



Audit of Practice

“Arts in Participatory Settings”

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On behalf of ArtWorks North East

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Executive Summary

The range of “arts in participatory settings” practice

There is great richness and diversity amongst partners’ practice. There is also a reasonably high degree of commonality of ideas and approaches. These commonalities may be grouped in the following way:

- Art-making
- Engagement and outreach
- Provision of creative spaces and building communities of practice
- Training artists and others to undertake participatory work
- Supporting participants’ creative progression

Creating such a typology has the potential to highlight and articulate some of this commonality, but at the risk of losing elements of the richness in the detail of practice.

Artmaking Practice

There is a broad range of purposes, values and roles within the artmaking practices described by partners. It is possible to categorise these in different ways, with one potential option being:

- Co-produced participatory art
- Artist-authored participatory art
- Talent/Skills development

However artmaking practice is categorised, the range of purposes, values and roles that have been described means that there cannot be a single understanding of “good practice”, and that practice needs to be understood in relation to the purposes (etc) that underpin it. Exploring the notion of spectrums of practice may be helpful in this respect.

Approaches to Arts in Participatory Settings

It is possible to categorise the range of approaches and values that different partners bring to this work in the following way:

- The transformational power of artmaking
- Increasing people’s engagement with art
- Learning approaches
- Organisational development approaches

Excellence

There is great diversity in the way that organisations describe and articulate excellent practice. Partly, this properly reflects the range of practices that organisations undertake, and the subjective nature of judgement in the arts. However, there is also an absence of a common framework which articulates the shared nature of aspects of excellence. The absence of such a framework hampers communication and discourse about excellence. Analysis of the interviews points to the potential to build a common framework for understanding excellence in the following areas:

- Principles and values
- Elements of process: developing, organising and managing work
- Elements of process: artists' practice
- The final product
- The 'impact' of work

Language

There is a great diversity of language used, which creates challenges for communication and dialogue. There is a need for both greater precision and consensus about the language used to describe this work. However, language in this area is evolving, which demonstrates that organisations are increasingly thinking about the language they use.

Employment

There is some variation in pay rates for artists between partners, although there is a large degree of consensus. Overall, average pay rates are low compared to other freelancers, which may cause problems, particularly in relation to artists being able to pay for their own training and development.

Training & Development

There is significant variety in the levels of training and development that organisations are able to undertake, with a couple of organisations standing out as providing comprehensive opportunities in their artform areas. Partners feel that there are significant gaps to be addressed in terms of training and development of artists. Analysis of the interviews suggests that we face collective action problems in addressing these gaps.

Audit Brief

The first Artworks: North East Steering Group decided that the first piece of work for our programme should be to undertake an audit of the participatory practice of each of the organisation's involved in the programme.

The group decided that it wanted the audit to achieve the following outcomes:

- To audit the participatory practice of organisations involved in the Artworks: North East project and other key partners – and record examples of excellent practice from each partner's perspective
- Using the material gained from the audit, it should develop an understanding of the range of arts practice undertaken in participatory settings. It should do this in order to help develop a common language, which we can use to understand the commonalities and differences in practice, and frame debate and discussion for the rest of the project
- Get an impression about the perceptions of participatory practice from different partners
- Produce figures on concerning the number of artist days and pay rates for participatory activity amongst Artworks: North East partners
- Audit the training/professional development opportunities available to artists who work in participatory settings in the North East
- Identify the established and emerging artists that organisations work with

Following further discussion amongst partners it was decided that the audit was not the most appropriate mechanism to:

- Identify impressions of participatory practice amongst partners, as this was felt that a separate study was best placed to address this issue
- Produce figures on the number of artist days worked, as initial sampling demonstrated that this would be impossible to measure with any degree of accuracy within the resources of this audit
- Identify the artists that each organisation worked with, as this could be done more rapidly in other ways

Relationship to Artworks North East research questions

Artworks: North East has specific research questions that the programme has set itself. This audit contributes to the following Lines of Enquiry and questions:

Line of Enquiry	Specific Questions
What is the scope of existing participatory practice across the North East region, taking into account terms and conditions of employment , numbers of artists employed	What practice exists and what are the commonalities and differences? How can good practice as perceived by individuals and organisations be exemplified? What are the agreed terms for participatory practice?
How do the artists learn to develop and what forms does this learning take?	How do we define appropriate knowledge and skills and understanding ? What are the commonalities and differences in learning across the 5 discipline areas? What are the commonalities and differences when working in different contexts?
How can we bring about change and growth in initial arts training?	What are the existing opportunities for CPD across the 5 discipline areas?

Methodology

Following the detailed discussions about the brief, it was agreed that the audit would use a semi-structured interview format to address the remaining questions. To develop the interview structure, Helix Arts staff worked with members of the national Artworks evaluation team at Newcastle University. With their support, an interview framework and questions was agreed. This can be found at Appendix A.

The following members of the Artwork North East partnership were interviewed:

- BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art
- Equal Arts
- Helix Arts
- Live Theatre
- National Glass Centre
- New Writing North
- Northern Stage
- Regional Youth Work Unit
- The Sage Gateshead
- Tyneside Cinema

Following further discussions between Artworks North East partners, it was decided to add The Forge and Arts Centre Washington to the list of interviewees.

The content of interviews was then analysed to bring out areas of commonality and difference, and highlight answers to some of the questions in the brief. The descriptions and suggested categorisations for each organisation were then offered back to each organisation, giving them the opportunity to amend or add to those descriptions.

A Note on Typologies

The nature of the research questions, and the lack of a prior conceptual framework in this field, meant that the process of creating typologies has been an emergent one, in that the typologies emerge from an analysis of the interviews, rather than being pre-defined categories which were part of the interviews themselves.

Therefore, the typologies suggested in sections below are simply that- one possible way to categorise responses. There are bound to be other legitimate ways, which may emerge through discussion amongst the Artworks: North East partners.¹

Further, the nature of typologies is that they are abstractions – they are attempts to bring together and cluster activities and ideas that share common themes or ideas in order to provide new ways to understand and communicate those things to people with different practices. In so doing, we are bound to lose some of the richness and detail of those activities. As a consequence, this report attempts to do two things: 1) to simplify activity and ideas by suggesting potential typologies which may aid communication, and 2) to give a flavour of the richness of the activities and ideas which organisations undertake and develop by reporting verbatim the detailed language which interviewees used to describe key areas of work.

¹One other recent attempt to create a typology can be found here: see for example the recent report for the James Irvine Foundation in the USA: <http://www.irvine.org/publications/publications-by-topic/arts/getting-in-on-the-act-report>)

Audit Findings

1. What “arts in participatory settings” activity do organisations deliver?

Below is a summary of each organisation’s response to the question “What activity does your organisation undertake that you feel meets the Paul Hamlyn definition of “arts in participatory settings”?”

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

BALTIC undertakes a range of activities which “introduce people to BALTIC on friendly terms, on their terms”. The organisation seeks to “increase people’s engagement with contemporary art” and to encourage people to have an on-going relationship with visual art.

To achieve this, BALTIC runs “learning and engagement activities” both within and outside BALTIC as a building. It targets particular sets of participants, based on analysis of gaps in who currently attends BALTIC shows and other activities, in addition to developing existing audiences. Currently, it has learning programmes targeted at:

- Families
- Young People
- Community Groups
- Schools and Colleges
- People with Special Educational Needs
- Adults
- Universities and artists
- Gallery visitors

A Programmer creates a programme of learning activities for each of these target groups, using BALTIC’s team of 20 freelance artist’s, who have been recruited especially to deliver the learning programmes, and the artists who work and exhibit at BALTIC.

Activities include “outreach workshops” in particular community centres, schools, youth spaces and other locations outside BALTIC, open-access drop-in workshops within BALTIC itself, and large-scale participatory events, which may work with many thousands of people in a compressed period of time. BALTIC works with roughly 60,000 participants per year and has an overall visitor attendance annually of approximately 400,000.

Equal Arts

Equal Arts “runs participatory arts projects with older people” (those who are over 60 years old) in the North East. The organisation designs and creates opportunities for

older people to make art, and puts significant time (up to a year) into the process of developing new projects. Equal Arts develop partnerships with organisations such as Age Concern to access older people who have less opportunity to make art. The organisation's development processes and practice are designed to put participants "at the centre" of the process of making art, and "engage participants all the way through".

Equal Arts works with partners and participants to create projects in which artists and participants work together to co-produce work, and then show that work to a variety of audiences. Equal Arts seeks to create durational projects, typically lasting a year, and undertakes roughly 12 projects per year, working across the full spectrum of visual and performing arts.

The Forge

The Forge undertakes participatory arts activities with young people (0 – 25) and their families, across the North East, mainly concentrated in Durham and Sunderland. The organisation describes its role as "making artwork with people" and "creating art through collaboration". It performs/shows the work to a variety of audiences, including on a national and international scale. It works across the full spectrum of visual and performing arts, and particularly encourages collaboration between artists of different disciplines.

The Forge works with partner organisations, such as schools and youth groups, to develop long-term contexts in which artists can work with the people in those partner organisations to make art. The Forge also run short-term taster activities, which enable young people and their families to engage with new forms of art-making.

Helix Arts

Helix Arts works the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the North East to enable them to work with artists to jointly create new artwork. The organisation targets those people who, according to research, have least opportunity to participate in making art. Currently, Helix Arts targets:

- Young people at risk
- The unemployed and people on low incomes
- People living in deprived neighbourhoods
- People with special educational needs
- People with limiting health conditions, particularly the elderly

Helix Arts forms partnerships with organisations who serve those people, in order to create opportunities for artists to work in contexts where those people already live or use services.

The organisation enables participants to make informed choices about the type of arts activity and creative ideas they want to explore, by involving participants in the design of programmes and enabling people to choose the artists they want to work with.

Helix Arts seeks to create opportunities for artists and participants to develop meaningful relationships and make and exhibit/perform high-quality work, and supports participants to progress onto other self-directed creative activities. Helix Arts typically delivers between 8 and 12 projects per year, and works with approximately 500 participants a year.

Live Theatre

Live Theatre has an “Education and Participation” programme which undertake activities which enable people to “participate in theatre”. The organisation’s participatory activities are focussed on a key aspect of the organisation’s mission: “Unlocking the Potential of Young People”. It pursues this focus on young people through:

- An open-access youth theatre group, which has no auditions, and is free for young people. The youth theatre group works with 300 every week, and has a waiting list of 200.
- education work in schools – often making issue-based work, such as sexual health or bullying, through workshops and performances. This work is targeted at schools in the poorer areas of Newcastle.
- “First draft” – a project which develops new playwriting by 9/10 year olds, and stages their work, performed by professional actors. This work is concentrated in the poorest areas of Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland.

Live Theatre also has a “community strand” which focuses on young refugee and asylum seekers, which has made films and new plays, and which feeds into the youth theatre. Live Theatre also seeks to make international links, particularly with South Africa.

National Glass Centre

National Glass Centre (NGC) run a Learning & Engagement programme which is designed to make people “inspired by glass and glass making” and “become inspired by [our] contemporary art programme”. Learning and engagement activity is targeted at:

- Families
- Communities
- Young People

The programme involves the following types of activity:

- Tours of galleries and glassmaking tasters
- Artists working with people in local neighbourhoods to make pieces of public art
- People curating their own exhibitions
- Artists undertaking workshops in schools

The Learning and Engagement programme works “hand in hand” with the exhibition programme, and works at crossover between the subjects of “art”, “history”, and “english”.

New Writing North

New Writing North (NWN) undertakes a range of “engagement” activity to involve people in writing.

The organisation works:

- In schools. Previously NWN has undertaken many “writers in residence” programmes with schools, but has become frustrated with this model, as it is often difficult to get writing embedded “at the heart” of a school’s work through this way of working. Consequently, NWN has shifted to work which seeks to influence teachers’ practice by engaging them with professional writers.
- In community settings. NWN has facilitated a number of community-based projects, in which the organisation acts as a “creative producer”. It does so mainly in response to ideas from writers and other artists, or in response to ideas from NWN staff. Examples include projects such as the North Tyneside Creative Centres project (which worked with various community groups in Longbenton and Killingworth), and work with the Medical Foundation for Care of Victims of Torture.
- With young writers. NWN runs a “young writers” programme which supports talented young people to improve their writing practice.

Northern Stage

Northern Stage has three overarching priorities: Produce, Present, Participate. The organisation’s participation work is designed to enable people to “make theatre” and to “respond to pieces of theatre” in order to “empower people to find their own creativity”.

Northern Stage works with people from 0-100 years old in:

- Schools
- Colleges
- Universities
- Early years settings
- Detached youth work
- Defined neighbourhoods

70% of the work takes place within Northern Stage’s building, 30% in other settings. An example of the work is the “Urban Alchemy” project, which involves young people working with drama workers from Northern Stage, plus artists from Dance City and The Sage Gateshead.

Northern Stage also works with organisations, particularly schools, to enable them to use theatre as part of organisational change and development processes.

Key to the purpose of Northern Stage’s participation activity is “to counter the idea that theatre is just middle-class entertainment”.

Provision of Creative Spaces and Building Communities of Practice

Northern Stage's regular scratch night, 'First in Three', gives artists and students the opportunity to work with the organisation's Creative Associates and professional performers to put on their work and get feedback from the audience. 'Time in Two' is open to artists who would like to spend a week in Stage 2 developing their ideas and 'Title Pending' is our annual competition for artists to spend two weeks at Northern Stage with technical support and a bursary towards the work. We also run a network called 'Talking Shop' for artists from different artforms to get together and share their practice in a creative way.

Training artists and other professionals to do participatory work

Northern Stage programmes CPD workshops and events throughout the year with visiting companies. Whilst these focus on a variety of areas (not just participatory practice) but the organisation does have training sessions for artists in participatory sessions (Northern Stage has co-produced two of these events with the RSC, for example). The organisation also mentors students and young artists interested in this area of work.

Regional Youth Work Unit

In this area, the Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU) seeks to “create cultural opportunities for young people that weren't there previously”, opportunities which “enable young people to understand their own lives better”.

The RYWU's does this by:

- Building systematic relationships between the youth sector and the arts sector, trying to “learn from the arts sector” and also to influence the arts sector with youth sector practice, particularly concerning “empowering young people in decision making”. An example is the 'somewhereto_' programme which creates spaces for young people to develop new opportunities, a significant proportion of which, are arts activities.
- Developing arts programmes in which young people “are not simply taking part” but are “co-producing” and “co-designing” arts activity. Examples of this activity includes the NE Generation project, which created a variety of new youth arts activity, and on which young people made the funding decisions.

The Sage Gateshead

The Sage Gateshead (TSG) undertakes “a huge programme of learning” which encompasses both “ethical” and “technical” aspects of musical learning – i.e not just the technical aspects of developing instrumental skill, but the relationship between musical learning and “the whole person”. The organisation runs activities “where music is the goal” and where the purpose is “doing things through music” for example, “using music to re-engage with society”.

The responsibility for this programme lies with the “Learning and Participation” department, which has a number of different strands to its work:

- Early Years and Family Learning
- Schools – both primary and secondary

- Young Musicians (a programme for talented young musicians)
- Co-Musica (a programme for disadvantaged young people)
- Professional learning (practice development for musicians)
- Business Development programme (providing musical activities for businesses, as part of team-building, for example)
- The Silver Programme (for older people)
- Sing Up (community-based singing activity)

These programmes work with people of all ages, but have the following priorities:

- People who don't currently use the TSG, as discovered through analysis of ticket purchasing
- "Current trends" in public policy – e.g "employment for young people, Looked After Children and young people with barriers to learning".
- The "passion" of people within TSG to develop and undertake particular pieces of work

They relate directly to the organisation's overall artistic priorities:

- JOURNEYS IN MUSIC:** programming for and communicating to TSG's public and participants with a strategic approach to i) helping them to develop relationships with new areas of programme, ii) encouraging repeat visits and risk-taking; iii) supporting ambition, achievement and progression.
- NURTURING TALENT:** investing in and developing new, young, and emerging artists through training, programming, partnership support, brokering and mentoring.
- INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT:** pro-actively planning and implementing strategies for involving people from across the spectrum of North East communities, with particular consideration for those who may be marginalised or vulnerable.
- NEW WORK:** commissioning new performance work, investing in L&P innovation, instigating new collaborative projects.
- ARTISTIC PRODUCTION:** capitalising more effectively on TSG's intellectual property and our artistic and production resources – e.g. touring new performance work, taking contracts for event development/production; publishing learning resources, selling training programmes /consultancy.

Taken together, these programmes represent an over-arching "community of practice" and enable "people to have the experience of creation".

TSG directly employs 176 people on its Learning and Participation programme, around 100 of whom are employed as musicians delivering educational work. It also uses the range of international artists who perform at the building to supplement workshop delivery.

The Silver programme alone works with over 1000 learners per week. The overall scale of the full programme is much greater. 70% of the programme is delivered outside of the TSG building.

Tyneside Cinema

Tyneside Cinema has recently radically changed its approach to “arts in participatory settings”. It used to deliver a range of activity which would fall under this heading, working with a range of different groups, in various setting – e.g. workshops in schools, community groups of all ages and with detached youth. This project to project way of working was unsustainable for the organisation; relying heavily on freelance practitioners and time bound project funding, as the organisation does not receive revenue support for this kind of activity. Furthermore, Tyneside Cinema wanted to recognise that there were other providers who were better placed and skilled to deliver some of this kind of work.

The organisation has switched to an approach to participation which focuses on building relationships with young people, which help to develop their potential and which, in turn, builds a long-term relationship between them and the Tyneside to influence what the Tyneside does and how it does it. The organisation is seeking to develop and start up initiatives that are sustainable, that develop new ideas, new ways of working and that look to the future. This approach:

- Seeks to “develop a relationship with young people”, in order to learn from and with them – to help the organisation understand “the film, digital media and technologies of the future and remaining a relevant organisation”
- Attracts and engages “a younger audience with specialist cinema”
- Focuses on “things that only we can do, because we’re a cinema”, “drawing on the expertise and resources that our cinema can bring that are both unique to us and distinguish us from other organisations”

This approach is realised by:

- Delivering a summer school programme for 7-15 year olds, a feeder programme of fun activities
- Running the “Northern Stars” young filmmaker development programme, for talented young people aged 15-18. Northern Stars is practical skills training offer that has an emphasis on learning by doing. Young filmmakers, who are competitively selected, work alongside a range of industry mentors to make short fiction films. The programme further enables its graduates to gain real life work experience by making work for paying clients.
- Providing spaces for experimentation, with access to technology and expertise. Pixel Palace is Tyneside Cinema’s new digital media arts programme, working with audiences and offering opportunities to artists at every level. The Factory is at the heart of the programme and is a regular drop in space for young people interested in digital media and technology in the broadest sense and the divergence of media today. Special projects also run in this space. Experimentation, ideas development, critical thinking and innovation are central to the Factory.

Arts Centre Washington

Arts Centre Washington (ACW) seeks to “involve the community” in arts activity, starting from a belief that “the arts should be accessible to everybody”.

ACW provides a range of “participatory arts activities” to realise this ambition. These are:

For Children

Pic n Mix – Saturday arts activities for 8-12 yr olds that incorporates Washington Youth Theatre (Junior and Intermediate), Saturday Art Club, Beat It drumming workshops, Pic n Flix – afternoon children’s film programme and dance and singing workshops by independent providers.

For Young People

Remix – ACW’s youth arts programme for 13-19 year olds offering activities every Wednesday evening in drama, dance, music, art, film and photography. There are showbacks every 12 weeks and occasional public performances, screenings, exhibitions etc

Community Music Space – free practise spaces and recording opportunities for young musicians/bands (target group 16-24yrs) every Tuesday evening. Hothouse, ACW’s monthly music gig has been developed as a progression route for young musicians involved in the Community Music Space.

ACW has also been commissioned by Sunderland City Council to deliver half term arts activities for young people up to March 2012.

For adults/older adults

- Washington Community Choir
- Weekly Tea Dance
- Sequence dancing
- Watercolour classes
- Nifties/Nifties Film – older ladies group

All the above activities are directly provided by Arts Centre Washington. These activities are augmented by independent providers who provide workshops and classes in dance, arts and crafts, and wellbeing groups such as yoga, tai chi and pilates.

ACW is also the base for several community arts groups who meet at the arts centre on a regular basis such as Washington Theatre Group (local amateur dramatic society), Caught in the Act (drama group for children with autism/Asperger’s), and a Model Making Club.

ACW also has creative industry tenants in its studios that provide arts activities e.g. The Voice Studio delivers singing coaching, TnT Dance School.

Analysis of interviews

In order to help address the research question of understanding the commonalities and differences in practice, the following issues may be worth further discussion.

Similarities between Artform Specific and Cross-Arts programmes

Many of the organisations involved in this audit have a specific brief to engage people with a particular artform, and particularly to engage people with a specific venue in which that artform flourishes. It would be easy to assume that there is a strong contrast with the participatory arts organisations whose declared interest is people making art, within any artform, and in any space.

However, whilst there are some differences in these approaches (as we will explore in more detail below in Section 3) many of the interviewees from artform-specific, venue-based organisations spoke in similar ways to cross-artform organisations about the drivers behind their work. For example, the work of one venue-based organisation was driven by the desire to “empower young people to find their own creativity” (Interview E), and another of enabling people “to have the experience of creation” (Interview C). This is very similar to the language and drivers of the cross-artform organisations who identified themselves as “participatory arts” organisations.

Potential Typology

This range of activity could be conceptualised in many different ways. However, given that such categorisation always loses something of the richness of the detail of practice, it is only useful if, overall, it helps us to better understand the similarities and differences within practice.

The following typology is an attempt to provide a basic categorisation of the work. This typology does not imply that particular activities must fit into only one category, nor that these categories are entirely separate and unrelated to each other. The edges of these categories are undoubtedly “blurred” and the same activity may exist in different categories at different times.

The following is a suggestion for a simple potential typology of five types of activity which organisations deliver under “arts in participatory settings”, based on an analysis of the responses given in interviews. Each of these types is subject to further analysis, splitting them into sub-types. This analysis will be undertaken in later sections. As discussed above, it is only helpful if it aids communication on similarities and differences in practice.

It is worth noting that alternative typologies for this kind of work are currently being developed. (see for example the recent report for the James Irvine Foundation in the USA: <http://www.irvine.org/publications/publications-by-topic/arts/getting-in-on-the-act-report>). It is heartening to see these attempts at language-making being developed as mechanisms to help people with different practices communicate with one another. The typology offered in James Irwin report is interesting, but did not quite seem to capture the range of activity described by interviewees. Hence, the following attempt.

Art Making

Activity whose primary purpose is to enable artists and participants to work together to produce new artwork, or to for artists to work with other people to develop their skills and talent so that they can make their own art.

Engagement and outreach

Activity whose primary purpose is to stimulate people's interest in the arts, and their desire to make their own art.

These are activities which enable participants to experience different types of arts activities in a 'hands-on' way. They are not designed to enable participants to make art, but to improve participants understanding of that artform and enthuse them about that practice. Examples include the National Glass Centre's facilitated tours, and Helix Art's taster workshops which enable participants to make informed choices about the creative ideas and artforms they wish to explore

Providing space and creating communities of practice

The provision of space for people to undertake creative activity, and the possibility of meeting like-minded people. These spaces provide opportunities for creative experimentation and development. Examples include Tyneside Cinema's "Factory", which provides space, resources, and access to technical skills on a drop-in basis for young people in Newcastle, and Arts Centre Washington's Community Music Space which provides similar resources to young musicians in Washington.

Training Artists and Other Professionals to do Participatory Work

Influencing the practice of artists and other professionals to deliver arts in participatory settings.

Progression opportunities

These are activities which are focussed on enabling participants to pursue further creative activity after their involvement with a particular project or programme. These may take the form of advice and guidance, support to gain access to Further Education or training, support to establish new groups or activities, or support to engage with activity offered by other organisations. Alternatively, it may be viewed as an approach that artists and organisations bring to their whole relationship with a participant.

An analysis of which organisations (and which artforms) undertake the different types of activity is presented in the table below:

		Art Making	Engagement and Outreach	Provision of Creative Spaces & Building Communities of Practice	Training artists and other professionals to do participatory work	Supporting creative progression
Cross Artform	Equal Arts	x	x			
	The Forge	x	x		x	x
	Helix Arts	x	x		x	x
	Regional Youth Work Unit	x	x		x	
	Arts Centre Washington	x	x	x		x
Visual Arts	BALTIC	x	x	x	x	x
	National Glass Centre	x	x			x
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	x	x	x	x	
	Northern Stage	x	x	x		
Creative Writing	New Writing North	x	x	x	x	
Music	The Sage Gateshead	x	x	x	x	x
Media	Tyneside Cinema	x	x	x		x

2. What is each organisation's artmaking practice?

In this section this report will dig into the detail of the artmaking practice that every organisation undertakes. What roles are artists playing when they work for each organisation? And what are those artists trying to accomplish?

The following is a summary of each organisation's response to questions concerning what practice they undertake, and the different roles that artists play.

BALTIC

The interview with BALTIC staff brought out the concept of a spectrum of practice when artists are working with participants.

At one end of the spectrum is "artist authored" practice, at the other is "participant authored" practice, which places participants at the centre. The key issue is, obviously, "authorship". At the "artist authored" end of the spectrum the artist is working "to their own ideas" and has complete authorship of the work. Participant involvement is required in order to realise the work, but the participants are not shaping the creative direction of the activity. Domain Field by Antony Gormely is a good example of this kind of work. At the other end of the spectrum, artists help participants produce work that is authored by the participants. BALTIC cited a project they had undertaken with Fairbridge, the youth charity working with disadvantaged young people, as an example of this kind of work.

Artists therefore play different roles depending on where the particular piece of work lies on this spectrum. Artists can either be sole creators, or facilitators of other people's creation. Clarity is required about what role the artist is playing in each project, so that artists and participants understand what role to play.

Interestingly, BALTIC reflected "it is possible that at either end of the spectrum, people get lost". At the "artist-authored" end, participants get lost. At the "participant authored" end, artists get lost.

Equal Arts

When artists are working for Equal Arts, their role is to "bring out the creativity in the people they're working with". The artists' role is to enable people to "create something new from their own experience".

Equal Arts described a two-way relationship between artist and participants. "Good artists are inspired by the groups they are working with", and the requirement that there is "empathy between participants and artists". In order to make this happen, artists need to "leave their ego at the door".

The resulting work that is produced is therefore a "fusion of artists' creativity with participants' creativity".

The Forge

For The Forge, artists are “facilitators” and “interrogators”. They are “collators and curators of ideas”.

When artists are working for The Forge, they play a number of roles:

- They “provide a source of inspiration”
- They “curate some sort of outcomes from the processes they instigate”
- They “help people vision their world in a new way” and provide “ways of interrogating current perceptions”.

The Forge have a strong sense that “participatory art” is a “creative journey”, which is “developmental”, and which should be “challenging to the people” who undergo that journey. The Forge believes that the artists’ role is to facilitate this journey.

Helix Arts

Helix Arts also described a spectrum of participatory practice, with the ends being “Artist led” and “co-produced”. Once more, this means that ‘*authorship*’ is a key issue, alongside *the role of participants*, and the *ethics of participation*.

Helix Arts undertakes some projects at the “artist led” end of the spectrum, but the majority are at the “co-produced” end.

At the “co-produced” end of the spectrum, artists and participants are “negotiating a creative journey together”. For Helix Arts, the artist’s role is to build relationships with participants, in which they:

- “inspire a set of participants with their [the artists] own creative practice” and help participants to imagine “a range of creative ideas”
- “inspire participants to undertake their own artistic thinking”
- Develop the “overall creative vision” for the project
- “support the co-production of work”, including helping participants to develop the necessary skills

Helix Arts identified the role of a “Lead Artist”, whose role in practice is to:

- Plan and structure the time of how the artist and participants will spend their time together
- Lead workshops and visits
- Undertake 1-2-1s with participants to support them to make work, and to discuss ‘what next’ for participants after the project
- Support participants to think about, and help realise, how work will be presented and distributed

In addition, there are “Sessional artist” roles, where the lead artist “needs another pair of hands” or the project evolves in a way which requires “other artform disciplines”. The sessional artist role, in practice, is largely confined to leading workshops.

Live Theatre

Overall, the “facilitators” that Live Theatre employ are there to “give young people an experience of theatre” in a way which recognises both the “process and product” elements of theatre. For Live Theatre’s facilitators, process and product are “valued equally” and “the product is a celebration of the process”.

The facilitators “work and respond to a brief” for each project and piece of work. For example, facilitators may be briefed to “take an alternative look at fairytales”. “How they realise that brief is up to them.”

Within the workshops themselves, the facilitators’ role is to “build towards a proper showing of one kind or another”. To do this, there is an element of “skills transfer” and development – supporting participants to improve their theatre skills.

National Glass Centre (NGC)

Artists working for NGC in participatory settings play different roles according to the type of activity being undertaken. They act as “facilitators” when “showing people round the gallery and helping them to make a piece of glass”. They act as “artist educators” when they are helping to develop participants’ “understanding of the creative thinking and making process”. When doing this, “artist educators” are “helping people think about [artists] practice in a deeper way”. This involves “guiding participants through an artist’s decision making process:

- “Making
- Editing
- Critical skills
- Fabrication
- Exhibition”

Artists also support participants with curation, helping participants to curate their own exhibitions.

New Writing North (NWN)

NWN also highlighted that artists play different roles depending on the projects they were working on. In projects where they are developing the practice of teachers, artists are playing a “mentoring” role.

NWN also identified the “Lead Artist” role for “co-production” projects in which there is a “collaboration between artist and participants”. In this role the Lead Artist is promoting “artistic ambition” for the work, and acting as “a producer”: “organising” the project and “spotting opportunities”.

In these kind of collaborative projects, in addition to the organisational role, the purpose of the artist is to “inspire young people” with “skills and ideas people wouldn’t otherwise encounter”. Artists are there to “help young people become producers” and “enable self-expression”, often through “surreptitious encouragement of writing”.

The artist's practice should "elicit stories" from people, and help them to "mine their own stories and lives". It should "develop trust" with participants, and build a "robust" relationship between artist and participants.

Northern Stage

The goal of Northern Stage's overall Participation programme is "to make excellent theatre with people". Within this goal, the organisation identifies different roles that artists play. Northern Stage associates the role of "workshop delivery" with a "drama worker" role. Generally, this involves "responding to a brief", such as a school's request for "two to three workshops on a specific piece of theatre".

The organisation also identifies a "creative associate" role which contains "so much more than delivering workshops". It extends to "creating productions with people".

The role of both "drama workers" and "creative associates" is equally concerned with both the "process and product" elements of making theatre. Depending on the particular project, the role of the drama worker/creative associate "might not be about creating a piece of theatre", but instead may be about "raising confidence of young people" or working to "engage" those who are "disengaged".

In all cases, the role of these artists is to "enable people to believe in their own creativity" and to "express their ideas in a way which they haven't had the opportunity to do before".

Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU)

When artists are undertaking work for the RYWU their purpose is to "release the creativity of young people" in order "to develop a broader understanding of the issues that affect their lives". RYWU wants to work with artists that are able to "tap into young people's emotions".

The approach that RYWU seeks from artists is one that enables "direct participation" for young people in the "co-design" and "co-production" of work rather than in a "chalk and talk" style.

Practically, the RYWU expects that artists will undertake a "facilitation" role for young people's art making, combined with "sharing their [artists] skills and experience".

The Sage Gateshead (TSG)

TSG's approach to arts in participatory settings is centred around the idea of "learning" and "enabling people to have the experience of creation". Whilst artists are involved in different types of projects – some in which "music is the goal" and others in which they are seeking to "do things through music". There are both "ethical" and "technical" aspects to participant's learning experience in both of these types of work.

The "musicians", "facilitators" and "project leaders" who work on TSG's programmes are therefore expected to develop "the whole person" and not just technical musicianship skills. This applies to international artists who are giving

masterclasses alongside their performances as much to the musicians employed by the Learning and Participation team. In all cases, the musicians/facilitators are expected “to meet people where they’re at” (figuratively, and very often literally).

TSG’s musicians work through both individual tuition of emerging, talented young people and via workshops with ensembles and other groups.

Within these contexts, the musicians are playing a number of different specific roles, depending on the nature of the project e.g.:

- “co-production”
- “producing”
- “devising”
- “managing”
- facilitating
- tutoring
- etc.

The overall programme of TSG’s work arises as discreet and specialist yet inter-connected ‘communities of practice’ which are constantly evolving and changing, learning from participants, one another and visiting artists, in the context of a wide range of pedagogical approaches.

Tyneside Cinema

The “filmmakers”, “animators”, “artists” and “workshop leaders” who deliver Tyneside Cinema’s participatory work have a distinctively skills development role in relation to participants on their participatory programmes.

- The “Summer Films Clubs” are about making, having a go and having fun
- Within the Northern Stars programme, the role of the filmmakers/animators/workshop leaders is described as “facilitation and knowledge exchange” and “training”. The emphasis is on talent development to produce “quality products” and developing the young people’s skills to succeed in the film industry.
- The Pixel Palace and The Factory have different roles for artists than the previously described programmes. In these spaces, The Tyneside is seeking to develop critically engaged practice – both for young mentors (who are described as early career artists) and wider participants. Ideas and process are paramount.
 - The Factory drop-in sessions are based around enquiry based learning and peer mentoring. An artist oversees the space, but is very hands off and concentrates more on the structure and overall vision.
 - Pixel Palace residency – operates on atelier model where artists in residence work on their own work in the Factory space. They share ideas and skills with young people and young people can see their work develop.

- Factory residencies. The Tyneside invites artists in to the Factory space to co-produce work with young people who are interested in their practice. Young people involved in the Factory choose to engage with that particular artist, or concentrate on their own work.

Arts Centre Washington (ACW)

ACW contracts with “professional artists” in order to “provide a different sort of learning experience” for participants. These artists fulfil a number of different roles within the organisation’s participatory arts activity:

- A “guide” or “mentor” role which enables skills development for participants, “for example, how to set up a drum kit” or “stagecraft, presentation and performance” skills within drama work.
- The artists provide “inspiration” and “focus” for participatory activities, which enable participants to produce “a product at the end”.
- They provide a “fun” and “exciting way to learn”
- They provide advice on “progression routes” through their “professional knowledge and experience”

Analysis of interviews

In order to delve deeper into the research question which concerns “understanding the commonalities and differences of practice”, there may be potential to analyse these responses by developing a typology which digs into the “art making” category of the previous section.

It is possible to identify types of activity within this ‘art making’ category which may help to understand the different types of practice and roles that artists bring to different pieces of work for the various organisations. This is not to say that any one project or piece of work need belong to just one of these categories. It is possible for particular pieces of work to be made up of different blends of the types of activity below.

Potential typology of artmakingpractice

Co-produced participatory art

This category of work involves an artist working with participants to undertake a shared creative journey, for which the artist provides initial inspiration, and acts as a facilitator to enable participants to explore their own creative ideas and life experiences. The artist works with participants to develop a shared creative vision and outcomes, which is co-authored by artist and participants together. An example of this type of practice is Equal Arts’ textile project, Knitted Lives, in which artists worked with older people to develop textile pieces.

The concept also includes The Sage Gateshead’s ideas concerning “social” or “ethical” learning in which artists are working with participants on “the whole person” rather than just their musical development. This typology therefore also includes

much of TSG's work, including "The Silver Programme", developing choirs and singing groups with older people, and "Mongrel UK", a devised theatre piece working with refugee groups.

This category also includes process based forms of art, which do not necessarily have a traditional outcome such as a performance or an exhibition. We could therefore view Northern Stage's work with a school on an overall change management process as a process-based, co-produced artwork.

Artist-authored participatory art

Activity in which an artist works with participants to realise a vision which the artist 'owns'. In this activity the 'participants' are engaged as material in order to help the artist realise their vision, contributing experiences and performances to shape the content of the piece. An example of this kind of participatory work is Domain Field by Antony Gormely.

Talent/Skills Development

These are educational activities undertaken by artists, designed to teach participants specific artform skills and improve their artform practice. Whilst it is likely that an element of skills transfer between artist and participants also happens in the great majority of co-produced artwork, the key element for this category is that artform skills development is the *primary purpose* of the activity. Examples include Tyneside Cinema's "Northern Stars" programme, TSG's Young Musician's Programme and New Writing North's Young Writers programme.

This category also includes peer mentoring, and the experimentation which accompanies it, for example in The Tyneside's Factory space where young people support one another to develop new artwork.

A table outlining which organisations undertake these different aspects of practice is shown below:

		Co- Production	Artist authored practice	Talent/Skills development
Cross Artform	Equal Arts	X		
	The Forge	X	X	X
	Helix Arts	X	X	
	Regional Youth Work Unit	X		
	Arts Centre Washington	X		X
Visual Arts	BALTIC	X	X	X
	National Glass Centre		X	X
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	X	X	X
	Northern Stage	X	X	
Creative Writing	New Writing North	X	X	X
Music	The Sage Gateshead	X	X	X
Media	Tyneside Cinema	X		X

Issues for further discussion within the Artworks programme:

One of the key points to arise from this section is that different types of artmaking activity have different purposes, values and roles. Whether this is expressed in terms of the “spectrum of practice” referred to by BALTIC and Helix Arts, or the “ethical” and “technical” dimensions of learning described by TSG, this raises a key issue for the overall Artworks North East programme. Given that the Artworks North East programme is seeking to identify elements of good practice, and translate those into professional development and training programmes for artists, we need to be able to categorise types of practice and identify what is good within those areas, since “good practice” within one category may be not relevant, or even worse, count as poor practice, within another category.

3. Why do arts in participatory settings? What is each organisation's approach to, or philosophy for, arts in participatory settings?

This section attempts to capture and understand the approach (or philosophy) that each organisation brings to “arts in participatory settings”. The purpose of this section is to provide a different perspective to help us try to understand the commonalities and differences concerning practice.

A summary of each organisation's response to the questions on what practice they deliver, plus what philosophy or approach they use, and ‘why do ‘arts in participatory settings?’ is given below:

BALTIC

BALTIC takes an “audience development” approach to participatory practice: “What underpins all of this for us is the audience research that we’ve been getting”. By that, the organisation means that it has a desire “increase people’s engagement with contemporary art” in a way which “encourages an on-going relationship with art”, and “to introduce people to BALTIC on friendly terms, on their terms”. BALTIC’s participation work is both responsive to its exhibition programme, and to requests from partners, such as schools.

It’s participation strategy is built on an analysis of who currently attends their shows and other activities, with participation opportunities designed to both attract those who currently do not come, and to offer relevant opportunities to those who are already attending.

BALTIC thinks that this is important because “offering people, including artists the opportunity through contemporary art [to] transform their thinking and learning. The beauty of contemporary art is that it can open your mind up to experience something quite differently or think about something quite differently”.

Different strands of its participation programme operate with different methodological philosophies. For example, its education programme uses the practice of “enquiry based learning”.

Equal Arts

Equal Arts’ core philosophy is based around “the importance of enabling access for older people to be creative... putting them at the centre”, enabling participants to work with artists to “create something new from their own experience”.

The organisation undertakes this work because of the impact it has on people: “we’ve seen over and over again the power of art to transform people’s lives... to give them a lifeline”. This impact can be felt in all sorts of ways, through “health benefits”, “confidence” and the way in which participants “feel valued” through doing

this work. However, Equal Arts feels some “frustration” when people “just look at [the] social outcomes”.

The Forge

The Forge’s core philosophy is that its work should be “courageous, contemporary and relevant”. This means that the work should “take risks” and build “relationships with groups so that they are prepared to take risks”, it should “embrace new ideas and new ways of working” and it should “have a positive, enlightening impact on a community”.

The approach that the organisation brings to participatory work reflects the personal journey of its Executive Director. He describes running a theatre education department in which the focus of the practice was about “sharing the activity that we [the theatre] were doing” rather than “engaging directly with the participants”. He wanted to move to a practice that was more concerned with “sharing the experience and developing the skills [of participants], which is a slightly different approach.”

One of the current questions for The Forge’s philosophy is how it balances the “artmaking imperative and social capital... how do we keep those two hand in hand, because they are equally important? But often our commissioners are more interested in the social capital side.”

The question that drives The Forge overall is: “How do we make high quality art that is meaningful for communities?”

Helix Arts

Helix Arts core belief is that “participation in creative activity – making art – is a fundamental part of human wellbeing” and that “there is inequality of opportunity in that”. It focuses its work on those people “who have least opportunity” to make art and therefore seeks to “contribute to redressing that balance”.

Helix Arts brings “a narrative philosophy and approach” to participatory arts. It seeks to enable participants to “explore, reflect on and share” the narratives that they use to understand themselves and the world through enabling people “to make their own art”. The organisation uses this philosophy “to understand and contextualise” the work that artists do, whilst giving artists the freedom to develop “the overall artistic vision for the project”.

This approach to participatory arts helps the organisation to understand the impact of its work on two levels. On “the personal level”, people making their own art “gives people a tool to reflect more effectively on their lives and begin to take control of the processes of narrative formation, to the extent that is possible”. On “a collective level”, it enables marginalised people to “have a cultural voice” because “those who don’t get to make art, don’t get to represent themselves in culture. They are only ever represented by other people.” This leads to “misrepresentation and scapegoating”, to be people being “marginalised” and being seen “as less than human”.

Live Theatre

Live Theatre's participatory work is driven by "a powerful social agenda". The Education and Participation lead for the organisation states, "I do this job because I believe in the transformative value of theatre... I believe it empowers young people. I believe it changes the way that young people look at the world."

The organisation has a strong "political awareness" which is "grounded in this city and this region", ensuring that the "voices of local people" are heard. "Live is a political animal."

Through enabling participants "to create new work" the organisation "gives young people an artistic voice" and the social benefits that participation in the process of theatre making can bring, such as "confidence" and "other transferable skills".

This also translates into a strong artistic vision for the organisation, manifest in the desire "to make great theatre", with the production values on participatory productions having "the same level of professionalism" as all other work. This link between the social and artistic agendas also means that Live's participatory work is "helping to develop audiences for the future".

National Glass Centre (NGC)

NGC's participatory work begins from a desire "to engage a diverse audience with glass and glass making", to "experience the material" and become "inspired by a contemporary art programme".

The organisation has a strong sense of place, and, in particular, seeks to "raise awareness" about the "history and heritage" of glass making in Sunderland, at both a local and national level. In doing so it tries "not to segregate art, history and education projects", mixing "heritage" and "contemporary" ideas.

NGC is also "giving participants [the opportunity to become] part of decision making – through groups of people curating an exhibition. Trying to get a group of participants to become part of the decision makers [within] the organisation"

New Writing North (NWN)

NWN's approach to participatory practice starts from some of the principles and values of its staff. One said "the reason I like art is because I am fascinated by other human beings and the ideas that other human beings articulate. That's why I do it [participatory work] to find out stuff about people... and present that back to the world".

This approach is manifest in the organisation's desire to "inspire [people] with skills and ideas that they wouldn't normally encounter", to "elicit stories" from them and enable them to have "self-expression" and "make great pieces of art".

A key reason why NWN undertakes participatory work in the first place is that “writers are interested in it” because it “creates new opportunities” which are interesting to writers.

There is also a very “pragmatic audience development and engagement” underpinning to NWN’s participatory approach. The organisation has a strong desire to re-introduce people “to literature and the art of writing”. NWN feels that these are now not covered well in many school curriculums, and that it is possible for even an English student to reach university “without ever having read a whole play or novel”.

Northern Stage

“Every person is creative. We fundamentally believe in that principle and that would be the starting point for all our participatory work”. In this way, Northern Stage describe a strong desire to enable and empower people to “make excellent theatre” in a way which values both “process and product”. The organisation has a desire to enable people to make work “based on you and your ideas”, work which “makes the private public” and enables people to “take a risk”. In particular, they seek “to empower young people to make decisions about what they want to say”.

Northern Stage recognises that different people within the organisation would offer a range of different purposes for participation, and these are reflected in different projects. Some projects are focussed on “learning”, others are “purely about creative or artistic excellence”, whilst some are concerned with process “and not about a final product”.

Northern Stage also has an audience development approach to its participatory work, attempting to counter the idea that theatre is just “middle class entertainment” and build a “long term relationship with families” so that they are able to think “the theatre is for me”.

Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU)

RYWU’s work is underpinned by a desire to “engage young people in meaningful dialogue, and the co-production, co-development, co-design of things... products, programmes and experiences.” All of RYWU’s work starts from this philosophy of “deeper involvement for young people in co-production”.

RYWU is also seeking to “open up new experiences for young people” and believes that “there is something different [in creative opportunities]”. The organisation engages in participatory art activity to “learn from the arts and cultural sector” and to share their understanding “of understanding what deeper participation means”.

The organisation believes that participation in the arts offers “a quality of experience that changes lives”, and that there are “learning and development” opportunities for young people through the arts that can help them “to understand [their] lives better”.

The Sage Gateshead (TSG)

TSG's approach to "music education" and "learning and participation" starts from a belief in "the transformative power of music" and a desire to enable people engage with music and have "the experience of creation". It seeks to take a "holistic attitude to music", understanding the "social role" that music plays, as well as developing musical talent.

A "learning" philosophy pervades the whole organisation, and shapes its approach to participatory practice. Each programme that it undertakes has a different "pedagogy", and these various methods and pedagogies inform a "dynamic community of practice" built around TSG.

Tyneside Cinema

One of the key influences on the Tyneside Cinema's work with young people is a quote from the McMaster report: "The desire and ability to innovate and the willingness to take risks is fundamental for any organisation striving to be excellent". From this, the Projects team have developed an approach and aims for their work which seeks to build relationships between young people and the cinema, which enable opportunities for them to develop as artists, and to influence the development of the cinema itself.

The organisation's mission is "to bring as many people as possible together in our venue to experience and enjoy the past, present and future of cinema" and they seek to "encourage young people across the North East to find their place in the Tyneside". This translates into a series of more specific aims, which focus on:

- "Encouraging a new and younger audience... for specialist cinema"
- "Learn from and with younger audiences to predict future trends in cinema going and understand the real impact of new technologies, media and communications"
- "Work with young people to push boundaries of creative practice and interrogate our offer"
- "Give young people a distinctive voice and presence by involving them at a creative, organisational and strategic level within Tyneside Cinema"

Tyneside Cinema has various philosophies which influence their participatory work. There is an "atelier model" of "master/journeyman" which shapes the organisation's Pixel Palace programme. The work of Prof. Sugata Mitra, and enquiry-based learning more generally, strongly shapes the organisation's approach to experimental learning in The Factory, together with Charles Leadbeater's work on the "art of with" which informs an idea of a philosophy of "co-production".

The organisation is also really interested in "ownership and collaborative approaches and how these influence processes and outcomes".

Arts Centre Washington (ACW)

ACW's approach to "participatory arts" starts from the idea that "the arts should be accessible to everybody", and that there should be "free, open access" for people.

“We are here to serve the community” is at the heart of the organisation’s approach, and therefore “we should not be putting any barriers to the local community to participate in anything that we do”. The organisation contrasts its approach with a “centres of excellence” model, which is about nurturing the talented. They see their role as “encouraging talent, but not at the expense of everybody else”. Groups, therefore, should not have auditions, or charge fees (wherever possible).

The organisation emphasises the social impact of engaging people with the arts: confidence, mental health and combatting social isolation.

ACW has “a duty to offer the arts in different ways” to the local community, as both audience and participants. A participatory offer helps the community of Washington “to develop a fully rounded community identity”.

Analysis of interviews

An analysis of the underpinning philosophies, values and approaches that organisation’s bring to this work should help us to better understand the commonalities and differences of practice.

The following provides a potential typology of the core beliefs which underpin organisation’s participatory work:

The Transformational Power of Artmaking:

The importance of the impact that artmaking has on people appears to be a widely shared value. It was mentioned explicitly in all but two of the interviews. This value is expressed in different ways:

The transformative value for individuals

This focuses on the personal development impact of artmaking. This can be expressed through an arts lens – which focuses on the way in which making art challenges and changes the perceptions of the people who make it, or it can be expressed in terms of social policy outcomes – such as confidence, social capital, skills development, aspiration and the like.

The transformative power for communities and wider culture

This aspect focuses on the collective impacts of artmaking. This can be expressed in terms of the way in which artmaking helps to create and express shared collective identities, and also in terms of the importance of hearing a diversity of voices within our cultures. Different people and organisations expressed this point in more and less political ways. For some this is explicitly political, closely linked with the politics of representation. Others expressed this more in terms of social and cultural development.

Increasing people’s engagement with art

Another value that was outlined in many of the interviews was a desire to increase people’s opportunity to engage with art. Again, this shared value was expressed in different ways.

Audience Development approaches

Organisations with a particular artform speciality, and often with a venue which acts as a high-profile centre for that artform, tended to describe their desire to increase people's engagement in "audience development" terms. These organisations tend to think about building relationships between people and an artform, and between people and their particular venue.

"Participant centred" approaches

This expression was used most by those organisations who also described themselves as cross-artform "participatory arts" organisations. On the surface, this represents an obvious difference in practice in that these organisations start from the perspective of a particular set of participants, and their needs, rather than a particular artform.

Not either/or

However, whilst these two approaches are undoubtedly coming from different starting points, there may well be greater similarity and convergence between the approaches than appears on the surface, and they should not be thought of as either/or approaches. For example, both approaches described the importance of some kind of equality of opportunity to participate, and many of those who described an "audience development" approach also used key elements of "participant centred" values (without necessarily using the language of "participant centred") – for example Northern Stage, NWN and Live Theatre all described elements of their philosophy and practice to participant empowerment which would have sat very comfortably within those organisations who described themselves as "participant centred".

There would seem to be value in Artworks: North East partners exploring in more depth the similarities and commonalities of these two approaches.

"Learning" approaches

A number of organisations, exemplified by TSG, but also associated with Tyneside Cinema and elements of the approach of BALTIC, Live Theatre, Northern Stage and ACW, described their approach to participatory practice as coming from a "learning" perspective. They made (greater and lesser) use of the language of "pedagogies" and tended to speak less about "making".

Organisational development approaches

A very interesting approach to participation was described by a small number of organisations. These organisations spoke of the importance of participation to the on-going development of their organisations – creating a feedback loop between participation and the future direction of the organisation. For these organisations, participation was not just (or even) about artmaking, but about making the future of the organisation itself.

Bringing the analysis together

If we bring together the analysis from the previous three sections together, it is possible to suggest a set of questions which help to identify the different elements of participatory practice that exist within a piece of work:

- To what extent is the purpose of this work to excite people about art?
- To what extent is the purpose of this work to enable people to collaboratively make new artwork together with an artist?
- To what extent is the purpose of this work to help an artist to realise their own artwork?
- To what extent is the purpose of this work to teach people how to make their own art?
- To what extent is the purpose of this work to enable people to achieve particular social outcomes?
- To what extent is the purpose of this work to train professionals (artists or others) to improve their participatory practice?

These questions may be useful to supplement the typology outlined in the previous sections, in that they offer the potential to develop a nuanced understanding of the blends of different purpose and practices within any particular project, and the **extent** to which a piece of work embodies these different purposes and practices.

Potential issues for further discussion

1. Is there value in examining the relationship, commonalities and differences between “audience development” and “participant-centred” approaches to participation?
2. Is there value in exploring whether there is any difference in practice which arises from the different language that is used between organisations who describe their approach in terms of “learning” and those who speak more of “artmaking”?
3. Associated with the discussion about ‘excellence’ (below) is it worth exploring whether differences exist in practice from different understandings of ‘the transformational power of artmaking’. In particular, is it worth exploring the question raised by The Forge concerning the “balance” between “social impacts and art imperatives”. Do different organisations view these as tensions to be balanced? If so, how do they manage this balance? Are there other ways of viewing this duality?
4. Are the above questions useful for helping us to identify the blends of purposes and practices within a piece of work? If they are, they may usefully help to inform the development of a common framework to think about excellence (see Section 5)

4. Participants & locations

The following table outlines the different types of participants that each of the organisations reported working with during the interviews.

Table of participant types

		Young people	SENs	Teachers	Adults	Older People	Refugees/ As Skrs	Dementia	Com Groups	Families	Students	Mental Health
Cross Artform	Equal Arts					X		X				
	The Forge	X	X	X						X		
	Helix Arts	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
	Regional Youth Work Unit	X										
Visual Arts	Arts Centre Washington	X			X	X			X			
	BALTIC	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	National Glass Centre	X			X				X	X		X
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	X		X			X					
	Northern Stage	X		x					X	X	X	
Creative Writing	New Writing North	X		X		X	X	X				
Music	The Sage Gateshead	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Media	Tyneside Cinema	X										



Indicates a particular focus on disadvantaged/excluded members of this group

The following table outlines the different types of locations/settings that each of the organisations reported working in during the interviews.

		Schools/ Colleges	Informal Youth settings	Community Centres	Healthcare settings	Within Venue	Libraries	Older People Residential/ Day Care
Cross Artform	Equal Arts				X			X
	The Forge	X	X	X		x		
	Helix Arts		X	X	X			X
	Regional Youth Work Unit	X	X				X	
	Arts Centre Washington					X		
Visual Arts	BALTIC	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	National Glass Centre	X		X	X	X		
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	X		X	X	X		
	Northern Stage	X	X			X		
Creative Writing	New Writing North	X	X	X		X	X	X
Music	The Sage Gateshead	X	X	X	X	X		X
Media	Tyneside Cinema					X		

5. Excellence

This section deals with the research question concerning 'how artists learn and develop', and in particular, addresses the question of how we define appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding.

The following is a summary of each organisation's response to the question: "Can you give some examples of excellent practice from within your organisation's activities? What is it about those examples that makes them excellent?"

BALTIC

The way in which BALTIC's thinks about excellence in participatory practice is explicitly related to "the intention" of the project and "its place on the spectrum of practice" that was outlined in previous sections. In short, the criteria concerning excellence that apply to an "artist authored" project are different to those that apply to a "participant authored" project.

BALTIC illustrated the different criteria for excellent practice at different ends of the participatory spectrum through the examples of 'Domain Field', and a project they undertook in partnership with Fairbridge.

Domain Field was highlighted as an excellent example of artist-authored participatory practice because:

- It had clearly defined roles for artist and participants, in terms of authorship
- It was "well executed"
- "It involved a huge number of people in its creation, but there was no pretence about what that level of involvement was"
- Individually, the reasons that different participants got involved were purely personal... you had people who wanted to mark that moment in time in their life... e.g. pregnancy... They didn't want to take the artwork home, they just enjoyed the process of being involved"

The role of the artist in the Fairbridge work was very different. "I wouldn't in any way call it the artist's work, or co-authorship, in that the artist who was involved in working with the young people didn't see it as her work, her project. What she was trying to do is offer them the confidence and help them through that creative process. The fact she was an artist was important, because she could do that honestly and openly."

The Fairbridge project worked "more on the basis of their raised level of confidence." "It was informed and led by the participants, and the main objective was about their social coming into the space. Over time, they were in the BALTIC interviewing members of the public about contemporary art. They really took charge of it."

Equal Arts

Equal Arts gave several examples of their work which they felt highlighted aspects of excellent practice.

“Knitted Lives”, a textile project with Age Concern, was singled out for a number of reasons:

- “it highlighted talent that was going to waste”
- It had a high quality of process – it took “a year to develop and a year to work with people”. The duration of the relationship is very important in this respect- “it takes six months to a year to make an impact”.
- the quality of artist – that they were “professional, having understanding of their artform”. Further, it was the combination of the right artist with the right group which really made the project stand out – “the combination of that artist with talented women” enabled the talent that was there “to be highlighted” “but which previously hadn’t been given an opportunity”.
- that “it toured to arts and non-arts spaces – 43,000 people saw it.” The reason that this was important was “the huge amount of feedback” that this gave to the women, which contributed significantly to “their self esteem”.

Equal Arts also highlighted work which “offered a variety of artists” to participants, and which therefore “gave participants the opportunity to try a variety of artforms”.

Other aspects of other projects which were felt to be excellent included work “based on the history of their area” which “has gone back to the health centre where they will visit”. The artist’s process was also highlighted, in that “the artist being so good at enabling them to do not just the ideas and design but the making as well... she had them in her studio doing welding and the actual physical making”.

The impact of the project was also highlighted, particularly the “confidence” that had been developed and “the progression of people’s confidence... a good experience can help people to go onto other projects”.

The combination of “good artist and good organisation” was highlighted as part of the project’s success – “realistic aims... a product you can deliver”. This was linked to the idea that “people have got to feel like they’re part of the process all the way through”.

The Forge

The Forge highlighted a particular example of a three year programme with a primary school that involved a lead artist and a number of other artist working across a school and the wider community. It was excellent because:

- “it had great art outcomes and critical acclaim”: “a theatrical lecture performed at the National Geographic in London” and “a piece called ‘Cassop and Coal’, a performance by the young people in collaboration with Tin Arts and directed by Jane Arnfield that won performance of the year at the Culture Awards”
- “It had integrity in terms of its facilitation”
- “The partnership was an honest and development process”
- “We were allowed three years to do it”

However, the organisation was also keen to stress that there can also be excellence in a short-term (1-3 days) experience with schools. “What we’re trying to do is take people on a journey, and you have to start somewhere. Not everyone is ready to go for a three year project”. “The underpinning principles of one day workshop should be the same as three year process... and an understanding of that journey we’re taking those communities through.”

These “underpinning” principles are:

- “Ensuring that journey that the participants are on has honesty and integrity”
- “That the process of facilitation that they’re taken through has a clear pathway and is developmental”
- “The art outcome, be it a big or small scale, should be new and challenging to those people”

Helix Arts

Helix Arts gave the example of a recent project called “Creative Progression” which worked with homeless adults in Newcastle, in partnership with Cyrenians and Crisis.

“The purpose of the project was to use creative activity to reflect on what progression meant to them [participants]. It was our first project which explicitly looked at the idea of art as a mechanism to reflect on narratives people use to shape their lives”. It was viewed as excellent because:

- it exemplified the organisation’s philosophy
- “it produced amazing pieces of work...poetry and map making about progression in people’s lives”
- “the very activities of creation” in the other strands [sculpture and design] “enabled people to think about progression” and enabled people to achieve progression onto:
 - “Having their own artist studio”
 - “having secure tenancies”
 - “further education”
- It produced “interesting and exciting artwork... critics said it stood up to degree shows that they’d seen”

Helix Arts also talked about the elements in participatory work that are required for excellence, within its practice. “There are two areas: stuff organisations do to create space for artists to work effectively... and artists’ practice within that space”.

The elements of creating space well are:

Understanding context – recognising particular situations and histories

- Creating partnerships which draw on the expertise of organisations and people who are expert at supporting marginalised people
- Recruiting artists with experience and expertise of working with disadvantaged and marginalised people
- Enabling artists and support workers to develop a shared understanding and knowledge about the particular contexts of participants and the way in which they relate to and inform the proposed creative programme

- Enabling participants to make informed choices about their own creative journeys

Building relationships and facilitating engagement with the participatory process

- Recruiting artists who excite and inspire participants to engage with the participatory process
- Creating budgets for work which allow artists the time to build high quality relationships with participants - e.g. duration of projects, and artist/participant ratios
- Ensuring that artists, support staff and participants understand and consent to the roles that they play within the project
- Providing practical and emotional support to participants to enable them to engage and access each workshop/event
- Ensuring that participants feel that they and their contributions are valued

Enabling participatory arts processes to function well

- Making use of places which provide accessible, fit for purposes environments to work in
- Providing equipment and materials which enables artists and participants to produce the work they want, to the standard they want
- Ensuring that processes are recorded or documented
- Ensuring that questions of authorship, credit and ownership are discussed and agreed between artist and participants
- Enabling participants to share their work as widely as appropriate, and engage others in dialogue about it
- Enabling participants to progress onto further self-directed creative activity
- Setting a vision, aims and objectives, and monitoring and reporting progress
- Ensuring that people have considered and mitigated the dangers of activity
- Managing budgets effectively
- Addressing and solving logistical problems – making sure people are in the right places at the right times, with all that they need
- Maintaining effective communication between everyone involved

In terms of recognising excellence in artists' practice, Helix Arts said "we've just begun to explore and reflect on that... we're at the start of those conversations and there's a long way to go." However, these were the emerging themes that were highlighted. Excellent practice:

- provides "exciting, creative, non-threatening ways into their creative practice" and is used by artists "who could build relationships with participants around their practice"
- "achieves a delicate balance of having a powerful creative vision that inspires participants but having a genuine commitment to negotiate how that vision will translate into a vision for the project... they [artists] need a practice which is genuinely excited by, and responsive to, people's ideas".
- "references what's going on in their artistic discipline, the latest knowledge, practice and theory... exciting people and plugging people into the various cutting edge practices within those disciplines, or the artists that they find

most interesting”. There “should be some kind of theoretical, critical framework for that work”

Helix Arts emphasised that these ideas had emerged from early conversations, and that artists and organisations needed the opportunity to have critical conversations with one another about practice to build up a broader picture of these ideas.

Live Theatre

Live Theatre’s response to what makes excellent participatory practice was “integrity, attention to detail, artistic vision and money”.

The organisation views excellence in all its work “as one” – “they might be different processes of art” but they need to be done to the same “professional standards”. “It’s not that the West End productions are here, and the education work is over here”. Live gave the example of First Draft, six new plays written by young people from across the city, as an example of excellent practice in this way: “We had Pitman Painters when the building first opened that went on [to the West End] and the next project was First Draft. And it had some of the same cast in Pitman as in First Draft”.

Live Theatre recognises and understands excellence through feedback from a range of sources: “audiences, stakeholders, critics and journalists” and excellence in its participatory work is essentially looking for the same feedback which helps to answer the question “is it a great piece of art?” – “Does it hang together as a story, vision or idea? Does it enthrall surprise or shock the audience? Does it make them laugh?”

However, excellence in participatory practice is also recognised through looking at the process, and receiving feedback from participants. “Did they learn things? Did they develop confidence?”

National Glass Centre (NGC)

NGC used the example of a Creative Partnerships project on “risk taking” as an example of excellent practice. Key elements to the success of this project were:

- “treating young people as adults”
- Work was exhibited “back in school”
- There was a continuity of attendance by young people throughout
- The quality of work produced “was on the same level” as other aspects of the exhibition programme
- “participants are inspired and engaged”

Other aspects of excellence in participatory work that NGC highlighted concerned “building a long term relationship” with participants, and offering them “progression routes” within the organisation. This is also linked to NGC’s desire to make “participants part of decision making” for the organisation.

New Writing North

NWN gave the examples from their delivery of participatory work, and of their training of others to do participatory work better. From their delivery of participatory activity, they cited their work with the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture as an example of excellent practice. The key aspects of this project that made it excellent are:

- That the project is “beyond therapy” – that it is attempting to reveal “personal stories” and enable “reflection on the detail of their lives”
- Significant work was put in to enable artists to “understand the context” in which they were working
- There was a good “understanding of the levels of participation that can be achieved with a specific budget”
- The project produced “a high quality publication”
- There was “an open minded approach from host organisation and artists”
- The project enabled “a range of stories to be expressed that aren’t normally heard”

From their “North Tyneside “Creative Centres” project, NWN identified other areas of excellence:

- That the “Lead Writer” was also a “producer”, meaning that they had the ability and capacity to “spot opportunities” that arose from discussion with participants “and make the most of [those opportunities] when they came up”. In this way, the artist was able to increase the “artistic ambition” of the programme. In order to do this, the artist was “committed to being a sort of activist... on the estate. He was artistically interested in what those women had to say, and how they could use their talents and skills to say it. Someone who is more than just an inspirational giver of workshops. It’s someone who makes things happen – collaborations”.

From a Mediabox film project with young people, a key aspect of quality was:

- the resources they were able to commit to it “a good team.. a full film unit of 9 or 10 people”
- The “mentoring” practice of those film professionals, where they were “committed to letting the kids get on with it”.

Another aspect of NWN’s work which they described as excellent, was their work with teachers in schools around the teaching of writing. Here, their work was trying to achieve a specific purpose – countering the fact “that the art of writing has been taken out of primary and secondary education” by enabling teachers to work with professional writers. The key elements of this programme that NWN identified were:

- Teachers “feeling comfortable” with poetry because they were “getting to do it”
- Voluntary participation by the teachers
- The “Longevity” of the work – meaning the duration of the writers relationship with teachers
- The “sustainability” of the work – meaning the sustained impact on “the teachers teaching practice... and their approach to life” which generated “powerful outcomes outside of the small world of poetry or writing in schools”.

- The fact that there was a postgraduate studentship attached to the project, which enabled greater “reflection” on and “articulation of” the learning that was taking place.

Northern Stage

Northern Stage gave the example of “40 babies”, which works with very young children and their families to document the first 3 years of those children’s lives, and offer a range of “incredible opportunities” for those children and their families to interact with the theatre. The key elements of practice that were highlighted were:

- “Building a longer-term relationship” between the families and the theatre
- Having “enough time to develop” the project
- “Crossing lots of departments in the organisation”, “it’s a real company initiative”
- “The families get a lot out of it. They are fantastic workshops. They get to meet each other and get to know each other. It’s a time that you very rarely get to take the opportunity to take part in creative events. People don’t think you’re able to do.... One parent wrote to us and said ‘I never thought the theatre was for me and it’s so fantastic we’re involved in this project because my child will think he belongs here”

Northern Stage also highlighted “Walpurgisnacht” as an example of excellent practice – “a piece with Newcastle College students, alongside our production of Who’s afraid of Virginia Wolff?... The final product was a fantastic piece of theatre. Sometimes we shy away from saying that actually the quality of thing produced is equal to other pieces of theatre produced... It was a really uplifting, fantastic piece of work. It involved large numbers of students, they’d worked with a real collaboration to create it, they were playing with the idea of what it means to be an actor, what it means to be an audience... We have a fantastic production team here. They always make the projects look amazing, which helps with raising status.”

Northern Stage also identified the Urban Alchemy they undertook with the BenshamAvenues youth project in Gateshead. This project involved young people “identifying local spaces they want to take ownership of”. They identified Saltwell Park – “they wanted to do a production and they wanted to do it in a park, because although the park was very near [to them] they felt they were often seen as trouble makers, and often chased out”. “They wanted to do Shakespeare, because no-one thought they would be interested in that... That’s such a powerful way of young people articulating that they had always been sidelined at school. They did Romeo and Juliet as a site specific piece in the park. The production team did lights and smoke and pyro. It looked amazing.”

Regional Youth Work Unit

The RYWU identified the NE Generation project as an example of excellent practice. The key aspects of quality in this are associated with the level of involvement of young people, and their relationship with the process as a whole:

- Young people determining the distribution of money
- Young people having workshops which enabled them to “think about what it all meant... e.g. What do you think culture means?”

- Activity which leads onto “young people actually running stuff... a peer education model”

RYWU also highlighted their previous work with the North East Regional Youth Assembly– work with 12 groups around the North East to “express their area”. The key elements to that being excellent are:

- The work being valued – “I was in Stockton Town Hall last month [5 years after the project] and the [young people’s] work was still on the wall... They’d produced it... A batik screen produced by young refugees in Newcastle “is still being toured now”
- “All the young people got something from it”
- “The work had an interesting idea behind it”
- “It’s all underpinned by the idea of releasing creativity from groups and individuals who’ve not had the opportunity before” – “that’s an equally beautiful thing [to the products that are made]”

The Sage Gateshead (TSG)

TSG highlighted both the direct delivery of participatory work, and also work which influences practice more broadly, as examples of excellent practice. TSG gave the following delivery projects as examples of excellence:

Foundation Learning

This is excellent because it is:

- “unique” – offering “a statutory programme that leads to qualifications for young people with barriers to learning, in an artform that they can connect to”
- “we’ve been able to listen to what those young people said and give them their own space outside the building to make it very accessible. We’ve had to create a particular workforce around it with very particular skills”.
- “We’ve had very positive feedback about that work”

The Silvers Programme:

- “gets so much quality feedback from the participants. It comes back to the whole thing about music being relational... Older people having the opportunity to come and participate in music, and be in relationship with groups of people, to make music as a community. It’s completely life changing.”
- “We are told stories of how participating in this programme has literally brought people back from the brink.”

“Mongrel UK”:

- “a theatre and music project working with young immigrants which devises theatre from their experiences to make meaning of those experiences”.
- “These are amazing, powerful pieces of theatre which are transformative not just for the young people themselves in having their stories witnessed, but for audiences as well. It’s an incredible powerful piece of theatre, which is what participation is about.”

For TSG, excellence is mixture of the social impact and the creation of powerful work. “It’s about the ethical and technical standards both being really high. Those are the conditions in which fantastic work is created.”

“It’s also about innovation. Things that are new, that couple unexpected things together. That have outcomes that haven’t previously existed – like foundation learning.”

TSG also understands excellence in terms of impact on wider social practice and policy.

Every Child a Talker: Encouraging children from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop language skills. This is excellent because:

“They’re not just working with under 5s, or people in those communities. It’s working with workers as well, so that by the time they [musicians] leave those workers know how to continue that work so it’s self sustaining”

Vocal Union

“Music practitioners going into schools for a whole academic year, with the whole school. Going to every classroom. ..They would work with each teacher in the classroom – so that the teacher is co-leading, co-learning, co-delivering. Often it is coupled with a staff choir... and not just the teachers, but the dinner ladies, the secretaries, the cleaners, the groundsmen.... And this was a pathfinder programme that led to Sing Up.”

Community Music Training Programme: Traineeship and Advanced traineeship “is another one that informed the development of Creative and Cultural Skills”. “We’ve had several pieces of work that started as ‘Regional Jewels’ which went on “to influence the sector nationally”.

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Tyneside Cinema

Tyneside Cinema highlighted the following work as examples of excellent practice:

Northern Stars.

This is excellent because of the quality of the training that is offered:

- It’s delivered by “professional filmmakers and professionals in the industry more generally”, “the best people that we can find”
- “the environment that we create - creative and professional, we take this very seriously”
- It is a “unique offer” to young people that doesn’t exist “within formal education” or other projects
- “because of the quality of young people that the programme attracts”

The Factory – the experimental drop-in space for young people for digital media and other technology. This is excellent because:

- “It’s investigating a completely new way of learning that is very exciting... There’s no pressure on any output, they’re not there to make a film... or

whatever. They're there to develop their own ideas and a lot of the emphasis is on developing ideas and critical thinking. And that kind of gets stamped on in a classroom, where artforms are segmented"

- "Of the four young mentors that lead it". They've been trained to be mentors and in "communication skills, leadership, team working, developing their own practice – researching new areas". "They are very approachable. It's inspirational for a young person to come into a room and be greeted by another young person... and have your questions answered by young people."
- "It's not elitist or exclusive, because of the drop-in nature."

Arts Centre Washington (ACW)

ACW highlighted the "music development" work that they undertake as an example of an excellent project. This is because of:

- "the various aspects of skills development and progression routes to performance and beyond"
- "the leadership of.. the groups", "that person's professionalism"

"Excellent practice comes from leadership... how they lead their group... their professionalism, their knowledge, their experience, their talent".

Overall, ACW highlighted that "excellence in participatory work is to do with what participants get out of it" but "there always has to be a product at the end."

Analysis of interviews

"Quality is a battlefield"

These interviews demonstrate the many different ways that people and organisations think about excellent participatory practice. There is a strong element of healthy diversity to this – within the arts, excellence naturally has a strong subjective element to it.

However, there also appears to be a lack of common framework for beginning to understand how to talk about and reference excellence across people who work in this area. The lack of this framework is highlighted by the totally different ways that people responded to this question – it isn't just that people have different opinions on whether a particular piece of practice is or isn't good, there does not appear to be a shared sense of what excellence means in this work.

This lack of a shared sense of what excellence might mean was highlighted by one of the interviewees when they said "quality is a battlefield" (Interview D), meaning that they had difficult experiences of trying to work with other organisations and agree what excellence looks like.

This lack of a shared sense of excellence – a framework for understanding what goes into making excellent practice - would therefore seem to be an impediment to effective discussion and communication within the sector. And beyond the sector, it

must harm the perception of the work if we're not able to articulate what separates good practice from that which is less good.

Excellent practice means different things according to the type of activity being undertaken

One thing that is clear from the diversity of answers around excellence, and from explicit points raised by some interviewees, is that any shared sense of a framework for understanding excellent practice needs to understand that there is a broad spectrum of participatory practice, encompassing different intentions, motivations and roles. Any common understanding must not conflate different practices and needs to be able to differentiate between different aspects of the work. This was expressed in terms of “a spectrum of practice” by both BALTIC and Helix Arts, and in terms of the difference between “ethical” and “technical” learning by TSG.

What might a common framework look like?

It is impossible to answer this question at this stage, because it requires discussion between the partners of the Artworks North East programme. However, we can identify the various elements that might go into such a framework from an analysis of the responses that partners gave to the questions about excellence.

Different partners referred to the following elements of excellent practice. (It is important to note that this is simply an attempt to categorise the responses given. Some of the elements of this list are mutually contradictory, and may well be contested by different partners. That is why further discussion is necessary.)

The principles and values which underpin participatory work

- Artistic ambition, challenge and risk taking – a set of ideas that express a desire that participatory work should have an interesting artistic vision, it should challenge artist and participants to try new things, and think or act from a different perspective, and should be experimental and take a positive view of ‘failure’
- Participatory practice as a shared creative and developmental journey between artist and participants – this idea was identified within the “co-produced” part of the participatory art spectrum. It expresses a desire for a mutual relationship between artist and participants, where both are learning from each other
- A desire to enable people who are unheard to explore and share their stories and find their voice
- Professionalism and integrity – this principle was expressed repeatedly by interviewees. On one hand, it was used to refer to the importance of artists bringing their professional standards into participatory work: their sense of what quality looks like, their making-skills and methods of working. It was also used to refer to the integrity of participatory processes, that the “shared journey” needed to be given both the space and time needed to find its own destination, and to have the processes of that journey championed and upheld by the artist.

- An understanding of context – the sense that participatory work is always situated practice. It is always working with a particular group of people, with particular histories, experiences and ambitions. This means that any artist leading participatory work needs to pay attention and respond to the particularity of that situation.

Elements of the participatory process: developing, organising and managing work

Interviewees referred to elements of developing and managing participatory processes which are factors in achieving excellence:

- Sufficient financial resources to involve the people that are needed and give them the equipment and materials they need
- Sufficient development time to build relationships, and the creation of partnerships which bring expertise about context into the project
- Having realistic aims for the work (in relation to budgets)
- The duration of activity and artist/participant ratios – ensuring that artists have the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with participants
- The practical and emotional support offered to participants to enable them to engage effectively
- The clarity of roles for artists, participants and others involved
- Voluntary participation of participants
- The extent of participant involvement in the decision-making processes throughout the project and the work that is produced, informed choice about the activities that they make
- Systematic thinking about progression opportunities for participants
- Space, skills and resources for reflection and learning
- Providing spaces for experimentation
- Employing highly skilled, professional artists

Elements of excellence in the participatory process: the artist's practice

- The ability to build relationships with people, and to help people build relationships with each other
- A deep understanding of their own artform and the importance of having their own artistic practice
- The ability to inspire and release creativity in others, and to find ways to engage people with their artform and passions
- The ability to challenge participants to see the world differently
- The ability to enable people to reflect on the detail of their lives and find or convey new meaning from their experiences
- Artists who continually challenge and develop their own practice

Excellence in the work produced/product:

Interviewees suggested a range of ways in which this could be measured or understood:

- The satisfaction of the artist and organisation with the work – is the artist proud of it?
- The satisfaction of participants
- Whether the works was challenging to participants and audiences
- Critical reaction to the work
- Audience reaction to the work

Excellence in the impact of work:

- Personal development for participants:
 - Skills development
 - Mental health
 - Increased confidence
 - Seeing the world differently –the transformational power of art
 - Self-expression
- Impact on culture:
 - Hearing previously unheard voices and untold stories
 - Helping to develop collective identities
- Policy impact – the impact on social and arts policy-making
- Practice impact- the impact of work on the practice of artists and other professionals

The Challenge for the Artworks North East Steering Group and programme

The issues raised in this section, in particular the lack of a shared framework for understanding excellence, and the requirement to understand excellence differently in relation to different practice, offers a challenge to the “case study” approach to identifying excellent practice which will inform the curriculum development process, which is part of the planned nextstage of Artworks activity.

Without a common framework for understanding excellence, it will be difficult for the Artworks programme to agree what case studies to choose, and how to analyse what those case studies tell us. Such a framework would also help organisations and artists to reflect on and interrogate their own practice, and will therefore support the development of both the mentoring and critical conversation strands of activity.

If we decide that such a framework is desirable, how will we undertake the discussions required to bring it about?

6. Language

Language describing the practice of “arts in participatory settings”

The following Wordle represents the different language used by interviewees to describe the practice of “arts in participatory settings”. The relative size of each word or phrase represents the number of different interviewees who said that they used this particular word/phrase to describe the work that their organisation undertakes, in response to the specific question about language use. (It is not, therefore, a representation of how many times each word/phrase was used by the interviewees)



“Participatory arts” was the most common expression used to describe this work (6 counts), followed by “co-production” (4 counts).

Language to describe the people who deliver the work

This Wordle represents the language that people use to describe the practitioners who deliver “arts in participatory settings”. Again, the relative size of the text represents the number of interviewees who stated that they used this terminology to describe the people who do this work, in response to the specific question about language use.



“Artist” was the most commonly used expression (7 counts), followed by “Facilitator” (5 counts)

Analysis

We face a challenge with language

There was a wide variety of language used to describe this work. Tellingly none of the organisations used the language of “arts in participatory settings”. At the initial national networking meeting, the national Artworks Programme Leader said that this phrase had been developed via a workshop process of potential partners in the programme, and had been arrived at because it was the phrase that fewest people objected to.

This suggests that we have face a challenge with language. If we do not have a common language to describe the work, then we cannot advocate for it effectively to raise the value and perception of the practice (we cannot sell what hasn’t got a name) and it also suggests that there is confusion or disagreement within the sector about what the practice is.

These points are supported by the findings from the interviews:

Differences in language use within the partnership

- Interviewees used 23 different terms for people who deliver the work, and 23 different terms for the practice itself.
- Interviewees used some telling phrases in response to the questions about language: “We’re not that careful about language” and “I don’t know how to describe it - our other engagement programmes” (Interview F) and “I keep changing the term. Sorry ” (Interview A)

Some of the diversity of language is necessary, as it reflects the diversity of practice that interviewees identified. Where practice is different, we need to use different language to name it appropriately. Otherwise, a common language obscures different practice and conflates the difference between types of work. As pointed out by two interviewees (Interviews I and L), the language we use needs to reflect the different practice that exists.

However, even if we reject the potential categorisation described in sections 1 and 2 (above) as too simplistic, it is unlikely that there are 23 different types of practice and 23 different roles that artists play within those settings.

The diversity of language is a challenge in this area, but there are also differences in the way that different people use critical pieces of terminology. For example:

- Interviewee F stated that “no-one calls themselves participatory artists” and Interviewee E stated that “some artists who work in participatory settings wouldn’t call themselves participatory artists”. However two organisations explicitly stated that “we call them participatory artists” (Interviews I and J). Where does this difference come from? Is it connected to the idea that artist must be sole author of work in order for it to be ‘theirs’, in the way that the artist working for BALTIC didn’t view their work with Fairbridge as “their

work”? Is it simply that participatory practice is not well understood? Or are there other reasons?

- There is also (unsurprisingly) disagreement about the language of “community”. Interviewee F stated that they “try to avoid language of community engagement”, whilst other organisations explicitly referred to trying to “involve our community” (Interview A) and “community work” was language used in Interview E.

Evolving language

It seems that organisations have been putting greater thought into some of the language that they use in this area. There are particular terms which have been popular in the recent past, but which people are deliberately moving away from:

- “outreach” – at least one organisation described that they are deliberately “moving away from outreach” because of its connotations (Interview E), and this is a journey that other organisations have reached the end of: “outreach is slightly colonial” (Interview J).
- “Creative practitioner” – Two organisations (Interviews E and F) described how they stopped using this language, which they described as being associated with Creative Partnerships.

Potential areas for further discussion within the Artworks:NorthEast partnership

This analysis raises the possibility that we need both more **precision** within the language that is used to describe different elements of practice, and more **consensus** between organisations and people in the sector about what that language is.

Without greater precision and consensus:

- it is difficult for organisations and artists to discuss their practice meaningfully with one another. Put simply, if we do not share language, we end up talking past one another. The lack of precision in our language means we are not able to state clearly the difference between different types of practice.
- We run the risk of confusing our partners – if we cannot accurately describe our practice using language that is widely understood, it is difficult for partners to know what to ask for.
- It is difficult to raise the profile of this work if we cannot name it. Given that the current Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey, can ask “What are the Participatory Arts?”², which is the most common label used by Artworks North East partners to describe their work, it feels like profile raising is extremely important.

²Mailout interview with Ed Vaizey, 26th September 2011.

<http://mailout.co/news/%E2%80%9Cwhat%E2%80%99s-the-participatory-arts%E2%80%9D-culture-minister-exclusive/>

7. Employment of Artists

Part of the task of the audit was to build an understanding of how artists are employed by the organisations in the partnership. The following table provides a snapshot of the ways that artists are employed, and the freelance rates they are paid for 2011/12.³

		PAYE	Freelance	Freelance Minimum per day	Freelance Maximum per day	Freelancers paid for noncontact hours?	Other benefits
Cross Artform	Equal Arts		x	180	200	£50 for meetings etc	
	The Forge		x	200	250	Yes	
	Helix Arts		x	230	250	Yes	
	Regional Youth Work Unit		x	200	250	n/a	
	Arts Centre Washington		x	180	180	No	Free training, involvement in BALTIC events, Free CRB check
Visual Arts	BALTIC		x	200	200	Payment for training sessions and meetings	
	National Glass Centre	x	x	120	240	sometimes	
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	x	x	100	150	No	
	Northern Stage	x	x	150	200	Yes	
Creative Writing	New Writing North		x	200	250	Yes	Paying artists for original commissions
Music	The Sage Gateshead	x	x	90	1000	Yes	
Media	Tyneside Cinema		x	175	300		

³ Some organisations highlighted that payment levels for artists were under review in light of the current economic situation

Analysis of interviews:

Issues that Artworks partners may want to discuss further:

Pay rates

1. There is a significant degree of variation in pay rates for artists. In some respect, this could be seen as surprising, given that they are performing similar roles across organisations. However, pay rates in particular organisations are often related to industry-specific pay scales (such as Equity rates or Musicians Union) which may not be relevant outside those areas.

Is there value in trying to achieve harmonisation of pay rates across the participatory practice sector? It may be something that the Artwork North East steering group wishes to look at in order to create a sense of shared minimum standards across this area of work. However, it may be that organisations need to set their pay rates in relation to other considerations.

2. Average pay rates are not very high. Whilst the lowest rates of pay shown in the table above are 'trainee' rates or those given to less experienced artists, even average pay rates are not high when compared with other freelance rates. Even the most common value for a maximum day rate (£250 per day) means that the artist is likely to be the lowest paid freelancer on any given project. Given that many evaluators charge £300 per day, do we feel that it is right that the people assessing the project are paid more than those delivering it?

Does this create a mismatch between the need for high quality artists to deliver work (which was highlighted by organisations in the section on 'excellence') and the rates of pay for those people? Also, what is the impact of low pay rates on perceptions of the value of the work?

Rates of pay also impact on artist attitudes and capacity to pay for their training and development. There is a danger that freelance artists become locked in a vicious circle of low pay/inability to afford training/lack of development. This is explored further in the 'training' section below.

Recruitment mechanisms

Many of the organisations who use a significant number of freelancers use both open recruitment procedures and handpicking to select the freelance artists they work with. There are advantages and disadvantages to both types of selection procedure. One interviewee described being "torn" between the two mechanisms (Interview K) as there different considerations to balance each time:

- The desire to open up opportunities to new artists (and the consequent positive impact on artist development)
- The desire to work with artists that organisations know can deliver
- The desire to work with artists whose practice excites and interests organisations

There were also interesting differences in the way in which different organisations involved participants in the selection of the artists who were going to work with them. Some organisations viewed this as a part of good practice, others thought that it could limit the artistic ambition of projects. This may be an area that partners wish to explore further.

8. Training & Development

The following table illustrates the types of training and development opportunities which organisations offer to artists to help develop their participatory practice.

		Shadowing/ Mentoring	Higher Education	Apprenticeships	Internships	Working with specific groups	Masterclasses	Policies & procedures	Opportunities to reflect on practice
Cross Artform	Equal Arts								x
	The Forge	x							x
	Helix Arts							x	x
	Regional Youth Work Unit					x			
	Arts Centre Washington				x			x	
Visual Arts	BALTIC	x	x			x	x	x	x
	National Glass Centre								
Dance and Drama	Live Theatre	x							
	Northern Stage	x			x		x		
Creative Writing	New Writing North	x							x
Music	The Sage Gateshead	x	x	x	Structured student & professional work experience placements	x	x	x	x
Media	Tyneside Cinema	x					x		

Analysis

There is a wide variation in terms of the level of training and development that organisations are able to offer artists to develop their participatory practice.

Some, such as TSG, offer an enormous range of development opportunities, not just to artists, but to a range of other professionals. Other organisations are able to offer very little in the way of training or support.

The importance of training and development for artists was recognised, but many felt that a lack of resources meant that this was currently impossible. “We need to keep them [artists] fresh and show them that they’re valued... But we don’t have the resources to pay for training for them [freelancers]. We need to be careful where we spend our money.” (Interview H). “Most of the people we work with are practising artists... They work with a lot of other organisations and deliver similar work with other organisations... that’s one way of developing their practice. In terms of delivering training, it’s not something we do at the moment... It’s down to funding.” (Interview G)

The issue of training for freelancers appears to be significant. There is some reluctance on the part of organisations to support the training costs of artists who aren’t “their” artists. This is mainly attributed to a lack of resources. Given that the freelance model is the most prevalent across organisations, this means that freelancers are expected to support their own training costs, or that other organisations will support them to develop their skills.

This raises two significant issues:

- 1) Given the rates of pay involved, it may well be the case that freelance artists aren’t paid enough to support their own training costs. The Artworks North East programme may want to consider research with artists on this specific issue.
- 2) Many organisations expect others to undertake training and development of the artists they work with. Whilst this may have been a workable strategy in the past, when there was a high level of European Funds available, which created a large number of free training opportunities, these have now significantly declined. We may be entering a situation in which everyone is expecting someone else to offer training.

This presents a collective action problem for organisations who deliver participatory practice. The Artworks: North East programme is in a good position to begin to address this issue.

The following gaps in currently available training were identified by organisations:

- Opportunities for early career artists to get ‘hands-on’ experience of participatory work
- Training for artists on how to work with different audiences and different groups of participants in different contexts

- Opportunities for mid and late career artists to refresh their practice – through reflection and development time
- Mechanisms to help develop greater consistency in the quality and rigour of artists work in this area
- Understanding how to measure and monitor outcomes
- An overall lack of resources to enable training opportunities for freelancers

Appendix A

Information on research sent to interviewees in advance of interviews

Research into “Arts in Participatory Settings” practice amongst Artwork: North East partners

Purpose of research

This research has three primary aims:

1. The Artworks: NorthEast partners wish to understand the range of practice that is undertaken by partner organisations under the broad heading of “arts in participatory settings” and the range of language, ideas and approaches that partners use to describe and contextualise this activity.
2. This research will also begin to explore the question of what different partners see as examples of excellent practice in this field, and the reasons why that is so.
3. The research will uncover the different approaches and opportunities available to artists in different artform areas to develop their participatory practice.

We want to keep this as simple as possible – so we will seek to uncover the **what, why and how of “arts in participatory settings”** amongst Artworks:NorthEast partners.

Important Information

With your permission, we will record the interviews, in order that we can analyse what you tell us properly later.

No names will be attributed to the information you supply (unless you ask us to!)

The information you supply will be used to produce a report for Artworks: NorthEast partners and may also be used in academic publications, and other published material.

The interviews will follow a semi-structured format. We have a series of questions that we will ask all of the partners. However, the conversation will cover any ground that you think is interesting and relevant.

The definition of “art in participatory settings” used by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation is: Artists working with participants in different places. The examples they give are “schools, community spaces, prisons, health settings.”

We think the interview should take between 1 and 2 hours.

Standard Questions:

What?

- What activity does your organisation undertake that you feel meets the Paul Hamlyn definition of “arts in participatory settings”?
- What language do you use to describe this work?
- What do you call the people that deliver this work? (e.g. Artists? Facilitators?)
- What role do the artists play?
 - What is the artist trying to achieve when they deliver this work?
- What types of participants do you work with?
- Where does this activity take place?
 - Do you work in partnership with other organisations to deliver this work? If so, which ones?
- Can you give some examples of excellent practice from within your organisation’s activities?
 - What is it about those examples that makes them excellent?
- If your organisation also undertakes other arts activity (programming arts performances/exhibitions etc), is there a difference between how you judge excellence in those fields and your participatory practice?
 - If so, what is that difference?
- Is there a particular philosophy that underpins your approach to “arts in participatory settings”?

Why?

- Why does your organisation undertake “art in participatory settings”?
 - What’s the purpose that underpins your activities?
 - Do different activities have a range of different purposes?
- Why does your organisation work with the participants it does?
- Why does your organisation work with the artists it does?

How?

- How does your organisation engage artists to undertake this work?
 - Do you employ artists (PAYE) on fixed or permanent contracts?
 - Do you contract artists as freelancers?
 - Other models?
- How does your organisation identify and recruit participants?
- How does your organisation develop artists and their practice?
- How else do the artists you work with develop their practice?
 - What gaps do you think exist in training and professional development for artists who work in participatory settings?
- How is your work in participatory settings funded?
 - What is the relationship between the funders who support this work and how you assess its quality?

A note on methodological issues

Helix Arts staff have undertaken the interviews for this audit, and have written the final report. Helix Arts staff were also interviewed for the audit itself. This is a slightly unusual methodological situation, but the Artworks Steering Group had decided that the skills and experience of Helix Arts staff meant that they were best placed to undertake the research. The methodological issues concerning Helix Arts staff being both interviewer and interviewee was handled by having a separate member of staff act as interviewer for the Helix Arts interview than the person who wrote the report. This meant that the report writer was able to treat the Helix Arts interview as a piece of evidence alongside the others.



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