

LeedsCEP Chair's Report Autumn 2020

The LeedsCEP was established in September 2017, with the shared ambition to ensure Leeds is a city that grows the aspirations and talents of children and young people through access to high quality arts and cultural opportunities. However, our mission has to be about more than simply supporting the delivery of excellent arts. Our diverse and growing membership of cultural organisations and arts rich schools already contribute to a vibrant arts and cultural landscape, but in the context of a city that is divided by economic and educational inequality it is a fragile ecology, and too many city centre based opportunities are not easily accessible to those most likely to benefit.

Throughout 2018-19 our development focussed on laying the foundations needed for creating a joined-up, sustainable cultural infrastructure. We worked hard to secure a strategic position for the LeedsCEP building our membership of frontline organisations and schools to become a representative voice and co-ordinating body within the city. LeedsCEP feeds into key policy and development teams within Culture & Sport and Children's & Family Services, Leeds City Council.

In order to address the inequality of opportunity that exists across the city, schools are critical partners in the LeedsCEP. Our programme of schools engagement has delivered key interventions to support schools across Leeds to deliver a high quality cultural curriculum. From regular headteachers' briefings, to working with Teaching School Alliances to deliver targeted conferences and workshops we have addressed information and skills gaps for school leaders and classroom practitioners in areas including arts and culture's role in the new Ofsted framework, curriculum design and achieving Artsmark. We have consistently promoted the city's cultural offer throughout and ensured wide engagement with outstanding cultural education opportunities such as the Leeds Curriculum, which won the Educational Initiative of the Year award at the National Museums and Heritage awards 2019 and was praised by judges for its "innovative sense of place and responding to the needs of its locality."

Ensuring connections between cultural, education and health policy is a key focus for LeedsCEP. In a city where cultural, education and economic inequality often tracks against health inequalities, it is vital that the role arts and culture can play in children and young people's wellbeing is understood. In June 2019, in partnership with the Leeds Arts Health and Wellbeing Network, LeedsCEP was instrumental in setting the focus of their national conference around how arts and cultural participation can help improve mental health outcomes for children and young people. This work provided a platform for case studies of the innovative work of our members and invite young people from a range of backgrounds and experiences to share their perspectives with 200 senior delegates from the NHS, community healthcare, education and academia.

Nurturing and retaining young people's creative talent in the city and addressing barriers to progression are of course vital elements of achieving the LeedsCEP vision. Through representing and co-ordinating our members' commitments, we have facilitated the development of applications to major creative skills funding opportunities including the Arts Council's Youth Performance Partnerships Fund. Our leading universities and dedicated arts education institutions are represented in our membership and our close partnership with the Leeds City Region LEP and Creative and Cultural Skills resulted in unprecedented engagement from creative sector employers in the 2019 National Creative Careers Programme's *'Discover! Creative Careers Week'* and the Leeds City Region LEP's parallel #FutureGoals campaign.

As we near the end of 2020, our task to ensure arts and cultural education is accessible to all children and young people in this city seems more vital than ever, highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis and its inevitable impact on the cultural sector and children and young people's education and wellbeing.

We are hugely proud of the activities of our members over these last months. Under the pressure of loss of funding and staff furlough they have innovated rapidly to offer arts and cultural opportunities that have been a lifeline for children and young people and their families further excluded through the lockdown. LeedsCEP has been a hub for members throughout this period, we secured funding and support for joint initiatives such as the Bags of Creativity programme which has already supplied 1000 bags of art materials into homes of vulnerable children over the summer.

Looking forward we hope to build on this activity in supporting our members to recover from this crisis and in developing the vital role of arts and culture to support communities reconnecting during and after the pandemic. We are delighted that IVE has approved our application for partnership investment which will secure further Arts Council England funding as part of their continued commitment to the Cultural Education Challenge. This will enable LeedsCEP to develop a joint strategic programme with Leeds2023, led by a dedicated Children and Young People's Partnership Manager, which will continue our work in 3 key areas:

Voice

COVID-19 has impacted significantly on Children and Young people's lives, yet their voices and views are not visible in narratives around recovery and responses to lockdown. We will use this investment to work with children and young people to develop a shared understanding about the complexity of facilitating children's voice authentically and the critical role that arts practice can play in this.

Sustainable Practice

Leeds2023 will be key to the city's sustainable recovery developing an infrastructure for the arts and cultural sector and children and young people's education and wellbeing. We recognise that there is a gap in practitioners' confidence and skills in designing and delivering work in this new context. LeedsCEP is uniquely positioned to support the city to benefit from the collective learning of our members from these past months and to support the sector to engage with skills development opportunities.

School Partnerships

Early indications suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has widened the educational attainment gap and highlighted a digital accessibility gap where those with limited digital resources are denied access to online resources. LeedsCEP will continue its schools engagement programme to raise profile of best practice with Headteachers and senior leaders and support their delivery of a 'recovery curriculum' through creating new opportunities for children and young people to participate in cultural activity.

As well as recruiting for a Children and Young People's Partnership Manager, we will be actively seeking a new, independent chair to help drive this ambitious programme of activity forward. The role of chair offers the right person a unique opportunity to take up a highly visible role influencing city wide development and playing a key part in building the aspirations and talents of children and young people growing up in Leeds.