

# Submission to the Northern Culture All-Party Parliamentary Group

**May 2021**

- 1. How do we support and encourage young people's creativity and cultural job opportunities post-Covid?*
- 2. How do we boost skills, create equal opportunities for all, promote diversity and support ambitions to empower future generations?*
- 3. How do we help develop a supply chain for talent and harness what many towns and cities in the North have always done – acted as a 'pool of talent' with pathways into the creative sectors?*

## **Supporting schools to develop a broad ranging creative and cultural offer both within and beyond the curriculum**

With many families across the North experiencing significant disadvantage, school is a crucial and universal access point for cultural education and creative learning.

The prioritisation of STEM within education policy over the last decade has led to a significant decline in arts and other creative subjects. Only this week we have seen DfE proposals for 49% funding cuts for creative and performing arts courses within Higher Education. We need to champion the role of creativity across the curriculum and the value of arts subjects for skills development, supporting mental health and wellbeing and making links to local communities.

## **Supporting partnership work across the cultural and education sectors**

By supporting schools to provide a rich cultural education offering, a local trickledown effect occurs. Partnerships between schools and creative and cultural organisations bolster the local cultural ecology by providing work for local artists, connecting schools with local venues and growing demand for family participation outside of school.

Schools can work with cultural partners to develop programmes of work that support the priorities of their school improvement plans. Opportunities for teachers to work alongside creative practitioners helps develop practice and creates high quality learning experiences.

## **Embedding creative and cultural skills across our education system**

The long-term impact of Covid-19 remains unclear. However, employers across all sectors will continue to prioritise key skills: problem solving, innovation, communication, team working and cultural intelligence – all mainstays of a high quality creative and cultural education.

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Unfortunately, arts, culture and creativity in academic institutions are declining, and are often overlooked within careers advice and guidance. If these subjects continue to decline, we risk cutting off a vital supply to our talent pipeline. We need to emphasise the value of the creative and cultural industries to the North, and help teachers, parents and young people understand what jobs and opportunities exist.

We need a 'fit for purpose' education system that helps grow the creative and cultural skills we need to rebuild a resilient cultural sector and enhance employability and growth across all sectors. We need creative and cultural careers embedded within careers guidance for young people, forging closer relationships with initial teaching training providers so teachers entering the profession have the knowledge and understanding to support the creative ambitions of students.

### **Amplify the link between cultural participation and skills for creative industries, positioning cultural education providers as key players in creative talent supply chains, launching creative career pathways and progression**

We need to be bolder in emphasizing the link between the cultural sector and the creative industries, helping creative industries employers to see youth theatres, music education hubs, arts clubs and youth dance companies as part of their talent pool.

By working more closely with key stakeholders for careers and skills (e.g., LEPs, Enterprise Coordinators) we can raise the visibility of creative and cultural career pathways, and improve access to skills funding.

We need to make clear links to other parts of the economy and show how a thriving creative and cultural sector can stimulate broader social and economic development locally. When we talk about a supply chain we need to think carefully about where the chain is leading, developing ways to stop the brain drain to major cities. Creative people will always have a positive influence on the places they live in, so let's keep them where they are.

### **Making skills and employment programmes more accessible for young people facing challenging circumstances**

Systemic change is needed to create a truly diverse creative and cultural workforce, starting in school by exciting and engaging children with the arts, then later through careers and employability interventions. We need to diversify the workforce at entry level for the sector to have representative leadership in future.

However, many of the skills and employment programmes that do exist are not accessible to all young people, and we believe that not enough is being done to reach those who need the opportunity most. We need flexible work experience opportunities that fit around work, study or caring responsibilities, particularly for young people from lower income households. We need programmes that are co-designed by young people and relevant experts to engage target groups and to ensure the best quality learning experience as well as prioritise diversity within our recruitment practice.

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#### *4. How do we increase higher levels of engagement with culture?*

### **Increasing investment and support for local and grassroots provision where children and young people are most likely to engage with arts and culture for the first time**

Young people's worlds are hyperlocal –especially for children from lower income households who won't have ready access to a parent or carer chauffer service, or the agency or capability to get to activity happening outside their immediate locality. As such, children need to access out of school hours activity within 5-10 miles of where they live.

Greater support for hyperlocal working requires a shift in approach to investment and support. We need to provide 'regular' funding and development support to grassroots cultural organisations and freelance artists who are of and for their place, helping break free from the limitations of short-term outcomes driven funding and short-term commissions. Regular resource would help this part of our cultural ecology to raise their game in terms of both reach and quality of provision.

### **Ensuring opportunities to engage and progress are clearly visible, and that key decision makers understand the value of cultural participation**

We know that raising the profile of 'what's on' is a persistent challenge for the cultural sector. Every Local Cultural Education Partnership that we support has prioritised the need to make their local offer more visible, to extend reach and improve access.

We need to drive demand for arts and culture from parents, carers and young people – especially those not currently taking part. We believe that everyone should be as clear about the educational and wellbeing benefits of taking part in creative and cultural activities as they are about eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

We need to raise awareness amongst public sector commissioners about the contribution the cultural sector in delivering key priorities for children and young people across the North. We must continue to support and encourage local areas to prioritise children and young people in cultural strategies and embed culture in wider strategy for children's services.

### **Rethinking our definitions of culture, listening to and valuing the experiences and opinions of young people**

To increase engagement, we need to create an offer that is relevant and that meets the needs of children and young people. We need to reassess the type of culture that is being valued and stop seeing targeted work as a means to get young people into 'mainstream' activities. Our focus should be helping cultural organisations and practitioners to better understand the cultural preferences of young people, not the other way around.

This requires a shift in thinking – taking emphasis away from historical forms of culture in what we fund. We need to value the new and the vibrant through our school curriculum and through the organisations being offered public money. We need to work alongside young people to co-design programmes and engage them in decision making.

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If we are to develop a bold new vision for Northern culture, we need to agree a new, fit-for-now and fit-for-purpose definition of culture and cultural education – driven by the kinds of culture that children and young people are creating and participating in, letting our young people lead a cultural revolution across the North of England.

### **Engaging young people and their families in local decision making**

As support and investment for place-based working continues to grow, we need to break down the siloes between different areas of policy and practice. Young people can play a valuable role in shaping their communities and effecting change, and opportunities to do so help us to develop the community and cultural leaders and champions of the future.

### **Developing local skills, capacity and opportunities for place-based partnership working**

We must continue to prioritise areas with low levels of cultural engagement and limited infrastructure, tackling the challenges of historic underinvestment and disadvantage head on. Children and young people will engage if the offer is high quality, accessible and genuinely relevant. In our role as a Bridge organisation, we've seen the far-reaching impact of bringing people together, helping them to share practice and resources, and to coalesce around shared goals and commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people.

We need to support the sector to become 'investment ready' and develop its ability to respond to opportunities at a local, regional and national level across a variety of areas. We need to continue to invest in training and support, as well as providing capacity for traditionally under resourced areas such as communications and advocacy. We need to develop leadership across all levels, enabling emerging and senior leaders to develop the knowledge and connections to drive opportunity within their local areas.

## **Recommendations:**

### **To develop a wide-ranging programme of themed leadership support for the creative and cultural industries across the North, rooted in cross-sector working and inclusive practice.**

Exploring opportunities to extend the reach of existing programmes and identify gaps in provision, Curious Minds has developed a range of leadership programmes that could be scaled up for delivery across the North.

- Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education (SLICE®) supports middle and senior leaders within Teaching School Alliances and Multi-Academy Trusts to embed cultural education within their schools and networks. This well-established programme was cited in the 2016 Culture White Paper.
  - Our Culture and Arts Schools Experts (CASE) fellowship programme was developed to create a talent pool of credible schools specialists working in the North West's arts organisations, museums, heritage settings and libraries.
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- Young Associates works with the future leaders of cultural education to develop essential skills for entering the creative and cultural sector. This bespoke training programme has successfully engaged with over twenty-five early career professionals over the last five years, who have gone on into employment as freelancers, entrepreneurs, and work for organisations such as The British Council, Lancaster Arts and Storyhouse.

### **To champion the value of arts, culture and creativity for CYP through a North-wide communications and advocacy campaign**

Harnessing the power of existing networks such as Bridge organisations, Local Cultural Education Partnerships and Artsmark schools, and connecting with other key providers across the children and young people (CYP) landscape to show how arts, culture and creativity can improve outcomes for CYP. Together we can develop a strong and compelling case, and through our collective voice aim to reach and influence young people, parents, headteachers, cultural leaders and policy makers.

### **To invest in bespoke work and skills programmes that aim to diversify the creative and cultural workforce of the future**

We need a bold commitment to developing employability programmes that are specific to the needs of our sector, and the needs of young people that are currently underrepresented. Curious Minds has developed several programmes that aim to break down the barriers to access that we know young people experience across the North.

- Alternative Saturday Jobs provides young people in challenging circumstances with valuable part-time paid experience in a role in the creative and cultural industries. Previous models have focussed on supporting young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Creative Kickstart SEND is a new offer aiming to establish an ‘agents for change’ model where young people with disabilities advise cultural organisations across a local area how to improve their accessibility and inclusion (part of the national Kickstart programme).
- Generations for Change is a paid development and training opportunity for young people from BAME backgrounds who are aged between 18 – 30 years. Funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, in partnership with Curious Minds, six organisations across the Liverpool City Region will be hosting a total of six young people, for six months, within their organisation.

For more information, please see: [www.curiousminds.org.uk](http://www.curiousminds.org.uk)

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