

## **P.L.A.Y LEEDS 2023 Research Partnership Development event May 2023**

P.L.A.Y (Participation, Learning and Arts for Youth) is a one year youth-arts activity programme led by Leeds2023 in partnership with the University of Leeds Cultural Institute, supported by Arts Council England. P.L.A.Y brings together a vast range of activity that engages young people of different ages across formal and informal education and across contexts and artforms. It is a unique, one-off investment in the creative engagement and leadership of young people in the city.

The University of Leeds, Leeds Cultural Education Partnership, Leeds Learning Alliance and Leeds City Council partnered with LEEDS 2023 to explore how we can best ensure learning and legacy of this investment.

**The first P.L.A.Y LEEDS 2023 Research Partnership Development event** was held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023, bringing together a group of researchers, arts managers and cultural creatives gathered to look at possible research collaborations and opportunities for children and young people to engage with culture beyond LEEDS 2023 Year of Culture. These areas of discussion were **Creative Skills and Inclusive Growth, Child Friendly Cities and Creative Learning in Formal Education**.

The purpose of this document is to summarise the discussions of that day and to lay a foundation for further exploration on how we can build on the legacy of the P.L.A.Y programme.

### **Creative Skills and Inclusive Growth**

#### **The current situation for Leeds**

- Leeds has a diverse cultural offer and a unique HE/Vocational education and training offer, across artforms (Music, dance, visual arts, film, creative writing, theatre, poetry etc)
- Leeds has a good reputation regionally, nationally and internationally for creative skills and creative development and there is lots of brilliant work happening in Leeds e.g. Armley Action Plan which has creativity and culture as a thread throughout its work
- [Grand Future Project](#) is an existing network, providing events, awareness building and opportunities to promote off stage opportunities for young people in the creative and cultural sector
- There has been a shift nationally in the political lens through which culture and creative arts are viewed and a lack of support and funding with fewer people and less money available. This is in addition to the stripping away of artistic and creative subjects in the national curriculum
- The cultural sector across the North is reporting (through Northern Culture Network) the stripping away of previous paid work experience, internships and apprenticeships (as a result of the financial crisis) which previously ensured a talent pipeline into the sector, especially from those communities who would not normally consider this an option
- There is a gap for young people in understanding how you find your way into the sector; between training/education and entering the sector – regardless of whether you leave education at 16, 18 or 22 years of age or beyond

- There is a skills gap: digital skills need to be included to support and help to develop artists for the future. There are frameworks in place for this, however due to resource constraints these elements are not being explored
- Leeds City Council has changed the focus for culture projects - culture, economic development and skills are now under one administrative structure which is good in terms of looking at creative skills for development however it may be compromising creativity

## Opportunities & areas to explore

### Creative Development Pathways & Employment

- Development pathways for creativity: possibly aligned to sports development pathways which not only bring through talent but also creates a lifelong affiliation with sport. Schemes along these lines have been run e.g. Find Your Talent and Yorkshire Young Dance but the ladder and progression of these needs to be more co-ordinated, organised and requires infrastructure
- In terms of responding specifically to Inclusive Growth (i.e. decreasing poverty etc) how can we tell the story of the young person who attends a local cheer dancing group (DAZL) for years, how does that link to increased employability for that person or what else does it lead to that impacts on improving Inclusive Growth?
- “From Kickstarter to Creative Director” generally there has been a widespread positive experience of employing young people in our sector, many of whom have found ongoing employment. Is there merit in getting a better understanding of this progression, how could research play a part in this?

### Mental Health & Creativity

- The arts need scale and exposure – now is a good time for this with the current mental health crisis, particularly in young people
- What might a longer-term, regional strategic intervention of mental health and creativity, involving policy makers, educators, mental health services and creatives look like

### A Connected Cultural Sector

- Covid-related activities and resources enabled the arts to be more inclusive and allowed people autonomy. What role does research have to play in understanding the learnings from this and informing future practice? (See the [Centre for Cultural Value \(CCV\)'s](#) recent [Covid-19 research project](#) for work to date)
- Change the influence and voice for the arts – speak to government and inform policy. Research can play a role in gathering evidence to inform this advocacy (see more on CCV's [existing work with policy makers](#))

## Key recommendations

- Creative skills development strategy to be produced to ensure training is embedded across the arts in Leeds (also from other industries like sport progression routes and talent pipelines)
- Map what Creative Skills pathways and opportunities already exist and identify gaps and look at what areas need building on (This been done in Birmingham by [Arts Connect](#) (this was a Bridge Organisation, like [IVE](#)))

- Map and use existing evidence to help advocate for the arts to develop creative skills ( e.g. gaming, digital skills) and then generate a pipeline of activities
- Develop an approach to demonstrate people’s career journeys tracking across organisations in order to demonstrate that career development is not a linear pathway and can develop in different ways. This would add the support and building blocks to help with career development in the cultural sector
- Develop an infrastructure for creative professionals to engage with communities, especially young people. This all requires organisation, co-ordination, strategy, collaboration, research for evidence and money
- Implement longitudinal research into children and young people progression in cultural/creative industries
- Assess whether a strategic intervention is needed or alternatively a study to be conducted (WARD or City Wide level) in order to understand how we build cultural capital for young people

## **Child Friendly Cities**

### **The current situation for Leeds**

- [Child friendly Leeds](#) has a diverse and exciting offer and they continue to further the progress that is being made
- There is a strong foundation of Youth Voice’s work such as through Leeds City Council’s [Leeds Youth Voice](#) programme and local community and arts organisations
- Some parents are fearful of their children travelling safely around the city. This impacts on the children’s potential agency and independence
- The city centre can be scary and unaccommodating for some people; in what ways can this be acknowledged and addressed to meet the needs of children and families?
- The city centre is not a particularly green space. How can the city become a more playful city centre with greener developments? (This could link to the potential redevelopment of city square)
- The University of Leeds is a civic university, integrated centrally in the city. How could the University open up more of its greener spaces to engage with city’s children and families?

### **Opportunities & areas to explore**

#### **City Safety**

- Examine the issues that are preventing the local areas from being safe, comfortable and familiar. Identify research to tackle these challenges
- Look at the roles of cultural organisations, councils and the Higher Education sector in helping to further Child Friendly Cities, identify where they can improve and ensure plans are monitored and evaluated
- Look at the role of research and where it can help to underpin evidence for change, and make suggestions for where local and statutory agencies have a role to play
- How does the system need to change to allow [12 wishes](#) to be granted

#### **Inclusive spaces**

- Provide better accessibility for children into arts spaces (e.g galleries), improve practical access to make more children friendly, but also to create a sense of belonging for children and Young People, in terms of the appearance and ‘feeling’ of the space so they can claim it as their own
- Use digital methods (such as visual stories) to help demystify how to get to places and what the expectations are of that space, so help bring a comfortableness for those visiting.

#### **Opportunities in the city**

- Children feeling they can develop cultural confidence, through what they see (such as visual stories of local people’s achievements) or through empowering engagement with cultural organisations
- A coordinated approach to giving young people more agency within the city
- Establish trust with groups, ensuring projects don’t only deliver a temporary effect and have a long-lasting impact
- Ensure cultural key stakeholders aren’t exclusive, and understand importance of embracing wider society and children and families from different groups and backgrounds

#### **Key recommendations**

- Stronger join up between researchers and arts organisations: this could be a hub or building infrastructure-type body, which links researchers to support arts organisations to build their cases for support; and also in the other direction helping researchers achieve their objectives by understanding better organisation’s plans and impact for young people
- Increased sharing of best practice and knowledge across the sector, also crucially educating funders on needs and gaps which need addressing - can a knowledge hub be established with live information for all to access. This could also ensure that when research and data gathering is completed it is not lost or forgotten and continues to help the longevity and stability of the sector. Identify an organisation/council to be a link between cultural organisations and researchers and act as this knowledge hub (see the work by the Centre for Cultural Value <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/cultural-value-resources/> )
- Designing a way to disseminate cultural sector findings in a way that is accessible, relevant and friendly for young people; therefore to succeed in this it must be designed in conjunction with Young People
- Create an infrastructure to help establish a children’s Mayor, to represent children and their needs locally, working alongside organisations advocating for children
- Establish more intergenerational spaces for children to meet with adults and the older generation to develop community learning and relationships
- Institutions in Leeds establishing a CFL post

### **Creative Learning in Formal Education**

#### **The current situation for Leeds**

- Due to the pandemic and its effect on employment, ‘portfolio careers’ have been especially impacted (A portfolio career is a way to define a career that has encompassed

several related or unrelated jobs such as writer/photographer or graphic designer/stylist). The temporary nature of portfolio careers, especially when starting out, means that there has been an increase in instability and therefore financial difficulty for many people.

- The constraints of the curriculum can make it difficult to incorporate creative approaches into a teaching programme for teachers. There is more of an emphasis of children focusing on mandatory subject, where there is statutory responsibility, meaning children have less exposure to creative subjects. These subjects also require specialist teachers, and additional school costs, another obstacle when schools often have budget constraints.

### **Opportunities & areas to explore**

#### **Raising the value of creativity in education**

- What support can be provided for Creative Education Training for teachers and headteachers (such as supplementary training, which could be post graduate and/or online)
- How can space for creative experimentation for students and teachers be given within schools? Can support be given to interpret the curriculum using creativity e.g. teach maths through music (advocacy needs to happen with headteachers, academy trusts, parents so they buy into this). Model what a new creative curriculum could look like, for academics or other types of schools.
- Exploring conversations with stem colleagues to see the value of creative subjects, qualifications, and what creative qualifications could add
- How do we tackle the perception of binary of academic or creative, how do we dismantle this and form a perception that the two could work in tandem?
- How could children co-create a curriculum, and when is the appropriate time/point to do this?

#### **School and community support**

- Need to support schools better, by mapping and communicating what is happening locally so local organisations can help fill the gaps
- Need to target support for children where there are barriers or challenges to accessing creative opportunities.

### **Key recommendations**

- Pilot an innovative approach to easily embed greater creativity into the school curriculum, which is uncomplicated and smooth for schools to implement
- Engage arts/stem crossover: initiate research to explore how these two areas can be integrated, and then pilot a showcase of how culture/creative subjects can work successfully together and bring increased benefit

### **Next Steps**

If there are any themes from the summary document that you would like to explore with the University, please email [culturalinstitute@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:culturalinstitute@leeds.ac.uk) with the heading P.L.A.Y Legacy in the subject title and we can look at bridging those connections.