



artswork



YOUNG CREATIVES

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

OCTOBER 2022

Flow

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

We at Flow Associates were commissioned by Arts and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes to carry out a robust evaluation of the Young Creatives project in 2019. This three year youth-led cultural and creative initiative has been designed to empower young people in Milton Keynes by building skills and well-being for future employment.

The report brings together the activity of the 3 cohorts that took part to understand the impact of Young Creatives for the young people taking part and also explores how the project has shaped the work of the stakeholders.

This evaluation will...

- Generate insights into the change and impact of participants in terms of their cultural awareness, skills, confidence and resilience
- Identify how young people have been supported to access Milton Keynes' creative and cultural community
- Understand how Young Creatives has developed participants management, leadership, employability and life skills through work with local cultural organisations and co-designed and co-delivered creative projects
- Consider how MAKE's relationships with MK College, arts organisations and schools are shaped through youth-led projects.

In order that you can...

- Understand what MAKE and MK College and its partners have learnt from this project, and how that might inform future activities or iterations of similar youth-led projects
- Understand how participants engaged and how it has impacted on their understanding of the value of creative skills and thinking
- Evidence through Young Creatives' impact the case for cultural education at a high-level to inform future MK strategies
- Use evaluation in a timely and meaningful way to formatively develop the project's approach

1.1

ABOUT YOUNG CREATIVES

Milton Keynes Council, Artsworld and MAKE, MK's Cultural Education Partnership (led by Arts & Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes) are worked in partnership with MK College to deliver a youth-led, creative and cultural initiative called 'Young Creatives'. This programme has been designed to empower children and young people in Milton Keynes by building the skills of resilience, confidence and communication, and developing their sense of well-being, so important for future employment.

Young Creatives was delivered by MK College and engages young people in arts and cultural activity in a way that allows them to develop the skills and behaviours they need for success. A core cohort of young people aged 16-18 was worked with to specifically develop these essential transferable skills for further education, higher education and employment.

The first two cohorts were supported by MK College to gain a better understanding of the cultural landscape (in Milton Keynes and beyond), undertaking training and then developing their own activities that other young people could take part in. MK College commissioned Offset Projects to deliver the programme for Cohort 3. This Young Creatives programme has been supported with investment from Milton Keynes Council (via Section 106 Skills Development funds) and Artsworld, the South-East Bridge organisation for Arts Council England.

The three cohorts were:

Cohort 1 (2019)

11 students recruited via an open call across MK College

Cohort 2 (2019-20)

Year 12 and 13 students from Radcliffe School and students from MK College's Project 1, a group of students at risk of becoming NEET

Cohort 3 (2021- 22)

8 young people recruited via an open call across Milton Keynes, Year 12 and 13 student filmmakers from St Paul's Catholic School and a further group recruited via an open call to help deliver the final project

Flow Associates worked in the role of evaluator to deliver the following:

- **Develop an evaluation framework:** Qualitative and quantitative data collection, benchmarking, summative evaluation. Monitoring numbers and impact in terms of well-being and skills.
- **Supporting young people involved to take part in documenting progress,** gathering data, reflecting on their experience and that of others
- **Final evaluation report** describing project outputs, evidence of outcomes and recommendations towards longer term impact. This will feed in to future MK strategies

Our proposed approach established a light touch advisory and facilitative role for the evaluation rather than a traditional monitoring approach. This has involved working with the stakeholder team to establish shared impacts for the working partnership and engaging with the young creatives to develop what successes look like for them.

This final report brings together the activity of the project from 2019 to 2022 with recommendations for any future developments of similar work or legacy projects.



2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young Creatives has built a foundation for relevant, supportive and innovative creative experiences for young people in Milton Keynes. Since 2018, 59 Young Creatives have gained essential skills for the future and the experience of delivering the programme has enabled the partners to understand what successful creative partnerships look like and how creativity can empower young people.

Over four years, the programme's delivery has adapted as partners learned about what impactful experiences for young people look and feel like, using these insights to influence its approach. Faced with the serious challenges of working with young people through COVID-19, Young Creatives met its original ambitions of engagement and Arts Awards qualifications. Overall, 120 Discover Arts Awards were achieved, 16 were Bronze Awards gained by participants and over 1000 people attended public events and displays.

Young Creatives had transformative and motivating experiences which validated and enabled them to discover their creativity, understanding through practical and public projects how it can be applied in other areas of their lives. At MK College, creativity has been embedded as a core skill for students and teachers, not only in Project 1 and Young Creatives, but also in other courses traditionally considered to be "non-creative", enriching the learning experience and the skills of learners.

The programme expanded relationships in the Cultural Education Partnership, building strong ties between MAKE and MK College which will continue to grow as part of Young Creatives legacy. Through these partnerships young people were not only able to collaborate with others they may not have met, but also new ways of working on creative projects were seeded between schools and creative and cultural enterprises in Milton Keynes.

The youth-led ethos empowered young people to direct the activity, vision and outputs of their experience as a Young Creative. Through scaffolding their learning young people reported that they were more confident in their own abilities and selves, better at communicating their ideas to others and able to work collaboratively with others. They recognised these skills as essential to their own development as they think about their future careers and studies, whether they are in the creative sector or not.

Young Creatives actively linked young people with professionals in Milton Keynes from a wide range of backgrounds to expand the young people's awareness of the opportunities in the city and beyond. At its most successful, it delivered relatable, informative and motivating exposure to creative careers, tackling the problem of the poor visibility of work experience and opportunities in the cultural and creative sectors.

The programme set out to open up access to Milton Keynes and its arts and cultural offer. Young people were supported in experiencing a range of venues and organisations in the city, visiting places that they had not previously been to despite being on their doorstep. More widely, Young Creatives were able to articulate what excited them about arts and culture and how the offer was well targeted at young people. As a group, they then created and shared creative work and experiences that demonstrated how immersive, sensory and contemporary work which spoke of their experiences as young people in Milton Keynes could connect with their peers more widely through well attended public events.

Curious

comfort

euphoria

ALTER

RELAXED

misogynal

AT EASE

Different

Serenity

Magical

peculiar

3

METHODOLOGY

3.1

AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

Evaluation Priorities

- Understand and demonstrate a quantifiable impact and change that Young Creatives had on **life skills** and **career opportunities** for the young people taking part
- Support the **case for cultural education** at a high level, impacting future MK strategies
- Gain **insight into the experience of Young Creatives** and what works for them, what inspires them and what barriers they face in engaging fully

Summary of Project Objectives

- Understand how the project enables a core group of diverse young people to **develop project management, leadership, employability and life skills** by supporting them to work with local cultural organisations to co-design and co-deliver creative projects for children and young people
- How a **youth-led ethos with empowered young people taking the lead**, working in teams, making decisions and taking pride, can result in personal development, resilience, confidence and creative enrichment for young people of Milton Keynes
- To what extent were children and young people supported to **feel confident accessing the MK creative and cultural community**
- How were skills development and educational progression supported by enabling children and young people to **achieve Arts Award certification**
- What was the impact of Young Creatives in **strengthening the MK CEP by building strategic partnerships** with Milton Keynes Council Economic Development and Milton Keynes College

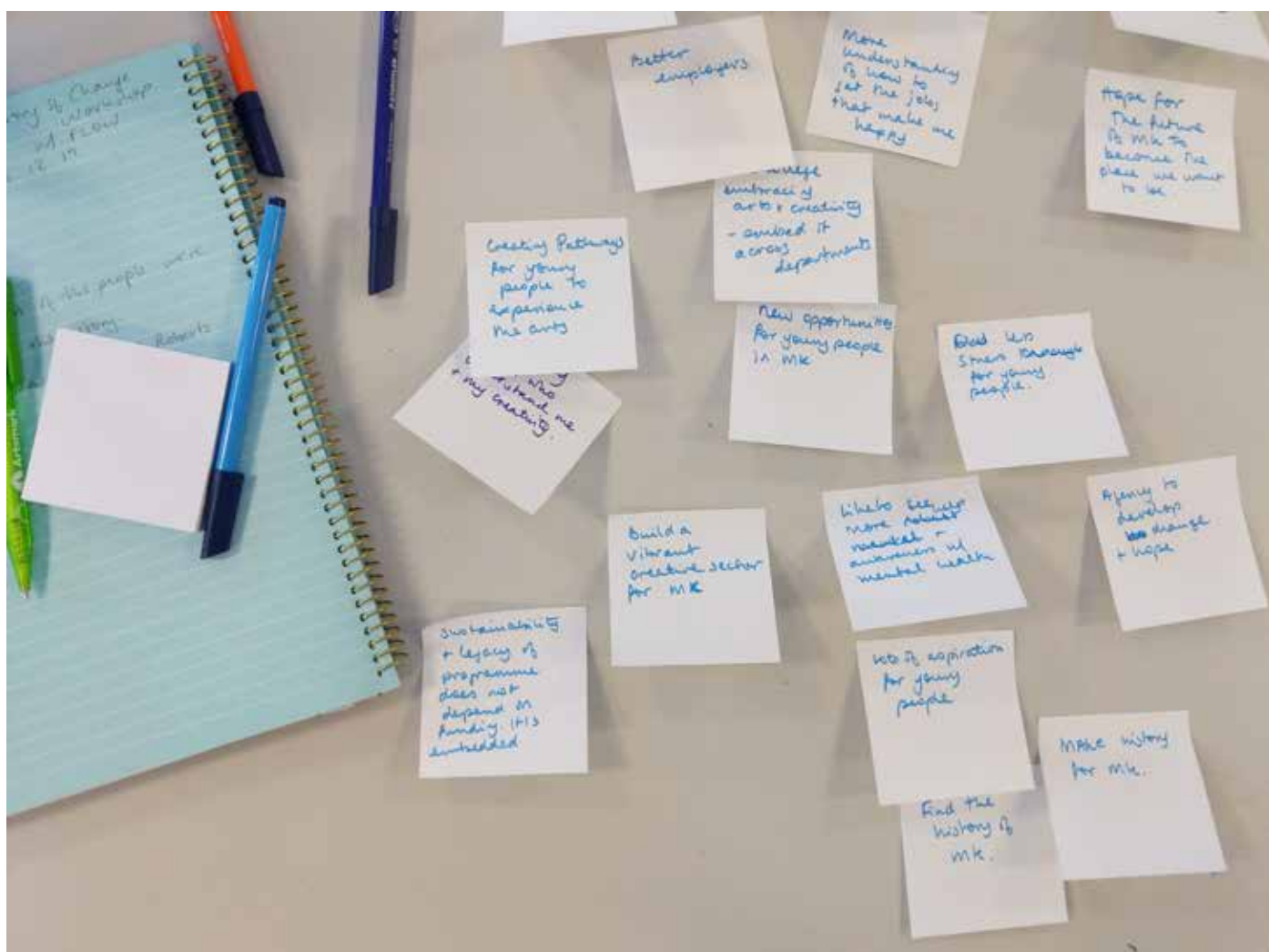
3.2 YOUNG CREATIVES STORY OF CHANGE

The creation of a Story of Change (SoC), provides an effective framework for the young participants to understand the value of the programme as a whole. Logic Models are the key tool in SoC, to help break down a programme based on how it causes change over time.

The SoC and resulting logic models were created over two workshops in December 2019 and January 2020 with input from the second cohort of Project 1 students, alumni from the first cohort of Young Creatives and stakeholders, developing a shared understanding of changes the programme is aiming to bring about (Outcomes), who for, and to what end (Impacts).

The workshop created an opportunity for everyone in the programme to outline the impact which it could have for Young People, MK College and Milton Keynes as a town. These act as guiding principles which inform and shaped the activity taking place and how we speak about its purpose.

From this SoC, an evaluation framework, which establishes how impact is measured, was developed. This is included as an appendix and outlines what data was collected, how and by whom. The Milton Keynes SoC is included as reference only as the longer term impacts and outcomes identified would form part of a potential longer term study which is outside the scope and resources of this evaluation.



Project 1 students, Young Creatives alumni and stakeholders identified the following outcomes and impacts they wanted to see from emerge from the programme over its lifespan:

Young People

Young people's voices are heard and valued in empowering them to be confident in their creativity

There is a fear to being creative and an anxiety that some people are born creative which excludes others

Young People have better access to employment opportunities

There is a lack of awareness of careers in creative industries and unequal access to opportunities

Young people feel ownership over their own creative enterprise

A sense of not belonging or owning a creative identity affects young people's confidence in pursuing their artistic and creative ambitions and there is a lack of authentic relationships for them with cultural venues

MK College

Schools, colleges and HEIs have creativity at their heart so that teachers can deliver a holistic education

An erosion of creative subjects in the curriculum has led to them being "extra" rather than "core"

The sustainability and legacy of the programme does not depend on external investment and the learnings from the project are embedded in all future work allowing Milton Keynes College to continue with a flexible and inclusive creative programme

Young Creatives can be a driver for a step change in attitudes and practice if its value can be demonstrated and its ethos supported by leadership across all areas of teaching and pastoral care

Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes has a creative identity supporting new types of creativity for young people

There are a range of barriers which make it difficult for young people to participate in culture despite the wealth of venues in the town

Young Creatives helps form a history for Milton Keynes

As a "New City" Milton Keynes faces the challenge of giving young people a sense of place but has the opportunity for them to be part of creating its identity

Milton Keynes has a reputation as a place with innovation and creativity at its heart

Businesses rarely articulate the importance of creativity in their workforce and the creative industries in the area lack prominence

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Flow took a mixed methodology approach to collecting data in order to reflect the diverse activities of the programme. Interviews were undertaken with participants and key stakeholders as well as written feedback to establish baseline skill development and reflections on the experience of the programme.

A series of data collection forms were created by the programme co-ordinator for the first cohort to capture the progression and attitudes of students as they progress through the programme and through the completion of their Bronze Arts Awards. The baseline data collected in December 2019 looked at their attitudes to their creative identities, career options and behaviours in visiting arts venues.

An interim report created by MK College in April 2020 documenting Cohort 1 has its findings incorporated into this final report, contributing case studies and verbatim feedback.

Flow Associates joined the programme as evaluators after the first year of delivery had finished. Evaluation planning began in the first academic term of the second cohort, formed of Project 1, a group of students from MK College with additional study support needs, and Radcliffe Sixth Form students. As such, the evaluation framework could not be applied to capturing baseline data in order to establish impact. However, the data which has been collected is useful in establishing some of the narrative of the student's journeys and will be presented in this report.

In March 2020 Flow attended a Young Creatives session at Radcliffe School. Students were working alongside artists to design an immersive experience which would be installed in both the Centre:MK and the MK Gallery Project Space. These events were then cancelled due to the extended shutdown of the school and of the Gallery with work moving online. Attending and observing the sessions, taking notes on actions such as collaboration and discussions, enabled Flow to speak with the teacher leading the session, the artists and the students.

In July 2020 Flow Associates created an interim report reflecting on the new context of the project whilst the second cohort of Young Creatives had their progress disrupted by COVID-19 and the closure of schools and colleges. This report outlined a revised timeline and methodology for the project whilst acknowledging that the evaluation and delivery of activities would need to remain fluid due to the uncertain situation.

On commencement of the third cohort we captured baseline data and established a timeline for feedback throughout their experience and at the end of the project. The framework is attached as an appendix at the end of this interim report.

Once lockdown had lifted and sessions took place in person Flow were able to attend meetings with the Young Creatives, a creative workshop with an artist and the final event as part of Art in the Park. End of project interviews took place on phonecalls and in person with the core group of young people, Offset Projects, MAKE and MK College.

CHALLENGES

The impact of COVID has remained a significant challenge in the evaluation of the project. We were disrupted in following the project due to the pandemic from Spring 2020 until Winter 2021 when full recruitment was able to resume. As such the collection of baseline data continued to be difficult and this accounts for the lack of quantitative data included in the report. The evaluation was also affected by slow recruitment and drop outs in Cohort 3 meaning that baseline data was not collected early enough in the project to measure the young people's initial attitudes and behaviours. At the end of the project, just three of the starting group remained, making the data we did have unreliable.

Therefore, the interview and observations have been used to create a fuller picture of the experience of Young Creatives throughout. This qualitative data provides indicators of progression, as seen by the participants themselves and the facilitators.

3.4 TOOLS

A mixed methodology approach was used in order to capture a holistic picture of the activities of the programme. Data was collected from:

- Project 1 Students
- Radcliffe School Students
- St Pauls School Students
- Young Creatives in Cohorts 1, and 3
- Staff at the College and School
- Partners (AHA-MK, MK College, Artsworld, Offset Projects)

Interim Programme Reports

Reporting from MK College for Cohort 1 at the end of the first year and subsequent updates and planning for Cohort 2.

Interviews with Young Creatives

Flow attended and observed events throughout the delivery period in order to gather qualitative insights of their experience. Observing sessions with a framework of prompts allowed Flow to capture interactions, key moments, how people felt and what collaboration took place. At the end of Cohort 3, a group of students were selected to carry out 1-2-1 interviews to enable Flow to explore their journeys.

Interviews with Stakeholders

In order to understand the process of the partnership, Flow spoke with stakeholders to build a picture of how collaboration took place and to what extent it enabled reaching strategic goals.

Interviews with Delivery Partners

Flow spoke with Offset Projects throughout the delivery of the project with Cohort 3 to understand how they adapted delivery in the context of a pandemic and the associated pressures on young people.

Event Observation and Attendance Data

Flow carried out observations at a range of sessions over the three years in schools, at the college, in external venues and at events. This enabled us to speak with young people about the process they were part of and understand the manner in which activities, collaboration and decision making were supported.

Baseline Survey

Cohort 3 received a baseline survey created by Flow as they began their time as a Young Creative, assessing the context they are coming from and later on establishing if changes against the aims of the programme have taken place.

Post-project Survey

Cohort 3 received a post-project survey created by Flow which revisited the metrics set out in the baseline survey to establish the impact of the activities. The data sample was small due to participant drop out and so it is not used within the report.

Academic Data

Aims of the programme such as Arts Award participation and achievement and continued enrolment at the College can be measured against academic data.

STAY AT HOME



4 CONTEXT

4.1

CONTEXT OF YOUNG CREATIVES

Educational Factors

Young Creatives sought to raise the status of creativity as a core skill for young people, alongside team-working, communication and confidence. Arts subjects have struggled to gain a foothold, or funding, under recent curriculum developments with many creative subjects being offered as extras, sometimes being offered in evening clubs. For students who may be perceived to struggle in education settings, there is a focus on achieving passes in Maths and English to enable them to progress into further vocational or academic training, with creative subjects being considered “soft”.

Access to Arts and Culture

Young Creatives seeks to expand and strengthen the local Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) in order to build access to local arts and culture for young people in MK along with skills based programmes. Young people in MK face a number of barriers in engaging with the opportunities on their doorstep, which is not unique to the city. Transport is considered to be difficult, there is a lack of awareness of where to go, as well as barriers in age restrictions at events, and there are economic barriers in accessing the arts especially when juggled alongside the pressures of part time employment. Young people may not also feel safe enough in town to travel or to visit venues alone.

Milton Keynes

The variety and availability of cultural activity and experiences in Milton Keynes is not fully recognised even by its own citizens. In part, this is due to the city being a ‘New Town’ that has had to build and develop its cultural infrastructure over the past 50 years, and historical perspectives and narratives of Milton Keynes purveyed a sense of the city being a ‘cultural desert’. Many venues within the town lack capacity to build authentic and sustainable relationships with young people and there are few spaces for young people to be independently creative. The city is a mix of rural and urban which is typically not found in other places and transport is often difficult when moving between these environments.

Environmental Factors

Young people face an unprecedented range of issues which have a direct influence on the choices they make and the skills needed to thrive in an uncertain future. Businesses recognise that creativity is key to building a workforce which is adaptable, adept at problem solving and focussed on innovation. The economic downturn has disproportionately affected young people, particularly those from deprived backgrounds, limiting access to employment opportunities and higher education.

The climate and ecological emergency stands to create a world for the next generation which will require a new understanding of what it means to thrive and the skills required to do so. Creativity will play a part in this, to enable young people to think of fresh solutions to old and new problems, whilst harnessing the potential of collaboration and multi-disciplinary thinking.

4.2

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

On 23rd March 2020 the UK announced a state of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rising number of cases and deaths required the UK Government to restrict non-essential contact and travel, enacting a 'Stay at home' rule to stem the transmission of the virus. As workplaces, town centres, schools, colleges and universities closed and travel was brought to a standstill, the population of the UK, apart from those deemed key workers, began what was to become another 15 months of phased lockdowns and restrictions.

For many people, the economic and social turmoil of the pandemic was a source of anxiety.¹ This was particularly so for many young and vulnerable people for whom it highlighted structural challenges and the issue of isolation. For some with positive home lives and financial stability, spending more time at home will have been easier and more enjoyable than those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.² Systematic reviews have shown that concerns about mental health and wellbeing for young people during the pandemic were justified.³

For those living with long-term health conditions, or classed Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), there was an instruction to shield at home. Even people cohabiting with CEV people had to take additional precautions, all of which took their toll. This shielding reduced access to long-term healthcare and coping methods, such as physical exercise, support groups and daily routines.⁴

The arts sector was facing financial pressures during the lockdown with a loss in ticket sales, commercial activity and sponsorship. Many refocused their programmes into digital formats whilst venues closed and many others looked to their purpose and missions to maintain their communities. A focus on wellbeing emerged for many of those that focused on audiences, supporting them through culture and heritage, connecting people across communities and the UK. Wellbeing as defined by the World Health Organisation is not just an individual state but also one societal.

“A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”⁵

In 2010 the UK's Office for National Statistics led a project to develop measures of subjective wellbeing. This identified 10 areas of life such as health, natural environment, personal finances, education and skills, crime and what we do.⁶ As a measure of wellbeing, the area for 'what we do' includes measures such as a person's satisfaction with leisure time and participation with art and culture. These measures are impacted by health, education, economic status, age and ethnicity and access and inclusivity in arts and culture, as well as many other areas of society that have an impact on people's lived experience and opportunities.

Culture and art can support people's wellbeing, enriching their lives, providing inspiration and building social cohesion.⁷ *'Creative Health'*, a report produced in 2017 by an all-party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, laid out how participation in the arts consistently has been seen to be supportive in enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing for people of all ages, both in mental health and preventing and treating

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/31/rise-in-depression-and-anxiety-day-after-uk-lockdown-announced-study-coronavirus>

2 <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/an-isolated-generation-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-children-and-young-people>

3 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00787-021-01856-w>

4 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/9october2020>

5 https://apps.who.int/gb/bd/pdf_files/BD_49th-en.pdf#page=7

6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britains-wellbeing-to-be-measured>

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-white-paper>

chronic health conditions.⁸

The ONS identified the main impacts on young people (16- 19 years old) in a large scale survey:⁹

Among young people (aged 16 to 29 years) who were worried about the effect the coronavirus (COVID-19) was having on their lives, their main concerns were the effects on schools or universities (24%), their well-being (22%), work (16%) and household finances (16%).

For those young people (aged 16 to 29 years) who reported that the coronavirus was affecting their work, the most commonly reported impacts were a reduction in hours worked (21%), concerns about health and safety at work (18%) and having been asked to work from home (19%).

Other than being unable to attend their educational establishments, most young people who reported an impact on schools or universities expressed concerns about the uncertainty over exams and qualifications (58%), the quality of education being affected (46%) and a move to homeschooling (18%).

Young people who reported that their well-being was being affected were much more likely than either those aged 30 to 59 years or those aged 60 years and over to report being bored (76%) and lonely (51%); they were also much more likely to say the lockdown was making their mental health worse (42%).

Young people's work was particularly hard hit by the pandemic, with 70% of employment losses being among the under 25s. The higher impact has been driven predominantly by the hospitality, retail and leisure sectors which they predominantly work in.¹⁰

This context is important to note as the delivery of Cohorts 2 and 3 developed. Both cohorts suffered from extensive disruption to their lives at home and in school or college. The effect on the perception of needs for the future, such as gaining qualifications, supporting themselves through work and ensuring that they would be able to succeed or thrive in a challenging economy and job market, refocused the time attentions of many young people.

"I think one surprise was about how difficult it was to engage the students. I think everybody was surprised by that and especially coming out of COVID, we all thought, oh they'll so want to engage. This would be something that they can get the teeth into, and if anything, it was the exact opposite. It was almost, 'I just want my qualification. I just want to focus on that. I need a part-time job'. To ask them to do something additional, even with the most enthusiastic, when it came to the crunch, they had to withdraw from (Young Creatives), now they really needed to focus on that (qualifications)."

MK College, Interviews

For students taking part in Cohort 3 the summer of 2022 would be the first time they were to sit major exams. This is due to their GCSE's being assessed by teachers and coursework rather than the usual examination route. The anxiety over experiencing exams proved to be a factor in the dropout rate of Young Creatives in the spring of 2022 as the pressure of school was stepped up.

6 https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

9 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsonyoungpeopleingreatbritain/3aprilto10may2020#measuring-the-data>

10 https://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk/media/4bpdbnl2/vital_signs_2021.pdf

5 DELIVERY



5.1 KEY FIGURES

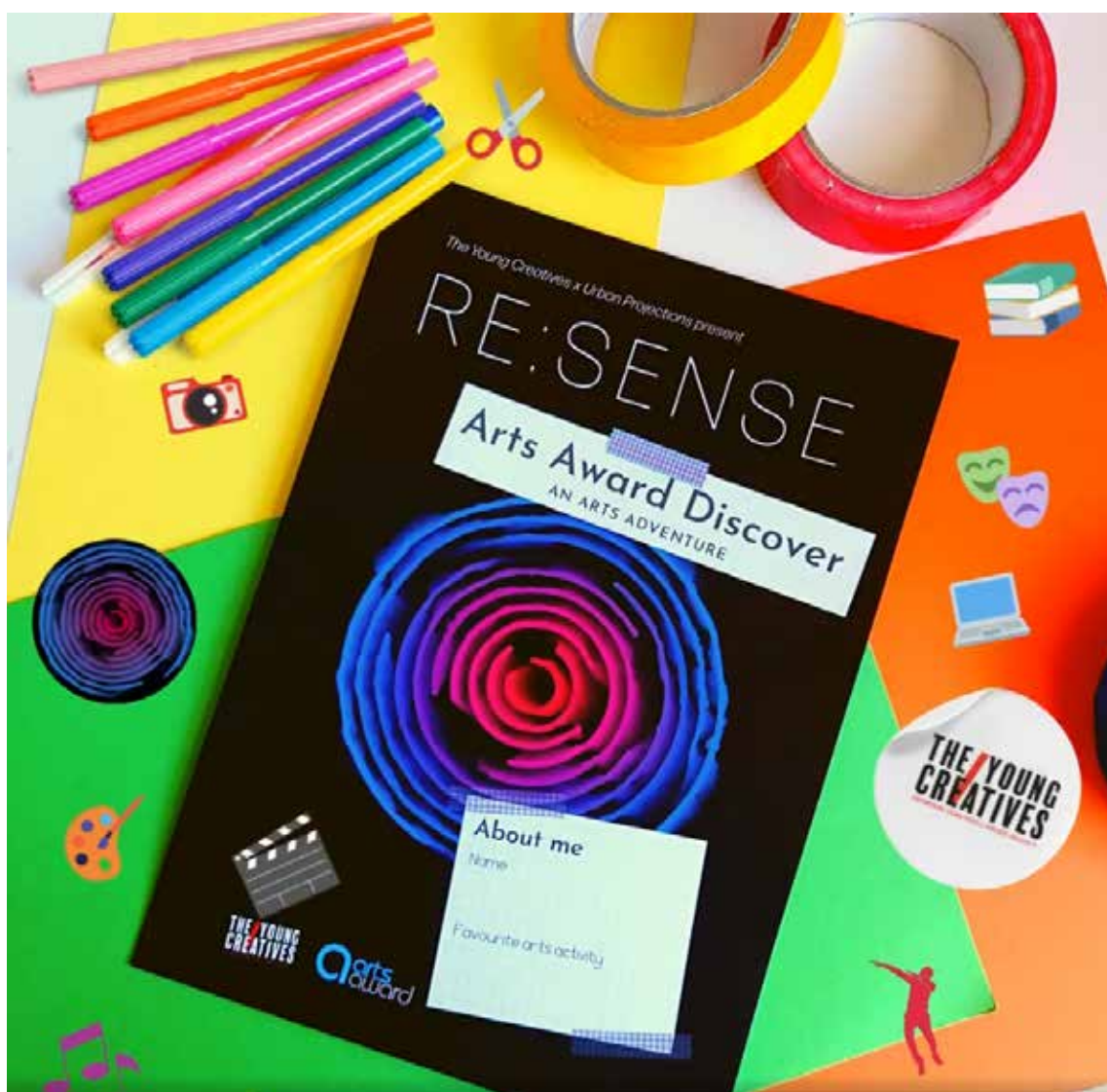
Young Creatives was **able to achieve the ambitions set out at its inception** for engaging young people and the public, as well as supporting the delivery of Arts Awards at Discover and Bronze levels.

59 Young Creatives took part in three cohorts

16 Bronze Arts Award: Level 1 achieved (with more worked towards until the disruption of COVID-19)

120 Discover Arts Awards achieved

Over **1000** people attended public events and displays



5.2 RECRUITMENT

The Young Creatives programme was for young people aged 16 – 18 from a mixture of curriculum backgrounds, not aiming for art students but also those who do not consider themselves to be creative. Most participants in the first two cohorts identified a educational or diversity related barrier prior to participation.

COHORT 1

This group of 11 students were recruited as a result of an open advertisement to students across the College. They included students who were at levels 2 and 3 and came from Social Care, Media, Drama, Art and Music.

COHORT 2, GROUP A

Radcliffe School set up an after school 'Period 7' session open to all students from across year 12 and 13 interested in the project across their curriculum. The staff supporting delivery have invested in the idea and concept and are keen to make it work as a model to take forwards for the value of project-based work and delivery of Arts Awards in their school.

COHORT 2, GROUP B

The MK College vocational programme, Project 1, is made up of 15-20 young people otherwise at risk of becoming NEET. The cohort was very diverse and has come from a range of home schooled, ESOL and NEET backgrounds. They did not "fit" into a mainstream programme and the Young Creatives had influenced the College's thinking by September 2019, enabling the College to pilot this approach to supporting young people navigating their own pathway as well as getting the underpinning English and Maths to progress into a specified career pathway by September 2020.



COHORT 3

The final cohort of Young Creatives was supported by Offset Projects. There was an open call released for young people across the city to take part to ensure the project was reaching as diverse a group as possible, providing creative opportunities to any young person in Milton Keynes who wanted to take part. Offset Projects undertook a rebranding of the visual identity and messaging, setting up social media accounts and a website. Targeted emails and postcards were distributed to colleges, schools, libraries, youth groups and the council.

Three open briefing sessions were held online for potential Young Creatives to find out more about what they would be doing and the benefits to them, as well as Offset Projects promoting the project at two MK College Advisory Days. The initial recruitment period ran from June to September but due to difficulty in attracting sign-ups, it was extended until October. By the Autumn 8 Young Creatives had joined the project although the continuing impact of Covid meant that by January there was a core group of 6 remaining in the project.

Students from St Paul's Catholic School were engaged to follow the programme. As a group they were invited to contribute to and follow the Young Creatives, creating a film which documented the programme. In April 2020 an invitation to join the programme was distributed to recruit additional young people as the core group had reduced in size to three. The invitation attracted another 5 members to the group who contributed to the creation and delivery of the Re:Sense installation.

THE YOUNG CREATIVES

FREE SNACKS & DRINKS
TRANSPORT COSTS COVERED
SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE | **FREE**

WANT TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING NEW?
SOMETHING IMAGINATIVE? SOMETHING FUN?

**HELP CREATE
A BRAND NEW
IMMERSIVE
POP-UP EXPERIENCE
IN MK**

ARTIST WORKSHOPS 20, 21, 22 APRIL 12-6PM Big Shop Friday	POP-UP EXPERIENCE 14, 15 MAY 1-8PM, 1-6PM Art in the Park festival, Campbell Park
--	---

FOR 16-18 YEAR OLDS
REGISTER AT [THEYOUNGCREATIVES.ORG/OPPORTUNITIES](https://theyoungcreatives.org/opportunities)

5.3 COHORT 1



Cohort 1 was a group of 11 students who were recruited as a result of an open advertisement to students across the college as well as selected students with a range of specific risk factors linked to academic progress. They included students who were at Levels 2 and 3 and came from Social Care, Media, Drama, Art and Music.

The group assisted in piloting the expectations around the programme and attended and contributed to a Steering Group meeting.

As a group, the participated in:

- A large scale artwork inspired by their idea of '*The World We Want To See*' which the group presented at the MKIAC Art by the Lake Festival.
- They contributed to a mural influenced by the work of artist Candy Chang. The same theme inspired the murals painted on school walls at Willen Primary school, an activity which also facilitated the delivery of Discover awards.
- A visit to London to see graffiti art
- A final outcome was a video in which the cohort spoke about their work in their own words.¹
- Hosting a celebration event for friends and family as well as stakeholders, curating an exhibition of images from the project where those close to the young people were able to talk about the impact they had seen.

Artist engagements included:

Jessica Rost, Fine Artist

Rachel Wright, Mixed Media Artist

Chiba Creative, Mural Artist

Milton Keynes Islamic Art and Culture, Organisation

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZpVJlx1INA>

5.4 COHORT 2

The approach evolved in its second year looking to stretch the model of delivery, encouraging a more youth-led, scaffolded and collaborative approach. The cohort included people explicitly at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). In addition to this a partnership with Radcliffe School was developed to add a second group of young people. As well as expanding the reach of Young Creatives it created opportunities for young people to meet with groups they might not typically engage with, in places that they would not usually visit.

At MK College a vocational programme was made up of 15-20 young people otherwise at risk of becoming NEET. As a cohort, 14 students began as Young Creatives in October 2019. This diverse cohort came from a range of backgrounds including home schooled, ESOL and NEET. They did not “fit” into a mainstream programme and the Young Creatives enabled the College to pilot supporting young people in genuinely navigating their own pathway as well as underpinning English and maths to progress into a specified career or study pathway by September 2020.

Radcliffe School set up an after school ‘Period 7’ session open to all students from across Year 12 and 13 interested in the project across their curriculum. The cohort at the school was formed of 11 students. The staff supporting delivery set out to look at it as a model to take forwards, valuing project-based work and delivery of Arts Awards in their school.

The Radcliffe School cohort began to conceptualise and work on a digital projection around the safety of teenagers in Milton Keynes in response to knife crime and lack of safe spaces, “*MK After Dark*”. Working with the artist Thomas Grey ¹the piece was to be a large scale installation in Centre:MK. The cohort at the College were working on a soundscape for the installation with sound artist Simon Bradford.



¹ <https://www.thegraycircle.com/>

Both cohorts played a role in choosing artists to deliver sessions throughout the project. Engaging with professional practitioners students were able to expand their knowledge and exposure to new forms of creativity far beyond what is usually possible within a curricular context.

Artist engagements included:

Sophia Ghory, Makeup Artist

Andrew MacDermott, Ceramicist

Ciara Callaghan, Textile and Community Artist

Drum United, Music Organisation

Rejoice in Your Voice, Beatboxing Organisation

Marie Gracie, Visual Artist and Resident at MK College

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the programme in Spring 2020. As both cohorts were working with the artists to create *“MK After Dark”*, college and school were suspended with students having to study from home. Group work was suspended and as such there was no opportunity to further develop the concept or supporting materials and creative outcomes.

It was at this point that The Radcliffe School transitioned to online learning to support their students as they worked towards their qualifications. Both the school and programme co-ordinator recognised that the severe disruption across all their studies meant that the programme would be unlikely to continue, even for the Year 12 students moving into Year 13 who would need additional support to catch up in their studies in the following academic terms.

The College created a digital exhibition to continue the Young Creatives whilst all the in-person study was suspended. The exhibition showed work from across the College’s courses and acted as a platform for a small selection of the Young Creatives’ work.

5.5 COHORT 3

The delivery of Cohort 3 was led by external youth-led engagement specialists Offset Projects, who were sub-contracted by MK College because of their expertise in working with young people on creative projects. Post-lockdown the College lacked internal capacity to deliver the Young Creatives programme successfully, and stakeholders agreed that an external partner should be brought in. The project continued to work towards delivering its key ambitions of employability skills for young people aged 16 to 18. Through a programme of workshops, talks, visits and creative commissions it would support young people to become more confident, better skilled and more empowered to have agency in their lives.

The original programme for Cohort 3 consisted of two phases. The first phase ran from September to December which focussed on the delivery of a project with Dotto Studios to explore youth voice, pilot a pop-up shop at Big Shop Friday where posters would be sold and a research trip to Coventry City of Culture to meet the Youthful Cities team. The second phase running from January to May would build on the learning from the first phase in order to develop a public event or exhibition.

The programme began as planned in September 2021 but was severely disrupted by Covid-19. The ongoing effect of the pandemic meant that studies for young people continued to be disrupted, social distancing was in place and participants were sporadically having to isolate after testing positive. The Steering committee agreed to pause the programme in November 2021 and the timeline was revisited. The project was continuing to struggle to recruit a full cohort and as such two further rounds of recruitment took place in late 2021 and April 2022.

DELIVERY TIMELINE, JUNE 2021 – JULY 2022

June- September

- Recruitment Phase 1
- 2 x online webinars
- Offset participation in 2 x MK College Open Days
- Offset participation in MK College Freshers Fayre
- Initial introductory sessions

October- December

- Introduction to Arts Award
- Workshops led by Offset- Manifesto writing exploring youth voice and action.
- Recruitment Phase 2 & 3

January

- Project relaunch
- Online session, Young Creatives and Broaden develop a filmmaking brief
- Dotto Studios (Designer, Dani Molyneux) delivered her first in person session with the team in Jan 2022 to explore the power of youth voice. Joined by Offset work experience student
- Session with Roisin Callaghan, Director, Big Shop Friday and ex participant in Lost&Found youth leadership programme
- Student filmmakers took part in a full day of face-to-face training and mentoring support facilitated by Broaden Film

February

- Open Conversation session facilitated by Offset in order to build a picture of the team's interests, concerns, priorities etc. in advance of the research trip.
- Research trip to London with 9 young people comprising the core group and student filmmakers. The trip was captured by the student filmmakers for inclusion in the final Young Creatives film with the group visiting a series of locations including: Superblue London – an ethereal, multi-sensory, and site-specific installation by artist duo A.A. Murakami; Selfridge's Corner Shop: 'Universe' – a pop up exhibition exploring the power of art and fashion with Op-Art artist Victor Vasarely and his contemporary, Paco Rabanne; Feel Good Club: 'Dear Stranger' – a public art commission featuring audience interaction alongside a series of large-scale posters designed to spread messages of joy and self-love; Private art galleries, Southbank Centre, and Tate Modern – comparing 'high street' experiences of art and creativity with public 'democratic' spaces.
- Session held at Vertigo VR to explore and discuss segmented reality, virtual reality, immersive experiences, and digital experiences as art.

March

- Online session with Threshold Studios to write a brief for an artist commission.
- Dotto Studios presented first drafts of posters in an online session

April

- Three days of artists workshops with Rebecca Smith, Urban Projections. Sessions were held in Big Shop Friday and offsite in Campbell Park and explored sound, spoken word, photography, digital manipulation, project planning, and collaborative making.
- Session with Anouar Kassim presenting on Art In The Park and how to develop live events.
- Session with Sanjeet Chandi, Treat Street and Sophie Neal to support the group to consider how to market projects. They explored means of innovative marketing, attracting online engagement, social media best practice, how to speak with audiences and how to increase followers
- Session with Hannah Olarewaju, TMR, with introduction to events planning, engaging audiences, developing a creative business model, and securing financial support.
- Young Creatives invited to participate in a conversation with young people from other projects with Offset chaired by Bella Emrys, Offset's Board.

May

- Re:Sense presented at Art In The Park- Over 800 attended over the 2 days with ticket sales of £626.39. £20.84 was raised through cash donations and £59.44 online donations.
- 96 Arts Award Discover packs were shared with children under 12 across the 2 days. Packs included a bespoke Re:Sense Arts Award Adventure map and marker pens.
- Arts Award session, MK Gallery to prepare portfolios for submission.
- Offset Projects – What's Next Meeting held at Big Shop Friday. This session brought together young people from across multiple projects including The Young Creatives and provided the opportunity to consider their future ideas for projects.

June

- St Pauls Filmmakers – Final day of mentoring with Broaden Films and Offset.
- Final posters developed with Dotto Studio presented at MK College end of year exhibition.
- 96 Arts Award Discover certificates were awarded to children who completed their Arts Award Discover as part of Re:Sense at Art in the Park.
- Arts Award Bronze portfolios submitted for moderation

July

- *'In Our Own Words'*, and article submitted by Offset Projects to Engage, The National Association for Gallery Education. The article was included in their Journal 46: Generation Z and the Future of Creative Work, and brought together young people aged 16 – 25 from across multiple Offset projects to join a series of conversations, including a final youth-led discussion chaired by Bella Emrys. Individuals from Young Creatives were invited to be part of these discussions.
- Arts Award Bronze portfolios passed moderation.



5.5.1 RE:SENSE

Cohort 3's Young Creatives produced an immersive mixed media installation in collaboration with artist Rebecca Smith. "Re:Sense" was shared with the public at Art in the Park in May 2023 and was visited by over 800 people during its two day run. It explored themes around nostalgia, transformation and our relationship to nature.

Entering into a darkened tent, the installation offered a reflective experience, an opportunity to take a breath and to reflect on how we interconnect with the natural world. A film of abstracted natural forms was projected on to a screen of water mist, making the moving images appear to float in air. A soundscape of narrated voices and field recordings combined with the video to lead visitors on a journey through the piece.

The themes of Re:Sense were developed in workshops and discussions earlier in the year. The research trip to London was instrumental in informing the approach and allowed the Young Creatives to describe the kind of experience they wanted to create. There was a sense of frustration with the way in which much art was displayed and their aim to create a piece which encouraged interaction, touch and actively engaging the senses, rather than having a passive audience. In the installation the audience interacted with the mist screen and projected images, often without prompting. Flow observed groups of young people, families and adults walking through the mist screen and taking photos and videos of each other in the space.

In the planning of the piece, Offset Projects worked with the Young Creatives to identify an artist who would be able to support them in realising their vision. Rebecca Smith of Urban Projects works with digital projection and sound installations which often happen in public spaces, transforming them into places of exploration, interaction and shared experiences. Rebecca had previously worked in collaborative and co-production projects with a number of communities and she was able to successfully bring this approach to developing Re:Sense.

The core Young Creatives, along with a newly recruited group who joined them to create the installation, took part in workshops at Big Shop Friday for three days during the Easter break. Days were structured so that the group could work with the artist throughout the day and then they would end with a visit from a professional to share their experiences of marketing or event management, or with a group discussion.



Over the course of the three workshops, the group and artist discussed themes and their ambitions for the piece before beginning to work on the content for the film and sound. The artist led the group through the use of digital tools that she found useful and inspiring. This included capturing vector images from nature, transforming images in VJ software Resolume and field recording (recording environmental sounds). The visual and audio elements collected during these workshops formed part of the final piece.

As a group they decided on what roles each member would take, for example narrating the video, or editing the sound. Throughout sessions, each Young Creative was able to stay busy with tasks and to have their voice heard to contribute to the shape of the installation.

At the end of the three days of workshop the core of the material had been produced and the narrative for Re:Sense was in place. Final production and mastering of the video and sound was done by the artist in time for the festival, three weeks later.

A short video is available via the Urban Projection Facebook page:

<https://fb.watch/fxx3Spda1p/>





6

IMPACT FOR YOUNG CREATIVES

6

IMPACT FOR YOUNG CREATIVES

The evaluation set out to capture the impact for young people taking part in Young Creatives. Across the three cohorts key themes emerged which are explored in more depth in the following section. The Story of Change workshop with Young Creatives and stakeholders identified the following intended impacts for the project.

Key Impacts for Young People

IMPACT: Young people's voices are heard and valued in empowering them to be confident in their creativity

CHALLENGE: *There is a fear to being creative and an anxiety that some people are born creative which excludes others*

IMPACT: Young People have better access to employment opportunities

CHALLENGE: *There is a lack of awareness of careers in creative industries and unequal access to opportunities*

IMPACT: Young people feel ownership over their own creative enterprise

CHALLENGE: *A sense of not belonging or owning a creative identity affects young people's confidence in pursuing their artistic ambitions and there is a lack of authentic relationships for them with cultural venues*

Emergent Key Themes in the Evaluation

Engagement

What kinds of engagement did young people have with Young Creatives and how was that scaffolded throughout?

Recognising Creativity

In what ways were young people supported to recognise their own creativity and how it helps them in their lives and careers?

Collaboration

How did Young Creatives work collaboratively within their cohorts to generate ideas and deliver creative outcomes?

Building Confidence

What evidence is there of Young Creatives building confidence in themselves and their abilities?

Awareness of Creative Careers

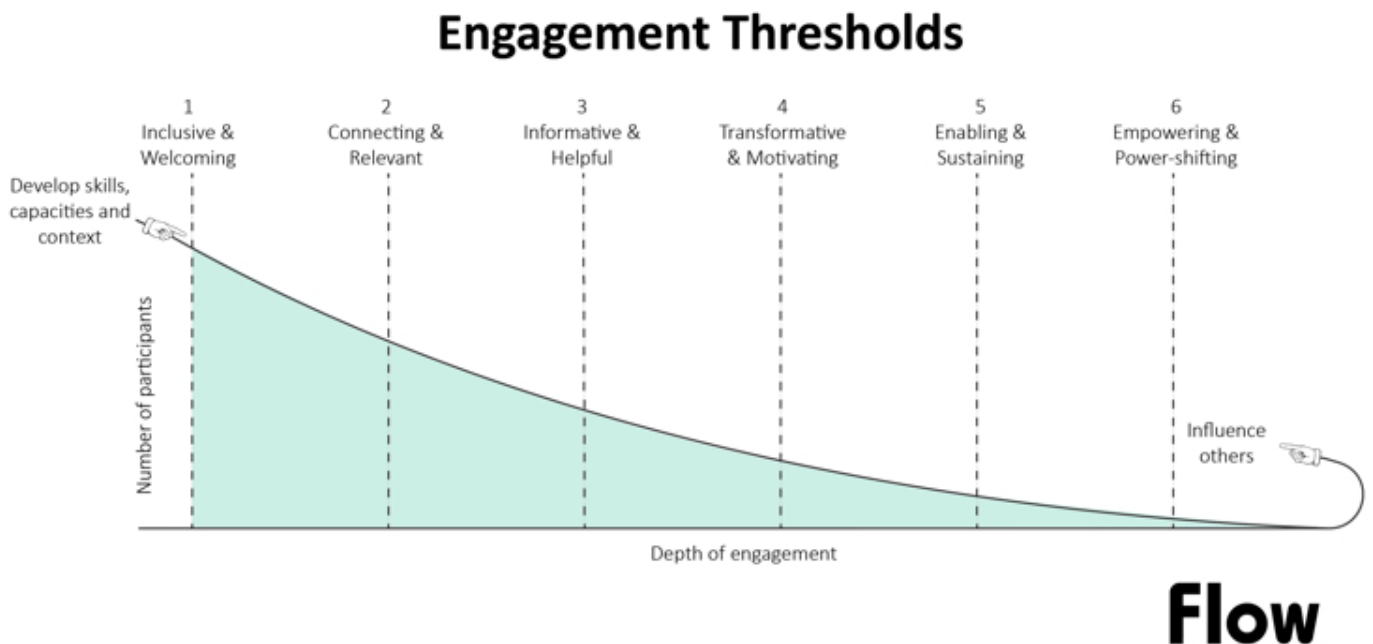
How did Young Creatives learn more about the careers available in the creative industries and more widely about their options for employment?

Milton Keynes Culture

How were Young Creatives empowered to make use of the cultural resources of their city?

6.1 ENGAGEMENT

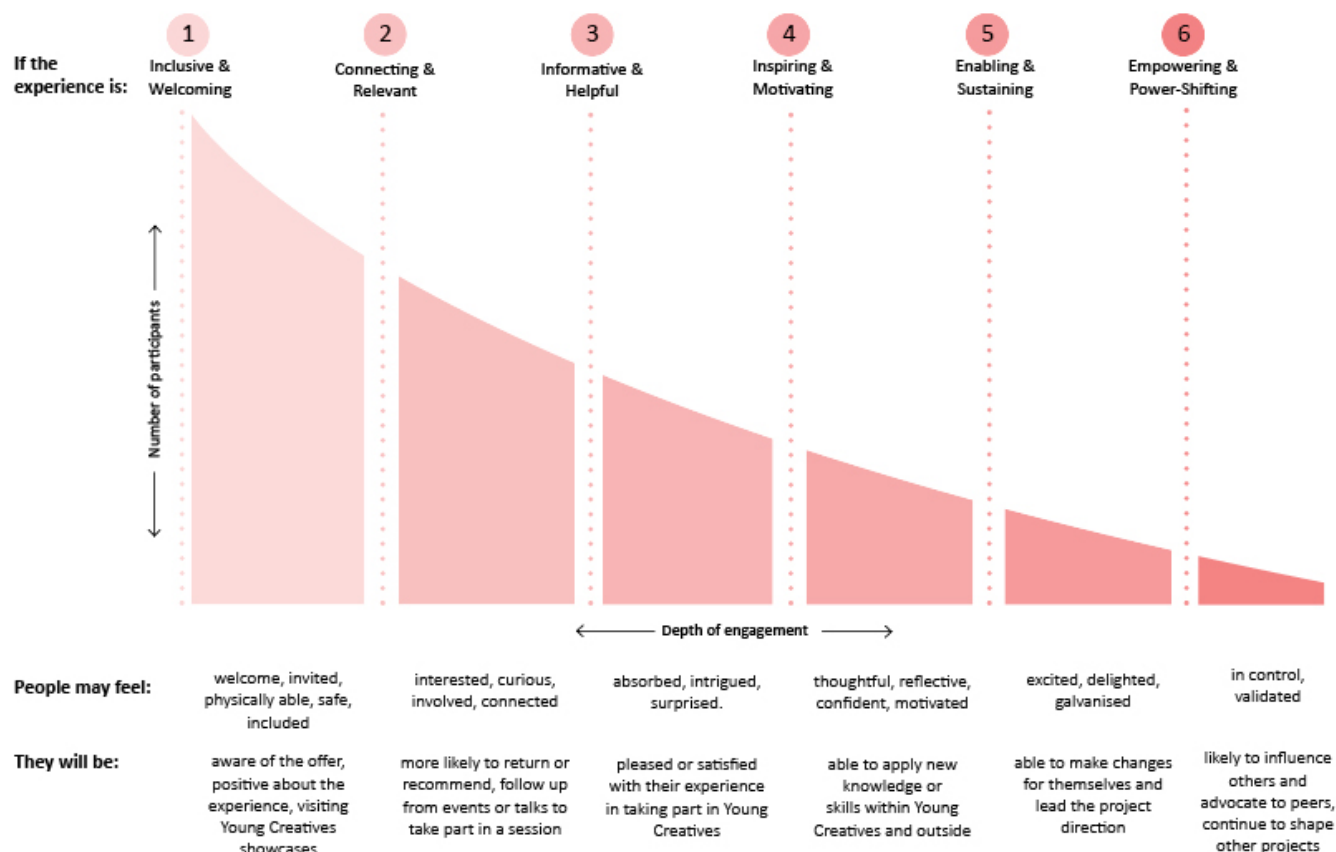
There are many models that illustrate different levels or modes of engagement, but at Flow we find it more useful to think about engagement as a series of thresholds that are passed through en route to a deeper impact. A lot of our work involves supporting our clients to enable and sustain transformative change for people, communities and organisations, through learning, participation and deeper involvement in arts, heritage, science or local citizenship. We have developed our Engagement Thresholds model to facilitate how this work is planned, delivered and evaluated. In its simplest form this can be visualised as a wedge-shaped graph, with number of participants on the y axis and depth of engagement on x.



In applying this model to Young Creatives we can view engagement as more than boosting numbers or reaching certain groups of people. What matters most is the impact that this engagement has on the young people involved, their lives, communities and on the project leaders themselves as organisations. As young people pass through each threshold they develop their skills, capacities and abilities to improve or cope with their context. While fewer people pass through each subsequent threshold those few do so in a deeper way, until those at the narrowest end become the champions who will support and influence those behind them.

The goal of a programme, which is not a realistic expectation, is that all the young people who engage with Young Creatives could go on to be empowered and be in control of the direction of the project. It is perfectly valid that each individual's journey and experience should differ. For example, the thousands of young people visiting an end of year display may feel welcomed and those coming to an introductory talk may feel included, but they may not go on to play a deeper part in the project. This is still an engagement which reflects the welcoming and inclusive nature of the project. We would expect, and saw within Young Creatives, this model reflecting the engagement with much smaller numbers going on to feed into the direction of the programme and a smaller number still continuing on with Offset Projects to take part in other initiatives such as *"Fuelled by Youth"*. From the Cohort 3 Young Creatives, when asked if they would recommend Young Creatives to their friends, all respondents said yes.

How can you ease thresholds to engagement?



Connecting and Relevant

"It feels like we were a part of something big." Cohort 1

Helpful and Informative

"It was so fun, going out, taking photos, talking to people who shared their interests with me, thinking of ideas and even seeing friends I didn't expect to be there, so much fun just being happy, plus free snacks..." Cohort 3

Enabling and Sustaining

"We had so much power over it, and I felt like if I said an idea, I would be heard. When we said ideas, they listened and they actually put it into the project" Cohort 3

"Being part of the Young Creatives Project helped me build my self-confidence and leadership skills as we, the young people, had to take charge of the protect and were responsible for getting things done." Cohort 2

Empowering and Power Shifting

"I have already told my friends and a few have said to want to attend The Young Creatives project. It is a great opportunity and experience and can benefit you in your future jobs career" Cohort 2

"I feel I am attached to The Young Creatives - this is who I am." Cohort 3

6.2.1 RECOGNISING CREATIVITY

Young Creatives' experiences were often about **validating and discovering creativity**. The focus on skills based creativity rather than that of artistic outputs created a space for young people who did not consider themselves to be creative to recognise the originality of their thoughts, ideas and communication. For those that did consider themselves creative, Young Creatives was an opportunity to expand their forms of artistic practice with others and **understand how creativity can be applied in other areas of their lives**.

Due to the changing recruitment of Cohort 3, an open call available to all, it led to an initial cohort who considered themselves to be creative and generally confident in expressing their creativity. Of the seven Young Creatives who started with Cohort 3, six agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, *"I am confident in expressing my myself"* and *"I feel motivated to seek out creative opportunities"*. One person neither agreed nor disagreed with both statements.

For those who thought themselves to be creative people it was an opportunity to meet like minded people. The project enabled them to be in **an environment outside of formal education** which would enable this in a more social and relaxed context whilst still having structured support.

"I would like to join The Young Creatives as it is a chance to meet other creative people and collaborate on interesting projects."

Cohort 3, Registration Survey

Young Creatives enabled **transformative and motivating experiences for people recognising their own creativity**. One participant did not consider themselves a creative person and was more interested in Young Creatives as a way to amplify the voice of young people in the city. However the project enabled them to realise, that despite their worries, they were able to be creative in other ways and work as part of a team in a project, whether it was a creative one or not.

"When I first went into, where I was at, I didn't think I'm going be able to do this because I'm not a very creative person. But I feel like I've learnt that it's made me more creative in some ways and also shown that the creativity I had before is fine. I don't need to be creative or all the time and there are different levels of creativity or I could think of creativity in a different way to somebody else."

Cohort 3, Interview

One participant considered themselves to have basic skills in traditional arts and so the **opportunity to work outside normal conventions** with digital was an opportunity to show another side of their creativity.

"I had a very different style of art experience so that to me was learning a whole different side of it. I was much more confident with the digital side of it."

Cohort 3, Interview

Young Creatives stirred new passions in participants and motivated them to pursue their creative practice. Participants spoke about how the project was able to open up new ways of expressing themselves and of the pleasure it gave them.

“There’s a spark to whole new interest for me, with a brand new field that I could go into that I never considered before. I just have to start doing it myself and have more of a push to actually do it. I’ve wanted to recently go outside with my bike and go take photos of the sunset and my local lake.”

Cohort 3, Interview

The Young Creatives of Cohort 3 **considered creativity to be a key skill as they moved on to thinking about their further studies and careers**. There was a recognition across the group that creativity takes many forms and can be applied in many ways, including in maintaining your personal wellbeing.

“Creativity is good for the mind so being creative is also good for my personal future. All of my career goals are based around creative subjects so creativity is important to me and my future .

Cohort 3, Registration Survey



6.2.2 ARTS AWARDS

Arts Award has been embedded throughout Young Creatives to capture, recognise and formally reward the young people who have taken part. The Arts Awards flexibility means that it can be delivered in a range of contexts and to a range of ages, ideally suiting it to a project such as Young Creatives. The levels delivered in the programme were Arts Award Discover, which recognises participation in arts, and the Bronze Arts Award which is a Level 1 RQF qualification which requires around 60 hours of guided and independent learning. At the conception of the programme an objective of delivering 50 Bronze Arts Awards to the core participants and 100 Discover Art Awards facilitated alongside the process was set.

In Cohort 1 there were 9 Bronze Arts Awards achieved along with the completion of another 24 Discover Arts Awards. The Discover awards were facilitated with the creation of the Mural at Willen Primary School.

Cohort 2 was due to have delivered 30 Bronze Art Awards but the disruption due to COVID-19 saw other curricular support take priority, especially for the students from Radcliffe Secondary School who were approaching their exam period. It was noted by the Young Creatives facilitator that in the first quarter of 2019 project management tasks such as goal setting and setting up the assessment framework for the Discover and Bronze awards were prioritised, with considerable time spent on gaining approval to run them and training tutors to deliver it.

For Cohort 3, Offset have had training in how to embed Arts Award through the programme and they have done so since the beginning. It was important at the initiation of the project to set the tone for the programme and so attention was given to ensuring that everyone felt confident and comfortable.

Offset found that including the Arts Award element as part of the project **added to the workload of the participants** on top of their formal education, with additional sketchbooks, journals and monitoring. Offset set out to establish a space that felt different to school and yet these are things which are necessary to complete the Award. It meant that in some sessions they had to create **interventions which were reminiscent of being in a classroom** where they would all sit down and be asked to write. Two young people left after being asked to start writing for their Arts Award as it added more pressure on an already stressful time in their lives. This was particularly striking as they were both people who had been driving the project forward in taking a path towards digital art and creativity.

Overall, **the inclusion of the Arts Award qualification was not a motivating factor in being part of the programme.** In future, Offset Projects would review this and consider whether to make the qualification voluntary.

“Those the moments where we make them sit down and do that kind of stuff, it’s really reminiscent of sitting in a classroom writing. Those are the moments where we felt the lowest levels of energy, the lowest levels of engagement and actually, we’ve had young people leave the program. They started to feel the pressure of it, saying ‘Okay, I’m doing all this stuff but now I’ve got to sit and write about it all for the sake of writing about it all.’ They are experiencing new things, growing their skills and we can see that they are already talking about it. Then that moment that you have to ask them to formally evidence it all, that’s the moment the group was at its lowest, it was a mood killer.”

Offset Projects, Interview

The Young Creatives who were recruited in Spring 2022, towards the end of Cohort 3, were more open to Arts Award as they had already begun working towards the qualification at secondary school, but had stopped midway due to the disruption of Covid. They felt it was **an opportunity to finish off something that they had already started** and could **add it to their CV for university and beyond**, for them the Arts Award was **relevant and helpful. Young Creatives enhanced the delivery of the qualification** by providing a wider experience outside of a school setting for young people. For the school itself, it was able to enrich its own Arts Award delivery by making use of the **wider Milton Keynes ecosystem**.

The moderator assessing the Arts Award Bronze portfolios found that they were well presented, structured and rigorous. They noted that the young people had been able to follow their own journeys and creative pursuits and that there was a real sense that the enjoyment the Young Creatives had in taking part, came through in their submissions.

“The portfolios were all really well-structured and full of challenge and rigour. They were all neatly presented and showed that the young people had been given the freedom to pursue their own Arts Award journeys but still under your leadership and guidance. There was a lovely sense that the young people really enjoyed all of their activities, and for that, I thank you. Overall, there was a nice variety of activities and creative responses in all the parts of the award. I especially enjoyed all the links that were created in the folders ..a really good project , I loved it !”

Arts Award moderator

6.2.3 COLLABORATION

The body of Young Creatives work was all based around collaborative practice. Sessions throughout the three cohorts encouraged young people to share their voice, ideas and ambitions for the project. The approach to facilitating a youth-led programme developed over each cohort with an understanding of what “youth-led” looked and felt like being consolidated between facilitators and the Steering Group.

Clarifying what “youth-led” looks and feels like and having a shared definition of it to guide the programme was raised as a key point of development before the delivery of Cohort 2. At its heart, a youth-led framework meets the **learning styles and needs of individual students** and empowers them to have **autonomy and independence**. This is done through scaffolding their learning experience by giving a grounding in skills and decision making, with the facilitators gradually stepping back as the students ownership grows.

“No decisions are ever made without actually listening to them and finding ways to make space for that to happen. We opened up the doors to connect with things linked with what they were telling us.”

Offset Projects, Interview

Cohort 3’s sessions took place outside of college and school time, in the evenings, rather than being part of their ‘school day’. By working in an environment which was given sole attention to the creative process, it enabled **more intense commitment to the sessions and supported teamwork**. Offset Projects established an environment for listening, to the young people and them to each other, and acted on the needs of the young people quickly. This created a group who felt that they were **listened to and respected** while Offset was there to facilitate and support, not lead and teach.

This collaborative environment and trust placed in the group was echoed in the way that the Young Creatives were able to work with each other. For those who had less experience in working with other people the creative and respectful nature of teamworking allowed them to test their roles in such situations and to learn from their peers.

“My greatest takeaway was probably the team part of it. I wouldn’t say I was particularly bad at it, I had done theatre and liked working within a team, but I feel like I really enjoyed learning from other people and learning their own experiences.”

Cohort 3, Interview

When Young Creatives spoke about being heard and their ideas being put into action, they often credited the group with making this happen rather than shifting the focus to Offset Projects. This demonstrates that the group felt as if they had **control over the direction of the project and that a collaborative and youth-centred approach** was successfully in place.

“We had so much power over it, and I felt like if I said an idea, I would be heard. When we said ideas, they listened and they actually put it into the project”

Cohort 3, Interview

Collaborating and working with artists to deliver the final projects for each cohort gave a sense of closure and shared achievement to each group. The mural, proposed installation in Centre:MK and Re:Sense made tangible what they had achieved and learned. It was through these works that they were able to share with each other and their wider family and friends, their success and development over the year.

“I think watching them arrive and see the piece for the first time and really get a sense of what is possible, to go on those kinds of journeys and have those kinds of conversations. For the months and months and months beforehand that we’ve been working with them it was all still quite intangible and to some extent quite abstract. For them to see that their ideas, their work and their conversations brought to life and for it to surpass their expectations was a definite highlight for me.”

Offset Projects, Interview

“I look back and see that an idea I had as a drawing is now a massive mural painted by more than 20 people. It’s a really rewarding and satisfying feeling.”

Cohort 1 End of Year Interview



6.2.4 BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Young Creatives often noted that they felt they were **given responsibility and trust that is absent from other projects that they have experienced**. Participants in Cohort 3 agreed that they were given creative freedom and that this created a sense of trust between the group and facilitators.

“It actually helped me to be more creative and with teamwork, your teamwork makes a dream work, you know, but also helps me be less shy, more confident, you know, just overall helped a lot.”

Cohort 3, Interview

“I feel like I got better at hearing their (the YCs) ideas and really seeing how beautiful other people’s ideas can be within with my own as well, and so on.”

Cohort 3, Interview

From the programme, participants went on to feel an **increased confidence and enjoyment in working in a team setting**. The programme enabled them to see what could be achieved by working with other people and this has gone on to motivate them to become more involved in other projects at school.

“Within my school I’m starting to do a little more because I have been really inspired by the whole experience and the teamwork that went into it. I like the fact that everyone pitched ideas and it really worked together. I’ve been really inspired because I’ve never been particularly bad at teamwork, but I never knew it could work so well within so many different perspectives.”

Cohort 3 Interview

For others the relaxed and collaborative nature of the project **took the pressure away from individual anxieties and insecurities**. One Young Creative spoke at length about her shyness and feeling uncomfortable in social situations but through the act of “*doing*” and creating in a group environment it empowered them to speak out and confidently express their ideas.

“If I learned anything useful from the experience, it’s that teamwork helps me to be less shy, more confident, you know, it just helps me. I work better in a team.”

Cohort 3, Interview

6.2.5 COMMUNICATION

Cohorts 1 and 2 brought together students from across the College from a wide variety of courses. This enabled cross-discipline working between students who otherwise may not have spoken to each other. The **longer time-span of the programme was positive across all three cohorts**, providing time for the group to be nurtured and creating the space for conversations and relationships. It built confidence in speaking with people more generally in the public.

“I learnt to adapt in situations where I am not as comfortable and to communicate better with people.”

Cohort 1, Interview

Offset created a **welcoming and safe environment** where everyone was listened to and encouraged to contribute. Young Creatives felt they were **recognised and heard**, with their ideas holding value in the minds of the group which is something that they did not expect coming from their other experiences in the arts.

“It was very welcoming and with everyone it was a very safe place. We were all pitching in ideas and it was very safe to do so. Everything was very relaxed and not stressful like at all. You were able to shape it and had the power to. We had so much power over it, if I said an idea I would be heard which I didn’t expect going into the project.”

Cohort 3, Interview



Being creative is often a social act, and in group settings the creation of an **artefact (such as an idea, object or image) can act as cue to communication**. When an artefact is relatively unformed, there is space to open up the conversation. Having this externalised shared focus for the group supported those less confident with communication skills or who struggled to speak out.

“I usually don’t like talking to people but when it’s in the element of being creative and then making something that is amazing, it was just so great and I just felt so welcome. It didn’t feel uncomfortable at all. I love talking to everyone here.”

Cohort 3, Interview

The public presentations of work and the events gave Young Creatives a safe space in which to speak with the public. At the events they were able to articulate what the project was about and their role within it and the creative work they were showing provided a prop to **scaffold conversation and communication**.

“I have learnt to be patient and how to communicate with [the] public. I feel that this will benefit me in the future.”

Cohort 3, Interview

“I really enjoyed my shift at the festival, and for being able to get out of my comfort zone to talk to various people.”

Cohort 3, Interview

The students from St Pauls who were following the creative process were given a brief to follow by the Young Creatives. This project management echoes professional commissioning and also relied on the Young Creatives being **able to communicate their vision clearly and succinctly in order to guide others**. The filmmakers worked as a group to create the final film, assigning roles to individuals and having a production manager whose job it was to ensure that everyone understand what they needed to do. Their final output also tested their ability to communicate articulately to a defined audience, young people, and ensure that the message they were briefed with came across.

“We need to do a lot of talking it through and lots of staying in contact and lots of ways of making everything and then having everyone review it and then compare it to the other footage. I need to see who’s going to be able to do different parts of the editing.

We’ll just kind of remind everybody what the overall film needs to do, and what the Young Creatives have requested of for their viewers, and of their filmmakers. And in terms of voice, what messages they really want to get across.”

St Pauls Student, Interview

An important element of developing the voice of the third cohort was their first project which ran from October to January. Through a series of workshops and facilitated discussions the Young Creatives were asked to develop a manifesto which reflected what was important to them individually. These manifesto statements were then developed into a series of posters in a collaboration with Studio Dotto. The posters were then exhibited at MK College in the end of year exhibition.

The process of distilling their motivations and beliefs into statements created the opportunity for the group to better understand each others' values and what drives them. Through working with Studio Dotto, the Young Creatives were asked to communicate creatively and visually, thinking about how they share these manifestos with a wider public audience and their peers. The project established an environment of open and honest communication and of listening, within the group, and with the facilitators and collaborators.



6.2.6 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Young Creatives **actively linked young people with professionals in Milton Keynes**, exposing them to new possibilities of careers and businesses. Offset brought together the group with early career professionals from a range of sectors that were chosen to bring relatable experiences.

The baseline survey for Cohort 3 asked where they might look to find out more about career opportunities in the creative sector. They identified one industry specific network, Artstation, where they might be able to find opportunities, otherwise they were only able to name generic job sites and searching Google.

The opportunity to build networks, contacts and confidence was identified as an opportunity to develop throughout the project. 85% agreed or strongly agreed that *“I know about what kind of creative careers might be open to me in the future.”*

However, throughout the programme **participants regularly spoke about how they were learning about new roles and areas of work**. The programme was able to broaden not only their understanding of what the creative sector offers but also how work in other sectors benefits from, and can be, creative. The understanding of how to find out more about careers shifted to more a **personal and social approach rather than information seeking**. In the end of programme survey, Young Creatives identified speaking to careers advisors, contacting people via social media and *“going out into the world”* to meet people.

The programme aligned with Offset’s aspirations to deliver youth-led projects and to work with young people who were curious about creativity but not always looking to go into the sector.

“In an aspirational sense, working with young people who might be curious but not necessarily want to go into the creative industries, but they want to learn the skills that they can do something with, where they are creative or not.”

“And it not just plays into the cultural sector for us. I think that was important that this never felt like a project about pathways into the cultural sector but that young people were finding their pathways into whatever employment they want but while learning the skills whether that’s communication, business skills development, working with other people and building their confidence post-COVID.”

Offset Projects, Interview

Meeting professionals working in the arts generated excitement from the group in that they were being listened to and were able to learn from them. The young people in Cohort 3 were particularly able to **benefit from meeting a diverse range of creative and business professionals local to Milton Keynes** who were able to **share relatable experience**. Bringing in young business leaders who are in touch with their communities and know what these communities want from them offered a uniqueness to what was considered the usual Milton Keynes business network.

“(Career Advice Visits from companies) Most frustrating was the lack of ability to meet young people on their terms and in their space. This was particularly frustrating in terms of connecting with business leaders. So as an example, we were quite open to the idea of bringing in business leaders who had a real vibrancy about them, who weren’t much older than they were. They may have gone to like a local school. They may not be much older than the young people themselves and bringing in those people who are setting up companies retail offers, whoever it was, to inspire them.”

Offset Projects, Interview

There is a **lack of visibility of work experience and apprenticeships across the cultural and creative sectors**, with opportunities to meet employers tending towards larger companies. This can be frustrating to young people who are looking for personal connections and their first opening. When it was at its most successful **Young Creatives provided connecting, relevant, informative, motivating and empowering careers exposure and guidance.**

“I really wanted to contact one person. I actually forgot to message her on Instagram, I was meant to but I really want to do that and just like pursue something there because it sounded so interesting. It’s hard to work as a young photographer because I know that young people in the field, and in any field, aren’t taken seriously. It’s an opportunity to be taken seriously right off the bat. It’s like one in a million.”

Cohort 3, Interview

A Young Creative was motivated to join so that they could learn more about the careers in the creative sector and the opportunities within it. They were keen to hear from people who had started their own businesses and learning about their professional experiences.

“I was interested in learning more about the kind of markets inside the arts, it was different and I felt like I could learn a lot from it, it was the main thing I was really interested in. I liked hearing from people who had marketed their own businesses.”

Cohort 3 Interview

There was still some **reticence in considering the creative sector as an area to work** as the perception of it being poorly paid and unstable remained. The young people in the project recognised some of the **employment issues and access to the creative industries and were able to make an informed decisions** using what they had learned.

The differing nature and needs of Cohorts 1 and 2 meant that more emphasis was placed on building skills which were transferable and less explicitly related to careers within the Creative Industries. As young people who were managing their progression into and through education, **key skills such as communication, team working and confidence were placed at the forefront of their experiences.** Young Creatives provided an opportunity for them to develop their skills in these areas in a scaffolded and managed environment which they could then apply to their part-time work and future paid roles.

“I really enjoyed art at the lake because I decided to put myself out there a bit with talking to the public and it made me realise I’d probably do quite well in customer service in a job so that lifted my confidence a bit as I tend to have social anxiety.”

Cohort 1 End of Year Interview

“(I have learned about) team work and time management, being on time has always been difficult for me but I liked the project too much to be too late.”

Cohort 3 Interview

Taking part in a programme outside of the commitments of education was considered to be **beneficial when it came to applying for university and jobs.** Young Creatives commented that it demonstrated their ability to juggle multiple commitments, their passion for creative projects and demonstrate that they had practical experience in working on projects with public outcomes.

“I think it is a brilliant thing to do and a great thing to put on your CV when it comes to get a job”

Cohort 3, End of Project Survey



Cohort 3 meet Hannah Olarewaju of TMR

6.2.7 MILTON KEYNES CULTURE

The programme introduced visits to new parts of Milton Keynes and engagement with unvisited arts and cultural sites. Despite the group being local, growing up and studying in the city, some participants had not visited areas such as Campbell Park or MK Gallery.

Project 1 at MK College progressed in Young Creatives through discrete steps to build their awareness of both themselves and the world around them. Young Creatives provided the opportunity to visit artist workshops and local venues such as MK Gallery. As baseline data was not collected for Cohort 1 and 2 it is difficult to draw conclusions. However, anecdotal feedback from facilitators noted a progression in confidence, awareness and creativity through scaffolding their exposure to a diversity of creative experiences.

“As the course has progressed we have seen many developments and positive changes as their understanding of the world expands and they show signs of a greater self awareness. Much of this has been down to the opportunities that MKYC has provided with visiting artist workshops and some of the amazing trips we have experienced. Because of this, young people (are) experiencing a world outside of Milton Keynes, as well as immersing themselves in experiences locally (such as the Gallery). There has been have nothing but positive, constructive and empowering outcomes for the students.”

Simon Wendt, MK College

In baseline survey of Cohort 3 100% of the Young Creatives agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“I know where to go in Milton Keynes if I want to experience arts and culture.”* This did not however translate into visits for these venues.

“(MK Gallery) Nah, I’ve never been there. I always say that I’ll go but never do.”

Cohort 3, Interview

Young Creatives was able to direct those in the programme to experiences within the city as well as raise awareness of the diversity of spaces and projects which exist in the city. As well as opening up their home city Young Creatives also introduced them to venues in London and areas of the city that they, as one participant put it, *“Would not have ever thought of visiting.”*

The digital nature of the programme and the interests of the group shaping it in that direction was a surprise to Offset, who noted that in a concurrent project, the group of young people that they were working with were anti-digital.



"I was surprised by the real dislike of going into arts and art spaces and not being able to physically touch or connect with the work in a physical way. There was a real pushback as the project gathered momentum in the last few months which they were very vocal around. How cultural spaces and arts education isn't best serving their interests or their needs."

"We opened up the doors to connect with things linked with what they were telling us."

Offset Projects, Interview

The group created something that pushed back against what they were experiencing as young people in cultural spaces and in their arts education. They brought in digital, immersive and sensory elements to build experiential work which expressed something of what they were missing in other spaces. This evidently appealed to their peers and public audiences as seen in the success and excellent feedback given to the Re:Sense installation.

6.3 LEGACY OF THE YOUNG CREATIVES GROUPS

At the inception of the project Young Creatives set out to, *“engage children and young people in arts and cultural activity in a way that allows them to develop the skills and behaviours they need for success.”* The legacy of this would lead to:

- **Empowered** young people taking the lead and **taking pride** in what they do
- Creating the setting for **better engagement** between young people and the MK creative and cultural community
- **Enabling young people to share their creativity** through project works, collaborations and artworks
- To feed into **MK Futures 2050**, the Milton Keynes Council vision for creating a thriving city for the next generations (delivered December 2020)

As demonstrated in the analysis of the impact for Young Creatives, there were the **indicators that the young people taking part left feeling empowered and with a better sense of the creative and cultural offer in MK**. Young Creatives also provided a **public platform** for those young creatives to share their work with the wider public and peers. These leave a **positive legacy** for those who took part and the continued engagement of Cohort 3 demonstrates that there was a **significant and motivating impact** for them.

At the beginning of the evaluation process, we worked with Young Creatives, MAKE and MK College to articulate what the impact and legacy of the project would be, concentrating on the long-term vision for the programme. However the impact of COVID-19 in the months after creating the Story of Change meant that the programme had to quickly adapt to the changing needs of the young people participating at the school and college. In the short term, supporting students through a disruptive and difficult time, became the most important priority.

Cohort 3 also began with the struggle of managing the lingering effects of the pandemic, such as young people feeling that taking on extra activities was difficult, renewed attention on academic success and the economic necessity for many of taking on part-time work. In trying to make sure that the project could go ahead the legacy of the work tended to become an afterthought. Offset was aware that the group they had engaged needed to be able to see what the legacy of their work was after the project had formally finished.

Cohort 3 were **successful in sharing and publicising their work** online which has left a record of their achievements and process. Although Cohort 2 created an online gallery of their work in lieu of a physical show, this is now inaccessible. Future programmes can learn from the experience of Cohort 3 in taking control of their **own social media presence, working with other young people to document activity and having a clear understanding of who they are communicating to and how**.

Offset ran a meeting called *“What’s Next?”* which brought together young people taking part across all their projects to look at synergies and what they would like to see happening in the future. Until this point Offset had deliberately not pointed out other opportunities with their other projects to make sure that **the group identified strongly with a being a Young Creative**.

“I think they want to stick with it (being of the Young Creatives group) for the time being, which is fantastic. They fundraised during the weekends and they charged for their event, which was a question that we put to them when Amal ¹ came to speak to them. He raised the question that actually the Arts Council encouraged him to charge for some of the activities for the funding he had won. So a small pot of money has been made to help them. We are obviously here and happy to build upon that in whatever way we can as Offset.”

Offset Projects, Interview

Offset stated it is important that MK College and MAKE collectively come together as a steering group and begin to identify when and where next and how these young people carry on, whether that is with Offset or elsewhere in the city.

The greatest challenge for sustaining the impact of Young Creatives comes from creating the environment or support for enabling the relationships and connections between the Young Creatives and the artists and facilitators. How can they be supported to continue leading and making choices to shape their future?

“It becomes difficult to understand how the Young Creatives continue as a self-defined programme, either supported by MAKE or by the College. Relationships and connections come from people, not necessarily organisations. How do we sustain that level of connectivity with people?”

Offset Projects, Interview

Without Offset’s initiative in linking the Young Creatives with their other work there was a risk that those relationships would have been lost. There is an opportunity and an urgent need for the stakeholders to identify which existing programmes can sustain the positive legacy of Cohort 3 and if necessary, what additional resources would allow those Young Creatives to continue to flourish.

¹ Amal grows opportunities for the UK’s Muslim communities to realise their full creative potential and share this creativity with others. (www.amal.org.uk)



7 STAKEHOLDERS

7.1 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Milton Keynes Council, Artsworld and MAKE, MK's Cultural Education Partnership (led by Art and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes), worked in partnership with MK College to deliver Young Creatives. The project has been supported with investment from MK Council with Section 106 Skills Development funds and Artsworld, the South East's Bridge organisation.

In 2015 the Arts and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes (AHA-MK) began the work to create a Cultural Education Partnership supported by Artsworld, the South East Bridge, in the national network of Arts Council England funded Bridge organisations. The Cultural Education Partnership, which became MAKE, undertook research, consultation, facilitated sessions and many meetings and discussions, to agree a set of priorities for cultural education in Milton Keynes.

Three priorities were developed for the partnership to work to:

- Work towards creating greater happiness and health for young people;
- Support children and young people to develop their own creativity
- Support access to careers in the cultural sector and the development of life-long transferrable skills.

On joining the programme, Flow identified the need for a strong sense of a shared vision to be established amongst the stakeholders. In December 2019, Flow held a Story of Change workshop which led to a greater understanding of what the shared aims and objectives of the programme were. The durational nature of the programme meant that the MAKE, MK College and Artsworld came together at regular intervals over three and a half years, and in that time a good understanding of partnership working emerged. This involves an informed consideration from each partner in the stakeholder group of the needs and perspectives of their peers. At the end of the programme, the group felt a greater shared sense of how to effectively reach young people that will enable future work together to have strong and committed roots.

"I think that there's been an understanding developed across the whole of the partnership and a capacity for listening, understanding and learning from each other."

MK College, Interview

In the pre-Covid stages of the programme, the need to establish a strong shared vision brought about many conversations amongst stakeholders relating to ambition, quality, the term youth-led, and who the target group for recruitment to the project programme be. This led to much experimentation in the earlier cohorts, testing boundaries of what might work, especially in terms of recruitment. Although recruitment continued to be a challenge into cohort three, Offset was instrumental in driving forward processes that were **youth-led, ambitious and excellent**. With its expertise and specialisms in creative youth-led work, Offset provided a way to break through the barriers that had surfaced in the earlier stages of the programme, and built new connections and relationships with MAKE and AHA-MK and more widely.

The College operates with resource constraints and delivering Young Creatives required a significant contribution of time and work which was additional to the investment. **The additional capacity of Offset Projects as an external partner has enabled Young Creatives to be responsive in shaping the programme for the individuals taking part.** Outsourcing the delivery of this programme to Offset while still remaining close to the process has enabled the College to understand new models of working with external partners, as well as smaller groups of people.

In the future, this model opens routes for how Young Creatives and work such as Project 1 can interact at the College. The College is exploring how smaller qualifications can be wrapped with skills, including creativity, which would embed the project within its delivery whilst enabling access to the richness of the Young Creatives' experience for the students.

Learning from the programme MAKE has started to generate approaches to building legacy in to its partnerships and programmes. It is recognised that legacy, in terms of ongoing relationship building with such projects can be difficult due to the transitory nature of that time of life for many young people as they move for study, work or family. Therefore it is important for organisations to hear the voices of young people as they emerge over time, understand their changing needs and begin to embed those in their future planning in order to build an ecosystem that enables young people to thrive.

MAKE hopes to **convene MK's existing youth panels in meaningful ways** and support partner organisations to make the most of the opportunity of listening to what young people need on an ongoing basis. This will not only help to shape the MK cultural education offer, but it will also inform arguments advocating for the importance of creativity and cultural education for young people locally and nationally. Additionally, MAKE hopes to generate better partnership working opportunities through developing a greater understanding of what good partnership working is.

7.2 MAKE

MAKE is a Milton Keynes-based partnership of over 60 schools and arts and heritage organisations that works towards better cultural education provision for children and young people (0-18 years –up to 25 for special education needs). It was established in 2015 (then known as the Milton Keynes Cultural Education Partnership or CEP), and it is one of ten CEPs in the South East. CEPs were developed in response to the Arts Council England's (ACE) Cultural Education Challenge, and in the South East they are supported by Artswork, an ACE Bridge organisation. A branding project funded by Artswork in 2019 that included 130 school children developed the MAKE brand name and logo. MAKE stands for Milton Keynes Arts Education.

At the time of development in 2018, MAKE had two programmes which it saw as essential in developing CEPs (Cultural Education Partnerships): Schools Connect and Young Creatives. Young Creatives was established as a programme that would support MAKE's priorities (see p. 49) towards developing new pathways into creative careers and developing a greater understanding of creativity as a transferable skill. Since then, MAKE has redefined its key role as **an organisation which acts as a hub to strengthen the links and opportunities of collaboration between partners** and promote and celebrate their existing and future programmes.

"MAKE is a network. It's a place-based partnership that strengthens what's already here in Milton Keynes. Research with our partners has shown that many teachers still do not know about many of the cultural education opportunities in the city, and they don't know about local venues, and they don't know how to access artists or their networks. MAKE is not here to say 'ok we'll bring up twenty artists from Brighton to work with you because we have funding to do that'. No. MAKE has to understand what is here on our doorstep and find the best ways to link everyone together so that offer is strengthened."

Interview, MAKE

Young Creatives has acted as a catalyst for this thinking from the learning MAKE gained from working with its partners on the programme. **MAKE has developed a strong relationship with MK College** through which new support structures and advocacy measures for the development of creativity in MK can be initiated. For example, in May 2022 MAKE and MK College met the Centre for Competitive Creative Design (C4D) at Cranfield University. From this connection it is envisioned that the existing infrastructures of both **educational bodies will be strengthened by working together** to achieve shared ambitions and synergies.

Elsewhere in MAKE, partners working on Young Creatives have become part of other initiatives. A teacher who led the group at Radcliffe School has been instrumental setting up the Creative and Cultural Teachers Network where educators can share skills and practice. The relationship with Offset has enabled MAKE to work with an independent partner, not part of a school, college or institution. As a new member of the MAKE network, Offset's youth-led focus provides the partnership with a deep understanding of how to embed youth voice in emerging cultural education work in MK.

Emerging from the project MAKE has built on its experience to have a legacy in their future work. There is a **better understanding of what it means to be in a creative partnership and the quality and trust that enables one to thrive**. Cultural education needs to have young people at its core. Through **genuine partnership working, trust and nurture, youth-centred and youth-led** work will open up exciting opportunities that encourage a creative city to develop with curiosity and stamina

7.3 MK COLLEGE

At MK College there is a broad offer to support young people into and through education, enabling them to graduate equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that underpin their transition into future work and further studies. During the first two cohorts, Young Creatives allowed the college to build on their Project 1 initiative and review the styles of learning, curriculum planning and types of project based learning that can support the needs of students.

“What we are doing is a result of the learnings that we’ve had with Project 1, and that’s actually impacting the greater curriculum design across the whole college over the next couple of years and how we’re starting off for 22/23.”

MK College, Interview

The learnings from this project have been taken and applied to other groups of students, providing an opportunity to upskill staff. What was considered normal for creative courses is now being applied to “non-creative” courses. Students are experiencing how to **apply creative learning in real-world situations rather than scenarios**, supported by staff who are understanding and responsive to students’ needs, applying creativity to their own practice as educators.

Project 1 was developed to meet the needs of students, who for a number of reasons, had barriers in engaging fully with education. In order to deliver a relevant, engaging and agile curriculum for them a new approach was required which did not try to emulate the mainstream offer of the College.

“Project 1 was for young people who couldn’t naturally access college and needed to have small bite size vocational qualifications. We then did a lot of wraparound to help develop learning strategies, thought processes - so that it wasn’t about getting them ready for a career. It was about getting them ready to be in a place to plan, engage think creatively.”

MK College, Interview

Project 1 embedded 2 days of Young Creatives alongside their 3 days of the core curriculum. **Creativity was positioned as a core skill and mode of thinking**, enabling each student to recognise in themselves their unique potential and through creative activity, provide a route to develop their interests and build on the strengths that give them the resilience to learn. **100% of students from Project went on to continue to learn at College** at the end of their year which is a particular achievement considering the barriers they faced.

“As a group, they are strong, they’re finishing the year, they will achieve very well for the type of students they are, bearing in mind, these are our most disengaged students. They developed those creative skills.”

MK College, Interview

This application of creativity into the curriculum was a way of building progression and confidence in **“learning how to learn”**. The College will continue to apply creative thought into its curriculum design to sustain refining the offer for some of their most challenging groups. For some young people who have had challenging experiences through their education, a **resilience in living with mistakes and failure is vital in**

supporting them to cope with their learning journey. Too often creative experiences are considered to not be a priority for students who can't access mainstream education and so the College **embedded them into the core of their learning.** This opened **access to creative experiences** for students who may also be working, preventing them from being able to take part in extra-curricular activity.

"It is experimenting and not fearing making mistakes because you don't know where that mistake is going to take you. That type of resilience and understanding is what we're trying to instil in those projects. It's phenomenal what that team are doing because if you think, if all those students, potentially if Project 1 wasn't there, they've been NEETs."

MK College, Interview

Young Creatives established a **context of reflection and learning for the College** in understanding the impact of creativity in courses across the college which were usually considered to be non-creative. **Creative practitioners have found a role in expanding vocational practice for students**, such as in Childcare, building rounded learning experiences and skills for their future careers. This, as with Project 1, has been embedded into the core of courses to complement and support students' progression.

"We'll bring artists in for them to help create things like nursery boards for them and new roles within us and furniture and nursery, furniture activities. At E3 level what we particularly know is that for some learning is challenging for them, the behaviours that they need to progressively be successful aren't necessarily developed to a point where they'll naturally rise to the challenges. So those creative ways of engaging them are going to be really important across all those pathways."

MK College, Interview

The College itself had multitudes of challenges to cope with throughout the COVID-19 pandemic which it will be continuing to work with as students start with them for their studies, and with others as they graduate and leave. The closure of the College buildings, teaching remotely and then when on site, teaching in bubbles, not moving classrooms and dealing with sporadic absences, created a highly difficult context in which to sustain creative partnerships. For the College, **building students' confidence** that they were going to leave having achieved something was of vital importance.

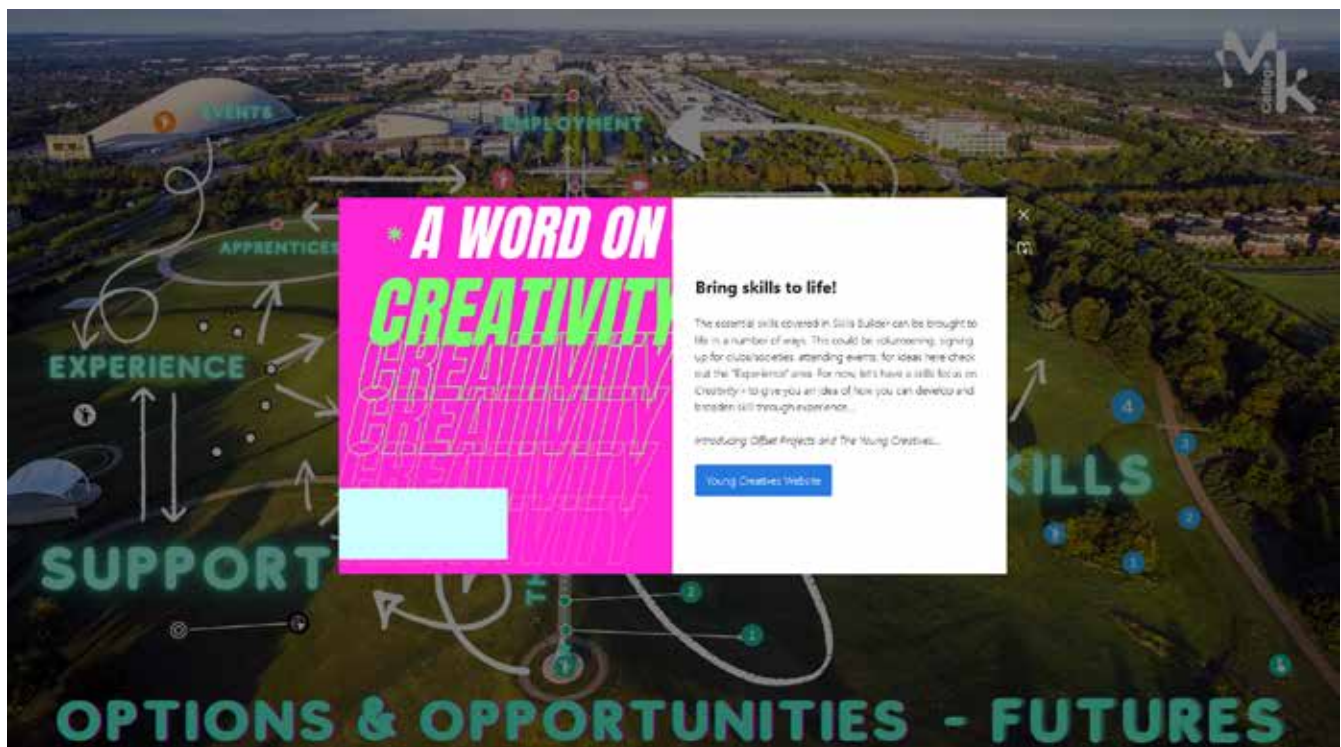
The College noted that there was a sense that **students wanted to focus more than ever on qualifications** and that their free time was less available for other activities. Due to the change from examinations to teacher assessment, the College noticed that students are more anxious as they come to experience them for the first time. The development of **"soft skills" and creativity need to continue to be injected across all courses, schools and colleges to empower the COVID generation of young people.** For the College, the experience of Project 1 and Young Creatives has provided an insight as to how this can be done to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.

"It was that low priority that the students gave it that just reinforces that the students aren't the same. We have actually got to work with that and with them on those soft skills, those transferable skills because they haven't picked them up. It's about building that resilience and focusing on that fact that these are different learners now - asking, 'What do we need to do to enable this group of learners to be successful?'"

MK College, Interview

The College has continued to work towards embedding creativity as a core value for all students. On induction students have been invited to contribute creatively to campaigns across the College, including recognising abuse, radicalisation, personal development and career advice. Online platforms such as Padlet have been used to collect responses to reflective activities, such as “What can we do to keep ourselves safe?” and, “What hobbies link you to others in your community”. Campaigns around campuses have invited students to design posters, showcasing the creativity of College community and using youth voice for greater impact.

Online Virtual Reality pieces have used interactive 360 degree views to direct students to support services and share the work and thoughts of students. An Options and Opportunities Futures Week map highlights progressions through learning, education, support and careers available in the College and Milton Keynes more broadly.¹ Young Creatives is highlighted on the map within its Skills path as a way to gain experience and broaden students’ future options.



The Museum of Me is an online gallery of students’ responses to their personal identities and what makes them unique.² Students created artworks to explore their identities, expressing themselves through small sculptures and music choices. This demonstrates how creativity is being used in new ways to support students development being able to reflect and communicate on their personal development.

1 <https://www.thinglink.com/video/1561395352974655491>

2 <https://www.thinglink.com/video/1525618401140015107>

8

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS



8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Young Creatives as a Network

The **model of a network** for Young Creatives can be used to bring maximum value to young people and its partners.

Young Creatives leveraged the expertise, resources and connections of many partners. The programme has shown the value in arts and culture organisations working alongside colleges and schools to reach young people. The connections brought about as a network will present **pathways to a legacy** of their experiences, **enabling them to continue to be involved** in projects working alongside other young people that expand their opportunities and voice. Young Creatives has the potential to be seen as **signposting and scaffolding further engagement** not only with the individuals creativity, but also that of partners and organisations across Milton Keynes.

Deliver Relevant Careers Advice

Sustain the programme of delivering **relevant, relatable and local** careers advice from smaller, young and Milton Keynes based businesses and creative individuals.

The Young Creatives had a number of opportunities to speak and connect with companies, professionals and artists from around the city. Working with a variety of young and creative local businesses will provide young people with experiences and places that are relatable and meaningful that they may not be otherwise able to access through other career related programming in schools and colleges.

The inclusion of young businesses and freelancers is an important step to building a programme of timely and practical creative careers advice. In the Creative Industries 32% of the workforce compared with 16 % in the overall economy.¹ Freelance and micro-businesses offer flexibility and autonomy but careers are often more unstable. Having **open and honest conversations** with those who are working with this way will equip young people with information and expectations which are relevant if they decide on this path.

Public Outcomes

Continue to **build upon the legacy of sharing the outcomes of projects with the wider public.**

The large scale public outputs of creative works, such as the mural and the Re:Sense installation, were beacons for the Young Creatives programme. As well as sharing the creativity and vision of the young people of Milton Keynes with the wider public, they enabled Young Creatives to **put into action the creativity, teamwork and practical skills** that they had developed during the programme.

Collaborating with an exciting artist selected with the group produced work that was genuinely **innovative, engaging and of a high quality**. By giving the young people a chance to work with a professional artist they are able to have **insight into their working practice, commercial advice and ways of thinking**, as well as creating impactful works which they can be proud of.

¹ <https://pec.ac.uk/news/national-statistics-on-the-creative-industries>

Arts Award as a Valued Option

The Arts Award plays a valuable role in letting young people get recognition their creativity, however its application to all creative projects with young people should be carefully considered, **balancing the need to reward participation with the intrinsic benefits of taking part.**

For those in school or college the Young Creatives enabled those students to work towards completing their Bronze awards. At the time of Covid-19 this helped top-up the missed time spent on them due to the suspension of school and changing timetables.

The kind of documentation and extra work required to successfully complete an Arts Award is very similar in experience to creating a portfolio for curricular subjects. Part of the appeal for Young Creatives was that it was separate to formal education as a creative, collaborative and youth-led space. The distinction between the activity and experience of open youth-led activity and qualification administration is a difficult issue to solve. For young people joining from the open call in Cohort 3 completing their Arts Award documentation created additional stress at a time when they were approaching their exams. By making the **Arts Award an explicitly optional award**, and perhaps **tailoring projects** which are only open for those working towards gaining awards in their school or college, it would **provide choice to engage with it or not** whilst still meeting the needs of young people.

A Core Group with Open Projects

Future iterations of Young Creatives should have the **model of a core group establishing projects which then bring in other young people for shorter periods on a project basis.**

During Cohort 3 an additional recruit call was made for Young Creatives to join to deliver the final project during the Easter Holiday. This offer of short term commitment in a discrete month long period brought in participants who otherwise may not have taken part in a longer project. These **open calls give potential recruits the chance to experience what Young Creatives is about** and discover pathways in to engaging further through other projects.

Building in time for Decision Making

If young people are to be shaping and leading projects then **time should dedicated and planned for** this.

Young Creatives demonstrated that in order for a programme to be truly led by young people there needs to be a flexibility in terms of time and the programming. In order for decisions to come about in a way that has space to incorporate their learning whilst still delivering on outputs such as artworks, **the scope should be agreed early on with the group and decision making front-loaded into the timeline** or sections of the project.

Create the Legacy Before Beginning

At the inception of **future programmes, establish what the onwards pathways are for people taking part and open the doors for them to continue.**

As the project drew to a close the legacy of the work for the young people taking part had not been fully developed. Young Creatives would have benefited from a clearer shared vision from all partners at the start of the project and an understanding what they aimed for impact for all involved was. By **thinking impactfully and establishing the evaluation before delivery**, future projects will be able to **clearly articulate their goals** to everyone involved and to capture and understand their impact.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

Young Creatives Evaluation Objectives

Understand how the project enables a core group of diverse young people to **develop project management, leadership, employability and life skills** by supporting them to work with local cultural organisations to co-design and co-deliver creative projects for children and young people

Young Creatives had transformative and motivating experiences which validated and enabled them to discover their creativity, understanding through practical and public projects how it can be applied in other areas of their lives. At MK College, creativity has been embedded as a core skill for students and teachers, not only in Project 1 and Young Creatives, but also in other courses traditionally considered to be “non-creative”, enriching the learning experience and the skills of learners.

How a **youth-led ethos with empowered young people taking the lead**, working in teams, making decisions and taking pride, can result in personal development, resilience, confidence and creative enrichment for young people of Milton Keynes

The youth-led ethos empowered young people to direct the activity, vision and outputs of their experience as a Young Creative. Through scaffolding their learning young people reported that they were more confident in their own abilities and selves, better at communicating their ideas to others and able to work collaboratively with others. They recognised these skills as essential to their own development as they think about their future careers and studies, whether they are in the creative sector or not.

How children and young people supported to **feel confident accessing the MK creative and cultural community**

The programme set out to open up access to Milton Keynes and its arts and cultural offer. Young people were supported in experiencing a range of venues and organisations in the city, visiting places that they had not previously been too despite being on their doorstep. More widely, Young Creatives were able to articulate what excited them about arts and culture and how the offer was well targeted at young people. As a group, they then created and shared creative work and experiences that demonstrated how immersive, sensory and contemporary work which spoke of their experiences as young people in Milton Keynes could connect with their peers more widely through well attended public events. Over the course of the three cohorts, over 1000 people attended public events produced by young people.

How were skills development and educational progression supported by enabling children and young people to **achieve Arts Award certification**

Faced with the serious challenges of working with young people through COVID-19, Young Creatives met its original ambitions of engagement and Arts Awards qualifications. Overall, 120 Discover Arts Awards were achieved, 16 were Bronze Awards gained by participants and over 1000 people attended public events and displays.

What was the impact of Young Creatives in **strengthening the MK CEP by building strategic partnerships** with Milton Keynes Council Economic Development and Milton Keynes College

The project expanded relationships in the Cultural Education Partnership, building strong ties between MAKE and MK College which will continue to grow as part of Young Creatives legacy. Through these partnerships young people were not only able to collaborate with others they may not have met, but also new ways of working on creative projects were seeded between schools and creative and cultural enterprises in Milton Keynes.

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