



Voluntary Arts and BBC Local Radio Up for Arts National Roll-Out Evaluation Phase One Report

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Mandalas produced
for Up for Arts CWR

Introduction

This report has been compiled independently by Nick Ewbank Associates, in association with the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health at Canterbury Christ Church University, on behalf of the charity Voluntary Arts (VA). It focuses on Up for Arts, an innovative partnership project between VA and the BBC that uses radio to raise the profile of local arts and everyday creativity and to inspire greater uptake of creative activity across the UK.

The evaluation spans five years of Up for Arts activities from April 2018 to March 2023:

Phase 1: April 2018 – March 2020

Stage 1. A rapid systematic review of literature and the compilation of a logic model (Vella-Burrows, Ewbank & Rice, 2019), and an interim report on Up for Arts activities relating to mental wellbeing and behaviour change (Ewbank and Vella-Burrows, 2019)

Stage 2. A report on Phase 1 addressing mental wellbeing and behaviour change and Up for Arts operational issues (this report).

Phase 2: April 2020 – March 2023

An exploration of barriers to engagement and further mapping of the achievements and challenges of new and existing projects.

The unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are changing many aspects of our lives, including thinking and narrative around arts and cultural engagement. The enforced closure of theatres, galleries, libraries, music venues and other cultural hubs has raised the profile of everyday creativity in the home, much of which has been promulgated on social media by ordinary citizens.

Evidence of people's need for creative expression at this time is abundantly clear. This evidence significantly supports the case that creative engagement is closely related to a sense of wellbeing. Moreover, the greater stress that populations are put under, the greater the apparent need for these activities.



Participants in the intergenerational letter-writing project, Up for Arts Humberside.

Narrow interpretations of the arts, however, continue to inhibit the effective deployment of public policy in this area. Andrea Baldini, Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory at the School of Arts, Nanjing University, writes:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a clarifying effect in a number of respects. For me, one of them is how limiting and frankly wrongheaded the modern take on the arts is at a moment when people all around the world have found authentic meaning expressing themselves creatively, whether through painting or baking.

(Baldini, 2020: 1)

Global public health expert Michael Marmot has warned that the pandemic is set to make health inequalities worse¹. It is important that the arts become part of the solution to this looming crisis, rather than further worsening the health gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The following section discusses the risks of continuing to pursue the current limited take on the arts, and urges a redefinition of arts as a sub-category of everyday creativity. This will allow for better understanding and systematisation of the application of creative processes in relationship to population wellbeing.

1. Everyday creativity

In 2019 the first WHO Health Evidence Network Scoping Review on Arts, Health and Wellbeing synthesized evidence from over 3,000 studies, and identified “a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan” (Fancourt & Finn, 2019: ii). Similarly, the 2017 Creative Health report from the APPG for Arts, Health and Wellbeing outlined the extensive range of ways in which the arts supports health outcomes - but it conceded that only a “small modicum” of the potential contribution of the arts is currently being realised (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017). An explanation is needed as to why the full potential of the arts in contributing to health and wellbeing is being missed – and there seems little doubt that definitional challenges are part of the problem.

1.1 The problem of definition

Unfortunately, narrow and often circular definitions of the arts serve to limit awareness of their potential, deter engagement for many, and exacerbate a democratic deficit in access to publicly funded culture, thus reinforcing the UK’s geographical and socio-economic faultlines.

A coherent definition of the arts in the context of our health remains elusive. The WHO Review (2019), for example, deals with the challenge of definition by saying that “the arts have always conceptually been difficult to define”. It goes on to reference “characteristics recognized as fundamental to art”, but which in fact relate to any shared experience involving emotions and the imagination. It then proceeds to suggest that art is that which employs “specialized skills” in its production, and relates to certain “rules of form, composition or expression”. In other words, according to the WHO Review, art is that which is considered to be art. The definition then moves to an extensional listing of the various artforms that are traditionally considered to comprise the Western canon: performing arts; visual arts, design and craft; literature; and, interestingly, “culture”; with the addition of “online, digital and electronic art”, no doubt to reflect the emergence of new expressive media.

The problem of defining the arts in circular, self-referential terms has been much discussed. It has been argued that narrowly defined, closed and inaccessible arts provision tends to exclude those who are already at the greatest risk of health inequalities. (e.g. *The Warwick Commission, 2015; WHO, 2019*)

In Creative Health, Simon Chaplin of the Wellcome Trust says: “... it seems self-evident that the arts, broadly defined, will play an increasingly important role, eliding the boundary between the medical, social and cultural spheres.” (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017). If the concept of what constitutes the arts is to be broadened beyond their current “limiting and frankly wrongheaded” framing (Baldini, 2020), it is important to embrace a definition that speaks to the factors that underpin the relationship between creativity and health.

An intensional definition is on hand if the arts are conceptualised as a disparate set of activities forming an abstracted and formalised sub-category of what

¹ Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/5e6330de-1e95-4343-8424-184d19dc34b9> (Accessed 1 June 2020)



Up for Arts CWR Producer Rachel New (right) with Men's Sheds participant

sociologist David Gauntlett, in his book *Creative Explorations*, refers to as 'everyday creativity' (Gauntlett, 2007). For Gauntlett, everyday creativity is typically "made by people who probably don't call themselves artists"; hence it is "widely dispersed and, more importantly, is one of the most central aspects of being human".

The arts have always been about our health. The Greeks knew this; it is no accident that Apollo is the god both of the arts and of healing. Marcel Proust knew it too. He described the artist's ability to see the universe through the eyes of others as "the only bath in the Fountain of Eternal Youth". Here, Proust is not suggesting that the arts can make us live longer – rather, he seeks to convey metaphorically the idea that creativity moves us from egocentric individual experience, through self-reflection, to intersubjective emotional participation in other people's lived experience and the external world, and thereby to health-giving benefits (see example on p.28).

Interestingly, Arts Council England describes the same process. Its website says: "When we talk about the value of arts and culture to society, we always start with its intrinsic value: how arts and culture can illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. This is what we cherish."² But this definition is not restricted to the Arts Council's traditionally prescribed artforms – it relates just as fully to the broad concept of everyday creativity.

Everyday creativity can currently be seen being played out in real time in homes and communities across the UK, as thousands of people develop and showcase their creative skills in a huge variety of symbolic and productive forms. During the lockdown, this creative activity has played an important part in alleviating stress and isolation. However, as a concept, everyday creativity is not yet well defined or understood.

1.2 Towards a science of everyday creativity

What can science add to understandings of everyday creativity?

Firstly, evolutionary psychologists attribute a central role to everyday creative activities, including singing and rhythmical movement, ritual, and call-and-response, as key human survival mechanisms, vital to effective mother-child attachment and group bonding.

Secondly, the two-step creative process of self-reflection and emotional connection, as referred to above by Proust and ACE, enacts and supports the crucial mechanism of "mentalization", first described by psychologist Peter Fonagy. Mentalization has been characterised as the ability "to see ourselves from the outside and to see others from the inside".³ Problems with mentalization, often caused by abuse, neglect or trauma, lead to much suffering and very considerable healthcare and social costs (Fonagy, 2002).

Thirdly, neuroscientist and philosopher Antonio Damasio foregrounds the importance of feelings. In *The Strange Order of Things*, he demonstrates how all life is governed by the homeostatic impulse to maintain balance. Cultural activity, including everyday creativity, began and remains embedded in feelings, which have a central role to play in restoring lost homeostatic balance (Damasio, 2018).

Finally, scientists from the formal and physical sciences (including biophysics, consciousness science and AI research) are entering the field, challenging reductionist approaches that have tended to dominate medical science. They offer fresh insights into how complex phenomena, such as consciousness, creativity and life itself, 'emerge' from the fundamental rules that govern the natural world; and how our feelings – central to art, but for too long marginalised by medicine – sustain our wellbeing.

Interdisciplinary dialogue is shedding new light on the phenomenon of creativity. As consciousness scientist Anil Seth puts it, art and science can "work together to reveal deep truth about the nature of human experience." (Seth, 2019: 402).

² Source: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/exploring-value-arts-and-culture/evidence-review> (Accessed 1 June 2020)

³ Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/moodpjj> (Accessed 1 June 2020)

2. An overview of Up for Arts

2.1 The project

Up for Arts is an innovative partnership project between Voluntary Arts and the BBC. The goal of the project is to enact ‘social action’, by bringing together local community networks, new and established creative groups and local agencies through the medium of the BBC. It aims to provide novel services in hard-to-reach communities and ‘cold spot’ locations, where numbers active in the arts are relatively low, to ensure that key messages are amplified and creative engagement is enhanced.

The project relates to both the BBC’s and VA’s missions for promoting health and wellbeing:

Good communication is critical to good health ... We use media and communication to build people’s knowledge, encourage them to talk to each other and adopt healthier practices – and to shift beliefs and attitudes that prevent people from enjoying good health... (BBC, 2020)

Voluntary Arts believes in the power of creative participation - to transform the lives of individuals, build communities and have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of all people. (VA, 2020)

It also supports the World Health Organization's call for collaboration in the key area of 'promoting public awareness of the benefits for health of engaging in the arts'. (WHO, 2019)

Life and art are local. Up for Arts sets out to capture and recount compelling arts-based stories from some of the UK’s most disadvantaged and marginalised local communities through an innovative partnership approach. Up for Arts enables both the BBC and Voluntary Arts to make more significant impacts than could be achieved by either organisation delivering services on their own.

The project focuses on developing audio content for broadcast on BBC local radio. This principally involves the production of arts-focused stories and features

designed to entertain, inspire and motivate listeners. The radio stories and features are part of an ongoing iterative process of engaging the public; projects proceed to support social action and extend access to everyday creativity, thereby leading to more content for broadcast.

Radio output provides a showcase for voluntary arts groups which are active at a grassroots level but which typically receive little publicity or media coverage. The process of matching people to cultural activity, and groups to members, features in all Up for Arts programming.

Being rooted in community-based partnerships and alliances means that all content is generated through co-production methods. Partners are involved as stakeholders, contributors and advisory group members, helping with mapping, scoping and planning. Up for Arts has worked on this co-production basis with a diverse range of stakeholders to develop new initiatives, including Thrive London, Greater London Authority, schools, cultural networks, sports organisations and community groups.

Off-air support includes referral advice and signposting, capacity building workshops for groups and agencies, information sheets and bulletins, toolkits, fabrication materials, databases and publications. Social media posts reinforce campaign messages and ‘call to action’ initiatives often encourage the general public to become actively involved in a creative challenge or a collective endeavour.

Outreach programmes augment themed campaigns for radio and are produced as taster or sampling activities. These activities have a grassroots focus with a clear exit and legacy strategy. Operating on a much longer timeframe than usual BBC news cycles, they avoid ‘hit-and-run’ approaches towards activities that can leave communities confused or frustrated.

BBC local radio tends to appeal to an older and more socio-economically disadvantaged demographic than the UK average. This demographic is increasingly seen as a priority for arts policy. However, there is a tendency in outreach work to appeal disproportionately to those who are already predisposed to the arts and culture. It is, therefore, important that campaigns have a wide reach and connect with priority audiences, particularly those who are likely to benefit most from involvement.

2.2 A brief history of Up for Arts

Up for Arts was initially created by VA and BBC Radio Merseyside in an initiative spearheaded by Mick Ord (then radio station editor) and Laraine Winning (Development Director for VA). An initial pilot was funded in 2009 by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills through a Learning Revolution grant intended to sustain levels of life-long learning achieved in the Liverpool 2008 City of Culture year, and to improve levels of arts participation within disadvantaged communities.

Using the Merseyside model as a blueprint, VA extended activities over the next decade as and when funding was available. 2012 and 2013 saw the creation of two new projects in the North West of England, at BBC Radio Lancashire and BBC Radio Cumbria. This established a cluster of neighbouring stations and allowed for the model to be adapted to both urban and rural settings. A feasibility study conducted in 2014 assessed the viability of extending the project model beyond the North West. The study assessed Up for Arts' 'bottom-up' approach (in contrast to the more 'top-down', centralised practice often adopted by the BBC) as being particularly effective in securing local buy-in and engagement.

Up for Arts was then externally evaluated to assess the impact of the project on the health and wellbeing of participants. The findings from this study consolidated the conceptualisation of Up for Arts as being linked to improved levels of wellbeing and public health outcomes in marginalised communities (Ewbank and Vella-Burrows, 2019). Both studies bolstered the case for further roll-out, with the recognition that piecemeal local funding, whilst effective at rooting projects in local communities, was unlikely to offer the scalability required to create an effective national network.

2.3 Expansion: Up for Arts roll-out programme

Gareth Roberts, Editor of BBC CWR and Head of Local Radio Development, describes the Up for Arts partnership between BBC CWR and Voluntary Arts as 'a gift'. The benefits, Roberts says, 'massively

outweigh the challenges', which are largely due to 'making it fit with the BBC's way of doing things'.

In 2018 Voluntary Arts received a grant from Oak Foundation to support a two-year programme of phased expansion of the Up for Arts service beyond its base in three local radio stations in the north west of England to a range of new BBC local radio stations around the UK. The roll-out initiative set out to:

- Establish 10 new projects over two years, principally at BBC local radio stations in areas of multiple disadvantage and arts 'cold spots'.
- Extend the network beyond England to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Experiment with a range of programming styles and formats.
- Develop programming that resonates with local radio's older demographic.
- Develop a health/wellbeing focus, including piloting the public health message that everyone should aim to participate in at least two-hours per week of creative activity.
- Complement and integrate with local cultural policy and arts initiatives in each area.

Initiating local projects

The following section outlines the strategies used to fit the processes and progress of the Up for Arts roll-out programme with the BBC agenda.

The process of setting up each project involved negotiations with local BBC management, and, often, external stakeholders. The ease of getting projects off the ground varied considerably depending on local conditions. Where editors had previous experience of working with Up for Arts, negotiations were often relatively straightforward, although local factors could sometimes lead to complications and delays. In other cases, extended negotiations ended in failure to reach agreement, particularly when larger stations were involved, or there were personnel changes at the BBC, or projects were predicated on local match funding that proved overly time-consuming to secure (see Section 7.4). The progress of negotiations and subsequent development in each area is set out in Section 2.4 below.

“Within the BBC, local radio has quite a unique relationship with its audience – it’s close to where people live. There’s an expectation that comes with this that we’re “one of them” – we’re from here; we know here. That’s our role. You can see that in the audience numbers – 30% or so of our audience don’t use any other BBC service, and they’ll tend to be C2DE, or what we call “modern mainstream”. We’re much better than other parts of the BBC at connecting to them – they have busy lives; they might be the sandwich generation with older parents to look after; they consume Netflix – we’re very much aiming to connect to those kinds of local audiences. When it comes to the arts and creativity if we were to be lofty or part of a big BBC brand, we’d lose that connection, so it’s really important that our cultural content is local. For the rest of the BBC, getting closer to the audience is crucial, especially outside London. We’ve seen that with the Listening Project, but the BBC needs to do more across the board to listen to local audiences, make sure they’re heard and reflect their voices back to them.”

Gareth Roberts, CWR and Head of Local Radio Development, BBC

Staff recruitment and supervision

A standardised approach was used to recruit and appoint new Up for Arts staff, including a generic application form adapted for specific stations where local needs were identified. Roles were advertised at a local level, including targeting candidates who worked for the BBC or had done so in the past. Job notifications were circulated internally within the BBC and on VA’s website. VA’s HR & Finance Manager liaised with all applicants. Shortlisting was carried out jointly between the BBC and VA using a scoring system. Interviews were held at each radio station, typically involving BBC Editors and the VA Development Director. Once appointed, staff were supported via an induction, one-to-one monthly VA supervisions, evaluation visits, annual appraisal, quarterly staff meetings and VA staff awayday. Staff were offered mentoring support from long-established Up for Arts staff, including a visit to another radio station.

For each project VA typically employed a part-time Up for Arts Producer on a 15 hours per week fixed term contract – for either 6 months or 12 months, depending on the availability of funding.

Each Producer was embedded within a local station, with the BBC offering desk space, air-time and other support. The Producer reported on a day-to-day basis to a senior BBC staff member within each station. Producers would typically be encouraged to supplement their Up for Arts hours with direct work for the BBC.

Governance

A standard governance package was developed by VA, setting out the basis of the relationship with the BBC in respect of each local project. This included:

- A Memorandum of Understanding outlining the partnership framework
- A work plan, outlining campaign activity over a 6 month or 12 month period
- Treatment plans to underpin major campaigns
- Co-production techniques to support partnership planning
- Terms for advisory groups in respect of larger initiatives.

Workplan elements

All workplans included the following elements:

- Outreach: taster events, exhibitions, performances, interactive activities, attendance at arts / craft events, displays, pilot projects, media training sessions, workshops
- On-air: features, trails, vox pop interviews, phone-ins, discussions, call-to-action appeals, challenge activities, branded output, key messages
- Off-air support: helpline advice, referral / signposting, information sheets, social media
- External partnership development: ad-hoc, advisory and strategic.

BBC Reach

BBC Radio was the primary mouthpiece and media partner for the project, offering geographical / audience reach and community focus through:

- Local radio as a medium that provides a high degree of intimacy and listener connection
- A strong public service ethos, underpinned by the BBC’s charter, including caring about community, and valuing the local
- Local audience reach ranging from c.150,000 to c.450,000 depending on network area
- Access to a predominantly older audience (45

- years and over) not well served by other media
- Audiences predominantly C2, D & E ('Modern Mainstream').

Media strategies used to engage with the listening audience varied according to local circumstances, but typically were drawn from the following repertoire:

- Agenda Setting: not telling listeners what to think, but telling them what to think about
- Social Marketing: using penetration methods to promote groups and events
- Nudge: providing information to increase listeners' knowledge and awareness of opportunities, thus enabling more informed choices
- Social Action: using radio to encourage listeners to take positive action
- Two Step Flow processes: information (including have-a-go and case studies) flowing from mass media to opinion leaders and role-models in order to influence action by members of the public.

Campaign Take-Up

Each Up for Arts project typically produced 8 to 10 campaigns per year. There were no set broadcast slots; output equated to between 1 and 2 hours of programming per month - a mixture of trails, features, interviews and studio discussions based on local arts provision / events and stories generated by activities.

Workshops attracted good levels of interest, often being fully booked in advance. Exhibitions and flagship events drew good footfall, according to feedback from stations. Internal surveying suggested that user satisfaction levels were high - in the region of 95% of participants reported enjoying taking part.

Up for Arts promotes and publicises the national Get Creative Festival (held each May) as an annual focus for activities. This involves running flagship events in localities and providing capacity building training for local groups in order to help them promote their work.

Roll-out funding

The funding allocation of £250,000 from Oak Foundation over the two-year period April 2018 to March 2020 covered:

- Project development - seed funding underpinning the development of new projects including the employment of Up for Arts Producers
- Development Director employment costs

- VA management costs
- Evaluation.

In-kind support from the BBC was made available to Voluntary Arts to support the development of Up for Arts in local areas. This support covered desk space, airtime, kit and equipment, outside broadcast facilities, access to performance and meeting space in local stations, access to the BBC bus, and in some cases the use of a pool car. This support was to the value of £30,000 to £40,000 per year per locality. This level of BBC in-kind aid at a local level is believed to be unique to the relationship with Voluntary Arts.

Despite this valuable support, available cash funding was only sufficient to support a proportion of the agreed project outputs, and significant match funding was required to enable targets to be met. Accordingly, project development funds were designated to enable new projects to be pump-primed over the course of the project and VA management committed significant staff resource to raising the required level of match funding, using Oak Foundation funding as leverage at a local level. As a matter of policy, VA's fundraising efforts were focused on external sources specific to local areas, as opposed to regional or national sources. Following consideration of options for the deployment of the development budget (including part-funding new projects or starting staff on reduced hour contracts) it was decided to establish two new projects that could test approaches and be used as a model for others to follow. BBC Radio Stoke and BBC Radio London were selected as the first two projects in Year One, with a view to phasing in three further areas towards the end of the year, as, it was hoped, funds became available through external project funding.

Over the course of the two years of the project, VA secured around £80,000 in match funding for Up for Arts from a variety of sources, including Arts Council Wales, Greater London Authority, Thrive LDN and BBC cash support. Grants either funded part of a project's operational costs (BBC Radio Wales, BBC Contains Strong Language festival) or provided income for Year Two. However these sums were not sufficient to demonstrate that the model of securing local funding to support the sustained roll-out of Up for Arts is a viable one. This challenge is further addressed in Section 7.4 below.

2.4 The progress of the roll-out by station and key dates

Up for Arts with BBC Radio Stoke

January 2018

Meetings and discussions with Managing Editor Andrew Bowman to address concerns over operating conditions. Andrew Bowman subsequently visited Up for Arts Merseyside project.

Agreement to proceed. Job description and advertisement drawn up and agreed.

March 2018

Interviews carried out by Laraine Winning and Andrew Bowman.

Charlotte Foster appointed.

April 2018

Charlotte Foster induction

Meeting with Helen Randle (Up for Arts Lancashire) – mentoring support

Monthly themed campaigns:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Writing Kiln / Creative Writing initiative
- Our Planet – Arts & Environmental campaign
- Black History Month
- Loneliness initiative (implemented across with station)
- Xmas Card campaign,
- Light Night event with Appetite (Arts Council England CPP programme)

March 2019

Oak Foundation meeting (progress meeting held at radio station).

Fundraising Activity

Charlotte Foster joined the Stoke Cultural Forum. This provided a platform for engaging partners in arts campaigns as well as contributing to cultural planning across Stoke-on-Trent. With pump-priming funding from Oak Foundation securing the initial 12 months, the focus was on raising new investment for 2019/20. Joint funding bids were pursued with a number of Stoke-on-Trent organisations:

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Appetite CPP – an arts initiative for the isolated and disadvantaged communities of Mere
- Stoke-on-Trent CVS (VAST) Older Volunteers and Community Project
- Digital Storytelling project with British Ceramics Biennial
- Staffordshire University – Arts Council England Leadership Bid

Despite some initiatives securing modest levels of funding, there was insufficient to contribute to Up for Arts operational costs needed to sustain the service into 2019/20 and Charlotte Foster's role was not continued beyond March 2019.

September 2019

Andrew Bowman left BBC Radio Stoke in to take up the role of Editor at BBC Radio Merseyside.

VA utilised core Arts Council England funding to appoint a part-time development worker based in Stoke-on-Trent so developments made by Up for Arts Stoke would not be lost.



Poetry and drumming session for Black History Month, Up for Arts Stoke

Up for Arts with BBC Radio London

October 2017

Discussions began with Jeanette Bain-Burnett (Head of Community Engagement, Greater London Authority) with focus on events to mark the 70th anniversary of Windrush.

January 2018

GLA funding of £10,000 secured to part-fund Up for Arts project in London.

February 2018

David Friend, Assistant Editor at BBC Radio London, agreed to support a themed year-long Up for Arts partnership. Due to Radio London's city-wide reach and diverse audience, the Up for Arts model was modified to focus on a single theme – Windrush 70. It was agreed the year would comprise a number of milestones - a major commemoration event at City Hall on 23 June; an hour-long documentary on the influence of Caribbean music; and mini features telling the stories of 7 Windrush generations. An advisory group was set up to support planning and partnership building.

A job description was drawn up and the post was advertised within BBC Radio London and through VA's website.

March / April 2018

The Windrush scandal broke as the initiative was being launched. Meetings between BBC Radio London and VA were held to discuss how the project would proceed given the BBC's requirement to hold local and national government to account. A division of programming lines was agreed, with the news focus being the responsibility of station news journalists and Windrush 70 commemoration activity the responsibility of Up for Arts. It was agreed to exchange contacts for storytelling purposes.

April 2018

John Offord was appointed as Up for Arts Producer for London.

June 2018

Arrival event at City Hall. John Offord carried out

8 interviews live on BBC Radio London from the event, including with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and members of the Windrush generations.

October 2018

Windrush Tea Party

John Offord broadcast live from the BBC bus outside Hackney Town Hall. People were invited to bring Windrush-related objects on board the BBC bus for reminiscence.

Vanessa Feltz Special Windrush event

Following the success of the Hackney Tea party event, BBC London hosted a Windrush breakfast tea party special on the Vanessa Feltz show, using material from the people who came to the bus.

December 2018

Up for Arts London produced a 1 hour documentary for BBC Radio London which focused on the music genres brought to London from the Caribbean. The 'Sounds of Windrush' aired on BBC Radio London on Boxing Day. In December 2019 the documentary was re-edited and broadcast globally on the BBC World Service.

Windrush Advisory Group meetings were held at City Hall on in May 2018, July 2018, September 2018, October 2019, and December 2019.

Through the project, partnerships were developed with: Hackney Museum; Willesden Green Library; Windrush Foundation; Gal-Dem (online magazine); Young Lambeth Cooperative; University of Westminster; Caribbean Heritage Museum; The West Indian Association of Service Personnel (WASP). Up for Arts also built working relationships across the BBC, with: The Listening Project; BBC Radio 2; the BBC's GNS Team; Women's Hour; the One Show; and BBC World Service.

Jan 2019

Year 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing - Partnership with Thrive London

The themed year aimed to break down stigma and prejudice around mental health, and to highlight the benefits of creativity.

An advisory group was created comprising representatives from: Mind, Rethink, Thrive LDN,

Wellcome Trust, Waltham Forest Council (London Borough of Culture), Hackney Council, Time Banking UK, BBC Radio London and Voluntary Arts.

April 2019

Thrive LDN agreed funding of £20,000, allowing the second year of Up for Arts activity in London to proceed. Subsequently expanded through additional VA support, the programme comprised:

- A series of podcasts produced by young people to reflect on issues that affect young Londoners.
- A documentary on the power of music to improve wellbeing for BBC Music Day
- A bursary for a young Londoner to work with the Up for Arts Producer
- A research paper from NEA on Music and Health
- A digital storytelling toolkit on producing and developing stories for radio.

September 2019

World Music Day – research paper released.

Interviews and live broadcast of “rush-hour concert”.

October 2019

World Mental Health day – live coverage from City Hall, featuring the role of creativity in mental health.

November 2019

Podcasts training sessions for young Londoners in three locations.

January 2020

Podcast series entitled ‘Act On’ launched on BBC Radio London with Katie Thistleton (Radio 1) and Vanessa Feltz. Vanessa Feltz invited podcasters onto her show to talk about the podcast themes and their experience of mental health, the arts and living in London.

Following training organised by Up for Arts, Thrive LDN have continued to commission further series of Act On podcasts.

Up for Arts with BBC Radio Humberside

May 2018

Hull’s UK Year of Culture team intimated that funding might be available to part-fund an Up for Arts project with BBC Radio Humberside as a legacy project to the Year of Culture. However, the management team changed and funding was not committed.

June 2018

Martyn Weston, Managing Editor at BBC Radio Humberside expressed interest in supporting an Up for Arts project through a year-long full-time post. However, fundraising proved challenging and a six-month post, funded from core, was agreed, with a target of raising local funding to sustain the service.

December 2018

Louise Brown appointed as Up for Arts Producer at BBC Radio Humberside.

January to March 2019

An intergenerational creative letter writing initiative with pupils from St Peter’s Primary School, Barton-in-Humber, and older isolated people from across Hull. The project involved a weekly exchange of letters between 20 children and 20 older people - led by a professional writer. The Up for Arts Producer supported the project and captured audio for broadcasting throughout.

April 2019

A tea party for the letter writers, old and young, and their guests was held at Hull Minster, broadcast live on BBC Radio Humberside – the first opportunity for the letter writers to meet their pen pals.

June 2019

A proposal was submitted to North East Lincolnshire Council for a Grimsby-focused year of arts programming. Negotiations continued for many months, but were put on hold due to the pandemic.

Get Creative with BBC Radio Wales

September 2018

Martyn Smith, Executive Producer of BBC Wales and the VA Development Director met to discuss a partnership. The VA / BBC collaborative Get Creative festival had not been as well received as hoped in Summer 2018, and it was agreed Up for Arts could bolster the festival for 2019. It was agreed to focus on arts in rural communities, with a themed monthly approach.

Helen Bowden, Deputy Editor, BBC Radio Wales, secured project approval. Arts Council Wales agreed to part-fund the project, focusing on the 2019 Get Creative Festival. Due to the alignment with the festival the project name in Wales was changed from Up for Arts to Get Creative.

February 2019

Rhiannon Imiolczyk was appointed part-time Get Creative Producer for BBC Radio Wales on a 12-month contract. The post holder was new to the BBC and faced some challenges working with well-established production teams - on various occasions project ideas were proposed but not approved.

Approval was secured for the Get Creative Festival (May 2019) to focus on a large scale 'Flag of

Wales' made from listeners' uploaded selfies. Community workshops were carried out by VA Wales, alongside the gathering of creative stories for radio broadcast. Over 4000 selfies were received, through booths at Bridgend county show (250 selfies); Cwmdare Primary (250 Charcoal selfies from this mining town); The Royal Welsh show (1460 selfies); Mold market (168); on air promotion and the launch day. The flag was subsequently used by BBC Radio Wales for Six Nations outside broadcasts.

February 2020

The Writers Circle Llantwit Major discussed writing and sharing love poems they had composed for Valentine's Day on air. Abergavenny knitting for mental health project - featured over 3 Sundays.

At the end of Year One BBC Radio Wales asked for the project to be rethought. Links to the BBC Wales Marketing team had been fruitful and a new role for the Get Creative Producer within BBC Wales marketing was agreed, to be based at the new BBC building in Cardiff and supporting BBC colleagues to host events, tours and outside creative activities. VA Wales will link these activities to the voluntary arts sector across Wales.



BBC Radio Humberside presenter, Amanda White, interviewing Up for Arts participants live on air

Up for Arts with BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire (CWR)

September 2019

Meetings between Gareth Roberts (Editor), Siobhan Harrison (Community Reporter) and VA management to discuss aims and funding.

October 2019

Job Description agreed and recruitment process undertaken.

January 2020

Rachel New took up post - an experienced presenter/producer. The agreed workplan focused on developing links to the Coventry City of

Culture team. Monthly themed schedule included a summer Creative Writing initiative based on the work of George Eliot, a Men's Sheds initiative (puppetry project), a maternity photography / storytelling project (Holding Time) and a Get Creative Festival initiative.

The pandemic has led to less airtime for campaign activity – the focus has shifted to cover stories of creative engagement at home and support of the BBC's Make a Difference initiative.

Up for Arts with BBC Radio Devon

November 2019

Sarah Solftley, Editor of BBC Radio Devon, met VA management to discuss Up for Arts. It was agreed that Up for Arts Devon would focus on a themed year adding value to the events for the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower, including creating a challenge activity for listeners.

February 2020

Abby Davis appointed to the role of Up for Arts Producer, having previously worked for BBC Radio Devon on a part-time freelance basis.

Due to COVID-19 the focus for the year shifted to supporting the station with its Make a Difference programme, focusing on home-based creativity and identifying arts stories for showcasing both on air and via online platforms.

Up for Arts with BBC Radio Leeds

November 2018

Sanjiv Buttoo, Editor of BBC Radio Leeds, met with VA management and agreed project. Sanjiv Buttoo had worked with Up for Arts when he was based with BBC Radio Lancashire and subsequently at BBC Radio York. Job description and advertisement drawn up.

December 2018

Following interviews, Jane Chesworth was appointed as Up for Arts Producer, having previously worked for the radio station on a part-time basis carrying out community projects and producing weekend programmes.

February 2018

12-month post commenced.

Work plan developed: a monthly focus with key milestones including the production of a Leeds United mural to celebrate 100 years of the football club. Liaison with network of arts / health colleagues on a social prescribing initiative. Links to the library network across Leeds.

The programme has been disrupted by the pandemic. The focus has shifted to Write Your Own Story – 1000-word creative challenge project, supporting the BBC's Make a Difference initiative.

Up for Arts with Contains Strong Language (CSL) Cumbria and Coventry

Up for Arts worked with BBC Radio Three for some years supporting the Free-Thinking Festival at Sage Gateshead. Then in 2018 Sue Roberts (BBC Head of Radio Drama and Director of CSL) invited Up for Arts to participate in CSL's Year of Culture programme in Hull.

December 2019

Meetings to discuss how Up for Arts could help CSL expand its links to communities through (a) its campaign for the 250th anniversary of Wordsworth's birth, with events in Grasmere, Kirby Lonsdale, Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness and (b) the Coventry City of Culture programme

for 2021. CSL agreed to part-fund a post based at Media City to support both programmes.

February 2020

Following interviews, it was agreed to split the role between two candidates – Jennie Dennett in Cumbria and Mollie Davidson in Coventry. Both have production and broadcasting skills.

March 2020

Jennie Dennett joined BBC CSL. Mollie Davidson's appointment was delayed to June 2020 due to the pandemic.

Up for Arts BBC Radio Lincolnshire

January 2020

Charlie Partridge, Editor of BBC Radio Lincolnshire, and VA Development Director Laraine Winning met and agreed to establish an Up for Arts project in Lincoln. 2020 is the radio station's 50th birthday and Up for Arts aimed to generate a station-wide music project as a showcase programme, among other activities.

February 2020

Rebekah Watkins was appointed as Up for Arts producer. She was already working for the station including producing the mid-morning show. Her start date was delayed to June 2020 due to the pandemic.

BBC Music – Media City Salford

September 2019 to January 2020

Drawing on relationships formed during the Up for Arts London project, discussions took place with BBC Music about establishing a specialist Up for Arts Music Producer. A departure from the model of locally based generalist Up for Arts producers, this provides the opportunity to work across the network with a specific music remit. The project is planned to focus on the role of music in supporting people living with dementia and people with mental health conditions. It builds on alliances established with Age UK,

Making Music, Live Music Now and other arts and health partners. The post holder is to be based in Media City Salford.

February 2020

BBC Music Day 2020 was cancelled due to BBC budget cuts. Four large scale events were planned in its place. These have now been re-organised due to the pandemic.

The post is currently on hold pending funding.

3. Case Studies: the effects of Up for Arts on wellbeing

‘Describing the benefits and costs of the arts ecosystem outcomes in the language of wellbeing, could earn the field a proper seat at the table of conversations about human progress.’

(Gibas, et al. 2015)

This section describes the process and findings of case studies relating to wellbeing, involving participants of Up for Arts projects in Humberside and London and, at the time of writing, the fledgling project in Coventry, and personnel from BBC, Thrive LDN and VA who were involved in Up for Arts projects.



Act On podcast training - participants with (second from right) John Offord, Up for Arts London Producer and (right) Katie Thistleton, BBC Radio 1 DJ

3.1 Background and context

In 2018, the authors of this report, together with colleague Dr Gayle Rice, conducted a systematic review of literature on local radio-led community-based participatory arts projects and their relationship to health messaging and population wellbeing (Vella-Burrows, Ewbank & Rice, 2018). The review uncovered a paucity of literature that dealt with this complex topic and the intersections between each element. There is a need, therefore, to ascertain the presence or otherwise of mechanisms that can lead to improved wellbeing through engagement with

radio-led participatory arts and, if present, to identify what affordances to positive wellbeing are at play. The authors of this report began to tackle this task in their analysis of the Up for Arts activities from April 2018.

This report consolidates and synthesises interim findings (Ewbank & Vella-Burrows, 2019) and additional findings up to March 2020.

The timing of the literature review (Vella-Burrows, et al., 2018) coincided with several relevant convergent factors, each of which relates to raising wellbeing across the UK population:

1. The UK’s increasing ageing population and the need to identify cost-effective mechanisms to reduce or halt age-related health inequalities and associated economic strain in the future (e.g. Scharf, et al., 2017);
2. A concerted drive to build positive partnerships involving government and non-government agencies to identify and respond to localised health and wellbeing needs, and to build confident and connected communities (Public Health England [PHE], 2015);
3. Research evidence over the last two decades showing a cyclical relationship between cultural engagement in older age and improved health and wellbeing, and in some studies, prolonged survival (e.g. Konlaan, et al., 2000; Pearce & Lillyman, 2015; Cann, 2017; Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Tymoszuk, et al., 2019);
4. The unprecedented acceleration of broadcasting technology and its increasing capacity to deliver public health messaging to promote wellbeing and healthier lifestyle behaviours (Wakefield, et al., 2010);
5. The global prioritisation of wellbeing on public health agendas for the prevention of mental ill-health (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013), and the centralisation of wellbeing in UK Government appraisal processes (HM Treasury, 2018).

3.1.1 Subjective wellbeing

Echoing the thinking behind Fun Palaces⁴, 64 Million Artists⁵, Arts Council England’s Creative People and Places initiative⁶ and Get Creative⁷, the Up for Arts programme centralises everyday creativity as an

⁴ <https://funpalaces.co.uk/>

⁵ <https://64millionartists.com/>

⁶ <https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/>

⁷ <https://getcreativeuk.com/>

affordance to wellbeing. However, generalising the state of wellbeing is complex and presents challenges for policymakers. Constructing wellbeing from a subjective viewpoint is increasingly understood to maximise individual benefit (Age UK, 2017). The acknowledgement that a state of wellbeing is a dynamic process that is not dependent on a set of objective, generalisable standards is increasingly influencing the process of defining the different facets of wellbeing and identifying the best measurement tools (Benson, et al., 2019). This echoes the challenge of measuring the individual effects of the subjective choices made by people in relation to everyday creativity (Yuriko, 2019).

The Government’s positioning of wellbeing at the heart of the evaluation of UK policy⁸ has led to increasing scrutiny of the meaning, domains, operational formulae, and measurements of subjective wellbeing. For example, the Department of Health’s definition of wellbeing acknowledges two now well-established, distinct but interlocking concepts, namely the *feeling* of wellbeing, which links to the ability to *function* well, and objective wellbeing, based on material and social assets (e.g. food, physical health, environment, education, finances, safety, life):

Wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well and comprises an individual’s experience of their life; and a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values. (DH, 2014: 6)

Whilst material and social assets may be objective indicators of wellbeing, with assumed values, such indicators cannot be truly assessed without reference to subjective wellbeing (Alexandrova, 2020). For example, a person with low material assets living with terminal cancer may be at peace with their end of life situation, while a healthy person with ample monetary and social resources may feel low life satisfaction.

Subjective wellbeing subdivisions:

- Evaluative wellbeing - the global evaluation that an individual makes about their overall life satisfaction
- Hedonic wellbeing - immediate feelings of e.g. happiness / joy / sadness / anxiety
- Eudaimonic wellbeing – a longer term sense of purpose and life meaning. (Miret, et al., 2017).

Several established wellbeing models, including the ONS Wheel of Well-being (ONS, 2016) and Age UK’s Index of Wellbeing in Later Life (Age UK, 2017), centre on components of wellbeing as they relate directly to people’s lived experiences. These two models collectively identify life experiences that are key to determining wellbeing.

Table 1. Wellbeing domains, integrating the Wheel of Well-being and Index of Wellbeing in Later Life.

Personal wellbeing – satisfaction with life / worthwhileness (eudaimonic), positive and negative emotions (hedonic)
Relationships – satisfaction with personal relationships / social interactions / loneliness / caring responsibilities
Health – subjective and objective measures of physical and mental health
What we do – meaningful activities (physical / mental), work / leisure balance
Where we live – personal dwellings, local environment / community, access to facilities, community cohesion
Personal finance – household income, financial stability
Economy – inflation and public sector debt (context for national wellbeing)
Education and skills – educational achievements / skills, the labour market
Governance - trust in institutions
Environment - (global context) activities that affect climate change / the natural environment

3.1.2 Up for Arts and subjective wellbeing

The findings from the interim evaluation show a cyclical relationship between taking part in the Up for Arts programme and wellbeing (Ewbank & Vella-Burrows, 2019). The subthemes align with six of the ten established wellbeing domains listed in Table 1:

- Personal wellbeing - pleasure and life satisfaction
- Relationships - individual and community
- Health - mental health and stressors
- What we do - activity that has meaning and purpose

⁸ “Economic appraisal is based on the principles of welfare economics – that is, how the government can improve social welfare or wellbeing, referred to in the Green Book as social value”. The Green Book, HM Treasury, 2018

- Where we live - a sense of culture / community and environment (e.g. public art)
- Education - new skills / life-long learning

These findings support the wider literature on the positive effects of arts engagement on wellbeing (e.g. Daykin, 2017; Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017; Oman & Taylor, 2018) and more specifically on community arts engagement and wellbeing (e.g. Swindells, et al., 2013).

Researchers in the field of arts and health continue to investigate the affordances generated by arts engagement that lead to wellbeing. For example, as one of its strands of investigation, the UK's What Works Centre for Wellbeing⁹ identified several affordances related to participation in visual creative activities that lead to wellbeing for people with mental health issues:

- Social enrichment and relationship building
- Identity gain – feeling ‘membership’ rather than ‘participant’ status
- A new sense of identity when immersed in a creative activity
- Achievement and appreciation
- Gaining confidence
- Creative activity acting as a stepping-stone to other services
- Distraction or escape from stigma.
(Tomlinson, et al., 2018)

3.1.3 Barriers to arts engagement and behaviour change

Over the last decade, a growing body of evidence has contributed to a better understanding of barriers to arts engagement (e.g. Gordon-Nesbitt, 2010; Sowton, 2014; Tait, et al., 2019; Fancourt, et al., 2020).

In 2019, the main barriers to taking part in arts and cultural activities identified through the ONS's national Taking Part Survey were:

- They are too expensive
- I'm not interested
- I don't have time
- I have a health problem or disability
- They are too difficult to get to
- I don't know what is available
- I would feel out of place
- I don't have anyone to go with
- The opening hours are inconvenient
(ONS, 2019)

The Up for Arts interim evaluation found similar perceived barriers among participants who offered a view as to what prevented other people from attending activities. As with the ONS's identified barriers, these are linked to wider inequalities relating predominantly to health, age, social grouping and education (e.g. Daykin, 2017).

Barriers perceived by the Up for Arts participants at the interim stage aligned to two models of behaviour change, the Behaviour Change Wheel (COM-B) model (Michie, et al., 2014) and the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). In relation to the COM-B model, perceived barriers included:

- **Capability** (lack of power to generate an outcome):
 - ◊ Practical problems, e.g. rurality, transport, working hours, child-care
 - ◊ Ill-health
 - ◊ Financial constraints
- **Opportunity** (lack of chance to generate an outcome):
 - ◊ Little or no access to or relationship with local radio
 - ◊ Poor or no access to information:
 - * English not first-language
 - * Poor levels of literacy
 - * Shortcomings in marketing a project
- **Motivation** (limited / lack of):
 - ◊ Lack of interest; little or no exposure to the subject matter
 - ◊ Unaware of or uninterested in the potential benefits
 - ◊ Lack of confidence or perceived lack of skill
 - ◊ Lack of companions or mentors to encourage engagement
 - ◊ Perceived or actual gender barriers:
 - * Men avoiding women-dominated groups
 - * Perceptions of gender-appropriate activities, e.g. crafts / cookery for women, woodwork for men
 - ◊ Lack of confidence in or ambivalence towards organising agencies / institutions as not seen as salient to an individual's life / community groups' lives.

Two domains on the Wheel of Well-being and Index of Wellbeing in Later life model - ‘governance’ (trust in institutions) and ‘finance’ - that were not highlighted

⁹ <https://whatworkswellbeing.org>

by participants in relation to wellbeing, were raised above in relation to potential barriers to engagement (see Table 1. p.17).

Sowton (2014) suggests that studies on barriers to engagement (specifically those relating to gallery and museum attendance among young people) collectively provide a three-point theoretical understanding of motivation, the most dominant of which is ‘individualistic and altruistic’, the volunteering motivation. Then follows ‘intrinsic and extrinsic’, or autonomous motivation, and ‘contingent and habitual’ motivation. In a Norwegian study on motivation to engage in playing a musical instrument, Tønnesvang (2012) emphasises the need for a holistic approach to motivation, in which are recognised a range of enabling and disabling elements.

Motivation is an essential component in the process of behaviour change, six stages of which are expressed succinctly in the Transtheoretical Model of change (see Figure 1. below)

The interim evaluation showed that most of the Up for Arts participants were at stage 4 or 5 of the TTM:

- ‘Action’ - motivated to attend the Up for Arts activities
- ‘Maintenance’ - willingness to continue to attend or seek further opportunities

Stage 3, ‘Preparation’, was demonstrated by two participants who were open to being persuaded by friends to attend an Up for Arts activity but would not have done so otherwise.

Stage 6, ‘termination’ of old behaviours, was evident among a very small number of participants who, having taken part in an Up for Arts activity that was

new to them, ‘wouldn’t look back’. Most participants, however, had a pre-existing interest in arts and / or craft activities, so did not consider having to reject old behaviours in this context.

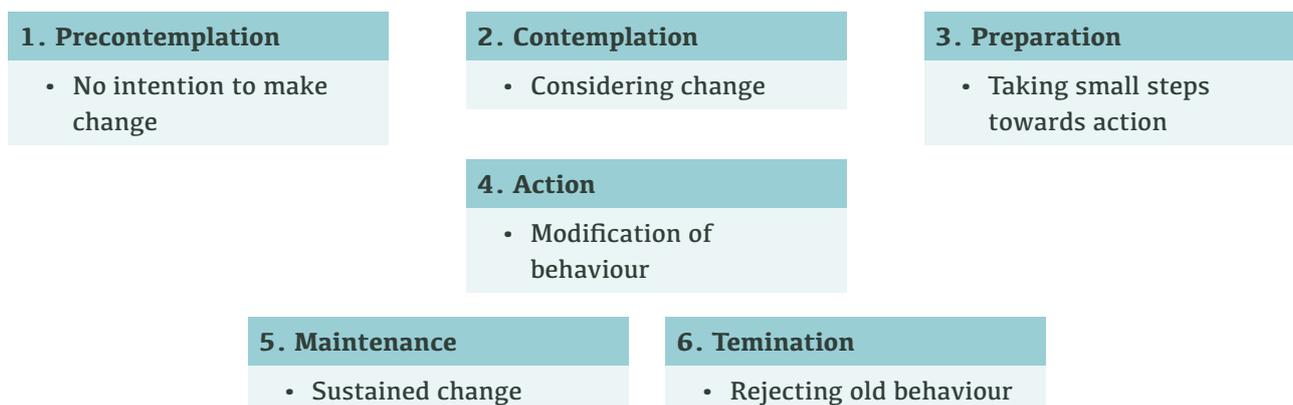
A good example of ‘preparation’ stage leading to ‘action’ stage was recounted by Hayden, who contributed to the Up for Arts London ‘Act On’ podcast series.

The experience of being mugged at knifepoint as a 13-year-old and living with the reality of frequent stabbings in his community inspired Hayden to co-found a social enterprise organisation to raise awareness of the risks of knife crime. Hayden also uses song-writing personally as a tool for self-reflection and to ‘gain perspective’ and manage life in a fast-moving world full of ‘outrageous things’, and to empathise with others.

Nudge

The perceptions of people who are in the ‘precontemplation’ or ‘contemplation’ stages of behaviour change in respect of arts engagement were not directly explored in this stage of the evaluation. Some Up for Arts participants, however, may have been ‘nudged’ towards contemplation, or beyond, through radio broadcasts, other information sources or peer support. ‘Nudge’ techniques use indirect

Figure 1. Transtheoretical Model of change (TTM)



methods and positive reinforcement to encourage a sense of empowerment on the part of individuals to make their own decisions about change (Tengland, 2012), in this case, engagement in the Up for Arts programme and / or other creative activities.

The interim findings revealed an example of ‘nudge’ in action, where a community member who was struggling with bereavement contacted Radio Merseyside for information on future projects after seeing the “First World War Soldier’ created by BBC Radio Merseyside listeners on display at Liverpool Cathedral.



Image of First World One Soldier, co-created by BBC Radio Merseyside listeners

An ‘Act On’ podcast contributor gave another example of ‘nudge’ – namely, receiving a gift from his mother: ‘I’ve had anxiety and depression since I was about 14. I didn’t know what was going on. My mum bought me a guitar. It’s hard to explain – I find it hard to interact with people when I’m low. Now, the only thing that makes a difference is when I pick up my guitar – it’s just me in the world. It means everything to me.’

(Jakob, ‘Act On’ participant)

3.1.4 The case study projects

BBC Radio Humberside:

In 2019 an intergenerational letter writing initiative was instigated with teachers and pupils from St Peter’s Primary School, Barton-in-Humber and older

isolated people from a variety of settings across Hull, including care homes, supported living schemes, older listeners and Hull Older Peoples’ Partnership. The aim was to champion creative letter writing, which has fallen out of fashion, and use it to connect old and young in a positive and creative way. The project lasted 4 months and included the weekly exchange of letters between 20 children and 20 older people led by a professional tutor / writer who hosted creative writing sessions. The Up for Arts Producer documented the story of the project from initial concept to final completion through capturing audio for broadcasting. The culmination was a meeting of over 150 people, comprising letter writers (old and young) and guests, at Hull Minster for a party with tea and cake, which was broadcast live on BBC Radio Humberside. The initiative received much praise, particularly from St Peter’s Board of Governors and the wider cohort of care partners.

BBC Radio London:

‘Act On’: a series of podcasts produced with Thrive LDN, a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of residents of London, hosted by BBC Radio 1 DJ Katie Thistleton. The content was aired on BBC Radio London as part of the Year of Mental Health and Wellbeing and featured on Thrive LDN’s website. The podcasts were linked to the Londoners Said¹⁰ report which set out priorities for young Londoners – addressing social isolation, unfair treatment, belonging, participation, and life satisfaction.

BBC Radio Coventry & Warwickshire (CWR):

At the time of data collection, the CWR project was in its fledgling stage. Newly appointed Up for Arts Producer, Rachel New, was in the process of scoping potential projects and building partnerships with community groups. Following this process allowed the evaluation to comment on what works in the planning stage of an Up for Arts project. Two projects in Coventry were visited after Rachel New had identified them as suitable partners, sharing the values and principles of Up for Arts. The purpose was to interview participants and organisers on their views of arts-based community projects and to gauge their potential to link with Up for Arts in the future.

¹⁰ <https://www.thriveldn.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Londoners-said.pdf>

4. Methods

4.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

This case study evaluation aimed to provide a ‘thick description’ of the impact of Up for Arts programmes to date. According to its originator (*Geertz 1973*), thick description centres on conceptual interpretations of the meaning and intentions of people’s verbal reports and actions (*Holloway & Wheeler, 2002*), in this case, a range of stakeholders involved in the Up for Arts programme.

The case study evaluation had three primary objectives:

- To inform the development of the project through an iterative approach
- To provide a rigorous evidence base to underpin planning for further Up for Arts roll-out
- Where appropriate, to influence future practice and public policy

The evaluation also aimed to assess the extent to which Up for Arts is successful in:

- increasing participation and engagement in local creative cultural activities
- enhancing the mental wellbeing of participants, including through the development of social networks

The evaluation methods relate to the Most Significant Change model of evaluation¹¹:

- Deciding the types of stories that should be collected – informed by the Logic Model (see Appendix 1)
- Collecting the stories and determining which stories are the most significant – in partnership with the radio stations
- Sharing the stories and discussion of values with stakeholders and contributors so that learning takes place about what is valued – an iterative process involving information-rich participants and information flow back and forth with VA and Up for Arts staff.

4.2 Evaluation tools

In line with thick description principles, this evaluation focused on qualitative data:

- Observations of three Up for Arts workshops and an event
- Focus group discussion and interviews with Up for Arts activity participants
- Interviews with strategic partners

Data were collected between April 2019 and March 2020.

4.3 Evaluation participants and coding

Twenty-one people contributed to the case study evaluation: eight participants in existing Up for Arts projects; four participants from projects earmarked as future partners for Up for Arts CWR; and nine organisational personnel, namely:

- Sue Roberts, Editor, Contains Strong Language and Head of BBC Radio Drama
- Andrew Bowman, Editor, BBC Radio Merseyside (and formerly BBC Radio Stoke)
- Sanjiv Buttoo, Managing Editor, BBC Radio Leeds
- David Friend, Assistant Editor, BBC Radio London
- Mark Grinnell, Editor, BBC Radio Devon
- Gareth Roberts, Editor, BBC CWR and Head of Local Radio Development
- Lise Hansen, Culture Lead, Thrive LDN
- Dan Barratt, Director, Thrive LDN
- Natanya Mark, London Development Officer, Voluntary Arts

To protect the identities of evaluation participants they are referred to by the location where they took part and their age group, e.g. ‘young participant, Coventry’ or ‘older participant, Humberside’. With permission, first names or full names identified BBC, Thrive LDN and VA personnel, and some of the Thrive podcast participants.

For the purpose of this report the Humberside letter-writing dyads (an adult and a child) are referred to as ‘pen pals’. The children involved in the Humberside project did not take part in this stage of the evaluation due to ethical considerations.

¹¹ https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change

4.4 Analysis

The systematic and rigorous analysis of qualitative data is time consuming and labour intensive, yet it is important in order to gain the truest insight into the information provided. The system of analysis used in this stage of the evaluation reflects the principles of qualitative data software programmes, such as NVivo. Such programmes sort large chunks of narrative data into thematic ‘nodes’ (Silver & Lewins, 2015). For this evaluation, the process was conducted by hand. Interview and focus group discussion data transcripts were subjected to a three-point thematic analysis, as set out by Twiddy, et al., (2017):

- Open-coding - ‘chunks’ of data sorted into broad topics
- Axial coding and theming - reading and re-reading these data to sort more specifically
- Thematic coding - emerging themes and subthemes identified and given a title.

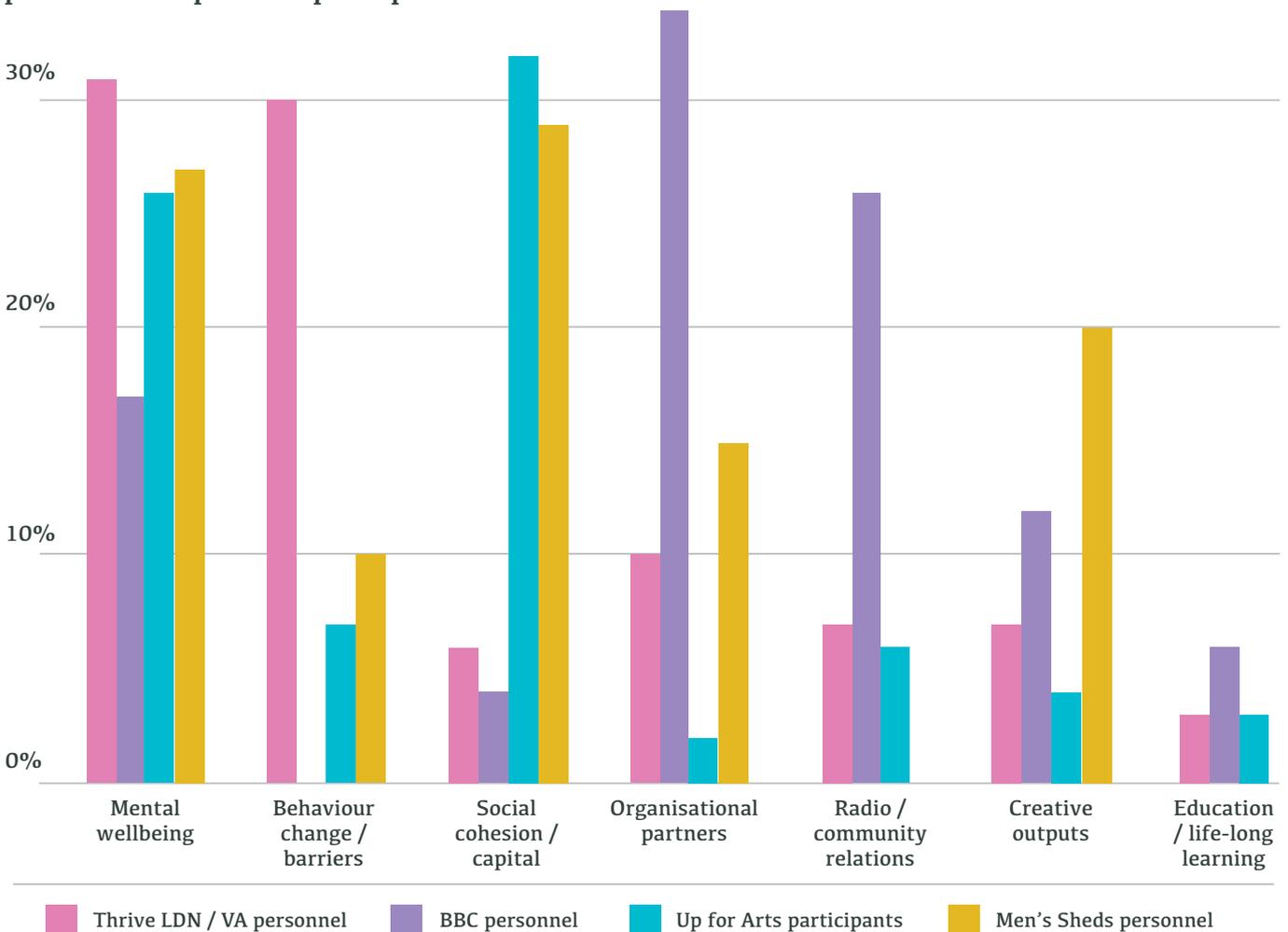
5. Findings

The collective sets of data provided by Up For Arts activity participants and organisational personnel are included in this section. The emergent themes from all the data relate directly or indirectly to wellbeing. The themes are reported as follows:

- Mental wellbeing
- Behaviour change and barriers
- Social cohesion and social capital
- Organisational partners
- Radio and community relations
- Creative outputs
- Education / life-long learning.

Reflecting qualitative data software analysis programmes that sort narrative data into thematic nodes, Figure 2 shows the percentage of commentary that was dedicated to each of the emergent themes.

Figure 2. Themes emerging from data analysis: comparison between organising personnel and Up for Arts participants



It compares the various emphases that the four different groups placed on each theme. For example, 58% of the commentary from the Up for Arts participants related to ‘wellbeing’ and ‘social cohesion/capital’, compared to 23% of the BBC personnel’s commentary. 60% of the BBC personnel’s commentary centred on ‘organisational partners’ and ‘radio and community relations’ compared with only 8% of the Up for Arts participants.

5.1 Mental wellbeing

Between a quarter and a third of the total commentary from each of the groups, apart from the BBC personnel, related to mental wellbeing. The emergent subthemes were hedonic wellbeing, eudaimonic wellbeing, and empathy, the latter of which was emphasised most strongly by the Thrive LDN personnel and participants. This group of comments also encompassed behaviours and barriers to engagement.

Hedonic wellbeing:

A sense of immediate wellbeing was inferred by the use of words and phrases such as, ‘lovely’, ‘really nice’, ‘she [young pen pal] made me laugh!’, and ‘..that was such a lovely surprise’. Reciprocal enjoyment involving the pen pal dyads was strongly evident, e.g.:

‘I think after the sugar rush, we got a bit girly and giggly and we started playing things like consequences. She thought this one was funny. She said ‘Ann is wearing an Easter Bunny costume. They went to Hominster, and while they were there, she laid an egg’. It made them feel happy because they couldn’t stop laughing’
(Older participant 03, Humberside).

One participant enjoyed sharing part of her life narrative:

‘So, it was nice to show some photos of my grandchildren, and my husband who I’d spoken about, and my aged relatives, so my great grandma, just to touch on that was nice.’
(Older participant 02, Humberside).

Most of the Humberside older letter writers expressed a sense of excited anticipation about receiving letters and, more intensely, on meeting their pen pal children.

Eudaimonic wellbeing

In line with their respective missions, much of the commentary on wellbeing from the Thrive LDN and VA personnel focused on mental health, e.g.:

‘We’re not about improving access to mental health services – we’re about working at community level to prevent poor mental health or other issues.’ (Dan Barrett, Thrive LDN)

‘[The podcasts] emphasise the need for a sense of belonging in this culturally diverse city.’
(Lise Hansen, Thrive LDN)

The dose-response relationship of creative engagement was referred to in connection to eudaimonic wellbeing:

‘We know a lot about risks and protective factors. Creativity is obviously a protective factor: two hours per week of creative activity has been demonstrated to improve people’s wellbeing.’
(Dan Barrett, Thrive LDN)

One Humberside participant implied a personal sense of residual wellbeing resulting from the project;

‘They’ve [children pen pals] all gone home with little things, a little something extra. I’m sure there will be stories coming out for a long time to come. I know I will be.’
(Older participant 03, Humberside)

A sense of worthwhileness was usually cross-referenced with a sense of social worth, as outlined in the following section. Other commentary focused on arts-generated empathy, relationship building and mental wellbeing, for example:

‘We all know the best way to create understanding is through the emotions, and that’s what creativity does. Through our emotions we can create sympathy and understanding – and that’s one of the things that art does very effectively. And self-reflection is part of the same process of understanding other minds; the more you understand yourself the more you understand how you interact with other people – this is the key to how art is related to our mental health.’
(Sue Roberts, BBC)

The issue of wellbeing relating to the stress of negative media output was also raised:

‘It’s been good to have John’s [Up for Arts Producer] links with the BBC to provide a



Trish Vella-Burrows (left) interviewing Up for Arts participants at Hull Minster

platform and to get away from the negativity of news coverage – people need to feel inspired and to share in positive energy.’

(Lise Hansen, Thrive LDN)

5.2 Behaviour change and barriers

Just under one-third of commentary from the Thrive LDN/ VA personnel related to behaviours around, and barriers towards, creative engagement, e.g.:

‘London has a thriving cultural sector, and lots of activities are free, but we know that there are barriers to access - even to free creative activities - and it tends to be people with complex challenges in their lives that experience the barriers most.’ (Dan Barrett, Thrive LDN)

Natanya Mark talked about the specific challenge of changing behaviours among young people experiencing mental health problems. She referred to the need to understand the model that has developed due to increased social media take-up by many young people:

‘... the idea that if you’re a self-starter you can overcome your problems through self-expression. You can see this through young people’s mental health stories on Instagram...’

(Natanya Mark, VA)

Dan Barrett, Director of Thrive LDN, explained that the Thrive initiative ‘feels very removed from the health and social care systems’. This relates to Natanya Mark’s observation that young people often aspire to engage in projects that are good for them but are held back by their rejection of being ‘part of the system’. Natanya Mark said that ‘the “sexiness” of the Thrive needs to be captured to encourage young people to engage’.

Commentary relating to behaviour change among the participants was less evident and more nuanced. Many had an existing interest in arts and / or craft work, for example:

‘So I deliberately wanted to seek out groups and things to do and I’ve always loved art and then I met Jenny there from Grapevine who showed me some examples of what this group do ... and when I saw what they’d been doing, I just thought it was absolutely fantastic.’

(Young participant 01, Coventry)

Three of the older Humberside letter-writers had previous long-term enjoyment in writing, and one regularly writes poetry. In these cases, the element of behaviour change related less to the uptake of new activities than to either the novel element of writing to the children or of re-engaging with traditional letter-writing, this having been superseded by email correspondence.

One older letter-writer did, however, speak of having no skill in writing but explained she gained the confidence to write to her pen pal alongside her friends. Comments from BBC personnel also highlighted the appeal of novel activities:

‘So, it’s a really natural partnership [Up for Arts and BBC Local Radio] to work with, to encourage people to both participate and try something new. And I think the “try something new” message through all the partnerships I’ve seen, is really critical, because the partnership mobilises people to do something that they mightn’t have had the confidence to do in other ways.’

(Andrew Bowman, BBC)

A BBC assistant editor referred to a change in behaviour from the perspective of radio programme-makers:

‘... rather than sit in New Broadcasting House looking out over London and telling people what we think they should think ... , it enabled us to get out, meet people in a much more in-depth and useful way.’

(David Friend, BBC)

5.3 Social cohesion / social capital

The importance of social wellbeing was emphasised predominantly by Up for Arts participants and Men's Sheds personnel (32% and 29% of comments respectively). The subthemes were: shared values; intergenerational connection; feeling socially valued; kindness and reciprocity; and loneliness and isolation.

Shared values:

'It was lovely. She really picked up on things I'd said in one letter and answered them. She knew what I was saying. She inspired me to read Harry Potter!' (Older participant 01, Humberside)

'I can still picture what I was like at the same age, which is why I think I get on so well with them at that age.' (Older participant 03, Humberside)

This element of social wellbeing, achieved through sharing creative activities, was also succinctly stated by the BBC's Head of Radio Drama:

'Being creative is about community and society – creativity allows us to understand other minds, and that's at the heart of what makes us human.' (Sue Roberts, BBC)

Intergenerational connection:

For the Humberside participants, a sense of intergenerational connection developed before meeting with the children face-to-face:

'It was really strange meeting here today and not knowing what she [young pen pal] was going to look like, but actually, I felt as though I already knew her really well.' (Older participant 02, Humberside)

The meeting at Hull Minster appeared to further strengthen the social connection between the letter-writing dyads, for example:

'When she [young pen pal] walked in, she went to the queue and I was sat on the table, and she just came straight to me. She said she could see my name and thought, "that's mine!" She literally came. Really sweet.' (Older participant 04, Humberside)

Feeling socially valued:

'They obviously wanted to know a bit more about you, what you felt, and what you enjoyed. It's nice someone wants to know those things.' (Older participant 03, Humberside)

'I think they see an older person as somebody they could have a conversation with. Because I think they don't get a chance to talk to older people and I think older people are reluctant to approach children. It's the society we live in. I think they feel like they can talk to us, quite relaxed, quite comfortably.' (Older participant 02, Humberside)

A sense of social value was also raised in relation to the older adults volunteering to take part in the project. Two talked of the volunteering agency, Better Impact, through which they heard of the project, and the social benefits they get from volunteering for community activities.

Kindness and reciprocity:

Many comments on social wellbeing related to reciprocal kindness, such as 'I get to help people and they get to help me', and:

So, one of the main things we do is we leave things [handmade craftwork - see front cover image] for people or actually give them to people or because it's a library we make bookmarks... And over there, there's a section of health and wellbeing and we often put bookmarks inside books on looking after your own health, you know, like mental health.' (Young participant 04, Coventry)

One Humberside participant had an emotional moment on meeting her young pen pal. The following conversation demonstrates empathy between fellow participants, and shows that new friendships were developing:

Humberside participant 03: 'We didn't know each other but when I saw you in tears, I had to give a hug.'

Humberside participant 02: 'We were like Teletubbies. We hugged!'

Humberside participant 03: 'But I've made a couple of friends who are interested in things I'm interested in. I've swapped details with a couple of people I've never met as a volunteer before now'.

A participant of the Thrive LDN podcast project also referred to empathy:

‘People can benefit so much from stepping outside their comfort zone and listening to different kinds of music, because it opens your mind – it’s like meeting different people – you think “OK, this is how these people think, or this is how these people express themselves”.’

(Young participant 03, London)

Perceptions of a flow of benefits between the children and adults also highlighted reciprocity:

Humberside participant 02: ‘It was lovely. But I’m hoping they’ve got a lot out of it, that they’ve been able to approach an adult in a safe way and be able to interact. I think that’s been lovely.’

Humberside participant 03: ‘I thought it would be a nice opportunity and differently to Alison, I don’t have any grandchildren. I thought, it would be interesting to see how things are now, because I’m a bit out of that loop.’

Loneliness and isolation:

Perceptions of loneliness were not confined to the well-documented problems of isolation in older age. For example, one of the Humberside children talked of her recently passed-away grandmother.

‘The little girl I was with, her grandma died fairly recently and somebody asked... who is the oldest person you know? She said, “It was my grandma but my grandma is not here anymore”. She [teacher] said, “How does it feel meeting Ann?” Because I’m probably older than her grandma, she said, “It’s great. It’s nice to be able to talk to somebody about things that happened”.’

(Older participant 04, Humberside)

‘My particular problem I feel is isolation so whilst I do it at home, because I just love craft and I mean I’ll probably go home and make some of these now, I do find being on my own a problem. It gets to me, so this group is great because of the social element.’

(Young participant 02, Coventry)

The observation that social media can contribute to loneliness was raised in relation to young people whose level of activity fluctuates considerably depending on how positive or otherwise their communications are with others:

‘This cycle of hyper-contact [social media] then

withdrawal is really unhealthy. [We need to] bring together experts - who are already mixing social media activity and community engagement - with people who are prone to isolation.

Actually, what young people need is to go out and build real communities ... through participation’.

(Natanya Mark, VA)

5.4 Organisational partners

The organisational personnel referred to partners frequently. Understandably, the BBC personnel placed a strong emphasis on this element of the Up for Arts project. The comments, which made up 34% of the overall commentary, were divided into two subthemes: BBC / Up for Arts partnership; and wider partnerships with public and third sector agencies.

BBC / Up for Arts partnership:

This partnership was valued specifically for enabling the Up for Arts producers to carry out their roles and supporting ‘much more efficient’ ways to connect with local groups / knowledge and people:

‘I think having the partnership with Up for Arts and having an Up for Arts producer allows us as a radio station to connect with the network of groups that ... Up for Arts has. Sure, we could try and do it on our own, but I think it feels like a partnership that it would be bonkers not to try and make work, in that [VA has] got that network, [VA] know where these people are, and having a dedicated producer who can access that network through Up for Arts and also who understands how radio works and what we’re looking for, it’s a win-win.’

(Gareth Roberts, BBC)

Andrew Bowman, BBC Merseyside, reiterated this valuable element:

‘It helps us reach people that we often find difficult to reach and provides a kind of link to a creative lifeblood in an area that can provide us really rich content and stories that we just wouldn’t get to any other way.’

Wider partnerships:

The span of partners was acknowledged to broaden the BBC’s scope and outputs. Partners included local authorities, arts venues, grassroots arts

organisations, and existing arts projects, for example:

‘We were approached to work with Up for Arts ... in the build-up towards the Windrush anniversary and it was something that we were very keen to explore. And then moving on from that, working with Thrive LDN to explore more areas around mental health ... helping to shine a light on some of the work that needs to be done, even just in the context of the podcast we worked on with Thrive, it was kind of tacit involvement but being able to put our name to something that was quite clearly going to be doing quite a lot of good outside of a normal BBC Radio London audience’.

(David Friend, BBC)

‘Up for Arts ... allows us to get into public buildings like libraries and other spaces, which we don’t have much time to work in.’

(Sanjiv Buttoo, BBC)

5.5 Radio and community relations

Of the comments from BBC personnel, around 26% referred to the relationships between the radio station and the community. These focused on: giving people a voice; creating ‘grassroots’ programme content; and arts and cultural messaging via radio.

Giving people a voice:

Up for Arts was reported to give a greater voice to community groups and individuals that the BBC do not normally work with closely, and this in turn benefits the radio stations by enhancing content:

‘Up for Arts and this appointment is great for us at the radio station. It means Abby, who’s our new Up for Arts representative, can go out, meet people in the community who perhaps otherwise wouldn’t have a voice or an ability to get on the radio station, and give them time here which our news gathering operation, or our other programmes, wouldn’t perhaps be able to devote the time to. So, it’s finding people at grassroots level who can make a difference in the community in getting that voice on the radio.’

(Mark Grinnell, BBC)

Creating ‘grassroots’ programme content:

‘The whole process has been win-win throughout and it’s something that’s brought fresh ideas and a fresh approach to some of our programme making and helped create programmes that we might otherwise not have been able to do.’

(David Friend, BBC)

‘We give Up for Arts that sort of platform to tell those amazing stories and, bluntly, we get to talk to people and hear stories that we might otherwise struggle to find.’

(Gareth Roberts, BBC)

‘It allows the team to focus a little bit on what else there is out there in regards to editorial. It gives a chance for people to engage with us and with West Yorkshire, which I think is very important because there’s not many opportunities for everybody to record things or take part in a project with the BBC.’ *(Sanjiv Buttoo, BBC)*

Arts and cultural messaging:

Several comments from BBC personnel referred to the potential for radio messages to increase interest and motivation in arts engagement, for example:

‘...what we want to do as the local radio station is also highlight what’s happening in Coventry right now and use that as a way of inspiring people and really making people see what this city already has to offer when it comes to arts, culture and creativity’. *(Gareth Roberts, BBC)*

A small number of comments from participants (6%) also centred on the radio/community relationship.

Most participants responded positively to the question, ‘Do you think there is a special appeal [about the project] because it’s connected to the BBC radio station?’. One was ambivalent, but highlighted the potential role of the radio to increase access for older people through publicity:

‘I think for me it’s a lovely project whether it’s been connected to the radio station or not. If the school had done it off their own bat, then no, I don’t think it’s made any difference. It’s been better publicised maybe, more people know about it. The older people especially because they have the radio on for company. So, from that aspect, definitely.’

(Older participant 02, Humberside)

5.6 Creative outputs

Just over 20% of comments from the Men's Sheds' personnel and 12% from BBC personnel centred directly on creative output, compared with 4% from Up For Arts project participants.

The remit of the Up for Arts programme to promote creativity by everyday people was highlighted:

'It doesn't have to be high art. It doesn't have to be lofty, pointy-headed stuff. It could be just everyday creativity: workshops, musical instrument playing, choirs, pottery, whatever it is, and just showing this is happening right now, you could get involved too.'

So rather than it all being shiny big stuff from London and around the world, what we're going to be doing is shining a light on the kind of grassroots voluntary arts organisations who are day in, day out, doing amazing work on creativity with all kinds of people in the city.'

(Gareth Roberts, BBC)

One older Humberside participant talked of artistic achievement, praising her pen pal's portrait of her saying, 'It was very good. Looking pretty much as I do.'

Another older participant proudly read aloud a poem she had written for her pen pal, Brooke. The poem consolidates the writer's feelings about the effects that the project had on her own subjective and social wellbeing and shows empathy for her young pen pal; despite the age gap they are "just two girls having a natter". The poem's author felt satisfied with the artistic process and outcome and gained a sense of worthwhileness having achieved an art piece that was appreciated by its intended recipient.

This example vividly encapsulates a process of self-reflection followed by intersubjective connection leading to health-related effects, closely aligning with the intensional definition of everyday creativity discussed in Section 1.1 above (p.5).

'Letters' - for Brooke

*I've been writing letters to a girl named Brooke.
I've not struggled for words, and I never felt stuck.
Who would have thought we have so much to say?
Talking about family, loves and life, just day to day.
I got to see inside the mind of a nine-year-old girl.*

*It just seems like yesterday I was nine,
it's passed in a whirl.*

*I hope she enjoyed my reminiscing about school,
holidays and things I enjoy.*

*I hope I've encouraged her to learn, explore, work
hard and do things that bring her joy.*

Between our ages, there is a fifty-year gap.

*Between our homes there are 12 miles,
I checked on the map.*

For six weeks, time and distance didn't matter.

We were just two girls having a good natter.

Older participant O3, Humberside

The skill and openness to self-expression among young people from the Act On podcast project was raised:

'It's been amazing so far – the young people are so articulate and good at expressing themselves; so open and willing to take part.'

(Lise Hansen, Thrive LDN)

The issue of the intrinsic value versus the instrumental value of art was raised:

'You need an activity to draw the men together - as a by-product they made some puppets and then there was a desire to make a show. It'll be shown here in the community centre, and there are two audiences – a professional mental health and stakeholder audience; and then people who are personally related to the men. Then we're hoping to tour it.'

(Nick Walker, writer, Men's Sheds, Coventry)

The relevance of Up for Arts to wider cultural projects was also raised:

'Up for Arts has come at an ideal time for CWR because Coventry is in the big build-up to becoming UK City of Culture 2021. And it's a really exciting time for the city. There will be amazing arts events, you know, concerts, all manner of things coming to Coventry.'

(Gareth Roberts, BBC)

5.7 Education / life-long learning

Just over 3% of comments made by Up for Arts participants and 6% made by BBC personnel related to education or life-long learning. The subthemes were: upskilling and re-skilling; novel educational approaches; inspiring innovation; and radio as a conduit for information.

Upskilling / reskilling:

‘People don’t tend to write letters anymore. We just text and email all the time.’

(Older participant 01, Humberside)

‘Alright, although I’m not that good at writing. I’ve enjoyed it. It got better. It’s been nice.’

(Older participant 04, Humberside)

Novel educational approaches:

‘It’s just another great way for the children to learn in a different format that holds their interest, gets them out the classroom and out of the schools as well.’

(Parent 01, Humberside)

Inspiring innovation:

Speaking of the Thrive podcast project, Lise Hansen talked of a ‘change in mind-set’ through creative endeavour:

‘The training sessions and the workshops have given people the opportunity to be creative and to think creatively – there’s a link between those two things.’ *(Lise Hansen, Thrive LDN)*

Other comments on innovation included:

‘There were certain aspects of the letter every week they’d been told to write. Something like, perhaps someone you’d like to write to who is either alive or dead, who would you write to?’

(Older participant 02, Humberside)

‘The second letter was more personal whereas the first one was quite a generic letter. We didn’t let that stop us going off-piste though. We went on all sorts of tangents.’

(Older participant 01, Humberside)

Radio as a conduit for information:

A comment from a BBC staff member referred to radio’s capacity for information-giving:

‘It helped create an awful lot of programming. We ended up commissioning a documentary through our Up for Arts producer, which was called The Sound of Windrush, which was a really great programme looking at musical influences linked to post-Windrush immigration.’

(David Friend, BBC)

The following quote from Andrew Bowman highlights the importance of creating life-long learning opportunities:

I think the “try something new” message ... is really critical, because the partnership mobilises people to do something that they mightn’t have had the confidence to do in other ways.’

(Andrew Bowman, BBC)

5.8 Transferability

Reflections on the transferability of the Up for Arts approach to other community groups and geographical areas constituted 11% of participants’ commentary. The comments were made in response to the direct question, ‘Do you think this could be done with different groups of children or other adult groups?’, which was not asked of the organisational personnel. Opinions offered on transferability related to locality, ethnic groups and age-specific groups, for example:

Geographical location:

‘I think writing from the same age group from school to school...a particular girl or boy in another school on the south bank, so north and south bank of the Humber. It would be nice if two communities of similarly aged children could write to each other.’

(Older participant 02, Humberside)

‘I think you could take a group of old people from Newcastle, a group of young people from Kent, and do the same sort of project and the same sort of meet up. So, I really don’t think geography comes into it at all, personally speaking. I don’t think there’s particularly a north / south divide either to be honest.’

(Older participant 01, Humberside)

Mixed ethnic groups:

‘Yes, I think it would work anywhere to be honest, and it might be nice to mix children from this school which is predominantly white, English children and do it in an inner-city school where there’s a lot more of an ethnic diversity.’

(Older participant 02, Humberside)

Age groups:

It doesn’t have to be old and young. It could be anyone. I think it’s absolutely brilliant. I am so impressed just with how well it’s worked. You could apply it to anywhere really.’

(Parent Humberside, 02)

‘I think the intergenerational thing is a good thing to carry on as well. But around us, we’ve got some people who are housebound, someone who is very outgoing... and I think somewhere like a residential home where they don’t go far, would love that writing.’

(Older participant 03, Humberside)

5.9 Legacy and sustainability

As with the question of transferability, a question on legacy and sustainability was asked of the project participants but not of the organisational personnel. The responses were unanimously positive, with all expressing the desire to take part in similar projects in the future. One parent hoped that the school would repeat the Humberside project over the coming years and an older letter writer said, ‘It just breaks down barriers’. One participant wanted to leave her young pen pal with a legacy for the future. She wrote:

‘I thought as last week was the last letter I’d be writing to her, I wished her well and told her to follow their dreams and things like that.’

(Older participant 02, Humberside)

No participant offered any criticism or other negative comment of the design or management of the Up for Arts projects.

6. Discussion

This report considers Phase 1 of the Up for Arts roll-out programme which ran from April 2018 to March 2020. The discussion section draws on the rapid systematic review of literature conducted at the outset of Phase 1, and the resultant logic model (see Appendix 1) (Vella-Burrows, Ewbank & Rice, 2018), the findings of the interim evaluation in 2019 (Ewbank & Vella-Burrows, 2019), and the current evaluation.

Considering the lack of literature on the impact of radio-led participatory arts engagement for population wellbeing (Vella-Burrows, Ewbank & Rice, 2019), this evaluation serves as a platform from which to launch an evidence base on the effects on participants of projects such as Up for Arts, and to report on operational processes for future development.

6.1 Conceptual issues: four key shifts

As the roll-out of the Up for Arts programme progresses nationally, its role as a test bed for four emerging concepts comes to the fore. These concepts are:

1. The importance of multidisciplinary creative partnerships for public good
2. An emphasis on wellbeing in:
 - a) agendas to prevent mental ill-health globally (WHO, 2013)
 - b) evolving evaluation priorities for UK Government policies (HM Treasury, 2018)
3. The substantial and growing body of evidence linking arts participation with wellbeing and improved understanding of barriers to engagement
4. New dialogues on the role of everyday creativity and its importance in relation to people’s wellbeing.

6.1.1. Building multidisciplinary creative partnerships

Reflecting Public Health England’s prioritisation of community-centred approaches to health and wellbeing (PHE, 2015), Up for Arts has developed partnerships between government and non-government agencies to identify and respond to localised need.

Organisational partnerships

The Up for Arts projects that are the subject of this evaluation have demonstrated the benefits of partnerships between:

- Local BBC radio and the wider media - giving a voice to under-represented communities, stimulating everyday creativity and broadcasting wellbeing and behaviour change messages / campaigns;
- Civic organisations - representing and supporting their communities;
- The voluntary sector / community organisations - improving people's quality of life;
- Health trusts and other health agencies - embedding arts alongside frontline mental health management;
- Artists and cultural organisations - bringing everyday creativity into new / broader environments, including people's homes, and broadening the scope and definition of the arts.

If sustained and developed organically, these partnerships have the potential to contribute to growing confident and connected communities, to improve environments, and to enhance the quality of life of individual citizens.

The BBC and VA partnership

The partnership between the BBC and VA has been able to deliver more than either partner could achieve on their own. This is seen most strongly in collaboratively work to improve the local cultural offer in areas of low cultural engagement, and to extend public participation in creative activities.

- Projects have built successful track records in engaging with multi-disadvantaged communities, including those of which the BBC had little prior knowledge.
- Up for Arts is not driven by the BBC's news agenda, so has been able to invest more time than traditional reportage permits in building trust within communities and developing partnerships across sectors.
- Once projects are well established, some have continued to widen their sphere of influence and helped to generate new services. This is most clearly seen in Merseyside where Up for Arts has operated for a decade and has supported a wide range of initiatives. It is also seen in London where Up for Arts has helped foster community

links between the BBC and GLA, and where partnership work with Thrive LDN has led to creative podcast activity extending beyond Up for Arts.

As with any new development, unforeseeable issues sometimes arose. It could not have been anticipated, for example, that the decision to focus the London Up for Arts project on the Windrush 70 celebration with Greater London Authority would quickly be affected by the Windrush scandal becoming one of the major news stories of 2018. In this case, the ability of the Up for Arts team to respond flexibly and creatively meant that a largely negative narrative could be transformed into a more positive counter-narrative. This led in due course to the Up for Arts producer making a radio documentary about the influence of Caribbean music on the UK music scene that was aired on Radio London and subsequently on BBC World Service, which has a weekly global reach of over 400 million people.

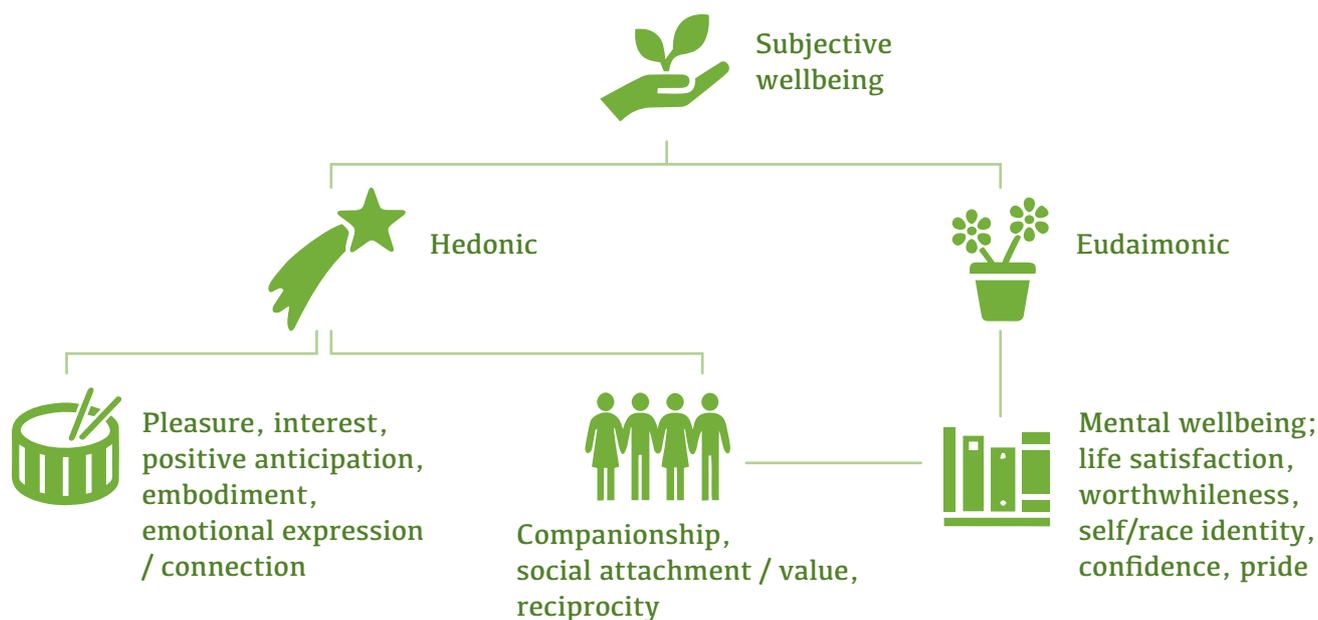
6.1.2. A global emphasis on wellbeing

The impact of the Up for Arts programme on the wellbeing of participants aligns with an increasing emphasis on wellbeing globally and nationally. For example, the World Health Organization's primary goal to prevent mental ill-health focuses on wellbeing (WHO, 2013). In the UK and elsewhere there is an increasing drive to shift the primary aim of government policy from economic growth to wellbeing. This parallels a move towards an asset-based model of health that aims to keep people healthy throughout their lives, thereby reducing personal suffering and economic strain on health systems.



Up for Arts participants took part in World Mental Health Day 2019 at City Hall, London

Figure 3. Up for Arts participants’ reported feelings of subjective wellbeing



6.1.3. Arts participation & wellbeing - and understanding barriers to engagement

This evaluation shows that people electing to take part in Up for Arts projects between April 2018 and March 2020 experienced an enhanced sense of wellbeing relating to both the hedonic and eudaimonic domains. The benefits encompassed immediate feelings of pleasure associated with embodied positive activity, companionship and belonging, and longer-lasting feelings of mental wellbeing, worthwhileness, and life satisfaction (Figure 3).

These findings echo those in the large body of evidence on the value of arts engagement on wellbeing (e.g. Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017; Tomlinson, 2018).

In the current evaluation, wellbeing effects were strongly evident in the long-running Merseyside project and also in newer projects. This indicates that improvements to wellbeing can both be rapidly achieved and sustained over time.

These facets of wellbeing were commented upon by each of the evaluation contributor groups (organisational personnel groups and Up for Arts participant groups). Differences appeared, however, in how much weight was placed on each. For example, 21% of BBC personnel’s total commentary focused on wellbeing and social cohesion, compared with 58%

of Up for Arts participants’ commentary. This finding highlights variations in priorities between organisers and recipients of the projects.

Figure 4 illustrates the scope of the Up for Arts programme in relation to domains on the combined Wheel of Well-being (ONS, 2016) and The Index of Wellbeing in Later Life (Age UK, 2017) (see 3.2 above). The strongest effects reported by Up for Arts participants related to personal and social wellbeing. Included in this was a sense of value gained in undertaking the creative process and pride in arts and crafts achievements. This was particularly strong where creative pieces were part of a larger community creation which were (or were planned to be) presented in public, or where creative pieces were used as tokens of kindness towards other community members. The latter highlights the significance of reciprocal benevolence engendered by taking part in collective project activities.

These findings correspond with those of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing’s review on arts engagement and mental health, and affordances that lead to wellbeing. These include: social enrichment; belonging and relationship building; self-identity through creative achievement and embodied experiences; and building confidence (Tomlinson, et al., 2018).

Figure 4. Up for Arts and subjective wellbeing relating to the Wheel of Well-being and Index of Wellbeing in Later life domains



Better understanding of barriers to arts engagement and behaviour change

It is important to note that the current findings on barriers to engagement in Up for Arts activities do not reflect first-person perspectives from non-engagers. They do, however, provide useful insights with which to compare the perspectives of the Up for Arts engagers with non-engagers in future evaluations. Findings on this topic reflect those of the most recent Taking Part Survey (ONS, 2019), which also fit into a theoretical model that identifies enablers / disablers to engagement (Sowton, 2014). These are:

- i) individualistic and altruistic elements, which pivot around a person’s willingness / ability to volunteer to take part;
 - ii) ‘intrinsic and extrinsic’, or autonomous elements; and
 - iii) ‘contingent and habitual’ elements.
- These elements align well with the components of the COM-B model of change drawn from the Behavioural Change Wheel (Michie, et al., 2014):
- Capability - the power to generate an outcome
 - Opportunity - the chance to generate an outcome
 - Motivation - reason for action
 - Behaviours - the above factors enabling or influencing specific behaviours.

Low motivation to engage in Up for Arts projects was reported by organising personnel to centre partly on lack of trust in the establishment or ‘the system’. This was highlighted specifically in relation to young people who had experienced mental health issues. However, the ‘Act On’ podcast partnership project organised in partnership with Thrive LDN (an organisation with a good record of engaging excluded young people) shows how imaginative collaborations can draw in harder-to-reach individuals or groups, providing appropriately authentic programme content and accessible peer support. The importance of allowing time to explore community groups for their suitability as partners was also evident in the early stages of the CWR project. In this case, a strong partnership was developing with Coventry’s Men’s Sheds project, which attracted men with enduring health issues, often considered a difficult-to-engage group.

Due to Up for Arts’ approach of encouraging individuals from population sub-groups that are mixed in age and gender and are ethnically diverse, no isolated theory can account for all the complexities relating to barriers and behaviour change. The issues raised around barriers, including financial

constraints, point to the wider debate on how the current narrow definition of arts and culture may contribute to worsening inequalities. This reinforces the need for a new broader definition that supports and enables a policy shift towards everyday creativity.

6.1.4. A new dynamic for everyday creativity

As described in Section 1, current understandings of the arts have often been found to restrict access to creative cultural activities and thus to contribute to health inequalities. WHO Europe's report *Intersectional Action: The Arts, Health and Wellbeing (WHO, 2019)* urges the arts and health sectors to work together in "identifying and removing barriers to accessing the arts, including among older adults, people with mental ill health, people of lower socioeconomic status, members of ethnic and other minorities, people with a health condition or disability and people living in geographically isolated areas." The report calls on agencies to ensure "free or affordable provision of arts resources and equal access to these resources to help improve equity in health".

The Up for Arts approach, rooted in affordable access to everyday creative opportunities, offers broader, more inclusive modes of engagement than more narrowly defined and formalised modes of the arts. The growing science-based underpinnings of everyday creativity further reinforce the appeal of the approach within health contexts.

The pandemic has led to extremely challenging times for the arts sector, broadcasters and the wider community alike, with public gatherings in arts venues being particularly affected by the lockdown. But it has also brought to the fore the importance of the nurturing of creativity in people's homes and local communities, particularly through practical partnerships between artists and arts organisations and public service broadcasters such as the BBC.

6.2 Limitations of evaluation methods

Phase 1 of the Up for Arts evaluation followed a pragmatic, formative approach, which worked within limitations from the outset. The geographical spread, heterogenous designs and varied, and sometimes uncertain, start dates of each of the projects created challenges for the evaluators in ring-fencing specific data collection time-points. The nature of Up for Arts activities, which are often designed to attract drop-in participation, limited the tracking of effects on specific participants over time. Arranging times and venues for focus group discussions outside of Up for Arts sessions was not easily achieved without relying too heavily on local help. Discussions that did take place appeared to attract more vocal and confident participants. In aiming to address this issue, one-to-one interviews were also offered, but these were usually undertaken during an Up for Arts activity session, where privacy was limited. These limitations may have hampered the scope of representation from across whole groups of participants. It is also important to acknowledge the likelihood of positive evaluation bias among the Up for Arts participants, each of whom had elected to attend and re-attend activities, some over a long period of time. This raises another notable limitation: the absence of voices from non-engaging communities. The perceived reasons for non-engagement, therefore, were assessed from a third-party perspective only. It is planned that groups of non-engagers will be recruited to address this shortcoming in the next phase of the evaluation.



Act On podcast series - training and recording session in North London

7. Operational processes

7.1 Preparation

The process of setting up new Up for Arts partnerships with the BBC was often complex and time-consuming. With only one member of VA staff focused on development, it was important that the Up for Arts roll-out was conducted at a manageable pace. Where local negotiations were carried out with a supportive and enthusiastic managing editor, agreement to proceed could be reached in a matter of weeks. However, on several occasions discussions with local radio stations extended over a period of many months before being dropped by the BBC.

This was particularly noticeable with proposed projects in the large, highly autonomous territories of Scotland and Northern Ireland, both of which failed to launch despite considerable investment of time by VA, as the stations responded to competing programming and operational priorities. Under the current model it is to be expected that a proportion of negotiations end in a negative outcome, given the financial constraints on BBC local radio, local political considerations and the conflicting programming priorities often faced by editors.

Laraine Winning, Up for Arts Development Director, reported that in discussions over new projects, BBC local radio editors would often raise concerns about having VA, an outside agency, so closely embedded within their structures. She would draw on word-of-mouth reassurances from editors or other key BBC staff who had positive past experience of Up for Arts in order to reassure decision makers. Standards, editorial control, accountability, sponsorship, funding and balanced output were key issues that were consistently raised by editors during the negotiation process. VA's ability to respond confidently and professionally to such concerns, and to put in place appropriate agreements, protocols and procedures, were important factors in building confidence and ensuring that the majority of negotiations had a positive outcome, albeit many took considerable time to bring to fruition.

For anyone who's going to be looking to work with the BBC, you need to know the processes, know the people that you're getting involved with, and know the products you're looking to be involved with, whether that's linear broadcasting or podcasting, or reaching out into the much more digital focused days that we're embarking on. The key thing is that the requirements of the BBC are met, whether that's editorially, in terms of compliance, and in terms of making sure that the type of programme and the relationships we're building are right for the reputation of the BBC.

David Friend – BBC Radio London

7.2 Management

New Up for Arts projects typically required intensive support at the outset to ensure that new staff were effectively assimilated into the BBC and any teething problems were rapidly addressed. The partnership between VA and BBC local radio relies on VA managing Up for Arts staff and their workloads in a productive way that avoids hindering the BBC and mitigates any working difficulties. Given the unique and experimental status of Up for Arts within the BBC, any local project that becomes a problem can jeopardise not only its own future but also the reputation of the entire roll-out initiative.

Initially the Development Director relinquished the management of existing Up for Arts projects in the North West, in order to focus on spearheading the development of the new projects. After six months the three projects in the North West came back under the direct management of the Development Director as this was deemed preferable for performance management purposes and to build a single Up for Arts network rather than two separate clusters.

It was clear that Up for Arts producers new to the BBC required considerably more support from VA management and peers than those with previous experience of working within the BBC, who had a degree of familiarity with personnel and procedures. This meant staff new to the BBC faced longer lead-in

times for producing content and getting to grips with BBC processes and protocols, including the selling-in of ideas for content. Those who had worked within the BBC previously were more likely to 'hit the ground running' and found it easier to forge strong working relationships. Resilience and persuasion skills were found to be crucial attributes for all Up for Arts staff.

7.3 Operational challenges

Significant operational challenges arose for VA in managing a dispersed network of projects all working to different local programming priorities. Sustaining performance levels, maintaining staff morale and ensuring that effective communication was in place centrally, locally and horizontally all required effective input. Up for Arts Producers work on a part-time basis and are highly peripatetic, meaning that their day-to-day activities needed effective supervision at a distance. This sometimes proved challenging given constraints on management time. As a result, considerable trust and responsibility were handed to individual Producers in managing their own workloads and keeping the relationship with the BBC operating smoothly. BBC broadcasting staff typically operate in a pressured environment with high levels of professionalism and autonomy; there can be low tolerance for any sub-optimal performance within the team. Any services that fell under the quality threshold or breached BBC processes might therefore negatively impact on progress and reputation.

Once a project was established, BBC colleagues could sometimes prove challenging in a variety of ways. Up for Arts Producers had to gauge how far to push their BBC colleagues in terms of pursuing their programme-making objectives, learning as they went. Troubleshooting and conflict resolution were given priority over other management issues when a project had not bedded in well, but sometimes operational issues persisted. Challenges arise as part of daily working in a busy radio station and the creative tensions that exist in compiling engaging content can often be productive, but in some cases BBC editors may not have been sufficiently robust with their own staff in laying down clear rules about partnership working. Where problems arose, significant management time was needed to address concerns and resolve issues. Skills gaps in these areas were discussed in management and team meetings, including through

sharing success strategies, but for a minority of staff gaining and retaining the confidence of BBC colleagues remained a key challenge.

The following examples of operational challenges illustrate aspects of the roll-out that required significant attention:

- **Cross-branding:** The roll-out project based in BBC Radio Wales was branded as Get Creative, and tasked with refreshing this annual Spring festival of home-grown creativity, which had been running in Wales, with partnership support from BBC Wales, for several years. The project suffered from differing and unclear programming objectives which resulted in conflicting views from BBC Radio Wales production staff about arts engagement priorities. A sense of fatigue about Get Creative was also a factor. This meant that the project in Wales was slow to deliver quality content and absorbed considerable management time from both the BBC and VA.
- **Navigating fast-moving media foci:** BBC Radio London's programming style differs significantly from that of other BBC local radio stations, due to its greater audience reach (c.450,000) and metropolitan news / entertainment brief. The Up for Arts themed year with BBC Radio London was a partnership with Greater London Authority to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Windrush. The Windrush scandal broke as the new partnership was launched, generating international headlines. Detailed and intensive discussions with station management followed over how to manage links to Greater London Authority and central Government, when the station's role was to hold them both to account. It transpired that the quasi-independence of Up for Arts allowed the BBC in London to keep a foot in both camps – to celebrate and commemorate the Windrush generation while maintaining a questioning stance over the political scandal.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic:** Coming at the end of the period under review in this report, the pandemic has had a major impact on the future direction of all Up for Arts programming and output. From the beginning of the lockdown, staff were instructed to work from home and to reduce trips to the radio station to only essential activity. Staff were also required to pull back

from promoting groups, events and activities and to shift the focus to ‘everyday creativity at home’. Up for Arts producers have reported that they have benefited from having more time to connect to people and to find “real grassroots groups” during the lockdown, with evidence of “new people coming out of the woodwork”. They also report that host stations have proved very receptive to arts stories and other material generated during lockdown, because listeners are “hungry for creative content”.

7.4 Funding challenges

From the outset of the roll-out the intention was for Up for Arts projects to use Oak Foundation funding as leverage for raising local funding in order to enable each project to be sustainable. However, securing additional external funding proved challenging and brought with it a complex range of issues.

VA staff engaged in fundraising viewed it as insensitive or inappropriate to move into an area where Up for Arts was not known and immediately apply for new grant investment. It was thought this approach could be seen as attempting to take funding away from local arts organisations, thus undermining the very partner groups required for Up for Arts to be successful. An approach of front-loading projects was therefore developed in Stoke-on-Trent, London and Humberside in order to allow the new services to build reputation, trust and evidence of effectiveness, prior to seeking local investment. This approach proved effective in London, but not in Stoke-on-Trent or Humberside, where projects were halted due to lack of local funding after the initial period, despite consistent efforts by VA staff and support from the BBC editors concerned.

Ambitiously, the Up for Arts roll-out set out to create new projects and a new national network in a period of austerity and cutbacks which particularly impacted deprived communities. Typically, local authority arts budgets were either being withdrawn or phased out, competition for local trust or foundation funding was high and rising, and in more deprived areas local funding was often being reserved for groups coping with issues of day-to-day survival. These factors may help account for the relative success of Up for Arts fundraising activity in London, as compared with the deprived cities of Stoke-on-Trent and Hull/Humberside.

As the partnership expands, I think some of the things that I would be aware of as a manager is the need for somebody to understand BBC editorial, because BBC editorial provides a whole load of checks and balances that enable us to do partnership work successfully ... in terms of editorial, it's about identifying the stories, and you need somebody with a journalist or producer brain to think about the key points that will represent the group, and also act as a recruitment tool. Identifying those stories and how they'll work as radio - or potentially television - is really crucial.

Andrew Bowman, Editor, BBC Radio Merseyside

Further, Voluntary Arts is a national organisation with a network of local projects and staff. This allows it to work at a community level, with minimal operational costs; most staff work from home or are embedded within another organisation. This way of working encourages flexibility and responsiveness but can sometimes hamper VA's ability to be recognised as a local organisation. On occasion VA's Scottish charitable registration may have added to the sense of VA being an external organisation seeking to move in to a complex local ecology.

Successful funding partnerships built up over the two years of the roll-out took considerable time to establish. For example, the link with Thrive LDN took eight months from initial discussion to the draw-down of funds - but it now appears to be mutually beneficial, with further collaborations planned.

7.5 Operational lessons

Phase One of the Up for Arts roll-out was conducted on an incremental basis and extended only as and when local conditions were appropriate. A measured approach was important to allow for bedding-in of new projects while at the same time brokering relationships with new BBC stations.

In considering the future development of the Up for Arts network, the following **lessons** are key:

- Output must be distinctive and clearly branded in order to avoid being lost in the welter of the BBC's overall content.
- The programming style needs to be constantly reinvented to stay relevant and fresh.
- Muscular support of Up for Arts staff is sometimes required in order to maintain the integrity of partnership agreements.
- Production standards are key to retaining a strong reputation for delivery.

Building and maintaining the Up for Arts brand is central to the success of the roll-out project, and the following **learning points** address this theme:

- Up for Arts brand values must remain clear, strong and consistent.
- Equally, there is a need to constantly reinvent the Up for Arts programming style to stay relevant and fresh. This involves new ideas, new formats, new approaches, and innovative alliances. An example is the Act-On podcasts where Up for Arts acted as a catalyst between the BBC and Thrive LDN, delivering training for aspiring young podcasters, and then supporting the production and dissemination of a series of podcasts on mental health related themes.
- Sustaining balanced output and impartiality are key BBC editorial priorities; there are limits as to how close Up for Arts can get to a local group or a specific focus.
- External groups need to be made aware of the limitations within BBC guidelines on Up for Arts partner endorsements.
- Output is aired only on merit. Up for Arts Producers must be able to produce quality audio (and sometimes video) and maintain broadcast standards.

In assessing how to navigate the challenges, the following **lessons** can be drawn from the Phase One roll-out:

- Given the many stakeholders involved in campaign activity and the fast-moving media environment in which they operate, projects require constant ongoing expert scrutiny. Managers and staff must be on the lookout for working difficulties and emerging performance issues, responding swiftly and robustly as they emerge.
- Equally, partnership opportunities can arise unexpectedly and, if responded to flexibly, can lead in new directions. This can result in themed activity than generates income to underpin future

service delivery.

- The base model of Up for Arts has been to run with monthly themes. However, the roll-out shows that focusing on a strong single theme (such as Windrush or intergenerational letter writing) over a longer period of months (or even up to a year) can prove a highly effective way of building trust and stable partnerships, and generating high quality content.
- Up for Arts Producers work on a part-time basis, typically two days per week. Commitment and excellent communication and time management skills are key to effective planning, partnership building and programme production.

Sustainability is crucial for future-proofing the Up for Arts network. It should be noted that whilst carrying out the Up for Arts expansion programme VA have also worked to sustain existing long-standing Up for Arts projects across the North West of England. This has included continuing the work of Up for Arts with BBC Radio Merseyside (currently with Liverpool One & Merseyside Community Foundation funding). The BBC Radio Lancashire project has temporarily been paused after the postholder left. The previous Up for Arts project at BBC Radio Cumbria came to an end, but a new project has now been commenced with funding from BBC Contains Strong Language.

The following **lessons** apply in regard to sustainability:

- Pump-prime funding from Oak Foundation has allowed for the first phase of the roll-out to be delivered. Achieving this has not been without its challenges, but it seems clear that proof of concept has been achieved, both in terms of impact and deliverability. Up for Arts is a unique partnership service that is valued by the BBC and by local agencies, and which has the potential to deliver improved outcomes for individuals and local communities across the country, whilst producing engaging local content for broadcast.
- However, despite some fundraising successes, the model of securing local funding to sustain local projects has proved difficult to operationalise. If services cease due to lack of local funding, listeners and partners can quickly become confused or disillusioned, and progress made in engaging hard-to-reach groups can be lost.
- The current stop-start approach to the funding of projects and the building of relationship with local communities is unlikely to be a sustainable way of working in the long term.

8. Conclusions

This evaluation of the first phase of the Up for Arts roll-out has shown that the partnership between VA and BBC local radio has provided good reach into communities and has helped to deliver the strategic objectives of both VA and the BBC. Up for Arts has been effective in operationalising strong, locally-rooted relationships which have increased participation in creative cultural activity among marginalised groups and led to improved wellbeing outcomes, while producing engaging and original content for broadcast.

The partnership between VA and the BBC has yielded more than either partner could deliver on their own. The nature of Up for Arts, with one foot within the BBC and one foot in the community, has allowed projects to act as a unique and valuable bridge, generating beneficial outcomes in a cost-effective manner, in a deeper way than is usually permitted under journalistic timescales and priorities. Whilst the quasi-independence of Up for Arts is an essential strength of the model, the employment of Up for Arts Producers who are known to and trusted by the BBC has been an important success factor.

This evaluation adds to the growing understanding of how taking part in creative and cultural activity contributes to improved wellbeing, bolstering the case for consistent and clear public health messaging to encourage further uptake. It is clear that strategies to support behaviour change take time and require consistent messaging across as wide a range of media as possible. This suggests that the impact of Up for Arts messaging would be likely to be greater if it was extended across multiple BBC platforms.

The support of BBC local radio has been critical to the success of the roll-out to date, but uptake has been patchy, with some significant ‘failures to launch’, including in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Although the value of locally supported and distinctive Up for Arts projects in each station is clear, more robust central support from within the BBC – ideally focused on a single senior lead – would help to ensure the second phase of the roll-out achieves its full potential.

The closer integration of Up for Arts into VA’s national work will be supported by VA’s new Media Partnerships Director, replacing Laraine Winning,

the developer of the Up for Arts model, who retired in March 2020. The Up for Arts funding model is predicated on pump-priming from Oak Foundation leading to locally sourced ongoing funding, followed by long term sustainability as Oak Foundation funding reaches an end. However, this model has been shown to be difficult to implement, particularly in areas of greatest need, and should be jointly reconsidered by VA and the BBC, with a view to moving towards national support and resourcing for full roll-out.

Evidence is growing that narrow definitions and understandings of the arts can inhibit the take-up of creative cultural activities, particularly among more disadvantaged sections of the population, and thus worsen wellbeing inequalities. VA is championing the broader notion of everyday creativity and it would be timely to consider adjusting the Up for Arts brand to ensure that, as far as possible, the project’s creative opportunities are afforded to all.

The lockdown began as the period under review was ending. As an unknown ‘new normal’ begins to be shaped, there is a need for a debate on the role of everyday creativity in contributing to reducing marginalization and inequality, and delivering healthier lives for all. This debate should draw together perspectives from across research disciplines, delivery agencies, policymakers and wider society. The forthcoming second phase of the Up for Arts roll-out can serve as an experimental field generating data in order to contribute to such a process.



Social media for Up for Arts London, Windrush project

Coda: Reflections on the Pandemic

“We’re dealing with a situation we’ve just never seen before with Coronavirus. But there’s a massive role for Voluntary Arts to link people together, even remotely. There’s a lot of creative activity that people can do from home, including podcasts, remote choirs, different ways of people connecting. It’s a time when people may be shut down, they may be in isolation; I think it’s really important to bring people together. And there’s a huge mental health aspect to this, that people can feel involved, and feel part of the process, and feel a sense of achievement by taking part in projects, whether they’re face-to-face or remote. We know we’ve got a close bond with our listeners and we’re there for them in the good times and the bad and by working with Voluntary Arts there’s never been a more important time to make people’s mental health a priority.”

Andrew Bowman, Editor, BBC Radio Merseyside

The COVID-19 lockdown came at the end of the period covered by this report. As the authors have gone through their own lived experiences of the pandemic, the world has been shifting in significant ways. The extent of appetite for radical permanent change remains unclear, but times of great stress can lead to shifts in the paradigm.

Here, Robin Simpson, Chief Executive of Voluntary Arts, reflects on the impact of the pandemic on creative cultural activity in local communities across the UK:

“Local voluntary arts groups have been unable to meet during the Coronavirus lockdown but many have kept in touch with their members and have embarked on remote creative projects together. Activities have been transferred online, including: choir singalongs; pre-recorded or live demonstrations of visual arts and crafts; and creative challenges on social media. Where online access is unavailable or problematic, groups have maintained contact and creative activity via post, telephone trees and local radio.

A particularly pressing issue is the reopening of venues for creative activity. The venues used by creative groups are varied and come from across the public, private and third sectors, for example: public libraries, schools, pub function rooms, church halls and community centres. It is likely that these different venues will be subject to different guidelines and different levels of availability as lockdown restrictions are relaxed. Groups will want to ensure that activities are safe and conform to appropriate social distancing requirements: entry requirements (such as excluding people who are displaying symptoms); cleaning standards and frequency; risk assessment, and so on.

We know that many groups are considering outdoor creative sessions as a means of mitigating risk of contact and exposure. There will also be large numbers of groups where some members will continue to shield when lockdown eases. Similarly to educational settings, these groups are exploring ‘blended’ approaches to practicing creativity together: some in-person activity alongside live-streamed or video-linked capabilities.

These groups depend on the availability of appropriate venues to meet, practice, rehearse and perform. We await clear, consistent guidance about the reopening and the use of venues but Voluntary Arts is also working with others to protect and promote civic spaces (arts venues, community centres, parks, libraries) for creative activity by providing information and guidance, sharing innovative examples, and connecting the people who need a place to be creative with those who own/run them.

Despite numerous challenges, the voluntary arts sector is typically characterised by optimism and resilience and is beginning to develop some fascinating models of innovative use of public spaces - both virtual and real - for creative cultural activity. As one of Voluntary Arts’ flagship partnership projects, we’re proud that Up for Arts is in the vanguard of these developments.”

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Appendix 1. The Up for Arts Logic Model

Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population • High cost of deficit model of health & wellbeing • Inequalities in cultural activity (CA) offer & uptake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in understanding the impact of public service radio messaging to inspire people to engage in CA, and the effects on social capital & mental wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-defined policy on arts as a conduit for wellbeing
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Arts England & the UFA team • BBC Local Radio stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nick Ewbank Associates & SDH Research Centre for Arts and Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Arts organisations and practitioners • Oak Foundation (funders)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping existing literature to inform evaluation design • Design discussions with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design framework & process • Gather initial data • Transcribe & analyse data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use iterative process to adapt subsequent stages of evaluation
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships: number, types & how they managed project issues and processes • UFA activities: number & types offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People: number engaging in UFA projects • Quantitative measures: effect on wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative reports & case studies from the range of stakeholders
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence: more people engaging with CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive connections: more local radio listeners connecting positively to station & CA-related public service messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing engendered by UFA engagement • Effective Partnerships: involving arts, health and local media agencies
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life and wellness extended among older people • Reduction in costs of acute & long-term ill-health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework for delivering effective arts-related public health messages via radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust evidence to inform policy



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