements of CPD for artists in its programme.

### ***Artist selection***

- 3.28 Quality and excellence criteria have been incorporated in to artist selection processes across the CPP places. Where appropriate to the commission or project, CPPs will cover excellence questions to varying degrees in artist applications and interviews. Most CPP places have provided opportunities for the community to contribute to artist selection, either by sitting on selection panels or interviews or via a delegated fund or panel to make decisions on grants or activities.
- 3.29 Community arts is about finding ways of using the skills of the artist that are relevant to local people. CPP places have reported to varying extents that some arts organisations and artists don't always have the experience to enable them to deliver a quality arts process and delivery a quality arts product in the context of an area of historically low engagement. Off the shelf approaches that have been used in areas of high engagement are not likely to be too successful in CPP places and a more considered and bespoke approach is necessary.
- 3.30 Several CPPs found that a number of 'community artists' struggled with these issues. CPPs have naturally been approached by local artists who may have assumed that they would secure commissions but not all will be able to adequately respond to questions about how excellence of process and excellence of product would be incorporated into their approach. Many may focus solely on the process with not enough detail on the quality of the artistic output for example.

- 3.31 Transported's commissioning process aims to ensure that this is built into the successful artists' model. It has taken this one step further and embedded the Arts Council question about quality and excellence into their commissioning process for artists as follows:

**ORIGINALITY, COPYRIGHT AND REPRODUCTION**

a) The Project needs to fulfil the Commissioners interpretation of excellent art in accordance with the Creative People and Places Initiative, as listed below:

The bravest, most original, most innovative, most perfectly realised Works of which people are capable – whether in the creation of art, its performance, its communication or its impact on audiences – to be measured in its effect on both those who make it and those who experience it. It is the opposite of the safe, routine and imitative.

b) The Artist warrants that the Works will be original. The Artist will use her aesthetic skill and judgement to create the Works, and the Commissioner agrees to accept the completed Works in accordance with the terms of this Agreement unless it can be shown that the Works was executed not in accordance with the description and design agreed by them in Clause 1 of this Agreement.

- 3.32 Transported has used an approach where they have exhibited proposals by artists for public art work. This has allowed the community to review and discuss them although the final selection process is undertaken by a steering group comprising Transported and members of the community groups. The steering group have received support and training and have discussed what Arts Council's expectations are regarding quality and excellence (e.g. around originality and uniqueness) as well as production value.
- 3.33 The influence of different perceptions of quality from different stakeholders involved in the artist selection process (e.g. CPP staff and community representatives) has produced some interesting discussions, risk taking and a number of decisions that would not have been made outside of the 'CPP model'.
- 3.34 There can sometimes be a tension between what the Arts Council is looking for regarding excellence and what local community/partners are looking for.

An example from **Transported's** Haulage project highlights a potential tension based on perceptions of quality from different perspectives. The Haulage project received responses from a range of artists including a high profile prize winner although the local haulage company preferred another artist whom it felt better connected with the audience and local context. Despite some views to the contrary, the project proceeded with the lesser known or celebrated artist and went on to become a great success. This compromise worked in both artistic terms and enabled them to strengthen their relationship with the haulage company which is supporting further arts activity.

- 3.35 The ability of artists working with CPP places to frame participatory work to create excellence is of paramount importance incorporating the key skills of relationship building and leadership. Excellence will be linked as much if not more to the outcomes for the participants than the eventual product at the end of the project. CPP provides the time and flexibility required to enable skilled artists to share their expertise with participants and vice versa in terms of their own knowledge and mutual practice.
- 3.36 In common with the combination employed overall, most stakeholders found it difficult to separate the skills, qualities and experiences required by artists linked to excellence in artistic practice and excellence community engagement in a CPP context. Key factors identified included:
- Participatory skills;
  - Working towards clear aims and objectives;
  - Agility within an action learning approach;
  - Relevance to and familiarity with an area/cohort;
  - Sharing values and goals;
  - Building on experience of what works and what doesn't;
  - Establishing supportive relationships;
  - Someone people can connect with; and
  - Honesty, genuineness etc.

### ***Endorsement factors***

- 3.37 This research has identified a range of factors which influence the views of quality excellence within different areas and types of stakeholders involved in CPP (e.g. CPP teams, NPOs, artists/arts companies and community representatives including those supported to play a delivery role by CPP places.
- 3.38 These endorsement factors will change for different stakeholders depending on their background and interests, previous engagement with the arts and position/role. These can broadly result in very different notions of 'good' art. For example, an art expert would often look for art to be 'challenging' with art that is too easy to like seen as potentially suspect. In contrast, for the non-expert there may have to be evidence of skill (e.g. something that someone's child could not do). (Crehan 2011)<sup>26</sup>
- 3.39 The Everyday Creativity report argues that the 'narrative' around excellence has become associated with a gradual professionalisation of artistic productivity that has been off-putting to many people. If only professional arts can make great work, that if a professional has made it must be good, and that conversely if you are not a professional, or likely to become one, the work must be somehow lesser in quality.

---

<sup>26</sup> Crehan, K (2011), Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective

- 3.40 This syndrome may be compounded by the way in which ‘endorsement’ or ‘subscription’ works in some artforms - so the artist must be not only professional but endorsed by a London gallery dealer, or performances in certain venues or at certain festivals to be readily perceived as ‘excellent’. Should they have some qualities but lack this endorsement, for whatever reason, they are likely to fall into the ‘local artist’ trap.
- 3.41 Related to issues of endorsement, the accreditation of CPP art and art more widely represents an alternative viewpoint of quality. Typically the influence of the artist, or to a lesser extent the producer or venue, are paramount. However, within CPP, greater recognition of the entire arts experience and process leading to that experience have a heightened importance with the CPP place brand highlighted in some areas as becoming a signal of quality built upon not only curatorial excellence but also a quality engagement process.
- 3.42 For example, the signing of a painting by an artist is commonplace and a potential source of pride, especially for someone participating in the arts for the first time. However, this could neglect to highlight the wider quality within the engagement process delivered by not only a coordinating artist but those involved in recruiting to a project and/or building the relationships, confidence and skills requiring to produce that product. In the context of CPP this could include a community organisation able to engage effectively with ‘hard to reach groups’ or a curator working with a group to build a trusted relationship through which arts activities can be delivered.

The **Appetite CPP** in Stoke has worked to develop its brand to a position from which people can make assumptions about the type and quality of arts activities likely to be delivered. The strength of brand and understanding of the approach to quality in both product and process was thought to therefore reinforce perceptions of both the quality of product and process behind, for example, a piece of street theatre commissioned by Appetite including the performer’s logo but also carrying the appetite brand.

The Ashington District Star project developed by the **bait CPP** in south east Northumberland provides a contrasting and equally valid example of the CPP approach to quality. The community editorial team behind the photographic newspaper made a decision not to accredit any photographs, irrespective of whether they were produced by the project lead and photographer Julian Germain, or a member of the editorial team comprised of local people. This equity of accreditation across the editorial team is again thought to reinforce the quality of engagement but works against conventional views on accreditation.



***Language and perceptions of quality within an ‘arts hierarchy’***

- 3.43 One of the issues or barriers to engaging with participants in CPP and discussing excellence more specifically is the language and attitudes often surrounding the arts. Several stakeholders highlighted that the language typically used to describe the work supported by CPP (e.g. community or amateur arts) can lead to assumptions of lower quality and potentially create a divide which can diminish the credibility of work produced.
- 3.44 There can also be some tensions for artists in pursuing community art who may fear that if they go ‘too native’ and move away from their training or the established arts sector, that there is a danger that their art will not be valued and impact upon future opportunities and funding.
- 3.45 CPP staff described the need to find balance between the language commonly used by the sector and more accessible terms to describe the innovative nature of CPP and its associated participation and quality targets without being patronising. CPP was described as helping to dismantle common or dominant ways of thinking/working with the language used a key first step in supporting greater engagement and sustainable outcomes.
- 3.46 Indeed, one Critical Friend suggested that ‘excellence’ is perhaps the wrong word to use altogether and the wrong aspiration for the CPPs in the short term. Use of terms including ‘good’ and ‘fun’ in particular were thought to be more useful in helping to secure longer-term participation for communities. Arts experiences have to be relevant to the lives of people with research showing that participants are more likely to discuss their engagement with the arts in terms of relevance to them and their lifestyles.
- 3.47 Accordingly, the language used is required to maintain the value and integrity of the programme without segmenting audiences, reinforcing the consensus that CPP delivery should be purposeful, meaningful and rooted in the communities it is supporting. It has also evolved around respecting the value of the different roles required to make CPP successful including engagement, brokerage and artists.

The **Transported** CPP has found that the language of excellence can be problematic in particular if arts organisations try to use elitist language in non-art contexts (e.g. factories, market places, school playgrounds etc.). The Transported team have encouraged and supported participants to provide feedback and in some cases this has meant getting them to think about other areas where they can make an assessment of relative quality (i.e. purchasing a car, fashion items, cooking). This helps the community express their views around quality.



- 3.48 The use of inaccessible language is linked to issues around excellence and the traditional hierarchy of excellence in the arts (i.e. the perceived disparity between ‘high’ or ‘fine’ arts and ‘craft’, ‘community’ or ‘grassroots’ arts). This can create particular problems when CPP places are looking to increase engagement with the arts in areas of least engagement. Even seemingly ‘innocent’ words can be off-putting - an example given was of a very accessible ‘pop-up gallery’ where the public found the artists’ repeated use of the word ‘installation’ excluding.
- 3.49 Discussions with CPP places highlighted the barrier to engagement represented by exclusive definitions of arts and culture that reinforce this hierarchy. Stakeholders however highlighted that the CPP approach (which can include or be termed by some as community arts) represents a different form of excellence that can generate significant outcomes including the inspiration and confidence to engage in the arts. This recognises that excellence can also be observed in the engagement process of the participant or attendee as much as the eventual product irrespective of any implied hierarchy.

DAGFEST is Dagenham’s outdoor festival of circus, music, street theatre and dance, produced by Creative Barking & Dagenham and curated by a steering group of local residents. The programme is notable for its range, which included over 280 performers in 2016. These included companies such as No Fit State Circus and Artonik ‘endorsed’ by established reputations from the national and international outdoor festival circuit alongside artists and groups that would be well-known to local people, ranging from dance troupes to brass bands and samba groups.

The programme is commissioned by a group of local people, working with support from Creative Barking & Dagenham but with curatorial lead. This has been supported over a long period of time, developing skills, expertise and insight. The festival takes places outdoors, on the streets, and in a 12<sup>th</sup> century church, and places all acts, whatever their supposed or perceived ‘status’ on an equal footing. This has been successful in generating new audiences, and audience satisfaction.

### ***Community ownership of CPP***

- 3.50 There are many similarities between CPP and community-based regeneration where communities are empowered to control and shape their own futures. There are also many examples of quality and excellence being adhered to across CPP places with communities being supported, to varying degrees, to take ownership of ‘their’ local programme.
- 3.51 Community ownership takes multiple forms and includes a range of roles including helping to guide and shape artist briefs, interviewing artists and supporting community activities typically through a panel which convenes to assess grants or decisions on CPP activities (e.g. Go and See visits). The opportunity for community ownership can support artists to engage with communities and reduce any tensions which can arise where participants fail to make a link between art and everyday life (i.e. cultural relevance).

Each community engaged in Round 1 (April 2013 to March 2016) by the **Appetite** CPP in Stoke was assigned an 'Appetite builder' to work with them on defining and commissioning an arts project they would like. This has enabled communities to get involved in the process of designing artist's briefs and shaping the quality processes that govern commissioned projects including the [Grand Cross Fayre](#) which has incorporated a range of arts activities shaped by the community and is now a regular event.

Appetite has also produced a Quality Assurance Framework - a series of prompts/questions, which is designed to aid projects/communities to deliver quality. The Framework is flexible, enabling weighting to be assigned to different quality elements (e.g. artistic output or artistic process). The Framework has been used to select artists to deliver work across Stoke. The programme has also established [Artsbank](#) which is an online resource to help community plan and run quality events.

Appetite has also established a [Cultural Reporter Scheme](#) which aims to showcase, promote and review cultural activity in and around Stoke-on-Trent. This is a volunteer led scheme providing a local 'voice' to what's happening in the arts and cultural sector in the city. It has helped to review the 'quality' of activities from the perspective of local people not artists.

- 3.52 CPP aims to engage the local community and to build their confidence so that they feel comfortable discussing issues of quality and excellence with artists and arts organisations. A number of CPP places indicated that the desire and ability of community representatives to influence delivery had grown through the life of the programme, reflecting the effectiveness or quality of the engagement process and the capacity building work of CPP places. A number of interviewees and respondents to the Basecamp surveys stressed the importance of locality to defining excellence of both product and process of engaging communities. Locality is an important factor in many sets of quality principles and its influence in CPP discussions of excellence is important to note.
- 3.53 The scale and scope of the role of the community in shaping the CPP programme is one example of 'risk taking' which programme teams can utilise and benefit from given the flexibility afforded by the action learning ethos of CPP. Whilst there needs to be a balance between social benefits and artistic value in order to maintain the arts element of the project, CPP can adopt an approach that builds ownership, trust and therefore the relationships that can support the sustainability of the programme.

**Creative Scene's** 'SceneMakers' have been involved in developing commissions and appointing artists. This has been useful to enabling outcomes, quality and excellence to be explored in the process of developing the brief and appointing artists.

**The Cultural Spring** in South Tyneside and Sunderland worked with Royal Northern Sinfonia to programme a performance by the renowned chamber orchestra into its Summer Streets festival, a two-day event combining established and local artists, with an emphasis on music and performing arts. When discussing what the Royal Northern Sinfonia would perform during their slot, in a tent in a Sunderland park to an audience of primarily local people, a decision was made to not do what might have been the ‘easy’ choice, of some ‘popular classics’, but to perform the whole of Schubert’s ‘Death and the Maiden’. This was received extremely well, and 50 special discounted tickets at £5 to see the orchestra at the Sage Gateshead sold out. This approach showed how the perceived difficulty of some art does not form a barrier when presented in familiar and welcoming settings.

### Risk-taking

- 3.54 There are many examples of CPP places taking informed risks in empowering and trusting artists and communities to lead on innovative or iterative approaches to engagement in the arts. Crucially given the action learning ethos of CPP, there is a need for risk taking to inform innovation and to capture the associated learning. The willingness of CPP to manage risk in project planning and delivery to the benefit of project outcomes is specifically welcomed by the artists consulted compared to their experiences of other programmes.

The **Heart of Glass** opening event, *Silent Night / ‘And, on that Note’*, was created through a collaboration with Saints Community Development Foundation and St Helens Music Service. Arising from a desire to create an arts intervention at the rugby, the event held at Langtree Park Stadium to mark the anniversary of the World War I Christmas Truce of 1914 was high profile but also posed a creative challenge due to the size of the space. It combined amateur or community arts practices and practitioners, such as a 600-strong a choir made up from church, community and school choirs across St Helens, with experimental professional artists. It also involved a music conductor, and youth brass band, plus local artists, volunteers and students. An audience of 2,000 attended.

*Silent Night / ‘And, on that Note’* was described as creating ‘highly experimental moments of transition, states of uncertainty, in-between private thought and public behaviour, which required its audience to add their own meaning and interpretation of what it represented’. It was thus challenging artistically as well as creatively. The complexities of the project were huge and the ‘political’ need to ensure all relevant groups were involved in some way was described to us as arguably compromising some of the artistic end result.

However, the event also signaled the ambition of Heart of Glass in terms of both excellence of art and excellence of engagement, and made a highly visible statement about the partnership and the profile it sought. This has arguably been rewarded in the success of the subsequent programme and appetite for it, meaning the risks taken were worthwhile.

**Made in Corby** worked with the theatre company Frantic Assembly, who are known for their innovative approach to making theatre. This selection on artistic grounds combined with an inclusive approach to community engagement to create both a memorable piece of theatre and significant outcomes for individuals who took part in the production. The process demonstrates a skillful balancing of risk and factors which made success more likely. These included the skills the skills and reputation of Frantic Assembly, but also the fact that its two directors were raised in Corby, creating additional local interest.

'No Way Back' was based on personal stories of the local cast and arguably took risks in who it involved, including people from a local drug recovery centre. People were initially daunted and challenged by what was asked of them in developing a physical theatre performance. Afterwards, though, participants reported gains in self-confidence, increased social connectivity and having gained new skills for both art and everyday life.

One participant from the recovery centre described how he now walked up to traffic lights in a more physically confident manner as a result of his new performance skills. Whilst he was also keen to continue to be involved in performing, he also described the positive effects on his recovery.) This was largely attributed to the excellence of the collaborative approach and trust the artists were able to develop as a result of an inclusive process that takes risks in terms of who it involves and what it ask of them, high production standards and a well-informed choice of artist.

### Key Points

- **There is no simple 'one size fits all' approach to quality and excellence in CPP, rather a tailored approach in response to the challenges arising in each CPP place.**
- **CPPs are designing programmes that aspire to both 'excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities' although evaluations tend not to address these elements equally.**
- **Some CPP places have integrated discussions and decisions around excellence within strong, community-driven models whilst others have maintained a tighter 'control' amongst CPP staff. Both approaches have provided examples of positive outcomes although a community driven model should yield more sustainable outcomes in the longer term.**
- **The majority of CPP places have focused their approaches, to different extents, on relatively loose structures which do not seek to over-define a CPP view on excellence. The crucial element of this approach is to provide a space for the community, artists and CPP teams to have a conversation about quality linked to overall programme aims and objectives.**

- **The CPP approach has facilitated people to gain an understanding of excellence through their own lenses and those of their community rather than merely those of professional curators, programmers or artistic directors.**
- **Several stakeholders highlighted that the language typically used to describe the work supported by CPP (e.g. community or amateur arts) can lead to assumptions of lower quality and potentially create a divide which can diminish the credibility of work produced.**
- **There are many similarities between CPP and community-based regeneration where communities are empowered to control and shape their own futures. CPP aims to engage the local community and to build their confidence so that they feel comfortable discussing issues of quality and excellence with artists and arts organisations. The aspects of excellence which relate to place or locality are central to CPP.**

## 4 Assessing Outcomes and Impacts

- 4.1 The scale and scope of outcomes and impacts arising from CPP, and the nature of the debates around what constitutes excellence in the arts, mean that assessing the excellence of CPP is no more possible or less difficult than it is for other programmes or offers. Measures must be contextual and flexible, and will therefore vary. Although all are addressing the same question, the meanings vary, as do responses.
- 4.2 CPP places and communities are often stated to come with a set of assumptions but also a range of perspectives on any project. This subjectivity requires continuous debate although it was widely thought to be unhelpful if this debate was shaped by fixed views of quality or a limited set of metrics.

***“It’s about how you tell the story – which lens you tell it through in order to evaluate the process and impact. An ‘artwork’ will mean different things to different people.”***

### Approaches to evaluation

- 4.3 The challenge for understanding quality and excellence within the context of CPP is identifying and communicating the findings of evaluation to sector stakeholders to inform learning and mainstreaming of good practice. This may include a range of outcomes which differ from those often linked to the wider arts sector which focus on the cultural relevance, value, originality, benefits and consequences for participants from lower socio economic groups.
- 4.4 In line with the variation in the design and delivery of CPP programmes overall, there have also been a number of different approaches to evaluating quality and excellence across CPP places. Most have been guided by external evaluators and/or Critical Friends who have taken different approaches to answering the second of the three core questions established by the Arts Council for the national evaluation: ***To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?***

### Qualitative reflection

- 4.5 A large proportion of stakeholders have chosen to employ a phased assessment of progress towards answering the above question. This typically involved comparing the results of initial, qualitative discussions at the outset of a project or programme with those from repeat discussions on completion. The emphasis of the majority of these discussions has been predominantly on the behaviours inspired by projects linked to excellence rather than the internal qualities of a project (e.g. the feelings generated, the desire to replicate the activity or the willingness to encourage friends to also participate etc.).
- 4.6 At the time of this research a number of CPP places had not undertaken or analysed the results of the follow-up consultations so were not in a position to report fully on the progress made. This is also thought to account for many of the gaps in responses to this question as part of interim national evaluation reporting.

- 4.7 The above approach is also consistent with feedback from CPPs that it was easier for artists and the community in particular to assess any progress they, and/or the programme, had made retrospectively. In this way, analysis can be informed by the contextual knowledge of participants and CPP staff gained from their involvement in the programme. It is also worth noting however that the challenge of defining excellence and quality isn't restricted to non-artists. For example, a visual artist may have similar challenges in defining the quality and excellence of a theatre production. Reflection from all sides is therefore typically seen as crucial to developing an understanding of quality rather than adopting a prescribed framework. Excellence for most CPPs is explored as much as it is defined, in the process of making and engaging, and in discussing the impacts on all those involved. These are not always straightforward or immediate.
- 4.8 Examples taken from consultations with stakeholders and the desk research are provided below:

The **Creative Scene** CPP in West Yorkshire commissioned an evaluation through the University of Huddersfield which included workshop sessions for staff to support them in understanding the concepts of quality and excellence in the context of the CPP in the local area. Creative Scene's commissions also have evaluation activity built into their design which attempted to enable the views and voice of the community (participants) to be heard through a process that didn't detract from their experience (i.e. an overload of surveys). For example, the theatre production, '[Like Mother Like Daughter](#)' involved the actors - all women recruited from the area - serving soup and eating with the audience as the culmination of the show. This enabled space for discussion with the audience which in turn enabled issues of quality and excellence to be explored and better understood.

In addition, more active community involvement in the process of developing the programme of activities has meant that more traditional models of assessing excellence and quality are not as relevant. What is seen as important is having sufficient space for the community and artists to come together to develop and design activities and as part of this process negotiate/agree what quality and excellence would look like. The community is then also actively involved (supported by SceneMakers) in reviewing arts activities and events and then learning from this process to drive quality and excellence in subsequent projects.

Following projects the **Creative Barking and Dagenham** CPP undertakes a review of projects with the local community, using feedback forms and focus groups to discuss quality and excellence. The programme's Cultural Connectors have had an important role to play in channelling feedback from the local community and, as the programme has developed, they have been instrumental in shaping the programme including overseeing grant making and providing a link between the team, artists and the local community. This has been central to engaging the wider community and enabling the programme to be shaped by the aspirations of the community.

The **Appetite** CPP collects data about participant's experiences through a number of channels including post event survey forms, debrief sessions with communities (in which they bring word of mouth feedback) and through the Appetite Builders. This is used to inform feedback on the quality of individual commissions and events. Appetite Builders in Stoke have acted like brokers with local communities to gather opinions and views about what projects/artworks/ideas will work. This has been valuable in shaping briefs, managing expectations, raising aspirations and involving the community. It has also been useful in recruiting artists with the right skillset to work in the context of the CPP areas.

Analysis of changing knowledge of, and views on, quality and excellence in the context of Appetite have been assessed through qualitative discussions at different stages of the programme. The discussions have provided clarity on the views of 'arts professionals' and the community with the former initially stressing the technical expertise required to create the 'wow factor' within CPP - something which the community has come to recognise more over time. Evaluation findings have indicated that community members now feel more confident to talk about quality including realising that they do not need to like something to recognise artistic quality.

Appetite has used a wide range of creative methods and approaches to gather feedback from community members about projects including working with artists to fully engage and involve community members in discussion. This has helped engender a sense of ownership as well as changing and challenging perceptions around the questions 'is art for me?' and 'what is art?' Communities have to be inspired in order to build their confidence to engage initially before they are ready and willing to discuss issues around quality and excellence. The Taster Menu approach has enabled local communities to experience a range of artforms and projects in order to inspire them and build their participation, experience and enjoyment.

### ***A quantitative assessment***

- 4.9 The Ideas Test CPP in Swale and Medway provides the most prominent example of applying a quantitative approach to assessing quality and excellence in the context of CPP leading to an Artistic Quality Review published in May 2015.

#### **Ideas Test - Artistic Quality Review**

The review emanated from the CPP's artistic vision, 'Ideas Test: Ensuring Artistic Quality' which established a target that 75% of all projects scoring 'good' or better for artistic quality. The review uses the following definition of artistic quality:

***"..technically excellent work which is both ambitious and original, connects to people and their concerns and leaves audiences changed in some lasting way".***



The methodology was formulated in partnership with the CPP research partners, Canterbury Christchurch University, and consisted of the following:

- An assessment of all completed projects against the five artistic quality criteria identified by Francois Matarasso in his paper 'Weighing Poetry' originally produced for the Irish Arts Council in 2000 and revised for the CPP national peer learning network conference 2015;
- A review of artistic support process for decision panels; and
- Qualitative sample of profiles of artists/companies engaged.

**The criteria for artistic quality are: technique, originality, ambition, resonance and magic.**

Projects were discussed by the Ideas Test team against the five criteria before being given a score between 1 – poor and 3 - high. The total score and overall ratings were 7 or below – poor, 8-10 - good, 11-13 - strong and 14-15 - outstanding. For comparison projects were also rated 1-3 for quality of community engagement.

- ***75.5% of projects were rated good or above for artistic quality with 35.5% rated as strong or outstanding.***
- ***82% of projects were rated as medium or high for community engagement with 18% rated as low.***

The results of the quantitative ratings were subsequently cross-referenced with the qualitative remarks made by the CPP's community decision panel comments prior to the projects commencing with a correlation found between initial concerns and poor quantitative ratings. This was found to suggest that the panel decisions took appropriate account of artistic quality and benefited from the input of an independent artistic critical friend.

Transported developed a framework for what they called 'Quality Intent' which is made up of 'Creative Intent' and 'Delivery Intent'. 'Creative Intent' codes events according to a simple typology. Events aimed at audiences are coded as Fun or Captivating, whilst those that are more participatory are coded as Engrossing, and all events are coded according to how Locally Resonant they are. Audiences were also asked open questions about their experience of the event which were then be compared with the programmers' 'Creative Intent'. 'Delivery Intent' relates to communication and management, and impact on local infrastructure, people and place.

**Right Up Our Street's** Ted Hughes weekend festival is noted in Ecorys' End of Year 2 Report as being 'considered to be excellent both in terms of its quality of art and engagement'. The festival was a celebration and discovery of the writer, who was brought up in Mexborough, Doncaster. The project built on a writers group attended by both published and new writers, and the interest of published poets.

The festival successfully created a network of spoken word and writing groups, which brought together members of a local writing group to perform alongside national poets. It combined community input and local leadership with an imaginative approach to programming - from walks to readings. This was noted nationally, and the organisers have since gone on to gain Arts Council funding for subsequent festivals.

Comparison with a different project, Poet Street is illuminating. Poet Street was a creative writing project, also in Mexborough. A writer aimed to gather stories from each household in streets named after famous poets, but received little interest. This was surprising to the writer, an experienced artist, who decided to stop the project. Conversations with the Creative Producer and Arts Supporter explored adapting the idea, but the artist stuck with his original intent and subsequently stopped the project. It was felt that a similar activity might have received more support after the work of the Arts Supporter in the area.

### ***Legacy points***

- 4.10 There was an overall consensus that there the main legacy of the CPP programme will be the learning and good practice (see key success factors in [Section 5](#)) that has the potential to influence the broader arts sector in terms of excellence in working in areas of least engagement. The majority of stakeholders, unsurprisingly, highlighted the potential influence of the learning from CPP on Arts Council England and the work of the NPOs, particularly around engaging previously disengaged communities.
- 4.11 Key issues and legacy points include the need to avoid fixed views on quality and excellence, learning from CPP by recognising quality through the eyes of the target audience, assessing the steps that underpin quality rather than the subjective outcome and agreeing where CPP fits into the broader policy context including the Art Council's 'Great art and culture for Everyone' strategy.
- 4.12 However, it was also agreed that any legacy should ideally be underpinned by a bottom-up model which recognises both the community as an engaged and active partner in the design, management and delivery of community arts and the size of resource required to adequately support sustainable community engagement. Importantly, legacy activity should aim to authenticate conversations with partners which recognise the skills of all involved in developing quality art with the CPP the intermediary between artists and the community - CPP makes sure the necessary conversation happen.
- 4.13 Stakeholders offered a variety of mechanisms through which a CPP legacy could be delivered ranging from training programmes for NPOs and wider arts organisations, introducing a need to deliver activity in areas of least engagement as part of funding requirements and communication of good practice by incorporating lessons and guidance in strategy and evaluation documents.

- 4.14 Whilst many suggested legacy outcomes had related aims of influencing the work of NPOs, several stakeholders highlighted that this may actually represent a ‘false holy grail’ with any success in this regard dependent on these organisations wanting to work in these areas and with these communities. However, areas of least engagement could be seen as an untapped market for many NPOs with potential financial drivers one way to encourage new audience development in line with the CPP ethos of cultural relevance and inclusivity.
- 4.15 Wider legacy points include the ability of CPP partnerships to influence non-arts partners including local authorities, health and education etc. By highlighting the impact of CPP-influenced activities on social inclusion, regeneration, health etc. there is scope to influence funding decisions and support initiatives to integrate art into other sectors’ delivery.<sup>27</sup>
- 4.16 The way in which CPP creates discussion around arts practice in its localities, around what works for that context, in what ways, or what doesn't and why not, has potential to be a powerful legacy. In each location CPP has brought a wide range of stakeholders together - be that at the Consortium level, or at local project level - who have been involved in discussions around programming and commissioning, and around the quality of the work and the process of engagement. This reflective process is in itself potentially significant as it can move all parties away from easy assumptions about programme, or place or ‘what people want’. Where this reflective process is combined with real influence over the next steps, the next programme, there are signs of increased commitment and ownership.

#### ***Arts Council consultation***

- 4.17 Given that CPP is a key strategic stream of investment for Arts Council England, and that its dual concerns of quality and increasing levels of engagement are present in Arts Council’s mission of ‘Great arts and culture for everyone’, it was appropriate for this research to gauge views of how CPP was delivering excellence. An online survey was sent to a sample of Arts Council staff and 25 responses were received from all levels of the organisation including Executive Board. Interviews were also conducted with two artform Directors.
- 4.18 Although only 52% had specific responsibility relating to CPP, 84% felt they had either a good knowledge of CPP or a lot of knowledge of it. 56% felt it was vital to the organisation’s mission, and 20% felt it was very important. (No respondents felt it was ‘not important’ or ‘less important than many other things’.)

***‘An important signifier for ACE, a programme that puts into practice the rhetoric about the importance to broaden audiences, to empower local people, and to develop art that is relevant to a broader constituency, including the minimally engaged.’***

---

<sup>27</sup> The Cultural Commissioning Programme is working with policy makers and stakeholders to embed support for cultural commissioning – see <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/public-services/cultural-commissioning-programme>

- 4.19 There was a strong sense that the combination of quality of product and quality of process of engagement was central to CPP, rather than one or the other. (68% felt this was the most important target for CPP.) Nor was it seen as simply an attempt to increase the lower than average levels of arts engagement that qualified places to apply to the programme.
- 4.20 Respondents were mainly positive that people were engaging with really excellent art (46% agreeing or agreeing strongly, with 40% unsure). 88% agreed strongly that CPP combines excellence of product and process of engagement in its actual work. Interestingly there were rather split views on whether the highest quality art, however defined, led to the best engagement. (An assumption behind the recommendations in the McMaster report.) 45% disagreed or disagreed strongly with that statement, with 37% agreeing or agreeing strongly. 54% of respondents disagreed with the idea that the best engagement process lead to the highest quality art.

***'Really helps evidence our commitment to the 'for everyone' bit of Great art for everyone. And important too for our wish to build cultural capacity outside London'***

- 4.21 When asked to consider which areas of the Quality Principles they felt CPP was delivering most, 95% of people cited Local Impact, with Enthusiasm (41%), 'Meaning' and 'Distinctiveness' (both 32%) the next most often chosen. This in many ways fits with the picture painted in interviews with directors, critical friends and others in the CPP network, for whom local impact appears central.
- 4.22 That CPP has a different 'starting point' from most, if not all, other Arts Council programmes was noted consistently. As one survey respondent put it, CPP is ***'the only national programme we run that starts with the public.'*** This potentially connects to the notion of building the skills in individuals or groups and capacity within communities to consistently engage in the arts, requiring different approaches to those focused more on current or lapsed engagers.
- 4.23 The importance of a wide-range of opportunities to sample work, to find what is excellent in that place, for those people, was stressed. For some Arts Council staff, this was connected to the process of decision-making, leadership and public involvement. Perhaps due to the consortium approach required of CPP places, CPP was seen as potentially signally a more collaborative leadership model amongst cultural actors, especially NPOs and other 'infrastructure', in places with historically lower engagement in certain arts practices.

***'It is critical that it engages people in a meaningful and compelling way with very strong work'***

***'Quality of art remains a core requirement but can take many different scales - it doesn't necessarily relate to size or impact of events, and traction with the public is crucial; learning and approaches are beginning to be disseminated through other arts organisations and local authorities in neighbouring areas with early but promising indications for commissioning and ways of working.'***

***'Ultimately what the public thinks is excellent trumps all else. It's not for ace or CPP consortia to decide in advance what people will or won't judge to be quality'***

- 4.24 Although not arising from our survey or interviews, it is also useful to note that the Arts Council have referred to CPP in its response to the Everyday Creativity Report<sup>28</sup> which looks at how to develop ‘the growing popular appetite for creative expression’, in the wake of the Warwick report on Cultural Value. Laura Dyer, Executive Director, describes CPP as Arts Council’s ‘flagship’ programme in this context and notes that it ‘aims to encourage greater involvement in creativity and culture with by and for the public, both as audiences and as participants.’ She also says that Arts Council is ‘learning how to apply this approach more effectively and the lessons will be valuable in shaping our approach to future projects.’

### **Artists’ perspectives**

- 4.25 This research also encouraged artists engaged through the programme to provide feedback on how the programme had influenced their practice in terms of quality and excellence. An online survey disseminated via CPP places received responses from 21 artists.
- 4.26 Almost 90% of artists responding to our survey state that their involvement in CPP has influenced their practice in terms of quality and excellence. Anonymised quotes taken from the small survey of CPP artists to highlight key issues include:

***“it has helped us further how community engagement is an embedded part of our creative process ... community workshops, and conversations with local people have informed every step of the process of making the show. I believe it's a better show for their contributions. Many of our participants are not regular theatre-goers, and I feel their perspectives have helped us make a piece that is welcoming and accessible, as well as being artistically ambitious.”***

***“I feel like I have learned a lot about practice and how to adapt my practice for a number of contexts and participants. I have been involved in a number of varying projects, the diversity of which has helped me to improve and adapt my practice in many ways. I have gained a lot of valuable experience and accreditations etc., and feel that I have a better idea of how to deliver high-quality, excellent work.”***

***“A rigorous understanding of quality and excellence in the context of contemporary theatre practice is central to my work as a producer. Working with ... bait ... has further developed that understanding by allowing me to see shows through the eyes of group members. Their responses have reinforced my conviction that participants are entirely able to recognise excellence when they are faced with it and that challenging or very contemporary work is no barrier to enjoyment.”***

***“It was great to be given a brief that was flexible, open and really tapped into my creativity I felt really supported by the process and also the people.”***

<sup>28</sup> <http://64millionartists.com/everyday-creativity-2/>

*“As an artist making work with a strong participatory and social engagement element to my practice, the experience has allowed me to work with a group over a long period of time, developing new skills in art making, as well as helping a group develop its voice and build solid, firm relationships.”*

*“Our project involved introducing people to world class contemporary theatre. We took them to see four shows, two of which were good rather than excellent, relatively safe and easy to watch - the kind of shows that programmers often think of as appropriate for a non-theatre going audience. The other two were truly world class and were more unusual - they didn't look anything like a 'play' in the traditional sense. I'm using my professional judgement here as well as the opinions of critics and awards programmes. What I found interesting was that every single member of the group, without any prompting, identified the more unusual pieces as being excellent in their opinion. They loved them so much we extended the project so that they could programme one of the shows into their own community. This project proved to me that non arts attenders are every bit as able to identify excellence as those immersed in the industry.”*

- 4.27 The different views of stakeholders and artists on how to approach quality and excellence in the context of CPP are reflected in the fact that 53% of artists stated that their approach to quality and excellence in CPP had differed from their previous work. Conversely, 47% had not changed their approach. Anonymised quotations covering the issues include:

*“I think there are circumstances in working with certain community groups where quality and excellence is not the sole priority of the work. I think CPP projects work in terms of exposing people to new art forms, or in allowing people to 'have a go' at things that they otherwise wouldn't have dreamed of, so to expect high-quality output straight-off-the-bat is unrealistic. After three years of the project, though, I think there has been enough time for the onus to start to be placed on high-quality output and, in my own personal experience, projects that I have been involved in have definitely started evolving and improving.”*

*“I feel working with Creative People and Places has helped us develop our community-based artistic practice further. The same principles that guide all our work, but done better, deeper and for longer!”*

*“Previously I have presented work of quality and excellence in a variety of contexts to a variety of audiences. Through Creative People and Places I have facilitated a process in which participants have identified work of quality and excellence themselves, and then presented that work in their local community. It's a totally different approach and a massive learning curve. It feels like the most important work I've done for a long time.”*

*“It differed because the staff at CPP have a great approach to projects. The joint ownership was very refreshing with quality of experience being valued as much as, if not more than, numbers attending. Connections with other appropriate initiatives were identified early on and built into the planning. It was easy to speak with CPP staff to share ideas, ask questions, speak through concerns.”*

*“I would say that in previous work, I feel I've only had to answer to myself and so it can be easy to allow the monitoring of quality and excellence to slide. Knowing that Creative People and Places has a clear approach to quality and excellence and levels set to attain, has given me a new benchmark”.*

***“The longevity of the project allows time for reflection and evaluation, which can be acted upon and reviewed, this is crucial to learning and developing a clear and cohesive practice.”***

***“Working with CPP has redefined what I think of quality and excellence.”***

***“To some degree it has afforded me the chance to emphasise process over product which is not always possible on projects, and this, I feel, has provided the participants with a greater sense of ownership and a deeper creative experience.”***

- 4.28 90% of artists stated that the quality of their artistic practice had formed part of the recruitment or commissioning process for CPP. Anonymised quotations covering the issues include:

***“We were interviewed for commissions at 2 stages: research and development, and the development of a final production. Evidencing the quality of our past work was a part of the criteria on both occasions. The panels included CPP staff, peer arts practitioners and 'community champions' (local people involved in CPP projects), so the assessment of quality came from these perspectives.”***

***“Yes, I feel that the process of considering how to deliver my projects was quite rigorous and focused intently on how I was going to work together with bait to deliver quality work. It feels that bait are dedicated to making sure that all work is delivered to a very high standard, and the recruitment/commissioning process reflects this.”***

***“Individual participants each had an independent choice regarding whether or not to be involved in the project and in order to gain their trust I did all I could to demonstrate the quality of my practice (whilst at the same time being careful not to create a dynamic in which I was the expert and they the non-experts).”***

***“I'd say that say that my reputation and status as a community development award winner, meant that my own artistic practice was trusted and perceived to be of a high standard.”***

***“My own artistic practice and my experience of delivering creative projects was considered while identifying the specific groups I worked with as well as the outcomes.”***

- 4.29 The following word cloud (overleaf) represents the key words and phrases produced by artists and practitioners linked to excellence in artistic practice when working for a CPP.



**Key words and phrases produced by artists and practitioners linked to excellence in artistic practice when working for a CPP**

freedom to change ideas that suit the environment  
 broader perspective and experience of artistic creativity exposure to high quality work  
 recognition of quality being part of a professional, high quality creative process  
 constantly improving high-quality, experienced artists capturing views of the participants  
 creative empowerment regular monitoring and evaluation  
 understanding **support** sustainability  
 consistency skill openness communication  
 forming opinions patience and faith quality of art reviewing  
 enjoyment lead in time provoking engagement flexibility  
 understanding of technique networking legacy vision presenting relevance  
 being driven by the participants' needs, wants and ideas sharing  
 engaging access going to see professional work interpreting  
 honesty experience reflection  
**aspire** celebrate inclusivity questioning  
 person centred approach  
 identifying the appropriate artist allowing artists to improve on the quality of their work  
 challenging originality valuing the time and talent of all those involved  
 giving community participants a sense of 'what can be possible'.  
 Identifying key goals  
 participants respond to knowing they are part of something high quality  
 collaborating with local successful artists  
 reaching out to new audiences  
 a focus on creating excellent and high-quality work delivering excellent events and sessions



## Key Points

- **The nature of the debate around what constitutes excellence in the arts means that assessing the excellence of CPP is no more possible or less difficult than it is for others. Measures must be contextual and flexible, and will therefore vary.**
- **The subjectivity of thoughts on quality and excellence require continuous debate which may be impaired if shaped by fixed views of quality or a limited set of metrics.**
- **The challenge for understanding quality and excellence within the context of CPP is identifying and communicating the findings of evaluation to sector stakeholders in order to inform learning and the transfer of good practice.**
- **A large proportion of stakeholders have chosen to undertake a qualitative and retrospective assessment of quality and excellence. The emphasis of the majority of this analysis is on the behaviours inspired by projects linked to excellence. Reflection is therefore seen as crucial to developing an understanding of quality.**
- **The Ideas Test CPP in Swale and Medway provides the most prominent example of applying a quantitative approach to assessing quality and excellence in the context of CPP.**
- **There was an overall consensus that the main legacy of the CPP programme will be learning and good practice with the potential to influence the quality and excellence of arts activity in areas of least engagement.**
- **Key issues and legacy points include the need to avoid fixed views on quality and excellence, recognising quality through the eyes of the target audience, assessing the steps that underpin quality rather than the subjective outcome and agreeing where CPP fits into the broader policy context.**

## 5 Key Success Factors

5.1 The research has produced a range of key success factors and associated learning points in the context of quality and excellence which are able to inform ongoing practice across both CPP and wider arts practice. These are summarised below:

### Active and meaningful community involvement

- Discussions over quality and excellence are most productive when framed around a local or personal context.
- Building community capacity to identify, embrace and support excellence can produce long term and sustainable benefits linked to participation and commissioning in CPP areas.

### Collaborative leadership

- The partnership approach to excellence within CPP highlights the need to understand the scale, scope and value of partner roles.
- Ongoing CPD and guidance from Critical Friends can inform approaches to excellence and quality within CPP delivery teams.

### Making choices

- Clarity of vision can underpin approaches to achieving excellence which are bought into by all.
- A balance needs to be maintained between providing support and over-influencing community input (i.e. the challenge of devolving power to the community) - lessons in risk, trust and empowerment.
- Reflection is crucial to developing an understanding of quality and excellence.

### Providing choice through breadth of approach

- The design and content of marketing and communications should be tailored to specific events and audiences. Content should be informative and clear in order to reduce barriers to engagement stemming from uncertainty of what to expect.
- Excellence should not always be linked to scale of participation - CPP enables ideas to be tested or delivered with small groups which can be developed or transferred to inform wider practice.

### Ensuring the right calibre of artists

- Selecting the right artist for the right project will help to ensure excellence in engagement and product (e.g. assessing relevant desire, experience, participatory skills and technical abilities).
- Communicating in inclusive and accessible language rather than 'arts speak' and 'jargon' can help to tackle traditional barriers to engagement.

### Flexibility

- It takes time to build the long term relationships required to embrace excellence as part of an engagement process which incorporates reflection and learning.
- Flexibility of approach may be required in order to identify and/or evidence excellence (and its impact), (e.g. extending project timeframes, overcoming challenges or believing in an idea despite setbacks).

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 Simon Armitage has a poem entitled *'It ain't what you do, it's what it does to you'*. This could be said about *'excellence of product and excellence of process of engaging communities.'* CPP is delivering excellence in a wide range of ways: what is notable is that it is doing it in ways that emphasise 'what it does to you'. However, this study also suggests that whilst the content aspect of 'what' you do may be as important as the quality of the experience or the impact on people, the process of 'how' you do it, and how you then reflect upon the process are also vital, especially when involving communities.

### **Conclusions**

- 6.2 Fundamentally CPPs should be about experimentation and learning with the community to explore concepts of excellence and quality. Consequently the CPPs have to work with their community to develop their understanding and involve them in a way that makes them feel confident and able to discuss the concepts of excellence and quality. This often involves subtly but significantly changing the power dynamics of artistic choice, (e.g. by delegating commissioning 'power' in relation to challenging practice).
- 6.3 What this highlights is that the pace of delivery in CPPs will necessarily differ from much other arts provision where, for example, a large arts organisation would be able to devote a lot more time and resources to consider issues of quality and excellence in the development of an art work/production. (Although in practice many find this as challenging as the time-limited programmes of CPP). This time isn't afforded to CPPs and would run the risk of turning off local communities keen to become involved in a new programme. The community expects an approach that can be more fleet of foot and rapidly responsive.
- 6.4 A key challenge for CPP places is that people that have not engaged in the arts previously lack confidence in their right and ability to shape the reference points for quality and excellence. There is a debate around whether their reference points should be benchmarked against the 'standard offer' from NPOs / Arts Council or whether this top-down arts-led approach is not appropriate for the context of CPPs. For many of those involved in CPP, the process of community engagement is precisely a process of skill and confidence building, of capacity building, rather than of provision and engagement with that provision.
- 6.5 There are concerns that imposing rigid delivery and/or evaluation guidance would run the risk of creating an imbalance between the arts sector and local communities. What is needed is a new approach to fully engaging the community in developing and experiencing the arts rather than simply using CPPs as a vehicle to attract a new audience to existing artworks. Community ownership is critically important in the approach of CPPs and individual artists (and a key factor in a quality process of delivery).

6.6 The research has outlined how many of the positive attributes that help to make CPP a success locally can be transferred to approaches to meeting challenges around quality and excellence. These include:

- Delivering a programme which combines excellence not only in artistic product but also the process of engagement;
- Maintaining flexibility in management, governance, attitudes to risk and in the definitions of quality and excellence used to define success;
- Ensure delivery is nuanced and rooted in local context and conversation; and
- Facilitating a rigorous and continual process of reflection between partners.

### **Recommendations**

6.7 We have a small number of recommendations for those involved in the Creative People and Places network. These relate to moving from an examination of excellence rooted in often *not defining* the term too much or too early in the process of development of both product and process of engagement, to a situation where flexibility and consistent assessment or consideration come together. They address specific opportunities at this point in the development of the programme.

1. CPP Network and Arts Council England should consider how greater connections can be made to work around quality metrics, particularly the trials ongoing with Culture Counts, and if proceeding with Participatory Metrics. CPP would be a useful sub-set of the development, and this would also encourage CPPs, especially those entering their second phases, to think how a more consistent measurement framework might sit with their bespoke, contextual approaches to development and evaluation. It should not be 'compulsory', as it may not fit with all situations and approaches, but should be considered.

2. The CPP Network should encourage more consistent use of frameworks for excellence of product and process, such as those developed by individual CPPs and the 'incomplete glossary of the qualities of artistic quality' in the New Bearings document, and share results.

3. Without preventing private or particular conversations amongst particular groups, the overall reflection on excellence or quality of product and process of engagement should involve input from as wide a group for stakeholders (e.g. teams, boards, artists, partners, panels, audiences etc.) as possible, to provide as many perspectives as possible.

4. CPPs should build on relations with NPOs to discuss quality together, connecting to local, regional or area-level networks exploring the topic, so that learning is mutual and embedded in long-term partnerships or infrastructure.

5. Arts Council England should consider how learning from the CPP programme could benefit their other priorities areas of work, and how insights around excellence from CPP could be shared.

## Appendix 1: Methodology

### Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research was to support the work of the CPP Places and strengthen the knowledge and practice of other community based arts/culture projects and practitioners by exploring the different approaches, impacts and outcomes of excellent art and engagement opportunities within the current CPP cohort.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Enrich the CPP National Evaluation programme in exploring the core research question no. 2 on artistic excellence and excellence in engagement in depth, and to increase broader learning opportunities within the arts and community based creative sector through sharing learning from CPP practices;
- Explore the practical implementation of varied interpretations of excellence in relation to artistic practice in the context of community engagement within the CPP programme, and to articulate and analyse the different approaches places are developing;
- Explore the different areas of impact and outcomes achieved through the different approaches, specific to local contexts;
- Understand how places are measuring and evaluating excellence and who is involved in these judgements;
- Understand the experiences and challenges felt by CPP places programming work for their areas and populations, including lessons learnt from failure; and
- Learn from wider literature, existing metrics and other relevant programmes or movements, past or present to place CPP lessons in wider context – challenging and unpicking if/how CPP is different.

A summary of the methodology employed to achieve these aims and objective is provided overleaf.

## Methodology Summary




**A. Project Management**

- Inception meeting
- Development and agreement of a Research Plan
- Progress reporting



**B. Desk Research**

- Literture Review**  
Relevant research reports, frameworks and metrics
- Research Tool Design**  
Development of semi-structured stakeholdre discussion guide
- Online surveys for CPP staff, ACE staff and artists/practitioners



**C. Stakeholder Consultation**

- CPP Representatives**  
Face to face, Skype and telephone interviews with x CPP Directors (or equivelent)  
26 discussions with CPP Directors, Critical Friends and evaluators
- Online survey - quality frameworks / metrics
- Sector Stakeholders**  
Discussions with wider stakeholders from ACE and other arts organisations
- Online survey - ACE views on / knowledge of CPP
- Online survey - artists and practitioners
- Event Observation**  
Two events observed
- Basecamp Discussions**  
Ongoing debate stimulation / calls for actions



**D. Analysis and Reporting**

- Analysis**  
Qualitative analysis of stakeholder and beneficiary consultation results
- Quantitative analysis of programme impact data
- Reporting**  
Development of ten case studies
- Draft and Final Reports

## Appendix 2: Stakeholders Consulted

Name	Organisation
Gemma Thomas	Appetite Stoke
Kate Gant	Appetite Stoke / First Art
Alison Clark	Arts Council England
Michelle Dickson	Arts Council England
Miriam Nelken	Creative Barking & Dagenham
Amanda Smethurst	Creative Barking and Dagenham
Helen Ball	Creative Barking and Dagenham
Nancy Barrett	Creative Scene
Erinma Ochu	Creative Scene
Emma Horsman	Cultural Spring
Nikki Locke	East Durham Creates
Tony Harrington	East Durham Creates
John Holmes	First Art
Nic Gratton	First Art
Patrick Fox	Heart of Glass
Karen Smith	Heart of Glass
Steff Fuller	Ideas Test - Swale & Medway
Ayla Suvern	Left Coast
Topher Campbell	Luton
Andrew Ormeston	Made in Corby
Ruth Melville	Market Place / Fenland & Forest Heath
Dr Leila Jancovich	Right Up Our Street (Doncaster)
Andrew Loretto	Right Up Our Street (Doncaster)
Kate Sully	Right Up Our Street (Doncaster)
Elaine Knight	Transported
Nick Jones	Transported (Boston Borough & South Holland)



[www.consiliumresearch.co.uk](http://www.consiliumresearch.co.uk)

Tel: 08448 484 885