

David

Blackpool



I ♥ BPL

# Weaving the social fabric

LeftCoast: Journeys to Cultural Engagement

December 2016

# Journeys to cultural engagement

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**LeftCoast** is a partnership of five **Blackpool & Wyre** organisations. They are funded by Arts Council England to deliver a three year programme of arts activity which is designed to **increase local engagement with the arts.**

LeftCoast is one of a number of partnerships funded by the Arts Council as part of its Creative People and Places Programme.

MHM was commissioned by LeftCoast to **track and investigate** audience member or participant **'journeys'** across a number of events.

## Who are the participants?

### Organisers

- Bernard Kennedy 9
- Dave Carlos 12
- Steve Pennington 15
- Michael Higgins 17
- Jennifer Price 19

### Volunteers

- Emma Taylor 21
- Debbie Cross 24
- Anne Charlesworth 26
- Fiona Walmsley-Collins 29
- Karen Forsyth 31
- Louise Pope 33

### Attendees

- David Raif Bailey 35
- Dorothy Douglas 37
- Diana Newhill 39
- David Cross 41

# Introduction

# Research objectives

## LeftCoast objectives

LeftCoast is delivering a comprehensive arts programme throughout Blackpool and Wyre, designed to engage local residents in arts and creative activities.

Their objectives are:

Engaging more people with arts and culture

Developing the arts and cultural sector in Blackpool and Wyre

Creating, generating, importing and exporting great art

Changing internal and external perceptions of Blackpool and Wyre

## Creative People and Places aims

LeftCoast is one of 21 Creative People and Places (CPP) projects in areas where people have fewer opportunities to get involved with the arts. Funded by Arts Council England, CPP is about more people choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live.

Their questions are:

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

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

Which approaches were successful and what lessons were learned?

## Research objectives

This project originally intended to investigate what happens after audience members attend a LeftCoast event. Due to recruitment challenges, discussed in the following chapter, objectives were modified to investigate engagement in arts and culture more broadly.

Research objectives included:

Understanding the potential follow on impact of attending or participating in LeftCoast events

Identifying potential pathways from initial to sustained arts engagement

Examining ladders of engagement - do people move from lower to higher engagement after being an audience or participant?

# Methodology & recruitment

## Recruitment

Participants were recruited by LeftCoast and MHM to participate in the project. The recruitment criteria was jointly agreed and calls for participants were released online, including on LeftCoast's Facebook page.

The original recruitment criteria called for 30 participants with an even gender split and representing a spread of ages 16-55+. The intention was to recruit individuals who were less engaged with the arts, i.e. who did not already volunteer time or donate money to the arts.

## Recruitment challenges

However, there was a lack of engagement from LeftCoast staff at the time, which in part made it difficult to find recruits who had only recently engaged with LeftCoast and were less engaged in arts and culture generally.

LeftCoast and MHM agreed to expand the recruitment criteria to include those who were more engaged with LeftCoast, as well as those who had not engaged with LeftCoast at all. It was agreed that the project would explore and track arts and culture activity more generally, as well as LeftCoast engagement.

This meant that some participants were recruited later during the project, so rather than tracking 10 months of arts and culture engagement, we tracked six or seven months of activity.

## Sample profile

Due to these challenges, the resulting sample group was heavily composed of individuals over the age of 45 who were already active arts and culture goers, with around five 'organisers', six 'volunteers', and two frequent attenders. Only two participants, Diana Newhill and David Cross, were less engaged as they attended fewer events in Blackpool and Wyre. And only two, Jennifer Price and Emma Taylor were aged 25-34.

Most participants were individuals with whom LeftCoast was already in touch and/or who were already invested in developing the arts and culture sector in Blackpool and Wyre and therefore willing to invest their time in this project.

## Recruit gets recruit

David Cross, the least engaged participant in arts and culture was recruited later in the project through another participant, Debbie (his ex-wife). This suggests that a successful recruitment method for future research involving less engaged arts and culture goers may be enlisting the help of those who are already recruited.

Participant	Type	Tracking
Bernard Kennedy	Organiser	Feb - Nov
Steve Pennington	Organiser	Feb - Nov
Dave Carlos	Organiser	May - Nov
Michael Higgins	Organiser	May - Nov
Jennifer Price*	Organiser	Feb - Nov
Emma Taylor*	Volunteer	May - Nov
Debbie Cross	Volunteer	May - Nov
Anne Charlesworth	Volunteer	Feb - Nov
Fiona Walmsley-Collins	Volunteer	Feb - Nov
Karen Forsyth	Volunteer	Feb - Nov
Louise Pope	Volunteer	Feb - Nov
David Raif Bailey	Attender	Feb - Nov
Dorothy Douglas	Attender	Feb - Nov
Diana Newhill	Attender	Feb - Nov
David Cross	Attender	June - Nov

\*Jennifer Price and Emma Taylor are pseudonyms

## Methodology

### Reflective journals

Participants were asked to keep a creative journal, tracking their arts and culture activities throughout the project. They were asked to record and reflect on where they went, what they did and how they felt about the events they attended. Apart from writing narrative, participants were also encouraged to include ticket stubs, drawings and photographs.

This highly effective reflective evaluation tool allowed for unmediated download of participants' arts and culture behaviour and attitudes, capturing their initial impressions and immediate responses in their own terms.

### Monthly telephone interviews

Monthly 15-30 minute interviews were held with each participant about what arts and culture events they had attended in the previous month. Referring to their journals, participants were probed as to their motivations for and outcomes from attending.

Interviews also covered arts and culture engagement prior to LeftCoast, especially as it became evident that prior engagement significantly influenced their current engagement.

As we had initially anticipated, these phone calls were important for maintaining participants' engagement and interest in the project and allowed us to explore the nuances in why a participant engaged more or less with the arts.

### Forums

Forums bring participants together in one place to interact with each other and share ideas and experiences in a dynamic way, using a range of creative techniques.

Two forums were held, one each at the start and end of the project. They included creative brainstorming group work, presentations, facilitated focus groups and self-guided discussions.

The initial forum introduced participants to the project and gauged perceptions of arts and culture, as well as the cultural offer in Blackpool.

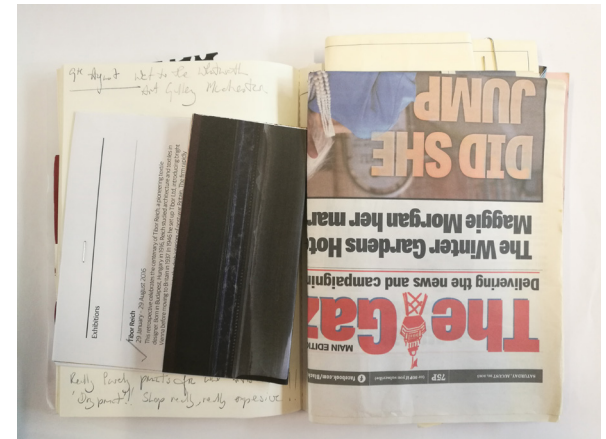
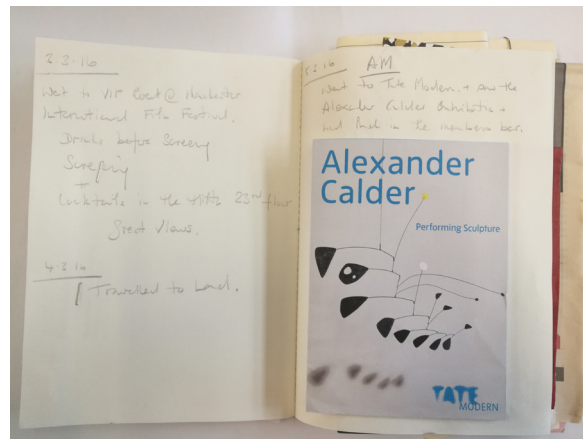
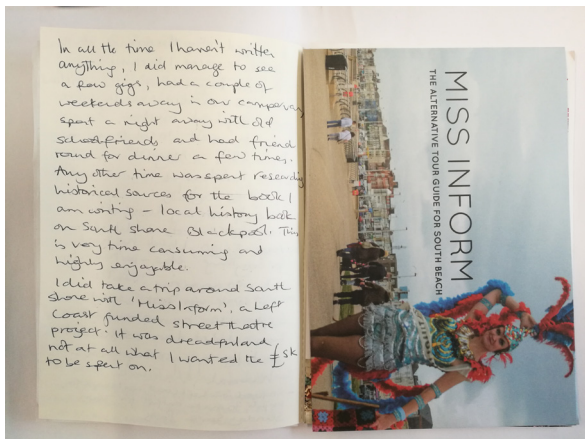
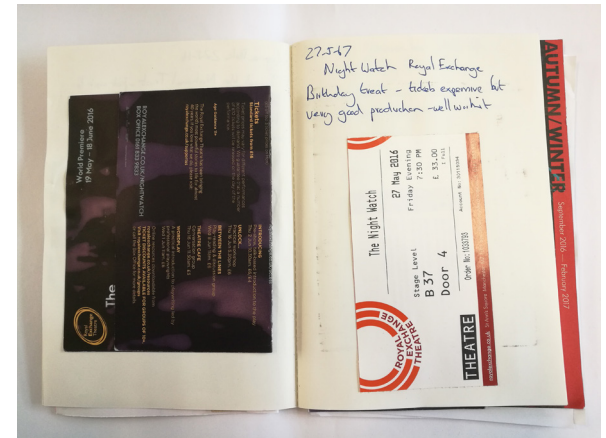
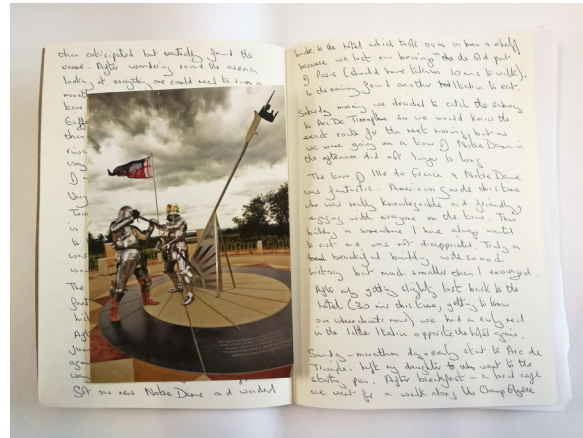


Participants at the first forum



The final forum brought the project to a close and allowed participants to reflect on their arts and culture engagement over the previous months and their changing perceptions of the arts and Blackpool.

## Examples of participants' reflective journals



# How to read this report

## Profiles

This report presents a case study on each participant. It includes their arts and culture engagement before and after LeftCoast. We have measured participants' cultural engagement using several different metrics.

## Type of engagement

Engagement types are not mutually exclusive and each is equally valued as a mode of engagement.

### Organiser

Organisers were or currently are involved with directing or running an arts or culture related group, activity or event. Organisers may also be volunteers on a separate arts or culture project, as well as attenders.

### Volunteer

Individuals currently involved with volunteering or who would like to volunteer with an arts or culture organisation. May also be organisers and attenders.

### Attender

Attenders are not engaged with arts and culture in a volunteering or organisational capacity. Their engagement is restricted to being audience members.

## Approach

Approach relates to an individual's dominant approach to seeking out arts and culture.

### Proactive

Will make the first move when seeking out arts and culture. This might include proactively emailing an organisation to ask to volunteer or collaborate.

### Active

Keeps an eye out for opportunities to engage with arts and culture, but is unlikely to make the first move to contact an organisation directly.

### Reactive

Responds to engagement opportunities when presented with them. This might include reacting to a friend's invitation or an event in an email newsletter.

### Passive

Unlikely to seek out arts and culture and also less willing to become reactive through signing up for a newsletter, etc.

## Artform

Artforms include the range of arts and cultural artforms that a participant engages with. It does not include other leisure activities, such as outdoors and sporting events.

The following icons are used to denote participants' primary artforms, as well as the artforms engaged with on their journey timelines.

Key of artform icons used throughout report





## Past LeftCoast

Past LeftCoast relates to a participant's previous relationship with LeftCoast prior to joining this project. This might include the number of LeftCoast events they've attended or, when the participant can remember, the specific events they've been to.

## Influencer

These are individuals who prompted the participants' arts and cultural engagement in **childhood**. We found that an early influencer often played an important role in adult engagement.

## Motivation

Each profile includes a brief discussion of what motivates participants to engage in the arts. These are based on MHM's model of visitors motivations but includes scope to discuss specific motivations in more detail, e.g. career building opportunities.

### MHM's model of visitors motivations

Through conducting extensive research in the cultural sector over many years, we understand that audiences attend cultural organisations and events for a wide range of reasons. Over time we have developed a model of visitor motivations. Our research tells us that people engage with culture to satisfy deeply personal needs.

## Why audiences attend the arts...

See cultural venues as:

CHURCH

SPA

ARCHIVE

ATTRACTION

Have this driver:

SPIRITUAL

EMOTIONAL

INTELLECTUAL

SOCIAL

And they seek this from a visit:

Creative stimulation and thought-provoking contemplation, they see attending arts and culture as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries, or as food for the soul

May have a personal connection to the subject matter, want to be fascinated and inspired by the performance they see, seek a real connection to the story, the sensory and intellectual

Keen to develop their interest and knowledge, may have professional interest in the subject, seek a journey of discovery, to find out new things

See attending arts and culture as an enjoyable way to spend time with friends and family, seek ease of access and entertainment, good facilities and services, welcoming staff

The model to the right describes how an audience member's primary driver for making a visit will determine how they perceive the experience and inform the expectation of the benefits they will derive. These range from seeing the venue as a visitor attraction offering an enjoyable, sociable day out to seeing it as a 'church' offering benefits that can be described as spiritual.

## Timelines

Timelines provide an approximation of the range of arts and cultural activities a participant has engaged in during their time with this project.

'Local' refers to non-LeftCoast events attended in Blackpool and Wyre.

# Participants

# Bernard Kennedy

Bernard is a 55 year old project coordinator who moved to Fleetwood four years ago from Blackburn, where he grew up. His passion is singing and acting.

## Before LeftCoast

### Daddy was a showman

Bernard's father was a singer in clubs and involved in amateur dramatics, inspiring his young son.

**'He was an inspiration for me to be on the stage, and he used to say that "You're following in my footsteps."'**

### Taking a cue from his father

As a young adult, Bernard also sang and ran a variety show until that scene disappeared after the 70's and 80's. It was around this time that he became involved in amateur dramatics.

Six years ago, his friend asked him to perform in a charity show and he has since been playing leading roles in big, musical productions. During this project, he was the leading man in Annie.

## Consolidating his energies

When Bernard moved to Blackpool, he joined the Lytham Amateur Operatic Society (LAOS), deciding to focus his energies in one group.

**'It's consolidating my energies into one group rather than being involved in several. I'm just feeling like I'll give this one my all.'**

Now he's chairman, determined to bring a new approach to the society. And it is in this frame of mind that Bernard's LeftCoast journey began.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Organiser**

Chairman of Lytham Amateur Operatic Society

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

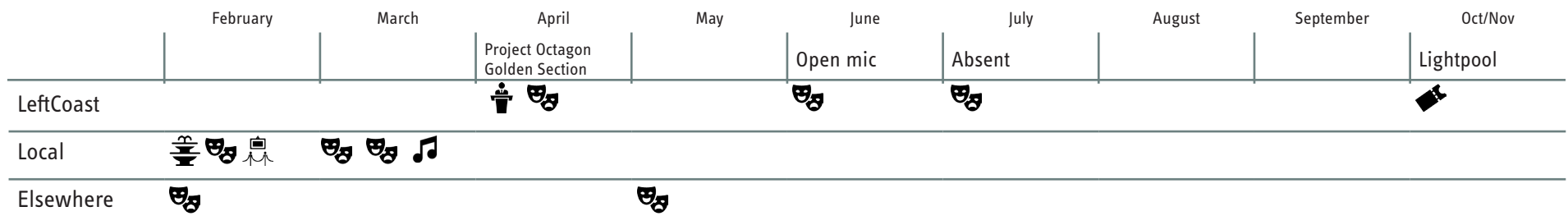
**4 events**

### Influencer

**Father & friend**

## Motivation

His love for theatre & acting means that Bernard is often **emotionally motivated** to engage with the arts. He's also attracted to events that will help him develop his skills as an actor, as well as for **networking opportunities** for his operatic society.



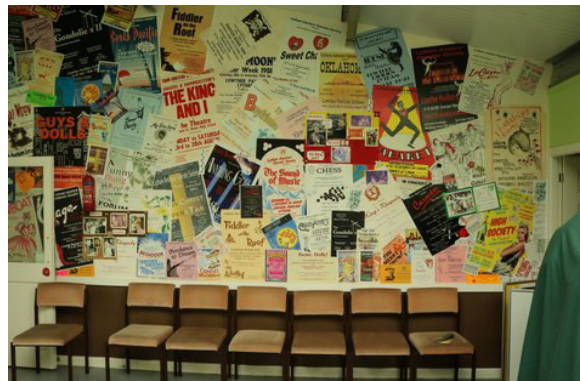
## Bernard's LeftCoast Journey

### A golden epiphany

Bernard attended a **Golden Section** with Ronnie Hughes, which he says 'set me on the right track.' In the talk, Hughes told the audience 'unless you bring art into the process, it won't work.' Greatly inspired for LAOS, Bernard wrote in his journal:

**'As the chairman I feel that I have responsibilities to change the direction of the group - and bring art into the group as quoted at a Golden Section seminar.'**

He decided to make his Society into a creative hub to encourage permanent membership. He's started by creating two murals in the group's venue with other members.



Murals at Bernard's Operatic Society that he and his group created after he attended a Golden Section

### An unforgettable experience

When the call for young male volunteers for **Project Octagon** was issued, Bernard went anyway - despite being slightly too old. He was intrigued by the secrecy of the project and hoped he could learn from professionals. He was delighted when they let him participate.

The experience has been one of the most important of his life.

**'I've been privileged to have some lead roles in musicals ... but that was nothing. It was like a bit of froth and bubbles compared to doing something really meaningful and I'd do it again in a flash.'**

Meeting and bonding with men from other walks of life, the high quality workshops, and the spiritual communion with the past ticked all the social and emotional boxes. It also changed the way he thinks about the arts.

**‘Art doesn’t have to take place in a theatre, it can be everywhere you know. It can be in the street, it can be in groups as performance pieces outside.’**

### **Hungry for more**

With an appetite for more, particularly to work with the same group, Bernard volunteered with **Absent** as an extra.

He was also invited to attend an **open mic night** to discuss his experience as part of Project Octagon. He was pleasantly surprised and decided to attend the next one.

**‘It’s not something I would ever have dreamt I would have gone to, but it’s interesting to be drawn into it.’**

### **Creating a new LeftCoast offer**

For a while, Bernard has been interested in developing a relationship with LeftCoast.

**‘LeftCoast didn’t know we existed until I went along and told them ... I’m dragging us into Blackpool. I want us to be more involved in events in Blackpool.’**

After being involved in these various projects, he and LeftCoast are now in the process of developing a set-building workshop at LAOS.

**‘We had a sit down meeting to look at how we can work together on some projects for next year. They’re looking at a set design course that we can work together with young people on. So that’s a positive spin off really of my involvement with LeftCoast.’**

### Impact of LeftCoast

Expanded horizons

More open to risk

Creating a new arts offer

Social interaction

# Dave Carlos

Dave is 64, partially retired and works part-time as an international brand director for a television company. He moved to Fleetwood four years ago with his wife and is a church leader.

## Before LeftCoast

### Brought up with the church

Dave grew up in a religious family and led a busy church life. 'I wouldn't call it artistic, but there were lots of interesting things going on,' he explains.

**'Church life in those days was very rich.'**

Although they went on family holidays, his parents didn't seek out art.

**'Art wasn't the first priority. It was just let's do things for the family and if there was an artistic element involved that was fine.'**

## A church leader

Dave acted in school but went on to study biology. His career has spanned various disciplines from being a primary school teacher in Leeds, to becoming a national magazine editor and then going on to start up his own PR agency in London.

Next he became an assistant director for a Christian agency in Wales for many years, as well becoming a church leader.

## Attending the arts

During that time, he and his wife regularly attended the theatre (they were members of the Leeds Playhouse Theatre Club), museums and galleries, particularly when they lived in London.

After retiring and moving to Fleetwood, Dave became involved in Tram Sunday. When LeftCoast got involved with Tram Sunday, he incidentally became an arts organiser.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Organiser**

Co-director of  
Tram Sunday

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

**Spare Parts Festival**

### Influencer

**None**

## Motivation

His love for theatre & acting means that Bernard is often **emotionally motivated** to engage with the arts. He's also attracted to events that will help him develop his skills as an actor, as well as for **networking opportunities** for his operatic society.

### **Volunteering and organising a community event: Tram Sunday**

When Dave and his wife first moved to Fleetwood, they attended Tram Sunday. He had just partially retired and had time to give, so he immediately decided this was something he wanted to get involved in.

*'I thought "This is fantastic. Fleetwood is a town that doesn't have a lot going for it, this thing is going for it. I want to be involved, I want to do whatever I can to make it happen and happen as well as it can." So I volunteered, stewarded the first year, worked in a more senior role the second year, and then they asked me to be a director.'*

### **Becoming an incidental arts organiser**

Dave's relationship with LeftCoast began when LeftCoast got involved with Tram Sunday. In this way, he incidentally became an arts organiser.

According to Dave, some of the organisers were initially sceptical about LeftCoast's involvement but those feelings soon began to change.

**'When LeftCoast came with the idea of the arts festival, at first there was a great deal of scepticism. But what we discovered was it started to delight people.'**

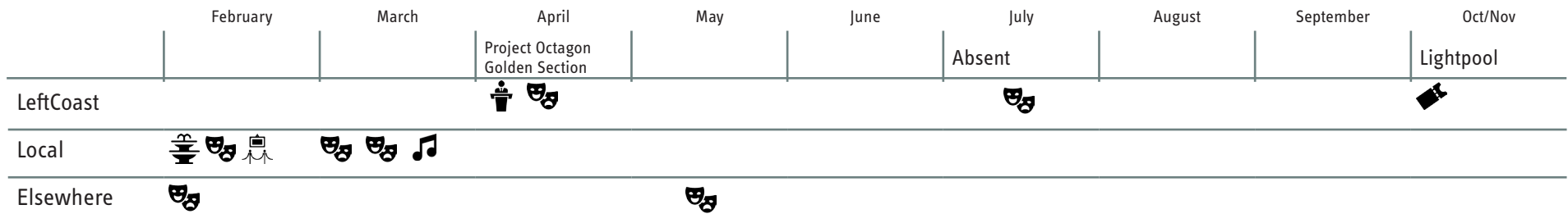
Without realising it, Dave explains, people were engaging with art.

**'The first year, LeftCoast brought a group of dancing diggers ... And I have a feeling that people never realised that was modern dance. I think they thought it was just a show. And yet, actually, they were watching contemporary dance in an interesting, fascinating and exciting setting. And they didn't realise it was dance. Perhaps including me!'**

### **Bringing the arts to Fleetwood**

He believes the addition of LeftCoast and the Spare Parts Festival has made a significant difference to Fleetwood. He largely credits this with LeftCoast's willingness to work with the organisers who were less engaged with the arts.

**'What the Spare Parts Festival has brought to Fleetwood is absolutely staggering and that wouldn't have been possible without the vision of LeftCoast and preparedness to walk us through, some of us who have had very minimal art involvement or experience.'**



## Dave's LeftCoast Journey

### 'Stimulating the surreal brain'

During this project, LeftCoast sent Dave and his wife to **Greenwich Dockands Festival** in London to scout out acts for Tram Sunday. They saw the Ulik Robotik Drumshow, a performance between man and robot, which made an impression.

He wrote an email back to LeftCoast saying 'We liked it, we loved it and we want it!' Later, he explained:

**'What was impressive about this was using an amazing gadget for an artistic purpose.'**



The Ulik Robotik Drumshow

At **Tram Sunday**, he saw the Eggmen who were dressed up as bees and went into someone's house to pollinate a flower that was in the window - drawing a large crowd.

**'It was magic. It was one of those things you could not have programmed. It was obviously just so unexpected, and yet so entrancing.'**

Dave also attended **Absent**. Although he thought the price was too high and would have preferred more interaction from the ushers, he wrote in his journal:

**'Intrigue, surprise, enveloping in story. Site transformed. Models staggeringly good.'**

When asked what impact LeftCoast has had, Dave answers:

**'I think about art much more now than I ever did before. ... I believe [LeftCoast] has enhanced and expanded my mind and many other people in the town.'**

Impact of LeftCoast

Expanded horizons

Became an arts  
organiser



# Steve Pennington

Steve is 66 and a film editor. He has just returned to university for an MA in film directing. As well as running a film workshop with an amateur dramatics society, he has been working on a feature film during this project.

## Before LeftCoast

### The magic of filmmaking

Steve's father was in the armed forces, so the family moved around a lot when he was young. He vividly remembers the day he was introduced to film.

**'My dad was in the army, and he borrowed a projector, a 16mm projector one weekend. And he brought this projector with him. And I was amazed we could watch cartoons and things in our own dining room ... I was absolutely gripped by it.'**

## A career in corporate film editing

Steve studied art and drama for his A levels and was involved with set drawing for an amateur dramatics group while working on his own films. He worked as an editor for commercial and corporate film production in Manchester, London and Blackpool over the years.

## A circumstantial organiser

When his wife got home sick, they moved to Blackpool. A burst appendix put him out of action but during that time he decided to return to his own filmmaking.

Steve didn't proactively become an organiser at first but did so circumstantially. He got involved with a few different film groups and ran one for a while when a number of members dropped out. 11 months ago, he joined a drama group 'purely to get their actors for my film'. However, it turned into a weekly film workshop.

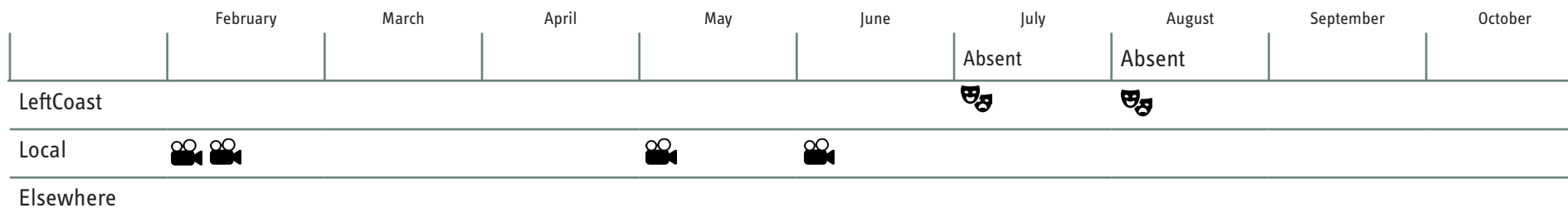
**'I just happened to mention that it'd be good if we could have a film workshop. And it grew from there.'**

## Cultural engagement

Type	<b>Organiser</b> Runs weekly film workshops
Approach	<b>Proactive</b>
Artform	
Past Leftcoast	<b>None</b>
Influencer	<b>Father</b>

## Motivation

Steve frequently attends the cinema & is motivated **emotionally**, by his vocation for film. He also joins activities that will provide him with **networking opportunities** & introduce him to actors & creatives with whom he can work on his own projects.



## Steve's LeftCoast journey

### A networking opportunity

Steve's first LeftCoast event was volunteering for **Absent** as a film extra during this project. He had received an email from LeftCoast, asking for extras and responded, having been an extra many years before. He was particularly drawn to the opportunity to network with other creative people.

**'It was on my doorstep and I knew I could do it, and I thought it's a good way of networking.'**

### Being on the other side of the camera

Steve enjoyed being an extra for Absent, being on the other side of the camera for once and learning from the director and cameraman there.

However, he was disappointed that there weren't more refreshments and thinks that there was a lot of time wasted.

### Making friends, creating networks

What made the day particularly memorable was the friendships that he developed with four other extras.

**'I've become very good friends with Nick and this guy called Adam. Adam's got an MA in music and composition, so he's a brilliant contact. And Nick is a guy who wants to act, I'm going to see him in a play tonight. ... There was Paul and Bernard and the five of us were just having the time of our lives. To be honest, we had such a laugh.'**

### Opening doors

As Steve had hoped, Absent allowed him to meet other, like-minded individuals he hopes to collaborate with in the future. A few of them already have projects in the pipeline.

Steve stressed that being part of Absent also gave him access to a community and people he wouldn't have been able to speak with otherwise.

**'I found that once I was at Absent, I could talk to people quite freely. Because it's all arts and crafts and performance, it opens up doors to people, complete strangers, who you'd normally never speak to.'**

Partly for this reason, Steve is keen to be part of a project like Absent again.

**'I would like to do something similar like Absent again, because I really enjoyed that. And I made some good contacts, as well.'**

Apart from that, the experience has also inspired Steve to sign up with an agency for part-time work as an extra.

#### Impact of LeftCoast

Opened sector opportunities  
Social interaction

# Michael Higgins

Michael is 52 and is a hotelier in Blackpool, which restricts his ability to attend arts events. In his spare time, he designs websites and mixes music.

## Before LeftCoast

### A school trip to the British Museum

Michael's earliest memory of arts and culture was a school trip to the British Museum when he was 10. They saw the Tutankhamun exhibition.

**'It blew me away, learning the story and seeing the mask and tombs. It made me think and opened my eyes to places where art is displayed.'**

### Finding emotion at Cirque du Soleil

The most memorable arts and culture event Michael has ever attended was the Cirque du Soleil in the Albert Hall. It was unlike anything he'd seen before.

**'It created emotion in you. It was very powerful.'**

### Art expands the mind

When he goes to an arts or culture event, Michael expects a high level of professionalism and a high quality production. He's also sensitive to whether he perceives a production as being worth the cost.

As he mentioned in relation to Cirque du Soleil, Michael wants an extraordinary experience that is emotional.

**'I want to be wowed. I want to think that value for money's happened. I want to be stretched. To think, "That's amazing."'**

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Organiser**

Organised a Wind Festival

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past LeftCoast

**Golden Evenings**

### Influencer

**None**

### Motivation

Michael is motivated to attend arts and culture events that will give him an **emotional** experience. As a hotelier, he is also searching for **networking opportunities** and to collaborate on projects that will benefit his hotel and the area where its located.

	May	June	July	August	September	Oct/Nov
	Golden Section	Pop up cafe	Absent			Lightpool
LeftCoast						
Local						
Elsewhere						

## Michael's LeftCoast Journey



### ARTIST CALL OUT FOR KING EDWARD AVENUE

20.03.2016

PLEASE NOTE THE EMAIL ON THIS ORIGINAL ADVERT WAS INCORRECT - PLEASE CAN YOU RESUBMIT PROPOSALS TO [lam.esson@leftcoast.org.uk](mailto:lam.esson@leftcoast.org.uk) by the 29th April 2016.

We are looking to commission an artist or artists to work on an exciting new creative festival being developed with the hotel owners and residents of King Edward Ave, North Shore, Elswick. This is an opportunity to help the group creatively explore what a festival of wind related activity could look like.

### The wind festival

Michael first became familiar with LeftCoast when a community group he is part of - the King Edward Avenue Community Arts Project - applied for the Future Popular grant scheme. This was for a Wind-themed festival that would help draw attention to the area where his hotel is located.

**'We've got the funding from LeftCoast, so it's their artists and their staff supporting us, which is very nice.'**



Michael was inspired by LeftCoast's pop-up cafe, which is run by ex-prisoners.

### An inspirational pop-up cafe

As a hotelier, Michael was also asked to be on an informal advisory board for LeftCoast's new arts bnb. He met with the organisers in LeftCoast's pop-up cafe, which is run by ex-prisoners.

**'It was artistic and out of the box and something I'd never experienced.'**

It made him reflect on his preconceptions and prejudices of prisoners and addicts.

He was also very inspired by the 'pay what you want' policy and is considering proposing a similar model at his hotel.

### Impact of LeftCoast

Created an arts offer

Expanded horizons

Inspired to try new pay policy at his hotel

# Jennifer Price

Jennifer is 31, a marketing manager in a shopping mall and is originally from Rotherham near Sheffield. She moved to Blackpool six years ago and is a street art enthusiast.

## Before LeftCoast

### Engaged with arts: the ‘black sheep’ of the family

No one in Mina’s family was interested in the arts, but Jennifer loved drawing. Her parents gave her drawing sets and supported her interests, or as Jennifer says with a laugh:

**‘My mum would definitely encourage it. If it keeps your kids quiet you’re going to encourage it, aren’t you?’**

Later, she studied performing arts as part of her GCSE.

**‘By the time I was 16 I’d done quite a lot of theatre stuff, we’d performed in quite a lot of places.’**

## Becoming a volunteer

After school, she got a job but kept her eye out for interesting events to volunteer for. She responded to an ad, which led her to helping to organise a flash mob dance party. She also helped her friend who organised a street art festival to engage underprivileged youths.

## Organising the Sand Sea and Spray Festival

Six years ago, Jennifer moved to Blackpool to take care of her granddad. She volunteered with the Sand, Sea and Spray festival and organised it in 2013.

It was a good way for her to meet people, but it also helped build her CV. At the time, Jennifer was doing a business course in event management.

**‘Until I moved to Blackpool, I had no idea you could actually make a career out of [the arts]. Not a clue.’**

Although she would love to work in the arts, she’s happy in her current job and wonders about the job security that comes with working in the arts.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Organiser**

Director of Sand, Sea and Spray festival in 2013

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

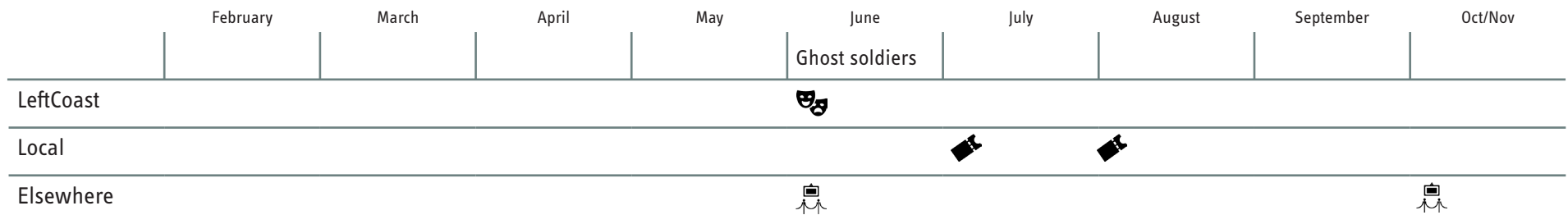
**Showzam**

### Influencer

**Encouraged by mum**

## Motivation

As a lover of street art, there’s an **emotional** motivation behind her arts attendance. However, she is primarily **socially** motivated. ‘I’d probably miss that social aspect more than anything, from what you get at festivals, meeting new people.’



### Mina’s LeftCoast Journey

Jennifer has been very busy with work and has attended two art exhibitions in London and a couple of festivals. The only LeftCoast event that Jennifer ‘attended’ during the project was when the **ghost soldiers** came to the shopping mall where she works. She loved it.

#### A limited personal journey

However, Jennifer doesn’t feel like she’s been personally impacted by LeftCoast.

#### Her friends aren’t engaged with LeftCoast

Jennifer says her friends aren’t engaged by LeftCoast’s marketing and aren’t interested in attending their events. However, once she shares pictures of the events she’s attended, they are interested.

‘A lot of my friends comment on my posts on Facebook saying “That’s really cool, where do you find this sort of stuff”. But if they were to see the advertising - and I share it as well - they don’t engage with it, because it’s not something that would catch their attention - the terminology that’s used, and the whole trying to be too different.’

Although Jennifer is proactive and will attend the arts alone, she is socially motivated and would engage with LeftCoast more deeply if more of her friends were engaged as well.

#### LeftCoast is contributing to change

That being said, Jennifer acknowledges that her perceptions of Blackpool are changing and that LeftCoast may have been contributing to that.

‘They’ve brought a massive amount of money to the town, and they have invested in areas of the town which would never have been invested in before.’

She also has a few friends who were involved in **Absent** and benefited from the experience.

‘A lot of people have made nice careers out of LeftCoast. They’ve been able to build on their portfolios from it. It has generated a lot of publicity for Blackpool.’

Impact of LeftCoast

## Contributing to Blackpool regeneration

# Emma Taylor

Emma is a 27-year-old single mother with a five-year-old son. They moved to Blackpool two years ago from London. A chronic heart condition makes it difficult for her to work; nevertheless, she's studying online to become a personal trainer and is determined to pursue her love of sports.

## Before LeftCoast

### Dragged to museums

Emma grew up going to museums with her family on the weekends.

**'My Mum used to take me and my brother and my sister nearly every weekend and I was like "This is boring." ... You've got to be quiet, and I'm not a quiet person!'**

The one exception was the Science Museum because of its sports section.

**'I did like the Science Museum. From an early age I was crazy about sports and wanting to be a personal trainer. And there you could use all the gym stuff, so that was my highlight.'**

### A preference for musicals

Emma attended the theatre for the first time in primary school, where she saw the Lion King.

**'That was the first time I went to the theatre and made me love going to the theatre.'**

In particular, she enjoyed watching talented actors and enjoyed the overall experience of attending the theatre, which 'is a bit more upper class!'

### But not an 'Arts' lover

Despite enjoying the theatre, Emma never had much interest in the arts, which she associated exclusively with museums and galleries.

However, that has started to change.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Volunteer**

LeftCoast Ambassador

### Approach

**Active**

### Artform



### Past LeftCoast









**Showzam, workshops**

### Influencer

**Family**

### Motivation

As a single mother, Emma is primarily **socially** motivated to attend events with her son that they will enjoy together. She's also motivated by opportunities that help her **build her CV**.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September/Oct
	Workshops	Showzam	Workshop	Workshop		Workshop	Tram Sunday		Workshop
LeftCoast									
Local									
Elsewhere									

## Emma's LeftCoast Journey

### Becoming an Ambassador

Emma was at her community centre when she was approached by someone from LeftCoast and asked to become an ambassador.

*'I was at the community centre, and then one of the people came up and said "I want you". So I was like, "Okay..." (laughs)'*

As an ambassador, Emma likes that she's the first to know what's going on. She hands out booklets and flyers, and encourages people to go to events. - which she's done with success.

*'I got quite a few people to go who suffer with depression and things like that. They don't go out, they've got kids but I said "Come along to these workshops, they're really good. Give yourself a break, let the kids do this.'"*

### Building her CV

Emma was also motivated to become a LeftCoast Ambassador because of the professional development benefits. As she works towards starting a career, despite her health condition, this aspect is particularly important for her.

*'It looks good on the CV. And just telling people "I'm an ambassador" - it's got a good ring to it.'*

### Receiving freebies

Emma thinks that getting more freebies would inspire her to get more involved with an arts organisation.

*'I like freebies. Freebies are always a winner. (laughs)'*

As a LeftCoast ambassador, she got two free tickets to Showzam, which continues to be a highlight from her time in Blackpool.

Also, compared to Tram Sunday, Emma preferred the SureStart fun day festival, which was free, gave away free hotdogs and smoothies, and didn't limit children to five minutes in the bouncy castle.

*'They did have bouncy castles and stuff like that at Tram Sunday. But you have to pay for it. Whereas at the SureStart fun day, they had the bouncy castle and it was free - and the kids could play for more than five minutes!'*



## LeftCoast makes a difference

### Providing family events

LeftCoast activities like Showzam and the family workshops have made a big difference to Emma and her son in Blackpool. They enjoy the activities, and she's appreciative that there are options and accessible events she can take her son to.

**'I wouldn't know what to do during the school holidays. I'd be ripping my hair out ... if they're not on, you've got to go places that cost a lot of money. Or just go to the park.'**

### Changing her perceptions of the arts

Being a LeftCoast Ambassador and attending Showzam and the workshops have also changed the way she thinks about the arts.

Rather than simply the fine arts, she now perceives the arts as encompassing a greater range of accessible art forms.

**'When I was approached and someone said "Do you want to be an arts ambassador?" I was like, "Me? Arts? I don't know nothing about it. I don't like museums or any art galleries, I'm not going to be very good", but then we worked out it's all about theatre shows, circus, all these little family workshops. So it was like ok, it's not just Van Gogh and things like that.'**

#### Impact of LeftCoast

Expanded horizons

Attended greater volume  
& range of activities

# Debbie Cross

Debbie is 55 and an admin manager for a charity. She's from Blackpool originally and currently volunteers with a reading programme for underprivileged communities.

## Before LeftCoast

### A family friend opens her eyes to the arts

When Debbie was seven, her family took a trip to London where they stayed with a couple who were family friends. She vividly remembers the rows and rows of bookshelves that lined the walls of the flat.

In particular, she developed a friendship with the wife who later gave her a copy of *The Lord of the Rings* that she still owns today.

**'She was a teacher and talked about going to the theatre and that was the first person that I met that was quite outside what was the norm for me.'**

This experience opened Debbie's eyes and made her realise she has to be proactive.

**'It made me realise that there were things in the world that I had no idea of and you have to go out and find them.'**

Her life-long relationship with the arts had begun. When she was eight, she begged her mother to take her to see Shakespeare and started to attend theatre regularly when she was 16.

### Encouraged to continue attending the theatre

Debbie later became a secretary for an architect who further opened her eyes to the art world.

**'He was the architect at the Grand Theatre and so he would often say "Go and see this", and he was quite good at talking about things and teaching me.'**

Ever since then, Debbie has continued to proactively seek out the arts and take her daughter and nieces and nephews to as many different events as she can. 'I realise it's important to show them different things,' she explains.

### Giving back

Ten years ago, Debbie tried to volunteer with the Grand. She was a frequent attender and wanted to give back, but unfortunately her schedule didn't work out. She was primed to volunteer when LeftCoast came along.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Volunteer**

LeftCoast Ambassador

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past LeftCoast

**Golden Sections, Showzam, When the World Tipped**

### Influencer

**Family friend**

### Motivation

Debbie is a frequent attender and is **emotionally** motivated to attend events. She greatly values the role the arts play in her life & wants to give back.



# Anne Charlesworth

A busy 52-year-old grandmother, Anne recently retired from teaching primary school. With a passion for history, she's currently writing a local history of South Shore and is from Blackpool originally.

## Before LeftCoast

### A family love for history

Anne's parents were hoteliers and family holidays were spent at historical sites and museums. Her father and grandparents were particularly interested in local and family history.

### Free tickets to Blackpool shows

Although they weren't as interested in the arts, thanks to her parents' profession she got access to free shows.

**'Because we were hoteliers, we would get free tickets for the shows that were on in Blackpool ... so I would go to quite a few of them.'**

This was when Blackpool was full of variety acts, which have since disappeared.

She also recalls going to the West End in London once with her family.

### Prioritising music

As a teenager, Anne attended concerts and still frequents jazz and blues gigs regularly.

When she was 19, Anne had her first child and it wasn't until her mid-30's that she began to have more time and money for leisure activities. Generally, she has continued to frequent musical events or other arts offers.

**'I've been to bits and bobs over the years but nothing regular if you like. It's definitely always been music that I've gone to regularly.'**

### Retirement: a new lease of life

Since retiring just before the start of this project, Anne has been working on her book and has been more open to trying new things.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Attender to Volunteer**

Advisory board of the Electric Sunshine Theatre

### Approach

**Active**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

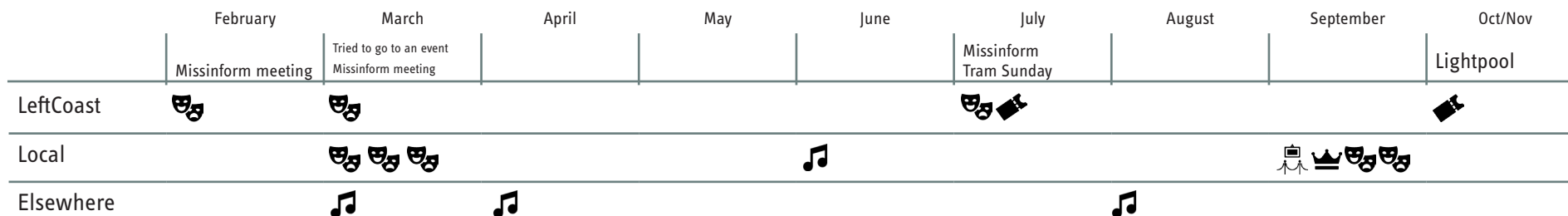
**When World Tipped**

### Influencer

**None**

### Motivation

Anne is **socially** motivated to attend arts & culture events. She enjoys the atmosphere of small, local jazz & blues concerts where she knows people. She doesn't like going to events alone. Otherwise, Anne is motivated to attend events that relate to history & the book she's writing.



### Giving Shakespeare a second chance

In March, Anne’s grandson was in a school production of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer’s Night Dream* that was performed at the Grand. The following month, the Royal Shakespeare Company performed the play.

Despite being turned off Shakespeare at school, Anne took her grandson to see it and was pleasantly surprised.

**‘It was brilliant. And it totally renewed my interest in seeing more like that.’**

Anne particularly liked that a local amateur dramatics society was involved with some comedic scenes - reflecting her interest in local connections.

**‘They work together regularly they know each other well, and they totally bounced off each other.’**

### Anne’s LeftCoast Journey

#### Missinform

Anne initially attended the planning committee for what became Missinform, as she understood it was going to be ‘an open air performance based on personal memories of the area.’ She went along, hoping to speak with some of the residents about their memories for her own book.

She eventually left the group due to differences of opinion and was unhappy with the choice of Missinform. Nevertheless, she tried to keep an open mind and agreed to give the actress a historical tour of the area when asked. However, the actress didn’t use any of her material, and she and her friends didn’t enjoy the final production.

### Asked to join Electric Sunshine Project

Despite her negative experience with Missinform, Anne was still open to trying new things. When she was asked to join the advisory board for the Electric Sunshine Theatre due to her background in education, she agreed even though it was uncharted territory for her.

**‘I agreed initially because she asked me and secondly because it was stepping out of my comfort zone and I thought “Well it will certainly awaken me to other things that are going on”.’**

As Anne explains, she isn’t comfortable with theatre: ‘It’s not my thing at all, I’m not comfortable with drama.’

Being asked to be on the advisory board allows her to engage with a new art form from a position she’s more comfortable in.

Anne also admits that being part of this project may have made her more willing to join ESP, as it made her more ‘focussed’ on the arts.

**‘Because I’ve been part of the LeftCoast feedback group, I felt it was relevant to what I was kind of doing for you as well. Had I not been part of this project, I might not have said yes as readily to be honest.’**

This points to the level of intervention that’s sometimes necessary to help someone deepen their engagement with the arts.

#### **Making friends and becoming more engaged**

Since joining the Electric Sunshine Project, Anne has met more people connected with the arts. This has encouraged her to attend more events, such as Lightpool.

**‘As a result of joining this Electric Sunshine Project I’ve also come into contact with two people who are very much involved in Lightpool. So I’m a lot more aware of what’s going on because I’m in touch with these people and friends with them on Facebook.’**

This reflects the importance of social connections for deepening engagement, particularly for those like Anne who are primarily socially motivated when it comes to arts and culture.

#### **Getting the family on board**

Throughout this project, Anne has lamented that her family isn’t more available to go to events with her.

**‘I think I would have participated in going to a lot more things if Darren had been more available, or the children had.’**

She is now forwarding LeftCoast newsletters to her partner, and they’ve agreed that they will make an effort to coordinate and make time to go to shows together.

**‘When I’ve talked to Darren in the past about some of the LeftCoast things he’s said “Well I don’t know about these”. So now I forward him the newsletter so he knows what’s going on as well.’**

#### Impact of LeftCoast

More open to risk

Greater range of activities

Increased social interaction

# Fiona Walmsley-Collins

Fiona is between 55 and 64 and trained as a nurse. She's originally from Blackpool but lived in Preston, Manchester and London before moving back to Lytham. She has a passion for fine arts and documentary film.

## Before LeftCoast

### A love for art

When Fiona was a teenager, around 13 or 14, she started going to the Grundy Art Gallery on her own. She liked that it was always empty.

**'It was a quiet space in a mad town.'**

It was there that she developed her interest in art.

**'I think the Grundy grounded me really, that's where I first got into painting.'**

## Discovering film

It was around that age that Fiona also fell in love with film.

**'When I was young and we lived in Blackpool, there were 13 cinemas so I used to go to the pictures quite a lot.'**

Without hesitation, she says that the piece of art that has made the greatest difference to her was the Godfather, which specifically sparked her interest in filmmaking.

## Going out into the world

After training as a nurse, Fiona moved away. She lived in Preston for three years, Manchester for six years and London for seven years.

**'I wanted to get out and see a bit of the world really.'**

She thinks this might make her more open to the arts than other people in Blackpool, and she thinks that the arts are important for expanding horizons.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Attender to Volunteer**

Decorative and Fine Arts Society

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

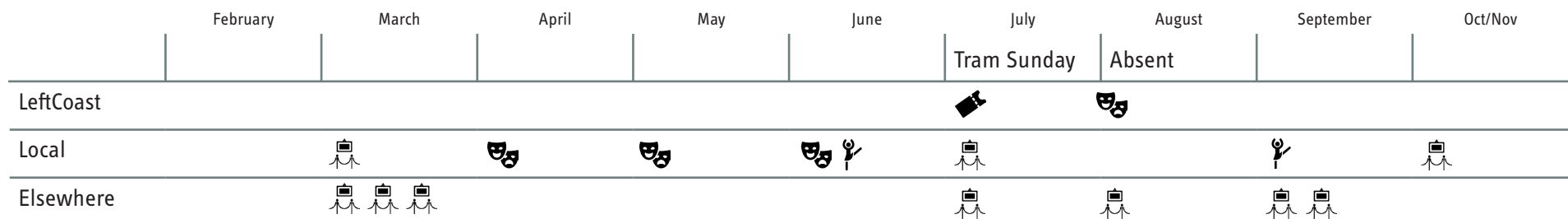
**3 events**

### Influencer

**None**

## Motivation

Fiona is motivated **intellectually & emotionally** by her passion for fine art. She also goes to galleries for **spiritual** reasons - as quiet & reflective spaces.



## Fiona's LeftCoast Journey

### A limited journey

Fiona doesn't feel she's had a LeftCoast journey as the events she attended didn't have an impact on her. However, she has started volunteering with another organisation she's a member of: the Decorative and Fine Arts Society.

### Why was it called 'Spare Parts'?

She attended two LeftCoast events, the Spare Parts Festival - which is part of Tram Sunday - and Absent. While she enjoyed the Spare Parts Festival, she and her companions didn't understand what it was about.

'We couldn't quite work out why it was called Spare Parts. It was quite nice to see everyone out and about in Fleetwood and the floats were nice. But we couldn't quite get the gist of it.'

### Absent didn't ring true

Fiona attended Absent and was very impressed with the sets. However, for her it 'didn't ring true' and wasn't 'immersive enough'.

**I grew up in Blackpool and I worked on the prom so I was always working in that kind of world and behind the scenes. So, I know it's fake. It's entertainment, making money, and I just thought, "Oh it's another spectacle".'**

Despite the story being set in Blackpool, Absent didn't resonate with Fiona as a local and she was pulled out of the story.

### Another journey - becoming a volunteer

During the course of this project, Fiona has decided to become a volunteer with the Decorative and Fine Arts Society. She'll be helping them

organise their archive, something she's interested in and comfortable doing.

**'Sorting an archive out is quite nice for me. I quite like that sort of thing.'**

She's been a member of DFAS for a while and attended two lectures during the course of this project. She thinks the lectures are interesting and very well organised and that the people are friendly.

**'DFAS is all voluntary and this group in particular are doing very positive things. And it's very well run.'**

Impact of LeftCoast

**None - she was already proactive and engaged**



# Karen Forsyth

Karen is '57 going on 29' and was an office administrator before suffering with rheumatoid arthritis. She moved to Fleetwood two years ago from Leeds but is originally from Blackpool. She has a passion for arts and crafts.

## Before LeftCoast

### Spending time with grandma

Karen spent the school holidays with her grandparents and she would go to the library with her grandmother.

**'I used to love going with her to the library. And then we used to go to Woolworths afterwards and get some pick'n'mix sweets. It's got happy memories for me.'**

Sometimes, Karen would also slip out and visit the Grundy, which was a quiet and 'special' place.

Karen's grandparents were also active in the busy Blackpool scene of the time. 'I was aware of all the shows and the entertainment' she explains.

**'I remember my grandparents used to go out and see shows or go dancing in the Winter Gardens.'**

### Becoming an attender and volunteer

When Karen turned 18, she moved to London and regularly visited the museums there and attended concerts and experimental theatre.

Next, she moved to Leeds, and after she stopped working she went to art college. She also joined a craft club, book club, a clandestine cake club and volunteered at Light Night.

**'I like local, small-scale projects where people can get involved. Probably people who wouldn't necessarily think about doing it.'**

Because of her illness, Karen relies heavily on the arts to provide her with activities and a sense of belonging to a community.

**'The arts are really important when you don't mix with many people, it makes you feel connected.'**

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Volunteer**

Wants to volunteer and has done so previously

### Approach

**Reactive** **Proactive**  
volunteer attender

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

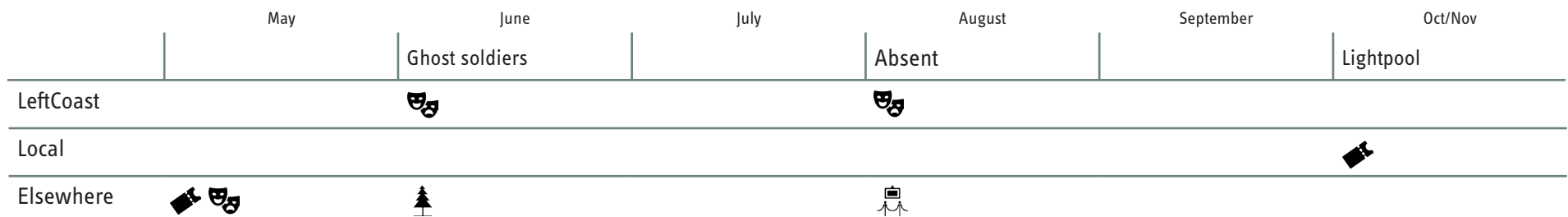
**A few events**

### Influencer

**Grandparents**

### Motivation

Karen's love of the arts means she's motivated **emotionally**. However, the **social** component is also very important to her, as a way to get out of the house & meet like-minded people.



### Karen's LeftCoast Journey

Karen found out about LeftCoast from Twitter. She joined a LeftCoast-related life drawing class when she moved to Fleetwood. Although she really enjoyed it, she had to drop out because of her health. During this project, she's been quite poorly and says she's coming to terms with what she can and can't do.

### Attending Absent and Lightpool

Karen attended both Absent and Lightpool, which she enjoyed and thought were good for Blackpool.

*'Absent was very unusual, I've never seen anything like it, and I thought it was really good for Blackpool to have something a bit different.'*

*'I've never seen as many people at night time just walking around looking at things. So I definitely think the Lightpool's had an effect.'*

### Growing in confidence

Since February, Karen says she's become more familiar with LeftCoast and it has helped her become more confident about attending arts and culture events in Blackpool.

*'I like LeftCoast things, they're interesting and varied and I feel like I can go. It's helping me do more actually. I feel more confident about going to things.'*

Karen has come to trust LeftCoast and knowing they are part of the Blackpool arts landscape makes her feel more comfortable pursuing the arts there.

*'LeftCoast are the pioneers, who brought art for everybody, really. And have made it available to people who wouldn't normally see things.'*

### Wants to join in

Karen is very keen to volunteer with LeftCoast. However, she hasn't seen anything that she feels is aimed at her, and her health has also constrained her.

She would like to volunteer in a teaching capacity, perhaps teaching crafts, but wouldn't organise it herself.

*'I would just probably respond if somebody was saying they needed someone to teach textile art, like knitting or felting. I would prefer to join in.'*

#### Impact of LeftCoast

Increased confidence

Increased volume & range of activities

Changed perceptions of Blackpool

Desire to volunteer

# Louise Pope

Louise is in her late forties and works for the Citizen's Advice Bureau. She's originally from Blackpool and loves Victorian Goth festivals. She's also heavily involved in cake decorating groups and is starting up her own cake decorating business.

## Before LeftCoast

### A culturally active family

Louise's parents were both culturally active. The family spent family holidays visiting stately homes and galleries. Her mother was also engaged with the theatre; Louise and her siblings were involved with amateur dramatics from the age of 5.

She didn't study art formally, however, and hated art lessons at school, which she found too proscriptive.

### Life happens

When she was 19, Louise became pregnant and got married. Her husband, however, wasn't engaged in arts and culture and it was only after they divorced that she engaged again.

## Reengaging with the arts: attending and volunteering

At that time, she joined a poetry group and took her daughter to art workshops at the Grundy. She also returned to her teenage love of Victorian Goth and started attending Goth festivals and weekends.

She made friends with people involved with the Blackpool heritage tours and volunteered with a music festival, where she was on the management committee.

Apart from this, she hasn't had much luck volunteering in the arts in Blackpool. She tried volunteering with a Shakespeare festival but never heard back from them.

## 'It's hard to volunteer in Blackpool.'

### Cultural engagement

#### Type

**Volunteer**

Wants to volunteer and has done so previously

#### Approach

**Proactive**

#### Artform



#### Past Leftcoast

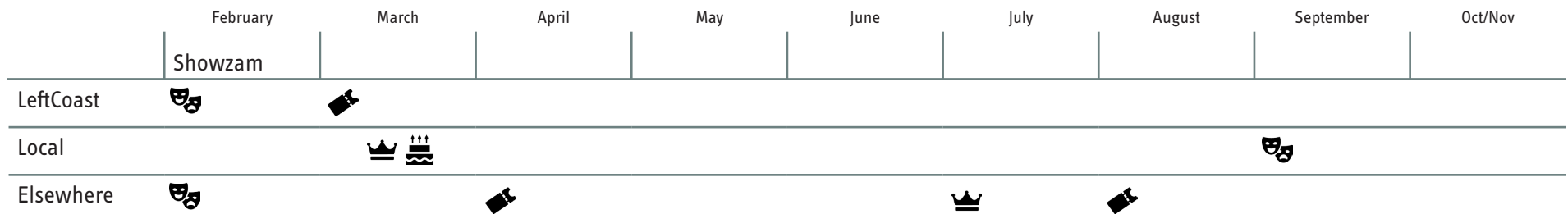
**Showzam, Spare Parts Festival**

#### Influencer

**Parents**

### Motivation

Louise's passion for steam punk & Victorian goth makes her **emotionally** motivated to attend these kinds of events. She's also motivated by the **social** element.



## Louise's LeftCoast Journey

### Less active than usual

#### A busy life

Louise says she hasn't been as culturally active during this project as she usually is. She's been busy with work, volunteering to walk dogs for a disabled neighbour, preparing her daughter for college and starting a cake decorating business.

#### Her cousin doesn't like musicals

She also hasn't been as active because she often attends events with her cousin. However, her cousin doesn't care for musicals and Louise says that most of the offers in Blackpool lately have been musicals. Despite loving musicals herself, Louise doesn't want to go to a show alone.

### A failed attempt to volunteer

With an interest in steam punk, Louise proactively contacted LeftCoast to volunteer with the Spare Parts Festival but never heard back from them.

**'I did try to volunteer for the Spare Parts festival long before the newsletter came out asking for volunteers. I actually emailed LeftCoast because I like Goth and steam punk and the Spare parts festival fits quite well with steam punk and nobody got back to me and by the time the dates were actually released and the call for volunteers, I'd double booked it for something else unfortunately.'**

### Spreading the word

Louise was already engaged in arts and culture and therefore hasn't experienced much impact from LeftCoast. However, she has encouraged family and friends to attend LeftCoast events and thinks in this way there's been a wider impact.

Impact of LeftCoast

Desire to volunteer

# David Raif Bailey

David is in his late 50's and is semi-retired. He's originally from Staffordshire and moved to Blackpool from London a year and a half ago. He has worked in the theatre in various capacities throughout his life.

## Before LeftCoast

### A rock & roll life

David was a roadie for Slade in the 70's and 80's. He also worked with other bands and as security.

**'So I used to work in different theatres every single day.'**

Next, David joined the Youth Service and became a part-time youth leader in Staffordshire, and it was at that time that he got involved with the Cannock Players, a small theatre company.

### Getting more involved in theatre

After his parents passed away, David moved down to London and during a chaotic living situation became involved with the Cardboard Citizens Theatre.

**'That taught me a lot about theatre, because you're not only having to act, you're having to know how to run a play.'**

### Moving to Blackpool

David inherited some money from an elderly friend he looked after, who was the dressmaker at the Opera House in Covent Garden.

He decided to move up to Blackpool, where he had nice childhood memories of day trips with his parents.

### Engaged and proactive

Despite having worked behind the scenes in theatre throughout his life, at the moment David prefers being an attender.

**'I'm happy just to be in the audience right now.'**

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Attender**

Volunteered in the past but not interested now

### Approach

**Proactive**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

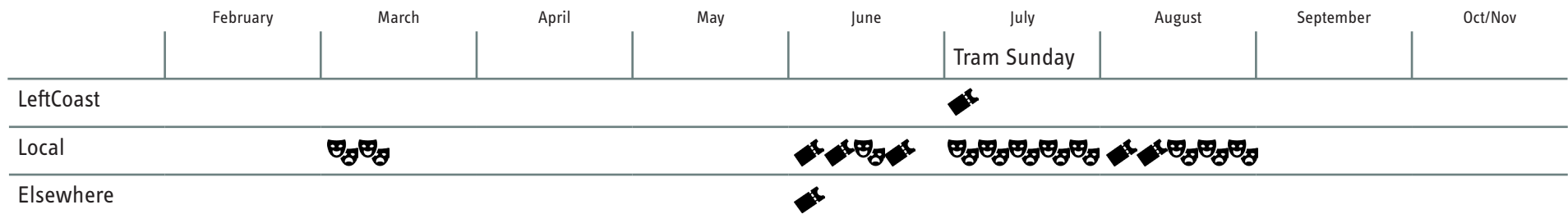
**None**

### Influencer

**None**

### Motivation

His background in theatre means David is motivated **emotionally** and **socially** to attend arts and culture events. However, he's happy going to events alone.



### David’s LeftCoast Journey

For the past year and a half since David moved to Blackpool, he’s been on a personal journey. He’s bought his first house, a car and has returned to his hometown during this project, connecting with old friends and family members.

He’s an avid arts attender and has frequented many events during this project, including ones he couldn’t have previously afforded, like a VIP event for Illuminations and suit and tie events at the Tower Ballroom.

**‘There’s quite a lot going on in Blackpool.’**

### A good day out at Tram Sunday

David’s first LeftCoast event was Tram Sunday in July, which he enjoyed. He wrote in his journal:

**‘Took a couple of hours to walk to the sea front and back. Plenty to see, do and buy. Very good day.’**

### Feeling unwelcome at Absent

David has become very involved with photography lately and was taking pictures as he waited for the Absent tour to begin. However, he left early after he was asked to check his camera and felt unwelcome.

**‘I felt so weird in there. A woman shoved this card in front of me and asked me to read it which was all the things that you’re not supposed to do. You’re not supposed to take photographs on the tour, which I wouldn’t have done anyway and then one of the male staff came over and said “Can you leave your camera in the cloakroom?” and I said “No, I’ve got too much money involved in the camera equipment”, and I just felt so uncomfortable and walked out.’**

Impact of LeftCoast  
**None - already proactive and engaged**

# Dorothy Douglas

Dorothy is in her late fifties and is a part-time drama teacher for adults with learning disabilities. She's lived in Blackpool since she was 16. Her activity has been restricted during this project due to illness.

## Before LeftCoast

### The music of Africa

Dorothy spent the first five years of her life in South Africa before moving to Bolton. Her earliest memories include music and dance from that time.

**'I'll always remember this African-type music and the free dancing. I think that influenced me.'**

## Finding her role models

As a teenager, Dorothy baby-sat for the director of the Octagon Theatre and his wife. Their lifestyle made a lasting impression and set her direction in life.


**'Mrs. Pemberton-Billing dressed in such a flamboyant way and was a drama teacher. And there were books and posters about the theatre in every corner of the house. I remember thinking "I want a life like this."'**

## Teaching drama for confidence

After trying to become a model and showgirl, Dorothy became a drama teacher and volunteered with an organisation called Stepping Stones that taught adults with mental issues. This is where she found her fit, using theatre to encourage confidence.

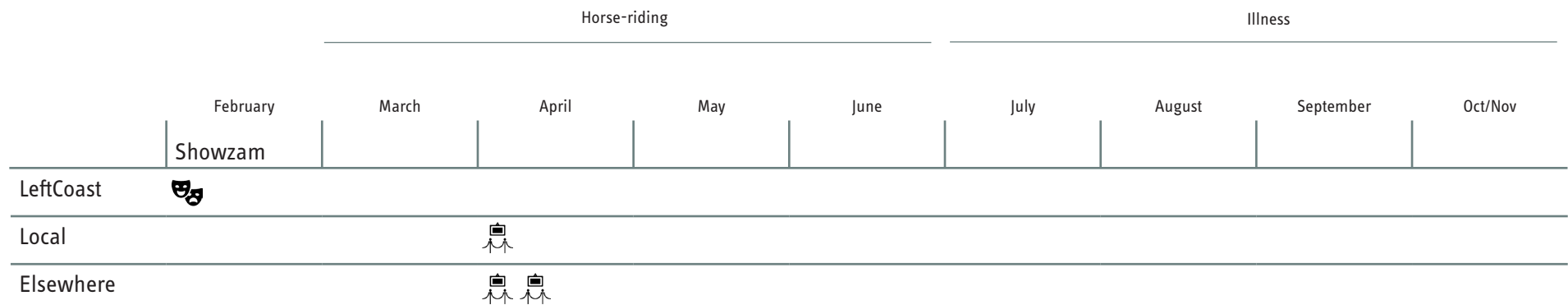
**'I decided I was going to teach drama for confidence rather than get them through onto the big stage, because I saw it as a therapy really.'**

## Cultural engagement

Type	Attender
Approach	Proactive
Artform	
Past Leftcoast	3 events
Influencer	Neighbour

## Motivation

Dorothy's vocation as a drama teacher makes her **emotionally** motivated to engage with the arts.



**‘LeftCoast has all these wonderful offerings and different opportunities and it is like gold dust. I would fight for it. If the Council ever say “Right, we’re going to close it down”, I would be the first to chain myself to the door.’**

### Dorothy’s LeftCoast Journey

#### A chance encounter

Dorothy discovered LeftCoast by chance, when she was walking from a class she teaches nearby.

**‘I was walking past the LeftCoast building and just popped in. I was asking questions and looking at what you did and I thought “Gosh that’s a very useful place to have.” So I made a mental note of where you were.’**

She thinks that LeftCoast should be located nearer to the promenade to encourage more people to drop in.

Since this first meeting, Dorothy has indeed kept an eye out for LeftCoast and her adult son was recently involved with Absent as a composer.

#### Taking art to the people

Dorothy is a big supporter of Showzam, which takes art to the street and envelops people in it.

**‘All the colour, the acrobats, it’s a live circus and you’re right in the middle of it. It’s wonderful.’**

She would like to see more like this, as she believes it engages people who wouldn’t normally seek out art.

**‘Blackpool could do with another two or three things similar to that through the year. Seriously in your face so that people know that something is on.’**

#### Another journey - horse riding

At the start of this project, Dorothy had just signed up for subsidised horse riding lessons. It was something that she had done as a young woman and the affordable price allowed her to reengage with an old passion.

She enjoys being in the countryside, communing with the horses but also connecting with other people also learning how to ride.

**‘You’ve got this closeness with the animals and there’s the other people around all in the same boat. You’re all going through the same thing. And it’s just wonderful.’**

#### Impact of LeftCoast

**Contributing to Blackpool regeneration**



# Diana Newhill

Diana is 66 and works part-time for Cultural Services. She's originally from Coventry and moved to Blackpool 35 years ago. She's a history lover and belongs to the Richard III society.

## Before LeftCoast

### Falling in love with history

Diana was mostly exposed to arts and culture through school. She remembers going on a tour of St. Mary's Hall in Coventry for a primary school trip. This is when she 'fell in love with history.'

Apart from the building and the portraits, Diana particularly remembers the guide who led the tour and told them stories.

**'I think it was just having somebody talking to you and explaining. Whoever the guide was must have made such an impression on me.'**

## Introduced to theatre through school

Diana's parents weren't very engaged in arts and culture, besides taking the family to the pantomime.

**'I do like to go to the theatre. But again, that was something we never did. My parents would take me to the panto when I was small. But that would've been about it.'**

Instead, school introduced Diana to theatre. It was there she made friends who also liked Shakespeare.

**I had a group of friends who were like-minded, so off we'd go to Stratford on quite a regular basis.**

## Set in her ways: 'I know what I like'

As an adult, Diana has enjoyed attending Shakespeare, the opera and classical music concerts. Apart from that, she's less likely to venture out of her comfort zone - although she says being part of this project has motivated her to do so.

## Cultural engagement

### Type

**Attender**

hoping to become... ..and trying to become...

### Approach

**Passive Reactive Active**

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

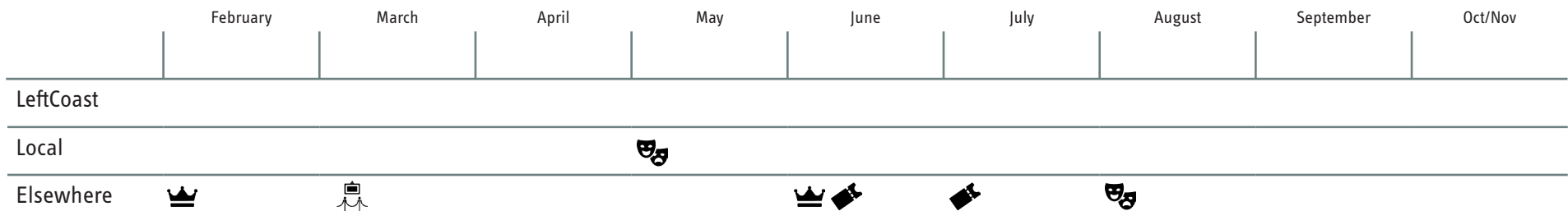
**Showzam**

### Influencer

**None**

## Motivation

Diana is **socially** motivated to attend arts & culture. She's **emotionally** motivated when it comes to history & heritage specifically, due to her love of history.



### Diana’s LeftCoast Journey

Diana didn’t attend any LeftCoast events during this project. Instead, she visited two historical sites on her own initiative, as well as galleries on holiday in Paris - where her daughter was running a marathon.

Otherwise, she was invited to two food festivals in Birmingham and Liverpool by friends, which was new for her, although they didn’t win her over. She was also invited to a play in Manchester by her grandson, which she really enjoyed.

### Waiting to react

Apart from Showzam, Diana has never attended a LeftCoast event. When she joined this project, she hoped to start receiving the LeftCoast newsletters and become aware of their events.

However, she didn’t receive any. In this way, Diana was **passively** engaged with LeftCoast and hoped to become **reactively** engaged.

**‘I must admit I thought that Saturday when we all met up, after that we would get regular updates from LeftCoast.’**

### Attending the final forum

It was attending the final forum for this project that motivated Diana to become more proactive. She was particularly influenced by the other participants in the room.

**‘I think going to that forum has really opened up my eyes to the fact that I don’t do enough. There were a few things people mentioned that I thought “I didn’t even know about them”. And it doesn’t take a lot of research to find out these things, does it? So I thought “No, I must go and look at more of what’s on”’**

### A proactive start begins with Showzam

Diana regularly goes out with friends to the cinema and for a meal. However, she’s decided

that next time she’s going to be more proactive. Her first thoughts were Showzam, suggesting that she trusts that she’ll enjoy it.

**‘I’m going to have a look online and see what’s coming up and I’m going to go with a list of suggestions. Hopefully, by Christmas, the programme for Showzam should be out. So I will have a good look at that because they do some good stuff.’**

Impact of LeftCoast

**Motivated to try new artforms**

# David Cross

David is 52 and works part-time as a retail accountant. He's originally from Lytham and enjoys spending time outdoors. He joined the territorial army when he was 21 and was a member until a few years ago.

## Before LeftCoast

### Religion and the great outdoors

Raised in a religious family, David was highly involved with the church throughout his childhood. Otherwise, his family spent most of their leisure time outdoors, and his exposure to arts and culture was mainly through school.

### Introduced to the arts through school

When he was 11, David performed in 'Oliver' and still remembers the lyrics. And when he was 16, he saw his first orchestra concert.

**'I remember thinking it was absolutely phenomenal. 50-odd people all reading music and coming in at the right time.'**

## Joining the territorial army

Joining the territorial army left him little time for arts and culture, and he hasn't prioritised it in his life.

**'I joined the Territorial Army and every spare minute, or every spare weekend was going with my mates on exercise with the army.'**

## Seeking out art - but not in Blackpool

Nevertheless, David continues to appreciate the arts and enjoys going to museums on his own. He's also willing to go out of his way to see an interesting exhibit, although this appears to be limited to London.

**'There was an exhibition on in London about Russian photography and I walked miles to find this really out-of-the-way, little gallery. ... So I will go and try and look at things, but I just haven't done it in Blackpool I'm afraid.'**

## Cultural engagement

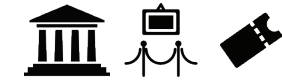
### Type

**Attender**

### Approach

**Passive** in Blackpool **Active** in London

### Artform



### Past Leftcoast

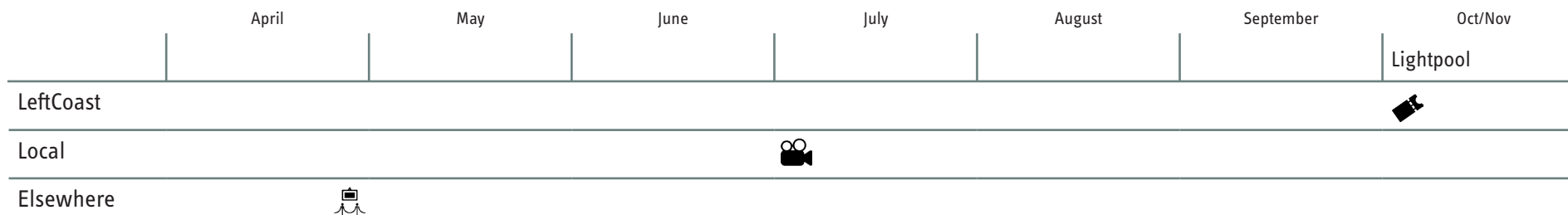
**Lumidogs, When World Tipped**

### Influencer

**None**

## Motivation

David is primarily motivated to attend arts & culture events with **friends**. When he goes on his own, he is motivated for **emotional** reasons, particularly pieces with high craftsmanship that have something to say about the world in which we live.



### David's LeftCoast Journey

During this project, David has been very busy with work. In the summer he prioritised being outdoors and walking and cycling.

David doesn't engage more deeply with the arts in Blackpool because his friends aren't culturally active, his awareness of LeftCoast is low and because he doesn't appear to perceive Blackpool as having an arts sector.

### Negative perceptions of Blackpool

Another reason that David doesn't engage with the arts in Blackpool is because he doesn't actually go into Blackpool.

**'I dwell in Blackpool but I don't live in it. I go to work two miles north and I go to see my brothers and sisters four miles south. I don't see the town centre from one week to the next because I have no need to go into it.'**

For David, Blackpool is a place for tourists to party and isn't suited to locals.

**'Friday Saturday night it is just people piling into town to go out and have a laugh. ... The options you've got are chain restaurants with loads of people you're probably not likely to see again.'**

Moreover, his friends feel that same way and don't go into Blackpool either.

**'My friends don't go to Blackpool anymore either, so you kind of stick with your friends don't you?'**

### Awareness of LeftCoast is low

David would prefer to hear about events through friends rather than actively research it. However, his friends aren't culturally engaged so he relies on advertising to hear about events.

### Passively engaged

Throughout this project, David has said he plans to sign up for the LeftCoast newsletter. However, he admits that he still hasn't.

**‘I could sign up to LeftCoast emails, but I haven’t. That’s a bit remiss! Is there more they could do? Probably not.’**

**Advertising for Lightpool was good**

However, David did attend Lightpool with his friends, which was well advertised.

**‘Lightpool has been very well advertised, there’s leaflets and people handing them out. There’s a big arch with an arrow that’s lit up at night that you see when you come out of the railway station. So things like that are good.’**

**‘I need new friends’**

The social component is fundamental to David’s choice of leisure activities. He joined the Territorial Army partly as a way to socialise.

**‘One reason I kept going to the TA is you make friends there and you want to go and meet your friends.’**

Although he would like to engage with the arts, he is less likely to because his friends aren’t culturally active. Therefore, he thinks he needs to find a new social circle.

**‘I need new friends who are more culturally inspiring.’**

By the end of this project, David seemed to realise that in order to make new friends who were culturally active, he would need to attend more events himself.

**‘I need to inspire myself to make the first move, and then others might inspire me once that move’s been made.’**

In other words, once David starts to make friends who are culturally active, they will inspire him to continue engaging - just as was the case with the Territorial Army.

However, considering that he hasn’t signed up for the newsletter, David might not follow through with becoming more proactive.

**Impact of LeftCoast**

**Motivated to attend more events to make new culturally active friends**

# Impact of LeftCoast

## Summary of participant impacts

Participant	Type	Great art	Sector	Blackpool	Personal	More engaged
Bernard Kennedy	Organiser	Changed perceptions of art More open to risk	Created new arts offer		Increased social interaction	<b>Deeper engagement as an organiser</b>
Dave Carlos	Organiser	Expanded horizons		Changed perceptions of arts offer in Blackpool		<b>Became an arts organiser</b>
Steve Pennington	Organiser		Opened doors		Increased social interaction	<b>Became an arts organiser</b>
Michael Higgins	Organiser		Created an arts event			
Jennifer Price	Organiser			Contributing to regeneration		
Emma Taylor	Volunteer	Changed perceptions of art Attended greater volume & range of activities	Became an ambassador		Increased social interaction	<b>Became an ambassador</b>
Debbie Cross	Volunteer	Expanded horizons Greater range of activities More open to risk Great art close to home	Became an ambassador			<b>Became an ambassador</b>
Anne Charlesworth	Volunteer	More open to risk Greater range of activities	Became a volunteer		Increased social interaction	<b>Became a volunteer</b>
Fiona Walmsley-Collins	Volunteer					
Karen Forsyth	Volunteer	Increased volume & range of activities	Desire to volunteer with LeftCoast	Changed perceptions of Blackpool	Increased confidence	<b>Desire to volunteer with LeftCoast</b>
Louise Pope	Volunteer		Desire to volunteer with LeftCoast			<b>Desire to volunteer with LeftCoast</b>
David Raif Bailey	Attender					
Dorothy Douglas	Attender			Contributing to regeneration		
Diana Newhill	Attender	Wants to try new artforms				<b>Wants to try new artforms</b>
David Cross	Attender			Changing perceptions of Blackpool	Motivated to make new culturally active friends	

# Creating great art

For seven of fifteen participants LeftCoast has been involved in the **creation and importing of great art** that has captured the imagination and made quality art **available in Blackpool**. It has also helped **change perceptions** of the arts and encouraged **risk taking**.

## Creating and importing innovative art

Showzam, As the World Tipped, the Ghost Solders, Absent and Lightpool were examples of 'unusual' and/or great art events that several participants found particularly memorable. They recognised LeftCoast's role in bringing these events to Blackpool.

**'As the World Tipped was crowded. Everyone enjoyed it, and it was completely different. It captured my imagination. And LeftCoast helped bring that to Blackpool.'** - David Cross

**'Absent would never have come to Blackpool if it wasn't for LeftCoast, and the Ghost Soldiers would never have come. No one else would've done that, would they?'**

- Debbie Cross

**'This year at the Lightpool Festival, the Grundy Gallery has effectively become the whole town because there is 40-odd pieces of art all over town.'**

- Dave Carlos



Illuminated drum performers at Lightpool 2016



'As the World Tipped' was performed on a tipping stage in September 2014



### **Providing a greater volume and range of art**

As a consequence of LeftCoast, there are more arts events to attend.

**‘It’s bringing art into Blackpool that really just wasn’t available at all.’ -**

Debbie Cross

This is important for parents like Emma, who says she would be ‘ripping her hair out’ during the school holidays were it not for LeftCoast’s family workshops.

**‘I wouldn’t know what to do during the school holidays. I’d be ripping my hair out.’ - Emma Taylor**

It also provides a greater diversity of events, which participants like Anne greatly appreciate.

**‘What they do is so diverse. It’s really important that LeftCoast are kept on in the future.’ - Anne Charlesworth**

### **Providing quality art close to home**

Whereas some participants previously felt they had to travel further afield to find great art, they are starting to feel confident that they can find great art in Blackpool. Frequent arts attenders were particularly aware of this, like Debbie Cross and David Raif Bailey.

**‘It broadens out what’s available so I don’t have to travel to Manchester or Liverpool to actually go and see art.’ - Debbie Cross**

**‘There’s quite a lot going on in Blackpool.’**

- David Raif Bailey

### **Changing perceptions of art**

Some participants appeared to associate ‘art’ with fine arts, rather than more accessible art. After becoming involved in LeftCoast in various capacities, some participants’ perceptions of art changed in a positive way.

After attending a Golden Section with Ronnie Hughes and participating in Project Octagon, Bernard realised that ‘art doesn’t have to take place in a theatre, it can be everywhere’.

Similarly, after speaking with the LeftCoast member who recruited her as an ambassador, Emma developed a different view of the arts.

**‘I don’t like museums or any art galleries ... but then we worked out it’s all about theatre shows, circus, all these little family workshops ... it’s not just Van Gogh.’**

- Emma Taylor

## Encouraging risk taking

In part, due to changing perceptions of art, some participants have also become more open to risk. This means that they're more willing to engage with certain artforms or with the arts and culture generally when they were previously more reluctant.

Following his involvement with Project Octagon, Bernard attended an open mic event, which he says he would've never done before because he associates it with poetry, which isn't his 'thing'.

Debbie also says she's 'more open to weird and wonderful things' than she was before she started attending LeftCoast events.

Anne Charlesworth was more open to joining the Electric Sunshine Project after being involved with this project, even though she says it's outside her comfort zone.



A performance at Lightpool



Absent was a surreal tour around the Winter Gardens



Soldiers taking part in 'We're Here Because We're Here' to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme



A float from the SpareParts Festival

# Developing the arts and culture sector

This research suggests that LeftCoast is playing a **vital role** in **developing** the **arts sector** in Blackpool. For eight of fifteen participants, it has encouraged **new arts offers, networking opportunities** and has encouraged a **desire to volunteer** among some participants.

## **New arts offers and opportunities**

### **Creating a set-building workshop with LeftCoast**

Bernard, who is chairman of the Lytham Amateur Operatic Society, has been interested in developing a relationship with LeftCoast. As he says, he's 'dragging us into Blackpool' because he wants his society to be more involved with events in Blackpool and sees LeftCoast as a key partner in this. This will expand the arts and culture sector, creating firmer ties between Blackpool and its neighbours.

**'I was trying to get LeftCoast to recognise us as a project, but also trying to get the people of Lytham to recognise LeftCoast as a project. So I'm trying to integrate us.'** -Bernard Kennedy

Currently, he and LeftCoast are developing a set-building class. His society has the venue and materials for set-building but needs the manpower to help build their sets; LeftCoast have identified set-building as a gap in the arts offer in Blackpool.

**'Mikey, that directed ghost soldiers, said they had a real gap in the offer to young people of how to build sets and we have a studio that's packed full of equipment, props and scenery and we need young people to come and help us because we've got an older volunteer base. So that's why he thinks it's going to work.'** -Bernard Kennedy

## **Organising a Wind Festival in Blackpool**

Michael Higgins, who is part of the King Edward Avenue Community Arts Project, received funding from LeftCoast to put on a Wind Festival. The aim was to attract attention to King Edward Avenue, where Michael's hotel is located.

Not only did this provide a new arts event, but it also involved commissioning artists, who were given the opportunity to practice and showcase their art.

### **A chance to create art**

Other participants are encouraged by the presence of LeftCoast and the opportunities it provides for them to pursue the arts, which will in turn help develop the sector.

**‘We need it, this facility where people can ask for grants to do creative work. For me it’d be making films or money for a film workshop. Knowing that kind of facility exists for ordinary people in the street who have an idea, not just those who are well off, I think it’s a great thing.’** -Steven Pennington

### **Arts career development**

LeftCoast has also provided the opportunity for local artists and creatives to develop their arts careers through being involved with various arts projects.

Debbie’s son, who is a composer, was involved with Absent, while Jennifer knows ‘a lot of people have made nice careers out of LeftCoast’.

### **Networking opportunities**

Among Organisers in particular, there is an appetite for networking opportunities in the arts sector in Blackpool, which LeftCoast has been providing. This is clear from Bernard’s story, and Steve provides another case in point.

Steve was partially motivated to volunteer for Absent because he saw it as a good way to meet people to collaborate on his filmmaking projects with. As he hoped, he established contacts with whom he’s planning to work in the future.

For Steve, being a participant in Absent opened doors to other people he never would’ve met.

### **Desire to volunteer**

LeftCoast has also engaged people who want to volunteer, which will also contribute to the growth of the arts and culture sector in Blackpool.

They would like to volunteer with LeftCoast for various reasons, perceiving them as delivering quality events and making a positive impact on Blackpool.

Karen Forsyth, who volunteered with arts organisations when she lived in Leeds, would like to volunteer with LeftCoast now that she’s become more familiar with them.

Louise Pope also wanted to volunteer with the Spare Parts Festival, which she had attended previously. Dave Carlos wanted to volunteer with Lightpool.

# Changing perceptions of Blackpool

Participants acknowledged that Blackpool has a negative reputation as a party town. However, for five of fifteen participants, their **perceptions of Blackpool** are beginning to **change**.

LeftCoast are contributing to this by bringing **inspiring art** to the town and **creating events** that are geared towards **families**.

## **Blackpool is a place with great art**

LeftCoast helps deliver art that may not be typically associated with Blackpool, contributing to changing internal perceptions of the city overall.

**‘Blackpool has a reputation for populist culture but to find some of the other stuff that actually provokes the mind and makes you think in different ways is wonderful.’** - Dave

Carlos

## **A town for families and friends**

Lightpool in particular was seen as bringing families back to Blackpool, creating a more wholesome experience than might be expected in a town renowned for stag and hen parties.

**‘I was really pleased to see lots of family groups at Lightpool. So it was a really nice atmosphere, it wasn’t full of drunken people being rowdy.’**

- Karen Forsyth

Having a positive experience at Lightpool also encouraged David Cross, one of the less engaged participants, to visit Blackpool again - despite its negative reputation.

**‘Blackpool’s not the nicest place. Everyone’s doing their best including LeftCoast and long may that continue. And having gone to Lightpool at the weekend, I’ll try my best to get to more.’** - David Cross

## **Developing local pride**

With quality art on offer and events aimed at families, some participants are starting to feel more pride in Blackpool. After attending Lightpool, Karen went back several times and also invited her friends from Yorkshire, which is something she wouldn’t have done before.

**‘There’s lots of things going on now, all sorts of different things. So I think that makes it really lively and vibrant. I would be more prepared to invite friends to Blackpool now.’** - Karen Forsyth

# Events have a personal impact

Six of fifteen participants experienced a **personal benefit** from attending a LeftCoast event.

## Increased social interaction

Four participants particularly enjoyed the social interaction they experienced from attending or participating in a LeftCoast event.

Bernard enjoyed meeting men from other walks of life at Project Octagon, while Anne has made new friends from joining the board of the Electric Sunshine Project. Steve made new sector connections from volunteering with Absent, but he also made new friends and had a lot of fun with four of the other volunteers.

For Emma, who is a single mother with a young child, attending LeftCoast workshops helped get her out of the house and interact with other people.

## Increased confidence

Attending LeftCoast activities has helped Karen develop more confidence after a period of illness. Whereas before she had felt hesitant about venturing out and attending events alone, she now feels more confident because she's familiar and has come to trust LeftCoast.

**'I like LeftCoast things, they're interesting and varied and I feel like I can go. It's helping me do more actually. I feel more confident about going to things.'** - Karen Forsyth

## Seeking new culturally active friends

Although David Cross appreciates art, he says he attends fewer arts and culture events because his friends are less culturally engaged. Reflecting on his arts attendance and behaviour has encouraged him to attend more LeftCoast events to seek out new friends who are culturally active. These new friends would then make him aware of and invite him to more events.

**'I need to inspire myself to make the first move, and then others might inspire me once that move's been made.'** - David Cross

# Challenges

# Challenges to engaging with LeftCoast

LeftCoast has a very **good reputation**, and is perceived as making a **significant contribution** to Blackpool.

Participants would like to **engage more deeply** with LeftCoast but feel that **communication** could be **improved**.

There is also some **concern among a minority** that LeftCoast as an organisation is **cliquey** and that its events may not always resonate with locals.

## LeftCoast has a very good reputation

As will be clear from the previous chapter and profiles, LeftCoast has a very good reputation among participants.

For example, Bernard went along to Project Octagon because he trusted it would be worth it since it was associated with LeftCoast.

**‘I knew it would be good if LeftCoast were doing it.’** - Bernard Kennedy

## And there is a desire to engage

There is also a strong appetite among organisers to collaborate with LeftCoast and a desire among others to volunteer, as previously discussed.

Among attenders as well, there is the wish to attend more LeftCoast events. Diana hoped that joining this project would make her more aware of LeftCoast activities, and David Cross has enjoyed the LeftCoast events he has attended and would like to go to more. David Raif Bailey was also interested in becoming more familiar with LeftCoast and joined this project for that reason.

## But communication could be improved

Despite the desire for increasing engagement, some participants have experienced challenges in doing so. This appears to be the result of limited communication.

**‘I think it’s been great. I think the problem is getting the word out.’** -

Anne Charlesworth

## Awareness is low

Each month, we asked participants what LeftCoast events they had attended and were aware of. Awareness was typically low. Those who weren’t signed up for the newsletter relied on word-of-mouth or other advertising to find out about LeftCoast.

For someone like David Cross or Diana without friends or family engaged in arts and culture, their exposure to LeftCoast was particularly limited.



### **The newsletter comes too late**

For those who were signed up to the newsletter, a common complaint was that it comes on the day or after an event has passed. Therefore, by the time they become aware of an event, they aren't able to go.

**'What I do find with LeftCoast emails is sometimes when you get the email, the thing has already happened, or it's about to happen that day or something, and it's really disappointing.'** - Anne Charlesworth

**'Sometimes when you get the newsletter it's already gone or you've already booked and it's like if only you had known a little bit earlier you would have been able to go to that specific event.'** - Emma Taylor

### **It's difficult to volunteer with LeftCoast**

Several participants also tried to volunteer with LeftCoast at various points during the project. As mentioned in her profile, Louise tried to volunteer with the SpareParts Festival, proactively emailing LeftCoast with her interest but never heard back.

Similarly, Dave attempted to volunteer as a steward with Lightpool but also had no response.

**'I did actually volunteer to steward, I filled in all the forms and everything, but LeftCoast in their wisdom failed to get back to me and arrange for that to happen.'** - Dave Carlos

Bernard and Steven both volunteered with Absent and mentioned that after volunteering there was a long period of silence from LeftCoast.

**'After I volunteered for Absent the first email was "Yeah come on board" and then they sort of disappeared and then you felt like you lost contact.'**  
- Bernard Kennedy

Debbie is a LeftCoast ambassador, but she also says she doesn't find out about events in enough time to spread the word. Compared to Emma, who felt confident as an ambassador, Debbie may not have received as much initial guidance for what to do as an ambassador.

**'I just felt that you've asked me to be ambassador. Yeah I'll do it but then you don't really give me information about what to do.'** - Debbie Cross

## Potentially inaccessible

A common theme in conversations was about LeftCoast treading the line between being ‘out of the box’ and being too avant garde to be accessible.

There was general consensus that some LeftCoast art is difficult to understand. While some participants enjoyed being challenged in this way, others felt like LeftCoast didn’t always ‘get’ locals.

Without interviewing people from Blackpool who are completely unengaged with LeftCoast, it is difficult to comment on their claims. However, it is still worth noting.

### Is the art locally resonant?

Mina, for example, says that LeftCoast advertising doesn’t resonate with her friends. The language and terminology doesn’t engage them, and they imagine the events to be ‘arty farty’.

Other participants shared this perception of LeftCoast being a little elitist.

**‘It can be a bit pretentious.’**

- Bernard Kennedy

## Are LeftCoast people ‘Blackpool’ people?

Jennifer also doesn’t think that teenagers from Blackpool are aware of LeftCoast or would find people associated with LeftCoast accessible.

**‘I can’t imagine that any of these teenagers hanging round on the street would ever add LeftCoast on their Facebook page. And they certainly wouldn’t know anybody that’s a part of LeftCoast ... they would probably class them as eccentrics.’** - Jennifer Price

That being said, she does think these teenagers would be open to engaging if they were approached personally by someone they found accessible.

**‘You can walk past the kids in the street, and they’ll talk to you. They’ll tell you what’s up, why they’ve got nowhere to go. It’s just all about how you engage them.’** - Jennifer Price

As we discuss in the final chapter, harnessing networks of local ambassadors and volunteers will allow LeftCoast to extend its reach and influence.

## An exclusive club?

Around a third of participants expressed concern that LeftCoast is cliquey, a small group of artist types that may not often engage with people outside their circle. This may make participants feel like LeftCoast is less accessible and less welcoming.

**‘LeftCoast share it on Facebook, but it ends up being their little circle of friends. And that circle’s not expanding to engage more people.’** -Jennifer Price

**‘I think there’s a clique because I don’t think the normal person in Blackpool would hear about LeftCoast.’** - Michael Higgins

**‘I’d never heard of LeftCoast until a lady that I used to work with in the theatre in Hackney in London, told me about LeftCoast.’** - David Raif Bailey

# Pathways to engagement

# Lightbulb moments

For some participants, it was possible to identify a **'lightbulb' moment** that spurred them on to **deeper engagement** with arts and culture, whether prior to or during this project.

Whether the 'lightbulb' moments experienced during this project will lead to **continued engagement** will depend on the **local arts and culture provision**, along with other personal factors, such as life circumstances.

'Lightbulb' moments, however, are not always a prerequisite for **deepening engagement**, which can be a **gradual process** or prompted by other factors.

## Lightbulb moments

The table on the next page highlights participants' 'lightbulb' moments identified through this research, as well as what caused them.

'Lightbulbs' were most often produced by experiencing **innovative art**, being part of the **art-making process**, and being **exposed to people engaged in the arts** - including **personal recruitment**. Examples of these are summarised in the table on the following page and discussed further in the following chapter.

## How long will the 'lightbulb' stay on?

Experiencing an 'a-ha' moment doesn't necessarily translate into sustained engagement with the arts. The extent to which someone who has experienced a 'lightbulb' moment will continue to engage with the arts in the long term will depend on a number of factors, including local arts and culture provision and their life circumstances.

As we discuss in the following chapter, there is no single formula to sustaining engagement. Someone may have a 'lightbulb' moment after attending one event that leads them to become

a volunteer, while another person may have a 'lightbulb' moment after decades of engagement.

## Sometimes there are no lightbulbs

Not everyone who engages more deeply with the arts will do so as the result of a 'lightbulb' moment. Deepening engagement can be a gradual process, the result of life changes, or due to other factors.

Change can be the result of a gradual process of developing a greater interest in an organisation or artform. For example, Fiona began to volunteer with the Decorative Fine Arts Society because she had developed a relationship with the organisation and was open to engaging as a volunteer.

Retirement can be another reason for someone engaging at a deeper level. For example, Anne agreed to join the board of the Electric Sunshine Project because she thought it would 'awaken' her to 'other things going on.' No 'lightbulb' moment made her want to 'wake up'; rather, she had retired and was open to new experiences now that she had the time. Similarly, Dave Carlos also began volunteering with Tram Sunday after he had retired.

## Summary of participant 'lightbulb' moments

Participant	Type	'Lightbulb'	What caused it?	Prompted by LC?
Bernard Kennedy	Organiser	'Art doesn't have to take place in a theatre, it can be everywhere you know'	Innovative art; being part of the process of art-making (Project Octagon)	YES
Dave Carlos	Organiser	'They didn't realise it was dance. Perhaps including me!'	Innovative art (Dancing diggers at Spare Parts Festival)	YES
Steve Pennington	Organiser	'Because it's all arts and crafts and performance it opens up doors to people, complete strangers'	Being part of the process of art-making (Absent)	YES
Michael Higgins	Organiser	'It opened my eyes to places where art is displayed'	School trip to a museum as a child	NO
Jennifer Price	Organiser	'I had no idea you could make a career out of the arts'	Being exposed to people who made careers out of art	NO
Emma Taylor	Volunteer	'But then we worked out it's all about theatre shows, circus ... it's not Van Gogh and things like that.'	Personal recruitment (LeftCoast)	YES
Debbie Cross	Volunteer	'It made me realise that there were things in the world I had no idea of and you have to go and find them.' 'LeftCoast have made me realise that I shouldn't just go to the theatre but be more open to weird and wonderful things'	Being exposed to people engaged in arts and culture as a child Innovative art; being part of the process of art-making (Various LeftCoast events)	NO YES
Anne Charlesworth	Volunteer	'It was brilliant. And it totally renewed my interest in seeing more like that.'	Seeing a Shakespeare play with grandson	NO
Fiona Walmsley-Collins	Volunteer	-	-	-
Karen Forsyth	Volunteer	-	-	-
Louise Pope	Volunteer	-	-	-
David Raif Bailey	Attender	-	-	-
Dorothy Douglas	Attender	'Mrs. Pemberton-Billing dressed in such a flamboyant way and was a drama teacher. There were books and posters and the theatre in every corner of the house. I remember thinking "I want a life like this."'	Being exposed to people engaged in arts and culture as a child	NO
Diana Newhill	Attender	'Going to that forum has really opened my eyes to the fact that I don't do enough.'	Being exposed to people who are more culturally active (Journey group forum)	YES
David Cross	Attender	'I need new friends who are more culturally inspiring'	Conversations as part of this project	YES

# Increasing and deepening engagement

The 15 case studies in this report reveal how **personal** each **journey** is.

While there is no single formula to **increasing engagement** with the arts, there are specific ways that LeftCoast can continue to **initiate, sustain** and **deepen engagement** among people of all three engagement types.

## Each journey is different

People come to the arts in different ways, and each journey is unique. Due to life circumstances, a person may move between engagement types and from higher to lower levels of engagement.

## Journeys aren't linear

Nevertheless, each engagement type is valued, and there isn't always a linear progression from attender to volunteer to organiser. Someone may

go from attending few events to becoming an arts organiser because of the resume building opportunities it presents. An organiser may attend few events and also be a volunteer. And someone may never become a volunteer or organiser but may deepen their engagement by attending more frequently or attending a greater range of artforms.

## Different engagement types can experience similar impacts

In a similar vein, different types of engagers may experience similar impacts from LeftCoast. Bernard was already an organiser and yet his perception of the arts has changed since volunteering for LeftCoast activities. This was also true for Emma, who is not an organiser but became an ambassador for LeftCoast.

In both cases, changing perceptions of the arts led to deeper engagement as an organiser and volunteer, respectively. Thus, there are common ways to initiate, sustain and deepen engagement but they are not necessarily specific to engagement type.

## Initiating engagement

Once an arts and culture opportunity is available to attend or become involved with, there are several ways to encourage initial engagement.

## Make clear what's in it for them

For some, they need to know what the personal benefit is of engaging with the arts, whether as an attender, volunteer or organiser. This may be particularly the case for someone who was not exposed to the arts in childhood or who developed an aversion to the arts, as Emma did.

Communicating the career and skills-building opportunities to young people in particular may help start someone on an arts and culture journey.

**'You've got to be able to offer people something that an employer's going to look at and think, "That's really good, that's really dedicated". And you have to be able to show them there's good value to that.'**

- Jennifer Price

## Make events accessible

Getting someone to engage with LeftCoast or the arts for the first time can be a difficult step. Therefore, it's important that events are as accessible as possible.

## Make events social occasions

Not everyone will be interested in attending an arts and culture event; however, framing events as primarily social has successfully attracted new audiences. Dave discusses this lucidly in his profile in relation to the SpareParts Festival, where he says attendees were very engaged and didn't necessarily realise they were viewing art.

**'They were watching contemporary dance in an interesting, fascinating and exciting setting. And they didn't realise it was dance.'** - Dave Carlos

## Use the right terminology

Finding out what the best language and terminology is to attract local interest may lead to increased engagement. As Jennifer discussed

earlier, many of her friends would be interested in attending arts and culture events but don't respond to advertising because it doesn't resonate with them.

## Make it logistically easy to attend

Making events as logistically easy to attend as possible not only promotes attendance but also encourages those who are already engaged to invite others to attend.

For example, Debbie was able to buy £5 golden tickets to Absent for herself and others so she encouraged her colleagues in Preston to attend. They were interested, until they found out they had to go into Blackpool to buy the ticket as it wasn't possible to buy it online.

**'I'm trying to promote this to people ... and they were all saying "What you want us to go all the way to Blackpool to buy the ticket, and it's not even the day of the show?" It was just so hard.'**

- Debbie Cross

## Encourage family attendance

Participants exposed to the arts and culture through family or friends were more likely to have a deeper engagement with the arts as adults than those who weren't.

These findings strongly support research that analysed the 2005/6 Taking Part Survey, which also found that being taken to arts events and getting encouragement to participate in activities as a child makes it more likely that they will be involved in arts activities as an adult (Osaka et al, 2009).

By targeting families and encouraging parents to bring their children to arts events, LeftCoast may encourage future arts attendance in Blackpool.

Emma's case study shows that LeftCoast's family workshops are valued and appreciated, giving her something to do with her son during the school holidays, but also exposing him to arts and culture from a young age.

## Sustaining engagement

Once involved with LeftCoast, whether as an attender, volunteer or organiser, three key factors were responsible for making participants want to continue engaging with LeftCoast and with the arts and culture more broadly.

### Innovative art with high production values

Participants were desirous to continue engaging with arts and culture after experiencing innovative art with high production values.

For several participants As the World Tipped in 2014 was their first LeftCoast event and was particularly memorable, encouraging them to keep an eye out for LeftCoast events in the future.

In a later section on being involved with the process of artmaking, we also discuss how Bernard, Dave and Debbie were involved with LeftCoast projects that provided them with new experiences that have made them want to continue engaging.

For others, they appreciate innovative art for providing a change from their normal routine.

**‘It just seems like the same thing every day, so Showzam was a little treat for us.’** - Emma Taylor

This is also why David Cross enjoyed the unusual sculptures around town at Lightpool.

**‘It’s different, it’s a change from the norm and therefore I would encourage it.’** - David Cross

### Increased social interaction and making new friends

Another impact that encouraged participants to continue engaging with the arts was the social interaction they experienced from being involved with an event.

Anne was asked to be a volunteer for the Electric Sunshine Project, and at least one reason she wants to continue to be on the board is because she’s made new friends.

Steve volunteered with Absent for the opportunity to network, but he also made new friends and had a fun time with some of the other volunteers. This is why he later said, ‘I’ll never forget that day’ and one of the reasons he wants to volunteer for something like Absent again in the future.

### Events perceived to have local relevance

Some participants wanted to continue engaging because the events they attended felt relevant. This was true for those like Bernard, Michael and Debbie who regularly attend Golden Sections, talks that they have found both interesting and personally resonant.

In contrast, Absent appealed to several participants for its innovative qualities and yet was only perceived by one to be locally relevant. For Fiona, it ‘didn’t ring true’, while Michael and others didn’t see the connection to Blackpool.



## Deepening engagement

There are a number of different ways to encourage someone to engage more deeply, whether becoming a more frequent attender, becoming a volunteer or organiser, or simply inviting others to engage.

### Involve them in the process of making art

Being involved with the process of artmaking made a significant difference for some participants. For Bernard it was being part of Project Octagon, which left a lasting impression. As he said, playing leading roles in musicals was just ‘froth and bubbles’ compared to Project Octagon and he ‘would do it again in a flash.’

Debbie and Dave have become more deeply engaged since being sent to attend arts events by LeftCoast. Debbie and her daughter were sent to Absent when it was in London to feedback to LeftCoast, while Dave and his wife were sent to the Greenwich Docklands Festival to feedback on acts for the SpareParts Festival.

## Demonstrate impact

Some participants were motivated to volunteer with LeftCoast once they became aware of the impact and personal benefit to themselves. This may be the networking or CV-building opportunities, as in the case of Steve and Emma respectively. It may be the chance to socialise and meet like-minded people, as in the case of Karen and Anne.

### Encourage risk taking

As discussed earlier, for some, sustained engagement was the result of attending or being involved in an innovative art project. Encouraging people to step outside of their comfort zone and try a new art form or medium they might perceive as risky may give them new experiences that in turn encourage them to attend more, volunteer or organise, thus deepening their engagement.

Framing potentially ‘risky’ events as social activities is a successful way of exposing people to the arts and encouraging deeper engagement. For example, the shows at the SpareParts Festival may in fact be modern art performances but, as Dave suggested, were presented as social performances at a family-friendly festival.

## Personal recruitment works

The case studies suggest that personal and proactive recruitment is a successful approach to initiating and deepening engagement, recruiting volunteers who in turn spread the word and encourage others to engage.

In particular, Emma and Anne offer good examples. Emma was recruited in a community centre by an individual who approached her and explained what being an ambassador entailed, what LeftCoast means by ‘the arts’, and what personal benefit there would be to her.

Anne was asked to join the board of the Electric Sunshine Project and agreed despite feeling it was out of her comfort zone.

### Develop the ambassador programme

Whether as an ambassador or volunteer, participants were happy to ‘spread the word’.

As an ambassador, Emma has been particularly effective at encouraging less engaged people to attend LeftCoast events. Debbie has also been encouraging others to attend, but would like more guidance on how to be an ambassador.

Non-ambassadors were also actively ‘spreading the word’, suggesting that this grassroots approach works and that more engaged people will likely be open to becoming ambassadors if given enough communication and instruction.

**‘I will definitely stay involved and spread the word. I have been telling other people about this, trying to get more people on board.’**

- Bernard Kennedy

### **Make it easy to join in**

The appetite is there to engage with LeftCoast more deeply. Making it easy to volunteer will empower people like Louise and Dave, who tried to volunteer with LeftCoast, to engage more deeply. Making it clear and easy how to be an ambassador will help people like Debbie to spread the word. And making sure that events are easy to attend and that discount tickets are easy to purchase, will also encourage less engaged people to get involved.

# Appendix

## LeftCoast events on timelines



### Golden Sections (monthly)

LeftCoast's monthly creative conversation inviting a visiting artist or creative to talk about how they got where they are today.



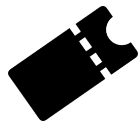
### Family workshops (monthly)

A series of art, storytelling and dance workshops for children and their families.



### Pop up cafe (ongoing)

LeftCoast funded pop up cafe run by ex-prisoners.



### Showzam (February)

A host of free circus performances in the Winter Gardens and a Carnival Ball in Blackpool Tower Ballroom.



### Project Octagon (April-June)

Rehearsals and workshops for participants of the 14-18 NOW ghost soldier remembrance performance.



### Small Corner of the World (June)

An international photography exhibition and a smorgasbord of music, food, beverages, workshops, arts and crafts from around the world.



### Open mic (June)

A monthly open mic night for locals.



### Ghost soldiers (July)

National Somme commemoration project, known formally as 'We're Here Because We're Here'.



### Tram Sunday and the SpareParts Festival (July)

The UK's only festival of art, performance and spectacle dedicated to transport and travel.



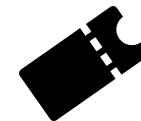
### Missinform (July)

Hostess and guide to an extraordinary tour of South Beach Blackpool.



### Absent (August-September)

A multi-media theatrical journey along a maze of transforming rooms and corridors in the Winter Gardens.



### Lightpool (November)

LeftCoast, Blackpool Illuminations and the Grundy Art Gallery teamed up to help transform the illuminations and extend its reach into the town centre.

## Research parameters

This study was carried out for LeftCoast by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

It was commissioned September 2015

**Target group for the research** LeftCoast and arts and culture attenders in Blackpool and Wyre

**Sample size** 15

**Date of fieldwork** February - November 2016

**Data collection method** Creative journals, telephone interviews, 2 forums

**Number of interviewers** 2

**Questionnaires** 8

### Credits

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Images of murals of Lytham Amateur Operatic Society courtesy of Bernard Kennedy



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We are passionate about understanding cultural consumers, getting to the heart of issues that matter to you and making practical recommendations.

All projects are different, but the value we add is constant: we measure our success by the impact we have on organisations we work with.



**‘LeftCoast have become part of the fabric of the culture of this area ... what they do is so diverse ... it’s really important that LeftCoast is kept on in the area in the future.’**

Anne Charlesworth (journey participant)

**‘LeftCoast plays quite a role in Blackpool. They’re bringing art into Blackpool that really just wasn’t available at all.’**

Debbie Cross (journey participant)

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