

THE CULTURE CHALLENGE



EVALUATION REPORT 2019-2022

Foreword

I'd like to invite you to think about how many children experienced something magical, something affirming, something hopeful or wonderful. Imagine the child that saw someone like them living a good and creative life, the child that discovered their talent, their voice or their joy. The child that met an airship captain or a long dead inventor, or discovered museum mannequins could talk, or danced on stage in front of people who genuinely thought they were amazing or realised the magical world backstage. The child who processed the horrors of the holocaust through a ceramic shoe, or who discovered WWII through learning vintage hairstyles.

Imagine the child that discovered cross stitch with a 6ft tattooed bald man and declared it to be 'better than Xbox' or the kid who saw a real-life llama on his way to a rural creative retreat, one that included forest school, clay work and storytelling, and who said he was the happiest person on earth, or the boy who found Little Red Riding Hood's clock after the storyteller built a world for him, or the child that told their own story around the fire pit.

I want you also to imagine the teachers who had a better day, who saw their class in a new way, who experienced the thrill of designing a creative project and getting money to pay for it. Imagine how many teachers tried something new, developed their practice, discovered a skill. Imagine the friendships formed, the skills built, the ideas generated. Imagine schools who have culture clubs and regular trips to the theatre, and the arts in their school improvement plan, because now 'that's what we do round here'. Imagine how many teachers talked about their creative projects in their interviews for promotion.

Imagine the artists who made a living, or found their network, who collaborated, who developed their practice and found their confidence. Imagine how much money we saved freelancers in marketing costs. How many creatives we saved from getting a 'proper job', even if only temporarily. Imagine how many CVs we are on, how many portfolios we are in, how many opportunities we made.

This magic came not from us, but from the arts. We simply provided a healthy little ecosystem which enabled schools to easily access them.

Kayte Judge, Founder of The Culture Challenge

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1 Introduction



Culture Club at Shortstown Primary School, Bedford. Photo: Cat Lane

*It's a brilliant thing and a power
for good - cultural provider*

What, who, why, when, where and how?

Looking back, and forwards

As *The Culture Challenge* winds down during summer 2022, as its funding streams come to an end, the purpose of this evaluation is twofold. On the one hand it aims to capture the last three years of *The Culture Challenge* delivery (for 2019-22), completing the ongoing evaluation of the programme by Bedford Creative Arts. On the other, it serves as a way to collate, recognise and celebrate – all in one place - the overall impact and significance of *The Culture Challenge* since its inception.

It also says farewell to its delivery format to date, as Bedford Creative Arts seek more collaborative options to continue the programme. At the time of writing, alternative methods of delivery by sector partners are under consideration, and there is hope for the future.

▶ What is The Culture Challenge, Who set it up, and Why was it set up?

The Culture Challenge (TCC) is a brokerage service between schools and cultural providers that was delivered by Bedford Creative Arts (BCA) between 2014 and 2022. Founded and created by Community Arts Producer Kayte Judge, (at the time a BCA staff member), and made possible by a range of generous funders, it had three key aims:

1. To help time-poor teachers to provide creative and cultural activity in their schools.
2. To increase the number of children and young people accessing art and culture by connecting them with providers, artists and activities in their local area.
3. To generate work for local artists and creative practitioners.

▶ When and Where was it delivered?

The Culture Challenge first began as an idea in 2014. Following pilot projects between 2014 and 2016, it was offered as a service across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire until 2022, taking a more indirect approach in 2020-21, due to covid-19.

With the ebb and flow of different fundings streams, during the period of 2016 to 2018, *The Culture Challenge* also expanded to schools in Luton and Milton Keynes. It contracted back to its current focus on Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire from 2019 to 2022, the period of this report.



The essential ingredients

▶ How was The Culture Challenge delivered?

The Culture Challenge consists of a collection of complementary ingredients as follows:

- **Culture Vouchers** - funding for creative and cultural activities in schools
- **Culture Directory** - information on local cultural providers
- **Brokerage Service** - specialist support to forge links
- **Training** - skills development and relationship building
- **Promotion** - news, marketing and opportunities
- **Culture Clubs** - school-based clubs for students
- **Projects** - spin-off collaborations and initiatives

Each aspect of TCC is interdependent. For example, funding from Culture Vouchers can encourage teachers to find providers on the Culture Directory. Then by using TCC's brokerage service, schools and providers can be helped to connect. Activities which take place as a result can be sustained through training opportunities. Over the years, these ingredients have led to new networks and projects.



CULTURE VOUCHERS



Culture Vouchers act as a '**closed currency**' that teachers could apply for to bring cultural providers into school or to take pupils to local cultural venues. They were offered in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire from the start, and in Luton and Milton Keynes as funding allowed. Eligibility for 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% of the costs of a cultural activity, was based on a schools' **Pupil Premium**, ensuring that access and equity was at the heart of the scheme.

CULTURE DIRECTORY



The Culture Challenge Directory gives teachers and young people:

- information about cultural activities found **on their doorstep**
- a one-stop shop where providers can promote programmes
- activities searchable by artform, topic or postcode
- a **mix of opportunities** from dance and craft to museums and filmmaking.

BROKERAGE SERVICE



Brokering links between schools and cultural providers has been a vital part of TCC. It was recognized early on that a website on its own would not be enough, hence the need for someone to be on the end of the phone or email to **offer guidance**. Its effectiveness has relied on BCA staff having a strong understanding of local schools, artists and providers as well as an ability to recognize cultural development and CPD opportunities.

TRAINING



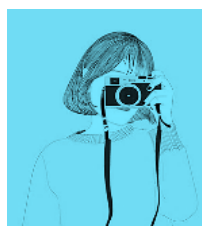
Training and skills-sharing opportunities have been offered regularly to teachers and providers as part of TCC, from speed dating to find creative partners, and online events, to residential courses. These have included: **building relationships** with schools and providers; writing artist briefs and fundraising bids; offering support for **Artsmark and Arts Award**, and approaches to marketing and promotion.

PROMOTION



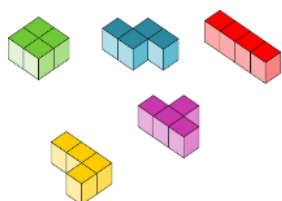
The Culture Challenge website, which is linked to BCA but exists separately, is designed to be **easy to navigate** for schools, parents and young people to find local cultural activities by provider, location, artform or curriculum theme. TCC's activities, resources and events were also promoted through marketing channels including social media and **monthly e-newsletters**.

CULTURE CLUBS



Culture Clubs have flourished in some schools as part of TCC. Set up to reach specific groups of children, such as those in receipt of Pupil Premium or with wellbeing needs, these small groups meet regularly at lunch time or after school to explore different creative activities. **Arts Award** is easily incorporated into this format, so students can gain a qualification whilst learning new skills.

PROJECTS



A range of **projects**, collaborations and **networks** have grown up over the years as a result of the TCC, such as **The Twinning Project** led by **BACE** (Bedford Arts and Cultural Education).

See pages 35-36 for more information.

2

KEY Statistics and OUTCOMES

Activity of the CULTURE CHALLENGE = 2019-22 =

Impact in focus: As the quantitative and qualitative headlines show, despite the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 and impact of staffing gaps in Bedford Creative Arts, a rich programme of activities took place in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire schools during 2019-22.

CULTURE VOUCHERS
were awarded to **34 SCHOOLS**

— VALUE OF **£22,000** in CULTURE VOUCHERS awarded —

≈ **118** CULTURAL PROVIDERS were listed on the Culture Challenge Directory ≈

97 SESSIONS
took place with
CHILDREN
and **YOUNG PEOPLE**

MEASURES of SOCIAL NEEDS CULTURE VOUCHER ALLOWANCE



13 schools were eligible for 100%.

8 schools were eligible for 75%.

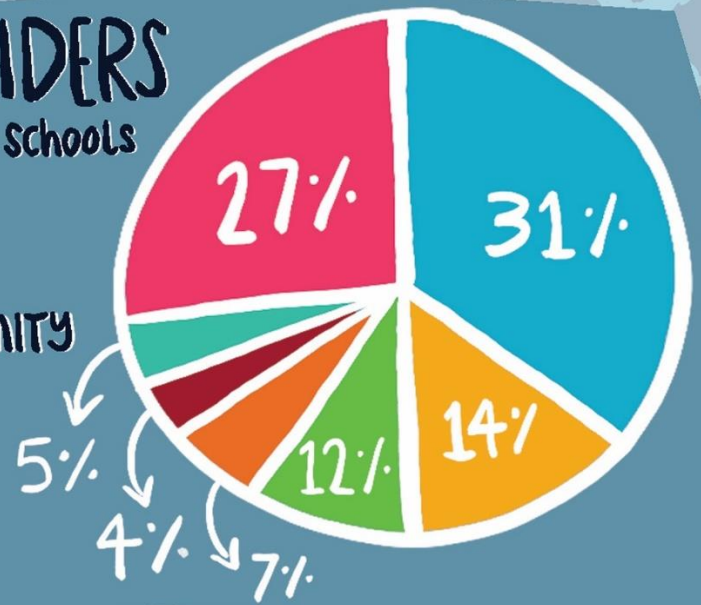
13 schools were eligible for 50%.

90% of EVALUATIONS RATED THE CULTURE CHALLENGE EXPERIENCE AS **EXCELLENT**

21 CULTURAL PROVIDERS

Some providers delivered in several schools

- MUSIC & PERFORMANCE
- ARTS & CRAFTS
- MEDIA/TECH & CULTURE/COMMUNITY
- DANCE
- HISTORY & HERITAGE
- WORD & VERSE
- NATURE & ADVENTURE



8 TWINNING PROJECTS reached **2,500 CHILDREN** and **YOUNG PEOPLE**

AT LEAST **5,000** CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED DIRECTLY

LOCATIONS REACHED

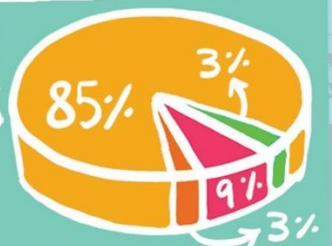


BEDFORD BOROUGH SCHOOLS

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

TYPES OF SCHOOL (34 IN TOTAL)

- 29 PRIMARY SCHOOLS
- 3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS
- 1 MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 1 SPECIAL SCHOOL



16 training and networking events took place with **170** attendees

1,700 'LET'S CREATE' packs delivered to schools during lockdown

► Outcomes for schools

Headlines

- 90% of evaluation forms rated *The Culture Challenge* as excellent
- Students' self-confidence increased as a result of taking part in *Culture Challenge* sessions
- Pupils were given new experiences that they could not easily have accessed otherwise
- Teachers' skills and confidence increased in delivering and advocating for creative activities
- Vouchers helped schools to take a leap of faith, acting as a spark for future arts activity.

Some of the children within the group who tend to struggle socially began to talk to other people during the trip and were not afraid of interacting with others.

It's been lovely to see our children experiencing excellence. There are not enough words to say how brilliant it was.

It was clear with this workshop that **everyone** wanted the musician to come back, even children that don't usually connect with music sessions.

Children have been talking to their peers about a cool book festival they are organizing.

All the children rated the session as excellent, and they all have identified clear aspirations for the arts and crafts that they would like to try in the future.

Pupils who are often quiet and withdrawn were engaged and enthusiastic. The children were very proud of the work produced.

The voucher has enabled us to use the skillset of a local artist... something we would not be able to offer without your

We are better equipped now. I can see the confidence of staff through our Artsmark journey which is because we had connection with The Culture Challenge.

The pupils all gave verbal feedback and were noticeably more confident as a result of the session.

From the smiles on their faces and their comments on the evaluation forms they have all increased their confidence around dance. A lot of the children feel more confident (their wellbeing has increased).

Less confident children were able to talk confidently about what they had been doing. Teacher reflections stated that the children who struggle with English and Maths, were much more animated and expressed a sense of positivity about themselves.

I am much more likely, as enrichment lead at school, to expose our pupils to as many culturally enriching activities and to provide them opportunities to varied art forms. This Voucher enabled us to do this.

▶ Outcomes for cultural providers

Headlines

- *The Culture Challenge* has played a key role in helping artists to get into schools
- TCC provided a valuable network for freelancers to support and learn from each other
- Artist sessions in schools and visits to cultural venues acted as effective CPD for teachers
- Vouchers enabled creative experiences to take place which would otherwise be unlikely
- TCC has led to new and deeper relationships between schools and cultural providers.

Children are building their skills, but their teachers' skills and confidence are building too.

The Culture Challenge has been the linchpin holding the schools and arts community together.

Most of the time when you work in a school it comes down to funding, and it's spread too thinly, so vouchers make it possible.

We have been able to build richer and deeper relationships with particular schools.

In my experience, teachers always end up using the experience as CPD.

It's very important and instrumental to lots of young people who would not usually be given the opportunity to do creative activities.

It gives children lots of different experiences to see what they might want to do in the future.

It's an extremely important part of the creative process to be able to network with people. Crucially for me it's been about partnerships.

I loved the way you could ring up and ask a question about arts activity and schools – there isn't really anything else like that.

This has enabled me to build relationships with a wider range of schools.

All of it is important in its own way. The vouchers are a key thing as many schools can't come without them, and the Directory is hugely important.

There needs to be somebody to support people – TCC offered that opportunity to find people and match them together.

The Culture Challenge activity 2016-22

Wider impact:

The feedback received from wider sector partners and stakeholders throughout the lifetime of TCC, has been drawn from a range of interviews and reports, including *The Culture Challenge Review* in 2021. It illuminates in particular the importance of TCC's role as a conduit for building relationships and forming an ecosystem. The quantitative data for this period can be found in **Appendix 6** (page 49).

The Culture Challenge has played a transformative role in developing creative learning opportunities on various levels, whether through the sheer number of children taking part, the strategic development of school improvement plans, or by creating a much-needed community of practice.



Left to right: Booktastic workshops with Rachel Rogan at Putnoe Primary; Anne-Marie Abbate's workshops with Dallow Primary School. Photo: Permission of Putnoe Primary (left) and Dallow Primary School (right)

▶ Stakeholders and partners

Headline outcomes

- *The Culture Challenge* has been an important mechanism in bringing people together across the education and cultural sectors, fulfilling its core aim as a brokerage service.
- TCC has worked on different levels in terms of engagement and impact, from one-off connections to long-term, in-depth partnerships leading to whole school change.
- The role of TCC manager has been crucial in building relationships.

It's hugely valuable for me as an individual, and an integral part of what we have been able to achieve here, without question.

It influenced the way we join up cultural and education sectors – it's a practical example of that.

Relationships are changed in some way when we engage with the arts. It is a vehicle for curriculum diversity, as well as supporting mental health and wellbeing.

More schools need to know about The Culture Challenge.

It's not that TCC failed to solve problems, the problems have just got bigger!

All aspects were good, it just needed 5 more staff.

As individual organisations it's easy not to open our eyes. We need somebody to support people coming together – that's the difficulty. TCC offered that. Someone driving communication and partnerships – organising that and being a driving force.

It's not used by all schools but can demonstrate a much deeper cultural learning journey for schools that do.

TCC at first seemed like a platform about one-off links, transactional in nature, but it led to much longer-term relationships.

3 The Culture Challenge Story



Pupils at Turvey Primary School with artist Anne-Marie Abbate.
Photo: Permission of Turvey Primary School

Timeline

START

This is much more than a website. This is a directory wrapped in a campaign. It is about relationship building.
Kayte Judge, Founder

Barriers identified:

- Time & resource
- Money
- Communication

2014

The Foundations

Kayte Judge (then at BCA and now a freelance Community Arts Producer), develops *The Culture Challenge* with young people, teachers and cultural leaders in Bedfordshire, seed funded by Royal Opera House Bridge, and delivered by BCA.

Pilot projects with 14 schools



2015

Website launches

The website takes off with a 30-item **call-to-action checklist** of activities to try, resources, and a **directory** of artists and providers.

62 cultural practitioners are listed on the website by 2015

2016

Culture Vouchers scheme

In January 2016 The Culture Voucher scheme launches to enable schools and youth organisations to access cultural and creative opportunities.



111 vouchers are distributed across 42 settings in Bedford, Luton, Milton Keynes and Central Beds. between 2016-18.

BCA creates a dedicated Youth Producer role

2017

Reputation grows

Trust and uptake increases as does the programme, with CPD, networking events and Culture Clubs. Expands to Luton and Milton Keynes.



41 training & networking events with 779 attendees by 2018

2018

Take up expands

By 2018 *The Culture Challenge* has provided over 7,400 instances of delivery with children and young people.



106 Arts Awards achieved by young people by 2018

2019

Twinning Project

In-depth projects take place linking 8 schools with 8 artists or cultural organisations.



2020

Culture Challenge 'on ice'

Covid-19 causes the programme to be frozen. Staff are furloughed and Culture Vouchers placed on hold.



1,700 'Let's Create' art packs are distributed via schools during the pandemic in Bedford, Luton and Central Bedfordshire by a volunteer team.

2021

Culture Challenge Review

In light of covid, strategic planning, funding and capacity challenges, the programme is reviewed focusing on future sustainability.



60 training events with almost 1000 attendances by 2022

2022

Final projects

As restrictions lift, the final projects take place. However, due to funding streams coming to an end, and ongoing capacity issues, the programme winds down whilst alternative methods of delivery are explored.



At least 16,000 children and young people have taken part

170 culture vouchers have been given to 70 schools by 2022



How it all began

It started with a map:

Fuelled by a mission to break down barriers which prevent children from accessing art and culture – including funding, awareness of local cultural provision, and opportunities for teachers and providers to connect - *The Culture Challenge* started out as an idea for a culture map of Bedfordshire. The creative and cultural challenges followed later.

Strong foundations

The Culture Challenge was founded in 2014 by **Kayte Judge**, who at the time was a staff member at Bedford Creative Arts. It followed, and grew from, a year of conversations with young people, teachers and creative and cultural providers about how to involve more children with art and culture when teachers have no time, schools have little money, and cultural organisations and artists need a foot in the door.

Thanks to the passion, vision, encouragement and expertise of the founder, initial funding from Royal Opera House Bridge (ROHB), and delivery by Bedford Creative Arts' dedicated team, *The Culture Challenge* got off the ground with a batch of pilot projects, matching schools and culture providers across Bedfordshire.

Responding to research and local need

It came to light during the early days of the programme's evolution, that only 5.2% of Bedford schools had achieved Artsmark, and that there was a pressing need for better communication between schools and the cultural sector.

It also transpired that there were several areas in Bedford with significant social deprivation. In fact, 11 areas were among the 10 to 20% most deprived nationally. At the same time, evidence was emerging from the [Cultural Learning Alliance](#)¹ which showed a link between cultural engagement and social mobility. It was against this backdrop that *The Culture Challenge* was shaped - in response to local need and informed by national research.

The goal of the Culture Map is to encourage social mobility for young people through cultural provision via schools.

TCC Founder, Kayte Judge

¹ [ImagineNation The Case for Cultural Learning.pdf](#)

The Culture Map



The Culture Challenge was initially envisaged as an online 'Culture Map' giving a searchable database of Bedfordshire's cultural providers.

However, to encourage cultural capital and social mobility, and inspired by The National Trust's '50 things to do before you are 11 ¾' project, it was decided that the 'Culture Map' would be accompanied by a call to action: a 'cultural entitlement checklist'.

The original 'Culture Map'. Photo: BCA

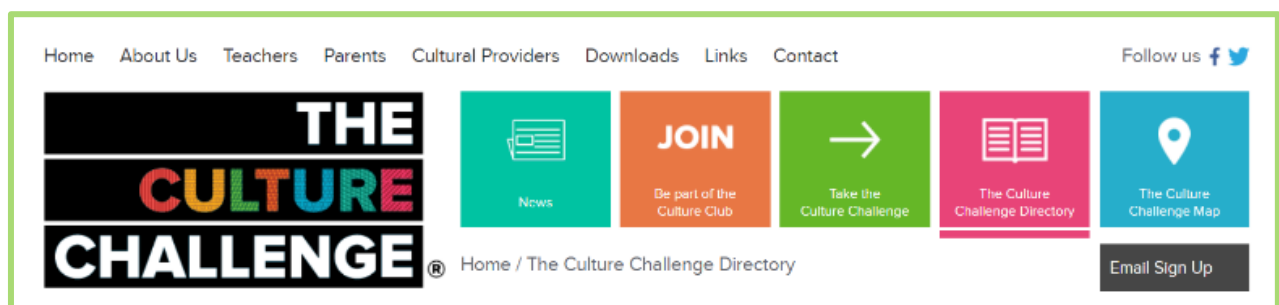
This would offer a diverse mix of experiences - or challenges - for young people to try, such as 'visit a gallery', 'make some music' or 'perform in public'. The checklist offered a practical resource for schools, with the map as a promotional tool for local providers.

The Culture Challenge website

This is much more than a website. This is a directory wrapped in a campaign. It is about relationship building.
TCC Founder, Kayte Judge

Before long, whilst it became clear that a website solution was the best way forward, it was also apparent that *The Culture Challenge* had to be much more than 'just' a website - it needed to be a campaign with a call to action which was not only distinct, but highly accessible.

By 2015, *The Culture Map* had become *The Culture Challenge*, a high quality, easily navigated website, with 30 challenges to try, a range of CPD events, a local directory, downloadable resources and a brokering service: www.culturechallenge.co.uk



Underpinning principles

Prioritising access, equality and equity:

From the very beginning, *The Culture Challenge* was about removing barriers and levelling up opportunities for young people by placing everyone's right to art and culture front and centre of the programme.

Targeting children most in need

Research from the Cultural Learning Alliance³ shows that learners benefit from cultural engagement in a multitude of ways, from increased self-confidence and better attainment at school, to being more likely to stay in employment, vote and volunteer. To ensure that the widest group of children and young people could make the most of these benefits, *The Culture Challenge* was designed with access at its heart. Applications were also mapped against each school's Pupil Premium allowance, whereby schools with a higher proportion of children in receipt of free school meals were eligible for a higher value of vouchers.

Creative learning impact



This was evidenced perhaps most strongly in the Culture Vouchers application process – a scheme launched in 2016 which initially took time to be trusted by teachers, before becoming one of *The Culture Challenge's* most valued aspects.

Schools had to clearly state the difference the vouchers would make and who would benefit most. The guidance was extremely clear in terms of its success criteria for schools wishing to embed cultural learning opportunities.

Applications will be favored that:

- Meet a specific need of an identified group of students in a creative way
- Explicitly support your School Improvement Plan
- Is linked to your Artsmark Action Plan or Artsmark Journey
- Incorporates Arts Award
- Include students in receipt of Pupil Premium funding and/or those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and/ or those with Special Educational Needs or other protected characteristics.
- Address issues of inclusion or diversity
- Request part funding, rather than full, for the proposed activity
- Commit to evaluating the process and sharing your results with The Culture Challenge

³ [Key Research Findings: The Case for Cultural Learning](#)

Measuring and maintaining quality outcomes

Successful Culture Voucher applications were later cross-referenced with *TCC* evaluation forms to see if and how the school's needs had been met, including impact on pupils, unexpected outcomes, and the nature of any future plans or legacies.

Not only did this process ensure that quality could be measured and maintained, with a continuous flow of feedback helping to shape and bolster the health of the programme, but it also provided a sense of its longer-term impact and influence to BCA staff managing the voucher scheme. For example, they then could offer support if teachers were taking part in future training days, planning similar sessions for the following term or year, sourcing new artists or writing fundraising applications to secure additional creative and cultural activities.

Sustaining cultural involvement



Culture Clubs started to be set up as the programme grew organically. By 2017, several were in place, with the intention of focusing on specific groups of children who would benefit most from creative and cultural activity. This was another way of ensuring that *The Culture Challenge* could reach vulnerable young people with an emphasis on wellbeing, self-confidence and broadening horizons.

These clubs – and the teachers running them - gave an opportunity for pupils to access cultural activities on a more sustained basis, through a regular after school or lunchtime club, giving pupils the chance to meet artists, learn new skills and visit new places.



Ukulele Pathways at Springfield Primary School.
Provider - Music for Bedford Borough
Photo: Permission of Springfield Primary School



Film Workshops at Livingstone Primary School.
Provider - Creative Film Workshops
Photo: Permission of Livingstone Primary School

Branching out and trimming back

Scaling up and scaling down:

As *The Culture Challenge*'s reputation and impact grew, it expanded to nearby areas, made possible through local authority support and links with key stakeholders. However, capacity for fundraising and delivery were perennial challenges for BCA.



From printing workshops at Dunstable Icknield Primary School, Luton. Photo: Katie Allen

Exploring scalable models

Due to a growing reputation; an increasing take up of Culture Vouchers; a richly populated directory; and a host of training and networking opportunities, *The Culture Challenge* was seen as a programme with scalable potential. By 2018, *The Culture Challenge* had expanded beyond Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire to take place in schools across Luton and Milton Keynes, on a geographical licence model.

However, by January 2020 these licences had come to an end when funding was no longer available. ROH Bridge did not wish to repeat fund a project and local authorities were unable to commit to long-term funding.

At the same time, there were practical elements to consider around how *The Culture Challenge* could continue to maintain its local expertise with limited capacity and destabilising staff changes. In other words - how could BCA make sure that *TCC* would not be at risk of spreading itself too thinly without enough appropriately skilled ambassadors on the ground?



Emerging from covid-19

Pausing and reflecting:

Due to covid-19, *The Culture Challenge* was put on hold for the majority of 2020-21. Most staff were furloughed, and like many cultural organisations, BCA's focus was to try to survive the pandemic intact. During this time BCA decided to review *TCC*.

Time to reflect and review

In the grip of covid-19, and the departure through ill health of its key member of staff, *TCC* activity on Culture Vouchers and CPD reduced. Alongside continuing communications, a key aspect of delivery during this time was an Art Drop of 1,700 artist-designed activity packs distributed to children via local schools and education settings (made possible by *TCC* funding and a team of dedicated volunteers). The BCA project, *Airship Dreams*, reached audiences of around 15,000 digitally, including some successful engagement with schools brokered by the new Culture Challenge Manager.



Through *The Culture Challenge Review* process in 2021, it became clear that there was a multitude of loyal and passionate advocates for whom the programme had been transformative – either for their school, their practice or the young people they worked with. It also emerged that there was a need for greater visibility - in terms of *TCC* itself and awareness of its link with BCA. There was a sense that *TCC* had waned in recent years, leading to variable capacity and a lack of continuity, largely due to staff turnover.

Picking up the threads

In the summer term of 2021, a new Culture Challenge Manager started to refocus on brokerage, issuing a large number of vouchers, and re-energising the programme. In late 2021, as restrictions started to lift, another Culture Challenge Manager was in place, who continued to promote and issue vouchers. By the new year, plans could be made for the final *Culture Challenge* sessions to resume in the summer term. This was taken forward by the current Culture Challenge Manager, from January to August 2022, who started to reconnect with schools and providers, honouring outstanding vouchers, and setting up additional sessions, training, legacy resources, and support.

BCA's future strategy and difficult decisions

Following competitor analysis, research into funding models, and wide consultation with a range of stakeholders, *The Culture Challenge Review* 2021 made suggestions for BCA to consider in their future planning. This spanned from bringing *TCC* programme more closely and tightly into BCA's remit and brand with greater resource and support, to looking for opportunities for its different aspects to be taken forward with or by other partners, to help share the load with funding and capacity issues.

For BCA, a key question was how *TCC* aligns with its own future strategy and its identity as a grass-roots organisation creating artwork with communities through socially-engaged projects. BCA chose to focus on being a deliverer of cultural learning projects within its core community arts role in future, as the responsibility of supporting the sector was beyond one small arts organisation and also because the service needed to be consistent in order to be successful (both in its offer and in its quality).

Wider context

Development of Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs):

In parallel with *TCC* evolving, significant developments took place to broker links between schools and the cultural sector through Arts Council England's call to action to meet the Cultural Education Challenge. This evolved through Bridge organisations and LCEPs.

BACE – Bedford Borough LCEP

Whilst Bridge organisations cover large areas, LCEPs, launched by Arts Council England in 2015, address more local needs, making each LCEP very different. With numerous LCEPs gathering traction, this raised the question of how *TCC* and LCEPs align.



Bedford's Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) known as BACE, (Bedford Cultural Education Partnership), has been in existence since 2015, and was originally chaired by *TCC* founder, Kayte Judge. Through investment by the Royal Opera House Bridge (ROH Bridge), and others such as the Education Improvement Strategic Group (EISG), the partnership supports different action research projects, such as research into barriers to Arts Award and Artsmark. BACE has evolved with close links to BCA and *TCC*, as reflected in BACE's launch programme The Twinning Project. This 'twinned' eight providers with eight local schools which in effect was a project-based version of *TCC* (see pages 35-36).

The group continues to meet regularly with members including Bedford Borough Council, the Music Hub, Museum Development Officer for Bedfordshire, the Arts and Culture Projects team at the University of Bedfordshire, The Harpur Trust, Bedford College, Full House Theatre and primary and secondary schools.

The Culture Hub – Central Bedfordshire

A precursor to LCEPs was formed in Central Bedfordshire as part of the Council's Royal Opera House Bridge funded project, *Make Way for Culture*. This aimed to explore ways to deepen connections between the cultural sector and schools in Central Bedfordshire. As part of this, BCA was commissioned to create the Culture Hub, an informal network of cultural providers working in the field of cultural education and including partners such as The Shuttleworth Collection, the Music Hub, Full House Theatre, Museum Development Officer for Bedfordshire, the Arts and Culture Project team at the University of Bedfordshire, Greensands Trust, The Grove Theatre and managers of Council-owned cultural assets. The Culture Hub is now chaired and administered by Central Bedfordshire Council. Luton also has an LCEP - Luton Cultural Education Partnership. The ROH Bridge's partnership investment currently funds administration of the Bedford and Luton LCEPs, via the Arts and Culture Projects team at the University of Bedfordshire.

With BCA on the BACE steering group, overlaps in brokering services, and the sector rebooting after covid, this could be an optimum time to consider whether *TCC* should be taken on by or merged into BACE, an idea supported by consultation feedback.

Funding challenges

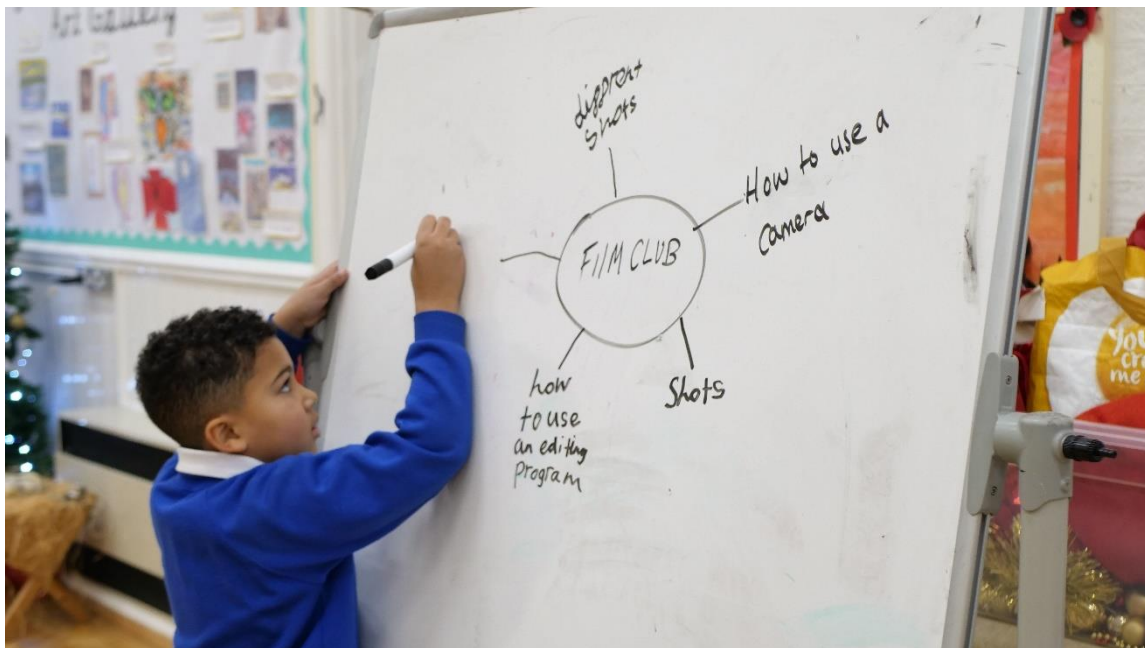
Securing ongoing support:

Like many cultural organisations, BCA is striving to be financially resilient in precarious circumstances, whilst trying to support its staff and communities. This can mean pauses in delivery, uncertainty in planning and difficult choices.

Initially, research into the need for *The Culture Challenge* was supported by the ROH Bridge. As the business model developed, licences were sought from partners to enable delivery across different geographies. During the period of this evaluation (2019 to 2022), the licence for Bedford Borough was funded by The Harpur Trust, whilst support for Central Bedfordshire was funded by Central Bedfordshire Council. Funding for Culture Vouchers in the previous period (2016 to 2018) was also secured from The Harpur Trust, The Wixamtree Trust, Gale Family Trust, Aspire Higher, the University of Bedfordshire, and Waitrose.

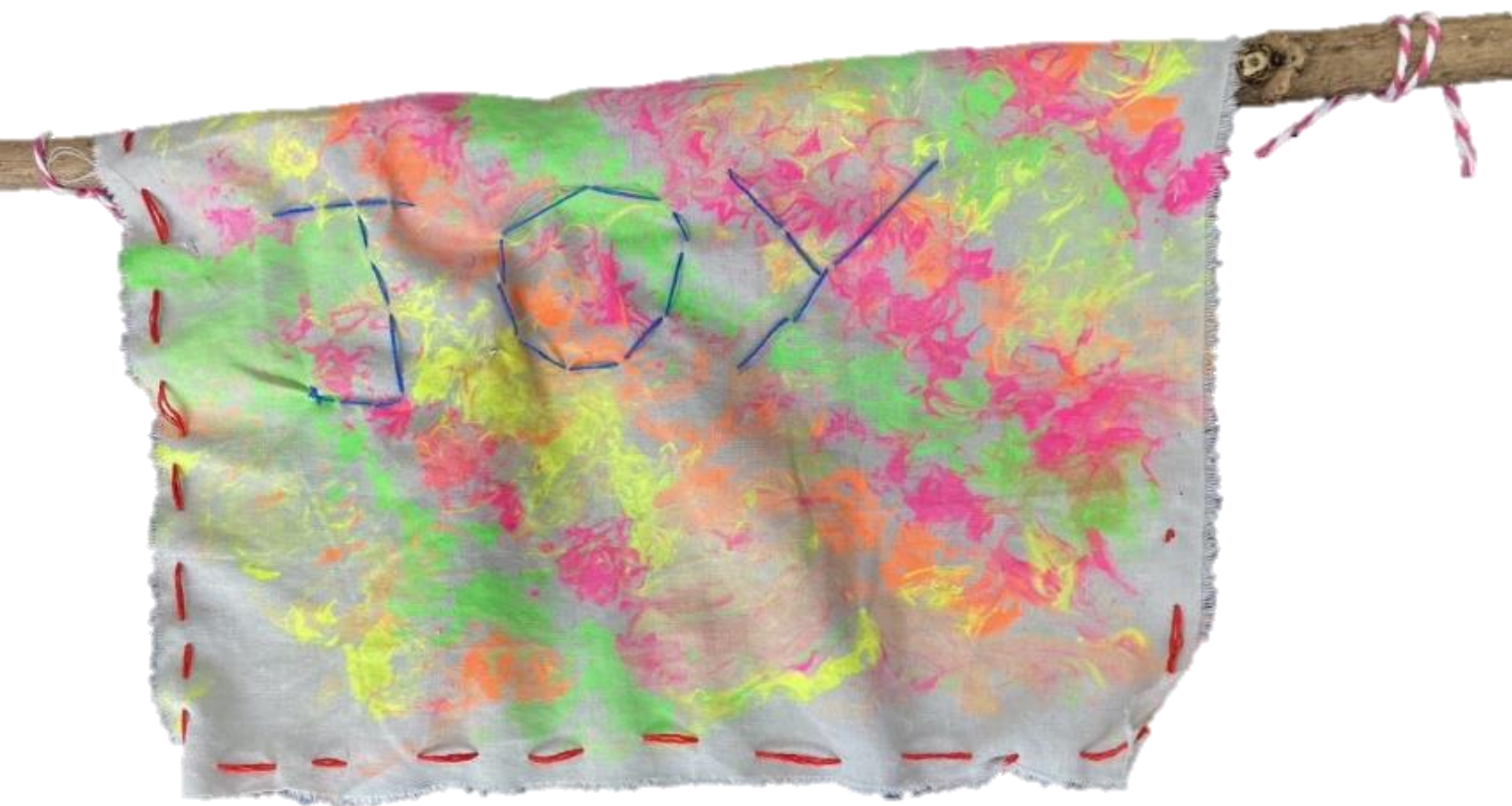
Funding has rarely been multi-year, meaning that applying for and negotiating funding has been constant and time-consuming for BCA. The original business model was also predicated on the notion that ROH Bridge funding to LCEPs could be used to support the service. However, a policy change within the ROH Bridge meant that this was no longer encouraged, and the reliance was shifted to grant funders and local authorities who were unable to support ongoing services, expressing a preference for one-off projects.

As with most externally supported projects, funding conditions have influenced where it can run, who it is for, and for how long. Fundraising for Culture Vouchers (to then be given away), has never been an easy ask for BCA, and unsurprisingly, an even greater challenge post covid.



Creative Film Workshops at Livingstone Primary School
Photo: Permission of Livingstone Primary School

4 Highlights and strengths



What really worked:

Drawing on interviews and conversations that have taken place over the last three years, and a collection of reports and evaluations created during that time, this section showcases the key strengths, benefits and potential of *The Culture Challenge* programme that have been most strongly and consistently articulated in feedback.

Printed flags made by pupils at St James's Primary School, Bedford, with artist Katie Allen
Photo: Permission of St James' Primary School

Building Connections

Brokering and partnership building

The Culture Challenge's brokering service has been described as a lifeline to many schools over the years, giving teachers the confidence and support to bring arts and culture into their classrooms, often for the first time. It has played a particularly useful role for non-specialist primary teachers, enrichment leads, and staff who have found themselves responsible for putting together a creative or cultural event with little time for planning or partnership building.

That said, the benefits have by no means been a one-way street. Many artists and cultural providers have benefited equally from this service, as a way to meet new contacts, gain routes into schools, find fellowship with other practitioners, test out project ideas, and acquire work. *TCC* Managers have been very proactive in trying to encourage teachers and practitioners to develop their skills in working together, based on mutual understanding of each other's needs.

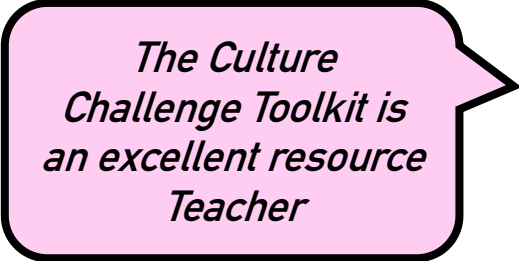
Igniting longer term collaborations

These initial moments of connection have also led to longer-term partnerships, or have been the spark for spin-off projects and collaborations (see The Twinning Project below, pages 35-36). What may start out as a single workshop or visit, has frequently grown into regular bookings from schools, or multi-layered projects.

Another key advantage of the brokering service is that it can support teachers and providers in creating more bespoke programmes, shaped by discussion and specialist local knowledge, leading to a richer alternative than simply choosing a session from a pre-set menu. The founder, who started the brokering service and is highly skilled at bringing people together, is often cited as being a pivotal reason for people getting involved – by being on hand, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and encouraging. More recent *TCC* Managers who have brokered new relationships between schools and providers, are also quoted as the reason why people became involved.

TCC Managers have needed to bring a unique set of skills (of understanding both the learning and cultural sectors, as well as the local arts ecology), in order to be able to speak the right language to schools, headteachers, providers and arts leads, and advocate for high quality cultural learning.

The brokering service has provided a human touch to what can sometimes seem daunting if it is the first time someone has planned creative learning activities.



*The Culture
Challenge Toolkit is
an excellent resource
Teacher*

Training and networking



Twining Conference. Photo BCA

As shown in the statistical data for 2019-22 and 2016-22 (pages 7-8 and page 49), the training and networking sessions run by *TCC* over the years have given a significant number of teachers and providers opportunities to connect, network, and learn new skills.

For artists and cultural professionals, the desire to be part of a wider arts and culture network has been a major motivation to attend these sessions – to build partnerships and feel part of a wider arts ecology.

Building a virtuous circle

The Culture Challenge is often talked about in terms of how each of its components lean into each other, and when taken together, can propel real action.

For example, some teachers and creative practitioners have described the Culture Vouchers as helping them to ‘take a leap of faith’. By this, they mean that the voucher funding has enabled them to do something different, such as inviting an artist to take up residence in their classroom, or visiting a local cultural venue. As a result of this new experience, the impact on pupils can be seen, (whether it is on self-confidence, creative skills or motivation), showing proof of its impact. With a track record to build on, and taking forward lessons learnt from the experience, this can inspire a desire to repeat similar activities or develop them in more depth, which can ultimately lead to more embedded practice, creative partnership working, and Artsmark journeys (See Case Study 1 on page 27 for an example).



Dance Path workshops with Jenny Rochford at Broadmead Lower School, Bedford
Photo: Permission from Broadmead Lower School

Practical resources

Money

It is no secret that most schools are short of money. They were short of money when *The Culture Challenge* was set up, and they are short of money at the time of writing. However, things are likely to get worse before they get better as we find ourselves in a perfect storm of financial pressures – from rising energy prices, food and living costs, to the after effects of covid which is ramping up school's supply cover costs to whole new levels. Set against these conditions, the Culture Vouchers have played a very real and practical role in helping children and young people to access arts and culture.

Feedback on the benefits of the Culture Vouchers has been consistently positive from teachers, whether they have been involved in *TCC* from the start, have only recently taken part in the scheme, are working as a Headteacher, or are new to the teaching profession. The fact that the vouchers are linked to Pupil Premium is also seen as an important dimension, although in practice, as well as using vouchers to support children most in need, the majority of Headteachers see them as an opportunity to benefit *all* pupils.

It could be argued that schools might be at risk of becoming reliant on vouchers for their creative and cultural activity, the subtext being that ideally, cultural opportunities should be embedded within schools by putting the conditions in place for an arts-rich school to thrive, such as empowering teachers through relevant training, ringfencing budget, or fundraising for creative projects. However, in many cases, as well as being time poor, teachers have little or no experience of fundraising, might lack buy in at a senior level, or need more allies on the ground to support their cultural and creative journeys with young people.

The vouchers, therefore, whilst not necessarily being a perfect solution to financial restraints, have been a welcome mechanism for helping to make creative projects happen, at whatever level. They have made new experiences possible for thousands of children and young people.

Website and Directory

The Culture Challenge website, and in particular the Culture Challenge Directory are seen as positive tools, especially by teachers who are already aware of them. Most teachers find them distinctive, well designed and easy to navigate, and are reassured by the knowledge that all of the people listed on there are DBS checked. The Directory fulfills its role in helping schools to get a sense of what is on offer to them locally, with the different categories showing culture as something 'beyond just drawing and painting'.

Another key strength of [The Culture Challenge website](#) is the wealth of resources it provides for schools, including *The Culture Challenge Toolkit*, packed with tips, planning guidance, evaluation templates, and pre-Arts Award support (see Appendix 5). The whole programme is structured to fit with Arts Award, to lead naturally into it as a stepping-stone.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Developing deeper creative teaching skills

Balliol Primary School working with musician Martin Hanson, Osagyefo Theatre Company



Who, when and where:

In June 2021, Martin Hanson of Osagyefo Theatre Company delivered African drumming workshops with Year 5 and 6 pupils at Balliol Primary School in Kempston. Its success led to Martin returning to lead teacher CPD sessions the following year, supporting staff to use their selection of *djembes* (African drums) with confidence. This was followed by eight workshop sessions over two days with Year 1- 5 children in June 2022 for World Music Day.

Balliol Primary School is an inclusive, community Primary School for children aged 2-11, based in south Bedford. It has 350 pupils on roll, and is strongly dedicated to celebrating diversity, encouraging risk taking and building an ethos of respect and empathy.

Osagyefo Theatre's participatory arts in education programme gives schools the opportunity to learn more about African culture. Martin's work includes the technical aspects of drumming on traditional instruments, and how they are used to communicate across long distances, in a form of coded sounds.

Martin Hanson of Osagyefo Theatre Company. Photo: Permission of Balliol Primary School

Background: The school's Music Lead, Hayley Inskip, was keen to embed music more deeply within the schools' culture and curriculum as well as to build teacher confidence, improving children's wellbeing and mental health after covid-19.

Why did this Culture Challenge project take place? The project took place as a way to celebrate World Music Day through a series of skills and wellbeing centred workshops. The project developed into something deeper, spanning two years, with staff training and further pupil workshops in 2022. The aims of the project were:

- To give pupils the opportunity to watch a musical performance, meet a musician, and learn how to play a new instrument.
- To support the children's mental health and wellbeing after covid-19.
- To grow and embed teacher confidence in playing their own *djembes*, leading to the long-term use of school equipment for creative learning by non-specialists, for the benefit of the students.

How did it work?

Martin and Hayley planned the series of workshops to meet the school's learning aims. He delivered these in school, using his own instruments with plenty spare for the students to practice their own hand-drumming skills.

Sessions were adapted to the different age ranges and his delivery was positive and uplifting, with an enthusiastic attitude 'shining through'. Rhythm, keeping to a simple and more complex beat, and contextual information about the origins and use of the traditional instruments, all made links across the curriculum for the students, in particular to Year 6's previous work on Samba and Humanities topics.

Each workshop was approached with enthusiasm and empowered the children to follow their musical passion – children were always incredibly engaged and excited.
Teacher

Teacher observations and verbal feedback from the children were gathered to inform evaluation. *TCC* Manager, Helen O'Hara, in her brokering role, suggested introducing teacher CPD by Martin before the children's second round of workshops in summer 2022, to help embed skills and confidence with small group work in the later sessions.

Impact:

We couldn't have had as successful a World Music Day without your support..
Teacher

In Workshop 2, Class teachers (non-specialists) were able to observe, embed their skills, and support as a follow up to the teacher CPD. Year 6 pupils were able to connect their knowledge to their previous Samba sessions. Many were not aware that this style of music originated from where they were born. There were significant morale-boosting and wellbeing effects for the teachers from their CPD sessions, at a time when covid-19 effects continued to cause difficult disruptions to school routines.

All the staff were fascinated by the workshops and the energy that Martin brought to World Music Day.
Teacher

Where next?

Martin was outstanding. He provided a captivating, inspiring and knowledge-rich experience - everyone wanted him to come back, even children that don't usually connect with the Music sessions. He has become a valued member of our school who is often talked about in the staffroom where teachers share how amazing his workshop has been.
Teacher

The Music Lead teacher is now definitely more likely to explore and engage with other providers from the Culture Challenge Directory, if the budget allows, and has plans to seek out further support if they look to work towards Artsmark.

Case Study 2: Promoting NHS staff wellbeing

Year 3 pupils at Dunstable Icknield Lower School with Katie Allen, artist and illustrator



Creating textile prints using natural forms
Photo: Katie Allen

Who, when and where:

In April and May 2022, art workshops were delivered by artist Katie Allen with Year 3 pupils at Dunstable Icknield Lower School. The idea for this project was to create artworks for staff at Luton & Dunstable Hospital, to thank NHS staff for their commitment during the covid-19 crisis.

Dunstable Icknield School has 294 pupils from EYFS up to Year 4, with 8% eligible for Pupil Premium. The school ethos and curriculum are underpinned by a values-based education to support wider wellbeing. The EYFS Lead and class teacher, Karen Angus, was the project lead.

Katie Allen is a Bedford-based illustrator with 10 years' experience of working in arts education. Her work combines typography, printmaking and surface design.

Background: This project was part of the wider '[These are the hands](#)' initiative, inspired by a Michael Rosen poem. The Bedford & Luton/Dunstable Hospitals Project was managed by artist Anne-Marie Abbate, with funding secured from the Arts Council England 'Let's Create Jubilee Fund' in March 2022.

We are committed to delivering a high-quality art and cultural education for every child at Icknield and we look forward as we grow with Artsmark. - **Teacher**

The wider project engaged NHS staff in creating bold and positive graphic installations designed to lift the spirit of viewers and was devised by the Take HeART group in the NHS Trust for staff wellbeing. Dunstable Icknield Lower School has both Artsmark Silver Award and a Music Mark Award and runs a number of enrichment clubs and activities.

Why did this Culture Challenge project take place?

The brief for the artist and children and the communications to schools explicitly linked this outreach project to the wider '[These are the hands](#)' project, to situate it as an expression of gratitude for the NHS. The project aimed to:

- Explore themes of wellbeing, hands, touch, and communicating gratitude (PSHE-related learning & art skills) through making workshops.
- Offer, as part of its Artsmark journey, the opportunity for children to work collaboratively alongside a specialist artist/illustrator.

How did it work?

The school had been invited to participate in the already-planned larger project, based on data resulting from the Culture Challenge Manager's targeted approach to Culture Vouchers in 2022. Working with Katie, two cohorts of students helped to inform wording for the artworks to promote hospital staff wellbeing. In workshops they created materials which were made into the final artwork digitally by Katie Allen and these were turned into products such as prints and postcards.

Skills learnt consisted of printmaking and collage, focusing on mark-making with found objects. In addition, the children learnt how to create repeated patterns and relief printmaking of abstract photographs onto collaged surfaces. TCC Vouchers funded the artist's and project coordinator's fees as well as the digital scans and print elements (all work was completed at the school and the artist's studio for the digital work).

Impact:

The Teaching Assistant supporting the workshops was inspired to set up a session for those children who did not participate, and to use her newly acquired CPD learning to develop further activity in school. Children will in future have the opportunity to apply their arts skills across the curriculum. A whole school assembly was planned as a celebration, as well as some review and reflection time. As a result, they will be able to develop and apply their skills towards their Year 3 *Discover Arts Awards*.

The children were very inspired and excited to talk about the skills they were using and to share their experience with their peers: less confident children were able to talk confidently about their activity. A great CPD opportunity for our staff. **Teacher**

Children gained knowledge about the local hospital and the role of some NHS staff. They were able to empathise with the feelings and emotions of others during the covid-19 pandemic, and with its aftermath.

Where next?

An opportunity will be taken to visit the hospital as follow-up in the autumn term 2022 to maintain the connections made. Prints of the work were produced for display in the school to inspire key stakeholders, and postcards of the work have been distributed to NHS staff as a big 'Thank You!'

Teacher feedback noted that the school is even more likely to engage with the culture sector to ensure that they can offer pupils a 'creative, diverse and inclusive curriculum'.



Finished digital piece with children's work. Photo: Katie Allen

Case Study 3: Inclusion and diversity mural

Sixth Form Student Council at Mark Rutherford School working with artist and illustrator Katie Allen



Year 12 Art students: Photo: Jacqui Saunders

Who, when and where:

In Summer 2022, artist Katie Allen worked with Mark Rutherford School's 6th Form Student Council to create a new mural celebrating inclusion and diversity, and build cultural capital.

Mark Rutherford School is a secondary school in north Bedford with 1,250 pupils on roll, drawn from Bedford town and surrounding villages. It offers a wide-ranging curriculum to suit the needs of all students, regardless of backgrounds or ability, and is strongly dedicated to supporting each child to reach their potential. Jacqui Saunders, Head of Art, and Michelle Bye-Gannon, English Teacher and Student Voice Lead, worked with Katie to make the project happen.

Katie Allen is a Bedford-based illustrator with over 10 years' experience of working in arts education. Her work combines typography, printmaking and surface design.

Background:

Mark Rutherford School has a robust track record of embedding the arts, and offers a range of GCSE, BTEC and A Level courses in music, drama, dance, art, photography and media. In fact, it was the second school in Bedford Borough to receive an Artsmark Gold Award (2019). The Sixth Form Student Council was re-established as lockdown lifted.

Why did this *Culture Challenge* project take place?

The project was a response to the impact of covid-19 upon students' mental health, aspirations and attainment, as well as their sense of community and belonging. Ideas came from the Student Council group and had three key aims, to:

- **Amplify student voice:** empowering 16–18-year-olds to share opinions, beliefs and values, developing their communication skills.
- **Design and create an inspirational art mural for their study area:** celebrating career options for students from all backgrounds, countries, cultures and identities.
- **Extend the project to the wider school:** older students delivering a similar project with younger pupils using the skills they have learnt.

Council members passionately requested the assistance of a local artist in designing and creating an aspirational art mural for their study area that demonstrates the different career pathways available to students from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, identities and religions. **Teacher**

How did it work?

Five Year 12 Art students were selected to design the mural with artist Katie Allen. Together, they came up with three different designs which were then shared with every Sixth Form tutor group, along with a voting form, so that the school community could choose which design would be created into a mural.

The final design included a range of characters holding objects or wearing items which represented their different careers, values and identities, celebrating inclusion and acceptance of diversity. The students worked closely with the artist who guided their progress. This included sketching the design onto the wall, painting each character and making sure the students could learn through trial and error. For example, Katie would allow the students to make mistakes which they could then find solutions to and edit.

It was marvellous to be involved in such a unique and modern project, campaigning for equality amongst all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality or identity. Art is such a powerful medium for communication – anyone can access the meaning behind the mural! - **Student**

The students told me they would use the experience on their CV and have learned about planning a big project. There was also lots of discussion about understanding negotiation and compromise! - **Artist**

Impact:

The mural has become a symbol of pride. It is a regular part of tours, demonstrates the school's commitment to inclusion and diversity, and serves as a strong student-led project. It has also nurtured links between the Sixth form community and subject departments (Art, English and the Pastoral team).

It has supported the school's Artsmark journey, prompted plans to introduce whole school Student Voice, and inspired students to ask for an annual Culture Day to celebrate diversity.

We hope that our mural will be our legacy that inspires generations behind us to aim high and achieve whatever they desire. - **Student**

Where next?

In 2022-23, the Year 12 students who led this project will take on leadership responsibilities – using their transferable skills to work with Year 7 to 10 students to design and create a second mural for the school, focusing on wellbeing. One of the lead teachers is fundraising for additional project funds, and there is enhanced support for creative projects at a senior level.

Katie offered inspirational insight into her own career journey and has been a positive role model. **Teacher**



The final mural in the Sixth Form Study Area. Photo: Jacqui Saunders

Case Study 4: Drama at The Shuttleworth Collection

Pupils from Caldecote CE Academy visiting the Shuttleworth Collection with actor Richard Mann in role



Richard Mann (left) as Dan Albone, and Shuttleworth Collection volunteer Ray.
Photo: Kayte Judge

Who, when and where:

In May 2022, pupils at Caldecote CE Academy visited the Shuttleworth Collection to learn more about local history, including Dan Albone, who invented some designs of bicycles, cars and tractors.

Caldecote CE Academy is a small, rural primary school near Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, for children aged 3-9, with 66 children on roll. Some 40% are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding.

The Shuttleworth Collection is an aeronautical and automotive museum in Old Warden, Bedfordshire. There is also a Swiss Garden, Shuttleworth House, parklands and trails.

Richard Mann, drama practitioner, has been producing films and running drama workshops in the education sector for over 20 years.

Background:

Caldecote CE Academy is a friendly, village school which believes in encouraging creative minds, fostering social skills and developing an understanding of the needs of other people. Outside learning is a key feature, including a Forest School. The school's current priorities include children's stamina for writing, reading, and recall.

Why did this *Culture Challenge* project take place?

The school wanted to take the children to a local heritage venue which would help to embed learning by bringing history to life through the use of professional actors. At the same time, the Shuttleworth Collection was developing its schools programmes around local inventor Dan Albone, partly funded by ROH Bridge. Its aims were:

- To support the delivery of Caldecote's whole school summer topic 'Through The Ages': bringing to life local history and heritage through an interactive visit to Shuttleworth.
- To prepare for Caldecote's whole school autumn topic 'Inventions': celebrating the achievements of local inventor Dan Albone, using drama to help the recall of learning.
- To work with the Shuttleworth Collection to support the development of their new learning activities.

A visit to a cultural venue will help to embed learning and the use of professional story tellers or drama practitioners will help with recall of learning.

- Teacher

How did it work?

The visit to The Shuttleworth Collection involved children from Years 1 to 4, and had two main aspects. Pupils could interact with 'Dan' (Dan Albone played by Richard Mann), and his friend Ray, (a volunteer at Shuttleworth), to find out about Dan Albone's life and inventions.

The session was very interactive, with the children asking lots of questions. The wider project involved seeing The Shuttleworth's Collections and grounds.

This project has been a highlight – working with hyper local schools because of *The Culture Challenge* vouchers. It shows our broader offer.

- Provider



Pupils meeting Richard Mann in role as Dan Albone.
Photo: Kayte Judge

Impact:

The visit to The Shuttleworth Collection fulfilled Caldecote CE Academy's hopes and aspirations, with drama proving to be an effective approach to learning for their pupils. In turn, the sessions helped The Shuttleworth Collection to develop new materials and resources for its Dan Albone-related collection, to be used by other schools.

The children have actually been more observant when looking at artefacts. They have picked up that there are sometimes subtle clues as to how something has changed over time and that they need to look closely at these before drawing conclusions, which has been great to see.

- Teacher

We found taking the children on a trip was hugely beneficial in making history come to life and having a drama practitioner there added really depth to it – the children engaged with him, wrote letters to him, and got a video message back.

- Teacher



Photo: Kayte Judge

Where next?

The school is now more likely to engage with the cultural sector as a result of receiving the culture voucher, particularly in relation to working with drama practitioners in the future.

The Shuttleworth Collection now has digital film resources to be used with schools in future sessions as a legacy resource.

Acting as a catalyst-The Twinning Project

Ripple effect: A key outcome of *The Culture Challenge* has been its ripple effect – acting as a catalyst for new partnerships, serving as an impetus for networks, and being the spark for longer-term projects such as the Twinning Project.



St John Rigby Catholic Primary pupils.
Photo: Permission of the school

Who, when and where: The Twinning Project was delivered on behalf of BACE in 2019. With funding from the Education Improvement Strategy Group, it was led by Isabel Davies of the Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance, and managed by Kayte Judge from BCA. Inspired by the idea of twin towns, it matched eight schools in Bedford Borough with eight local culture providers, so that together they could explore and co-develop new approaches to high quality cultural provision for children.

The twins were:

- Artist Anne-Marie Abbate and Grange Academy (Special School)
- Bedford Borough Libraries and Goldington Green Academy
- Bedford Creative Arts and Wootton Lower School
- Dance Path and Scott Primary School
- Full House Theatre and Putnoe Primary school
- Music for Bedford Borough and Sharnbrook Academy (Secondary)
- The Philharmonia Orchestra and St John Rigby Catholic Primary
- The Higgins and Mark Rutherford School (Secondary)

The Culture Challenge was the ground from which many things grew... a grassroots solution to a local problem. Big strategic projects came from it, such as the Twinning Programme in Bedford, and Pioneering Partnerships in Central Bedfordshire, which both attracted further funding.

Kayte Judge, TCC Founder

Background:

TCC led to large-scale, strategic projects. The Twinning Project was BACE's first major enterprise in its mission to ensure that Bedford Borough's children could access high quality arts and cultural experiences. BCA was a founding member of BACE, co-chaired initially by TCC founder Kayte Judge, and the late Gill Peck, Head of Putnoe Primary.

Why did this project take place?

The Twinning Project sought to address challenges around arts participation through cross-sector collaborations, in a climate where research was showing the benefits of cultural provision on engagement and wellbeing, whilst the arts in schools were being eroded. It also built on a recent 'Culture for Wellbeing' project by TCC which measured the impact of Culture Clubs on children using the Leuven Scale, (5-point scale measuring a child's emotional wellbeing and involvement) which showed a 17% increase in wellbeing and a 20% increase in engagement, after 20 sessions. The Twinning Project aimed to:

- Develop eight cross-sector partnerships
- Support teachers and cultural providers in their leadership development through their Artsmark journeys and collaborative commissioning of cultural activity and
- Increase the cultural engagement of children and young people in schools.

How did it work?

Each twin worked together to commission new cultural activity in each of the host schools. The cohort was supported through a combination of six training sessions; peer-to-peer learning and practice sharing; Culture Voucher funding for creative activity and Artsmark registration; regular updates, resources and support from the project manager; as well as ongoing reflection and evaluation. Although there were some challenges along the way, such as starting later than planned and time pressures, the projects took place over the spring and summer terms in 2019, and led to a Success Conference in July for over 70 delegates.

We have identified how it could be developed into more sustainable experiences that will enrich our curriculum and extra-curricular offerings.

- Teacher

Impact:

The session on Youth Voice led us to changing our approach.

- Teacher

Over 1,200 children and young people took part directly in 24 creative projects, with a wider reach of 2,500. The project helped schools to move forward with their Artsmark journeys, with six schools using the project in their Artsmark applications, and many pupils receiving Arts Awards.

Stronger relationships were forged between the twins, with four partners applying for further funding to continue working together in the future. Teachers improved their understanding of creating briefs for creative practitioners and networks increased. The opportunity to work in a more sustained manner led to stronger student voice, greater confidence in working creatively, and contributed to a number of School Improvement Plans.

Where next?

BACE is now planning a similar, but smaller scale action research project in later 2022-23, with Sarah Golding, of GLOW Training. It will involve 'triplet' style partnerships of school, provider and venue for the purpose of cultural learning CPD in Bedford.

Working together opens up better opportunities to embed practice rather than just give children a nice experience.

- Teacher



The Twinning Schools and Culture Providers group photo. Photo: One Stop Media

5 Lessons learnt

On reflection - signposts for the future

Through a programme spanning almost eight years, there have been many learnings. With the gift of hindsight, there are things that could have been done differently. Like any creative process, it has been a journey of trial and error, with bumps, thrills and surprises along the way.

The brief for this final evaluation was to record '*the good, the bad and the ugly*', particularly over the last three years of the programme from 2019-22. So whether you are reading this as a teacher, artist, funder or cultural organisation, it is hoped that the lessons learnt might be useful in some way to your own settings or contexts.

Prioritise resource and capacity

It's not unusual for capacity to be an issue for small arts organisations, or indeed for schools. It's also not unusual for creative programmes to be pushed over the line by passion and goodwill. However, by its multi-faceted nature, *The Culture Challenge* was always going to be fairly resource intensive - hardly surprising when its delivery involved not just brokering links, developing CPD opportunities, advocating and networking, but also fundraising, administering bookings, marketing and maintaining a website.

Whilst feedback over the years from staff and freelancers has been resounding in its message that a full-time role was required to manage *TCC*'s various aspects, when cast against a context of diminishing funds for our education and cultural sectors, this has often been a challenge. To put this in some context, BCA's NPO funding has been at a standstill; it has received an inflation uplift of 1.7% in only one year out of the last nine.

Since 2018, and then amplified by the shadow of uncertainty cast by covid-19, there have been *five* different part-time *TCC* managers, which led to a lessening of visibility and a lack of continuity. Whilst there were several reasons for staff turnover, these were exacerbated by challenges around long-term funding and short-term contracts.

To prevent capacity issues and staffing gaps, and to allow vision and creativity to flourish, provision needs to be realistically resourced and supported, not just in terms of funding, but by peer support, dependable networks, and opportunities to be inspired and refreshed. Although goodwill tends to be overflowing in the education and cultural sectors, nourishment is essential.

Cultivate a specialist skillset

Development and delivery of *TCC* requires a specialist skillset – a particular combination of both educational and cultural expertise - as well as the ability to pre-empt needs, and tread a line which requires strategic thinking and astute administration in equal measure. Building partnerships across sectors, and confidence in crossing thresholds takes time and nurturing, especially if a staff member is new to a role or an area.

Less really can be more

Although being small in size does not mean being small in ambition, there is only so much that one arts organisation can do. Although there was a point when *TCC* expanded to other boroughs and its aim was to scale up nationally, there can be real value in focusing on embedding delivery locally, capitalising on a key aspect that makes *TCC* stand apart – its ability to keep its finger on the pulse of its arts ecology and the importance of local knowledge of schools and of maintaining key contacts.

Share it out – with a joined-up approach

With a range of partners and entities across Bedfordshire, such as Creative Bedfordshire, BACE, SLICE (Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education) and LCEPs, (a number of which have developed only during the timespan of *TCC*), there is potential for a shared brokering service which could have greater reach; co-created CPD sessions; stronger pupil voice; and a wider offer of support, whilst continuing to nurture new and lasting cultural relationships.

On occasion, the impact of *TCC* has been diluted by overlap with others, which can lend a sense of competition rather than partnership. A more joined-up approach can foster clearer communication as to who does what to support, champion or deliver cultural education.

Navigating a sliding scale of engagement

There have been different levels of delivery and purpose across the lifespan of *TCC*. With some approaches leaning more towards *TCC*'s original intentions of helping time poor teachers link with local providers, and others reflecting the action research nature of the Twinning Project, the programme has always had potential for varying degrees of engagement. For example:

- Focussing on making initial connections between schools and arts providers, as well as setting up projects and training for deeper engagement and relationships, leading ultimately to more independent brokerage between schools and providers.
- Prioritising support to non-art specialists to develop their skills and confidence, as well as offering CPD opportunities which can help teachers on a progressive journey to become arts leaders in their schools, so they no longer need *TCC*'s support.
- Using Culture Vouchers to involve every child in a school for maximum reach, as well as for more targeted engagement with specific, small groups of children.

At times, *The Culture Challenge* has been difficult to manage due to shifting resources, need and capacity, and a tendency to perhaps spread itself too thinly. However, whilst an activity or a project might not always satisfy multiple layers of participation, or reach as many schools as it would ideally wish to, no matter how large or small, short or long, each interaction can still have a positive and meaningful impact.

6 What's next? Legacies and resources

Moving forward in partnership: A Bedfordshire-wide cultural education strategy?

At the time of writing, local partners are in discussion about how the legacy of *The Culture Challenge* could form part of a Bedfordshire-wide cultural education strategy with resource for similar delivery with shared ownership by a wider number of parties.

For example, discussions have begun between members of the Bedford and Luton LCEPs and the Central Bedfordshire Culture Hub members. These are being supported by the Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation and officers of all three local authorities in the county.


Strategic Vision



The role of LCEPs

The future of the ROH Bridge and local LCEPs remains uncertain until the outcome of the Arts Council England's 2023-26 Investment Programme funding round is known in October 2022. However, with LCEPs in both Bedford and Luton, and the Culture Hub network run by Central Bedfordshire Council, there are several forums where local cultural education stakeholders regularly come together to reflect on local strategy.

It is possible that greater collaboration between these local partners may enable *The Culture Challenge* legacy to be built into the strategic vision of the future that could be shared by these groups.



We, as a community of people that believe children need access to the arts, need to think about how we nurture that project or projects, how we might support and develop the person or people running it, and where it might flourish best.

**Kayte Judge, Community Arts
Producer**

Legacy resources

A number of legacy resources will either continue, be adapted or have been created for the first time in later 2022. These will be available for free use in the future by all the cultural providers and teachers across Bedfordshire with whom *TCC* has worked, as well as for future Arts Leads and providers well beyond the county boundaries. Publicity about these is planned for the autumn term 2022. The deeper, creative learning legacy for students, providers and teachers is harder to pinpoint without detailed longitudinal research (outside the scope of this report) on changes in attitudes to the arts, in engagement, in teamwork or in creative or communication skills as a result of activities.

Reconfiguring *The Culture Challenge Directory*

There is a definite need for a culture directory in some shape or form for Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, and the existing resource will be updated and retained by BCA in the short term. To reduce the need for staff resource to update a website manually, consideration is being given to a mechanism for providers to manage their own online profiles. In addition, other local networks are developing, such as Creative Bedfordshire online (www.creativebedfordshire.co.uk) which may offer locations for expansion. Local LCEPs are also considering how they communicate with schools and providers about their offer, and there is potential for communication platforms to be joined up.

Repurposing *The Culture Challenge Toolkit*

The *TCC Toolkit* is an excellent resource and unlikely to become quickly outdated. Ways of promoting the Toolkit content, ensuring strong signposting to it for teachers and providers, and making it searchable, are being produced as a legacy resource on the BCA website.

A new 'How To Guide' video is in production for the website for launch in autumn 2022. It features the founder of *TCC* and creator of the Toolkit, Kayte Judge, informally demonstrating how to make the most of this resource by teachers and providers to plan, evaluate and develop their own creative learning projects.

Skills sharing resources

In preparation for the change required by the discontinuation of *TCC* in its current format, the current *TCC* Manager with the BCA team has been preparing a free legacy resource for creative practitioners and teachers, which is intended to bring together some of the planned training sessions that could not take place in 2021-22 due to covid-19 uncertainties. It is envisaged that this will have wider applications beyond just Bedfordshire schools.

The resource will consist of short video 'Skills sharing sessions' on marketing, networking, being school-ready, and how to use *The Culture Challenge Toolkit*. There will also be an audio podcast option, some individual resource pdfs for reading, as well as other useful links to external resources and sector organisations for creative learning CPD. These will be found, along with this Evaluation Report from autumn 2022, on the re-designed Education page of BCA's website here:

www.bedfordcreativearts.org.uk/projects/culture-challenge

Signposting other networks and opportunities



The Grange Academy mural
Photo: Permission of the School

Creative Bedfordshire is a local authority funded online networking platform that is free for creatives to access. By creating a profile at www.creativebedfordshire.co.uk anyone working in the creative industries locally can connect with peers, post their own news and events, and receive a weekly newsletter to stay connected.

In addition, BCA and 1 Degree East provide a Producer Hub mentoring service for producers and self-producing artists to access support with acquiring funding, delivering creative projects and developing ideas in the sector. Directing Arts Leads in schools and providers to continue to utilize these services, and have an active role in other networks, will enable relevant opportunities, ideas and partnerships to be formed.

Diversity mentoring scheme

When monitoring the Directory of providers using the demographics forms, it is noticeable that the diversity of the Bedfordshire population is not yet reflected in its makeup. To partially address this, using a portion of *TCC* budget taken forward into later 2022 and with a freelance mentor to manage the scheme, a small cohort of more diverse cultural providers will be supported over the course of a number of months in late 2022. They will have small group and 1 to 1 mentoring, developing skills in areas they have identified as needing attention such as marketing, producing their own projects and communication skills. The intention is to actively bring more diverse cultural providers into the BCA Producer Hub, so as to build confidence in pitching and proposing their own projects with schools in future.

Conclusion

Like many great ideas, *The Culture Challenge* began quietly. To quote TCC Founder Kayte Judge, '*The Culture Challenge* started as a stolen bit of paper in my back pocket'. Before long, not only had the programme gained a website, set up a cultural directory, and expanded to other boroughs, it even had its own currency.

The building blocks of *The Culture Challenge* were sound, created from a place of in-depth consultation and collaborative action. It was both logical and impassioned, bringing people together - practically and whole heartedly - to create extraordinary cultural experiences for children and young people.

Without *The Culture Challenge*, thousands of pupils would not have had their horizons broadened or their eyes opened to new experiences. They may not have had the chance to be flushed with pride at something they had created, or be able – just for a moment – to look at the world from a different perspective. Hundreds of teachers may have missed out on learning new creative skills, making new friends, or re-fashioning their classrooms. The artists, venues and culture on their doorsteps might have remained just that step too far away.

Relationships are vital, as *The Culture Challenge* has shown, and the benefits of creative and cultural experiences on young people's health, wellbeing, achievements and self-confidence are well known.

As the programme pauses, in need of new funding and support, will the sector be challenged to pick up the baton?

The Culture Challenge has been the linchpin holding the schools and arts community together - Provider

I feel excited, interested and proud - Student

7 Acknowledgements

Thank you: *The Culture Challenge* has been an epic journey which would not have been possible without each and every person involved along the way.

Kayte Judge, *The Culture Challenge* Founder and former *The Culture Challenge* Manager

BCA staff and freelancers who have worked directly on *The Culture Challenge*:

Emily Alleyne, Jo Atherton, Samantha Evison, Ailene Gray and Helen O'Hara

BCA staff team who have supported *The Culture Challenge*: Elaine Midgley, Bex Foskett, Ami Aubrey, Louise Stewart-Young, Maria Minett and Jack Keenan

Schools in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire: see Appendix 2 for a list of those awarded Culture Vouchers between 2019-22

Cultural providers: see Appendix 3 for all providers in *The Culture Challenge* Directory

Members of BACE in Bedford Borough including BACE founders: Dawn Giles, former CEO of BCA; Paul Wildman, Lincroft Academy; the late Gill Peck, former Head of Putnoe Primary; and Tom Perrett, Manager for Libraries and Culture, Bedford Borough Council

Members of The Culture Hub in Central Bedfordshire

Royal Opera House Bridge: Tina Gray-Rampello and Emma van Nieuwenburgh

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Central
Bedfordshire
Council
Working in partnership



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

and in addition, from 2016 to 2019:

Aspire Higher

Arts and Culture Project team, University of Bedfordshire

The Gale Family Trust

The Wixamtree Trust

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Ailene Gray, Freelance Illustrator [LinkedIn: Ailene Gray](#)

Case studies 1 & 2, project management & editorial: Helen O'Hara, CC Manager (2022)

Contributions to *The TCC Story* section and proof reading: Elaine Midgley, Director, BCA

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interviewees involved in consultation for *The Culture Challenge Evaluation 2019-22*

Balliol Primary School
Dunstable Icknield Primary School
Livingstone Primary School
Mark Rutherford Secondary School
Queens Park Academy

Anne-Marie Abbate
Katie Allen
Desiree Bashi
Bedford Music Hub
Dance Path
Full House Theatre
Future Legend Media
Little Science Lab
Osagyefo Theatre Company
The Shuttleworth Collection

Bedford Borough Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Royal Opera House Bridge
University of Bedfordshire

TCC Founder
BCA staff

Appendix 2

Interviewees involved in consultation for *The Culture Challenge Review 2021*

Balliol Primary School
Carlton CofE Primary School
Goldington Green Academy
Greys Education Centre
Lincroft Primary School
Livingstone Primary School
Scott Primary School
Shortstown Primary School
Turvey Primary School

Anne Marie Abbate
Creative Film Workshops
Faith in Queens Park
Ground works
Maria Merridan
Rogan's Books / Booktastic

Arts Council England
Bedford Borough Council
Royal Opera House Bridge
The Harpur Trust
University of Bedfordshire

TCC Founder
BCA Staff
BCA Trustee

Appendix 3

Schools involved in *The Culture Challenge* during 2019-2022

Balliol Primary School
Bedford Free Secondary School
Bedford Road Primary School
Biggleswade Academy
Broadmead Lower School
Caldecote Primary School
Camestone Primary School
Cotton End Forest School
Dunstable Icknield Lower School
Edward Peake Middle School
Etonbury Academy
Eversholt Primary School
Grange Academy
Hawthorn Park Community Primary
Hazeldene Primary School
Hills Academy
Kings Oak Primary School
Laburnum Primary School
Lakeview Primary School
Lancot Challenger Academy
Livingstone Primary School
Mark Rutherford Secondary School
Priory Primary School
Putnoe Primary School
Queens Park Academy
Ravensden Primary School
St James Primary School
Scott Primary School
Shackleton Primary School
Sharnbrook Primary School
Shortstown Primary School
Springfield Primary School
Stondon Lower Primary School
Turvey Primary School

Appendix 4

List of providers in the Culture Challenge Directory

Amanda Silk	Jo Atherton	Smallbeans
Aimi Rix Artist	John Bunyan Boat	Sophie Robyn Bennett
Art Adventurers After School	John Bunyan Museum	Soundhoppers
Artist Workshops: Gresswellart	Junior Filmmakers	Spectrum Community Arts Ltd
Bedford Choral Society	Katie Allen	Spirit Forge
Bedford College	Kemi Onabule	Step Out Arts
Bedford Corn Exchange	KL Dance Studio	Stockwood Discovery Centre
Bedford Creative Arts	Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre	Stotfold Watermill & Nature Reserve
Bedford Music Cooperative	LifeBox Theatre Co.	Susan Popoola
Bedford School of Visual Arts	Lindsay Tempest Art	T-HOP (UK) LTD
Bedford Theatre In Education	Little Science Lab	Teaching Talons
BedPop	Livi Gosling Illustration	The Bedford Chronicles
Bletchley Park Trust	Luton Central Library	The Bedford Language Centre
Bromham Mill	Luton Library Theatre	The Chellington Centre
Catherine O'Donnell Photography	Mandy Jennings	The Circus of Illustration
Charlotte Designs	Mark Steinhardt - Storyteller	The Drawing Machine
Christina Marks School of Performing Arts	Milton Keynes Art Centre	The English School of Falconry
Collar and Cuffs Co	Mini Map-Makers Limited	The Frog's Chorus
Conscia Jazz	Mique Moriuchi	The Greensand Trust
Creative Beginnings	MK Gallery	The Hat Factory
Creative Days	Moot Hall	The Higgins Bedford
Creative Film Workshops	Motus Dance	The National Museum of Computing
Creative Learning at Milton Keynes	Music for Bedford Borough	The Panacea Museum
Dance Path	Novus Theatre	The Parks Trust: Howe Park Wood
David Clarke - Drum Tutor	Once Upon Productions	The Parks Trust: Linford Lakes Nature Reserve
David Clarke DJ & Radio Tuition	Osagyefo Theatre Company	The Place Bedford (Theatre)
Demografix	Ozzlebox Ltd	The Play's The Thing Theatre Company
Denise Bowser	Pagrav Dance Company	The Quarry Theatre at St Luke's
Desiree Bashi	Pandora Inc CIC	The Shuttleworth Collection
Drumming is Fun	Patsy Izzard Company	& Swiss Garden
eduCreate	Paul Pibworth	The Stables
Equaliteach	Pell Ensemble	The Womack-Banning Piano Academy
Erskine-Jones Fine Art	PoMoNo Visual Arts	Theatre of Widdershins
Evie and Lola	Pottery by Andrew McDermott	Theatretrain Bedford
Festive Road	Qemamu Mosaics	Thomas Eke
Friends of Bedford Cemetery	Queen's Park Faith Tour	UK Centre for Carnival Arts (UKCCA)
Full House Theatre	Ready Steady Roll	University of Bedfordshire
Future Legend Media	Red Phoenix Storytelling	Uoldbag!
Grove Theatre	Rogan's Books	Utopia Creative Arts
Hannah Delaney Dance	Rost Productions Ltd	VyMy Dance & Fitness
Hot House Dance	Route Canal Arts	Warden Abbey Community Vineyard
I Am Strong Coaching	Schools Radio Network	Wardown Park Museum
Ian McEwen	Sharnbrook Mill Theatre Trust	Wassledine
Imajica Theatre	Shires Rep Theatre	Wiseminds Escape Room
Inspiring Music	Sinfonia Verdi	Wonderfuel Productions
Irie Vibes	Skip Beatz / Exercise Behaviour	
Jeremy Turner		

Appendix 5

Online resource [The Culture Challenge Toolkit](http://www.culturechallenge.co.uk)



THE

CULTURE

CHALLENGE

TOOL KIT

This is it... The Culture Challenge Tool Kit. It's a series of handy documents that will make using **The Culture Challenge** that little bit easier and has been designed for both cultural practitioners and teachers. And don't worry – there aren't reams of pages to wade through. Instead, you'll find **The Culture Challenge** Tool Kit has been designed so that you can dip in and out of it, and pick and choose the bits you need. **Print it off, download it, or bookmark it online** – it's up to you. So what have you got...?



The Culture Challenge Code of Conduct

This is where you'll find everything that a creative or cultural provider with **The Culture Challenge** signs up to. It details your commitment to quality, professionalism, creativity, safety and inclusion. Use it as a checklist, reminder, and – even – a confidence boost.

If you're a teacher, a quick skim of this will show you exactly the level of professionalism, quality, and experience you can expect when you make a booking with one of **The Culture Challenge** providers.



The Culture Challenge Commitment to Quality

Find out more about our quality checks and what **The Culture Challenge** Verified Provider logo means and the ways these help schools book cultural provision with confidence and ease.



The Culture Challenge Planning Form

Before you book a provider, you can work through this form to help you clarify what sort of practitioner and activity you're looking for. It will also help the practitioner understand all of the specific elements of the booking. This form can be used by teachers alone, or to help with those early planning conversations.



The Culture Challenge Booking Form

A neat, easy-to-follow, booking form that can be used by **The Culture Challenge** providers and by schools, during planning conversations. It's a helpful tool where you can store important information all in one place, plus you'll find questions that will help with planning.



The Culture Challenge Communications Best Practice Guide for Providers

From voicemail to thank you notes - make sure the communications side of your work is up to scratch. This practical guide pinpoints things you can do to showcase yourself in the best possible light, and ultimately help you achieve those bookings.



The Culture Challenge Evaluation Documents

Want to really understand how your workshop went, figure out ways to improve, or how you could adjust the experience to suit a specific set of people? Forget guesswork – it's all about evaluation. Here you'll find a pool of evaluation documents that will help you dig a little deeper and understand what worked, what didn't, and what you can do about it. It includes everything from simple telephone interview guides, to ideas for creative evaluation exercises you can incorporate into your event.

BEDFORD

CREATIVE

ARTS

www.culturechallenge.co.uk

OVER
220 CULTURAL
ACTIVITIES
HAVE BEEN DELIVERED THROUGH
WORKSHOPS, ARTIST
AND VISITS TO RESIDENCIES
CULTURAL
VENUES

OVER
16,000
CHILDREN TOOK PART,
PLUS **100s** OF
TEACHERS

150
ARTS AWARD
QUALIFICATIONS
WERE ACHIEVED BY
YOUNG PEOPLE

THE
CULTURE
CHALLENGE

ACTIVITY 2016~2022
THE BIGGER PICTURE IN NUMBERS

The Culture Challenge has played a transformative role in developing cultural learning opportunities on a range of different levels, whether through the sheer number of children taking part, or by creating a much-needed community of practice. Drawing on 7 years of evaluations, interviews, reports and booking data, this infographic summary celebrates the lifetime of The Culture Challenge's impact.

OVER
60 TRAINING
EVENTS
INVOLVING
970 ATTENDEES

90%
OF EVALUATIONS RATED
THE CULTURE
CHALLENGE
AS EXCELLENT

118 CULTURAL
PROVIDERS
WERE LISTED ON THE
CULTURE CHALLENGE
DIRECTORY

6
CULTURE CLUBS
WERE SET UP IN
SCHOOLS

OVER
150 CULTURE
VOUCHERS
WERE AWARDED TO SCHOOLS IN
BEDFORD, CENTRAL
BEDFORDSHIRE,
LUTON AND MILTON
KEYNES

65 SCHOOLS
AND COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS
HAVE BEEN INVOLVED,
WITH MANY TAKING PART
MULTIPLE TIMES

ABOUT THE CULTURE CHALLENGE

The Culture Challenge was founded in 2014 by Community Arts Producer Kayte Judge, and delivered by Bedford Creative Arts. Following extensive collaboration with young people, teachers and cultural providers - including a series of pilot projects in 2014-2016 - The Culture Challenge became a multi-dimensional brokerage service between schools and the local culture on their doorsteps.

Through an online culture directory; vouchers for schools to fund creative and cultural activity; through advocacy; a bank of resources; and a range of training and networking opportunities, The Culture Challenge has reached over 16,000 children and 100s of teachers across Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. At its heart has always been a human touch - a brokerage role to support schools and cultural providers in connecting with each other, sharing ideas and enabling new experiences to happen.

This evaluation captures and celebrates the last three years of The Culture Challenge, set against the backdrop of its wider activity since 2016. It charts its successes and impact, as well as its challenges and lessons learnt, providing a rich resource to underpin future developments in creative learning in Bedfordshire. As existing funding streams come to an end, this evaluation is also a call to action. Can wider, joined-up, strategic partnerships and longer-term funding take The Culture Challenge to its next stage?

Over the last three years, activity has been generously funded by the following organisations:



**Central
Bedfordshire
Council**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

All TCC resources and directory of cultural providers - www.culturechallenge.co.uk
Email - info@bedfordcreativearts.org.uk
Legacy resources and digital version of Evaluation Report 2019-22 -
www.bedfordcreativearts.org.uk

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