

**Curious
Minds**

can[®]
community arts north west



PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Pilot Programme Evaluation



A Cultural Education learning and development
programme for international artists with experience
of forced migration

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PART ONE

What we did

PUSHING BOUNDARIES PROGRAMME SUMMARY

From September 2022, Curious Minds in partnership with Community Arts North West (CAN) launched a pilot learning and development programme called Pushing Boundaries.

The project formed part of our work to improve the diversity of the cultural education workforce, and was designed to remove barriers to learning for a group of international artists, most of whom have experienced forced migration, enabling them to learn skills and develop networks that will support them to work in schools in England.

The Pushing Boundaries project was created as a response to the lack of opportunities available in schools and education for recently settled artists from countries that have experienced conflict.

The value of having diverse cultural voices and experiences visible within our schools cannot be understated as a vehicle for inspiring young people, fostering a sense of belonging and supporting learning.

Supported by Curious Minds partnership investment funding, 7 international artists were recruited from Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, Palestine and Ukraine, to work alongside 4 specialist mentors from the North West who already deliver schools-based arts projects. The artists were each matched to a mentor and offered training before gaining practical experience by delivering creative sessions in schools across Greater Manchester. Each artist received a bursary which covered their time spent on the training course and in schools.

The artists gained work experience in 6 Greater Manchester schools:

- Falinge Park High School
- Stockport Grammar Primary and Secondary School
- Highfield Primary School
- Adswood Primary School
- St Thomas' C of E Primary School.

The programme concluded with a networking and artistic sharing event at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester.

“The value of having diverse cultural voices and experiences visible within our schools cannot be understated...”

PROGRAMME AIMS

1. Provide artists with lived experience of forced migration, with a safe and supportive environment in which to gain the skills, confidence and resources they need to develop and increase their work in Greater Manchester schools.
2. Harness the skills and expertise of lead partners, Curious Minds and Community Arts North West, and other Cultural Education experts to design and deliver a unique professional development pathway into working in English schools for new migrant artists.
3. Support Greater Manchester schools to develop and establish direct relationships with a more diverse pool of skilled Cultural Education practitioners.
4. Provide more young people with the experience of working with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiencing different approaches to creativity than is usually available to them.
5. Longer-term to establish and sustain partnerships and mechanisms that achieve a more diverse Cultural Education workforce that is more skilled at diverse practice.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

For Artists

- Explore how their creative practice can benefit children, teachers and schools.
- Discover more about arts education in Greater Manchester, and nationally.
- Learn about the curriculum and how schools work.
- Develop classroom facilitation skills in their creative artform.
- Gain hands-on experience in a school setting.
- Prepare for professional practice.
- Learn from two leading arts organisations with expertise in creative delivery in schools.
- Meet a range of Greater Manchester schools and cultural organisations.
- Put their skills into practice through a 5-day placement in a local school.
- Benefit from one-to-one support from an artist mentor who already delivers school-based arts projects.

For Schools

- Understand the benefits of working with culturally diverse artists who have experienced forced migration.
- Increase their confidence to work with culturally diverse artists who have experienced forced migration.
- Increase their access to a larger pool of culturally diverse artists with the skills and confidence to work in English schools.
- Shift attitudes towards working with artists who have experienced forced migration, so that similar work is more likely in future.



PUSHING BOUNDARIES PARTNERS

Pushing Boundaries was co-created by **Curious Minds**, who are leaders in cultural education and **CAN (Community Arts North West)** who work with culturally diverse artists, many of whom are from refugee backgrounds.

It was loosely based on the Curious Minds CASE Fellowship Programme (Culture and Arts Schools Expert), SLiCE programme (Senior Leaders in Education) and other Curious Minds employability work. It was also inspired by Flight Paths, a programme developed by Stella Barnes which supported refugee artists to work in London schools. **Music Action International** played a key role in supporting the programme through one of their mentors. **TiPP** delivered safeguarding training to the artists, **Z-Arts** hosted a practice session and supported the artist's development and the **Whitworth** hosted the networking event.

Curious Minds aim to improve the lives of children and young people by increasing opportunities for their active participation in arts and culture and enabling creative collaboration between the cultural and education sectors.

curiousminds.org.uk

CAN work with urban communities in Greater Manchester to create access to cultural opportunities where people can stand up, speak out, challenge social justice issues and inspire change

can.uk.com

Music Action International transforms lives destroyed by war, torture & persecution. They create innovative psychosocial music and skill-sharing programmes with refugees, asylum seekers & Roma people, to overcome the effects of trauma & isolation through creative expression in emotionally safe environments.

musicaction.org

It is rare to have a training programme which is as bespoke as Pushing Boundaries. I think the programme's value has been in its' targeted nature which has responded to the very specific challenges that artists who have experienced forced migration face by directly addressing barriers and knowledge gaps, as well as providing mentoring and practical opportunities to learn.

Many artists that CAN work with have a huge amount of experience, wisdom and creativity to offer the sector, but this potential is often lost due to artists not having quite the right knowledge and experience to access opportunities. Pushing Boundaries has opened lots of doors enabling artists involved to access new work and opportunities. I am genuinely excited to see what they all achieve in the coming months and years.

Katherine Rogers, Senior Producer, CAN

PUSHING BOUNDARIES PROGRAMME MAP

PROJECT TEAM	ARTISTS	TRAINING & MENTORING	PARTNERS	SCHOOL PLACEMENTS
Programme Leads: Sara Domville (Curious Minds), Katherine Rogers (CAN) Programme design and facilitation: Stella Barnes (CAN), Saphena Aziz, Emma Bush and Holly Ball (Curious Minds) Additional Trainers: Magdalen Bartlett (Freelance), Simon Ruding (TiPP) Outreach Support: Mahboobeh Rajabi (CAN) Volunteers: Tree Saeed, Emmanuel Bajiji	8 international artists recruited from 16 applicants: Abas El Janabi (Iraq, theatre maker) Amang Mardokhy (Iraq, visual artist) Fares Farraj (Palestine, dancer) Fariba Taghy poor (Iran, musician) Masresha Wondmu (Ethiopia, dancer) Parisa Pirzadeh (Iran, musician) Valeriia Lukianets (Ukraine, drama) Arian Sadr (Iran, musician) Each artist was awarded a £1,000 bursary to cover the costs of taking part and allocated a travel and materials budget <small>*recruited but left programme</small>	Zoom Q & A delivered to artists interested in applying in June 2022 Induction Day for mentors and artists took place in September 2022 Training Programme for artists took place during September and October 2022 at Green Fish Resource Centre, Bridge 5 Mill and Z Arts One to one and small group mentoring sessions delivered between September 2022 and March 2023 by Claire Weetman, Magdalen Bartlett, Sanja Govorčin & Ben Mellor Networking Event took place at the Whitworth in March 2023	Lead Partners: Curious Minds Community Arts NW (CAN) Supporting Partners: Music Action International (MAI) TiPP Z-Arts The Whitworth Lead Schools: Falinge Park, Highfield Primary, Stockport Grammar (primary and secondary) Supporting Schools: Adswood Primary school St Thomas' C of E Primary School	Each artist undertook a 5-day placement in a school between November 2022 and February 2023 Artists were paired with a mentor and supported to deliver creative sessions within primary and secondary schools in 3 Greater Manchester boroughs. School Placement leads: Anna Woodhead (Head of English as an additional Language at Falinge Park High School, Rochdale) Caitlin Plant (Art Lead and Artsmark Lead at Highfield Primary, Trafford) Matt King-Sayce (Director of Drama at Stockport Grammar School)

THE LEARNING JOURNEY



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS, MENTORS AND SCHOOLS

Abas did his placement at Falinge Park High School in Rochdale, supported by his mentor Ben Mellor. He worked with the EAL team (English as an additional language) delivering drama and storytelling workshops with a group of young men aged 15 and 16, who were unaccompanied asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Albania.

"I learnt to trust myself."

(Abas)

ABAS ELJANABI

Abas ElJanabi is a theatre maker and director originally from Iraq. Abas has a BA in Acting from the University of Baghdad, and a BA and MA in Theatre from the University of Manchester. He speaks Arabic and English. Abas leads workshops as a storyteller to teach and tackle issues and problems including mental health issues, wellbeing, hate crimes and racism. Abas can tailor his workshops within schools to connect with books, stories, plays and set texts.

"I was teaching drama to a group of young men newly arrived in the UK. Having my own lived experience of forced migration helped me respond to their learning needs and gain their trust" (Abas)

BEN MELLOR

Ben Mellor was the Youth Theatre Director at Collective Encounters. There he developed the project Where You're At for young people from migrant backgrounds, many of whom were unaccompanied refugees/asylum seekers. He was a Curious Minds CASE (Culture & Arts Specialists in Education) Fellow between 2019 – 2021. Ben is currently Writer in Residence at Beckfoot Oakbank School in Keighley with First Story since 2019.

Fares and Masresha did their placement at Falinge Park High School in Rochdale, supported by their mentor Magdalen Bartlett. They worked with the EAL team (English as an additional language) delivering dance workshops with a group of children aged 11 – 14 from Kuwait, Eritrea and Pakistan.

"My mentor was amazing"

(Fares)

FARES FARRAJ

Fares Farraj delivers Dabke dance workshops, traditional folk Middle-Eastern dance, to all age groups. The workshops involve dance choreography and activities that enhance creativity and mind-body coordination. As a Palestinian born in Jerusalem, Fares provides a unique and personal perspective on resilience and the importance of creativity in developing yourself and your story. Children who have participated in Fares' workshops highlighted the beauty of dancing to traditional Arab music, the surprise of being able to perform an international dance form, and the joy of experiencing a new culture with their peers.

MASRESHA WONDMU

Masresha Wondmu is a performer, instructor and facilitator in dance, circus and gymnastics from Ethiopia. He has worked in combined art forms building on his cultural background with many layers of experience for 18 years. He facilitates and delivers creative workshops and creative dance sessions including African dance, experimental dance and acro-dance as well as interactive circus skills such as object manipulation and movement games. His workshops for young people, children, teachers and schools build confidence and concentration, and encourage resilience, tenacity and wellbeing.

"The school placement felt like a real achievement. Having some support from my mentor to plan lessons was useful and I think my dance classes sparked inspiration for the young people" (Masresha)

MAGDALEN BARTLETT

Magdalen Bartlett is the founder and CEO of the Manchester-based charity Afrocats which works with refugees and asylum seekers who face discrimination and experience trauma. She has had a long association with CAN both as an artist and team member. Magdalen also works with Curious Minds, Manchester International Festival, The Whitworth, and schools across Greater Manchester. Her work includes the delivery of the primary schools' programme for Little Amal – The Walk.

Parisa and Valeriia did their placement at Highfield Primary School in Trafford, supported by their mentor Sanja Govorčin. They delivered music and drama workshops to children across the school from ages 5 to 11.

VALERIIA LUKIANETS



Valeriia Lukianets is an actress, dancer, acting and stage movement teacher from Ukraine. She has a BA in Acting for Theatre and Cinema from Kyiv National University. Valeriia's workshops involve physical movement and spoken games and give children the confidence to try new things, build their understanding of how drama and stories are structured to include a beginning, middle and end and how conflict and its resolution are a key part of drama.

"My mentor was very helpful, we had a good journey together and I enjoyed collaborating with her, there was a good flow between us, and we could read each other's eye contact." (Val)

PARISA PIRZADEH



Parisa Pirzadeh is a musician originally from Iran. She has an MA in Music Performance from Tehran Art University. She is classically trained, but also plays ghaychak (a Persian string instrument) and brings this aspect of Eastern musical instruments to her work within schools. She uses storytelling, songs and rhythm with younger children aged 5 to 10 and composition and music writing with children aged 11 to 15. She has also composed and released pop-instrumental music for children.

"The placement has been a great experience for me. I usually teach music one to one and this is the first time I have worked with a group of children. I have learnt to be louder and have gained more confidence in use of the English language to give instruction to the children" (Parisa)

SANJA GOVORČIN

Sanja Govorčin is originally from Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanja has worked in music education and participation in the UK for CAN, MIF, MIRO Community Projects, 6Million+). Sanja has worked in high schools and colleges in Austria and the UK. Between 2018 – 2022, Sanja was the Programme Coordinator for Music Action International's Harmonise NW. Sanja's mentorship role is delivered in partnership with Music Action International.



Fariba and Amang did their placement at Stockport Grammar, Adswold Primary School and St Thomas' C of E Primary School, supported by their mentor Claire Weetman. They delivered music and visual arts workshops to primary and secondary school children from ages 5 to 15.

FARIBA TAGHYPOOR



Fariba Taghypoor is a professional music education consultant, with over 25 years' experience teaching piano, violin, Tar (Iranian string instrument) and creative approaches to sight singing, operatic singing and choir at schools, institutes and universities. 'An invitation to listen' is the title of workshops she delivers to schools that encourage children to pay attention to what they hear rather than what they see. Listening to sounds develops curiosity and can help children to learn how to stay calm by listening to noise creatively. Her sessions can also connect across the curriculum to astronomy, geography, history, biology and physics.

"I used to be a music teacher in Iran. It was useful to learn about the differences between schools here and those in my home country" (Fariba)

AMANG MARDOKHY



Amang Mardokhy born in Kurdistan, has a large body of work exploring the war from which he escaped. He works responsively and instinctively, encouraging students to work with mark making, colour and paint in a childlike space of creation, of trust, exchange and play without judgement. This combination of art and music can provide a new experience for teachers in school, connecting rhythms in drawing, painting and sound. The workshops provide the opportunity for teachers to continue to create work with their students following their time with Amang, forming part of students' ongoing learning about how to express themselves through art.

"I developed the skills to bring children alive" (Amang)

CLAIRE WEETMAN

Claire Weetman has worked extensively with Manchester City Art Gallery, Castlefield Gallery, and the University of Salford. She has delivered education programmes for Early Years at Halton Borough Council, in Secondary schools for the Inspired Responses programme at The Brindley, and in Primary schools for St Helens LCEP. Claire was commissioned by Cultural Hubs St Helens Arts In libraries to create What are you waiting for? and by Heart of Glass for Walking Together/ Walking Apart with Refugee Women Connect.



PUSHING BOUNDARIES IN NUMBERS

28

Creative workshops delivered in schools by international artists



42

Mentoring sessions took place



7

International Artists gained the skills to deliver creative sessions in English schools



4

Specialist mentors employed



443

Young People took part in artist's workshops



6

Greater Manchester schools in Stockport, Trafford and Rochdale took part



6

Bespoke learning days designed and delivered by partners



Evaluation

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflective practice was central to the programme and embedded at all stages of the learning process by the artists, mentors and partner organisations.

Each artist was paired with a specialist mentor, who supported the development of their practice, both through the 6-day learning programme and 5-day school placement.

The mentors took part in an induction morning which covered the role of the mentor and included lots of tools, tips and reflective feedback techniques for working with the artists.

Throughout the programme, each artist received one to one mentoring sessions with their mentor, who also accompanied them into school and helped them reflect on how their sessions had gone each day. Where more than one artist was delivering a session the reflection took place between both artists and the mentor. The artists received a School Session Planning Template to help them plan their creative activities and a School Session Evaluation Template to help them reflect on and record their learning.

“Creating space for ongoing reflection and evaluation was a really important part of the Pushing Boundaries process”

(mentor)

After each session the artists reflected on:

- Preparation
- Group dynamic and participation
- Children’s enjoyment
- Children’s ownership
- Children’s confidence and growth
- Children’s inclusion
- Clarity of instructions
- Overall suitability of plan for the group
- Artistic outcome (if relevant)



“Evaluating with my mentor after each school session helped me see further”
(artist)

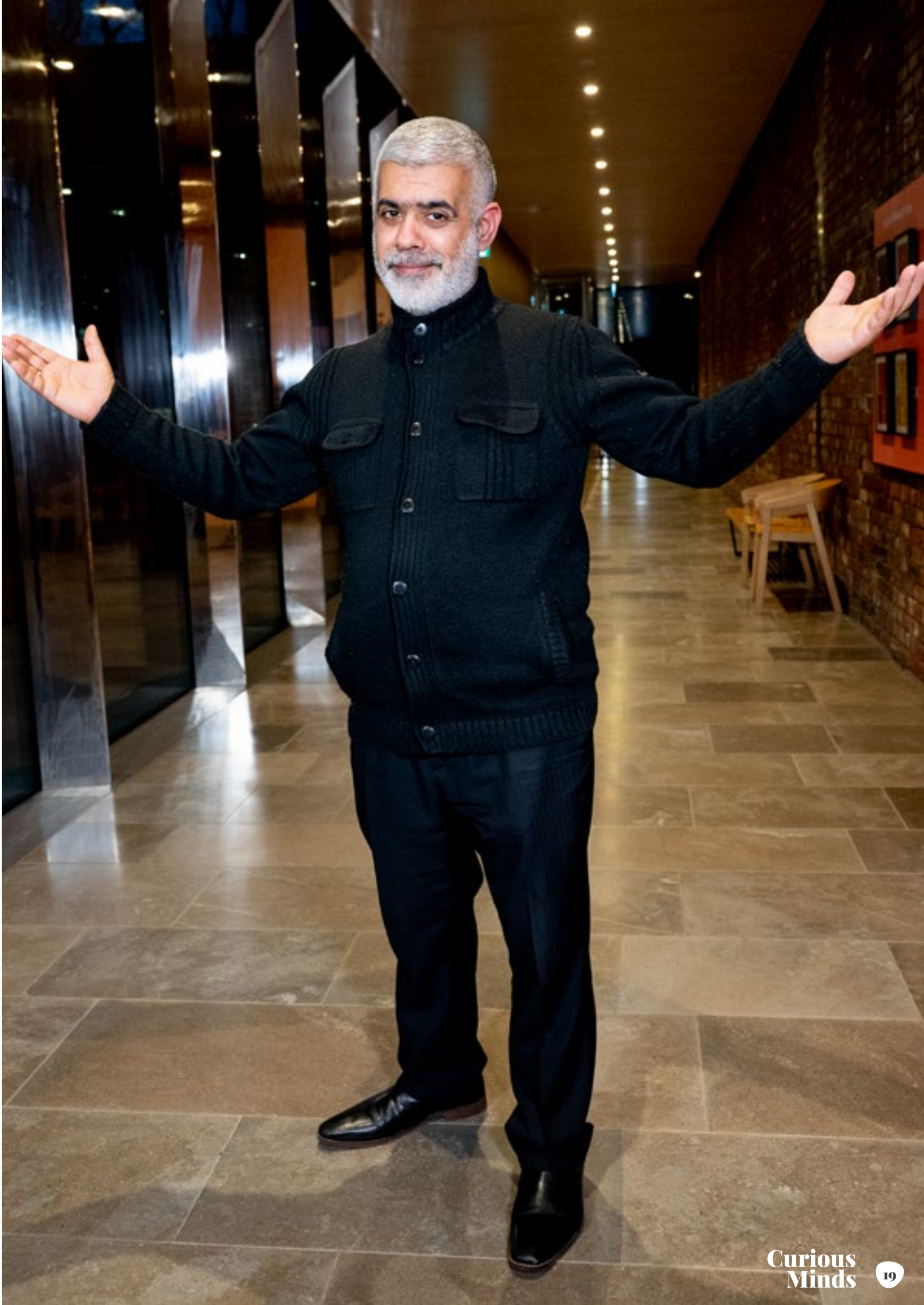
HOW WE EVALUATED THE PROGRAMME

Evaluation activities took place at the following stages of the programme	
Beginning, middle and end of programme	• Artists Learning Outcome Stars
After the training programme	• Evaluation day for artists which comprised group activities and a one-to-one interview • Post training programme partner evaluation
After the school placements	• One to one artist exit interviews and coaching sessions with Curious Minds Head of Employabilit
At the end of the programme	• Mentors Focus Group • Teachers Focus Group • Sector feedback gathered through round table discussions at networking event



Training Programme

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
A rich and varied training programme: The artists appreciated the breadth and depth of the training programme curriculum and felt most subjects they needed to know about before going into schools were well covered.	Too much material: Some of the artists felt the amount of learning material and resources shared was overwhelming for the amount of time we had.	A more spacious learning programme: Less information over a longer period that would enable the artists to integrate the learning more easily and create 'more time to breath' as one artist put it.
Learning about how English schools work: None of the artists had attended an English school as a child and therefore found exploring the similarities and differences of the education system in the UK versus their country of origin particularly helpful.	Not enough links to the school curriculum: Some of the artists would have like to have learnt more about the English school curriculum. They felt this would have helped them to approach schools with more clarity about what they could offer as artists.	Better connection to the school curriculum: Creating better links between the artist's practice and the school curriculum, so that the artists have a stronger sense of the value of what they can offer and specifically where and how it can enhance the English school curriculum.
Varied delivery style: The artists and mentors enjoyed the combination of learning styles, which included games, interactive exercises, small group work, reflection time, mindfulness exercises, presentations, and practical exercises.	Too much theory: Some of the artists felt there was too much theory at times and that this didn't always match up to their experience in schools. An example of this was around school policies.	Better connection between the theory and practice: A more integrated programme in which the artists had the opportunity to apply the theory to practice and then bring back their experience of working in the schools and interrogate this together.
Opportunities to practice: Part of the learning programme involved the opportunity for the artists to practice teaching each other and to get feedback. They found this particularly helpful in terms of skills development and confidence building.	Not enough opportunity for peer learning: The artists would have liked more opportunities to learn from each other and more opportunities to collaborate outside of their school pairings.	Build a stronger community of practice: More opportunities for the artists to practice together and try out ideas and activities with each other in a 'safe space' would enhance the programme and create more opportunities for collaboration.
Sessions delivered by the mentors: The artists found the sessions delivered by the mentors as part of the learning programme particularly useful. In these sessions the mentors shared an element of their practice through delivering a creative session, followed by an opportunity for the artists to reflect and ask questions.		More opportunities for the mentors to share their practice: This could happen as part of the learning programme or in the schools, through opportunities to shadow and work alongside mentors.



Mentoring

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
Opportunity to work alongside mentors in schools: Some of the artists delivered activities alongside the mentors in schools. The artists found this particularly useful as a way of building up their confidence and learning from watching their mentors in action.		More opportunities for mentees to observe and/or work alongside artists leading sessions in schools.
Reflective Approach: The artists benefitted from ongoing reflection about their learning with their mentors. They found it particularly helpful when mentors gave feedback on their school session plans and delivery of sessions.	Not enough input from schools: The artists would have liked more feedback from teachers on their delivery of sessions in schools. However, this wasn't always possible due to the time constraints of the school timetable.	More opportunities to involve teachers in the reflective process: Building into the schedule opportunities for the artists, mentors and teachers to reflect together on the delivery of sessions would benefit the both the artists and teachers.
Mutual Learning: The mentors felt they learnt a lot from the mentees, particularly enjoying the opportunity to learn more about their mentees' culture and approach to their artform.		Build in more opportunities for mutual learning.
Pairing of the artists and mentors was positive: Some of the artists were involved in the selection of the mentors, and overall, the artists were happy with their pairing and felt they grew exponentially from their mentors' support.	There was little collaboration between the artists: Most artists were paired together in schools, to create the opportunity for collaboration. However, most of the artists chose to facilitate their classes on their own, or with support from their mentor, as they wanted the opportunity to explore their own practice in the classroom before considering working with another artist.	Recognise the time needed for artists to establish their own practice in the classroom before collaborating with others.
Working in small teams: the artists and mentors generally felt it was useful to be part of a small team, particularly when visiting the school for the first time.	Some of the artists would have appreciated more input from a mentor with the same artform as them: Due to geography and the way the placements were organised it wasn't always possible for the artists to have a same artform mentor.	Recognise the importance of input from a mentor with the same artform: Where this isn't possible to have a second mentor who can provide some input.



Placements

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
Contracting with schools: Curious Minds created the initial partnership with the individual schools and the mentors took the lead on negotiating the details of the placement. The artists felt this enabled them to focus on the delivery of their sessions in the school and build strong relationships with the children and teachers without worrying about the administrative side of things.	Not enough experience of contracting with schools: Some of the artists would have liked more experience negotiating with schools. This is one of the areas they scored themselves lowest on their outcome stars (see Impact)	Build in more ways in which the artists could more get involved in contracting with schools: This could be through attending initial meetings between Curious Minds and the schools, shadowing the mentors in their negotiations, taking the lead on some of the communication with schools.
Building relationships: Both artists and teachers felt the placements enabled them to build strong relationships with each other, which in some instances has led to further employment opportunities.	Not enough time to get to know the school environment and children before the placement began: Both artists and teachers felt more could have been done at the beginning of the placement to prepare the artists for delivering their sessions. Although all the artists visited their school beforehand they didn't necessarily get the opportunity to meet the children they would be working with and ask all the questions they had about the school and school policies. More experience in different schools: Some of the artists would have liked to gain experience in more than one school, so that they could compare and contrast the experience.	More thorough pre-placement school visits: Working more closely with the teachers to prepare for the placement and ensure all areas that will help the artists feel prepared for delivering their sessions are covered. Explore possibilities for artists placements in more than one school.

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
Good standard of creative sessions: The feedback about the sessions the artists delivered in schools was extremely positive from the teachers, who all felt the delivery was of a high standard. Teachers commented on the positive relationships the artists built with the children, the high levels of engagement with the children, the empowering way in which the artists ensured all the children were included in the activities, the high levels of expertise that the artists brought to the classroom and high levels of enjoyment experienced by the children.	Sessions in one of the schools weren't long enough: Most of the artists had the opportunity to deliver full length classes to the children. However, a couple of the artists delivered all their sessions together in one of the schools, which wasn't long enough for them as they had to split the class time in half. Teachers found it challenging to fit the placements into their schools' timetables: For a variety of different reasons, including staff shortages, an already busy timetable, not enough time to plan ahead and the limited availability of the artists, it wasn't easy for schools to accommodate the artist placements. This meant that some of the placements went on longer than initially planned for.	Ensure school sessions are long enough: Make sure each artist has enough classroom time and where possible explore the possibility of double or extended creative sessions. One teacher suggested that in the future she would like to find opportunities for artists to work for a full day with her pupils. More lead in time with the schools: This would enable the teachers to plan the placements into their school timetables more easily and ensure that the sessions are long enough. 6 to 12 months lead in time would be optimal.
Supportive Environment: The artists appreciated the opportunity to try out delivering creative activities with the support from their mentors and the teachers in the schools. They all felt this enabled them to build their knowledge and confidence, to take risks they might otherwise have not taken and to learn as much from didn't work as what did.	More tools for working with trauma: One of the artists was working with a group of young men who were newly arrived in the UK who found working with storytelling triggering. He felt that neither he or the school had enough knowledge to handle this as skilfully as they would have liked.	Trauma informed training: Training about how to work with trauma and develop a trauma informed approach could be built into a future training programme.



Placements

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
Diverse cultural backgrounds of the artists: The schools felt that having artists of different nationalities delivering creative sessions in their schools was important because the teacher workforce is predominantly white. Having artists from different parts of the world in their schools provided positive role models for young people who are first or second-generation migrants, particularly seeing them in leadership roles and with a career in the arts.		Continue to support international artists to gain the skills to deliver creative sessions in schools
The creative skill sets of the artists: The diverse nationalities of the artists brought diversity of artform. The schools felt the young people's learning was greatly enhanced by access to creative activities they wouldn't usually have opportunity to take part in - for example, Dabke dance, Ethiopian circus, Middle Eastern music.	More skills for working within the classroom: The artists would have liked more teaching tools and behaviour management techniques, either as part of the training or embedded within the placement. Teaching pedagogy and shadowing: Teachers felt they could have better supported the artists with their teaching practice and methods and created more shadowing opportunities within the placements. Recording of creative sessions: Some of the artists would have like the opportunity to record the sessions they delivered for observation after as a learning tool.	More teacher input into the training programme and placements: Involving the teachers earlier on in the planning process so that there are more opportunities for them to contribute to ways in which the artists can develop their classroom skills. For example, by delivering a session on teaching pedagogy and behaviour management as part of the training, creating more opportunities for shadowing teachers and having conversations with the artists about their classroom approach.
Artists Bursaries: It would have been challenging for the artists to take part without a bursary that covered their time, materials and travel expenses.		Keep the artist's bursary: Ensure that future funding covers the artist's time, materials and travel.



Networking Event

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
More diversity within the sector: Attendees wanted to diversify their freelance pool of artists, but many didn't have access to a wider pool of artists and appreciated the opportunity to meet artists with experience of forced migration and the skills to work within schools.	Not enough schools attended the networking event: Due to school strikes most attendees at the networking event were from cultural organisations. The artists would have liked more opportunity to connect to other GM schools.	More networking opportunities with other schools: Ensuring that future events don't preclude teachers from attending.
Making new connections: Both the artists and organisations who attended the event appreciated the opportunity to make new contacts. This led directly to employment opportunities for several of the artists.		More opportunities to create new connections: Going forwards we will invite artists to join the Curious Minds Freelancers Network and ensure they have access to opportunities through CAN, MAI and Z-Arts.

Documentation and Marketing

What worked?	What didn't work?	Recommendations for next time?
Artist Profile Sheets: We got positive feedback from organisations and schools that attended the networking event about the printed artist profile sheets which were made available. The artists also felt it was helpful to have a printed summary, with key information about their work and practice to share with potential employers.	Not enough support with marketing and communication: The artists felt they would have liked more help and advice on the practical side of how to connect with schools and sell themselves as an artist.	More support with marketing and communication: Helping the artists to 'package up' their offer to schools, promote themselves through a website, social media and support with their CV.
Artist's portraits: The artists appreciated the opportunity to work with a professional photographer to provide them with photographs for their portfolios.	More photographs in schools: The artists would have liked more documentation of their workshops in schools. This was challenging due to GDPR and safeguarding the pupil's identity.	Work more closely with the schools on documentation: Explore more possibilities for documenting artists workshops whilst still protecting the pupil's identity.



ROSES AND THORNS

We asked the artists and mentors what their best memories (roses) and worst memories (thorns) were of taking part

ROSES



I learned from my mentor how to manage and control the whole class spontaneously. That was really inspiring!



The programme was well organised, and I particularly enjoyed the mindfulness and group games.



The children were fantastic, they had such positive energy. Every session I learned something from them



I gained more belief in myself and more self-confidence speaking English



My school made me feel so welcome and the teacher shared that our passion had a positive impact on the children



I appreciated the opportunity to work with a group of children from diverse backgrounds and build their confidence



My highlight was introducing the violin to the children in the school for the first time



My mentor was amazing!



This was my first time working in a British school. The kids loved learning about Dabke (a traditional Palestinian dance) with the added bonus that I was able to speak Arabic with some of them.

THORNS



Some of the school rules created stress!



I struggled controlling the classroom and raising my voice to be heard at times



As a mentor, not always knowing how to, or being able to help



Some of the training sessions were too long



The workshop on policy was too complicated and there was too much information



My sessions with the young people were too short



Not enough contact with the school in advance



Behaviour management was sometimes a challenge



The schools didn't always manage time well



The biggest challenge was too much information. Many things were new. I was worried to begin with

WE ASKED THE ARTISTS

“IF PUSHING BOUNDARIES WERE AN ANIMAL WHAT ANIMAL WOULD IT BE?”



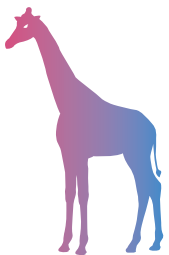
PEGASUS

The horse with wings, it takes you wherever you need to go.



LION

It's a warrior and has a kind of pride, like the Lion of Ethiopia. The programme defends us like a lion.



GIRAFFE

Collecting lots of opportunities together with a great view of your future and able to run fast.



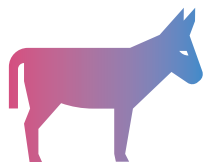
MONKEY

Upbeat with lots of energy. Not afraid to upset the boat and be a bit cheeky.



HORSE

Because the horse always gives support and is very strong.



DONKEY

A hardworking donkey that gets you from place to place, providing transportation across difficult geographical range of mountains and rivers. Donkeys deserve respect but are often undervalued.

PART THREE

Impact



THE ARTISTS

To measure the impact of the programme on the artists we created 8 Learning Outcomes (LO's). We asked the artists to measure their progress against these outcomes at the beginning and end of the programme. Additionally, 4 of the artists also measured their progress after the training days.

The Learning Outcomes were:

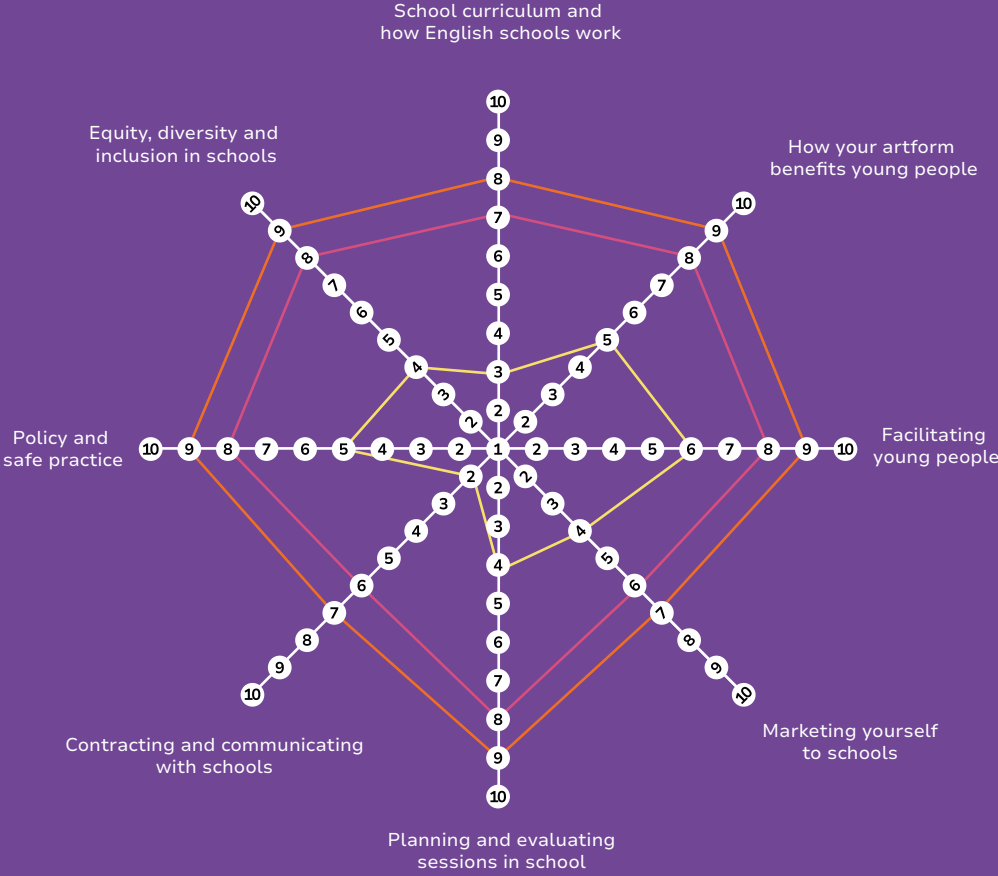
1. Gain knowledge and understanding of how their artform and creativity can benefit children, teachers, and schools.
2. Gain knowledge of school curriculum and understanding of how English school's work.
3. Develop skills to plan and evaluate school sessions.
4. Develop facilitation skills (can be artform specific)
5. Understand safe practice and risk assessment in schools.
6. Understand equity, diversity, and inclusion in schools.
7. Gain knowledge, understanding and experience of how to negotiate contracts and communicate with schools.
8. Gain knowledge and skills to successfully market themselves to schools.

Each artist was asked to fill in an outcomes star, with a spoke for each of the LO's. This helped us to measure the 'distance travelled' by the artists and the areas in which they felt they had made most and least progress.

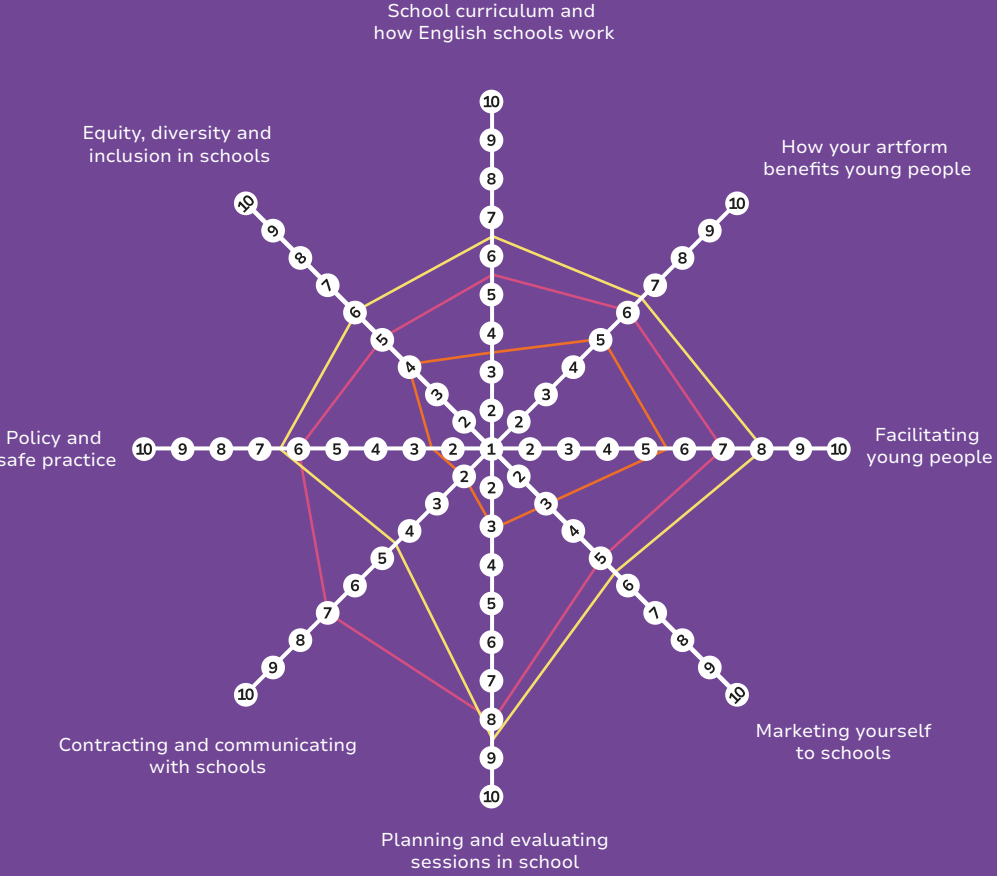


LEARNING OUTCOME STARS

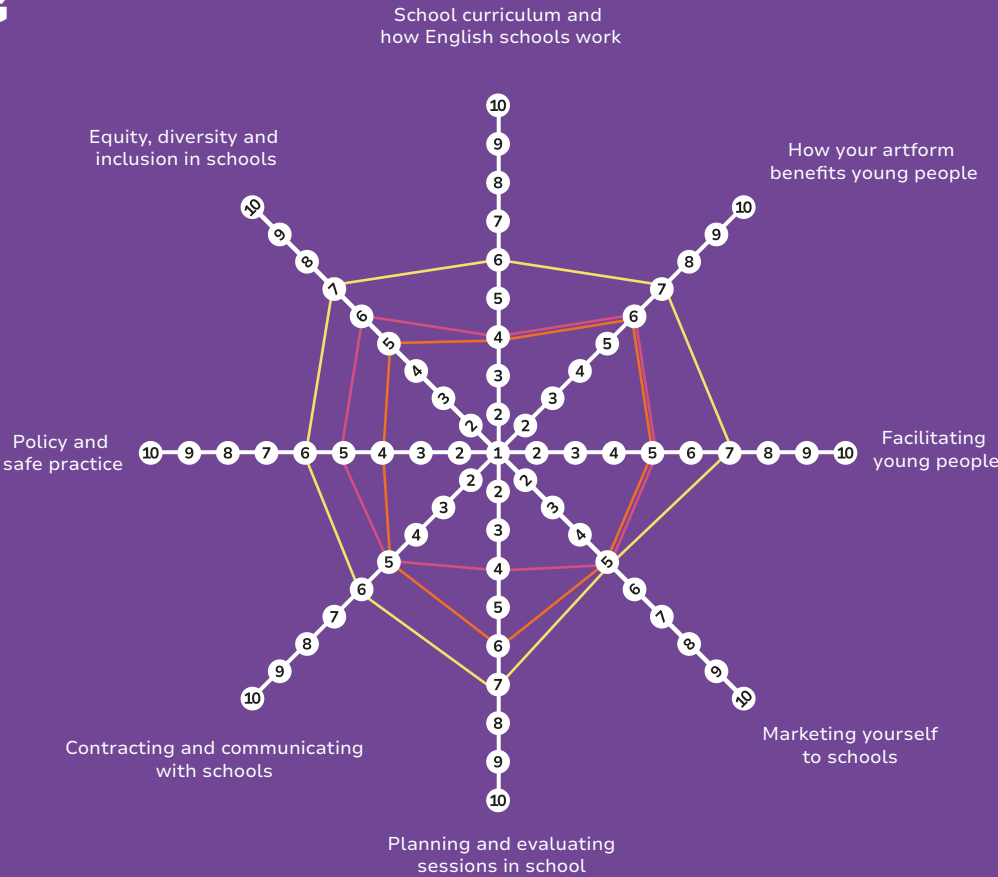
ABAS



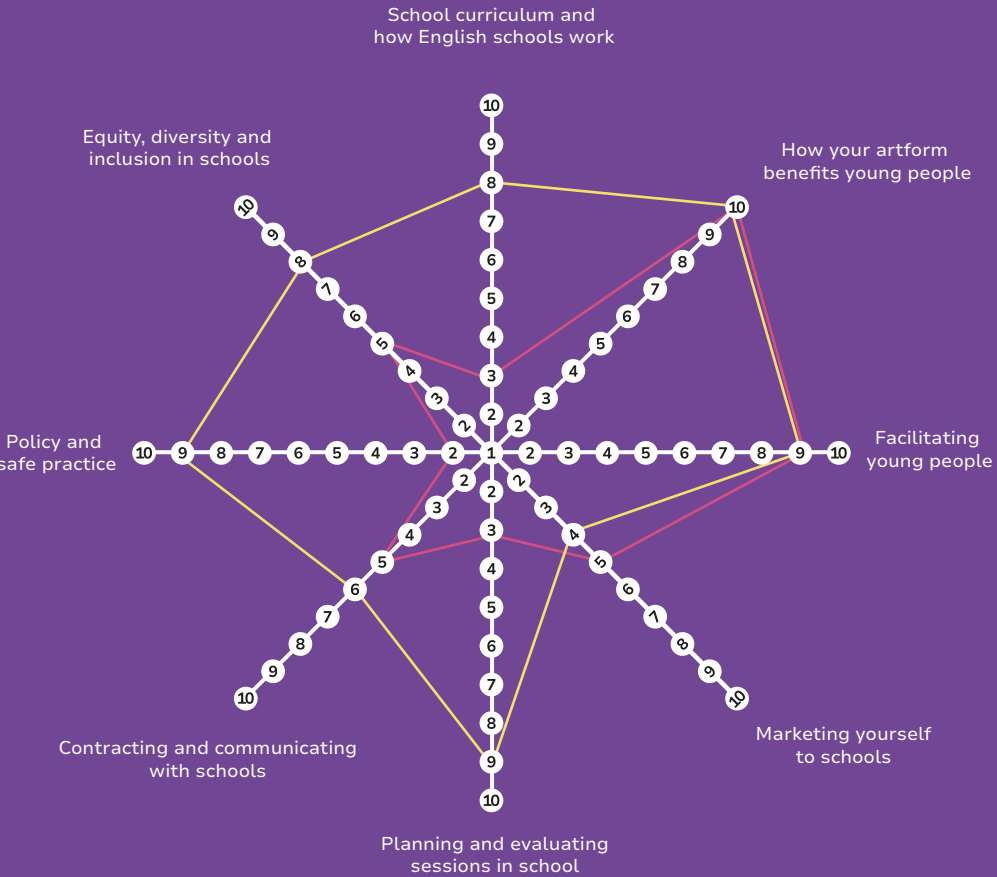
FARES



AMANG

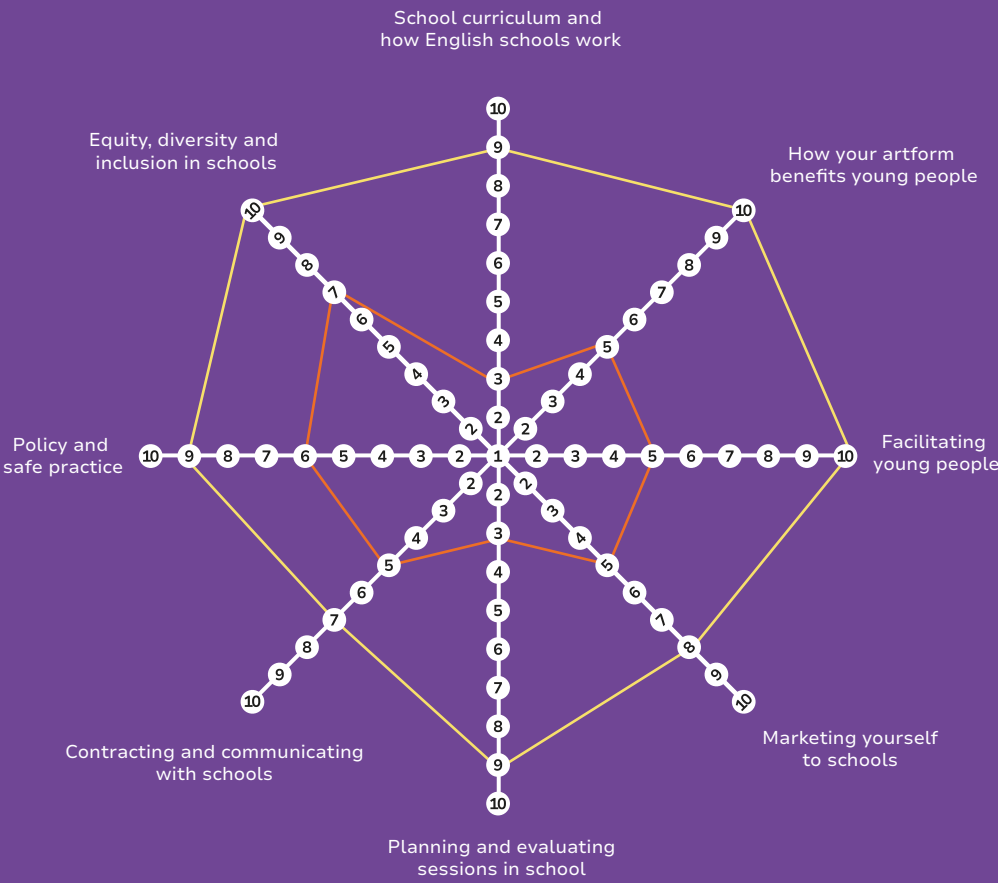


FARIBA

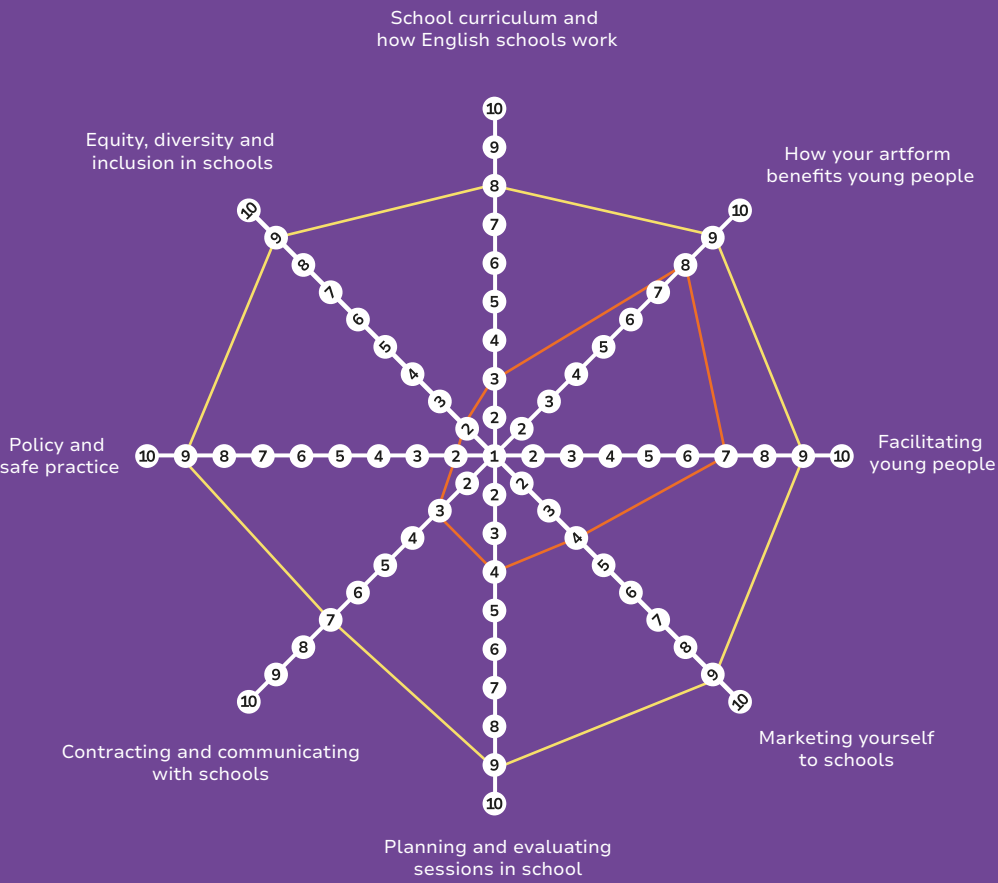


LEARNING OUTCOME STARS

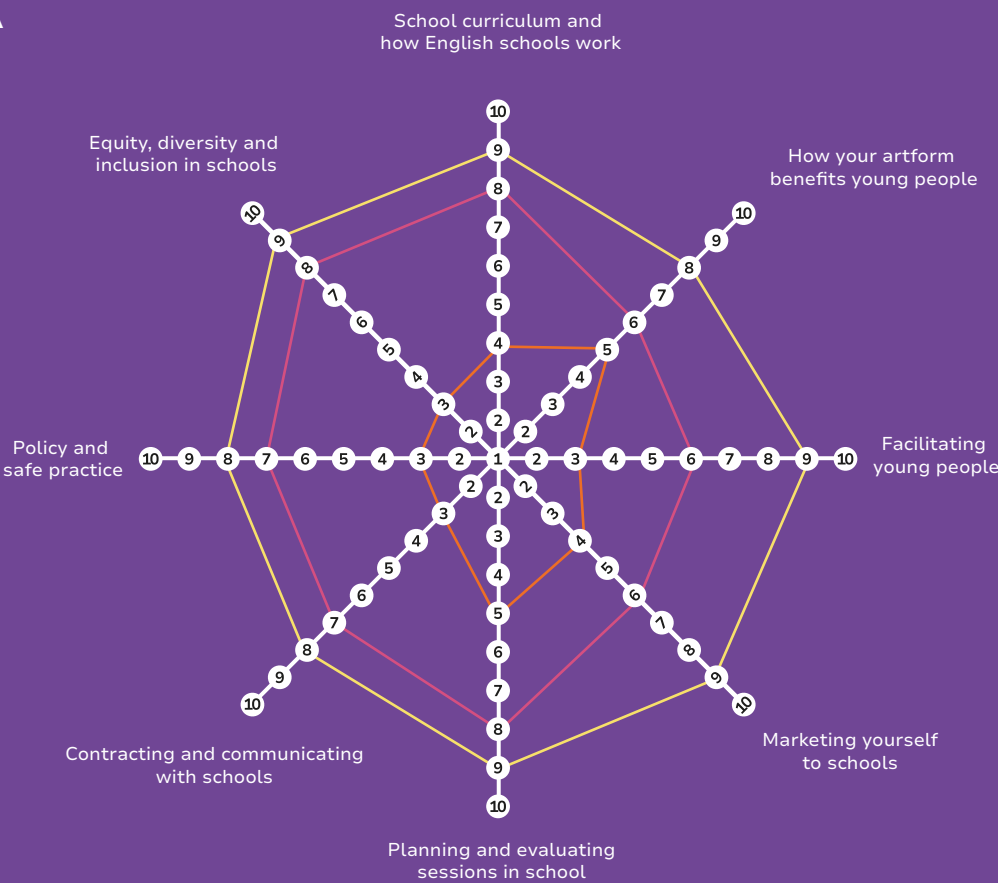
MAS



VAL



PARISA



"I made it complicated at the beginning, but Magdalen said to me, less is more. I now know that the children benefit more by taking it step by step rather than jumping too quickly."



IMPACT ON THE ARTISTS

The main areas in which the programme made a difference for the artists were: Knowledge, confidence, skills and understanding, changing attitudes and behaviours, opportunities and future plans.

KNOWLEDGE

"Knowledge, understanding and confidence. This is a big part of what I really took from this experience."

"Knowing I had the right information was important, it gave me confidence."

"Working with my mentor was very helpful. She could see further than me and critique what I did so that I could adjust."

"The new information helped me balance the knowledge from my country with my UK experience."

"The most useful thing was learning how UK schools worked."

"By putting the theory into practice, I discovered how much I know, which is really valuable because you don't get this chance every day, to actually go into a school and try it out."

"I learnt how to approach the school regarding their policies, if there are some safeguarding issues how can I cope, how to communicate with the teachers and how to communicate my art form, as well."

CONFIDENCE

"The confidence came from knowing that I am better than I thought. I mean we had it, but we didn't know we had it!" "I was worried and didn't have much confidence, my mentor knew how to push me. It was a big growing experience for me."

"It's not until you do the job that you realise you can do it. Realising I could stay calm and confident even when struggles happened was the best moment for me."

"It was a safe space, because if you do it alone, you take all the responsibility on your shoulder, but doing it in this way, all the responsibility, it's not on your shoulder, it is shared."

"I feel confidence now in working with different ages, different classes, different stages."

"At first, I thought that I was a bit shy. But working with Sanja has built up my confidence. It has been a huge improvement, because I come from a country that says, 'Speak quietly, daughters can't shout'."

"My mentor taught me how to build up my confidence and how to overcome the tough situations that might be occurring during the workshop or the lesson and that was inspiring."



"Being in an English school is a bit scary. I learnt that if I can run a session there, I can do it anywhere!"

SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING

“With English as my second language it was challenging but my language skills definitely improved.”

“It was a new skill speaking the English language for 1.5 hours.”

“The programme gave me the skills to make the transition from training to becoming more professional.”

“I developed the skills to bring children alive through my artistic practice.”

“My mentor introduced a new way of communicating with young children that really helped me.”

“Because you feel safe, you will do the best. And then by doing that, you will feel okay. So, you discover yourself through it.”

“I am far more focused and understand what my creative practice can contribute to a school”.

“I feel more motivated and energetic to continue, it’s been an enhancing experience.”

“I have learned through this process, a lot of things and that make me well organized and well planned, and also to sell myself and build up my skill sets.”

“I learnt how to manage and control the whole class.”



CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

“I felt really inspired by being around the other artists and the mentors. It really resonates when you hear a personal story you can relate to yourself. You can see yourself in it. Its tangible.”

“Rather than build a bridge between me and the young people, the bridge is already there. It helps that I have been in the same situation several times (forced migration), I am understanding the other because I was there.”

“Pushing Boundaries really got behind us as international artists and believed in the importance of what we have to offer schools. This helped changed attitudes.”

“You are creating an opportunity for underrepresented artists from diverse backgrounds. This has a big impact on us as well as other stakeholders and funders.”

“I was in Ethiopia, I built my career there doing multi art forms. When I came here it’s a new system, there are more established artists than me, so this is really valuable in helping me find my feet”.

“I felt valued as an artist, the bursary was really important because it acknowledged the cost of replacing my income, not just my expenses.”





“My mentor gave me access to new opportunities outside of Pushing Boundaries. I really appreciate that.”

OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE PLANS

“In my county there isn’t this kind of opportunity to access the education system or curriculum as an artist. I’m so grateful for this opportunity”. “I’m lucky to be one of the candidates and get this chance. If you don’t have this kind of opportunity, everything is closed.”

“The specific impact on me is practical; I am more connected, with better signposting and networks”.

“This opportunity really helped open me up to start to connect in the right way to the people you need to be connected to”.

“If money were no barrier we should go ahead and keep the network going. It’s been such a special thing.”

“I gained work as a Creative Producer with CAN. I wouldn’t have known about that opportunity without Pushing Boundaries”.

“The Networking event led to work with Z-Arts and at Bolton School.”

“Going through this process has made me think I can package up what I do and offer it to schools and youth centres”.

“Tips and support for networking and future opportunities was really valuable. More signposting would be most helpful for the future.”

“I would enjoy more opportunities to collaborate with the artists in the future”



IMPACT ON THE SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN

FALINGE PARK HIGH

Anna Woodhead (Head of English as an Additional Language)

“Where pupils had very little English, language teachers were able to see them express themselves in a different way, a way in which we wouldn’t have seen had they not taken part. It allowed us to see the pupils in a different light, listen to their hopes and dreams and find out about their perceptions of themselves and what was important to them. It also gave us a chance to work with creative artists from fields that we knew very little about, yet at the same time we were able to share pedagogy, behaviour management strategies, planning ideas and feedback for the artists to use which I found particularly empowering. We were also able to build and strengthen a partnership between the school and the Curious Minds team.”

“Working in small groups gave the pupils the opportunity to have some much-needed attention from ourselves and the artists - EAL pupils can often get ‘lost’ in traditional curriculum lessons and so to see them asking questions, clarifying and sharing their ideas proved that the pupils felt comfortable in those situations with the staff and artists. The dance sessions were particularly empowering as the artists were able to share traditional moves and music, recognising and valuing the pupils’ culture and background. Although the pupils were nervous to start with, they became more and more open to the sessions and taking part with less of a worry about getting embarrassed about performing in front of their peers. Six out of the 8 pupils have asked if they can do more dance sessions with the artists again.”



STOCKPORT GRAMMAR

Matt King-Sayce (Director of Drama)

"I think for us, it was the impact of exposing the children to different art forms and different cultures. Amang's approach and style was very different from the way we would usually teach art at GCSE or A level; it was a breath of fresh air. And I know that's impacted on the art department and the students."

"Pushing Boundaries gave me the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with some of the other schools in our locality. This also did the artists a favour, getting them in their doors, and then once they're in there, that's the start of a relationship. So, I think that had a positive impact as well."

I also think there's a real need for more schools to be involved in a project like this, so that it can have a wider impact on more children and teachers. It's a niche area that can tie in with lots of other things, for example it has helped us on our Artsmark journey."

"there's a real need for more schools to be involved in a project like this"

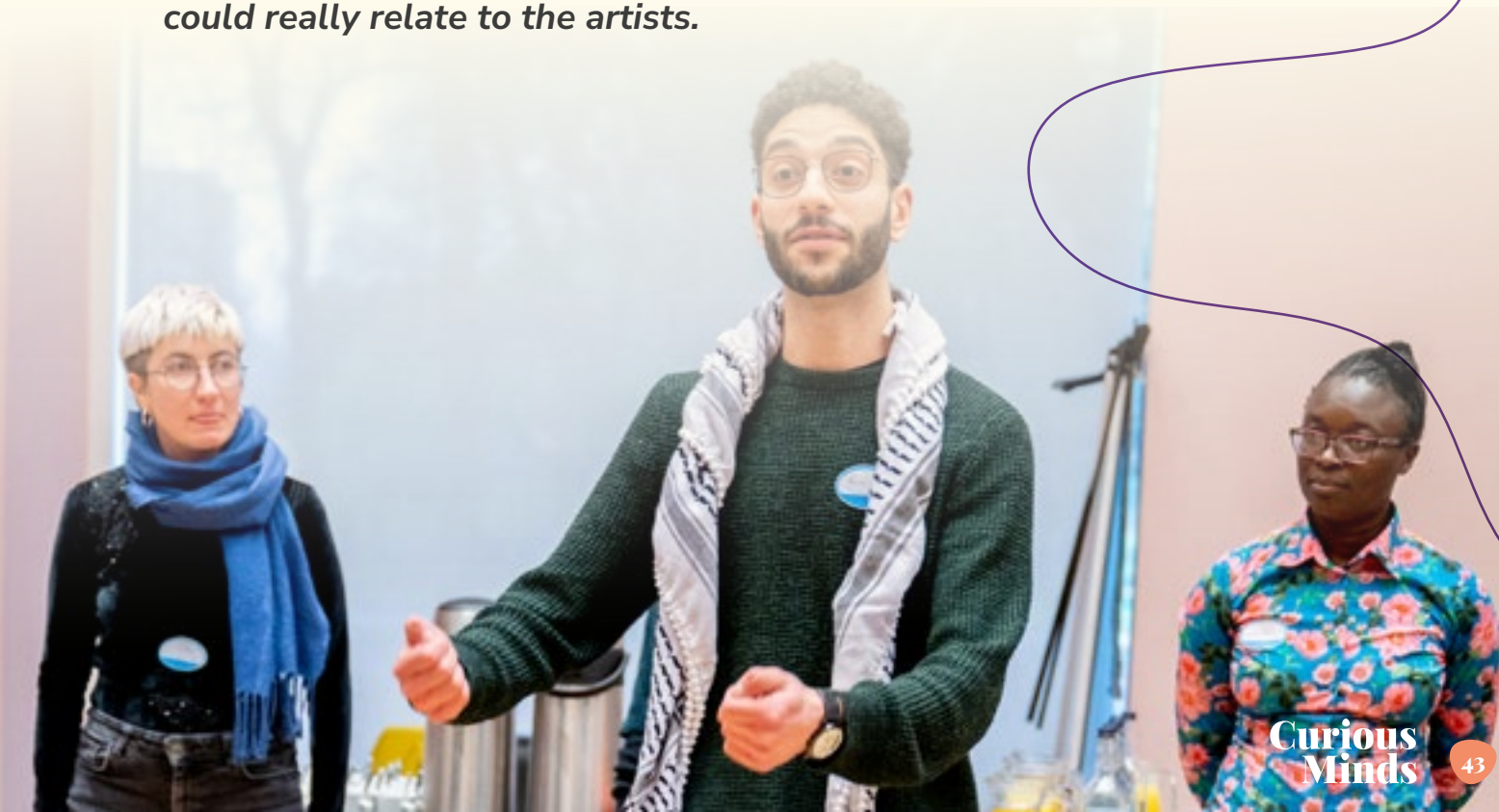
HIGHFIELD PRIMARY

Caitlin Plant (Art Lead and Artsmark Lead)

"Having not only artists from a different country, but also music, arts and drama from their experience, that opened the children up to different stories, especially as one of the artists was Ukrainian. The children were really aware of Ukraine, because it's such a hot topic at the moment and I think it made it a bit more real meeting Valeriia. There is so much poison that you hear on the news about how many people are coming over on the boats, so giving the children a different spin on why we want to be open as a country and look at what people can bring to our country. That was fantastic."

"And then on the other side of we've got a lot of children, who if they're not first-generation migrants, then certainly their parents are, so they could really relate to the artists."

See people from a similar background, doing this kind of work, having a career in the arts, that was great for them. It was fantastic for our school and made the case for the importance of cultural capital and diversity, making it more visible and pushing it a bit further up the ladder". "The artists didn't have easy classes, but all the children were engaged and able to join in. It was so organic and naturally flowing. The children learnt a song in a different language and I still now sometimes hear them singing the song in the corridor. It obviously had an impact, they've remembered it and they've enjoyed it. I was impressed that everyone got to share their voice and have a go, no matter how shy they might be. The way they ran the class was very empowering."



CHILDREN'S QUOTES

"I really liked how we had to paint with your eyes closed to gain a new perspective."

"It was an interesting experience."

"I enjoyed painting with my eyes close as it gave me a different way of working on art."

"It was fun to have a different experience."

"I loved the experience, and it was interesting to experiment with different artistic techniques."

"I enjoyed painting expressively along to their music."

"I enjoyed expressing myself using my hand and along to the music."

"Close your eyes and create your own world."

SECTOR FEEDBACK

Pushing Boundaries concluded with a Networking Event at the Whitworth. This was an opportunity for cultural organisation and schools to:

- Meet and find out more about the artists involved
- Meet and hear from the teachers involved in hosting the artists in their schools.
- Consider how they might be able to offer the next step or opportunity for one or more of these artists to develop their creative practice.
- Connect with other organisations and individuals passionate about this area of work, and those just starting to explore it.
- Meet the partner organisations involved and find out more about how we hope to develop this programme and why it has been created.

At the event we asked attendees:

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A PROGRAMME LIKE THIS TO YOUR ORGANISATION?

Extremely valuable! It's so important to nurture talent and to open opportunities to diverse artists. To my organisation it's important for the artists who work with us, to represent the children and young people who take part in our projects and programmes

Massively important to see artists perform, talk, show, share. The artist profile sheets are ACE.

I want to support the artists and events like this. I know how hard it is to build connections.

Signposting to diverse artists with training for school collaborations is invaluable.

Development of bespoke projects with artists who more closely represent our children opens new conversations and injections into exciting variations of practice.

Events like these help organisations to get a sense of an artist's practice and delivery style. We don't often get to 'observe' sessions and it helps when planning or pulling together last-minute projects! Especially if artists have DBS and PLI in place already.

It's a great opportunity to meet new artists who Global Grooves may be able to work with in the future.

Brings more diverse art forms into schools and educational organisations, demonstrates the value of the arts and exposes children to new ways of thinking.

Creates deeper thinking about what is partnership and helps to market work within our 'sector'.

Builds connections and promotes artists from different cultural backgrounds to work at schools and education. Promotes Inclusion and Diversity and sharing positive thoughts and experience and knowledge.

It's hard to advertise opportunities beyond our usual channels. We don't reach diverse artists as much as we'd like.

The pool of artists we connect to is quite small. We know there are more people out there. Word of mouth is still often used.

Schools come to us with requests we can't always fulfil. We want to encourage schools to think more broadly about what and who is out there.

Schools can feel scared to talk about war – artists can help open up these conversations.



PROGRAMME LEGACY (SO FAR . . .)

Following completion of Pushing Boundaries, we revisited participating artists 6 months later to review their progress and track the impact of the programme.

Every single artist had gained paid facilitation work with a wide range of Greater Manchester organisations, schools and educational institutions including; Afrocats, Bolton School, CAN, Culture Bridge, The Friars Primary School (Salford), HOME, Manchester College, Music Action International, Rainbow Haven, Royal Exchange, St Mary's C of E Primary School (Moss Side), St Joseph The Worker RC Primary School (Irlam), Z Arts and many others.

Interestingly participating artists seemed to be gaining more work in community settings than in schools indicating a high demand for experienced facilitators in this sector.

An unexpected outcome of the programme was the mutual support of both participating artists and mentors to offer paid creative work to each other following the programme. This has also led to creative collaborations above and beyond the artist's workshop practice.

Of the artists participating in Pushing Boundaries:

100% gained paid creative facilitation work as a direct result of the programme.

100% gained wider arts industry connections resulting in creative opportunities, performances and producing work.

100% gained a creative opportunity or paid work through a fellow participating artist or Pushing Boundaries mentor.

100% felt that creative facilitation was now a part of their professional offer.

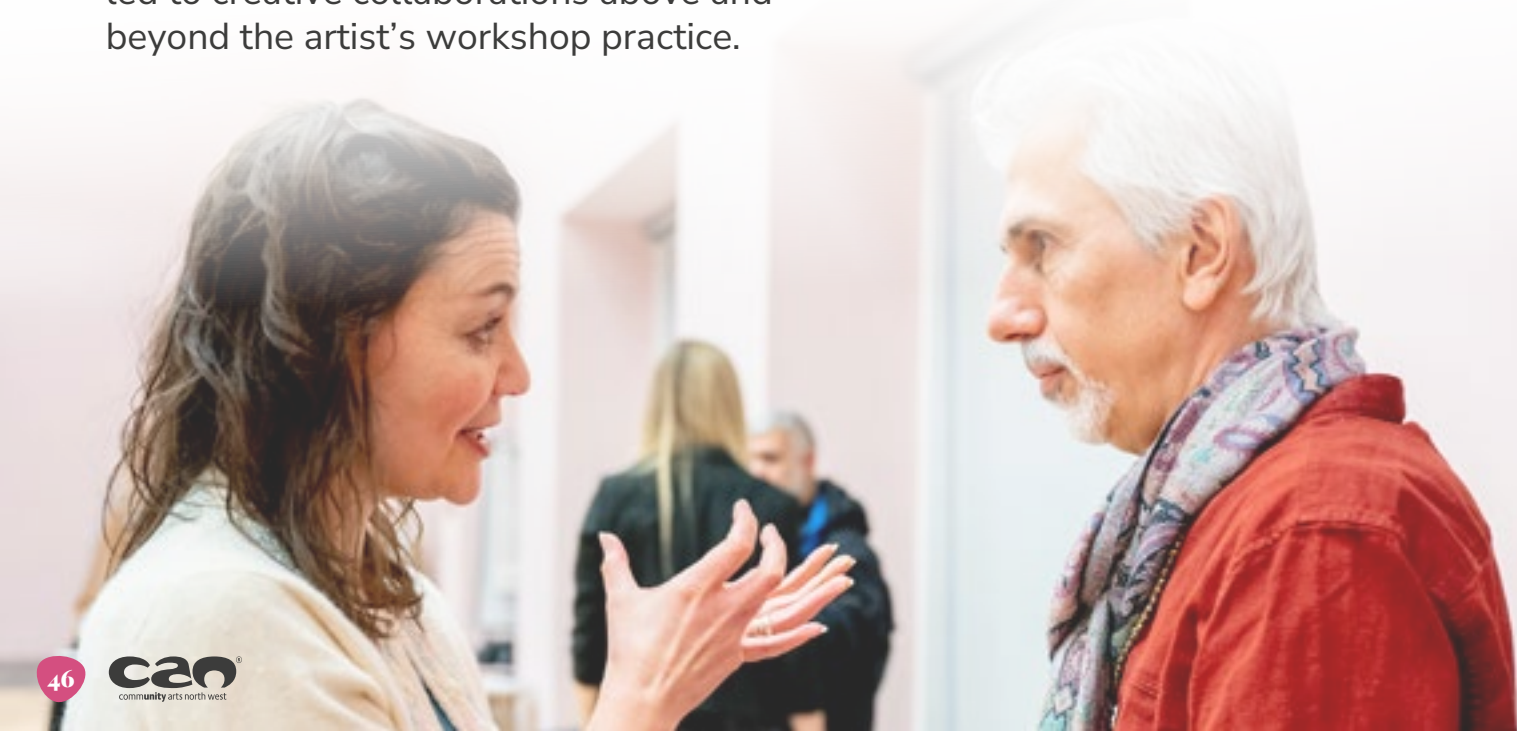
86% had been employed as a creative facilitator on at least one project.

71% had repeat paid work with at least one organisation or had joined the regular pool of facilitators for an arts organisation.

CASE STUDY

Prior to Pushing Boundaries, Fares had only really run occasional one off workshops in the UK. Six months on from the programme, Fares has accessed the following paid work;

- Three workshops for year 8 boys at Bolton School through a Pushing Boundaries connection with Bolton at Home.
- A dance workshop for year 9 boys through Pushing Boundaries partner, Z Arts
- A series of dance workshops with asylum seeker children and young people in emergency accommodation through Pushing Boundaries partners; CAN and Afrocats, resulting in a performance at HOME as part of the Horizons Festival
- A creative dance workshop for families as part of the Horizons Festival organised by CAN and HOME
- A one off dance workshop for families at The Whitworth through Afrocats
- A series of 10 dance workshops for asylum seeking men through Rainbow Haven
- A one off school workshop in Nottingham as part of a cultural day
- A series of 5 dance workshops with families and adults through Liverpool Arab Arts Festival.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING PUSHING BOUNDARIES

- Programme length is extended to allow more integration of the learning
- Better connection to the school curriculum
- Build a stronger community of practice amongst mentees
- More opportunities for the mentors to share their practice with mentees
- More thorough pre-placement school visits
- More teacher input into the training programme and placements
- More opportunities to involve teachers in the reflective process
- More support for the artists to market themselves to the sector
- Trauma informed training to be part of the programme that takes into consideration the 'life stories and experiences' of the mentees.



CONCLUSION FROM CURIOUS MINDS

Pushing Boundaries was devised to help us achieve the long-term impact that we have described in Curious Minds' Strategic Plan. The project has made a significant contribution to the delivery of our workforce development outcomes, specifically working towards a more diverse, resilient, skilled and connected cultural education workforce.

Designed for a group of international artists, most of whom had experienced forced migration, Pushing Boundaries was an opportunity for them to learn skills and develop a network that would support them to go on to work in schools in England.

This evaluation has systematically examined the difference Pushing Boundaries made for those involved. Through mentoring and practical classroom experience, participants gained knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence in areas such as classroom management, different year groups, the English education system, policies and safeguarding. Their involvement had a positive impact on their attitudes and behaviours, helping them to feel valued, capable, inspired and motivated.

The artists involved report being better connected and networked, and as a result they have secured more paid work-opportunities. In this way Curious Minds is building the diversity and resilience of the cultural education sector, one project, one artist, one teacher, one classroom at a time. If you'd like to join Curious Minds in its mission, please visit our website, sign up for our e-bulletin and consider making a donation.

curiousminds.org.uk

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Dr Steph Hawke,
Head of Evaluation and Impact



Credits

Evaluation report written by Sara Domville with contributions from Kathrine Rogers, Saphena Aziz and Dr Steph Hawke

Lead Partners:

Curious Minds
Community Arts North West (CAN)

Supporting Partners:

Music Action International (MAI)
TiPP
Z-Arts
The Whitworth

Lead Schools:

Falinge Park
Highfield Primary
Stockport Grammar (Primary and Secondary)

Supporting Schools:

Adswood Primary School
St Thomas' C of E Primary School

The Pushing Boundaries Artists:

Abas EUanabi
Amang Mardokhy
Fares Farraj
Fariba Taghy poor
Masresha Wondmu
Parisa Pirzadeh
Valeriia Lukianets

The Pushing Boundaries mentors:

Claire Weetman
Magdalen Bartlett
Sanja Govorčin
Ben Mellor

The Pushing Boundaries School Leads:

Anna Woodhead (Head of English as an additional Language, Falinge Park High, Rochdale)
Caitlin Plant (Art Lead and Artsmark Lead at Highfield Primary, Trafford)
Matt King-Sayce (Director of Drama at Stockport Grammar School)

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