



**PLACE BASED CULTURAL INCLUSION:** The importance of cultural and creative experiences for children, young people and residents in areas with high level of disadvantage

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# PLACE BASED CULTURAL INCLUSION

The importance of cultural and creative experiences for children, young people and residents in areas with high level of disadvantage.

An introduction to the Rock Pools 3 year programme- a million pound of investment for Hartlepool

JESS TONES, THE NORTHERN SCHOOL OF ART



# THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

- 6 cultural venues ( museums, galleries, theatres)
- A thriving festival scene
- 6 community Hubs including Fab Lab
- Over a 100 sports clubs in the town
- A higher and post graduate level Art School

*“ FREE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR PEOPLE-CREATES A SENSE OF CULTURE”*  
SURVEY RESPONDENT



# BARRIERS

Engagement with arts, culture and heritage is lower than the national average in Hartlepool ( DCMS/2024)

*"I THINK WALKING INTO AN ART CLASS IS VERY SCARY. I THINK IT WOULD BE GREAT IF A LOT OF THE COMMUNITY COULD BE ABLE TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITHOUT THAT HEAVY BURDEN OF GUILT" MUM HARTLEPOOL, CPP SURVEY*

The main barriers to engagement our community face are....

- Associated costs
- Time poverty
- Low confidence
- Social & cultural exclusion
- Lack of awareness or information
- Stigma & judgement
- Family or caring responsibilities
- Education & early experiences



# WHY IS CULTURAL INCLUSION IMPORTANT

1. Builds confidence, identity and belonging
2. Enhances cognitive & academic skills
3. Supports emotional regulation & wellbeing
4. Strengthens social bonds & inclusion
5. Promotes long-term positive outcomes

*I THINK GOOD ART IS JUST SOMETHING YOU DRAW OR MAKE WITH YOUR HEART. IT MEANS DOING WHAT YOU LIKE AND EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS” PRIMARY SCHOOL AGED GIRL, CPP SURVEY*





# ROCK POOLS

## CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACES

To enable communities to choose and co-design creative experiences in their area, addressing inequality in cultural engagement and building local creative resilience

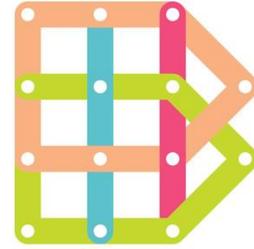


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Creative People & Places ( CPP ) is an Arts Council England investment programme that supports places where engagement in arts and culture has historically been low.

CPP is about empowering communities themselves to shape cultural activities, to make decisions and lead on what they want to experience on their doorstep.





## BORDERLANDS, MIDDLESBROUGH

- Park(ing) Day-Illustrating how an imaginative approach to urban space can bring communities together. A public, participatory project where people repurpose kerbside parking spaces.
- Hour House-Homes transformed into living galleries and community event spaces celebrating their life stories.



## SUNDERLAND

- Nibbles-Small scale commissions match creatives with local venues to develop and test new ideas for performances in their communities
- Gig Culture-A project that celebrates South Tyneside's rich musical heritage while giving the next generation of musicians the mic.



# ROCK POOLS

Rock Pools is Hartlepool's ten-year Creative People and Places Vision, designed to build a long-term sustainable cultural infrastructure rooted in local voices, care and creativity.

If successful the programme will fund an initial 3 year period. Rock Pools is built on the belief that culture is strongest when shaped by the the people who live it.

The programme aim to embed creativity in everyday life across all 12 wards of Hartlepool, working at the hyper local level while building meaningful connections across the town.



One million pounds of investment across 3 years.

-£750,000 Arts Council Investment

-£250,000 from match funders & fundraising

# Rock Pools Consortium



**Cultural Body**  
Arts Education & Access



**Community**  
Social Housing



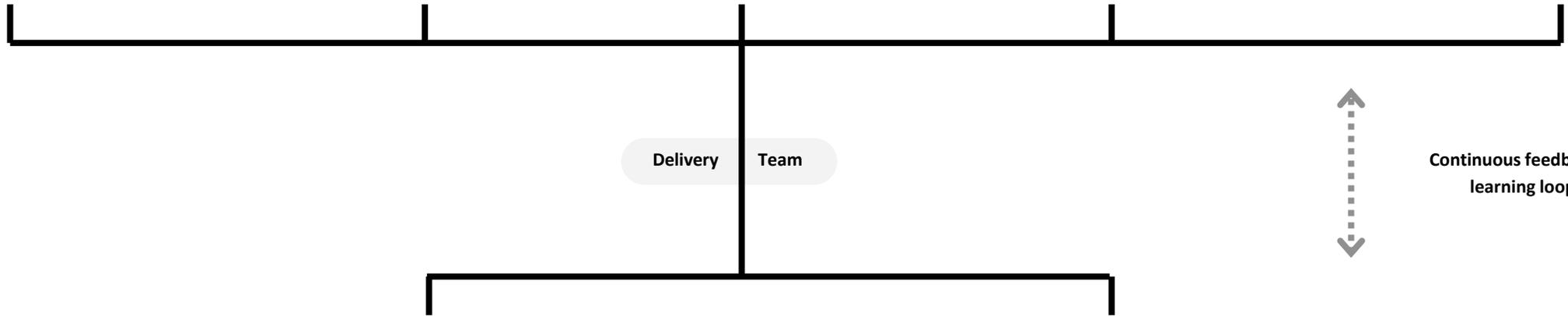
**Lead Applicant**



**Grass Routes**  
Poverty, Inequality & Lived  
Experience Advocacy



**Private/Community Sector**  
Sports & movements Communities



Delivery Team



Continuous feedback & learning loop

**Creativity & Learning Advisory Group**  
Co-lead- The Northern School of Art /  
Tees Valley Music Service

**People & Place Advisory Group**  
Co-lead- Thrive Teesside / PFC Trust (  
Hartlepool Sport)/ 13 Group

Responses to our first creative consultation activity showed that people are being creative individually- whether building a new set of shelves in a garage, knitting, or doodling, but there were very few respondents who engaged as part of a group or a project.

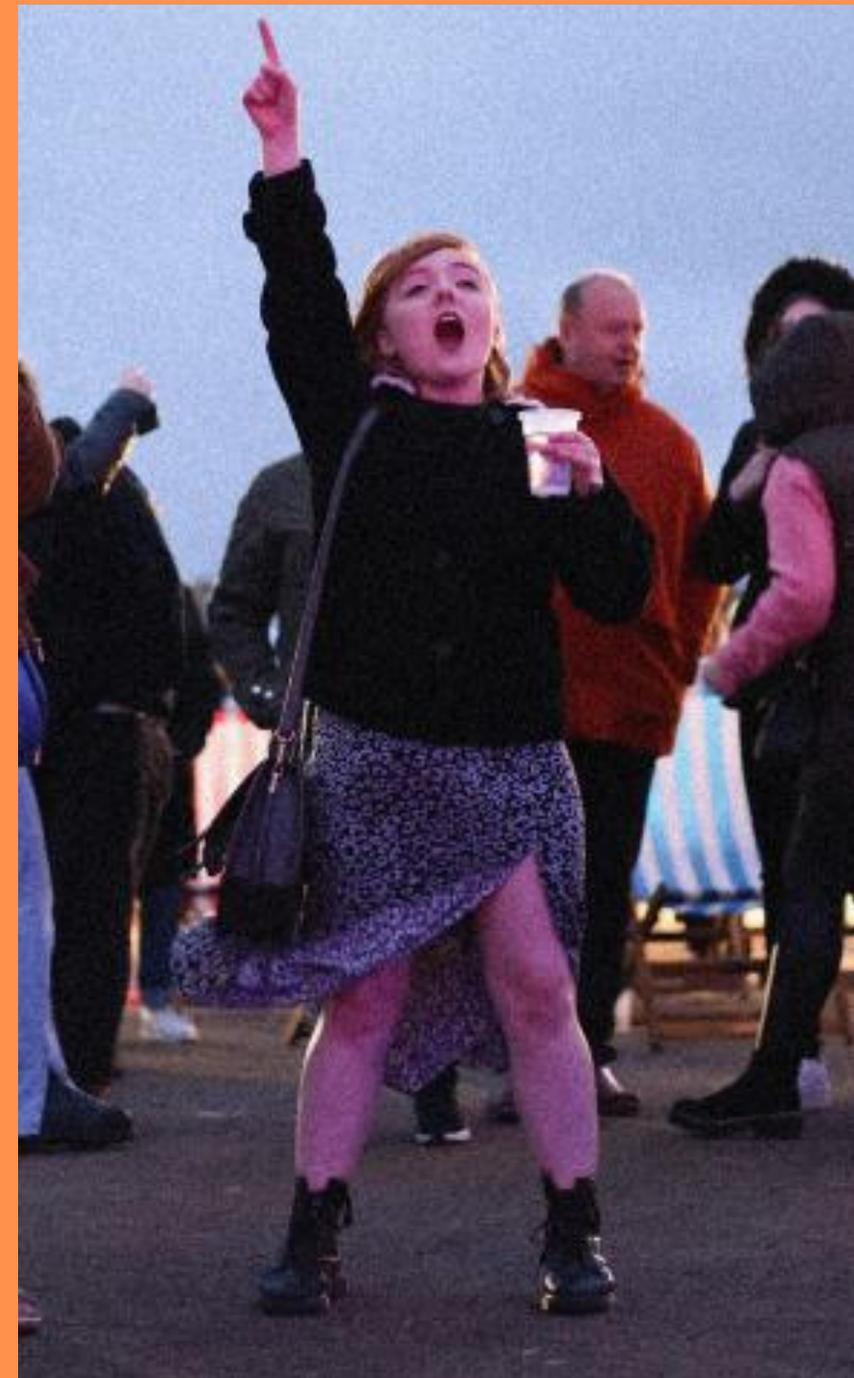
Not a single respondent to our first survey mentioned a gallery, a theatre or a museum as part of their response.

*“ I think great art can be anything as long as it mean’s something to someone”*

*“It would be nice to have choices instead of just having something put on which they think we would like”*

*“Great art to me, great art can be anything, it could be something on the TV.”*

*“We desperately need something in Hartlepool to help more people get involved, I don’t mean the arty ones, I mean the other ones who don’t do any art at all and wouldn’t even think about it.”*



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by creativity and culture and what are the most effective ways to achieve this?
2. What approaches enable us to deliver on our aspiration for excellence, both in the process of community engagement and the creative and cultural experiences on offer?
3. What else are we learning that facilitates better public engagement in creativity and culture?

# THE METHODS: THREE WAYS IN

- 1. Accessible Cultural Exploration:** Includes low-risk taster sessions (e.g. crafts, music, performances) in familiar settings. 'Go-See' trips to cultural venues outside Hartlepool and open conversations about creative possibilities. This method builds curiosity, trust and confidence.
- 2. Coastal Commons (SOUP):** Community members pitch creative ideas over shared meals. Attendees vote on their favourite pitch and the winning idea gets a micro-grant. It's accessible, fun and rooted in local voice.
- 3. Consensus Based Decision Making:** Given Hartlepool's long-standing feeling of exclusion from formal power structures, we will test collaborative methods of decision making to build trust, encourage equity and develop community leaderships.



# IMPACT

The data will be linked to the dimension benchmarks within the Counting What Counts Impact Insight Toolkit. The toolkit will be highly valuable when evaluating programming where we can learn something interesting about the experiences of our audiences and participants, or at times in which we intend to test a particularly hypothesis.

The toolkit will be critical in understanding the datasets available to set a baseline of local engagement through audience agency tools.

Place dimension metrics will also be tested to understand place-based research. We'll be analysing place celebration, place attachment and community connections.



# IN SUMMARY

## THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Limited access to creative education or encouragement in childhood can lead to adults feeling disconnected from the arts. Without positive early exposure, creative activities might not seem relevant or attainable

For information on Rock Pools,  
Creative Networks and more...

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