

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

PARTICIPATORY ARTS EVIDENCE FOR ARTISTS

Tools to help tell your story, attract new partners for your work and access funding

Part One



Image: People Dancing Summer School. Photo: Rachel Cherry

WELCOME...

We're delighted to introduce you to this toolkit produced by People Dancing in conjunction with ArtWorks Alliance, the strategic network for participatory arts. Proof of the Pudding: **Part One** is a resource for artists to help them demonstrate the value and impact of participatory arts and develop partnerships for funding work.

Individual artists are often limited in the grant programmes to which they can apply. Working with partners, either through joint fundraising or as part of a commissioning relationship, can open up all sorts of new income generation opportunities. Partners may be arts partners or non-arts partners, for example in the community development, criminal justice, education, or health and care sectors. Whoever they are, they need to know – and you as an artist need to show – what difference participatory arts makes to people and how what you do can align with what they're trying to achieve.

This toolkit offers some existing evidence about the impact of participatory arts, with signposting to additional resources. There are also some guide ideas so you can start to build our own evidence bank.

Proof of the Pudding Part One has three sections:

- **Insight:**
locating your work in a wider context
- **Impacts:**
telling the difference through 'stats and stories'
- **Images:**
showing the difference through pictures

Proof of the Pudding: Part Two

A Marketing & Communications pack supporting you to get your message across.

Proof of the Pudding: Part Three

A set of Case Studies contributed by members of ArtWorks Alliance or members of the individual alliance organisations.

Section One: Insight

Locating your work in a wider context

The sector and you

The participatory arts sector in the UK is broad, comprising a range of practices in many different settings. Many terms are used, from community art to socially engaged art, and the titles of colleagues working in organisations include words such as learning, education and inclusion as well as community and participation.

Often funding bodies refer to the all-embracing 'arts engagement', so while of course there's a difference between people being participants actively making art and people being audiences for someone else's art, this does mean it's difficult to present a comprehensive account of the sector from a 'nature of the work' perspective. Likewise, in terms of the workforce, there is no definitive research about how many participatory artists there are.

However, the following headline statistics and statements may help you locate yourself and your practice within a wider context of significant credibility:

A report written to inform the **Paul Hamlyn Foundation Special Initiative ArtWorks**: developing practice in participatory settings found that 'between 200,000 and 250,000 might be a realistic estimate for the number of artists regularly engaging in work that requires them to facilitate the learning and creativity of others' (Burns, 2010)

A Survey of Artists (DHA, 2014) with 1,000 respondents found that 'about a third [were] focusing their work primarily on activity with communities/participants' with artists identifying 'working in community, participatory and socially-engaged settings' as one of the two 'most important activities to their artistic practice and to their income from artistic practice'

Many of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are either working totally within the participatory arts sector, or have significant education/engagement/participation departments

So however you describe your practice – and there's support and advice in Proof of the Pudding: Part Two about that – you're in good and numerous company.

The people you want to work with

Whether you want to work in what arts funding bodies call ‘areas of low cultural engagement’ or with specific geographic, shared interest or identity groups in the community, knowing where to go for demographic information is really useful in determining what sorts of opportunities there are for making a difference. Identifying and understanding need is key when approaching a partner and making a funding pitch.

Existing evidence: The main national sources of information for understanding levels of arts engagement and participation in the arts are the Taking Part Survey and the Active Lives Survey (England).

The Taking Part Survey has run since 2005 and is the key evidence source for DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport). It is a continuous face to face household survey of adults aged 16 and over in England and children aged five to 15 years old. It provides robust data for estimates of engagement with the arts as well as heritage, museums, libraries, digital and social networking on a regional as well as national level, so may be useful to you if you’re looking for some broad brush statistics.

For information on national surveys from other UK nations go to **Additional Resources on page 13.** 📍



Image: People Dancing International Event, Glasgow. Photo: Rachel Cherry

Respondents within National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) 1 to 4 were more likely to have engaged in arts and cultural activities than those within NS-SEC 5 to 8

34.7% of respondents had spent time doing a creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft and were most likely to demonstrate multiple instances of spending time doing a creative activity or craft

There were higher engagement levels among younger people e.g. those aged 16 to 24 were more likely to have spent time doing a creative activity or craft in the twelve months prior to interview, with 43.2% having done so

The Active Lives Survey explores participation in leisure and recreational activities, including sport, physical activity and culture. The survey is led by Sport England in partnership with Arts Council England, Public Health England and Department for Transport. In terms of the arts, it covers arts participation (doing creative, artistic, theatrical or music activity or a craft) as well as arts attendance (attending an event, performance or festival involving creative, artistic, dance, theatrical or music activity). It is robust at a local authority level of geography for each of the 326 local authority areas in England, as well as regions and nationally, so is very useful for making the case where participation can be increased. Data from the survey between November 2015–May 2017 was published in January 2018, including the following national findings in relation to arts participation. For information on national surveys from other UK nations go to **Additional Resources on page 13**. 

The local authority where you plan to work may have an arts or cultural strategy that includes useful demographic information. It's always good to show how your work can deliver on a strategy's aims and objectives and provides a convincing context when applying for funding. Local authorities will also have a wide range of 'facts and figures' on their website about the people living in their area, such as their social, education, employment and economic circumstances, as well as information on the wider environment.

Public Health England holds health-related profiles across a range of health and wellbeing themes on Fingertips. Although this website is primarily to support policy makers and commissioners in their work to meet the health and social care needs of their local communities and address health inequalities, it's an interesting accessible resource if you're working in that sector.

Public Health Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world. The Information Services Division (ISD) is a division of National Services Scotland, part of NHS Scotland. ISD provides health information, health intelligence, statistical services and advice that support the NHS in progressing quality improvement in health and care and facilitates robust planning and decision making.

Public Health Wales publishes data and evidence on a range of public health topics. The information on the website has been developed over time to make it as easy as possible for you to find the evidence you need.

Public Health Agency Northern Ireland: Making Life Better 2012–2023 is the ten-year public health strategic framework. The framework provides direction for policies and actions to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland.

Section two: Impacts

Telling the difference through 'stats and stories'

In this section we provide some key evidence for the impact of participatory arts in some specific sectors and the opportunities for focusing your work to make a difference. This is provided as headlines from a range of research and reports, as well as quotations from case studies – courtesy of ArtWorks Alliance partners and associates – which are presented in full in the Appendix at the end of the toolkit.

Case studies are one way of telling a project story. These particular case studies have been chosen to represent a range of art forms, participants and settings. Although they use a similar format, they highlight different aspects of project storytelling and between them, also help demonstrate the range of partners that can be involved in a participatory arts project; the variety of funders; the different evaluation methods that can be used; and the wider research and evidence context in which work takes place.

You'll also find signposting to additional resources you can consult and guide ideas for building your own bank of evidence covering quantitative and qualitative data that gives you the powerful mix of 'stats and stories'.

Where you see this symbol



Check out the Case Studies at the end of this toolkit for some stories that complement the statistics and evidence statements below.

Existing evidence: Community Development

Arts Council England (2014) The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society

- Engagement and participation can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and make communities feel safer and stronger
- Those who are most actively involved with the arts and culture that Arts Council England invests in tend to be from the most privileged parts of society; engagement is heavily influenced by levels of education, by socio-economic background and by where people live.

Department for Culture, Media & Sport Culture (2014) Quantifying the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport

- Engagement and participation in arts increases the likelihood of volunteering frequently, contributing to civic society.

Taylor, P., Davies, L., Wells, P., Gilbertson, J. and Tayleur, W. (2015) A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport

- A majority of studies suggest cultural participation results in an improved capacity for cultural citizenship, boosting confidence and developing social skills which lead to more effective engagement with the community at large.



‘They showed patience and respect for one another’s ideas. Because they were working together on one end piece, there was an authentic need for communication and collaboration which they seemed to enjoy.’

Practitioner, Caban Sgriblio project



Image: People Dancing Photo: Rachel Cherry

Existing evidence: Criminal Justice

Laura Caulfield, David Wilson and Dean Wilkinson (2011) Continuing Positive Change in Prison and the Community Centre for Applied Criminology, Birmingham City University.

- Participating in Good Vibrations [a music project] can provide the starting-block for positive change in offenders. Many project participants are able to leverage the impetus from the project and use this to go on to achieve, both personally and practically. Participants experience sustained positive, emotional, psychological, and behavioural improvements
- [Participating in music making] acts as a catalyst for change in the lives of offenders, and that this positive change is sustained as offenders move through the prison system and out into the community.

Dr Rachel Massie, Andrew Jolly and Professor Laura Caulfield (2019) An evaluation of the Irene Taylor Trust's Sounding Out Programme 2016-2018 Institute for Community Research and Development, University of Wolverhampton

The Irene Taylor Trust music traineeship Sounding Out provided ex-prisoners with longer term rehabilitative opportunities upon their release to bridge the gap between life inside and outside, with the following benefits:

- The development of personal and social skills associated with desistance from crime
- Identifying focus and direction towards employment and away from reoffending
- Building practical skills, improved musical ability, patience to work with others, and empathy through team working.

'Well look I've been out of jail for two years. That's a record in itself, usually I'm not even out for six months, and that's over twenty years, that's a long time.'

Peter, Cohort 2 Participant



Existing evidence: Education

Cultural Learning Alliance (2017) Imagine Nation The Case for Cultural Learning

Creative and cultural learning benefits young people, not just in terms of them gaining skills to become creative and cultural professionals, but also in relation to the positive impact of being better equipped to achieve across the curriculum and to take responsibility for their own learning. Attendance, attitude and wellbeing are all improved by engagement with culture, as is employability. In particular:

- Participation in structured arts activities can increase cognitive abilities by 17%
- Learning through arts and culture can improve attainment in Maths and English
- Children who take part in arts activities in the home during their early years are ahead in reading and Maths at age 9
- The employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment
- Students from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree, twice as likely to volunteer, 20% more likely to vote as young adults
- Young offenders who take part in arts activities are 18% less likely to re-offend.

Arts Council England (2014) The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society

- Taking part in drama and library activities improves attainment in literacy
- Participating in structured music activities improves attainment in maths, early language acquisition and early literacy.

Crossick, G. and Kaszynska, P. (2016) Understanding the Value of arts and culture AHRC

- Arts in education contributes in important ways to the factors that underpin learning, such as cognitive abilities, confidence, motivation, problem solving and communication skills.



'In Blaenau Gwent, one participant sat in silence outside the door during the first week. The second week he brought his acoustic guitar and sat at the back of the group, still in silence. The third week he quietly played along at the back. By the eighth week, he was performing with the rest of the group and eventually performed his own written song on the stage in front of approximately 70 people. He would now like to continue being part of an active creative group in Ebbw Vale.' Community Music Wales, Sound Works project

Existing evidence: Health & Care

There is a wealth of research about the positive impact of arts participation on people's health and wellbeing.

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (2017) presents the findings from two years of research, evidence-gathering and discussions with patients, health and social care professionals, artists and arts administrators, academics and people in local and national government. It describes how:

'the arts can help to address many of the challenges the health and social care system is facing and improve the humanity, value for money and overall effectiveness of this complex system'

With arts participation bringing specific benefits over people's life course, mitigating the effects of an adverse environment by:

- Influencing maternal nutrition, perinatal mental health and childhood development
- Shaping educational and employment opportunities and tackling chronic distress
- Enabling self-expression and empowerment and overcoming social isolation
- Helping environmental quality, sense of place and community which are also crucial to our health and wellbeing.

In the public health arena, the arts have a significant role in preventing illness and infirmity from developing in the first place and worsening in the longer term, alongside enhancing wellbeing and quality of life. Here are just a few of the key findings from the report in relation specifically to participatory arts, which has been found to:

- Support co-production – equal involvement by people using services and people responsible for them, not only in design and delivery but also in evaluation and refinement
- Provide social participation which can have a protective effect on health comparable to giving up smoking
- Reduce anxiety, depression and stress
- Increase self-esteem, confidence and purpose
- Contribute to the management of long-term conditions (e.g. dancing and group singing enhances cognition, communication and physical functioning in people with Parkinson's while enhancing wellbeing; singing alleviates chronic respiratory conditions and cystic fibrosis)
- Offer specific benefits (e.g. dance is particularly effective in the prevention of falls in older people, with dance programmes having better retention rates than alternative NHS initiatives).

A World Health Organization (WHO) report synthesises the global evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing, with a specific focus on the WHO European Region, showing:

Within prevention and promotion, the arts can:

- Affect the social determinants of health (the conditions in which you live and systems affecting them)
- Support child development
- Encourage health-promoting behaviour
- Help to prevent ill health
- Support caregiving

Within management and treatment, the arts can:

- Help people experiencing mental illness
- Support care for people with acute conditions
- Help to support people with neurodevelopmental and neurological disorders
- Assist with the management of non-communicable diseases, and
- Support end-of-life care.

Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn Health Evidence Network synthesis report 67 What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review (2019) World Health Organization



Image: Canva stock

Existing evidence: Health & Care (Older People)

You can find research about the difference arts participation makes in relation to people of different ages and with different health conditions. As an example, here are some key points about the impact of participatory arts on older people, where there is evidence of it:

- Increasing confidence and self-esteem
- Embracing new and positive aspects to identity and life role
- Counterbalancing the mental wellbeing difficulties associated with periods of loss which can increase the risk of low mood, anxiety and social isolation
- Helping improve cognitive functioning, communication, self-esteem, musical skills, pleasure, enjoyment of life, memory and creative thinking
- Exceeding personal expectations about what they could achieve, enhancing their mental wellbeing
- Making significant physical health improvements (such as cardiovascular, joint mobility and breathing control)
- Increasing the levels of general daily activity
- Providing meaningful social contact, friendship and support
- Improving relationships between those living in care homes and prisons
- Creating a better sense of social cohesion and community
- Contributing towards challenging and breaking down both the self and external stigmas of being older that pervade popular societal culture
- Bringing people together in a way that helps individuals in marginalised groups mitigate the negative effects of stigma and self-doubt on their wellbeing.

Mental Health Foundation (2011) An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People

Age UK (2018) Creative and cultural activities and wellbeing in later life found that:

- Creative and cultural participation was the single factor that contributed the most to the wellbeing of older people out of all 40 factors on their Index of Wellbeing in Later Life
- Even for people with very low wellbeing overall, having something creative to do really helps.



'What Sara manages to achieve in the workshops is amazing. DV doesn't really like to stand, but when Sara comes in he's up on his feet straight away. And D, well, she's more vocal, clearly shows excitement – shows her feelings, which we don't usually see. She wants to join in all the time and M has really come out of his shell.' Anon

The Age UK report has a very useful section Tips for Practitioners arising from the research evidence. Three key points from this are summarised and re-focused from being addressed to arts organisations and the cultural sector more generally, as they are very relevant to artists with a participatory practice:

- Artists need to shape and communicate their offer more successfully by using the networks that exist to reach those older people who are not already taking part
- The best way to support older people to experience high quality creative and cultural activities is for artists to work in partnership and share expertise across sectors
- There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Most partnerships start off small and build, beginning with taster sessions and developing in response to demand. The best models engage older people in the decision making at all levels, as co-producers and artists, as well as audiences, participants and volunteers. The key to long term delivery, as opposed to one off projects, is to build on existing resources and expertise and seek additional funding as required.



Image: Canva stock

Additional resources

- **AMAculturehive**: A free online resource library for culture professionals that brings the collective intelligence of the sector together in one place and includes a range of participatory arts case studies
- **Arts Council England**: Highlights from Arts Council England (2014) **The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society** are presented in the form of an infographic and you can access many evidence reports such as **Arts and culture in health and wellbeing and in the criminal justice system: Scoping the evidence base (2018)**
- **Arts Council of Northern Ireland: Annual Funding Survey Results**. This report contains a statistical analysis on the financial, operational and artistic activities of arts organisations in receipt of regular funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- **Arts Council Wales: Arts Portfolio Wales Survey**. Every six months, Arts Council Wales survey all members of the Arts Portfolio Wales. The survey gathers information on the number of arts events run every year and how many people have attended or taken part in the activities
- **Arts Professional** carries relevant articles including **Are you sitting too comfortably?** in which Michelle Wright explains how great storytelling is about connecting emotionally with audiences and donors in a clear and succinct way
- **ArtWorks Alliance**: As the strategic network for participatory arts, AWA offers an online **Knowledge Bank** with over 150 searchable resources (reports, evaluations, case studies and toolkits) about participatory arts. It includes links to two key books **Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement** edited by Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty (2018) and **A Restless Art by François Matarasso (2019)** which cover history, context and impact
- **Creative Scotland: The Social Impacts of Engagement with Culture and Sport****Published: 18 May 2015 From CASE**: The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme, this reviews the current evidence base for the social impacts of engaging with culture and sport. It focusses on the four main areas of social impact: improved health; reduced crime; increased social capital and improved education outcomes

Additional resources

- **Cultural Learning Alliance**: Champions a right to art and culture for every child. Their Evidence page makes the case for cultural learning, with a variety of reports on impact
- **Cultural Commissioning Programme**: Plenty of information if you're wanting to engage in public service commissioning. Includes reports and resources to refer to in order to build your own evidence base
- **Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance**: A national organisation representing everyone who believes that cultural engagement can transform health and wellbeing. Their Research and Evaluation page helps you find out about the ever-growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of creativity and culture on communities and individuals' health and wellbeing
- **Youth Arts Transforms Lives – FACT!** provides evidence to demonstrate how youth arts can transform young people's lives and enable new generations to progress positively as young citizens influencing the society we live in
- **Local Government Association (England)**: is the national membership body for local authorities and material on their website gives you a good insight into their work and priorities. Their **Culture, tourism, leisure and sport pages** include a wide range of case studies highlighting the benefits that culture can bring to people and places
- **National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA)**: The 'go to' place about arts and criminal justice work with dedicated **Demonstrating Your Impact** resources. Their **Evidence Library** is an online library housing the key research and evaluation documents on the impact of arts-based projects
- **Scottish Government: A More Active Scotland**: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan. Sets out the Scottish Governments actions that they and partners are undertaking to encourage and support people to be more active
- **Sport Wales: Sport and Active Lifestyles Survey**: forms part of the National Survey for Wales. This is a household survey involving face-to-face interviews with around 12,000 randomly-selected adults aged 16 and over. It covers a wide range of issues affecting people and their local area. The latest results were gathered in 2018-19.

Guide ideas:

To be able to evidence the impact of your own work, you need a planned approach to evaluation. Partners, funders and commissioners will all want to see you're committed to finding out about the difference a project makes, as well as learning from what works well and not so well so you can 'improve and innovate' in the future.

Whether you need to adopt or adapt the evaluation measures and tools partners already use or work together to create a new approach, early conversations are really important.

Evaluation that is embedded in a project as soon as you start planning it and that embodies a participatory approach produces the most robust and useful evidence. Deciding together 'what counts' for everyone beyond the number of people and sessions, is all important.

Remember just like the evidence provided here in this toolkit, evaluation is a mix of 'stats and stories' – quantitative and qualitative data and analysis – and needs to include everyone's perspectives from across a project, particularly participants. Of course, it's really important to make sure everyone is happy about taking part in evaluation: that they've given their 'informed consent'. So have a clear, ethical approach: explain why you're evaluating a project and how you'll be using evaluation material, where and in what format. Think carefully about confidentiality and attribution in relation to people's views, stories and images. This is always important and especially so on social media, where best practice safeguarding is key.



Image: Canva stock

Some 'wise words' from ArtWorks Alliance partners

'When you're running projects, save quotes etc. somewhere handy so you can access them easily. I find the best quotes are sometimes the ones that people say 'in the moment', so write them down and ask for permission to use them.'

'Story first, figures as back up. Then show some commissioned research.'

'Use quotes, photos, videos, links to your work – this will bring it to life and make partners and funders feel something.'

Evaluation:

Evaluation is a topic in itself. Below is just a small selection of evaluation guides that can help you focus on what you want to achieve through evaluation and how you're going to go about collecting and analysing data to provide evidence of impact, as an integral part of your reflective creative practice.

- [Arts Council England Self-Evaluation Toolkit](#)
- [Creative People and Places \(2019\) Evaluation in participatory arts programmes](#)
- [Annabel Jackson \(2004\) Evaluation Toolkit for the Voluntary and Community Arts in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Annabel Jackson \(2009\) Social Impact of the Arts Evaluation Toolkit for Somerset](#)
- [Jane Thompson \(2007\) Paul Hamlyn Foundation Evaluation Resource Pack](#)
- [National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance \(2011\) Demonstrating the value of arts in Criminal Justice](#)
- [Willis Newson and the University of the West of England \(2015\) Creative & Credible: How to evaluate arts and health project](#)
- [Felicity Woolf \(2013\) Partnerships for Learning: a guide to evaluating arts education projects.](#)



Image: Canva stock

Showing the difference through pictures:

Throughout this document and within the case studies, you'll find photographs which show what an impact an image can have. Singly, each photograph tells a specific personal or community story; together, they represent the diversity and collective power of participatory arts.

Guide ideas

In Proof of the Pudding: Part Two, you'll find some detailed advice about using images as evidence of impact and also as one of the tools for communicating – to a variety of audiences – the difference you make as a participatory artist.

Some key points to consider are:

- Being clear about the purpose of taking and using images (photographs and video): thinking about what you want to capture, the message you want to get across, to which target audience(s), on what channels
- Getting an image with impact: paying attention to content and composition
- The importance of permissions and credits
- Keeping up to date with the technical specifications for different platforms.



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